

APR 2019

# TRUMPET

VIEWS AND NEWS FROM TRINITY THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE

MCI (P) 129/03/2019



## Building Walls or Building Bridges

*By Rev Dr Andrew Peh*

**W**e are inundated with news about a president who is desirous of building a wall to keep the ‘undesirable’ immigrants out of his country. Nearer home, we read of the Rohingyas, a displaced (and despised) people, without a place to call home. And in Singapore, the total number of foreign workers as of 2018 stands at about 1.37 million, according to the Ministry of Manpower.

These are snapshots of the reality of the displacement and migration of peoples. This global diaspora is changing the way we look at the world and the impact and implications are numerous. Missiologists have termed this development ‘diaspora mission’. There is increasing awareness that mission in our contemporary world is no longer unilinear (from the global north to the global south), but polycentric; that is, we are invited to partner in God’s mission ‘from everywhere to everywhere’.

The biblical basis for diaspora mission is also evident in both the Old and New Testaments. For me, Philip’s encounter with and baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch is one of the most poignant passages. Discounting their ethnic, social and even gender differences, what Philip did in obediently sharing the Good News with the eunuch provides a basis for us to engage those who exist on the periphery of the dominant culture. Justo Gonzalez is right in noting that in the baptism of this eunuch, Philip is doing much more than we think: he is fulfilling the words of the prophet Isaiah, that the eunuch and the foreigner (the Gentiles) also have a place in the house of the Lord.

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How do we understand a passage like this? What lessons can we glean? Perhaps the most primary is that God feels passionately about the person on the other side of the wall that we have erected to keep out!

It is significant that the story of Philip encountering the Ethiopian eunuch is placed here in Acts 8. It is Luke's way of saying that at the moment when the Gospel is reaching to the wider world, wherever you go, whatever culture you come to, whatever situation of human need, sin, exclusion, or oppression you may find, the message of Jesus transcends all - God's love transcends geography, culture, gender, race, and all the sins that we see in others. We are compelled always to point them to Jesus; because He is the one who brings forgiveness, healing and transformation. Like Jesus, we, the church, should be in the business of demolishing prejudices.

It is said that Singapore is the place where the world converges, and while there have been increased efforts among Singapore churches to send out missionaries, there is also the fact of peoples migrating to Singapore in the hope of a better life, that churches need to give more thought to. This is mission at our doorsteps.

Have churches given sufficient thought of what or how this mission looks like? Do we set up a migrant workers ministry to demonstrate our obedience to God's missionary mandate while erecting walls of division and disunity, based upon ethnic and cultural differences? Is the Gospel we share indicative of the fact that the God we worship is the One who desires the salvation of all the nations and all of creation?

Diaspora mission enables us to have a view of mission from the perspective of those who are on the margins of our society, just as Philip's obedience to the Spirit's leading enables him to reach out to one who was ethnically, socially, culturally different from him with the saving knowledge of God. Dare we move out from our comfortable middle-class church community to minister amongst the construction workers from India and Bangladesh, the domestic helpers from Myanmar and Indonesia, the nurses from the Philippines, the bus captains and waitresses from China? Dare we be inclusive in our outreach to the ex-offenders, the single parents, the disenfranchised not only by drawing them into the church community but also ensuring that there is no safe distance between 'them' and 'us'?

Dr Goh Wei Leong, one of the founders of

HealthServe, shared his story of how he and some like-minded friends initiated a work among migrant workers to provide some basic healthcare for them. They found a place for a clinic in Geylang Lorong 23 and opened it on Saturday afternoons. But to their dismay, not many workers turned up. He was told that if he really wanted to reach out to the migrant workers, he needed to get to the other side of Geylang, to the even-numbered streets where sex workers ply their trade and where many migrant workers live above brothels, where rental rates were cheaper. They subsequently relocated their clinic to the other side of Geylang. For me, this is the true "crossover" project because Dr Goh and his friends took that bold step, like Jesus, to break down the walls of division and cross over to reach out to those who need His touch. *"By crossing the street, we crossed over to the side of the vulnerable and oppressed.... We spent many evenings talking to them, telling them about the clinic. And after that, they started coming. It was a major lesson for us; we had to move into their community,"* Dr Goh shared.

The urban context of mission is 'from everywhere to everywhere'. God still calls some to minister in a cross-cultural context as a long-term missionaries, but for the rest of us, God is perhaps calling us to do His work across the road, on the other side and perhaps even in our own homes where we have erected high walls of exclusion instead of bridges of embrace.

