

## Living Hope

‘Jesus, You are everything to a lonely soul.’ St. Faustina

Mark was among the brightest of Living Waters’ young lights; he faced his same-sex attraction squarely and well with a similarly motivated group of men and women in Los Angeles. He left for China to fulfill God’s call on his life (he had studied Chinese and Asian culture at university). As he was learning Mandarin, Kim from Northern China was majoring in English. She came to the same metropolis in China where Mark had just found a job as an English teacher. They met without sparks at the first Living Waters group run in that city.

Much to my surprise, I reconnected with Mark there; my sister and husband were on job assignment in that city, attended the church sponsoring Living Waters and alerted me to the group starting. I just happened to be elsewhere in Asia and managed to combine a family visit with the launching of the group. Marvelous.

Mark poured himself out in the healing culture of Living Waters but lived and worked far from the sponsor church. In truth, the good news of Living Waters in the city dimmed as he faced what it meant to assimilate into a culture founded on words and habits not yet his own. He had few local friends and frustration with local churches wary of his presence. Lonely and feeling powerless, he descended into Jesus and wondered if He could be everything for him.

Blessed by Living Waters, Kim deepened intimacy with Jesus but remained uncertain about her relational future. She grew up in a household that dishonored women, a theme played out daily in her job with an organization that helped prostitutes get off the streets and into other work.

Mark and Kim met again at the going-away-party of the coordinator of the Living Waters program they had both attended two years earlier. They were different people, Mark humbled by hardship and alive to her beauty, Kim seeing him as the radiant man he is for the first time. They began dating and worshipping together; after two years of falling and rising in love, they discerned their readiness to fuse lives in Chinese, for a people for whom Christ gave all.

I recently reengaged with them a couple months after their wedding. The grace of marriage has enlivened them. Kim said that that she ‘had never imagined how good life could be; Mark honors me, and that gives me hope for all, especially the women I work with.’ Mark: ‘I wake up and feel full. My same-sex attraction has diminished as we go deeper in God together. Rather than fear not being enough for Nicole, I have more to give.’ Jesus gives generously through marital love. Who He has joined, let no-one divide.