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# DIOCESAN Digest



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Our Community Services



Our Mission Deaneries



Our Schools

## It is time also to strengthen your stakes

The Most Reverend Dr John Chew

**Presidential address: 22<sup>nd</sup>  
session of Synod  
1<sup>st</sup> MEETING  
13 and 14 MAY 2011**

Before I deliver my Address, on behalf of the Diocese, welcome all to the First Meeting of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Session of Synod, especially to those who are new delegates to Synod.

Needless to say for all who are from Singapore, the events of the past weeks; the build-up to and outcome of the General Elections 2011 which has not been experienced for many decades, are still and probably will be on the minds and mouths of many for the days or months to come. It is definitely a transition of sorts, maybe much more than that, in the socio-culture dynamics of our society. Much soul or heart-searching will be done no doubt. It is not my task to dwell into that here but simply to say how it would or could be done is important. *The challenge is its depth and its outcome.*

In this regard, we as a Diocese could and should take encouragement and heart that this is a process which the Lord of the Church Himself has always been doing and will continue to do for and on behalf of His People. This is evidenced throughout its existence since Abraham, Moses, Joshua ..... and above all in Jesus Christ our Lord and continued in Peter, Paul, and John .... As such the unbroken continuity of the history of life and witness of His People has always moved on and crossed over practically intact, though severely tested and refined. So being endowed with this spiritual capital of re-freshness rising above such mundane anxieties of surviving and continuing, our concern and task has to be differently directed – a fulfilling and joyful duty in fact.

**CROSSING OVER and MOVING ON in the LORD!**

*Only let your manner of life be worthy of the Gospel, ...  
**standing firm in one spirit, with one mind,***

***striving side by side** for the faith of the Gospel .....*

*So if there is  
any encouragement **in Christ**,  
any comfort **from love**,  
any participation **in the Spirit**,  
any affection and sympathy,  
**complete our (my) joy** by being of the **same mind**, being in **full accord** and of **one mind**.  
Do nothing from rivalry or conceit,  
but **in humility consider others** more significant than yourselves.*

*Let each of one look not only to his own interests,  
but also the interests of others.*

*Have **this mind** among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, .....*

***So that** at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow ... and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,  
to the glory of God the Father.  
(Phil 1:27, 2:1-9; cf 2 Cor 13:14)*

***Pray for the peace of Jerusalem!**  
May they prosper (be secure) who love you!*

***Peace** be within your walls and **prosperity** (security) within your towers!*

*For my brothers and companions sake, I will say, "**Peace** be within you!"*

*For the sake of the **house of the Lord** our God, **I will seek your good**. (Ps 122:1-9)*

***Do good** to Zion in your good pleasure;  
**Build up the walls of Jerusalem**;  
Then you will delight in right sacrifices ...  
(Ps 51:18-19)*

*The Lord bless you from **Zion!**  
May you see the **good** (prosperity) of **Jerusalem** all the days of your life!*

*May you see your children's children!  
**Peace** be upon **Israel!** (Ps 128:5-6)*

The above living words of our Lord, help to identify and name our "spiritual" heart-ware or capital and vocational responsibility, which is infinitely more critical and precious than any success or achievement. May I be given that special grace and blessing and

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joy, on this my last occasion of giving the President's Address to begin a new Session of Synod, to most humbly appeal and urge you my dear fellow brothers and sisters in Christ in this diocesan family, that as we have just crossed over, let us continue and move in such spirit and commitment in the Lord, most gloriously seen in and through the full dimensions of His Cross. We have indeed come a long way, remember the Centenary Year of 2009! Our journey however will continue till we see Him face to face. As such it is crucial for us then *how we journey together* with the sole concern and desire that His Name be confessed and glorified.

### Enlarge the place of your tent

For this, two things are of importance. Firstly it is to take stock, giving us cause to marvel and to give praise and thanks to the Lord, and in the process be strengthened with the needed confidence of our foundational faith, order and values to move on in the uncharted and uncertain waters or to weather the surprises of the journey ahead. Secondly we need to be always ready to be surprised by the Lord and ready for any change of events in the world.

