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TRUMPET

VIEWS AND NEWS FROM TRINITY THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE

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HOME

By Dr Yee Chin Hong

As Singapore celebrates 56 years of independence this month, we thank God for providing a home for us in Singapore and for preserving this home during the COVID-19 pandemic. At the same time, we are shocked and saddened by the grim toll the pandemic has exacted. For multitudes all over the world, the safety, sustenance and stability of home have been all but wiped out. Even in Singapore, no home has gone untouched by the scourge.

In these fearful, uncertain times, the picture of 'home' in the book of Exodus offers comfort and hope. We seldom associate Exodus with 'home', and for good reason. As the book begins, the descendants of Jacob have been far from home for centuries. When it ends, though out of Egypt, the Israelites are living in tents on inhospitable grounds. What of 'home'?

Exodus 25-40 provides a clue. These sixteen chapters are largely about the tabernacle. In a book named for Israel's exit from Egypt, it is easy to overlook the fact that some two-fifths of the book are devoted to the tabernacle. The tabernacle is, moreover, described twice in these chapters. If these literary features imply theological importance, what might the significance of the tabernacle be?

To begin with, the Hebrew word translated 'tabernacle' (*miškān*) comes from the root *škn*, which means 'to dwell'. So, a tabernacle is literally a 'dwelling place'. It is where God's presence dwells, the

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place he chooses to be his earthly home. The picture of 'home' in Exodus, then, has to do with the tent-home of the Lord. Exodus 25-40 highlights three aspects of the design of this home.

First, the Lord sets up home on earth in order to live with his people. This is clear from Exod 25:8, where the Lord tells Moses, "And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst." This sanctuary refers to the tabernacle (v. 9).

When the Lord calls Moses to deliver the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt, he promises to bring them home to a land flowing with milk and honey, in keeping with his covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. But home is more than a place of plenty. The placement (as the book's conclusion), prominence (16 chapters) and purpose (Exod 25:8) of the tabernacle in Exodus suggest that the Lord delivers his people to bring them home to himself.

Today, the homeless still find their home in God. Jesus Christ literally 'tabernacled' among men (John 1:14), as did God's presence amongst the Israelites. For God's people, then, home is found first in a person, not a place. As the Lord told Israel, "My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest" (Exod 33:14), so Jesus invites us, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matt 11:28).

Second, God's home shows his people how they are to worship him. The detailed description of the tabernacle is given twice in Exodus 25-40, first as instructions for building the tabernacle (chs. 25-31), then in the report of its construction (chs. 35-40). Except for some variation in order, the two descriptions are essentially the same. One important difference, however, is the recurrence of the phrase, "as the Lord commanded" in Exodus 39-40. This phrase is especially meaningful in the wake of the golden calf incident, which is recounted in Exodus 32-34, between the instructions and the report.

The Israelites are to make the tabernacle exactly as the Lord instructs them (Exod 25:9). By doing so, they will learn how to approach and worship a holy God who lives among them. But they fail colossally, choosing instead to secure God's presence on their terms. Following the account of apostasy, the repetition of the tabernacle description serves to contrast true worship (chs. 35-40), which honours God, with false worship (chs. 32-34), which promotes self.

The pandemic has changed how Christians worship. For many, the changes are unsettling and overwhelming. Amidst change, let us take heart that today we need no tabernacle to show us how we are to worship God truly. The presence of God no longer accompanies us in a tent but lives in us to instruct and enable us.

Third, God's home directs his people home. The tabernacle recalls the perfect home God created for man. Like Eden, the tabernacle is where God dwells and meets with man. Its furnishings, such as the tree-shaped lampstand and the cherubim woven into the curtain, are also reminiscent of Eden.

By recalling Eden, God's tent-home stirs in the Israelites a longing for their true home, where humanity freely communes with God. Our Lord also directs his disciples home: "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am" (John 14:3).

In sum, 'home' in Exodus is where God lives with his people.

In the wilderness or Promised Land, true rest, relationship and reorientation can only be found in coming home to God and living with him. So, too, today.

As we play our part in building the nation we call home, let us serve wholeheartedly, for Christ has entered the greater and more perfect tabernacle by his blood so that we may serve the living God. And as we work at recovering the normalcy of home post-pandemic, let us do so hopefully, for one day, the dwelling of God will forever be with men. "He will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God" (Rev 21:3).

Home, at last. ❖



Dr Yee Chin Hong
Lecturer in Old Testament



Christian Formation in Times of Crisis

A new academic year at Trinity Theological College began in July 2021. Among the points highlighted in my orientation address to the more than seventy matriculated students is the concern for the formation of seminarians in theological education. Christian formation happens through the work of the Holy Spirit, as under God the redeemed community commits to a rhythm of study, prayer and service.

Besides the planned curriculum in theological education, attention must also be paid to the 'unplanned curriculum' of life's circumstances no matter how tempestuous. In his book *Rediscovering Holiness*, James Packer cautions against the misconception that "growth in grace may be furthered by retreating from life's hard places, heavy burdens and hurtful relationships".