What are the bridges that we need to build in place of these walls of exclusion? I recognize that tearing down walls and building bridges will not be easy for the church. It will certainly be uncomfortable; it will challenge our status quo and cause us to consider where/who is at the centre of our church and who is at the centre of our faith. But in keeping with the thrust of the mission of God, we cannot afford to let class, race, gender, politics, geography, culture or any other differences and prejudices hinder us from being an instrument for God's work. Will you raise a wall or will you build a bridge? ❖



**Rev Dr Andrew Peh**  
Lecturer in Missions & Missions History

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## Proclaiming God's Magnanimous Love

The season of Lent, more than any other time of the year, serves to remind us of the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ. The spiritual tone that Lent sets for us takes us deeper into the meaning of the gospel message which some may have missed amidst the merry-making and holiday season of Christmas. Those who kept the discipline of devotional reflection during Holy Week would have been reminded that God's love for humanity brought pain and sacrifice to our Lord Jesus Christ whose earthly ministry ended on the cross. Hopefully, our spiritual exercises did help to rekindle our waning faith, resulting in a renewed desire to witness to God's magnanimous love toward us.

Yet, we are aware that the preoccupation with daily living can very quickly dampen our enthusiasm about sharing God's love. Mundane chores such as house-keeping, difficulties faced at work, raising children or carrying the burden of a family member's ill health, can take the passion out of our Christian witness. Weighed down by these challenges, we find ourselves unable to express the unique experiences we have in Christ. At other times we feel inadequate and lack confidence in articulating the gospel message to family and friends. How then can we fulfil the Great Commission to "go and make disciples of all nations" (Matt 28: 19)?

Under these circumstances Christians do rely on evangelistic meetings specially organised by their own churches to present the gospel message to the general public. While many churches do hold such meetings from time to time in their premises, few have been the occasions when churches jointly organize a large public gathering to proclaim God's love for humanity. It has been decades since such evangelistic meetings have been held here but that rare occasion has arrived and will take place very shortly in our city.

The Celebration of Hope (COH) will be held from 17 - 19 May, and provides an opportunity for people to hear the gospel at the National Stadium. Organised by the National Council of Churches in partnership with the Evangelical Fellowship of Singapore, it is a joint effort of many local churches. Spearheaded by Singaporean church leaders, their bond of unity is palpable and inspires their congregations to commit wholeheartedly to the event. Much prayer has undergirded the planning and organisation of the COH as human effort is futile without the enabling influence of God's Spirit.

Some may question the effectiveness of large scale evangelistic meetings in an era when individual Christian witness could be more credible. Others feel that living in a multi-religious society requires much sensitivity if we are to share the faith so publicly. But we are reminded to 'preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season' (2 Tim 4:2), and certainly, we ought to do so humbly, graciously and sensitively, guided by the love of Christ.

Not everyone will enter a church when invited, but there will be those who do not mind a neutral setting and may accept an invitation to the National Stadium. So we can do our small part by considering people we wish to invite to the event in May.

We can start praying for people in our special circle of family, friends and colleagues. We can offer our time to accompany them to the COH. We can support the event with our financial gifts. But after all is said and done, we believe that ultimately, it is God who brings about a change of heart and mind when the word is preached, and it must begin with ourselves. ❖

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# Accountability

By Rev Dr Chiang Ming Shun

On 6 and 31 January 2002, the *Boston Globe* newspaper published two shocking articles by its Spotlight Team following a 6-month investigation into sexual abuse by clergy in the Catholic Church. The Spotlight Team, which initially consisted of Matt Carroll, Sacha Pfeiffer, Michael Rezendes, Stephen Kurkjian and Walter V. Robinson, reported that the Catholic Archdiocese of Boston had in the previous 10 years “quietly settled child molestation claims against at least 70 priests”. The *Boston Globe*’s investigation resulted in the newspaper publishing more than 600 stories about widespread sexual abuse and how Church leaders moved priests to different parishes instead of holding them accountable. The reporters, their investigation and reports were featured in the Hollywood movie ‘Spotlight’ in 2015.

However, although the Spotlight stories blew the lid off sex abuse in the American Catholic Church, these stories were not new. Accusations of abuse had been made as early as the 1950s, and the issue gained traction in the 1980s and the 1990s. Over time, the scale of abuse became clearer. A report commissioned by the Catholic Church in 2004 found that more than 4,000 priests in the US had faced sexual abuse allegations in the last 50 years. More than 10,000 children were victims, mostly boys.

Was abuse just in the US? No.

In 2009, following a nine-year investigation, The Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse published a 2,600-page report which concluded that “Sexual abuse was endemic in boys’ institutions” run by the Catholic Church in the Irish Republic. In addition to rape and sexual molestation, “[p]hysical and emotional abuse and neglect were features of the institutions”, which held up to 30,000 children. Moreover, the “recidivist nature of sexual abuse was known to religious authorities.”

In 2017, a five-year inquiry found that tens of thousands of children were sexually abused in Australian institutions, including churches. Last year, the Australian cardinal George Pell was found guilty of abusing two choir boys in 1996.

Is it only children who were abused?  
No.

On 6 February 2019, Pope Francis admitted an ongoing problem with priests who sexually abused nuns, and even kept them as sex slaves. He said that his predecessor Pope Benedict had shut down an entire French congregation of nuns who were being abused by priests. Cases have been reported in India, Italy, Chile and Africa.

Is the abuse only occurring in the Catholic Church? No.