*Enlarge the place of your tent, and let the curtains of your habitations stretched out; do not hold back; lengthen your cords and strengthen your stakes.*  
(Isa 54:2)

These words of Yahweh in the light of a "cross-over" perspective, has a dual-duty of command and promise. But first and foremost there has to be a *tent* in the first place. In biblical terms, it is also both soft and hard ware; the walls and the people, Jerusalem and the inhabitants. We are not stand-alone Christians, congregations, parishes or even a diocese, but we are very much an inherent part and parcel of the historic Church; the People and Kingdom of God, albeit through a particular spiritual and form of grouping in the divine economy of historic incident. But this is never to be despised. Therefore loving care, critique for renewal and transformation are needed.

I am consciously aware that we have on various occasions taken stock. But today in reflecting, maybe we can see afresh.

Today we are a diocesan family of 27 parishes and six growing mission deaneries. It would be a tremendously enriching and awesome exercise if one could detail the bits and pieces, nuts and bolts, of how the Lord has graciously grown us from where we were just at the turn of the new millennium. The first major challenge we were all confronted with at the very First Synod Meeting in 2000 May, and my first as Diocesan Bishop for that matter, was in this very site where we are meeting in almost every year since 2003/4, namely this more than 12 hectares and growing,



unique all-in-one **St Andrew's Village**. In Singapore's context, it is without any doubt a miracle of a very high level. This Village was dedicated on 29 Dec 2004. Who could ever dream that we would be given trust and stewardship of this Village and all it had and could stand for? The real and full potential has yet to be really appreciated, understood and realised. I would definitely be on much safer ground by saying "Up and On!"

In recounting this, we must take it in twin conjunction with our beloved St Andrew's Cathedral. In 2006, shortly after we were again miraculously blessed with the permission to "*enlarge ... your tent ... lengthen your cords ...*" of the Cathedral buildings and facilities, we were refreshed in the historic and mission-defining **150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of St Andrew's Church Mission** which gave birth and planted the seed of what we are and could be today and tomorrow. Next year **2012** by God's grace, we will be having a twin celebration of the **150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of St Andrew's Cathedral and St Andrew's School**. One of the most precious outcomes of all these key events and occasions has always been the drawing out of our best, the depth and breadth of talents and resources of the diocesan family and the favour and goodwill of the communities beyond. These surely should cause us to marvel, give praise and strength for the journey ahead. A host of other new or extension building efforts of other parishes and congregations, as well as our schools, have shown the same. How should we harness, build on and synergise all these spiritual and material assets for the continuous and greater glory of our Lord?

The challenges in the changed landscape of formal education in Singapore, and the world at large for that matter, are something that will no doubt continue to engage and challenge us as we have been entrusted with such tremendous educational opportunities and facilities to "*enlarge ... your tent, ... lengthen your cords ...*", not only for ourselves but also on behalf of the wider Christian community in Singapore and beyond. But our education challenges and missions probably have gone way beyond what the traditional school chaplaincy was designed for and able to address. We cannot, and we would not be allowed to, forget the new critical importance of Early Childhood Education in the whole education continuum. The Diocese with the endorsement of the Standing Committee has submitted a Letter of Intent to develop an Anglican Integrated Programme

within our existing schools. May I urge all to pray fervently to the Lord for His favour and the endorsement of the authorities for this could be a defining milestone in our education mission. The enormity of the tasks of the Education Board in understanding, defining and raising commitment and mobilising all possible resources of the Diocese and beyond to rise up to the challenges cannot be over-emphasised.

**2003** could be described as a defining year in the life and witness of our Diocese. Little

its total life and witness was initiated. For the first time in our synodal life, we had our then Chancellor, the late Justice Lai Kew Chai and then Registrar, the retired Senior Judge and our current Chancellor, Mr Richard Magnus, together giving the homilies at the Services at Synod in November 2003. We began the process of the Parish Life Review that year, in the prayer that each Parish will prayerfully, intentionally, and responsibly internalise and work on a review and re-define their own parish life in the context of a collegial



Centenary Evening Service (2009)

did we know that a most damaging step was taken when the then Episcopal Church of the USA on 2 Nov 2003 consecrated Mr Gene Robinson as a Bishop, against all pleas and warnings from the whole Communion.

On the wider front, it brought alive a movement of a network, or should we say, a communion of Provinces of the Global South to more purposefully come together to uphold and continue the apostolic and historic faith and order. The Lord had actually begun the seed-planting in 1994 and 1997, which on hindsight, if kept faithful, humble and gracious, could well be the instrument of His in this critical time to keep the Anglican Communion intact on the basis of the Anglican Communion Covenant, and with the Historical Preamble which our Diocese and Province developed and offered to the Communion at large. The pivotal role and contribution of our Diocese through the myriad gifts the Lord has entrusted us with and very collegially harnessed cannot be underestimated. "*Enlarge ... your tent, ... lengthen your cords ...*" in this arena was something that we never envisaged nor dared to embark on if not for the Lord's doing!

