

Dear Parishioners,

I first met Father Graham in January 2018 in Toungoo, Myanmar where I was voluntarily teaching English and he was making a pastoral visit to deepen the link between that Diocese and St Stephen with St John Westminster. At that time, I was living in Hong Kong and had previously visited Toungoo in 2016, with the Dean of St John's Cathedral, Hong Kong Island, to launch a Partnership between them.

My love, support and admiration for the people of Toungoo is clearly shared by Father Graham and you all, this close connection going back many years through the late Joanna Smith and Burmalink.

I have returned to teach English in Toungoo every year between 2017 and 2020 (around 8 months in total). I have also been moved to participate in many fundraising activities to support them, both from Hong Kong and the UK (having relocated back here 3 years ago).

These activities have included producing calendars, featuring images I have taken from my visits to Myanmar. But as I haven't been able to visit since March 2020 (Covid and the terrible civil war getting in the way), I didn't have any up to date photos for my latest calendar "Scenes from Myanmar 2024". So instead, I asked my friends and students in Toungoo to send me their own photos, capturing local scenes from their area.

And what a success it was! I received 80 photos! We chose the best ones and the results can be seen on the calendars that Father Graham has received from me. If you feel able to buy a calendar (they make great Christmas presents!) and make a suggested minimum donation of £20 per calendar, then every single penny will go straight to the Diocese. I'm covering all the printing and postage costs myself.

So if you would like a calendar, please do let Father Graham know. And if you are interested in learning more about the current situation of our dear friends in the Diocese of Toungoo, do read the article that I wrote for St John's Cathedral this autumn.

My thanks, blessings and thoughts are with you all as we approach Advent.

*Debbie McGowan*