



**THE DIOCESE OF SINGAPORE
25th SESSION OF SYNOD (4th MEETING)
13th NOV 2021**

**PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS
STEERING AHEAD THROUGH TIMES OF CHANGE**

Shalom, my dear brothers and sisters in Christ, and welcome to the 4th meeting of the 25th session of Synod.

Thank you for availing yourselves, especially our brothers and sisters in the deaneries, to attend this Synod meeting. Unfortunately, we are still unable to gather physically, given the Covid-19 situation. Nevertheless, we thank God for the ability to meet online to share about matters pertaining to our Body.

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce you to our recently instituted Archdeacon of Singapore, Venerable Daniel Wee. On behalf of the Diocese of Singapore, I also wish to express our appreciation and gratitude to Assistant Bishop, Rt Revd Low Jee King, who relinquished his role as Archdeacon of Singapore, one he carried since 15th August 2008. Bishop Low had exhibited exemplary servant-leadership as he faithfully carried out this difficult and important role.

We also welcome the newly ordained deacon Revd Kelvin Koo, and the recently priested Revd Aaron Cheng, Revd Choo Cheng Leong, Revd Christopher Ho and Revd Brandon Loy.

Sadly, we had to bid farewell to Revd Michael Chan, Revd Dr Ivan Ee and Revd Peter Manimuthu who have had to resign or retire early due to health reasons this year. We wish them all the best and thank them for their years of faithful service. This is also a timely reminder for us to take good care of our health as part of our worship to God, for “our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit” (1 Cor 6:19). Without a healthy body we will be limited in what we can best offer to our Lord.

With great sorrow, we noted the departure of our brother Ong Chooi Seng from Holy Orders and the cessation of his service in the diocese. We want to commit him to God and trust that our Lord Jesus Christ, being his Great Shepherd, will continue to guide and lead him in the way ahead.

We wish at this point to thank Dr Esther Tan for her many years of faithful and fruitful service. Esther was instrumental in helping the formation of SACeCe in 2014, and also in the recent transfer of ownership of 4 kindergartens to Anglican Preschool Services (APS). We wish her all the best in her retirement years and may our Lord daily grant her favour as she walks with Him.

We record our gratitude and appreciation to Mr Choy Siew Kai, who stepped down as the Diocesan HR Board Chairman, after faithfully serving in this role for many years. During his tenure, Siew Kai had made significant contributions towards improving the Diocesan HR policy. We wish him well and trust that the Lord will continue to guide and strengthen him. We warmly welcome Dr Stanley Lai as the appointed HR Board Chairman since 1st September 2021. May the Lord's favour and guidance be upon him as he leads the HR Board and the Diocese in the overall review and alignment of our human resource policies.

Since the start of Covid-19, we have been constantly flooded with updates, often in the form of negative reports. It is easy to lose sight of God's mercy and grace while we are trying to cope with the pandemic as well as the ever-changing measures put in place by the authorities.

While the nations (we have seven countries under our care) continue to fight to curb the transmission of the Covid-19 virus, we thank God for His protection and provision in moments of challenge and difficulty. While situations may vary from country to country, inadequate resources and lack of support are prevalent and common, especially in areas less developed or remote.

Responding to their needs, we thank God that parishes within our diocese willingly stepped forward to provide generous support. A good case in point is the relief rendered to Nepal, as we do our part to help our brothers and sisters cope with the effects of the pandemic. Even at the point of writing, many of our deaneries are still struggling with the ravaging effects of Covid. We encourage all parishes to uphold our brothers and sisters in the deaneries in prayer, and continue to give generously. Let us count it a privilege to contribute to the relief efforts and serve alongside our brothers and sisters who are there.

On the home front, although the crisis is well managed by the authorities, the recent surge in Covid-19 cases does alert us that we need to be more vigilant and less complacent, and not take things for granted. We do have a number of cases in St Andrew's Mission Hospital and St Andrew's Community Services (at the point of writing, 79 cases in SAMH and 92 cases in SACS) but thankfully, they are well-managed.

Indeed, God's protection is upon many of our residents and clients and we must regularly uphold both them and our medical, service and chaplaincy staff in prayer. We should not overlook the fact that during this difficult period as our frontline staff face challenges at all fronts, they could be physically, mentally and emotionally stretched. We wish to pray for God's strength and protection for them as they faithfully serve those who are in need every day.