### Our vocation and responsibility

Again it was in **2003**, not knowing how the crisis in the Communion would pan out and impact our diocesan life and witness, when somehow by the moving of the Spirit leading, guiding and preparing our Diocese for the awesome role we have been entrusted and called upon to bear, the deep sensing of the essential task of bringing our whole laity to fuller awareness of their collegial vocation and responsibility in the diocesan family for

diocesan responsibility of ministry and mission here and beyond. A common template was developed for guidance for each Parish/Congregation to work on by themselves according to their own contexts. It is with great praise and thanksgiving as over these years, the number and extent of involvement of our laity in the parish/congregational, and also home front and deanery mission life of the Diocese has grown tremendously. We are particularly encouraged to witness in the Services of this Synod that Bishop Rennis Ponniah, representing the clergy, and Chancellor Richard Magnus, representing the Laity, are giving the homilies together after our crossing over. May we all pray that this will be definitely not just symbolic but a sacramental and covenantal communion so that we will, by God's grace and Spirit, see the fruits of it in the days ahead in our total life and witness in ministry and mission here and beyond.

On hindsight, **2003** could not be a worse year in contemporary history of the Anglican Communion. It was also the year when SARS hit, and we had to cancel the much awaited Second Missions Consultation that we had been planning and looking forward to with much expectation. We began consciously to take ownership of our mission responsibility of growing and nurturing our mission deaneries which with the sheer grace of God will become healthy and stable national dioceses eventually. In light of the crisis and confusion and potential fragmentation of the Communion, it is a miracle that somehow we did not give up but continued to plan and believe in the purpose of the Missions Consultation, with the consistent theme: "*That they May Hear and Confess Jesus is*

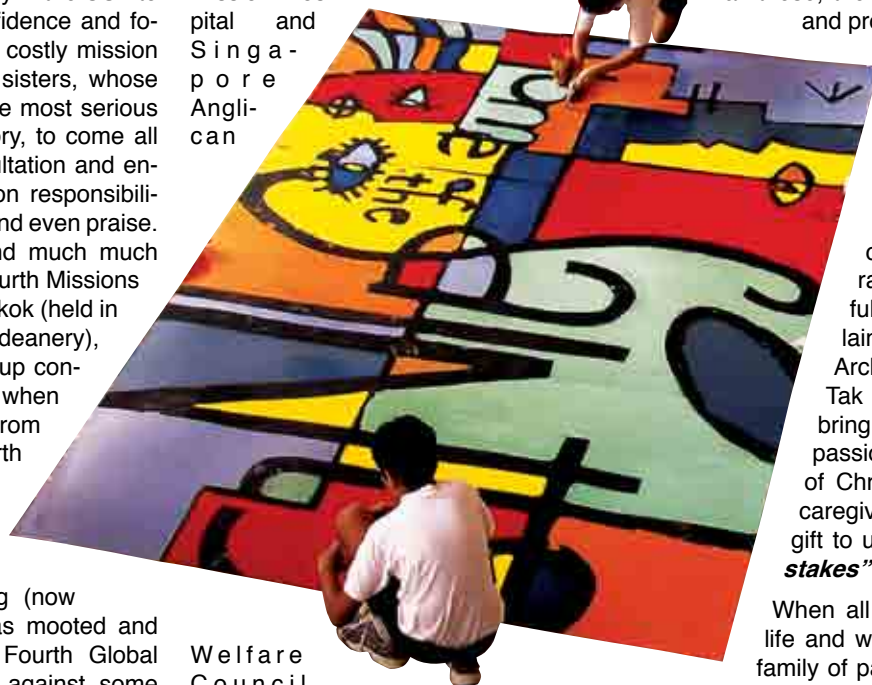


**Christ and Lord**", which was held in 2004. I believe it was the Hand of the Lord and the enabling of the Spirit that we continued. In fact, it proved to be a most vital focus and occasion which gave purpose and hope and encouragement for our beloved orthodox brothers and sisters especially in the USA to not lose purpose, unity, confidence and focus. To have intentional and costly mission partnership of brothers and sisters, whose own church is in probably the most serious crisis ever in their own history, to come all the way to be in deep consultation and engagement in our own mission responsibilities is simply beyond words and even praise. Again the rest is history and much more as witnessed by the Fourth Missions Consultation of 2008 in Bangkok (held in the real context of a mission deanery), even a very concrete follow-up consultation only early this year when specific partner churches from the Anglican Church in North America came to Singapore and our mission deaneries.

