

Speech by FS at Salvation Army Charity Christmas Luncheon 2023 (English only) (with photos)

Following is the speech by the Financial Secretary, Mr Paul Chan, at the Salvation Army Charity Christmas Luncheon 2023 today (December 1):

David (the Chairman of the Advisory Board, Salvation Army Hong Kong and Macau Command, Dr David Li), Colonels Philip (the Territorial Commander of the Salvation Army Hong Kong and Macau Command, Colonel Philip Maxwell) and Deslea Maxwell (the Territorial President of Women's Ministries of the Salvation Army Hong Kong and Macau Command, Colonel Deslea Maxwell), soldiers of the Salvation Army, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

I am pleased to join you all for the Salvation Army Charity Christmas Luncheon. Congratulations to the Salvation Army on organising this event to celebrate the festive season and raise funds for a worthy cause.

The Salvation Army has been serving Hong Kong for over 90 years. All along, it has demonstrated a deep commitment to transforming lives and caring for the community, bringing help – and hope – to those who need it most.

Famous author and humanitarian Helen Keller, who visited Hong Kong in 1955 and has a house named after her at St Paul's Convent School, said this: "Optimism is the faith that leads to achievement; nothing can be done without hope."

The Salvation Army creates hope for members of our community through its various services, with more than 100 social service units, schools, and education centres in Hong Kong and Macao. With subventions from the Social Welfare Department since 1958, the Salvation Army has expanded its reach to becoming ever more deeply rooted in our society.

In this financial year, the Salvation Army received more than \$600 million subvention allocation. The sum supports a spectrum of social welfare services covering different target groups such as family and children, young people, individuals with rehabilitation needs, and offenders.

All this good work helps the Government in building a caring and inclusive society.

Among your recent efforts, one of them is partnering with the Government on transitional housing. Indeed, providing short-term accommodation for those who need it is a priority.

To date, sites for building over 21 000 transitional housing units have been identified. And about 9 000 units are already in service, with the remaining 12 000 units (to be) available over the next two years.

The Sam Shing Transitional Housing Project, involving conversion of a seven-storey school building into 123 accommodation units for 400 tenants, is run by the Salvation Army. With your dedicated efforts, all 123 units were occupied by June this year.

Ladies and gentlemen, Christmas is about love and a season of giving. Look at the world at large which is filled with complexities, challenges and conflicts. Cliffhangers are everywhere. But Hong Kong has remained a safe and peaceful city. Our economy is bouncing back, and tourists and businesses are returning. So let us count our blessings and have a grateful heart.

The festive season reminds me of Acts 20:35: "It is more blessed to give than to receive". Let's share our joy, peace and blessings with our family, friends and colleagues, and let our blessings be the blessings to others too.

Once again, my heartfelt appreciation goes to the Salvation Army, to all of you, for your dedication to transforming lives and caring for the people in need.

And being part of that effort, I appeal to you all to vote in the DC election on December 10. Let us vote for those who are dedicated to serving the community and making Hong Kong a better home.

Finally, I wish you and your families a blessed Christmas filled with happiness, peace and love of family and friends. Thank you.