Joseph learnt the mystery of providence in Egypt, not Canaan, that God overruled the evil inflicted upon him by his brothers in order to save many lives (Gen 45:7-8; 50:19-21). King David's faith in God deepened and gave voice to confident hope in the face of murderous enemies, not apart from them (Ps 27). The Apostle Paul's longest recorded doxology was offered to God in captivity (Eph 1:3-18).

Be it moments of joy or pain, comfort or crisis, life's circumstances are the divinely appointed settings within which believers learn by grace to live out our divinely assigned callings. Gordon Smith puts it aptly: "Our vocations are always for this time and this place. Always. We always embrace the good work to which we are called in response to actual circumstances, challenges and opportunities. No one is ahead of their time; no one missed their time."

Needless to say, the previous year and a half has been unusually challenging for the College as we navigated the storm of the pandemic. Incessant engagement in crisis management has a way of speeding up our education in the school of faith. Thrown into uncharted waters, many

of our tried and tested standard operating procedures had to be overhauled and reworked from scratch. Even after careful and informed deliberations, decisions on the way forward were often made in acknowledgment of our lack of answers to what works best. Humbling ourselves before God in prayerful dependence was a posture renewed amid the COVID-19 crisis.

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Poverty of spirit and the virtue of faith are not the only signs of spiritual life that sprang up in the context of crisis. Self-giving service answered the needs of our community as the pandemic threw into relief what those needs were. Members of our community whose giftings were either previously unnoticed or undiscovered stepped forth to serve in new and creative ways for the common good. Without the contribution of our students, we would not have the AV teams which are now supporting the College's live-streaming efforts.

Christian formation is bound up with God's providential ordering of history in accordance with his redemptive purposes. Isaiah had long ago prophesied that it is in the 'wilderness' and 'desert' that God gives drink to his people whom he formed for himself to declare his praise (Isa 43:18-21). Even a crisis as globally disruptive and devastating as the coronavirus pandemic is not beyond the pale of God's sovereign superintendence "for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose" (Rom 8:28). ❖



Created but Misplaced Being? The Body-Soul Relationship and Gender Dysphoria

By Rev Dr Edmund Fong

Bringing a theological slant into the issue of gender dysphoria raises the following question: “Could God have created me a woman but placed me in the wrong body (and vice versa)?” So, even as Gen 1:27 tells us that “male and female [God] created them” (ESV), could an individual with gender dysphoria fall under the curious case of what I call a “created but misplaced being”? In this article, I wish to explore the possibility of this curious state in relation to the body-soul relationship.

I begin with the first broad position that outlines the body-soul relationship: materialism. Materialism views the human being as a purely physical entity; we comprise no additional non-physical or spiritual substance. Even if certain materialists allow for the presence of mental entities or realities, they would reject the idea that these mental entities could be integrated to form a united ‘mental’ self that can be spoken in terms of a conscious ‘I’.

There are difficulties relating to how gender dysphoria sits with materialism. At the centre of gender dysphoria lies a conscious and united belief concerning the individual as a whole person: the gender I experience or am is discordant

with that indicated by my bodily or biological sex. Materialists have responded by either challenging the whole idea of consciousness or allowing at most for one’s conscious experiences to be nothing more than mental representations of certain qualities of objects (like colour) made to the human brain. These responses, however, fail to adequately account for the real and undeniable presence of the unitive and wholly conscious self — the ‘I’ — that is experiencing gender dysphoria.

The above leads to the outcome that the Christian materialist really has no room to assert the claim that ‘I’ have been created a certain gender but misplaced in the biological body of the opposite gender, for in materialism, there is no unitive and wholly conscious ‘I’ present other than the ‘I’ constituted by my body cells, all of which, it can be argued, have been stamped with a certain biological sex.

Unlike materialism, the other broad position of substance dualism maintains that there are two distinct mental and physical realms or substances — the soul and the body — and both are fundamental and non-reducible. As ontological distinct entities, the mental and physical substances can be in causal relationships with one

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another.

At first glance, substance dualism might lead one to conceive of a “created but misplaced being” scenario: my soul is ‘female’ but I have been mistakenly placed in a ‘male’ body or vice versa. A deeper look, however, at two varieties of substance dualism — emergent dualism and Thomistic dualism — holds that thought in check.

Emergent dualism states that the soul (or mind) is an emergent entity or mental substance that emerges from a properly configured physical system, in this case the body with all the biological, chemical and neural relationships, and interactions. Once emerged, the soul subsists as a distinct substance that is ontologically distinct and separable from the body.

Thomistic dualism presents the soul as the substantial form that animates or actualises matter — in this case a body — to be a living human body. This understanding leads some Thomistic dualists to maintain that the soul could be properly characterised as sexed or gendered on account of the fact that it serves as the vivifying or actualising principle of actually existing sexed human beings.

Together, I believe that emergent dualism and Thomistic dualism rule out the possibility of a created soul sexed (or gendered) one way but placed in a body sexed another way.