In February 2019, following an investigation by two newspapers in Texas, the Southern Baptist

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Convention admitted that it had a problem, with nearly 400 church leaders “accused of sexual misconduct or crimes against more than 700 victims since 1998”. The president of the Convention even suggested that there were churches with a “wanton disregard for sexual abuse and for caring for the survivors”.

In his 1996 book *Pedophiles and Priests*, (written six years before the Spotlight articles) Professor Philip Jenkins stated that “clergy of most major denominations were to some extent tainted” by allegations of abuse. He noted over 500 reports of abuse allegations in 1993 “against Episcopal, Methodist, Lutheran, Presbyterian, and Greek Orthodox clergy”. Jenkins argues that there is nothing Roman Catholic about the problem at all.

Last year, after months of denial and controversy, pastor Bill Hybels of the Willow Creek megachurch, along with the entire board of elders, stepped down after Hybels was accused of sexual harassment and misconduct.

What’s going on in this long-running, complex and painful problem?

There are many issues, but for me, the main one is accountability. Leaders, particularly those who are successful or long-standing, feel that the rules no longer apply to them. Perhaps because of hubris or a sense of immunity, Christian leaders can do very un-Christian things. Those who notice turn a blind eye, cover it up or explain it away.

Jules Woodson, the woman who accused pastor Andy Savage of Highpoint Church of sexually assaulting her when she was 17, says, “There is a systematic problem within the institution of the church that props people up in places of power and gives them immunity... This has bred a culture ripe for abuse and cover-up. Repentance, accountability and justice should not be contrived”.

Again, this is not new. In 2 Samuel 11, there is the story of David committing adultery with Bathsheba, and then ordering the death of her husband Uriah to cover up the adultery. After all that he had done for God, and after all that God had done for him, David was still susceptible to succumbing to temptation and committing evil.

What could have prevented the leaders from falling? I think other people in the household of God, especially subordinates, are key. One of the



best books I have read on leadership is *Lead On* by Rear Admiral Dave Oliver, Jr. He writes, “One bad leader is a malignant cancer in an organization. His faults are hidden or disguised when his seniors are present and therefore are often invisible to them, but they are obvious to those in the organization who are junior to him, lingering everywhere like the malodorous smell of a pulp mill.” Subordinates have a vital role to play.

King David wrote an order to his general Joab to send Uriah into the hardest fighting. No one else saw that order. Joab obeyed it unflinchingly, even though he knew that, in addition to Uriah, other men would die. But Joab could have disobeyed the order. Perhaps even then, as it is today, we give too much deference and unquestioning obedience to leaders. Christians should be bold to speak truth to power and hold our leaders more accountable. We could follow the example of the prophet Nathan, who went to confront David in 2 Samuel 12.

After all, we are all imperfect creatures who wrestle with our own skeletons in the closet. We could all improve, we could all benefit from correction.

My worry is, if abuse is happening in churches around the world, where in our local churches is it happening? When we find out where it is occurring, what are we going to choose – a cover-up or accountability? ❖



Rev Dr Chiang Ming Shun

Dean of Students  
Lecturer in Church History



# Meritocracy and Its Discontents

By Dr Roland Chia

In an article published by *The Straits Times* (October 25, 2018) entitled 'Meritocracy and the Paradox of Success', Education Minister Ong Ye Kung observes that meritocracy, which arises 'from a belief in fairness, seems to have paradoxically resulted in systemic unfairness'. This observation is substantiated by a number of important monographs and studies that have appeared in recent years.

Meritocracy may be described as a social system that allows individuals to advance in society on the basis of their capabilities and merits rather than on family wealth or social background. The simple but compelling idea enshrined in meritocracy is attractive because it appeals to common sense. As McNamne and Miller explain, meritocracy asserts, quite straightforwardly, that 'individuals get ahead and earn rewards in direct proportion to their individual efforts and abilities'.

That meritocracy has allowed individuals belonging to a low status group in modern societies to improve their social standing and economic class is evident and has been well documented in a number of studies.

The British sociologist Michael Young coined the term way back in 1958, and the concept has since been lauded in Western societies and wedded to other modern ideologies such as capitalism and

egalitarianism. In Asia, this ideology is particularly well received by countries influenced in some ways by Confucianism, for example, Korea, China and Singapore.

In Singapore, meritocracy was championed by its founding Prime Minister, Lee Kuan Yew, and remains one of the fundamental principles of governance. Thus, in his National Day Rally Speech in 2013,

Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong declared: 'Meritocracy has to remain the fundamental organising principle in our society. We have to recognise people for their contributions and effort, not backgrounds or status or wealth or connections.'

From the Christian perspective, meritocracy must be evaluated on the biblical principle of justice (Deuteronomy 16:20; Psalm 106:3; Amos 5:24). The question that must

be put to meritocracy, therefore, is whether the ideology and its implementation is able to deliver what it promises, namely, a fairer and more just society.

While meritocracy has demonstrably enabled the upward mobility of some individuals and appears to address (in some measure) the problem of social inequality, there are fundamental problems with it that must not be overlooked.

