



A Light has Dawned

By Dr Roland Chia

The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned (Isa 9:2).

In a recent article published on the International Monetary Fund website, Senior Minister Tharman Shanmugaratnam paints a bleak picture of the state of the world, two years after the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic:

The pandemic, war in Ukraine, the threat to food security, and the resurgence of global poverty. Heatwaves, droughts, and other extreme weather events. These are not random shocks. Nor are they a perfect storm in the conventional sense, a one-off conjuncture of bad events. We face instead a confluence of lasting structural insecurities—geopolitical, economic, and existential—each reinforcing the other. We have entered a perfect long storm.

The Minister issues a warning to those who are naïve enough to think that these realities are too far away from them (war in Ukraine) or that they are too abstract (global poverty). “We cannot wish away these insecurities,” he adds, “or hope that the problems that occupy one part of the world will not rebound on others.”

Surveying the troubles that plague our world can be an unnerving experience. It is all too easy to be seized by chronic pessimism as we are bombarded daily with one piece of bad news after another.

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Are there real solutions to the seemingly endless and insurmountable challenges that plague and harass our world? Are we facing the prospect of World War III? Do the nations have the political will to address the current ecological crisis? When will our troubles end? How will they end?

We have more questions than answers!

As we approach Christmas, the lectionary readings and carols invite us to cast our eyes yonder—beyond the wars, rumours of wars and pestilences that grip our world, and to, perhaps, catch a glimpse of another reality.

They urge us to look beyond Ukraine, Syria, Afghanistan, Somalia, Myanmar, Yemen—and all the current political hotspots in our conflicted world—and to fix our gaze instead on Bethlehem!

This is not a tacit refusal to confront the stark realities of our time, a childish and irresponsible exercise in escapism. The invitation rather is for us to penetrate the very real troubles around us in such a way that we are confronted with another—deeper—reality.

Put differently, Christmas urges us never to allow the bad news that relentlessly presses upon us from all sides to obfuscate the Good News!

That Good News is announced in this season's oft-read passage from the Gospel of Matthew: "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel, which is translated 'God with us'" (1:23).

Christmas reminds us that in the "deep darkness" of our world "a light has dawned". The second person of the Triune God—God himself—has entered into our history and our world: he has become flesh and "tabernacled among us" (John 1:14).

He will deliver us from the darkness of sin and death. He will still the storms of our fallen world and transfigure his sin-marred creation into something unimaginably beautiful (Rev 21).

Christmas invites us to put our faith in this God amidst the distresses of our world.

Now faith is the antithesis of fear. In the absence of faith, fear will surely rule. But when we put our faith in the Almighty and sovereign God, fear can have no power over us.

We learn this from the psalmists of old.

"The Lord is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my

life—of whom shall I be afraid?" (Ps 27:1). "When I am afraid, I will trust in you. In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I will not be afraid." (Ps 56:3-4).

Christmas also invites us to put our hope in God, who is illimitable love (1 John 4:8).

The great Christian philosopher Josef Pieper has arrestingly described faith as "the virtue of the 'not yet'". Hope longs for a future that is still distant. But hope sees a future that is in the hands of God, a future made certain because of his promises.

Hope issues from faith, and together they give Christians the courage and fortitude to face the most intense of challenges.

Christmas reminds us never to fear or despair, but always to put our faith and hope in God.

As we weather the "perfect long storm", we are never alone—the sovereign God, whose name is Emmanuel, is with us! Although the world is buffeted from all sides by

dehumanising evil and chaos, our Saviour has come!

In the deep darkness of our fallen world, a light has indeed dawned! It "shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it" (John 1:5).

Christmas reminds us never to fear or despair, but always to put our faith and hope in God.

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Dr Roland Chia
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Lessons from the Pandemic

We are marking the close of 2022 in a vastly different context from that of the previous two years. Singapore's DORSCON level was lowered from Orange to Yellow on 26 Apr 2022. According to the Ministry of Health's vaccination statistics, at least 92 per cent of our local population have taken the primary vaccination series. Safe distancing and restrictions for social gatherings and religious services have been removed. Mask wearing is now optional in most settings.

Thanks be to God; we have turned the corner in our fight against the pandemic. This is cause for much rejoicing. Important lessons have been learnt in the storm of the pandemic that would not have been possible on the pond of tranquility. Be it fresh perspectives to old lessons or new ones, we ought to take stock of them lest they be lost in the euphoria of our advance into Covid resilience.

Allow me to reflect on two discernible lessons among others that have shaped our college's journey through these pandemic years. **Firstly, integrity.** Changes to community life that needed to be made in the light of health measures were guided by the conviction that the nature and quality of theological education should not be compromised. The concern for integrity was evident, for instance, in the faculty's perspective on the relative importance of online platforms for lesson delivery. We were clear that the best condition for the theological formation of students is face-to-face engagement in the context of a worshipping community.

