



Good News to Man

By Rev Dr Leonard Wee

Christmas is round the corner! It is the season of joy, celebrating the advent of the Son of God. But for many of us who have been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic over the last two years, the mood for the season this year is somewhat muted. Not only is life impacted by the restrictions on social gatherings, travel and work arrangements, we hear about fellow Singaporeans who are affected by the virus in even more personal ways. It can bring a sombre mood to what is usually a festive season.

Nonetheless, we should remember that when Jesus Christ came to his people, the mood of Israel as a nation was not exactly jubilant either. In fact, it was quite the opposite. The religious texts of that time bemoan the fact that Israel was under the rule of foreign powers. Their ruler was Caesar Augustus from Rome, and not a Son of David. The governor of Judea, Herod the Great, was an Idumean (a descendent of the Edomites in the Old Testament), and not a Jew. The Jewish nation was economically burdened by the taxes that were levied on the people, and politically subjugated. The people had little to hope for, except that God might perhaps send a deliverer to rescue them.

The Son of God came to his people not because they were at the height of their prosperity as a nation. They were in a dire situation when he came to them with the good news of deliverance, except that

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God's plan was more encompassing and holistic than just the political liberation of a nation. The Gospel of Luke records what the angel said to the shepherds who were looking after the sheep at Bethlehem: "I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11). When carefully examined, we would find that all these words have thematic reverberations within the Gospel that ultimately connect back to the prophetic texts in the Old Testament.

The angels' proclamation of the birth of Jesus to the shepherds in Bethlehem has its special significance as well. The Jewish writer Alfred Edersheim, based on rabbinic traditions recorded in the Mishnah, tells us that these shepherds were looking after the flocks that were used for the Temple sacrifices. It is, therefore, profoundly meaningful that the birth of Jesus, the Lamb of God, would be first announced to them. Luke tells us that, after witnessing the events that transpired during that night, the shepherds glorified and praised God (Luke 2:20). I am sure they were rejoicing because the Saviour is born; but for shepherds who were used to sending their beloved sheep to be killed as burnt offerings, this was especially Good News indeed!

Yet, we should remember that what is Good News to man is perhaps the beginning of a glorious, but nonetheless painful event for God. The apostle Paul tells us that the Son of God made himself nothing, took on the form of a man, humbled himself as a servant, and died a shameful death on a cross — a humiliating form of punishment for criminals (Phil 2:6-8). It is suffering enough for a man to go through this. But, for the Second Person of the Trinity to be subjected to the same, the disparity in terms of pain and humiliation is infinite.

It is the profound love of God for us that makes him do this — to take on earthly abode as a man, suffer, and die on the cross. All this is to atone for the sin of humanity as a sacrificial lamb of God. Indeed, the unconditional love of God would inevitably lead to this.

A recent experience of mine struck me deeply and caused me to realise that if we have genuine and

unconditional love for someone who is in desperate need of our help, we will inevitably, ultimately lay down our lives for that person. Similarly, if the love of God is infinite and unconditional, and given the sinful condition of man, the only logical outcome is that the Son of God, Jesus Christ, would ultimately lay down his own life on the cross in order to redeem us.

So, while Christmas is a season of great joy for us, it is an event that ultimately leads to the suffering and death of the Son of God. This narrative only speaks all the more about God's love for us — that the pain endured by the Son of God, was nevertheless presented as Good News to man because it came out of God's infinite and unconditional love. Moreover, while we may be dampened in our spirits by the Covid-19 pandemic, we can still celebrate the coming of Jesus Christ because it is exactly during a time like this that Advent is to be greeted with great joy, just as the shepherds in Bethlehem did.

Finally, our reception of the Messiah must also be translated into a mission to bring his healing to those who are suffering. This present pandemic is God's call for us to minister to the weak, the poor, and the needy among us. We, the followers of Jesus Christ, are compelled to give of ourselves to help these people, just like the Son of God has given of himself to us and told us to do the same for our neighbours.

A blessed and joyous Christmas to all! ❖



Rev Dr Leonard Wee
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Life Together Between the Times

Since the new academic year began in July, some new students were not permitted to enter Singapore due to border controls. Although physically absent, they have been an integral part of the TTC community through their online presence and remote participation in classes and communal events. We rejoiced when they finally arrived "in the flesh".

Prior to their arrival, the community only knew these international students through seeing and hearing them on electronic devices. Whatever their actual physique, they were flattened into two-dimensional images on screens. Their voices were clear or choppy depending on the stability of wireless connections.

While deeply grateful that every new cohort member could begin the academic year onsite and online, faculty, staff and students long for the entire community to be gathered in-person, and without restrictions.

Under the present constraints, the hybrid nature of community life evokes conflicting feelings: satisfaction that physical absence is no barrier to forging new friendships online alongside lingering dissatisfaction. The latest versions of Zoom or Teams cannot mediate human presence beyond two of our five senses. The immediacy of a full-bodied experience of communal life is conspicuously missing. Conversations in the community reveal a longing for an experience of theological formation that is unmediated and more satisfyingly human.

Since the ascension of Christ, the church has been living between the time of Christ's inaugurated kingdom with his birth, death, and resurrection, and that of its consummation at his glorious return. This intervening period between "the already" and "not yet" keeps separate the church on earth from the bodily presence of Christ. It is also a period when members of Christ's universal

church are not yet gathered in our resurrected bodies; think of members of our local congregations who have died in Christ.

Whatever forms hybrid communities may take, our longing for community is set in perspective within the reality of the church's life together between the times. Although Christ is now physically absent from his church on earth, he is present through his Spirit to nourish, teach, and guide his people through his Word.