On another note, we rejoice that four of our parishes have recently transferred the ownership of the license to operate their kindergartens to Anglican Preschool Services (APS). That makes APS one of the largest Christian preschool groups in Singapore, well-positioned to offer a holistic, value-based education for children. The terrain of pre-school and kindergarten ministry in Singapore is getting challenging and thus we should treasure every opportunity we have to serve and educate every child God has entrusted to us, so that they can grow up well with a strong biblical foundation.

We also give thanks for the 11th Anglican school, St Andrew's Missions School (SAMS), which will be fully operational in January 2022 with their first batch of Primary 1 students. This is a partnership between SAMH and MOE to provide high-functioning students with special needs the opportunity to receive national-curriculum education from primary to secondary. We seek your prayers for this school and the team who has been working tirelessly behind the scenes. We pray that God will use the school to fulfil His purpose of making Jesus known and bringing hope to many who need a helping hand to make life better.

Holding Fast

Singapore is a little red-dot and we are a small diocese. Although small, God has a huge task for us and it is clearly visible in our development and growth in church, mission, school ministries and social services over the last decades. Much as we are thankful to Him for His blessings, it can feel overwhelming at times. The Covid-19 pandemic certainly added multiple challenges to our ministries. We not only have to cope with it in relation to our ministries, making necessary adjustments, but also begin to think about how we can better prepare the church for the post-Covid era where the world (as some believe) will never be the same again.

Since taking on the role of leading the diocese, I have emphasised the necessity to return to the New Commandment (Matthew 22:36-40) and the Great Commission (Matthew 28:16-20). This is essential for us to make sense of why we are doing what we are doing and understand the purpose of our existence in the overarching economy of God.

These two most important teachings of our Lord must be treated as one because to love God and to love our neighbour as ourselves indeed have everything to do with us being the disciples of Jesus, both individually as a Christian and collectively as a church. Likewise, a disciple and a discipling community of Jesus cannot claim to be truthful to God's calling if love is not found in how

we treat one another in relation to God. This pairing cannot take place in a vacuum nor remain an intellectual exercise. To be real, it has to be given an avenue for its full expression.

Therefore, we find that which have been entrusted to us both relevant and meaningful, for in the ministries of the church, mission, school and social services we learn to love God and one another, and also work out for ourselves what it means and what it takes to be a true disciple and a genuine church. Thus, we encourage every parish under the leadership of your Vicar, the one God has placed in your midst, to appropriate the two most important teachings of Jesus and realise them in our church life.

It may be tempting to say that given the current situation, where physical social interaction is restricted, it is impossible for us to achieve this. No doubt, this will be challenging if we stick to our traditional methods of doing ministry and sharing the gospel. However, we must remember that our God is never limited to the circumstances, for He is the Lord of History and God of Impossibilities. Being a disciple of Christ, we ought to be vigilant, well-prepared and ready to overcome inconveniences and obstacles that may come our way. We pray that our love for God and for one another will be the driving force compelling us to think outside the box in coming up with new ways to fulfil the teachings of God's Word.

As leaders of God's household, both clergy and laity, it is our duty to lead the church towards fulfilling the Great Commission and the New Commandment. Our deaneries, schools, community services and hospitals are surely relevant avenues in which we can be used as God's vessels to spread His love and message. We hope we will not waste the opportunity, especially in this difficult period, to be the salt and light in which God has entrusted us to be. Let us be the one "who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them, and he made five talents more", and not be the one "who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground and hid his master's money" (Matthew 25:14-30).

Forging Ahead

In order to help our parishes achieve the vision and mission of the diocese, we recently grouped every parish into **Area Groups**. This initiative has been shared with the clergy, parish workers and the House of Laity and we received very encouraging feedback. We strongly encourage everyone to work with your Vicar to see how your parish can be a part of this initiative to build up the bigger family.

Partnering with other parishes may be a new idea to some of us and it may seem inconvenient and challenging. If your parish has had the capacity and resources to function alone, it may be more intuitive for you to solely work within your own parish. However, we encourage all to look at this with a kingdom perspective and move out of the silo mentality.

We hope that by grouping our parishes, no one parish will be left alone to achieve this high call as scripture states that "two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil" (Ecclesiastes 4:9). We recognise that our ministries can be strengthened when more parishes come together to share and support one another because each parish can contribute different talents.

This being a new initiative, we anticipate teething issues. Let us not allow them to hinder us from working with one another. I pray that as we come together and labour in the kingdom, let the love of God and our love for God be the foundation of the work of our hands. Let us, as one diocese, press on as one Body of Christ, and overcome the bumps by fixing our eyes on the vision that the Lord has called us to achieve. Amen.



The Rt Revd Dr Titus Chung
The Bishop of Singapore