On account of emergent dualism, the soul is not created ‘externally’ and subsequently ‘plopped’ into a body, but the soul emerges ‘internally’ from the physical, chemical and neural operations in the created human body. The body’s biological development of sexuality serves as the proximate cause for the ‘gender’ of the soul.

As for Thomistic dualism, because of the unitive soul-body relationship and the soul serving as the

vivifying and animating principle for a human body which is biologically sexed one way, it is virtually impossible for the soul to be sexed (or gendered) another way.

This leaves the last variety of substance dualism: Cartesian dualism, which in its stronger forms construes body and soul to be so fundamentally different that there is little interdependence between the two substances. The soul is often seen as that which is real and the sole constituent in one’s personal identity, with the human body often ending up being viewed as a nonpersonal instrument of the self.

‘Strong’ Cartesian dualism could do damage in severing the link between sex (understood as a biological identity) and gender (understood as a psychological identity). Because the soul and that alone is what constitutes the real ‘me’ and my sexual identity as a characteristic of my body is not definitive for the gender identity of the real ‘me’, the door is opened to the possibility that my soul could be sexed (or gendered) one way but misplaced in a body sexed another way.

There is a way out for Cartesian dualists, and it is by maintaining that the soul is not ‘gendered’ by itself in abstraction from a human body. In this model where souls do not instantiate one gender essentially but only derivatively as a common property it shares with the body sexed in a particular way, it is difficult to envisage a case of a soul gendered one way mismatched with the wrong body.

In short, the major accounts of the body-soul relationship understood within theological anthropology outlined above reveal the implausibility of the “created but misplaced being” scenario, where God creates a human soul ‘gendered’ one way but misplaces the soul in a human body biologically sexed another way. ❖



Rev Dr Edmund Fong
Dean of Students
Lecturer in Theology



Phoebe, the First Teacher of Romans

By Dr Tan Kim Huat

If we agree that Paul's letter to the Romans is a key document of the Christian church, then calling Phoebe the first teacher of this document amounts to recognising her role in early Christianity as highly notable. Of course, this proposition has to be defended but, first things first, who was Phoebe?

Rom 16:1-2 contains Paul's commendation of Phoebe to Christians at Rome because she had been designated as the carrier of his letter to them. We may make three quick observations. First, the name suggests that she was a Gentile convert because it is connected with Greek mythology. The next two observations are of greater relevance. Citing from the NIV, Phoebe is described as both a "deacon of the Church in Cenchreae" and a "benefactor of many people". Significantly, she is the only person in the entire New Testament (NT) to be called both a deacon (*diakonos*) and a benefactor (*prostatis*).

There has been some discussion on what *diakonos* means precisely in Rom 16:1. What follows are the salient points that give us confidence in the NIV's rendering of the Greek. *Diakonos* in Greek means generally a servant or minister but in the usage of the Early Church, it soon became a term for an office. Most scholars argue that Paul uses this term here to indicate a specially designated group of people.

First, the term is linked to a particular church: the church at Cenchreae. Phoebe was a *deacon of that church* and not simply a Christian with a heart of service, who happened to have a membership in that church. The office of the deacon was slowly crystallising in the 1st century and Phoebe belonged to it.

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Secondly, in the long memory of the Christian church, Phoebe is inextricably linked with the office of the deacon. A 4th century inscription found at Mount of Olives is instructive here. It mentions a certain deceased Sophia, described as "the slave and bride of Christ, Sophia, the deacon, the second Phoebe". Why was Sophia named "the second Phoebe" after being called a deacon? It is because Phoebe was specially connected with that office, almost like a forerunner. The title "the second Phoebe" serves then to indicate that Sophia's diaconal work was distinctive, inspired by and patterned after the female deacon *par excellence*: the first Phoebe.

There has also been some discussion over whether 'benefactor' is a good rendering of the Greek *prostatis*. We do not have the space to treat the matter, except to say that the NIV rendering is highly credible. What is more important is to point out that since Phoebe was both deacon and benefactor, it meant office and character fitted harmoniously in her. She was not only a great help

to many people in her capacity as an officer of the church, she also used her own resources in offering this help. Paul even included himself as one of the beneficiaries of her generosity.

If our article ended here, there would have been enough material for us to appreciate her impact. There is, however, one more datum that deserves highlighting. It concerns the propagation of Paul's letter to the Romans and Phoebe's role in it. Much can be said about this matter but we can only offer the gist.

In a time when there was no electronic mail or public postal service, let alone an express one, communication across many miles was inevitably slow and dependent on couriers, who would be known either to the sender or the recipient. These couriers often played the role of clarifying the content or circumstances of the letter. It should be plain that all communications do have gaps, needing clarification or completion. Whenever the recipient had a question, he could either send a note to the author and wait a considerable amount of time for the answer to be relayed back to him, or seek immediate answers from the courier.