Whatever forms hybrid communities may take, our longing for community is set in perspective within the reality of the church's life together between the times.

While separated by time and space, members of Christ's body are caught up in what the hymn-writer Samuel John Stone calls, "the mystic sweet communion". Believers on earth and in heaven are physically separated but in communion with each other on account of our vital union with Christ through his Spirit. This reality should not be lost on us, when in gathered assemblies for worship, belief in "the communion of saints" is confessed as taught in the Apostle's Creed.

Life together during the pandemic may be filled with longing for a fuller experience of being community. For believers in Christ, this longing must extend beyond the current confines to embrace our brothers and sisters who are separated from us in time. Thus, we will keep to the grand plot of God's redemptive story and live in hope of the life together that it promises.

Paul prayed that it is "together with all the Lord's holy people" that we grasp "how long and wide and high and deep is the love of Christ and...be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God". (Eph 3:18-19). We will be together in the fullness of the saints' communion when we see Christ face to face. Meanwhile, our posture should be one of waiting in confident hope as this Advent season reminds us. ❖

Vaccination As An Act of Love

By Dr Leow Theng Huat

The Challenge of Systems Thinking

In the novel *The Brothers Karamazov*, the protagonist Ivan Karamazov makes an insightful comment about love. He says that it is “possible to love one’s neighbour in the abstract, and even sometimes from a distance, but almost never when he’s close at hand”.

I wish to suggest that the opposite also holds true, when it comes to identifying acts of love. When we help a person close at hand in a concrete manner, it is easy to see this as a praiseworthy act of love. When someone helps an elderly man struggling with his grocery bags to carry them home, no one would dispute that this is a loving act (absent any ulterior motives). Conversely, actions which affect others in a more abstract and remote way tend not to be viewed through moral lenses.

This should not come as a surprise, since management gurus have been telling us that human beings are not inherently good in “systems thinking”. We are myopic in understanding the effects of our actions, especially those which ripple through the systems we are enmeshed in, impacting people in ways not immediately apparent. The situation is aggravated by the individualism that is the feature of so many societies today. We see ourselves as discrete units, each endowed with a bundle of rights and existing separately from one another.

In theory, the Christian faith should help us overcome this myopia. The community of believers, through time and space, is depicted as the “body of Christ” (eg. 1 Cor 12), with all of us organically connected to one another and to Jesus our head. There is also a lesser (but still

profound) link joining all human beings to one another (eg. Rom 5) and to the rest of creation (eg. Gen 2). The systems thinking in the Bible vastly exceeds anything proposed by contemporary management gurus.

Unfortunately, the spirit of the age has also infused our Christianity; the version of the faith many of us hold is an “individualised” one. Christianity is all about an individual standing before God, forgiven and having a place in heaven. Decisions that this individual makes are solely a matter between him and his God. The interconnectedness and mutual dependence emphasised in the Bible do not feature at all.

The Decision on Vaccination

An example of this individualistic perspective is seen in the way the decision whether to take the Covid-19 vaccine is framed (this includes the decision whether to take booster shots when one is eligible). This decision is usually depicted as a morally-neutral choice which is a matter of an individual’s preference. Each person has the autonomy to weigh the relative benefits and costs of vaccination to himself or herself, and then decide what works best.

This simplistic framework, however, ignores the profound systemic effects of one’s decision. There is overwhelming empirical evidence that those not vaccinated have a higher likelihood of being infected and subsequently spreading the disease. The unvaccinated also have a much higher probability of falling severely ill and requiring hospital treatment. Choosing not to be vaccinated thus means we are more likely to infect those

we come into contact with. We are also far more likely to utilise the scarce resource of hospital beds and ICU rooms if we fall ill. This heightens the need to impose restrictions on the general population to slow the rate of infection in order to prevent our hospitals from being overwhelmed.

Who might be affected by an individual’s decision to remain unvaccinated? Picture healthcare workers, serving to the point of exhaustion and badly needing some respite. Picture the residents in nursing homes unable to have visitors and suffering in loneliness. Picture students from lower-income households who have already lost months of education, as they do not have the resources for conducive home-based learning. Picture business owners struggling to stay afloat, as one restrictive measure after another knock them to the ground each time they try to stand up. Picture employees who have lost their jobs and are now constantly worrying about providing for their families. Think also of the church — what would happen to her if the prolonged restrictions mean that Christians no longer see the need to gather in person? Once we look beyond ourselves, we begin to see the myriad of people profoundly affected by our decisions.

Pope Francis was therefore right when he declared, in an August video message, that getting vaccinated is “an act of love” — “love for oneself, love for our families and friends, and love for all peoples” (I would add “love for the church”). Love, according to the pope, is not only individualistic. It is also “social and political”.

Two Objections

At this juncture, readers might raise two objections. Firstly, what about the side-effects of vaccination which are also well-documented? Surely, the fact that vaccination carries a risk means that individuals should be free to decide whether to accept this? There is indeed a point where the risk to oneself makes vaccination a reckless (rather than a loving) act. But this applies only to those medically exempted from vaccination. For the vast majority, the risk is so small and the common side-effects so minor that love demands that we bear them for the sake of others who are suffering so severely. True love always comes at a cost. It is when we sacrifice something dear to us that our act becomes one of love.

The second objection is that our individual decisions are too insignificant to make a difference.