Online platforms were not deployed as replacements but complements to in-person learning. Thus, in-person classes, chapel services and family groups were optimised within the limits permissible by the authorities. This meant that every aspect of community life was recalibrated with each release of new health measures.

Going entirely online would have made ground operations more convenient, reduced the strain on human resources, and possibly increased student enrolment. However, we chose to walk the narrow road. International students who could not matriculate in Singapore due to border restrictions were advised to defer studies until conditions were favourable. Faculty and staff worked hard to ensure that the theological formation of students was not compromised for the sake of survival or convenience.

Second, service. Self-preservation as the dominant posture was a tempting option in the face of an unknown and uncertain future. Policy decisions could have veered towards the preservation of resources to bolster a sense of security amid trying times. However, TTC chose to steward our resources with the goal of service in mind.

We continued to sponsor two-thirds of tuition fees for all students although the strain on our financial resources was felt. TTC made available our e-books subscription to alumni at no charge out of concern for pastors and theological educators in the region who were unable to access theological resources for ministry. At the height of the pandemic, our library staff went the extra mile of scanning materials upon request and forwarding them to alumni whose movements were restricted by health measures.

The post-pandemic world not only feels the pain of having lost 6.5 million people to the coronavirus, but also the trauma of the ongoing war in Europe. Although we have turned a corner in our fight against the pandemic, this is not the time to sound a victory cry. It is a time to identify with a suffering world through lives of sober commitment and dedicated service to God. This is the posture of TTC as we cross the threshold of a new year.

TTC will be marking our 75th anniversary in 2023. Celebratory events throughout the year will climax in October with a thanksgiving service and a dinner. A calendar of events can be found in the center pages of this edition of the Trumpet. The faculty has chosen as our anniversary theme, "Changing World, Unchanging Light." It is our prayer that God, who has established TTC from the ashes of war to be *lux mundi*, will continue to empower us as witnesses of Jesus Christ in a suffering world. ❖





Religious Voices in the Public Sphere

By Rev Dr Jeremy-Joe Tan

The recent announcement to repeal Section 377A of the Penal Code has led to a deluge of comments and statements. Christian denominations and their leaders, for one, have voiced their response to the repeal along with their views on the wider issue of marriage and family. However, their voice was not entirely welcomed. A recurrent retort that I have encountered both on social media and in personal conversations questions the legitimacy of their voice. It asserts that as Singapore is a secular state, religion and religious voices should stay out of the public sphere. But is this claim valid?

The first half of that assertion is true—Singapore is indeed a secular state. While this secularity is not hardcoded in our Constitution, the 1966 Constitutional Commission Report does describe Singapore as a “democratic secular state”. Furthermore, our history and practice since then have shown a commitment to this secular democracy. Political and legal authority are based on democratic processes and the Constitution, not divine revelation or legitimacy bestowed by a religious figure.

Moreover, a line has been drawn between religion and politics. Religious groups and their leaders are not allowed to subvert, hijack, or usurp political authority. Neither should they assert undue influence

on the political processes or government decisions. One main reason for this is Singapore’s religious diversity. A 2014 Pew Research Centre report ranked Singapore as the most religiously diverse country in the world. The state must therefore remain religiously neutral to ensure fairness and equitability to all its citizens regardless of their religion, if any at all, so that public and social order maybe upheld.

But does this mean that religion and religious voices are barred from the public sphere? Not at all. Singapore’s secularism is not of the militant or fundamentalist variety that seeks the complete removal of religion from the public domain. The secularism here is more moderate, practical, and reasonable. It has variously been termed as accommodative secularism or pragmatic secularism, although we should note that the government has never committed itself to a singular term or definition.

Evolved within our own context, Singapore’s model of secular democracy allows religious voices to participate in public discourse whether on national matters, social issues, or public policies. Yet this allowance does not mean that their voice is privileged or beyond criticism. It is just one voice amongst many in the public sphere. Such an approach is in line with the more participatory and consultative stance that the government has been taking towards

public policy decisions. Citizens and social groups have been more actively engaged in the political processes as a recognition of a maturing and more educated electorate.

That being the case, a crucial distinction must be made. Singapore’s commitment to secular democracy means that religious concerns do not form the central consideration in government decisions even though they are heard. Take the debate on casinos in 2005 as an example. Many voices, especially religious ones, voiced their concerns about it through the public consultation process. Nonetheless, the government decided to go ahead with it because of its economic benefits. Their final decision was clearly based on secular and public considerations. However, the final decision also included many policy mitigations that were based on public feedback, especially those of religious leaders. This process displayed both a commitment to a secular state ideal and yet willingness to allow religions a voice in society.