At the outset we note that meritocracy as an

ideology is riddled with internal contradictions.

For example, meritocracy appears to have two mutually contradictory goals and outcomes: egalitarianism and elitism. On the one hand, a meritocratic system is supposed to provide equal opportunities for all citizens, regardless of their social and economic background. But on the other hand, meritocracy favours the members of the elite, who have their place at the top of the ladder.

In his book *Elitism and Meritocracy in Developing Countries* (1986) Robert Klitgaard discusses how meritocracy, which is 'ostensibly anti-elitist', can be commandeered by the winners. These so-called winners then become elitist, and are determined to perpetuate their own power, status and prestige.

Not only can meritocracy bring about the very elitism it seeks to avert, it can also be used to justify social inequalities, as the French economist Thomas Piketty has convincingly argued. Piketty maintains that the very discourse that presents meritocracy as the fair and just way of distributing goods in modern society also legitimises disadvantages and inequalities. In other words, meritocracy, which is hailed as a social system in which egalitarian values are instantiated and even exemplified, is often also used to rationalise inequality.

Perhaps the most insidious consequence of all of this is that the meritocratic system tends to put the blame squarely on the shoulders of its victims. As William Lee points out, meritocracy may encourage the misperception that 'the poor only have themselves to blame' and that the 'poor are poor because of laziness and other personal defects'. In this way, a meritocratic system does not only legitimise 'failure' but also stigmatises those who have not succeeded to climb the proverbial social and economic ladder.

But this also reveals an erroneous assumption that undergirds the meritocratic system, namely, that success or failure is dependent solely on the efforts of the individual. Meritocracy works with the myth that there is such a thing as a level playing field and ignores the unequal circumstances of individuals in society. Structural and systemic factors are therefore either passed over or pushed so far to the margins that they are deemed inconsequential.

As Kenneth Paul Tan explains, 'Meritocracy, in trying to "isolate" merit by treating people with fundamentally unequal backgrounds as superficially the same, can be a practice that ignores and even

conceals the real advantages and disadvantages that are unevenly distributed to different segments of an inherently unequal society, a practice that in fact perpetuates this fundamental inequality.'

Finally, we come to the concept of merit itself and the conflicted question of who gets to define it.

Studies such as Jerome Karabel's *The Chosen* (2006) have shown that there can be no neutral definition of merit. According to Karabel, Ivy League universities keep changing their admission criteria so that exclusive privilege is given to 'our kind of people'. Consequently, 'outsiders'—Catholics, (Eastern-European) Jews, nonwhites and women—are 'legitimately' excluded.

Should meritocracy be abandoned because of these very serious blemishes? The short answer to this question, as I conclude this article, is 'No'. These serious problems notwithstanding, meritocracy as a social policy and system does have its merits (pun intended).

However, if meritocracy is to be put to good use for the benefit of society, it should be seen for what it truly is—a useful but imperfect strategy. Meritocracy must never be lionised as the guarantor of justice and social mobility, and the panacea for inequality in society.

Most crucially, meritocracy must never be the sole and even dominant strategy for organising society. It must always work in concert and in creative tension with other social policies that focus on helping the poor and vulnerable, especially the people that a meritocratic system tends to leave behind.

Simply put, a truly just and humane society can never be organised solely on the steely principle of merit and competition. It must always also be characterised by compassion, kindness and respect (Zechariah 7:9), and it must take a keen interest in the wellbeing and flourishing of all its members, not just the ablest among them. ❖



**Dr Roland Chia**

Chew Hock Hin Professor of Christian Doctrine  
Lecturer in Systematic Theology  
Theological and Research Advisor of the Ethos Institute for Public Christianity

# CELEBRATION OF **Hope** One Name, One People, One Witness

## 17-19 May 2019 NATIONAL STADIUM

By Rev Dr Edwin Tay, Vice Principal

**A**s Singapore commemorates her Bicentennial, many churches in Singapore are gearing up for three days of Gospel rallies at the National Stadium, organised around the theme, “Celebration of Hope” (COH).

According to the organisers, this event is more than simply having mass rallies: “Celebration of Hope is about Christians in Singapore rallying together and reaching out to share Jesus Christ with friends and relatives. The message we are proclaiming is that Jesus Christ is the one name in which everyone can have solid hope. The vision is of personal evangelism on a mass scale, culminating in Gospel rallies at the 50,000-capacity National Stadium over three days, 17-19 May 2019.”

Birthing in the hands of several pastors in 2017, the vision of COH now extends to more than 190 churches nationwide. The National Council of Churches of Singapore (NCCS) and the Evangelical Fellowship of Singapore (EFOS) have taken the lead organisationally.

The COH steering committee is chaired by Bishop Rennis Ponniah of the Diocese of Singapore (DOS). Assisting him is Dr Lawrence Chia (EFOS) as co-chairman, Rev Tony Yeo of the Covenant Evangelical Free Church as Executive Secretary, and Rev Lewis Lew (DOS) as Assistant Executive Secretary, along with leaders from a wide spectrum of churches.