One more vaccination would not change the situation. But the Christian way is always about contributing what we are able, and leaving the results in God’s hands. Isn’t this what the narrative of the five loaves and two fish (John 6:1-14) is about? Once we start to demand that our acts of love must single-handedly “change the world”, we would cease to do anything.

Pope Francis, in his video presentation, spoke about small gestures of love: “No matter how small, love is always grand”.

Conclusion

It would sadden me if this article is used to condemn the unvaccinated as “unloving”. This is not its purpose. Many genuinely struggle over the decision to get vaccinated. Some are enmeshed in another “system”—the system of conspiracy theories and false information provided by self-declared experts, which unfortunately dominate our social media today. To truly help these people, we need to understand

where they stand and journey patiently with them. We need, in other words, to love them too. We must, moreover, be careful in case we miss the log in our eyes as we point out the speck in the eyes of others (Matt 7:3-5). The implications of systems thinking go far beyond the decision on vaccination. Have we not also mistaken some of our actions as morally neutral, when they have a deep impact on others?

This article is written to encourage, not condemn. Getting vaccinated or receiving our booster shots is not only a wise move when seen from an individualistic cost-benefit analysis. It is also an act of love. It is our gesture of love for people in desperate need; it is our service to the church. It is a small gesture, but a very grand one. ❖

Getting vaccinated and receiving our booster shots is not only a wise move when seen from an individualistic cost-benefit analysis. It is also an act of love.



Dr Leow Theng Huat
Lecturer in Theology



Mary Magdalene, the First Eyewitness of Jesus' Resurrection

By Dr Tan Kim Huat

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is central to the Christian faith. As Paul teaches it, without Jesus' resurrection, our faith is futile (1 Cor 15:17). In fact, having seen the risen Lord was one criterion for being an apostle (Acts 1:21-22). It is therefore notable that Mary Magdalene — and not one of the Twelve Apostles — was the person God chose to be the first eyewitness of this great event. This becomes more significant as many ancient societies, including the Jewish, often regarded a woman's testimony as dubious. Moreover given her background, she was the unlikeliest candidate for the important role. The implication is clear: God must be signalling something profound by choosing Mary Magdalene. Who, then, was this special person?

Firstly, she is not to be identified with Mary of Bethany (sister of Martha) or the sinful woman of Luke 7:36-50. Distilling from all the relevant Gospel passages, the thing that strikes us is that the toponymic name (being named after a place) 'Magdalene' always accompanies her birth name 'Mary'. Now, Mary (or Miriam, if we follow the anglicised Hebrew pronunciation) was a very common name in first century Palestine. To distinguish one Mary from another, additional identity markers were needed. For women then, this would normally be a male relative's name: her husband's or her father's. Naming a woman after a place was therefore highly unusual, especially when

it was done consistently. So why was Mary called the Magdalene?

The toponymic 'Magdalene' referred to the ancient town of Magdala, which sat on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee and at the southern tip of modern Migdal. Recent archaeological excavations have given us a wealth of knowledge of the place. It was a bustling town, dominating the fishing industry around the lake. Ancient records also mention a prominent tower near its harbour. What is fascinating is that this tower gave the town its name, as Magdala means 'tower' in Aramaic. Accordingly, a handful of scholars have proposed that 'Magdalene' was not toponymic but a trait descriptor. In other words, they argue that Mary was the 'Tower', just as Peter was the 'Rock'. To be called a 'Tower' would mean that she had special strengths or leadership qualities. Although attractive, this hypothesis is vitiated by the silence

of the New Testament and other early Christian literature over this purported characteristic of Mary. This hypothesis emerged first in the writings of Jerome in the fifth century. We are on safer ground if we treat 'Magdalene' as toponymic.

The use of a toponym certainly differentiated her from other Marys among Jesus' disciples. More importantly, it also meant she had left her hometown to be with Jesus because a toponym is relevant only when used of a person outside his or her

hometown. Luke 8:1-3 also indicates that, together with a few women, she supported Jesus' ministry. Since she was not identified with a male relative's name, she was most probably unmarried and independent of family ties. Being cut off from family would have been especially difficult for a woman then.

Luke 8:2 sheds light on Mary Magdalene's domestic situation. In this passage she is described as having once been possessed by seven evil spirits. The number seven in the Bible is often used to mean 'completeness' and hence, she was akin to being a hopeless case of demon-possession. Deemed a menace to society because of her demonised and dehumanised personality, she would have brought shame to the family. Although Jesus successfully exorcised her, her family members probably did not believe in him because, if they did, Mary would have been identified with the name of a believing family member. This meant she had to leave her family — perhaps even driven out — in order to follow Jesus. The conversion of Mary and her subsequent role as the first eyewitness of Jesus' resurrection will therefore provide much encouragement to the many people who, for one reason or another, are displaced, deemed unstable or problematic. Our future in the Lord is not defined, or limited, by our problematic past or our perplexing present.

Next, we need to ask how Mary Magdalene became the first person to see the risen Lord. In all the Gospels, other than Luke, she pops up only in the crucifixion and resurrection scenes; her significance being understood primarily in connection with those events. In such events, she shone the brightest of all Jesus' disciples. Details in the familiar story of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection demonstrate this and bear highlighting.

The four Gospels testify consistently that the disciples who were present at the crucifixion of Jesus were women, the men having fled. At crunch time, the one nicknamed the Rock crumbled. The Beloved Disciple, if it were not a literary construct, was the exception according to John 19:26. If it was risky to be identified with the crucified Jesus, embalming him could have escalated that risk. Moreover, there was a formidable obstacle for these grieving women to overcome: the huge stone that sealed the tomb's entrance. Undaunted by the difficulties and probably without any solution, they set forth. But true devotion

does not cease, even when no solution is in sight. In all listings of these valiant women, Mary Magdalene is placed first. Possibly, she was the main driver behind the initiative to embalm Jesus or it could be a narrative technique to signal to readers the important role she would soon have.