But why has Singapore chosen such an approach? Is it not easier to banish religion from the public sphere altogether? While this might be expedient, such a demand is unrealistic. It is unfair and untenable to ask religious citizens to draw a dichotomy between their public civic self and their deepest convictions, that is, their religious convictions. This point was astutely made in the 1989 Maintenance of Religious Harmony White Paper. It states that it is “neither possible nor desirable to compartmentalise completely the minds of voters into secular and religious halves, and ensure that only the secular mind influences his voting behaviour”. This was reiterated by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong (PM Lee) in his 2009 National Day Rally speech. He recognised that religious beliefs are “part of you...your individual, your personality”. It will naturally inform and guide us even when we approach national issues.

This articulates an important truth worth underscoring. Religion is a personal affair, but it is not a private affair. Religion has a definite public dimension to it because it fundamentally informs our worldview. It has bearing on our values and impacts the way we view all things. The religious citizen’s opinion will naturally have some measure of religious grounding, whether implicit or explicit. Moreover, a democracy entails that they can voice

that opinion in the public sphere. This is why religion cannot be expelled from the public sphere.

This resurgence or rediscovery of religion in society is not unique to Singapore. This has led thinkers such as Jürgen Habermas and Charles Taylor to posit that we are now living in a post-secular age. Against the Western secularisation thesis, religion has not faded into the margins of society as the private beliefs of individuals regardless of how modern or rational a country is. Religion remains a clear facet of life in many societies. This is certainly true of Singapore.

The Department of Statistics’ 2020 population census showed that 80 per cent of Singaporeans profess a religious affiliation. But more than that, Singaporeans are also taking their faiths more seriously. This observation was made by PM Lee in 2015 at the 66th anniversary of the Inter-Religious Organisation. In his opinion, this increase in religiosity was a positive trend as “religious faiths are strong anchors for good morals and caring communities”. Clearly, religion is here to stay.

In conclusion, we could say that Singapore is a secular state and a religious society. This has led to a pragmatic *modus vivendi* in which

religion is afforded a voice in society. But while its voice may be heard, the government remain neutral and its considerations remains secular. Untidy as it is, it gives credence to both the need for social harmony and the reality of its citizens’ religious beliefs. Social harmony is upheld through that state neutrality and the separation of religion from politics. But its citizens’ religiosity is affirmed by not separating religion from the society. Or to put it simply, religious voices are allowed in the public sphere. ❖

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Rev Dr Jeremy-Joe Tan
Lecturer in Theology



Church Leadership: Copying or Contrast to Society?

By Rev Dr Bernard Chao

This is the final article of a three-part series on church leadership in Singapore discussing the findings and implications from the writer's research on the underlying beliefs shaping the relationship between leaders and laity in Singapore's Protestant churches: *Narratives and Ideologies that Shape Power Relations in Singapore Protestant Churches* (Fuller Theological Seminary, 2021).

their role or office. Authoritarian, directive, harsh, oppressive, and coercive behavior by leaders is accepted, minimised, or excused. Consequently, leaders have greater control over leadership tasks and processes. In contrast, the voice and input of laity in church leadership and decision-making are effectively muted or silenced. The agency of laity to contribute to shaping decision-making processes, initiating new programmes or ministries, or holding leaders accountable is also largely suppressed.

Churches Copying Society

These leadership beliefs and practices of the respondents' churches were influenced by and mirrored norms, ideologies, and narratives present in Singaporean society. The respondents directly and indirectly referenced how experiences in their cultural upbringing, education, national service, business environments, and the political development and narratives of the nation, influenced and shaped their thinking and behaviour. This qualitative data resonates with scholarship that indicates that the respondents' churches mirror or copy our society in terms of three sets of norms.

The first set of norms relate to the power distance between leaders and laity in predominantly hierarchical leadership structures with power concentrated in leaders. This reflects what sociologist Chua Beng Huat calls a "hierarchical structure of unequals" that is present in Singaporean society (*Communitarian Ideology and Democracy in Singapore*, 1995). This socio-political ideology sustains a portrayal of leaders as the sole voice and arbiter of the collective or the community and creates starkly unequal relationships.

Privileging Leaders Over Laity

In the first two articles of this series, I introduced my research into the underlying beliefs that shape leadership practices and the relationship between leaders and laity, and outlined three findings. The first finding identified hierarchy as the unquestioned norm across churches of different polities. The second finding noted the presence of strong socio-cultural ideologies of paternalism and deference shaping a belief in the presumed competence of leaders as wiser, more knowledgeable, and whose opinions carry greater weight. The third finding was a corresponding belief in the presumed incompetence of laity who are minimised with a narrative that they are just sheep who passively receive direction and viewed as less knowledgeable and capable for participation in decision-making.

