



**THE DIOCESE OF SINGAPORE
25th SESSION OF SYNOD (5th MEETING)
21st MAY 2022**

**PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS
RETURNING IN WORSHIP, REBOUNDED WITH STRENGTH**

Brothers and Sisters-in-Christ, it is a joy as we gather for the 5th meeting of the 25th session of Synod.

We extend our warmest welcome to two of our clergy who are back from overseas: Revd Andrew Yap, who was serving in the Anglican Church of Thailand and Revd Jeremy-Joe Tan who returned from UK after completing his studies. We also welcome the following new clergy from our deaneries: Revd Matthew Fitter, Vicar of Christ Church Bangkok, Revd Ian Jennings, Priest-in-Charge of Church of the Holy Spirit in the Deanery of Laos, Revd Dhanadhis Jirathamakul from Christ Church Bangkok and Revd Sakda Kittiwatthanchote from Lat Krabang Anglican Church who were both ordained to the diaconate in April.

In the last couple of months, our diocese saw the loss of two great men in Christ – the late Revd Canon Dr James Wong and our Diocesan Chancellor, Professor Richard Magnus.

The late Canon James, who was promoted to glory on 8 April 2022, served actively in the diocese for 41 years. With a deep passion for church growth, Canon James was instrumental in establishing several of our parishes such as Marine Parade Christian Centre, Chapel of the Resurrection and Chapel of Christ the King.

Canon James will remain as an iconic figure in our diocesan history and may we be found faithful to carry on his legacy to share the gospel to the lost.

Our late Chancellor, Prof Richard Magnus, went home to the Lord on 14 March 2022. He served the diocese for a total of 29 years - 13 as the Registrar and 16 as our Chancellor.

Richard was heavily involved in the work of Singapore Anglican Community Services and was instrumental in setting up the HR task force in 2014, which evolved into our current HR Board.

Undeniably, Richard has left behind big shoes to fill, not least of which is the critical role of the Diocesan Chancellor, one which should not be kept vacant for too long, given its importance.

After much prayer, I am pleased to announce the appointment of Dr Stanley Lai as the next Chancellor of the Diocese of Singapore. This appointment will take place with immediate effect.

Many of us will remember Stanley's late father, Justice Lai Kew Chai, who served as our Diocesan Chancellor for many years. Stanley is also no stranger to us. He currently serves

as a member of the Diocesan Standing Committee, and helms our Diocesan HR Board as its Chairman. Stanley is an active member of the Provincial Synod and Provincial Standing Committee. He has also represented the Province of South East Asia on the Anglican Consultative Council. At the parish level, Stanley holds various responsibilities in the PCC of St Andrew's Cathedral. He chaired the Virtual AGM Taskforce in 2020, and was instrumental in guiding our parishes through the new and permissible ways to conduct their AGMs in the midst of the pandemic.

Stanley was the first Singapore-born lawyer to be conferred a PhD in Law from the University of Cambridge in 1999. He was appointed Senior Counsel in 2010 and is an accomplished lawyer. I am confident he will excel in this new appointment. Let us keep Stanley in prayer as he discharges his new and significant responsibilities under God.

Next, I would like to highlight these new Diocesan appointments: Revd Dr Timothy Chong as the Director of Missions, Revd Andrew Yap as the Associate Director of Missions, Bishop Kuan Kim Seng as the Acting Dean of the Deanery of Nepal, Revd Aaron Cheng as Chairman of the Board of Youth Work and Revd David Lee as the incoming Chairman of the Education Board. Let us pray for a smooth leadership transition and that the Lord will continue to build these ministries.

I would like to record a vote of thanks to their predecessors for their faithful service and stellar contributions: Canon Yee Ching Wah, Canon Steven Asirvatham, Revd Christopher Chan and Revd Dr Joshua Sudharman.

It is also my pleasure to announce that Revd Edwin Tan has been appointed the Associate General Secretary of NCCS. The new appointment is a sign of our commitment and contribution to building a greater understanding and unity among churches in Singapore through the National Council of Churches Singapore (NCCS).

I want to take this opportunity to record my heartfelt appreciation to the following who have retired from active service: Bishop Raphael Samuel, who served as a missionary in Bolivia and Deaconess Chow Wai Keng. In addition, Revd Yopie Buyung, Associate Dean of Indonesia will be retiring in July 2022. We pray that the Lord will guide and continue to refresh them in this new season of their lives.

Holding Fast

In the past six months, we see growth in our healthcare and community service arm – St Andrew's Mission Hospital (SAMH) and Singapore Anglican Community Services (SACS). St Andrew's Mission School, a national curriculum autism school, received its first cohort of Primary One students in January 2022. Under the headship of the Principal, Mrs Wong Bin Eng, we pray that these students may be nurtured to fulfil their potential and be active members of our society.

St Andrew's Migrant Worker Medical Centre (SAMWMC) held its official opening ceremony on 19 February 2022. With the setup of a permanent and purpose-designed medical facility, we are now better able to support the health and well-being of our migrant brothers.