All the Gospels identify Mary Magdalene as the first person to see the risen Lord but John's Gospel surfaces a point that is seldom appreciated. Upon discovering the tomb was empty, Mary naturally reported it to Peter and John because they were the prominent leaders of the early Christian community. They then went to the scene and confirmed that the tomb was empty. But they soon left, with many questions still swirling in their heads. In contrast, a likely distraught Mary stayed at the scene, and this set the stage for the unique encounter with Jesus (John 20:1-17). Through this encounter, she received the commission to convey the good news of Jesus' resurrection to the apostles.

We are familiar with the phrase 'being at the right place at the right time', often applied to successful or fortunate people. In Mary Magdalene's case, this familiar saying must be tweaked to a more profound 'being at the right place at a challenging time'. Her outstanding achievement was no walk in the park. Many people were at the right place but they left because the moment proved too challenging and they therefore missed out on significant blessings. Mary Magdalene was also at the right place but at an incredibly challenging time. Nevertheless, she, like many outstanding women of early Christianity, stayed true to the divine appointment and we are all the richer for it. ❖

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Dr Tan Kim Huat
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Let the Church Hear

Learning to preach at TTC

By Dr Mark Chan, Earnest Lau Professor of Systematic Theology

God's people are subjected daily to the formational influence of the world. The masters of persuasion behind our media-saturated society are superspreaders of values and ideas, many of which are inimical to God's design for life. These are often stylishly presented, usually sporting elements of truth so that they come across as plausible if not desirable. Without the ability to discriminate between what is of the Lord and what is of the world, Christians are at risk of being spiritually malformed.

Given the ubiquitous encroachment of worldliness, it is incumbent on church leaders to ground Christian believers in the truth of God's word. And there is no more important means of doing this than the church's preaching ministry. For it is in the faithful opening of Scripture and the submissive obedience of God's people to that declared word that Christians are spiritually transformed and built up.

Among the great gifts of the risen Christ to the church are apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers who together serve "to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ" (Eph 4:11-12). And at the heart of what they do is the ministry of the Word. For it is by means of the Word that the purposes of God for the church in the world are realised.

The church is birthed by God's Word, and she is sustained, directed, sanctified, reformed, and renewed by it. Christ the Head of the Church exhorts, instructs, confronts, and comforts his people through his under-shepherds. He feeds them through his appointed preachers. As John Stott reminds us, "The Word of God is the sceptre by which Christ rules the Church and the food with which he nourishes it."

The health and vitality of Christian communities hang on whether there is biblical preaching in their midst. For the pulpit undergirds and nourishes the ministry of the church; it determines the spiritual ethos of a congregation.

The foundational truth in preaching is that God is one who speaks. Things happen when God speaks. He spoke creation into existence and brought forth the new creation through Jesus the incarnate Word. And God continues to speak today through his written Word as this is faithfully proclaimed by his servants. When that happens, lives are touched, transformed, and changed.

God has graciously chosen to be present in the preaching event. As Thomas Long notes, "God has chosen to meet us in the event of preaching, promised to be present there, and this is not because our sermons are good but because God is good...Christ is not present because we preach; we preach because Jesus Christ is present."

If there is to be a renaissance in expository preaching in evangelical Christianity today, it must start with a recapturing of the theological conviction that God is present in the preaching event, and that there is power in God's Word to effect change. And that change must begin with those who aspire to the preaching ministry.

To this end, TTC is committed in its ministerial training to attend not only to the cultivation

and sharpening of preaching skills but also the formation of the person of the preacher. One of the paradoxes of homiletical training at TTC is to help budding preachers recognise that preaching is simultaneously not about them but also all about them.

It is not about them because the focus is decidedly on Christ and the truth of Scripture. The preacher must guard against the intrusion of the self in the pulpit, for it is easy to use the sermon to draw attention to oneself. Being Word-centred is not the same as being preacher-centred.

At the same time, preaching is all about them in the incarnational sense that the Word indwells the preacher and is expressed through his or her unique personality and abilities. Learning to balance self-effacement on the one hand and allowing truth to come through one's personality on the other is part of what we hope to instil at TTC. Sermons are birthed in hearts

with a burning love for the Lord who is the way to the truth about life.