These findings revealed an overarching privileging of leaders over laity in the imagination and practices of the respondents' churches and an unequal power relationship between leaders and laity. Leaders are accorded respect, deference, and are regarded as competent and correct by virtue of

A second societal norm is the strong presence of paternalism, deference to, and lionising of leaders in Singaporean society. These ideologies are partly shaped by cultural upbringing and the way we have been taught to relate with both elders and persons in authority. They are also shaped by a socio-political narrative of heroic leaders that operates in Singaporean society. According to Loh Kah Seng et al, within this heroic narrative, followers are cast as ignorant and incapable and in need of wise leaders (*Living with Myths in Singapore*, 2017). The presumed competence of leaders surfaced amongst the respondents' churches echo this heroic narrative that lionises leaders.

The third norm complements this lionising of leaders. Scholars studying both Singapore society and business practices have observed a passivity in its citizens. One study has surfaced a pervading narrative of unassertiveness or devaluing of individual agency among managers in both the private and public sectors (cf McKenna & Richardson, "*Business Values, Management and Conflict Handling: Issues in Contemporary Singapore*"). This passive inclination amongst citizens is accentuated by workplace practices that shape a tendency toward unassertiveness and is reflected in the belief in the presumed incompetence of laity.

Christian Leadership in Contrast to Society

My research showed that leadership thinking and practices in the churches studied mirror the norms of Singapore society to a great extent. In the previous articles, I highlighted the dangers of these ideologies and narratives that privilege leaders over laity. Pastors, staff, and leaders will find ourselves tempted toward authoritarian, oppressive, and exclusive behavior. Our Christian commitment to love one another, unity, mutual submission, and the contribution and spiritual gifts of every believer is also endangered. In view of these temptations and dangers, should Christian leadership in our churches mirror the leadership practices of our society? Or should our churches be a witness of contrast to our society and Christian leadership expressed differently from the norms around us?

Gerhard Lohfink in *Jesus and Community* portrays the church as a "contrast-society" whose praxis of real togetherness is different from, and a witness to, the world. The church as a contrast-society experiences brotherly love and is where every member takes seriously their identity and responsibility toward

one another. In particular, such a contrast-society rejects domination by any person(s) over others. As such, leadership in the church as a contrast-society involves the grace-infused exercise of authority that is purely motivated by heart of service.

Is such a vision of Christian leadership and relationship in the church too far-fetched? How could it possibly be? Our Lord Jesus himself has commanded us: "Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:34-35).

There is more than one way to imagine and express leadership. The church is resourced and restrained by our Christian ethic of love, the guiding metaphor of servanthood, and an ecclesiology of mutuality, unity, and inclusion. We must be different. Our love for one another must also be experienced and expressed in how we exercise leadership in the church. By this too shall the world know that we are Jesus' disciples.

Redeeming Christian leadership as a contrast-society may not require a wholesale rejection of existing processes, structures, and polities. It can begin with a courageous willingness to critically reflect on existing beliefs and practices individually, in teams, or as churches.

It will require a reimagining of leadership and a reinterpretation of both unarticulated expectations and existing processes and policies. This redemptive work will call for experimentation and decisions to change current practices and to enact new habits of inclusion and mutuality and new patterns of discernment and making communal decisions. The bonus in this effort is that engaging such a process of conversation, reflection, hearing one another, and enacting new practices together would in itself be a testament of how we love each other. ❖

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Rev Dr Bernard Chao
Director, EQUIP
Lecturer in Practical Theology



75th Anniversary Calendar of Events

Trinity Theological College celebrates her 75th anniversary in 2023 with the theme: **Changing World, Unchanging Light**. It is our joy to share with you key events in this historical milestone. Our celebrations will culminate with an anniversary service and a thanksgiving dinner on Fri 6 Oct 2023.



New Professorial Chair

17 Feb | 8.00pm
TTC Chapel

Launch of the ACS Chair in the History of Christianity and the induction of the new professor

Book Launch

23 Mar | 11.30am
TTC

Launch of the book, *Chinese-speaking Churches and Chinese Worldwide*, a multi-authored book that examines the opportunities and challenges facing Chinese-speaking churches in Singapore and beyond.

Trinity Lectures

1-4 Aug | 8.00-9.30pm
TTC Chapel

Four public lectures on the theme "The Resurrection" will be presented by Prof Murray Rae from the University of Otago, New Zealand

APECSS Conference

7-9 Sep | 9.00am-6.00pm
TTC

TTC will host the 13th Annual Conference of the Asia-Pacific Early Christian Studies Society (APECSS) on the theme "Pluralistic Contexts in Early Christianity"

Anniversary Conferences

4-5 Oct | 9.00am-5.00pm

TTC will host its hybrid format 75th anniversary conference on the theme "The Church in a Changing World"

English conference: 4 Oct

Keynote speakers: Rev Dr Simon Chan and Dr Mark Chan

Launch of our 75th anniversary book written by TTC faculty *Becoming a People of Light: For a Phygital, Hyperconnected, and Fragmented World*

Chinese conference: 5 Oct

Keynote speakers: Bishop Dr Titus Chung and Rev Dr Caleb Soo

Presentation of, *Echoes*, a book of Chinese essays by TTC alumnae

Thanksgiving Service and Dinner

6 Oct

Our 75th anniversary celebrations will culminate in an anniversary service and a thanksgiving dinner



For updates and details, please visit our website:
www.ttc.edu.sg

A Living Sacrifice

By Ms Ong Ching Hui, MDiv 3

After two years of not celebrating the college's anniversary on campus together as a community, Trinity Theological College gathered to commemorate its 74th anniversary with a thanksgiving service on 7 Oct 2022. This year's anniversary theme was "A Living Sacrifice", taken from Rom 12:1.

