



**THE DIOCESE OF SINGAPORE
26th SESSION OF SYNOD (1st MEETING)
19th MAY 2023**

**PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS
RELATIONSHIPS: THE FOUNDATION OF DISCIPLESHIP**

Brothers and Sisters-in-Christ, Shalom. Welcome to the 1st meeting of the 26th session of Synod.

First and foremost, I wish to warmly welcome all of you to Synod, especially if this is your first time being a Synod Representative. Thank you for stepping up to take on this added responsibility.

The scope of Synod is broad and complex, but we have only one goal. Lifting from the Constitution of the Diocese of Singapore, the responsibility of the Synod is to labour to “make the Church in the Diocese to be ever more and more truly a body, a small living organism within the body of Christ, working in Him for the salvation of men and for the Kingdom of God.”¹.

On top of being involved in the “business portion” of the Synod, we are relying on you, clergy and lay leaders, to play an important role in being that bridge and to build and strengthen the relationship both between your parish and the Diocese, as well as between your parish with other parishes in your Area Group. We rely on you to help your parish better understand key Diocesan ministry developments and policies, and more importantly to encourage your parish to uphold the rest of the Diocese in prayer. I believe with the help of God, we will be able to serve well together and truly become One Body to bring glory to God.

I also wish to acknowledge our deanery clergy who are present today. Indeed, it is wonderful to have you with us. Please also join me in extending a warm welcome to Revd Canon Dr John MacDonald and Revd Dr Jake Stum, from the Anglican Relief and Development Fund, who are visiting this part of the region, and have taken time to join us at Synod today.

Next, I want to take this opportunity to record a vote of thanks to the following clergy - Revd David Wong who, having served as a priest for 33 years, will retire in July this year, and Revd Ian Hadfield who will end his employment term in August following the expiry of his employment pass. David and Ian, thank you for your faithful service unto the Lord and we pray that God will continue to lead you in this new season of your life.

¹ Statement on the Spiritual Background of the Diocesan Synod - Page 1 of the Constitution of the Diocese of Singapore

Holding Fast

This year, St Andrew's Mission Hospital (SAMH), our healthcare and community service arm, celebrates her 110th anniversary, while Singapore Anglican Community Services (SACS) marks her 56th year of serving the vulnerable and disadvantaged in Singapore. Together, both SAMH and SACS serve about 20,000 people annually. On 3rd December 2022, we officially dedicated the opening of the 7th ageing centre, the Anglican Senior Centre (Havelock). We praise God for what He is doing in SAMH and SACS, and let us continue to pray and support this ministry of our diocese so that they, together with the chaplaincy team, can continue to fulfil their calling to serve the needy in our nation and society.

We thank the Lord that Singapore has reverted to DORSCON Green on 13th February. The last 3 years had indeed been difficult - the COVID-19 pandemic had disrupted every aspect of our lives. Yet we give thanks to God for He has protected the Diocese, and sustained us through the whole period.

We also thank God for the many precious lessons He has taught us during the pandemic. Many of us had to critically evaluate our pre-COVID church activities and focus on what was essential to the life of the church: worship, evangelism and discipleship - when physical meeting was limited and, at certain period, impossible. We also found creative ways to share the gospel with the lost and anxious, helping them understand the reason for the hope that we hold. By God's grace, not only did we overcome the challenges presented by the pandemic, we also saw growth in some of our ministries.

Forging Ahead

Now that Singapore has exited the acute phase of the pandemic, it would be wise for us not to forget the lessons we learnt. Some questions we should ask ourselves – If the day should come when the church is again unable to gather physically, will we be better prepared for church life to continue? What is the one thing that could hold us together as a church and sustain us through difficult and tough situations? How can we continue to faithfully share the gospel?

For the church to be ready, one critical element cannot be absent, and that is relationship. Relationships are the glue that holds the church together, especially in difficult circumstances. Relationships, however, do not blossom overnight and will need time to be developed. As clergy and lay leaders of your parish, do you have strong relationships with your members? Do your members have a strong relationship with one another? And would you say that these relationships please the Lord?

We need to focus our energy on building relationships that are centred on discipleship. A small group of believers in a loving relationship gathering regularly, but not engaging in any form of evangelism or disciple-making is at best a social group. A parish that only focuses on rolling out programme after programme on teaching techniques of evangelism or discipleship but does not cultivate a church culture of evangelism and disciple-making is at most a good Christian education institution. Do not be mistaken, these are all good. But for the church to truly fulfil her calling, all of us should focus on the primary duty of encouraging and spurring each other on in living out the New

Commandment and carrying out the Great Commission -the two most important and inseparable teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is important to talk about love and discipleship; it is equally important to walk this talk.

I encourage all of you, clergy and lay leaders of the Synod, to intentionally look at how best to raise disciples in your parish. There is no 'one-size-fits-all' method here and each parish should prayerfully, with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, determine for yourselves, how best to make disciple-making the way of life for your church. Whatever method you choose, let us not overlook disciple-making for it shapes us as individuals and as a community, with the goal to present "everyone fully mature in Christ" (Colossians 1:28).

In my President's Address at Synod last November, I emphasised the urgency to strengthen our Diocese across all levels of leadership, ministries, and in the mission fields that God has entrusted to us. I also stressed that only when our parishes are strong, then will the Diocese be strong.

A strong parish is made up of mature disciples, caring for one another in love, and actively engaging in evangelism. Building on the lessons learnt from the past 3 years, let us press on "to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." (Ephesians 4:12-13)

Amen.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Titus Chung" with "Singapore" written below it. The signature is fluid and cursive.

The Rt Revd Dr Titus Chung
The Bishop of Singapore