



**THE DIOCESE OF SINGAPORE
25th SESSION OF SYNOD (6th MEETING)
12th NOVEMBER 2022**

**PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS
RENEWAL OF HEARTS, REVIVAL IN CHURCH**

We warmly welcome The Rt Revd Dr Stephen Soe, Suffragan Bishop of West Malaysia, who brought us the Word of God in the Pre-Synod Holy Communion Service this morning. We especially welcome our Deanery clergy and Synod Representatives, who are able to be physically with us today. We also have with us, amongst others, Revd Philip Sinden, who is the in-situ Locum at All Saint's Church (Jakarta) and Revd Will McLaughlin, Priest to Church of Christ Our Peace (Cambodia).

Yesterday, we had the pleasure of ordaining 32 clergy, which is the largest group we have ever ordained in one Ordination Service. All Glory to God! They are with us here today – 4 from the Archdeaconry of Singapore, 2 from the Deanery of Cambodia, 15 from the Deanery of Indonesia, 9 from the Deanery of Nepal and 2 from the Deanery of Thailand. Last month, I had the privilege of travelling to Cambodia to make Sister Yos Malina a deaconess. Ds Yos is also with us today. To all our newly ordained clergy and deaconess, thank you for remaining faithful to your calling, and waiting patiently to be ordained.

I would also like to record a vote of thanks to the clergy and deaconesses who retired from active service: Revd Huang Hui Jen, Ds Grace Tan, Ds Ti Lian Swan and Ds Laura Seet, as well as Revd Eric Chiam and Revd Andrew Raman who will both be retiring in December 2022. We thank them for their years of service and may our Lord continue to lead them in this new season of their lives and grant them the desires of their heart.

Holding Fast

With the easing of community safe management measures, many of our parishes were able to hold large-scale events to celebrate significant milestones. We rejoice with St John's–St Margaret's (SJSM) Church on the official opening of the SJSM Village in September 2022. This is a momentous milestone for SJSM Church, SJSM Nursing Home, St Andrew's Senior Care (Dover) and Little Seeds Preschool (SJSM), who are all part of this village. We pray that every individual who comes through its gates will be blessed and ministered to by our Lord.

We praise God for His faithfulness to St Matthew's Church who celebrated her 120th anniversary and Church of the Ascension who commemorated her 70th anniversary this year. May the Lord continue to show His favour upon them and lead them according to His will and purpose.

Another significant milestone is the Dedication Service of the Church of the Epiphany (COTE) held on 6th November 2022. We thank God for His leading and provision in this project, for "Unless the LORD builds the house, the builders labour in vain" (Ps 127:1). As COTE moves

into a new chapter of ministry with the use of the new building, let us continue to pray that the Tamil, English and Chinese-speaking works there will continue to grow and flourish, in unity and as One Body, to the glory of God.

We give thanks to God for seeing all our parishes and deaneries through COVID-19. No doubt, the Church suffered and had to adapt to the inconveniences and restrictions put in place. But I am grateful for the collegiality amongst the clergy in bringing one another up to speed on the changes in safe management measures as well as sharing ideas on how to continue with ministry under the prevailing measures. Our deaneries were also not left to fend for themselves. It is heartening to see the local parishes rendering support to our deaneries. This is a demonstration of oneness in Christ where there is no differentiation of where one comes from or which country one belongs to. Indeed, in the Body of Christ, if one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together (1 Corinthians 12:26).

Forging Ahead

We are currently able to see some light at the end of the COVID-19 tunnel. While most of us may be glad that parishioners are coming back to church for on-site worship, we must not be ignorant of the challenges facing us. Is the spiritual life of our parishioners as vibrant as before? How about those who have not returned regularly for on-site worship? Are they still walking in the faith? Given that there are still a majority of churches in Singapore doing livestreaming of their services, many may just continue to church-hop online and are reluctant to return to on-site services. Would it therefore be better for the church to then do away with livestreaming? After prayer and deliberation, we think there is no cookie-cutter solution that would be suitable for every parish. This decision is best left to the leadership of every parish and church in the deanery. Regardless of a fully on-site or hybrid form of worship, we should endeavour that the flock is ministered to in the best way forward. As leaders of our parish, I pray that the Lord will lead you in deciding how best to lead your parish forward in this new season. Whatever the form of worship, we cannot disregard the critical need for all pastors and lay leaders to strengthen our pastoral care to our members; for a strong pastoral relationship is critical to build a healthy church. As “a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 2:4-5), let us all, clergymen, deaconesses and lay leaders, care for our flock that God has entrusted to us.

It has been my heart’s burden to strengthen our Diocese which comprises 27 local parishes, 6 deaneries, 32 healthcare and community services by SAMH-SACS, and 11 schools. This is certainly a mammoth task and we can only look to God for His leading and strengthening.

I am encouraged that the Area Groups, formed since the last quarter of 2021, are developing well. Parishes within the same Area Group are working together to foster relationships, either by some combining ministry efforts or holding combined retreats among staff. We are still in the early days moving steadily towards building and strengthening the church. In the Lord’s timing, I trust that the Area Groups will fulfil its God-given purpose of coming together as One Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:27), encouraging and supporting one another in the mission and vision God has entrusted to us, which is the most important “twin teachings” of Jesus, the New Commandment and the Great Commission. When this happens, I believe that we will be better-positioned to support all the other areas of ministry under the Diocese - the chaplaincy work in our schools and community services and of course, our six deaneries.

Wherever the Lord has placed us in, I would like to exhort you to pray through this all-important issue - in the grand scheme of things, are we prepared for the future? What is your vision for your parish/deanery/ministry? The answer to these questions should guide the focus of your ministry. However, every parish and ministry should not deviate from the bread-and-butter of the Church, which is the focus of our Diocese: to obey the New Commandment (Matthew 22:36-40) and to fulfil the Great Commission (Matthew 28:16-20). It is crucial that the leadership of each parish/deanery/ministry collectively hear from God to internalise and unpack what you would need to do to heed and act on these two undivided and fundamental teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ. In addition, the leadership plays a key role in mentoring and discipling members to take evangelism seriously and develop them to be mature disciples of Christ.

As we obey this New Commandment and carry out the Great Commission, we need to also take stock of the state of our being – who and what we are, both as individuals and as a parish/deanery/ministry. In this regard, our Anglican tradition certainly has a lot to offer, in particular, enabling us to root our faith properly in the Scriptures and expressing it wisely in the public square, so that we can be effective Salt and Light in a world of chaos and confusion. In times of suffering and difficulties, Jesus says, “let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:16).

Paul reminds us to ‘not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind’ (Romans 12:2a). We are transformed as a result of renewal. When many individuals are renewed, revival will happen. Brothers and Sisters-in-Christ, if we yearn to see our parishes, deaneries and ministries revitalised in the post-COVID era, it starts with us, the leaders. Just as Jesus said that ‘A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit (Matthew 7:18a)’, I believe that when our leaders are spiritually strong, there will be an overflowing of life into our community and our parish. When our parishes are strong, the Diocese will be strong. Many of us pray for revival for the Church. If we want a revival, it begins with spiritual renewal in us. Will you choose this day to commit yourself afresh to the Lord?

May the Lord renew and transform us to fulfil His purpose for the Diocese of Singapore.
Amen.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Titus Chung" with "Singapore" written below it. The signature is stylized and includes a flourish at the end.

The Rt Revd Dr Titus Chung
The Bishop of Singapore