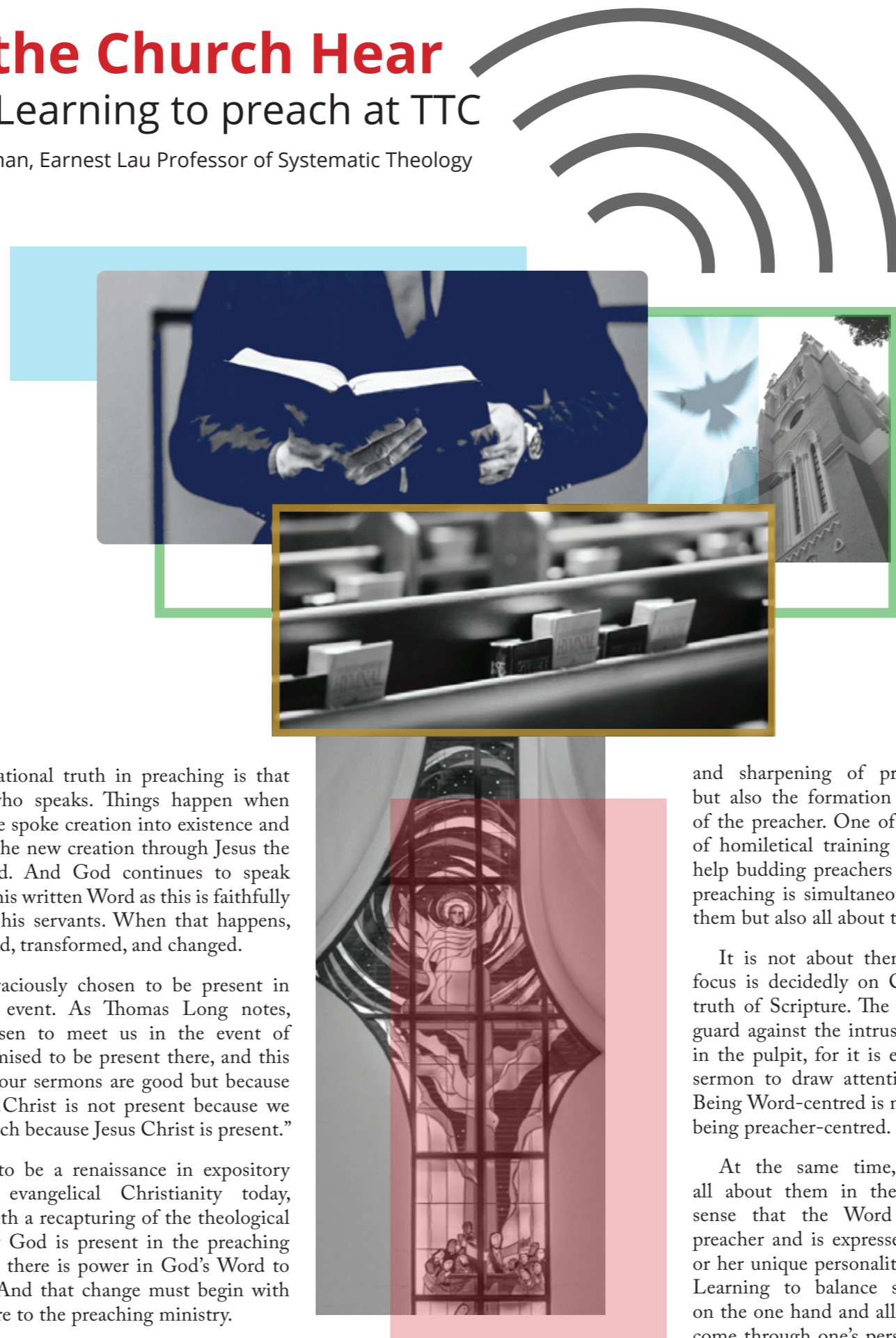
Attending to the cultivation of the heart of the preacher is joined by instruction in the art and craft of sermon preparation and communication. Developing competency in preaching is an integral part of ministerial training at TTC. That said, homiletics courses alone do not yield good preachers for the church. It takes the combined faculty, the entirety of the theological curriculum, and the community with whom he or she is being formed to prepare a person for the pulpit.

It is hoped that classes in biblical and theological studies, in hermeneutics, church history, missions and evangelism, along with other pastoral subjects would help students develop a theological mindset that orientates their exegetical engagement with the biblical text. Learning how to exegete the Bible is pivotal to expository preaching.

In addition to the exegesis of the biblical text, one must be adept at exegeting both the world at large as well as the congregation to which one is preaching. The biblical text does not come in a vacuum; it is always contextually rooted. As such, we strive to equip our students with the ability to connect Scripture to the realities of life in their sermons. And the preacher as under-shepherd must learn to speak a targeted word relevant to the life of the congregation.

Preaching is an inalienable part of the minister's role. In many ways it is the most visible of the pastor's ministry. Prioritising attention to preaching is something that both pastors and lay leaders must commit to. Sermon preparation requires disciplined industry on the part of the pastor-cum-preacher. And lay leaders can play their part in helping the pastor carve out time to 'cook' the spiritual meals that they serve on Sunday morning.

Church members, too, ought to be invested in good preaching. After all, whether they are spiritually nourished or underfed will depend on the Word being faithfully preached. In this regard, church members ought to exercise their "pew rights" in ensuring — yea, even demanding — that their pastors give attention to the ministry of the Word. ❖



Ethos Annual Conference: "The Triune God"

By Dr Tan Loe Joo, Lecturer in Systematic and Historical Theology

The Ethos Annual Conference was held on 25 Sep 2021, with the theme "The Triune God". This event, jointly organised by various theological seminaries each year, is a testament to Christian unity among Singapore churches. The doctrine of the Trinity, which states that the one God that the Church professes is a unity of three Persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is one of the foundational pillars of the Christian faith. However, for many Christians, this doctrine remains obscure and even seems irrelevant. The conference, therefore, aimed to explore the centrality of the doctrine and its significance in the lives of Christians.