Long didactic letters, a category to which *Romans* belongs, will generate many questions. Significantly, Paul's letter was addressed to Roman congregations he did not plant, which had many members he did not know. Hence, Paul could not count on shared assumptions to plug communication gaps. This means whomever Paul designated as the courier must be sufficiently informed or equipped to tackle questions that might arise; those beyond him or her would then be conveyed back to Paul. A didactic role for this courier was therefore unavoidable. An example from the Book of Acts is instructive: when the apostles and elders in Jerusalem sent out a letter to Christian churches affected by the issue of circumcision, they ensured that it was carried by trusted teachers (Acts 15:22-23, 30-32). Why? No matter how well the letter was written, there would be questions that it did not anticipate. Who would be better to answer these than trusted teachers?

Romans is not only long and didactic, it was also written to achieve some important goals. We may deduce from its contents that there were substantial divisions among Roman Christians that needed mending (14:1-15:13). A united church at Rome would then be a suitable base for Paul to launch his mission to Spain (15:24). Hence, not only did Paul have to bring factions together — and we know how difficult this can be — he was also persuading

congregations he did not plant to support his mission. To add to the complication, Jews in Rome were well connected with Jews in Jerusalem in the 1st century. A significant number of Jews in Jerusalem found Paul's gospel highly controversial (15:30-32). Hence, any inaccurate presentation of this gospel in Rome could jeopardise Paul's mission.

What all this means is that whomever Paul chose as the courier, he must be assured that this person could help further his goals and not complicate things further. Judging from the importance of the issues mentioned earlier, the chosen person must have — to use our lingo — the IQ and EQ for it; we can even add to the mix TQ or theological quotient. Who fitted the bill? In Paul's view, Phoebe.

If we take courage in both hands and do not let cowardice corrode our conviction, we can candidly confess that Phoebe had a didactic role in the propagation of *Romans*. And, if we are prepared to withstand the occasional gust of pedantry that blows across the Church, we may even call Phoebe the letter's *first teacher*. An inference may now be drawn from this fresh understanding of Phoebe's significance. Paul's entrusting the most important letter he had ever written to Phoebe for onward propagation implies that his statements prohibiting women from teaching must be taken in context and not absolutised.

As crucial as helping the reader see that women were involved in notable didactic work in the Early Church, there is an equally potent point this article hopes to surface. People naturally crave publicity but divine work is of a different character. Although unpublicised, the impact we make by divine grace leaves behind a silent, fossilised footprint that stands the test of time and awaits rediscovery by later generations. Phoebe's conveyance of *Romans* is a good example of this, the true significance of which is only now slowly being appreciated. Our minds are then drawn to 1 Cor 15:58, which assures us that our work for the Lord will never be in vain and, certainly, never unrecognised by God. Hence, we should press on to serve the Lord, unfazed by environment or human applause. ❖



Dr Tan Kim Huat
 Chen Su Lan Professor of
 New Testament

The Place of Theological Education in Missions

By Rev Dr Andrew Peh,
Lecturer in Missions, Missions History

I could not contain my excitement when my god-brother shared that he had sensed God's leading to enroll for theological education at Trinity Theological College. He was on a short-term attachment with the Overseas Missionary Fellowship (Thailand). Reading Mark Noll's book, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, he was convinced that theological education is essential. He envisaged that the studies were to be a particular season in his life when he learned to love God with his mind.

Noll famously went for the jugular with his opening statement: "the scandal of the evangelical mind is that there is not much of an evangelical mind". Noll laments the atrophy of the intellect, in his strident critique: "Evangelicals do not, characteristically, look to the intellectual life as an arena in which to glorify God because, at least in America, our history has been pragmatic, populist, charismatic, and technological more than intellectual." Noll highlighted the growing anti-intellectualism that is impacting both the society as well as the church.

In the same tenor, John Stott, noted in his book, *Your Mind Matters*, "The spirit of anti-intellectualism is prevalent today. The modern world breeds pragmatists, whose first question is not 'Is it true?' but 'Does it work?'" This perhaps explains why there are so many 'How to' books today, as we become increasingly fixated on techniques than on theory. We live in a world where it is more about 'how you feel' rather than 'what is the truth?' We live in a world where being fashionable is given more attention than being faithful, where following fads seem more important than following Jesus. The point I am making is that the church in Singapore is perhaps undergoing these similar changes, particularly in the area of missions.

The results of the National Missions Survey 2019, conducted by the Singapore Centre for Global Missions, show empirically that churches in Singapore are seeing a decrease in sending long-term or career missionaries as well as a corresponding increase of a more pragmatic approach of sending short term missions (before the COVID-19 pandemic halted all short-term mission trips). Many missionaries are sent to the mission field by local churches and mission organisations after a short period of 'training' of between three to six months. Formal theological training may not even be a necessary condition for being sent out as a missionary by official mission agencies of churches. It seems that many on

the field are content with short courses to equip them with some missionary skills instead of being grounded theologically. In most cases, the sending churches or the missionaries themselves are responding to the tyranny of the urgent instead of operating from the travails of the important. Most of those who respond to God's call to cross-cultural missions are passionate about the call. But have we become pragmatists in relegating preparation as secondary to passion?

