

A Christmas Message from Rt Rev Dr Titus Chung:

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Grace and Peace to you and your family from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ!

The last two years have been “unusual”, to say the least, and similarly the first Christmas was also “unusual”. **Luke 2:1-7** shows a usual scene where the powerful in the world called the shots and, in this case, it was the Roman emperor, Augustus, who decreed that a census should be taken throughout the Empire. And that sent Joseph and Mary back to Bethlehem, the prophesied birthplace of the Messiah, the Saviour of the world. How interesting that the usual scene of a world dominated and controlled by the powerful, also revealed the unusual fulfilment of an age-old prophecy from God, who is the ultimate power. What a joy to remember that there is a Sovereign God who holds the world in his hands and we can rest because he watches over us.

Luke 2:8-14 shows a usual scene of shepherds out in the fields at night to look after their sheep. It was a night like any other – usual – yet that usual night was filled with the unusual! Angels lit the night sky with such a glorious light that frightened even the seasoned shepherds who were so used to dangers that lurk in the night. That unusual night, instead of a heightened sense to defend their flock, their senses were heightened by the good news of God’s defence against humanity’s age old enemy – sin... “I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. The Saviour—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David!” (Luke 2:10 -11). What a joy to remember that as Christians we are forgiven and accepted by God. But this piece of good news is also for all whom God has placed in our midst. Let us be earthly messengers to bring this heavenly good news to all whom we meet this Christmas.

Luke 2:15-20 shows a usual scene of a poor family resting their baby in a manger. There was nothing spectacular to behold. But look closer and deeper and you will discover that the ‘bundle’ was much more than just joy to his parents but also joy to the world! Though Jesus may have been preached to you a thousand times and though you may have seen the Christmas lights countless more times, I would like to invite you to take another reflective look at this Christmas scene. What a joy to remember that as you look closer and deeper, you will discover that the Creator of the world is right there before you, looking back at you and longing to embrace you.

May this Christmas be an unusual Christmas where the Joy from above becomes fully alive in you... *“Glory to God in highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased.”* (Luke 2:14). May the favour and peace of the Lord be upon you this Christmas!

Feedback requested from churches: The Ministry of Manpower (MOM) is reviewing the Foreign Employee Dormitories Act (FEDA), which currently licenses foreign employee dormitories. The review is looking at expanding FEDA to cover all foreign employee housing, including premises with fewer than 1,000 beds, to ensure that standards in all foreign employee housing premises can be raised consistently, such as building and fire safety, minimum living and hygiene standards.

If your church or denomination operates worker quarters under the FEDA, MOM requests your feedback. Please download and use this [feedback form](#) for your church-related feedback, and send directly to tan_tu_yong@mom.gov.sg and michelle_chen@mom.gov.sg, if possible, by 15 January 2022. Thank you.

National Environmental Agency (NEA) has shared some feedback regarding the cremation process. For example, some families place items of sentimental value to the loved one within or on the casket, or on the handle of the casket before cremation. It is observed that there are increasing cases of such items accompanying the casket which has resulted in items catching fire upon entry into the cremator. The excessive items also cause a significant delay in the cremation process resulting in inconvenience to other bereaved families. NEA is now considering how best to improve the cremation process.

The Church in China: The friendship between the China Christian Council and the National Three-Self Patriotic Movement (CCC/TSPM) and NCCS dates back several decades. Church leaders of both countries visited each other periodically until the Covid-19 pandemic. It was decided that they should meet virtually to share with each other how churches and Christian ministry have been affected by the pandemic. The meeting was held on 30 November.

NCCS Exco members met the leaders of the Church in China, represented by its President, Rev Wu Wei, Residential Vice-President Rev Shen Xuebin and other colleagues. Rev Wu informed NCCS that the Church in China has not been spared the impact of the pandemic. However, it continues towards “the path of the indigenization and contextualization of Christianity in China”. In addition, efforts are being made to achieve good church management in accordance with the law of the land. Rev Wu expressed appreciation for the financial support of NCCS for Wuhan City and Hubei Province at the height of the pandemic. Rev Shen said that churches in China are looking at different ways to reach young people to respond to the Christian faith.

Bishop Titus Chung shared, among other things, about the challenges of pastoral care ministry faced by churches in Singapore during this period. The church leaders agreed to maintain their friendship and to resume mutual visits when the pandemic is over. A report of the virtual meeting can be found on the website of the [Church in China](#).