We await the pan-Anglican Conference for the Decade of Missions and Networking (now probably in 2012) which was mooted and resolved when the critical Fourth Global South to South Encounter, against some formidable odds, took place in Singapore in April 2010. When once asked, our Dean of Cathedral and also Director of Missions quipped in answer, "the whole diocese is a mission society". All our most hard-working and committed brothers and sisters, clergy and laity of parishes and congregations and our mission partners overseas, humbly speaking, are maybe re-writing a map and way of cross-cultural missions and partnerships are done or could be done; back to the basics of parish-based and centred missions, in this contemporary age of missions strategising, mapping and networking. The promise-command of **"enlarge ... your tent, .... lengthen your cords ..."** will, by faithfulness and collegiality in His grace, continue and be much more.

If my memory serves me right, it was probably around **2003/2004** that I had various deep conversations with Dr Arthur Chern, then Chairman of our Board of Community Services. Knowing the social-community landscape and needs have changed, we mused about the future of this Board and how to go about to meaningfully and relevantly address and engage the challenges. It was felt after much consultations and meetings, formal and informal, that it was right and of critical necessity to harness our efforts altogether and focus on our strength as it is simply unrealistic to respond to all and sundry needs. We also knew the dynamics and development of social needs

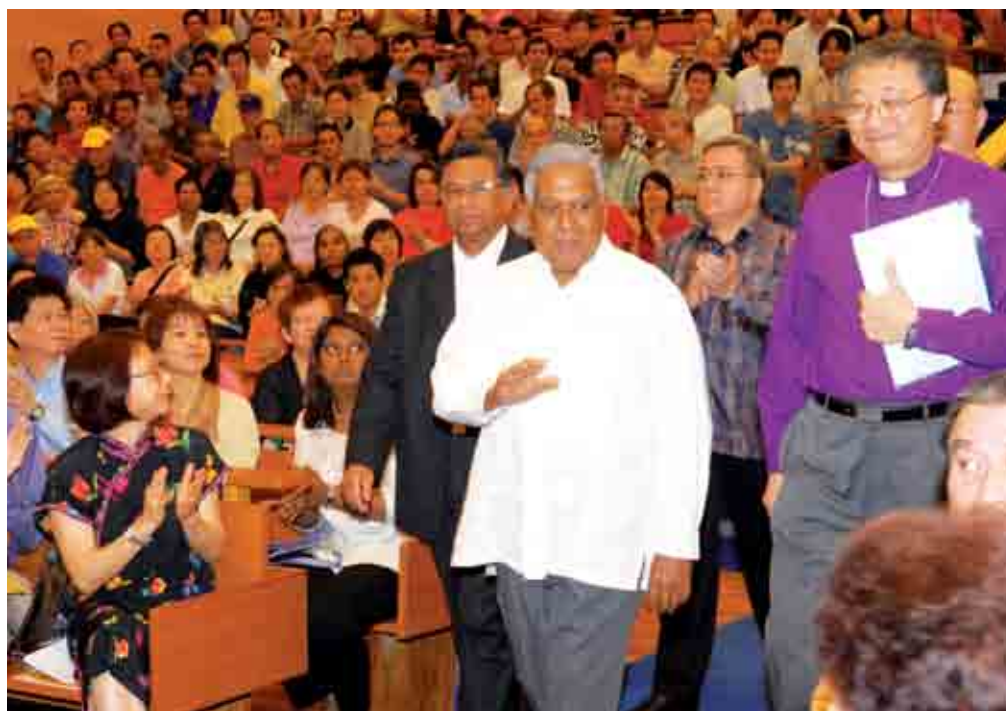
will challenge all providers and volunteer groups. How? That we were not able to know and foresee! But we knew it was necessary to come together as a family; not only of our two then fairly loosely associated service arms; the St Andrew's Mission Hospital and Singapore Anglican