Preparations began in earnest in 2017, followed by 2018 as the Year of Prayer, 2019 the Year of Proclamation, and 2020 the Year of Personal Discipleship. COH is therefore not to be equated with merely a series of rallies. Taken together, these rallies are but the high point of a broader Gospel vision that spans four years of commitment to a united and holistic approach to evangelism.

Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong has stated that the Bicentennial is an occasion to “reflect on how our nation came into being, how we have come this far, and how we can go forward together.” For Christians in Singapore, the nature of our reflection will necessarily involve, among other things, the growth and impact of Christianity to nation-building through the individual witness of Christians in their vocations, and the corporate witness of churches in events such as COH.

Although infrequent, large-scale Gospel rallies have been part of the history of the churches in Singapore. Before the Second World War, a notable example is the forty revival meetings of Dr John Sung from 31 August to 15 September 1935. After Singapore’s independence in 1965, one of the most significant of such events was the Billy Graham Crusade. Held in December 1978, it drew an attendance of about 337,000 over five evenings. The spiritual legacies of the above events are still evident today.

Occurring five months after the fortieth anniversary of the 1978 Crusade, a significant motivation for COH has been the desire for the spiritual renewal of churches and its impact upon the nation. Bishop Ponniah comments: “I am confident that in God’s grace and power, Celebration of Hope will be to His (God’s) praise and glory, and will be a step towards revival in this land.”

After reviewing 183 years of history, Bobby Sng makes the following observation in the concluding chapter

to his book, *In His Good Time: the Story of the Church in Singapore, 1819-2002*:

“With the vantage of hindsight, we can safely say that one thing stands clear: God has always used people as agents of change and for the advancement of his kingdom...The baton of history-making has now been passed on to us. If the church is to continue to grow, then what we need is to have more men and women with a vision for God’s work and whose lives are open for his use. We need people with a Spirit-given capacity to endure hardships and temporary setbacks. We need people who can inspire others to heights of spiritual commitment.”

Is COH history in the making? Will it be a catalyst for spiritual renewal, church growth and social impact? Will it be an instrument to call men and women into a lifetime of dedicated service to God in the church and society? While it is humanly impossible to answer these questions with certainty, we do have the certain promises of God.

Come May, as the one name of Christ is proclaimed by one people gathered under Christ, for one witness to eternal hope in Christ, God “is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us” (Eph 3:20). ❖

## **GATHER**

### **COH RALLY SCHEDULE**

*Guest workers outreach will take place on Sunday, May 19, at decentralised venues*

<b>FRIDAY, 17 MAY</b> <b>7.30PM ENGLISH</b> NATIONAL STADIUM	<b>SATURDAY, 18 MAY</b> <b>10.30AM CHILDREN &amp; FAMILIES</b> <b>ENGLISH</b> NATIONAL STADIUM <b>7.30PM CHINESE</b> NATIONAL STADIUM <b>7.30PM TAMIL</b> OCBC ARENA	<b>SUNDAY, 19 MAY</b> <b>10.30AM FILIPINO/ENGLISH</b> NATIONAL STADIUM <b>7.30PM ENGLISH</b> NATIONAL STADIUM
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*For details on how you can prepare for and participate in COH, see <https://celebrationofhope.sg>*

## Synergy and Quality in Theological Education TTC in Partnership with ATESEA

By Dr Tan Kim Huat, Academic Dean, Chen Su Lan Professor of New Testament

Not long after WWII, many Asian societies broke away from colonial rule to form new nations. This quest for self-determination also impacted the Church in Asia. The rationale was simple: the Asian Church must be responsible for its own affairs and minister to its own people. Hence, the establishment of good theological schools was necessary and urgent. But how might this be done during those resource-starved years?



To address some of these challenges, some theological schools in South East Asia came together in 1957 to discuss how they might synergise to hasten the development of theological education in the region, without compromising on quality. They owed this to the students who had entrusted their training to them, and the people whom these students would one day serve.

TTC participated as host. Out of this meeting, the Association of Theological Schools in South East Asia (ATSSEA) was born. The name was changed to the Association for Theological Education in South East Asia (ATESEA) in 1981, by which it is still known. It is currently head-quartered in Iloilo City, the Philippines, and it has ninety-three member schools.

Synergy and quality are achieved principally through the enrichment programmes that ATESEA runs for regional theological teachers – or theological teachers in the making – and the accreditation of member schools. It also offers a platform for human and library resources to be shared, so that none in South East Asia is denied quality theological education just because of local constraints. Ever mindful that *koinōnia* should characterise the life of the church, TTC continues to be a key participant in these initiatives. ❖

Note: Dr Tan Kim Huat is Chairman of ATESEA's Board of Trustees

## Welcome to our New Website

“Aesthetically nice.” “Captivating and informative.” “The pictures really make a difference.” These comments were heard the first day that the newly designed TTC website was launched, early last month.