In order to train as a pilot flying on the Singapore Airlines, one requires no less than 250 hours of basic flying on piston engines before one is recognised as a

cadet! This is merely the prerequisite for the training flights for landing and take offs on different planes as well as the qualification required for the jet phase. Similarly, for one training to be a surgeon in a specific field of medicine, the training period is about eight years (or more) after one obtains the prerequisite MBBS (Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery). Would we fly in an aircraft with a pilot who took a short course in flying? Would we entrust our heart surgery to a surgeon who is just completing the hospital housemanship attachment? We are similarly stringent with our clerical ordinands, ensuring that they have the requisite theological education and the

rigour of pastoral evaluation and examinations. If we are willing to invest no less than three years of theological education and equipping for those called to the pastoral ministry, why are we content to send those called to the mission field with a token requirement of between three to six months of 'missionary training'? If mission work involves evangelism, church planting, discipleship, spiritual mentoring, leadership training - which essentially includes most if not all of what we typically refer to as 'pastoral ministry' except in a cross-cultural context (which presents a host of other challenges), why then are we content to send those the Lord has called to the mission contexts with only scant and sorely insufficient training for the work of cross-cultural missions?

Some question the need for theological education for missionaries. Others like J. Brennan hold that, "seminary education can be a useful means of preparing missionaries, but it's not a necessary means of doing so." I am thankful for Jackson Wu's emphatic and incisive response. Wu insists that "if theological training is not necessary for a missionary, then it is unnecessary for anyone!" He holds that "the heart of missionary training is biblical and theological. Its aim is doxological". The history of Christian missions is replete with examples of how theological and incarnational responses are necessary in engaging the culture of the people with the claims of Christ. To this end, Trinity Theological College is insistent on developing a strong biblical and theological foundation for our curriculum. Various courses have been developed to attend to the needs of those who are training to be missionaries, such as Cultural Anthropology, Theology of Mission and Contemporary Issues in Mission - Creation Care. But more than just an emphasis on the discipleship of the mind, the various elements of life at TTC - hostel, chapel, family groups and class gatherings - provide the communal context for developing an incarnational perspective, in learning to love God by loving others.

The need for the church today is to learn to love God afresh with all our hearts, with all our minds and with all our strength. Devotional passion (heart) cannot and must not be divorced from theological preparation (mind), in better developing missional precision (hands). For in so doing, the seminary becomes a place where we learn to love the Lord with all our faculties and where 'heart and head, go hand in hand'! ❖

TTC's 71st Graduation Service

By Koh Chao Rui, MDiv 1

TTC's 71st Graduation Service is a testament to the Potter's hands in both the event and in the graduating cohort through and through.

Just a week leading up to this significant milestone for every aspiring graduand, the local authorities announced tightened measures due to the escalating COVID-19 situation. Revised measures imposed left everyone wondering if the graduation service could proceed as planned.

Through God's grace, the college leadership and organising committee responded to the situation in their stride, culminating in the eventual graduation service being held onsite at the TTC Chapel on 15 May, Saturday.

By a-quarter-to-three that blazing afternoon, the graduands and faculty members, donning their academic regalia, were all promptly seated. While the restricted measures meant that esteemed guests and family members could not attend the ceremony in person, the atmosphere at the Chapel was nonetheless filled with exuberant joy in gratitude to God for his faithfulness.

At the strike of 3:00pm, ecclesiastical leaders and appointment holders marched into the Chapel to the hymn, "Praise My Soul, the King of Heaven". This was followed by the recitation of Scripture and community prayer by denominational representatives



Office bearers in procession



Waiting for conferment of degrees

The Right Reverend Terry Kee, Bishop of the Lutheran Church in Singapore and Chairman of the TTC Board of Governors, delivered the keynote address "A Moulded Vessel" based on Jer 18:1-6. His exhortation, peppered with personal experiences spanning four decades of ministry challenged the graduands to let God shape and mould them even after their theological equipping and spiritual formation at TTC.

Principal Rev Dr Edwin Tay, in pronouncing the Charge, tapped on the "TTC" acronym to encourage the graduating students to be always 'Teachable', 'Trustworthy' and 'Christ-like', staying true to the college's motto *Lux Mundi*, 'Light of the World'. Dr Tay, together with Academic Dean, Rev Dr Lim Teck Peng, then presented certificates to the respective graduating classes as each student proudly took his/her stand at the altar area. The valedictorians, Ms Cai

Yinhong (English Department) and Mr Teh You Siong (Chinese Department) offered words of appreciation to faculty, reflections on their journey of equipping, and thanks to God.