Because of the ongoing pandemic mitigation measures, the conference was held online for the second year in succession using the Zoom webinar platform. The first presentation was by Dr Tan Seng Kong, Director of Spiritual Formation and Educational Resources and Lecturer in Spiritual and Systematic Theology at Biblical Graduate School of Theology. Dr Tan took the attendees through the development of the doctrine of the Trinity in early Christianity as well as its roots in Scripture. The second speaker, Dr Edmund Fong, Lecturer in Theology and Dean of Students at TTC, examined the significance of this doctrine within contemporary Christianity through Karl Barth's Trinitarian theology in dialogue with G. W. F. Hegel. The next presenter was Dr Leonard Sidharta, Associate Professor of Theological Studies at Singapore Bible College. Dr Sidharta presented a proposal of how the doctrine of the Trinity may provide answers to some questions raised by Neo-Confucianism and its cosmogony. Finally, Dr Lewis Winkler, who lectures in theology, church history, and ethics at the East Asia School of Theology, explored the implications of the doctrine of the Trinity for the Christian life. He asserted the need to avoid a generic understanding of the Trinity, and that our ideas of the doctrine should be rooted in Scripture, especially in the affirmation that God is love.

The conference was moderated by Dr Tan Loe Joo, Lecturer in Historical and Systematic Theology at TTC, and concluded with a question and answer panel discussion involving all the speakers. The online attendees raised many interesting questions about the various aspects of the doctrine which were answered adroitly by the presenters. The conference also saw the launch of a book of the edited papers presented last year with the theme of "God and Creation" under the Ethos Engagement Series. The e-book can be purchased from the Bible Society of Singapore website, and the printed copy will be made available at a later date. Participants and those interested in this year's conference materials can look forward to the aforementioned papers being published under the same series next year. ❖

Interreligious Dialogue Skills Workshop

By Mr Charles Lee, MDiv 1

I was at the Suntec Convention Centre on 23 Oct 2021 with five fellow TTC students and our lecturer, Dr Leow Theng Huat. We were participants in an interreligious dialogue skills workshop organised under the Studies in Inter-Religious Relations in Plural Societies Programme (SRP) of the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies of Nanyang Technological University.



Organisers of the workshop together with representatives from the various religious institutions

The SRP had invited representatives from the Buddhist College of Singapore, Catholic Theological Institute of Singapore, Hindu Centre, MUIS Academy, Taoist College (Singapore), and TTC to each choose a scriptural text from their respective traditions to the theme of "Religion and the Common Good". Dr Leow selected Gen 1:31-2:2. After the representatives had each given a brief introduction of their text, we discussed these texts in our assigned small groups, consisting of members from the different religious traditions. Associate Professor Paul Hedges of the SRP then explained that we had engaged in a "Scriptural Reasoning" exercise and elaborated on its ethos. The representatives from the religious institutions then shared their reflections on the exercise, before a question and answer segment.

Dr Leow shared in his reflections that the "Scriptural Reasoning" exercise had allowed both the similarities and differences in the various religious traditions to be surfaced. He added this prevented us from coming to superficial conclusions like "all religions teach the same thing", and yet highlighted common areas of concern where the various religions, in spite of fundamental differences, can work together for the betterment of society.

My fellow student, Jeremy Teo, appreciated the opportunity to engage in a meaningful conversation with a Buddhist monk. The monk was intrigued by the Christian concept of eschatology (the end of history) and there was mutual sharing on its similarities and differences with the Buddhist notion of nirvana. The rest of us had similar interesting experiences as we learnt how others saw things from their religious perspective, and had the opportunity to share how Christian beliefs like creation, the Trinity and the incarnation influenced the way we perceive the common good.

Although the size of the workshop had to be kept small (due to Covid-19 regulations), it was an eye-opener in interreligious dialogue for us, the participants. ❖

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Dr Yee Chin Hong (Instructor)	Dr Tan Kim Huat (Instructor)	Rev Dr Andrew Peh (Instructor)	Rev Dr Edmund Fong (Instructor)
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Lest We Forget....

By Rev Dr Andrew Peh

Researching on the dissertation topic of American Methodist missions in British colonial Singapore at the close of the 19th century inevitably meant that I had to spend an inordinate amount of time rummaging through primary sources — correspondence, records and reports — held at places such as the archives of the British Library, the National Archives (London), the archives at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) of the University of London, the Special Collections at the Drew University Archives (New Jersey, United States of America), the Singapore National Archives, the Lee Kong Chian Reference Library of the National Library as well as the archives of The Methodist Church in Singapore. It certainly is true that oftentimes one does not value the importance of keeping records until one is tasked to write a biographical article or the more ubiquitous church or organisation anniversary publication.

In the age of information technology, where what is current or the new(s) is constantly refreshed at a keystroke or on the screen of an app, the old is often considered passé. Not unlike Israel in the book of Judges, we are becoming an increasing forgetful people and we live in a context where theological amnesia and historical dementia are the common malaise of the

masses. In 1 Sam 7:12, Samuel took a stone and raised it as a memorial between Mizpah and Shen. This was to serve as a reminder of the great victory God gave to Israel, lest Israel forgets God's covenantal faithfulness. And for the student of history, this underscores the relevance and the significance of the place and ministry of archives and history in both the local churches as well as a theological institution such as Trinity Theological College. Archives are akin to "raising an Ebenezer" and like Ebenezers, archives serve as a reminder that "thus far, the Lord has helped us" - lest we forget!

It may well be that most people think of archives and history as matters that relate to the past. This perhaps creates a dissonance in appreciating the importance of archives. We need to understand that archives and history are NOT only about the past; they are about giving to and empowering posterity with a rich historical legacy. Historian, Jonathan Hill, reminds us that "A society with no grasp of its history is like a person without a memory."

In writing about the significance of archives, Schwartz and Cook noted: *Memory, like history, is rooted in archives. Without archives, memory falters, knowledge of accomplishments fades, pride*

in a shared past dissipates. Archives counter these losses. Archives contain the evidence of what went before....

Archives validate our experiences, our perceptions, our narratives, our stories. Archives are our memories.

