

And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head."

Matthew 8:20

The Right to Housing

According to a global survey of the affordability of houses in more than 350 cities last year, Hong Kong was the least affordable community to buy a home in the world—a title it has maintained for the past six years. According to the survey, the price of an average flat in Hong Kong is 19 times the city's annual median income.

High property prices are only relevant to people who can dream about buying a home. What about the approximately 200,000 people who pay to live in so-called coffin cubicles, caged homes, or subdivided flats? And then there are the homeless whose numbers were estimated at a record of more than 1,600 people last year and the 250 so-called McRefugees who sleep in 24-hour fast food restaurants. They cannot afford the city's high rents, and they refuse to live in small, squalid flats.

What about public housing? The average wait for public housing is four-and-a-half years with more than 280,000 people currently on the waiting list.

While the Hong Kong government has made attempts in the past few years to lower housing prices, the fact is that housing prices remain stubbornly high and out of reach for far too many people in the community.

Lost in the debate about the high housing prices is that housing is a right, not just a place to live nor an investment. Moreover, enjoying this right means housing that is adequate and affordable in which one can live in dignity. Until the right to housing becomes a reality for everyone, there is no one home in Asia's World City.

Bruce Van Voorhis serves as missionary with the Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCA's in Hong Kong. His appointment is made possible by your gifts to Disciples Mission Fund, Our Churches Wider Mission, and your special gifts.



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