“We have built this website with the user in mind,” says Rev Dr Edwin Tay, Vice-Principal. “It is important for users to feel a sense of welcome, to be able to access information they need with ease, and to have a pleasant experience while doing so. Among other improvements, we have updated the design and streamlined information for easy access. We’ve also included more photos to enhance the user experience, and inserted student and alumni testimonials for a personal touch.”

Besides course information, our new website is buzzing with what’s happening in community – both with students and faculty. In FACULTY MINISTRY, catch up on how our faculty (and TTC) are involved in ministry beyond the confines of TTC by participating in inter-religious dialogue, inter-college seminars and residencies, publishing books and engaging in consultations, locally and abroad.

“I will give it my vote!” chirped one user. Won’t you? Check out our new website at [www.ttc.edu.sg](http://www.ttc.edu.sg).



## ETHOS Conversation 2019

By Dr Edmund Fong, Lecturer in Theology



Close to 250 people attended the ETHOS Conversation 2019: Nurturing the Future Generation, held at The Bible House on 20th March 2019, 7:30 – 9pm. Leading the conversation were Minister for Social and Family Development, and Second Minister for National Development, Mr Desmond Lee, and Senior Pastor of Adam Road Presbyterian Church, Rev Dr Christopher Chia, with the session chaired by TTC lecturer Dr Leow Theng Huat. Following an opening prayer by NCCS President, Lutheran Bishop Terry Kee, Minister and Pastor Chris took turns to address the audience. In complementary ways, both speakers touched on the need to recognise the traits of the Generation Z youth and young adults, the reconstitution of what defines the family unit, and the ever-present dangers that come from the societal trends of polarisation, exclusivism, tribalism



and a deepening social stratification. Both speakers also stressed the importance of continual governmental intervention that would benefit from involving civic and religious institutions.

The audience participated actively when it came to the Q&A session. Questions included the adequacy of the level of government support and intervention shown towards specifically the special needs education sector; ways to prevent a deepening stratification of society for the next generation, whether there avails a place for the church in discussion over public issues and, correspondingly, if the church has too many of its members in professions or positions of power and influence. Both speakers answered the questions to the best of their abilities, with a strong sense of a heartfelt authenticity undergirding their answers. The session was brought to a close with Dr Leow thanking the two speakers and Rev Dr Ngoei Foong Nghian, TTC Principal and NCCS General Secretary, leading in the closing prayer. Minister was happy to stay on to interact with members of the audience before taking his leave at 9:30pm.

Overall, I believe that I speak on behalf of all present that evening that we were engaged in a heartfelt and authentic conversation. Above just being given insights, we were shown live examples of what it means for a “Minister of the State” and a “Minister of the Word” to do what remains as the central theme for the conversation — nurturing the future generation that God has graciously given to us. ❖

# INTO THE NEXT DECADE

Special areas of need which form important pillars of our ministry

## EQUIP : LAY TRAINING

To equip lay people for their vital roles in the church and the public square; build capacity & expand theological expertise



FUNDING REQUIRED:

\$34,000 x 10 years = \$340,000



## IT & LIBRARY RESOURCES

Theological centre for excellence; provide superior systems of information delivery and build up publications



FUNDING REQUIRED:

\$130,000 x 10 years = \$1.3million



## PLEASE CONSIDER

We are excited to reap a bountiful harvest in the coming years, as the Lord leads, but fund raising will stop once the target is reached.



Please visit our website [TTC.EDU.SG](http://TTC.EDU.SG) for further details



## Evening Classes 2019

Details at [www.ttc.edu.sg](http://www.ttc.edu.sg)

New Testament Survey	Christian Witness in the Plural World	Theology, Imagination and the Arts	Worship in Personal Life
Wednesdays @ St Andrew's Cathedral	Mondays @ Wesley Methodist Church	Tuesdays @ Trinity Theological College	Thursdays @ Trinity Theological College
Rev Dr James Lim (Instructor)	Rev Dr Daniel Koh (Instructor)	Miss Shirley Bong (Instructor)	Rev Dr Soh Guan Chin (Instructor)
Dates : 3 Jul - 14 Aug Time : 7:30pm - 9:30pm	Dates : 8 Jul - 26 Aug Time : 7:30pm - 9:30pm	Dates : 9 Jul - 20 Aug Time : 7:30pm - 9:30pm	Dates : 11 Jul - 22 Aug Time : 7:30pm - 9:30pm

## Student Council 2019

On 1 February 2019, the new Student Council for 2019 was installed during Chapel Service. Presided by our Principal, Rev Dr Ngoei Foong Nghian, the incoming Council members pledged to serve God and the community at TTC with humility and gladness, remembering that the greatest in God's kingdom is the servant of all. Taking the cue from the homily based on 1 Corinthians 14:13-25 to build each other up, the Council will do its utmost to be positive examples to the community, always committed to the work of reconciliation and love. ❖



Front Row (L-R): Yeo Zhi Wen Adriel, Lu Li Li, Wang Qing Xin, Tan Hui Min Eleanor, Chan Heng Wee Rufus, Chia Soo Sian Vinn, Rev Dr Chiang Ming Shun (Dean of Students), Teo Meow Ling (Vice-President), Lee Sheng Wei Daniel (President), Rev Dr Ngoei Foong Nghian (Principal), Ong Yao Min, Chan Xin Hui, Wen Tian Yue, Wu Kai Xuan Victor, Wong Kok Leong Aldran