It is in this tenor of valuing history that TTC has been building up our archival collection of resource materials of Protestant missionary societies operating in Southeast and East Asia from the 18th century. This includes denominational missionary publications such as The Chinese Repository, a monthly magazine

published in Canton (present day Guangdong) from 1832 to 1851; the Singapore Diocesan Magazine (1910-1936) and Malaysia Message (1891 to present), now published as the Methodist Message. All of which provide a rich historical account of the denominational mission work in Singapore. And to this end, TTC has been at the forefront of ensuring that we do not forget "who we are and where we come from".

Some of the artefacts held at the TTC library include:

- A Chinese Bible, that was published in 1823 by the Anglo-Chinese College Press. This was the translation that was completed by Robert Morrison (the pioneer Protestant missionary to China) and William Milne of the London Missionary Society in 1819
- Coins that were issued during the time of Emperor Constantine I, who ruled between 307-337 AD
- A rare book collection, 圣年广议 (*sheng nian guang yi*), a set of devotional materials compiled and translated into Chinese by Jesuit priest Joseph Anne Marie de Moyriac de Mailla who went to China in 1703. This set was published in 1738. It is a collection of daily meditations including scripture, the teaching of the saints, biographies of Christians, daily meditations, and daily prayers

The work of expanding the archives continues and researchers and students of history are welcome to access our collection, lest we forget.... ❖



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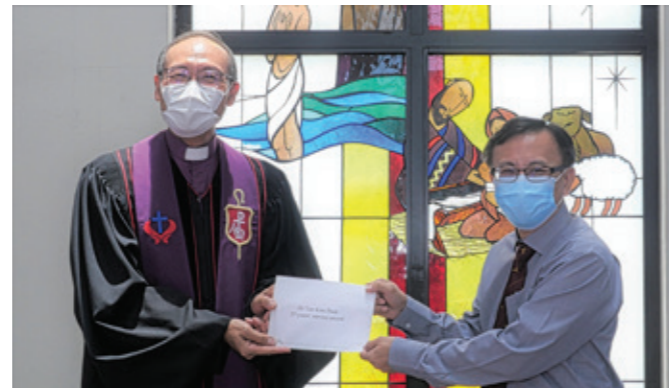
Formed for His Praise TTC's 73rd Anniversary Service

By Mr Tan Chong Yaw, Manager (Corporate Communications and Information Management)

“Let us sing new songs of praise to God by providing new waters of kindness and love to help us get through the wilderness today,” exhorted Bishop Dr Gordon Wong at Trinity Theological College’s 73rd anniversary thanksgiving service. The Bishop of The Methodist Church in Singapore was the guest speaker at the service held on the morning of Wednesday, 1 Oct 2021 at the TTC chapel. Drawing from Isa 43:18- 21, he exhorted us not to get stuck in the past but focus on how things can be in the present and future; to help people get through the wilderness of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Continuing the anniversary service theme of “Formed for His Praise”, Principal, Rev Dr Edwin Tay, gave examples of how God was forming TTC for his praise during the pandemic. Mindful of its missional role and the needs of the church, he announced that TTC has extended to alumni access to the college’s e-library at no charge so that they can benefit from this resource.

In tune with the celebratory mood, long service awards were given to four faculty and four staff members: 25 years - Dr Tan Kim Huat; 20 years - Dr Chan Yew Ming; 15 years - Dr Mark Chan and Rev Dr Andrew Peh; 20 years - Mdm Lee Su Chin, Mdm Liow Ah Moi,



Dr Tan Kim Huat receiving his long service award for 25 years of service

Mr Edmund Yan, and Ms Leong Ian Ming.

We also witnessed the graduation of the following ten EQUIP students, five of whom graduated in person: Certificate in Mission Practice - Mr Edwin Bellido; Certificate in Christian Ministry - Dr Bob Choi, Ms Lee Hui Min, Dr Celia Tan and Ms Susan Koh. Licentiate in Christian Ministry - Mr Eric Quah, Mdm Famajati Sastro, Ms Ng Yee Hoon, Mr Patrick Low and Mr Wong Kin Leong . ❖

TRINITY NEWS

Congratulations to...

Rev Bertram Cheong Kok Hong (MDiv 2011) and his wife, Cherlie Choong, who celebrated the arrival of their daughter, Elyse Cheong, on 14 Jul 2021.

Rev Anthony Phua (BD 2015) and his wife, Serene, who celebrated the arrival of their second child, Jady Theadora Phua, on 23 Jul 2021.

Mr Yerima Christofen Tang (MDiv 2018) and Natalia Kristianti who were joined in holy matrimony on 25 Jul 2021.

Mr Eric Chiam (MDiv 2018) and his wife, Tiffany Teo, who celebrated the arrival of their daughter,

Kaitlyn Chiam, on 1 Aug 2021.

Rev Cathy Law (MDiv 2014) who was ordained at the Pentecostal Holiness Church, Hong Kong, on 3 Oct 2021.

Rev Jasper Ngoh (MDiv 2017) and his wife, Christine Kwok, who celebrated the arrival of their son, Elisha Ngoh, on 7 Oct 2021.

Mr Jason Lee (BD2) and his wife, Shermaine Vong, who celebrated the arrival of their firstborn son, Nathan Lee Zi Yi, on 31 Oct 2021.

...continued on next page



Rev Sarah Ang (MDiv 2018) who was ordained in the Lutheran Church of Singapore on 31 Oct 2021.