We rejoice with two of our Anglican schools who will mark significant milestones this year. St Margaret's Schools, Singapore's oldest girls' school, will celebrate their 180th anniversary whereas St Andrew's School, another school with rich history will celebrate

their 160th Founder's Day. By God's grace, may these schools continue to inculcate kingdom values to every student that passes through its gates.

Incidentally, the free-will offering for this year's Whitsunday on 5 June will be channelled towards supporting school chaplaincy work. I encourage us to prayerfully consider the amount of support we can extend to this part of our collective Body. While some of our parishes have the privilege of being part of the school chaplaincy work, the rest can share the same call to reach out to the students through your financial giving. Let us remember that we all belong to the same Body.

Forging Ahead

We thank God that after grappling with the pandemic for more than two years, Singapore has made a decisive step to move towards living with COVID-19. With the drastic easing of safe management measures, many of our church activities may now revert to how it was pre-COVID, to a large extent. The lift on border restrictions also means travelling to and from our deaneries is now made easier.

What does this 'new normal' mean for us as a diocese? After two years of disruption to our worship services, we need to assess the spiritual condition of our church. Undeniably, our worship to God was affected under the safe distancing rules and we know that our relationship with God is closely intertwined with how we worship Him.

Pastors and leaders, I urge you to be intentional in working towards bringing our members back to the physical church. In order to encourage our parishioners to return to on-site worship, I have decided not to extend the dispensation for online Holy Communion after it expires on 30 June 2022. While there are merits to using technology when the circumstances did not allow for physical gatherings, it is certainly not the will of our Lord for us to continue worshipping Him within the comfort of our homes and be apart from the rest of the Body when the situation has improved drastically.

Firstly, God has made us "a little lower than the angels" and crowned us with "glory and honour" (Hebrews 2:7). The difference between the angels and Man would be our bodily presence and capability to connect physically. In our full expression as human beings, we cannot do without the body as it is the physical touch that makes our humanity count.

Next, we need to bear in mind that the incarnation of Jesus Christ is central to our faith. In order to save us, the Son of God became Man. John 1:14 states, "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth". Jesus' dwelling amongst us is a bodily one and so is his relationship with us. As we relate to one another in love, through the work of the Holy Spirit, Jesus' bodily presence is experienced in our physical and mutual interactions. God, being omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent, would be more than able to do the impossible. Yet, he chose to create Man in the physical form and provided salvation through the Son of God in becoming man. This is the will of God. It is therefore critical that the church gathers physically and work towards obeying the New Commandment and fulfilling the Great Commission. The incarnation of Christ, the Word made flesh, should be modelled after by His bride – the Church.

We may rejoice that we are at the tail end of the pandemic, but we must not forget that the end times are drawing closer. We should not be surprised that the world we live in will become increasingly unstable. In Matthew 24:7-8, Jesus warned us that as we approach His Second Coming, "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pains." As we are all aware, the war in Ukraine has brought about tension in the global political landscape and impacted the economy. We cannot assume that the situation will improve as we come out of the pandemic. The days of challenge and difficulty are not soon-to-be over as we wish, but we have our God who is faithful and trustworthy, and He will strengthen us as we lean on Him.

Jesus said "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city" (Revelation 22:13-14). The call to heed the New Commandment and fulfil the Great Commission is a pressing matter. As we move nearer to the Final Judgement, let us not keep this gift of salvation to ourselves but rise up earnestly and step out courageously to share with those who do not yet know the Good News. It is a matter of urgency and our calling to work out what are the most important instructions God has given to us. Every parish should take responsibility under the leadership of your Vicar to unpack what it means to love God and to love our neighbours, and to make disciples of all nations, as we work towards becoming an authentic discipleship-community --- the Church.

Brothers and Sisters-in Christ, we give thanks that over the years God has entrusted us with so much through our ministries in the parishes, deaneries, schools and community services. I encourage us to prayerfully discern, as we navigate the times ahead, how you and your parish could continue to be good stewards of the people and ministries under your care. Yet, no parish should feel that they need to carry this burden alone.

Ecclesiastes 4:12 says, "Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken." We thank God that the Area Groups are progressing well. I am encouraged that since the formation of our Area Groups (Annex A), the clergy have been meeting within their own Area Group; we are seeing more clergy visiting other parishes and staff & senior lay leaders from different parishes meeting together.

In the days ahead, we hope that the Area Groups can band together in greater synergy, plan strategically and discuss pastoral concerns. We pray that with the greater interaction and collaboration amongst the parishes within each Area Group, nothing will stop us from bringing out the best in our parishes for the Lord and that we will enjoy serving together in unity, in fulfilling the most important teachings of our Risen Lord.

So let us strive to spiritually strengthen our Body and serve together for the glory of our Lord! Amen.



The Rt Revd Dr Titus Chung
The Bishop of Singapore

AREA GROUPS