Back Row (L-R): Goh Chay Ngee Genevieve, Ng Ee Chiat, Qu Xiang Yao, Amos Yeo, Yeo Yong Tai Gareth, Ng Wei-Ern Christopher, Tan Jit Chong Isaac, Zhang Xun, Quay Sook Lyn Audrey, Tan Tze Ann Bryan Luke, Ong Yu Kai Alvin, Ilango s/o Yagambaram, Peh Wan Qian Esther, Enoch Yeung, Sim Meng Kwan Barnabas, Jin Zhong Liang, Hu Bin, Teh You Siong

## Spiritual Retreat for Lay Leaders

The quarterly Spiritual Retreat for Lay Leaders, launched in 2016, is intended to meet the need for spiritual formation and direction among the lay leaders of our four governing churches—Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian and Lutheran. Thanks be to God, so far 131 retreatants have benefitted from the overnight retreat, 95 of whom are active lay leaders. The SRLL also saw 41 retreatants coming from beyond our member churches, making it a ministry that extends to the larger Christian community in Singapore. A recent retreatant testifies to the value of this ministry as she commented that “the retreat taught [her] practices to inculcate the habit to be alert to God's presence throughout the day.” We invite you or several of your lay leaders to participate in a coming retreat. ❖



Join us in 2019

❖ May 3-4 ❖ Nov 1-2

### March 2019 participants share their experiences ...

“The teaching on rhythms of life was very helpful for carrying the practices back into our daily lives.”

“Reading the Bible changed from being informational to transformational.”

“I often did not give myself opportunities for silence. The retreat helped me to enter into silence so as to listen to the Lord.”

Sign up now at [www.ttc.edu.sg](http://www.ttc.edu.sg)

# TTC shows off its Brawny Side

On 1 March 2019, the annual Inter-College Sports Day held at Choa Chu Kang Stadium saw the gathering of five seminaries in Singapore to pit their skills against each other. The TTC women's captain's ball team emerged champions while the TTC men's captain's ball team finished second. TTC men's soccer successfully retained their crown for the second year running.



## Flying the Flag at Yale

By Gilbert Lok, a 3rd year MDiv student

I am grateful to have been selected by TTC for a student exchange programme with Yale Divinity School (YDS). My wife, Grace, and I spent the last four months of 2018 in New Haven, Connecticut, USA, where we were warmly welcomed into the community.

I am thankful for the opportunity to have studied under lecturers who have authored major works and textbooks in their respective fields. This includes Homiletics with Thomas Long, Dead Sea Scrolls with John J. Collins, and Christian-Muslim dialogue with the recently-deceased Lamin Sanneh. The classes were challenging and eye-opening, yet I found I was able to engage with, reflect on, and critique the materials discussed in class. This is a testament to the strong foundations laid at TTC.

In addition, I took a class on Psychopathology and Pastoral Care, became certified in Mental Health First Aid, and got to know the leaders of the local chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI). I hope, with this new awareness and skills, to work towards a closer synergy between pastoral care and mental health in Singapore.

We joined with local New Haven churches in community ministry at a food and clothing pantry which provides daily necessities to persons in need, and also encountered the ministry of Sanctuary churches which serve as refuges for migrants appealing against unfair deportation. At the International Church at Yale, we worshipped with and befriended Christians from far flung places like Columbia and Korea, as well as non-Christian postdoctoral and PhD students from China. I even ended up leading carol singing at the church's Christmas party, complete with Chinese translation. My wife and I are so glad to have had this opportunity to both learn from and contribute to God's church, even in a very different part of the world. ❖



Gilbert soaking in different experiences

## TRINITY NEWS

### Congratulations to...

Shi Ji Long (MTh 2018) and his wife, Shi Meng Fang, who celebrated the arrival of their baby boy, Shi Chen Su on 1 Sep 2018.

Mark Lai Wai Leong (MDiv 2) on the celebration of his marriage to Chessa Lim on 5 Jan 2019.

Daniel Lim Sze Kai (BD 2008) and his wife, Leong Pei Yu, (MDiv 2012), on the birth of their daughter, Anetta Lim Min Xi, on 28 Jan 2019.

Rev Ram Kumar Budhathoki (MDiv 2007) and his wife, Adna Thapa Magar, who celebrated the arrival of their baby boy, Nathaniel, on Jan 2019.

### Condolences to...

The family of the late Rev Yeong Siong Chye Frankie (MMin 2007) who was called home to glory on 21 Sep 2018. News of his demise was received in Jan 2019.

Yuri Seki (MDiv 1) on the passing away of her beloved father, the late Mr Seki, on 4 Dec 2018.