Rev Canon Daniel Wee Chun Chian (BD 1995) on his institution as the Archdeacon of the Anglican Diocese of Singapore on 7 Nov 2021.

The following alumni on their ordination in the Diocese of Singapore on 7 Nov 2021.

To the Diaconate:

Mr Koo Chee Yong (MDiv 2019)

To the Priesthood:

Rev Cheng Tiang Ping Aaron (MDiv 2019)

Rev Choo Cheng Leong (BD 2018)

Rev Loy Chun Teng Brandon (BD 2015)

Our alumnus, Ps Goh Choon Cheow (MDiv 2016), on his installation as Associate Minister of Singapore Life Church by the Chinese Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church in Singapore on 7 Nov 2021.

Ps Kok Jia En John (BD 2017) on his ordination as deacon with the Chinese Annual Conference of the Methodist Church in Malaysia on 11 Nov 2021.

Rev Andreas Pilipus (MDiv 2009, MTh 2012) who was ordained at the Gereja Kristus Bogor, Indonesia, on 21 Nov 2021.

Rev Ling How Sian Gabriel (MDiv 2016) on his ordination as elder with the Chinese Annual Conference of the Methodist Church in Sarawak on 24 Nov 2021.

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

Chinese Annual Conference (18 Nov 2021)
Ordination as Deacon:

Ps Timothy Ang (MTh 2019)

Ps Shawn Koh (MDiv 2019)

Ps Ong Bee Keow (MDiv 2018)

Ordination as Elder:
Rev Glenn Tan (MDiv 2016)
Rev Jasper Ngoh (MDiv 2017)
Rev Jacqueline Ho (MMin 2017)

Trinity Annual Conference (25 Nov 2021)

Ordination as Deacon:
Ps Emanuel Goh (MDiv 2016)
Ps Tay Li Ping (MDiv 2019)
Ps Jeremy Yap (MDiv 2019)

Ordination as Elder:
Rev Jacob Lim (BD 2017)
Rev Anthony Phua (BD 2015)
Rev Collin See (BD 2009)
Rev Timothy Yong (MDiv 2016)

Condolences to...

Mdm Jeneba Koker Foh and her family on the passing of Rev Sylvester Momoh Foh (MDiv 1994) on 9 Jul 2021.

Mr David Kang Im Seok (DTh1) and his wife Mdm Jinyoung on the demise of his beloved father, the late Mr Kang Gee Won, on 9 Aug 2021.

Mr Andrew Ong (BD1) on the passing of his beloved father, the late Mr Ong Kim Bock, on 17 Aug 2021.

Rev Wong Shyun Jye (BD 2007) and his family on the passing of his beloved wife, the late Mdm Ko Yun Chin, who went to be with the Lord on 17 Sep 2021.

Rev Dr Jimmy Tan (MDiv 1995) and his family on the passing of his beloved mother, the late Mdm Yee Chan Meng, on 30 Sep 2021.

Rev Nathanael Goh (BD 2012) on the passing of his beloved grandmother, the late Mdm Tan Bee Cheng, on 12 Oct 2021.

Miss Lily Lim (MTh 2005) on the passing of her beloved father, the late Mr Lim Tiong Kong, on 14 Oct 2021.

Rev Martin Jungnickel (MDiv 2012) and his wife, Mdm Jo Anne, on the passing of his father-in-law, the late Mr Dante de Leon Enriquez, on 23 Oct 2021.

Rev Anne Lim (MMin 2004) and her family on the passing of her beloved father, the late Mr Lim Ah Teng, on 27 Oct 2021.

Ms Teo Sau Ching (MDiv 2011) and Ps Chok Chun Hong (BD 2019) on the passing of her beloved father, the late Mr Teo Chi Tak, on 18 Nov 2021.

FIND OUT MORE about STUDYING at TTC



SIGN UP NOW for :

- Access to videos on student life at TTC, a campus tour, how to apply for admission, sample lectures, and more; and
- A dialogue via Zoom with faculty members and students to be held on **Wed, Jan 19, 2022 at 8-9pm.**



SIGN UP BY
FRI, JAN 7, 2022 at
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or via this QR code

Trinity Theological College: Serving the Church for 73 Years

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.

“As I recall my time at TTC, I am deeply thankful to God for the spiritual formation I experienced through the academic rigour, the friendships forged and the blessing of serving the student community. The fond memories testify to God’s gracious hand of moulding and preparing me for His purposes.”
- Rev Raymond Fong (MDiv 2011), Pastor-in-Charge, Wesley Methodist Church

“Akin to a nursery, TTC strives to be a nurturing environment where budding seminarians are developed through theological education, ministry praxis and spiritual formation. Here is where I learn under the tutelage of an acclaimed faculty, develop a holistic framework for ministry, and journey alongside fellow pilgrims from various denominations and ethnicities.”
- Koh Chao Rui (MDiv 2)

APPLICATIONS OPEN for academic year starting July 2022

<p>DIPLOMA</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Diploma in Theological Studies Joint Programme with Biblical Graduate School of Theology (BGST) 	<p>Singapore: 28 Feb 2022</p>	<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Application Deadlines</p>
<p>BASIC DEGREE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Bachelor of Divinity ■ Master of Divinity ■ Master of Theological Studies 	<p>Singapore: 28 Feb 2022 Others: 31 Jan 2022</p>	
<p>ADVANCED DEGREE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Master of Ministry ■ Master of Theology ■ Master of Letters ■ Doctor of Theology 	<p>All applicants: 31 Jan 2022</p>	

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

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Mr Tan Chong Yaw, Ms Christine Ting, Ms Pauline Wong

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