In closing, the Principal thanked family members, friends and supporters of TTC for their unwavering support, through their presence, prayers, pledges, and strategic partnership in raising workers for God's harvest field. The event concluded on a high note with a pre-recorded performance masterfully presented by our very own TTC choral ensemble. ❖

A Moulded Vessel - Class of 2021

By Cai Yin Hong, MDiv 2021

At TTC, the valedictorian is chosen not only on the basis of academic excellence, but also contributions to the TTC family, service to the church and the community at large. Credi Cai (more popularly known on campus as Cai Yin Hong), one of our two valedictorians for the Class of 2021 shared, the following thoughts in her speech:

Graduation Service 2021

We thank God for bringing us through our TTC journey. On behalf of the graduating class, we wish to thank the principal, administration, faculty, our supporting churches, family and friends for generously supporting us throughout our studies.

The theme of our graduating class is 'A Moulded Vessel', and I can think of two major ways that God moulds us at TTC.

God shapes us as his sons and daughters

Some describe the time at TTC as a crucible where God purifies us through his refining fire. In this 'whole new world' of theology, we discover that the more we learn about God, the more he leads us into situations that refine our faith, where we begin to personally experience these truths about God.

Indeed, many of us went through very challenging situations. Some were confronted with family members who were taken ill, the loss of loved ones, the shock of being burnt by a gas explosion, being hospitalised for dengue, or the stresses that come with juggling family, ministry and studies. In those moments, we were brought to our knees in prayer. Yet, it was also in those moments that we experienced God and his love in deeper ways, and learnt to depend on him.

At TTC, God exposes our vulnerabilities, to prune and purify our faith, moulding and shaping us as his beloved sons and daughters.

God sharpens us as his servants

Some may also compare TTC to an 'army training camp', referring to its rigorous academic programme that aims to equip us for full-time Christian work. But it is not all about academic learning. God also uses other means to train us for ministry. I was encouraged to see classmates prayerfully step up to serve in the community, reach out in pastoral and practical ways to those struggling, or remain faithful in their spiritual disciplines and accountability. Those too became places where one honed skills and virtues essential for ministry.



Teh You Siong (centre), valedictorian from the Chinese Department

Leadership opportunities, pastoral situations, and lives' crises became our classrooms for learning. In them, what we learn in our heads, travels to our hearts, translates into action through our hands, and ultimately transforms our lives. Through them, God sharpens us as his servants, moulding us into his vessels that convey his presence and carry out his work in the world.

As we graduate from TTC, may we continue to be moulded as God's vessels, shaped as his children, and sharpened as his servants. ❖



Cai Yin Hong, valedictorian from the English Department



From Anti-Christian to Pioneering Servant

By Rev Dr Chiang Ming Shun

On 12 Jun 2021, TTC bade *au revoir* to one of its highly respected and deeply loved former principals when Rev Dr Choong Chee Pang was called to glory.

Dr Choong not only helped transform TTC into an internationally renowned theological college, he also became the face of it nationally: he was repeatedly invited by Channel 8 to comment on television on social and cultural issues, and current affairs. A contemporary colleague of his, Rev Dr Lee Chong Kau, remembered two occasions when taxi-drivers recognised TTC because of the association with Dr Choong after they had seen him on television. Dr Choong's sensible and sincere Christian voice gave many a positive impression of Christianity, and he served on the Presidential Council for Religious Harmony for many years.

Overseas, Dr Choong was recognised as a Chinese Christian expert in Chinese culture and Confucian studies. He was Chairperson for the Lutheran World Federation's China Study Programme, as well



Rev Dr Choong at TTC Chapel, Mt Sophia

as its Academic Consultant for Christian Studies in China. In the mid-1980s he was invited to lecture on Christianity at the Department of Philosophy at Beijing University and thereafter was a regular Visiting Professor not only at Beijing, but also at Fudan University in Shanghai. And yet Dr Choong came from a humble, anti-Christian background.

Dr Choong was born on 10 Sep 1942 in a small mining village near Ipoh, Malaysia. He was a student at Yoke Choy High School, the largest Chinese high school in Perak, and because he was Chinese-educated, Dr Choong would later say that made him "quite naturally very much against the Christian faith." He and his friends read books that reinforced his 'anti-Christian biases'. He was not very religious, but he admitted that 'ancestor worship and other superstitions were part of my life'. His family was poor, so much so that on three occasions he nearly had to stop school because there was not enough money. This poverty made Dr Choong increasingly pessimistic about life.

However, when he was 14, Lutheran missionaries visited his village to give Dr Choong his first contact with Christianity. Two years later, on Easter in 1957 Dr Choong was baptised. His mother, a sister and two brothers were all converted at the same time. Then his grandparents became Christians and finally his father, three generations converted within five years. His conversion gave Dr Choong a new hope and confidence.

Even with no finances, Dr Choong applied to both National Taiwan University and the then Nanyang University in Singapore. When he was

admitted to Nanyang University (NanDa) in 1961 to study literature and political science, the Lutheran Church gave him a scholarship. His conversion experience and his time in university led Dr Choong to be active both in the Lutheran Church as well as in the Varsity Christian Fellowship, where he rose to be president of the Fellowship. In his final year at NanDa, Dr Choong received two letters just before Christmas in 1964. The first was from the Vice-Chancellor of NanDa, offering him a scholarship to do a PhD in Canada with a view of him joining the faculty later. This was what Dr Choong had been dreaming of!