Bishop Rennis Ponniah (MDiv 2000) & his wife, Amir, and Rev Jeremy Peter Ponniah (MTS 2010) & his wife, Sim Yee Peng, on the demise of their beloved father, the late Mr Dravium Ponniah on 5 Jan 2019. He was 93; and their beloved mother Mrs Elizabeth Paripuranam Ponniah nee Sundaraj on 1 Apr 2019. She was 92.

Pastor Susan Leong Soak Cheng (BTh 2005, MMin 2009), as her

beloved mother, the late Mdm Koh Siau Hwee, was called home to be with the Lord on 1 Jan 2019.

Rev Eric Chan Chee Keong (BTh 2004), on the passing of his beloved mother, the late Mdm Chong Yoke Chun, who was called home to be with the Lord on 17 January 2019. She was 73.

Rev Dino Veerasamy Thangamany (BD 2013) and his wife, Maria Anita, on the passing of his beloved father, the late Mr Veerasamy S. T., who was called home to be with the Lord on 13 March 2019.

The family of the late Rev Petrus Wijaya (MMin 2011) who was called home to be with the Lord on 31 Mar 2019.

## We Invite you to Support the Ministry of Trinity Theological College

Your support will enable our college to :

- be equipped with a competent and dedicated faculty
- keep tuition fees affordable
- offer financial subsidies to less fortunate students
- house an outstanding theological library in the region
- organise workshops and conferences at minimal cost
- furnish and maintain our 18-year-old campus

Here are some ways you may contribute to our ministry:

- By Cheque to 'Trinity Theological College'
- By Bank or ATM transfer to our **DBS current account 033-017261-3**
- By scanning this QR code or accessing **PayNow**
- By Way of Bequests to TTC. We shall be pleased to discuss this plan with you. You may email the [principal@ttc.edu.sg](mailto:principal@ttc.edu.sg) or call 6767 6677



The Trumpet is published in English and Chinese. To view the Chinese edition, please visit our website [www.ttc.edu.sg](http://www.ttc.edu.sg)



# Trinity Lectures 2019

## “St Paul on the Absence and Presence of Jesus”

**A** theological truth that many Christians in Singapore hold dear is the presence of Jesus. They believe that Jesus is present with them in the Spirit or through the spiritual realm. This realm is often thought of in relation to a simple dualistic ontology, where reality is split into visible matter and invisible spirit. Since this invisible realm is always enveloping us, any talk of Jesus’ presence should be quite simple and straightforward. Unfortunately, this feeble notion founders on the rich and profound teaching of the New Testament.

The fifth biennial Trinity Lectures addresses this topic so that we may be enriched in our understanding of how Jesus is present with us. The rationale of our ongoing series of biennial Trinity Lectures is to bring the best of Christian scholarship to address topics relating to our walk and witness as Christians in Singapore. The form in which these lectures take is intentionally adapted to the needs of ordinary churchgoers.

Professor Markus Bockmuehl, the Dean Ireland Professor of Biblical Exegesis at Oxford University, has been invited to be the speaker. The highly accomplished and widely published NT scholar is especially known for his research on Paul and Peter.

Trinity Lectures 2019 will be held at TTC chapel on four successive nights, from 29 July to 1 August. Each lecture begins at 7.30 p.m., and there will be opportunities for questions to be asked. The topics to be covered are:

Lecture 1: The Pauline Problem: Where is Jesus Now?

Lecture 2: Seeing Jesus: Vision and Transformation

Lecture 3: Jesus and the Canonical Paul

Lecture 4: The Present Jesus and the Footprint of the Absent Paul

All are welcome to this great time of learning! Registration opens this quarter; please check our website for more details. ❖



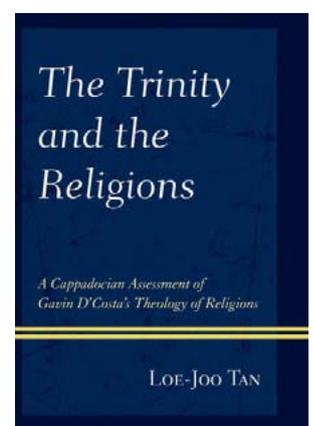
Professor Markus Bockmuehl

## Our Contribution to Christian Scholarship

**O**n 16 Oct 2018, Dr Tan Loe Joo launched his new book at TTC, *The Trinity and the Religions: A Cappadocian Assessment of Gavin D’ Costa’s Theology of Religions*.

Dr Tan offers much food for thought on the question of salvation by critically engaging the writings of Gavin D’ Costa on the subject in the light of Basil of Caesarea’s trinitarian theology. The book concludes that while there is much to commend in D’ Costa’s theology of religions, there remains some features not fully consonant with classical trinitarianism.

“This book is a major step forward in Evangelical-Catholic dialogue... Anyone with an interest in interreligious dialogue and/or ecumenism needs to read this splendid book. May the conversation initiated here long continue!” Matthew Levering, James N. and Mary D. Perry Jr. Chair of Theology, Mundelein Seminary. ❖



**TRUMPET EDITORIAL:** Rev Dr Ngoei Foong Nghian (Editor),  
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