The celebratory service was both joyful and somber—the atmosphere was jubilant, as the choir graced us with beautiful harmonies and meaningful hymns, and we had the opportunity to sing heartily without our face masks. We were also privileged to have members of our Board of Governors (BOG), alumni, and other guests join us in Holy Communion.

The preacher, the Rt Rev Lu Guan Hoe, Bishop of the Lutheran Church in Singapore and BOG Chairman, poetically reminded us of all we could be grateful for. God's grace is '丰丰富富/prosperous' and we have '充充足足/more than enough'; financial support has not wavered through the economic downturn, and newborns have joined our community. The college has new lecturers and faculty-in-training, and more people have dedicated themselves to theological education. Though many seminaries have seen a decline in applicants, TTC's admissions over the past two years have increased. In the service, we also witnessed the graduation of the following 11 EQUIP and 启承 students, nine of whom graduated in person: Certificate in Christian Ministry—Dr Chuah Seng Chye, Mr Lam Yew Chek Simon, Mr Lim Keng Chong Andrew, Ms Teng Wei Ling Joyce, Mr Goh Jen Shyang, Mdm Wong Chee San; Certificate in Mission Practice—Ms Katherine Loh Yean Hung; Licentiate in Christian Ministry—Ms Koh (Xu Jinyi) Charlene, Dr Tng Thiam Huat Tony, Ms Tong Min Wei Tricia, Ms Ho Shu Chun Isabel. We are also grateful for our long-serving staff: Ms Esther Lee, Rev Dr Wilfred Ho, Ms Tieu Ing Ing, Dr Roland Chia, and Dr Chan Yew Ming.

Yet, this celebration was subdued as we stood in solidarity with a world still experiencing great suffering and death. The pandemic endures, lands are ravaged by war, and natural disasters occur. This delicate coupling of cheerful triumph and austerity was echoed in our Principal's message, and in the juxtaposition of the Prayer of Thanksgiving and Dedication by the Rt Rev Teoh Boon Cheow and the Prayer for the Suffering and the Future by Bishop Dr Gordon Wong.

To make sense of the "negative things" that had happened, the college was encouraged to meditate on the gospel. "Good things" overrule "bad things"—Jesus' horrible death saved humanity from the debt of sin. Christ offered his life so we may have eternal life. We were also reminded to thank God for his mercy that has and continues to sustain TTC.

Moving ahead, our leaders urged us to be "living sacrifices". We are to offer our bodies and our lives to God, who is Lord of everything. The community was called to recommit and totally dedicate ourselves to serve God in this post-pandemic world. May we be *lux mundi!* ❖



Bishop Lu Guan Hoe (right), preaching at TTC's 74th anniversary service.



Graduates of our EQUIP certificate and licentiate programmes 2022.



Bishop Dr Gordon Wong making the Prayer for the Suffering and the Future.

Dr Chan Yew Ming Installed as Bishop William F Oldham Professor

By Dr Leow Theng Huat (Lecturer in Theology)

The evening of 30 Sep 2022 saw the installation of a new professor at Trinity Theological College. At a special service held at our college chapel, Dr Chan Yew Ming was inducted as the new Bishop William F Oldham Professor of Old Testament. This professorship was endowed in 2009 by Barker Road Methodist Church (BRMC), in cooperation with TTC. The previous occupant of this chair was Rev Dr Gordon Wong, the present Bishop of The Methodist Church in Singapore.



Dr Chan Yew Ming delivering his inaugural lecture.

In his welcome and introduction, our Principal, Rev Dr Edwin Tay, mentioned that the endowment of professorial chairs was a sign of the growth of the academic stature of the college. He set out the numerous accomplishments of Dr Chan, including the fact that he has served faithfully as a lecturer at TTC for over 20 years.

A special guest at this event was Rev Dr Joshua Cho Wai-Tung, the President and Academic Dean of Hong Kong Baptist Theological Seminary. Rev Dr Cho commended Dr Chan for being an outstanding scholar, an astute administrator and an excellent teacher. Students under his tutelage grow not only in knowledge but also in maturity, as Dr Chan guides them to integrate academic learning and contextual application.

As Dr Chan was officially appointed to his chair through the litany of induction, rapturous applause erupted. The pastor-in-charge of BRMC, Rev Wendy Watson, said a prayer for the new professor.