But the second letter came from the Fellowship of Evangelical Students (FES), inviting him to serve as a staff worker working among Chinese-educated students. Dr Choong struggled, "Coming from a poor family and being ambitious about my future... It was a very difficult decision, but the Lord gave me grace and courage to make it...if we truly understand the meaning of discipleship and Christian commitment, to decide to become a full-time worker is itself quite a natural thing."

Dr Choong joined FES and became its first Travelling Secretary, moving throughout Malaysia and Singapore. He married Choon Huah in 1966, having first met her at NanDa where she was his vice-president in the Christian Fellowship. In 1969, Dr Choong left for theological training in Australia, studying for a Licentiate of Theology. But ever the hardworking student, Dr Choong simultaneously earned a Bachelor of Divinity from the University of London as an external student. Returning in 1972 to be associate pastor at the Lutheran Church of Our Redeemer, Dr Choong also became a part-time lecturer at both TTC (teaching New Testament in Chinese) and at the Singapore Bible College (teaching Christian Doctrine in English). In January 1977, Dr Choong completed his PhD at the University of Aberdeen in Scotland with a thesis titled, '*Doctrinal and Exegetical Issues in the Hindu-Christian Debate During the Nineteenth Bengal Renaissance, with Special Reference to Paul's Teaching on the Religions of the Nations*'.

Returning to Singapore, Dr Choong joined TTC full time in April 1977 and was inducted as lecturer on 13 Sep 1977, and concurrently appointed assistant

Dean of Studies. He served not for material rewards, because his monthly pay initially did not qualify him for a Professional Pass; he only earned enough to get a Work Permit from the then Ministry of Labour. Nevertheless, he laboured in TTC for about a quarter of a century. He was appointed Acting Principal from 1 Aug 1982 and then Principal, serving for nine years, until 16 May 1991. By then he had broken two records: the first for being the longest serving



Rev Dr Choong

Principal up to that point, and the second for being the only Principal appointed to a second term of six years, instead of three. But Dr Choong did not leave TTC entirely. After a year of research at Oxford University, he returned to continue lecturing here.

Dr Choong once asked, "[I]n our materialistic world which adopts a totally different philosophy of life, how are we as Christians going to be effective in that kind of situation?" One could answer that question by pointing to Dr Choong's life of service. He was the very image of what gracious Christian faith

should look like. He lived his faith, breaking new ground for the Church in Singapore and in China. He sowed into the lives of a myriad of students, who can never be above their teacher but who all hope to be like him.

We will see you later with your full reward in front of our Father, Dr Choong! ❖

.....
...if we truly understand the meaning of discipleship and Christian commitment, to decide to become a full-time worker is itself quite a natural thing.
.....



Rev Dr Chiang Ming Shun

Associate Dean
Lecturer in Church History

Webinar with Minister Lawrence Wong

By Dr Leow Theng Huat, Acting Associate Dean, Lecturer in Theology

The ETHOS Institute for Public Christianity held a Zoom webinar entitled “Church and Society in Pandemic Times: An Evening with Minister Lawrence Wong” on the evening of 22 Apr 2021. As the title suggests, this was an opportunity for the Christian community in Singapore to hear from the co-chairperson of the Multi-Ministry Taskforce on COVID-19 on the effects of the pandemic on both church and society and the government’s efforts to mitigate the negative outcomes.



After an opening prayer by Rev Dr Gordon Wong, the Bishop of the Methodist Church in Singapore, the seminar began with Mr Lawrence Wong giving a short address. The bulk of the session consisted of a time of interaction, where the participants posed their questions to the minister, who provided frank and detailed answers which significantly

increased our awareness of the key issues at hand. This segment was expertly moderated by Rev Dr Edmund Fong, a lecturer at Trinity Theological College. At the close of the session, the principal of this college, Rev Dr Edwin Tay, gave thanks to God for a fruitful seminar and prayed for continued wisdom and strength to be given to our government leaders.

The ETHOS Institute is grateful to Mr Lawrence Wong for taking time off his busy schedule to meet with us. Through his sharing of his experiences and insights, we have been encouraged to persevere and do our part in the long struggle against the pandemic, as part of the church’s witness and blessing to our society and nation. ❖



EQUIP Modules : September to November 2021

How Then Shall We Live?	New Testament Survey	Issues in Mission	Living by the Word of God
Rev Nathanael Goh (Instructor)	Rev Dr Leonard Wee (Instructor)	Rev Canon Yee Ching Wah Mr Lawrence Ko (Instructors)	Rev Dr Soh Guan Chin (Instructor)
Dates : 20 Sep — 1 Nov Every Monday	Dates : 21 Sep — 2 Nov Every Tuesday	Dates : 22 Sep — 3 Nov Every Wednesday	Dates : 23 Sep — 11 Nov Every Thursday

All Modules are Conducted from 7:30pm - 9.30pm

Visit www.ttc.edu.sg for more details



TRINITY NEWS

Congratulations to...