Welfare Council, but also the diocese/parishes/congregations. How is this family to be effected for discipleship and missions in terms of compassionate services and ministries (Mt 22:34-40. Cf. Eph 2:11-21 esp v. 20 and 4:1-16). As a result in 2005, the integrated **Singapore Anglican Community Services**

the string of mental-psychiatric Community Rehabilitation Support Service centres, is really a witness to the faithfulness and goodness of the Lord as He commanded-promised His people to **"enlarge ... your tent, .... lengthen your cords ..."** In all these, the Lord has specially moved and provided for us the wonderful and faith-obedient spirit of parishes and congregations concerned to rise up and take on chaplaincy support to these public institutions and services of very special needs people. The raising up of a new track of full-time and Honorary Chaplains, led by Senior Chaplain, Archdeacon-designate Wong Tak Meng, on our behalf to bring and internalise the compassionate love and presence of Christ in their lives and their caregivers, is a real blessing and gift to us as we **"strengthen our stakes"** to continue to reach out.

When all the above strands of the life and witness of our Diocese and family of parishes and mission deaneries are brought together, as in the **Centenary Year 2009**, we started seeing the tapestry of the Hand of the Lord in our lives and suddenly taking on a fresh lease of accelerated and spontaneous life and growth (Eph 4:1-16), or **"inflection"** time-point and moment as our Chancellor pointed out in the recent Lay Gathering in Feb earlier this year, in the flow of our "sacred" communal history and story. I am fully aware of the breathlessness of many, if not all, of us together. I believe we all have experienced that feeling that we have been thrust into experiencing and doing things way beyond our capacity, scope and responsibility in ecclesiastical and public spheres. May I venture to urge it was and is **"our duty and our joy!"**



Launch of Singapore Anglican Community Services (2006)

(**SACS**) was formed and inaugurated in Dec 2006 by our President of Singapore at the newly-completed New Sanctuary of St Andrew's Cathedral overseen by the old wooden rugged Cross. It was most sacramental and symbolic!

To narrate and continue the story of how, beyond our wildest dreams and expectations, SACS and SAMH are now giving birth to so many new much-needed institutions and services, especially the heart-touching story of the consecrated **Chapel of Jesus Christ our Hope** in the St Andrew's Autism Centre, could not be over-marvelled at, and

### Spreading to the right and left

To continue to write the story at the macro—(diocesan-province-communion) and micro—(parish/congregation and educational and community service institution), I sense and believe it is now more than just **"enlarge ... your tent, ... lengthen your cords ..."**, it is time also to **"strengthen your stakes. For you will spread abroad to the right and to the left, ..."** (Isa 54:2-3) and whatever, wherever and however that means for us, it will be as the Lord so wills and leads. Since 2003, it is now a more organic community life and history and story as received from **the past,**

guarded, lived on, strengthened, enriched in **the present**, and passed on to **the future**—our "three-generational" culture of living out our "prophetic and priestly" life and witness for the Lord and the society (Ps 145).

Coming back almost a full circle to **2003**, as I re-trace our diocesan journey and how things have unfolded in our collegial life and witness, that the theme, chosen for the historic Third Global South to South Encounter in 2007 in Egypt, by the very shore of the Red Sea, **"One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church: Being a Faithful Church for such a time as This"**, provides us with a biblical and creedal truth as essence and foundation, then derived and lived out in varied but integrated lives and forms to strengthen our (not individual but collective) stakes to weather all storms and uncertainties, and even internal tensions and challenges, to hold and to continue to grow beyond our generation. I will have to ask your forgiveness for not expounding on this very essence and hallmark of what it means to be the body of Christ, the Church, in which,

*"Of this gospel I was made a minister ..... to preach ... the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God ... so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might be made known to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places (if I may be so bold as to add also to the "widows, the orphans, the poor and the sojourners on this good earth of His") ..... Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen".*

*(Eph 3:7-11,20-21; see also 1 Cor 1:17-2:5)*

My dear brothers and sisters in this blessed gift and family of God to us, the Diocese of Singapore and all it stands for, in its vocational life and witness to our living Lord "in the presence of all his people" and in the public square in which we live and serve, these are the words of our Lord to me as I begin to take my leave of you, as I retire come October 2012, as your diocesan Bishop — May our Lord richly bless and endow all that is necessary for our continuing and growing life and witness to His glory, His Name and His Honour, in our generation and for generations to come till we see Him again in glory! Amen!

Moses could not have received a more divine and blessed gift when he was burdened with the fear of whether the Israelites would continue to be "distinct" in the new world of uncertainties they were moving into. The Lord promised in answer to his plea to be shown the glory of the Lord,

*"I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name 'The Lord.' And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy."*  
(Ex 33.19)