Dr Chan proceeded to deliver his inaugural lecture, entitled "Land, Faith, Identity: An Old Testament Perspective". In his usual erudite manner, Dr Chan analysed the three major themes in the title and correlated them to one another, focusing on the situation faced by the post-exilic Israelite community. He mentioned that the next stage of his research would focus on drawing out implications of this study for the contemporary struggle experienced by many over the various facets of one's identity.

We congratulate Dr Chan Yew Ming on his appointment and pray for God's guidance as he assumes his new responsibilities. ❖

We Invite You to Support the Ministry of Trinity Theological College

Your support will enable our college to:

- keep tuition fees affordable during the current pandemic,
- be equipped with a competent and dedicated faculty,
- offer financial subsidies to less fortunate students, and
- house an outstanding theological library.

Here are some ways you may contribute to our ministry. By:

- cheque to **Trinity Theological College**,
- bank or ATM transfer to our DBS current account **033-017261-3**,
- **PayNow** to UEN T01CC1488C, or via QR code, or
- a **bequest** to TTC. We would be pleased to discuss this plan with you. Please email us at principal@ttc.edu.sg or call 6767 6677.



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



From Alumnus to Principal

By Rev Dr Chiang Ming Shun

The *Biographical Dictionary of Chinese Christianity* identifies Rev Dr Stephen Tan as a “diasporic Chinese pastor, theologian, migrant and missionary to China”. But TTC will always remember him as our 7th Principal. He was not just the first Singaporean Principal, but also the first TTC alumnus to be appointed Principal.

Rev Dr Stephen Tan Chin Kwang (陈振光) was born into a Christian home on 26 Dec 1932 in Guantang village in Guangdong province in China. His great-grandfather Chen Kaijun (陈开俊) was a Presbyterian who had co-founded the first church in the village. The church would then join the Lingtung Synod of the Church of Christ in China and Dr Tan’s father, Chen Rouhui (陈柔惠), would in time

become an elder and pastor of the Lingtung Synod. Dr Tan, his great-grandfather, and his father would be just three of many pastors, preachers, elders, evangelists, and church leaders the Tan clan would produce over the years.

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...diasporic Chinese pastor, theologian, migrant and missionary to China.
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It was only after the death of Dr Tan’s father that Dr Tan came to Singapore as a teenager in 1946. He was accompanied by his mother and third brother. His second sister and eldest brother had left for Singapore earlier in 1937, and they had joined a Teochew church in Bukit Timah: Glory Presbyterian Church. Dr Tan would also find a home in this church.

It was in the Youth Fellowship at Glory Presbyterian Church that the young Dr Tan caught the eye of John Robb Fleming. Fleming was a Church of Scotland missionary who originally intended to join the Indian Civil Service but changed his mind as an undergraduate and ended up as a missionary in Mukden (Shenyang). The work in Mukden was interrupted by the Second World War and Fleming was initially and briefly evacuated to Singapore. After the war, Fleming returned to China but was expelled by the Communists and came again to Singapore in 1951 where he served as the first general secretary of the Malayan Christian Council. He also lectured at TTC.

The teenage Dr Tan was Fleming’s translator in his work among the Chinese in Malaya. Because of this close relationship, Fleming helped Dr Tan secure a place at TTC, even though he did not have the



Glory Presbyterian Church was Rev Dr Stephen Tan’s first church in Singapore.

requisite secondary school or high school graduation certificate. At TTC, Dr Tan took up a Chinese-language Theological training course for three years from 1952-1955, and then enrolled in the English-language degree programme from 1955 to 1958. After that, Fleming helped Dr Tan obtain support to continue graduate studies at the University of Edinburgh, the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey, Switzerland, and then at Princeton Theological Seminary.

Dr Tan returned to Malaysia as a pastor and was ordained in 1967 at Kluang, Johor, one of the first local Presbyterian pastors in independent Malaysia. But when the Singapore and Malaysia Synods of the Presbyterian Church separated in 1970, Dr Tan joined the Singapore Synod first as its Moderator, and then General Secretary, while serving at True Way Presbyterian Church. When the National Council of Churches of Singapore was constituted in 1974, Dr Tan was its Honorary General Secretary. Then in 1975, Dr Tan was appointed the first Singaporean Principal of TTC.

During his tenure as TTC’s Principal, the college made significant progress in the development of an Asian faculty whose members are sensitive to the local and Asian contexts in the tasks of theologising and theological training. It was also during his tenure that the Master of Divinity programme was introduced at TTC. And as Principal, Dr Tan had a leading role in the Association for Theological Education in Southeast Asia (ATESEA). In recognition of his contributions towards theological education in South-East Asia, Dr Tan was conferred the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity by Baldwin-Wallace College, Ohio, in 1979. The next year, during his sabbatical, Dr Tan went to San Francisco Theological Seminary and completed a Doctor of Ministry.



Rev Dr Stephen Tan (first from left).