The following alumni on their ordination into the Diaconate of the (Anglican) Diocese of Singapore on 9 May 2021:

Rev Cheng Tiang Ping Aaron (MDiv 2019)
Rev Choo Cheng Leong (BD 2018)
Rev Loy Chun Teng Brandon (BD 2015)

Our alumnus Rev Lu Guan Hoe (BD 1988), on his installation as Bishop of the Lutheran Church in Singapore (LCS) on 26 Jun 2021. He was elected as Bishop at LCS’s 25th Annual General Meeting on 22 May 2021.

Bernard Chao (MDiv 2005) who was conferred the Doctor of Philosophy in Theology on 12 Jun 2021 at the 72nd Annual Commencement of Fuller Theological Seminary.

David Raju (BD 2016) and Mary Shiny who were joined in holy matrimony on 8 Apr 2021.

Ilango s/o Yagambaram (MDiv 2020) and Diana Cheong (MDiv 1) on their marriage on 10 Apr 2021.

Jerome Li Wencong (BD 2017) and his wife, Jin Shi, who celebrated the arrival of their daughter, Noah Li Nuo Han, on 21 Apr 2021.

Joshua Ong (MDiv 2018) and his wife, Cecilia Pek (MDiv 2019), who celebrated the arrival of their daughter, Elyse Ong, on 11 May 2021.

Liu Weizhen (DipTS 2020) and his wife, Zhou Lili, who celebrated the arrival of their son, Liu Muyang, on 12 May 2021.

Isaac Ngo (MDiv 2021) and his wife, Germaine Tan, who celebrated the arrival of their daughter, Estelle Ngo, on 26 May 2021.

Darren Huang (MDiv 3) and his wife, Denise Ho, who welcomed their firstborn, Noelle Moriah Huang, on 3 Jul 2021.

Rev Ricky Wong Wai Hung (MDiv 2012) who was ordained at the Trinity Theological Baptist Church, on 2 May 2021.

Condolences to...

Rev Dr Lynette Sathiasingam (MDiv 2004) on the demise of her beloved father, the late Mr Sathiasingam Poologasingam, on 31 Jan 2021.

Rev Dr Simon Chan, former faculty member, and Mrs Chan, on the passing of Dr Chan’s beloved mother, the late Mdm Phua Meow Keow, on 21 May 2021.

Kruneilie Neingusienuo (MTh 2020), on the passing of her beloved brother, the late Mhanyivituo, on 22 May 2021.

Rev Dr Joshua Sudharman (MDiv 2008), on the demise of his beloved father, the late Mr Sudharman Dharan, on 23 May 2021.

Rev Dr Lim Teck Peng, Academic Dean of TTC, on the passing of his father-in-law, the late Mr Tan Ah Nee, on 8 Jun 2021.

Mdm Koay Choon Huah and her family on the passing of Rev Dr Choong Chee Pang, on 12 Jun 2021. Rev Dr Choong was TTC’s eighth principal (1982-1991) and served at the College from 1977-2001.

Ven Wong Tak Meng (MDiv 2001) on the passing of his beloved father, the late Mr Wong Kok Hwa, on 12 Jun 2021.

Jacob Lim (BD 2017) and Charmaine Tang (MDiv 2017) on the passing of their daughter, the late Eliza Althea Lim, on 14 Jun 2021.

The family of the late Ring Lian Thang (MMin 2009), who was called home to be with the Lord on 30 Jun 2021.

Rev Terry Kee (former member, Chairman and Vice-Chairman of TTC Board of Governors) on the passing of his father-in-law, the late Mr Lim Siew Hon, on 25 Jun 21.

Pastor David Illuri (BD 2016) on the demise of his beloved father, the late Rev Dr Illuri Emmanuel Jacob Raju who went to be with the Lord on 23 Jul 21.



**1 Sep 2021, Wed, 10:00am - 11:30am
via Zoom**

Join us to find out more about what
Trinity Theological College has to
offer and how you can sign up for
our courses and programmes



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TTC develops in students a mature understanding of the historic and biblical faith through an academically rigorous, spiritually nourishing, and vocationally formative curriculum that reflects a variety of church traditions from an Asian perspective.

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- *Lisman Komaladi (MTS 2016), General-Secretary, Fellowship of Evangelical Students*

“TTC not only provides a robust environment for theological dialogue and debates, but it also provides an inter-denominational platform for me to interact with my fellow classmates from different church traditions. In addition, the international nature of the community offers me a broader perspective of our faith from different cultures.”
- *Louis Leong (MDiv 3), Acts Centre, English Congregation of My Saviour's Church*

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- By Way of Bequests to TTC. We shall be pleased to discuss this plan with you. You may email the principal@ttc.edu.sg or call 6767 6677



To view the Chinese edition of
Trumpet, please visit our website
www.ttc.edu.sg

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