Beyond theological education, Dr Tan was also deeply involved in missions work. The same year he was appointed Principal of TTC, Dr Tan was a key participant in a consultation in Singapore that led to the establishment of the Council for World Mission (CWM). CWM went on to appoint Dr Tan as its missionary-at-large from 1977.

After his tenure as TTC Principal, Dr Tan started three decades of work in China as a missionary representative of CWM, lecturing and teaching across seven seminaries, and building relationships between the church in China, CWM and TTC.

Dr Tan is a fine example of a pastor, theologian and educator firmly rooted not just in the seminary and the Church, but also in missions work. He spent himself for God, and for more than seven decades humbly served in Malaysia, Singapore, and China, before returning home in glory on 24 June 2022. “Enter into the joy of your master.”

This article depended gratefully and heavily on the work of Joshua Tan of the University of California, Santa Cruz who was a Research Fellow at the National Library of Singapore. ❖



TTC’s 7th Principal, the late Rev Dr Stephen Tan



Rev Dr Chiang Ming Shun
Associate Dean
Lecturer in Church History

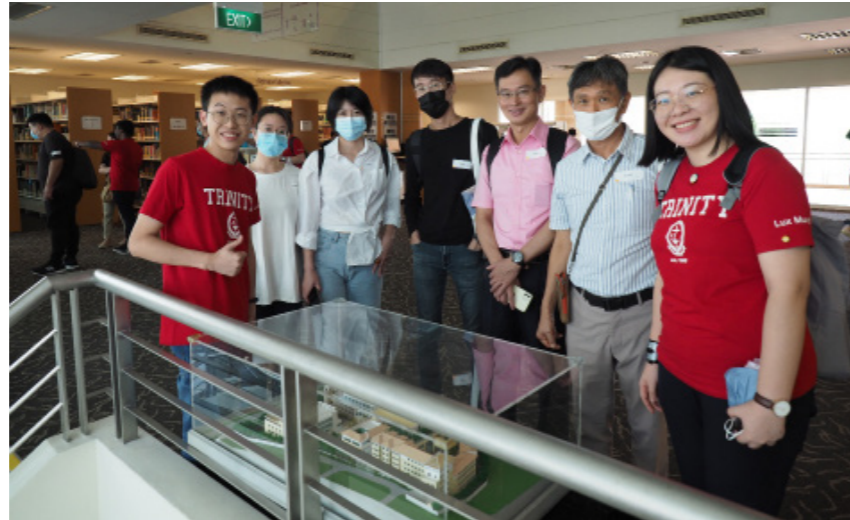
College's Events

Open House 2022

By Mr Joshua Loke, MDiv 3

The TTC Open House 2022 saw many potential students having the opportunity to learn more about TTC'S brand of education and what it entails. The day began with the Principal's welcome, and an introduction to the application process. Our visitors also had the chance to hear lecturers' rationale behind pursuing a theological education, as well as from students' personal experiences.

During the break, visitors got to interact with both lecturers and students and shared their own journeys. Afterwards, they attended a lecture on the New Testament by Dr Leonard Wee, and joined the TTC community in worship at the chapel service. Conversations continued at lunch, and the day ended with a campus tour. ❖



Some potential students on a campus tour which included a visit to our library.

Cultural Night

By Mr Ho Qi Heng, MDiv 2

The TTC Cultural Night returned after a two-year hiatus due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Held on 2 Sep, it was attended by more than 150 participants including faculty, staff, students and their families. This was the first time that most of the current students had the opportunity to experience the event that served to foster a greater sense of community in the TTC body. Students of different cultural background and nationalities enthusiastically served up delicacies unique to their hometowns over dinner, with faculty and staff also chipping in to ensure that no one was left "unfilled". The performance segment by students and even our Dean of Students thereafter brought much laughter and joy. Our hearts were filled with gratitude as we ended the night singing Amazing Grace together in our various tongues, giving thanks to our God who has gathered us into one family as his children. ❖



The performance segment brought much laughter and joy.

TRINITY NEWS

Congratulations to...

Seth Tan (MDiv 2019) and Sarah Tang who were joined in holy matrimony on 23 Jul 2022.

Rev Jason Phua (MDiv 2011) and his wife, Belinda, on the safe delivery of their third born, a baby boy, Emmaus Phua on 26 Jul 2022.

Rev Gabriel Ling (MDiv 2016) and Tan Wan Lin (MDiv 2016) on the birth of their new baby, Elyana Ling Cong Xin, on 4 Aug 2022.

Han XiaoHuan (MMin 2019) and her husband for the new addition to their family, a baby girl, Li Yijin, on 18 Aug 2022.

Mark Lai (MDiv 2020) and Chessa Lim (MTS 2022) on the arrival of their baby girl, Ameniah Lai, on 2 Sep 2022.

Newly weds Jonathan Huang (MDiv 2016) and Elysa Chen (MDiv 2016) who celebrated their special day on 18 Sep 2022.

Preacher Andrea Ong (MDiv 2018) on her ordination and her installation as Associate Minister of Bethel Presbyterian Church by the Chinese Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church in Singapore on 8 Oct 2022.

Esther Sangeetha Moses (MDiv 2019) and Amit John David who started their journey as husband and wife on 24 Oct 2022.

Rev Liew Kek Ming (MTh 2008) on his election as Chinese Annual Conference Bishop of the Methodist Church in Malaysia on 8 Nov 2022.

Rev Dhanadhis Jirathamakul (MDiv 2019) who was ordained into the Priesthood at the Deanery of Thailand, Diocese of Singapore on 11 Nov 2022.

The following alumni on their ordination in the Diocese of Singapore on 11 Nov 2022

To the Diaconate:

Rev Calvin Tan (MDiv 2013)

To the Priesthood:

Rev Koo Chee Yong (Kelvin) (MDiv 2019)

Rev Dr Jeremy-Joe Tan Wei Horng (MDiv 2014)

The following alumni on their ordination in The Methodist Church in Singapore

Chinese Annual Conference (17 Nov 2022)

Ordination as Elder:

Rev Dr Nathanael Goh (BD 2012)

Rev Wang Haibin (MDiv 2018)

Rev Patrick Lim (MDiv 2018)

Rev Florence Ngu (MDiv 2014)

Rev Lin Mingzhong (MDiv 2018)

Trinity Annual Conference (24 Nov 2022)

Ordination as Deacon:

Ps Gilbert Lok (MDiv 2019)

Ps Clement Ong (BD 2011)

Ordination as Elder:

Rev Benjamin Lau (BD 2016)

Rev Joey Chen (MDiv 2016)

Rev Alex Chew (MDiv 2018)

Rev Allan Lee (MDiv 2018)

Condolences to...

The family of the late Rev Ng Khoon Seng (BTh 1986) who was called home to glory on 6 Feb 2022.

The family of the late Rev Canon Ong Ming King (BTh 1972) who entered his eternal rest on 7 Jun 2022.

Pastor Wong Teck Mee (BD 1997) whose beloved father, Mr Wong Chee Yong, passed away on 26 Jun 2022.

Rev Ian Chew (MDiv 2017) on the passing of his father, the late Mr Chew Chiong Chee, on 6 Aug 2022.

Dr Philip Huan (MDiv 1996) and Rev Jenni Ho-Huan (MTh 2001) on the passing of Philip's father, the late Mr Henry Huan Tzu Sang, on 25 Aug 2022.

The family of the late Pastor Kuok Ming Hung (MMin 2012) who was called home to the Lord on 22 Sep 2022.

Rev Tee Heng Peng (MDiv 1994) on the demise of his beloved wife, Woo Chooi Lin (CTS 1994), on 27 Oct 2022.

Han Hai Kwang (BD 1997) on the passing of his beloved mother, Mdm Sim Suo Ngoh, on 31 Oct 2022.

Dr Mark Chan and family on the passing of his mother-in-law, Mdm Esther Lee Yiew Gim, on 14 Nov 2022.



TTC is pleased to offer a series of online lectures for the Christian public for the first quarter of 2023. The subjects in these courses are explored in depth by EQUIP instructors who include both TTC faculty and other guest lecturers, all of whom are highly qualified subject matter experts in their fields. Many of our own alumni, pastors, Christian ministry staff, missionaries, and lay leaders also attend our courses for their own continuing education.

EQUIP Modules: 1st Quarter 2023

“Dogmatics in Outline” by Karl Barth	New Testament Survey	Theology of Mission	City of God, City of Men: An Introduction to Christian Political Thought
Rev Dr Edmund Fong Mondays, 2 Jan-20 Feb	Rev Dr Leonard Wee Tuesdays, 3 Jan-21 Feb	Rev Dr Andrew Peh Wednesdays, 4 Jan-15 Feb	Rev Dr Nathanael Goh Thursdays, 5 Jan-16 Feb

All lecture modules are conducted via Zoom from 7.30pm–9.30pm
Online registration closes on 26 Dec 2022

Visit www.ttc.edu.sg for more details

APPLICATIONS OPEN for academic year starting July 2023

DIPLOMA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Diploma in Theological Studies Joint Programme with Biblical Graduate School of Theology (BGST)	Singapore: 28 Feb 2023	Application Deadlines
BASIC DEGREE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Bachelor of Divinity ■ Master of Divinity ■ Master of Theological Studies 	Singapore: 28 Feb 2023 Others: 31 Jan 2023	
ADVANCED DEGREE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Master of Ministry ■ Master of Theology ■ Master of Letters ■ Doctor of Theology 	All applicants: 31 Jan 2023	

For more details (including information about financial aid), please visit www.ttc.edu.sg or email registrar@ttc.edu.sg

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