

NDTS 2023

The National Day Thanksgiving Service will be held on Thursday, 17 August at 7.45pm in the Cathedral New Sanctuary, St Andrew's Cathedral. NCCS President, Rt Rev Lu Guan Hoe will preach from Psalm 67: 1-7 on the topic "May all the people praise you, God". Bishop Lu's message will be in Mandarin with English interpretation. Participants include the music team of Prinsep Street Presbyterian Church and the choir of God's Kingdom Bread of Life Church.

Invitations will be sent to churches in due course, and we welcome individuals as well as groups representing your church. Reservations to be seated as a church group are welcome. We are also resuming light refreshments after the service to encourage fellowship among worshippers at the NDTS. Let us come to worship and to pray together as Christians in Singapore at NDTS 2023.

From Competitive Bidding to Balloting and Fixed Pricing for new Places of Worship

1. On 28 May 2023, the government announced the 'revised place of worship land allocation and pricing framework'. It was a major change of policy for religious organisations such as churches wishing to have a place of worship (PW) in HDB estates. The revised framework means that new PW sites will be offered at a fixed price and will be awarded through the balloting system. The pre-qualification stage remains unchanged, requiring the church to demonstrate community involvement, the need for space as well as adequate local funding.

The policy change will put an end to competitive bidding introduced in the early 1990s that had pushed the cost of building a new church in a HDB estate beyond the reach of churches with less financial resources. At the same time, the high winning bids had also affected churches sitting on leasehold land as the high bids are factored into the valuation of lease renewal premiums. Over the years, congregations have had to deal with the burden of raising funds every 30 years for the rising lease renewal premium. We are certain that with the 'revised place of worship land allocation and pricing framework', churches can now focus more on ministry and service rather than being pre-occupied with fund raising.

2. Churches interested in the multi-user place of worship are also assured that it will be less costly, and this will hopefully encourage smaller churches to combine their resources in order to share premises and facilities for worship and ministry. For those who missed the recent announcement, here are some relevant information:

- The ballot will be conducted manually. Qualified Religious Organisations (ROs) will be invited to witness the balloting process. The result of the ballot, including the list of ROs who failed at the ballot stage, will also be made known on HDB's website.
- The fixed price will be determined by the Chief Valuer based on his professional judgement and will take reference from the valuation of directly alienated PW land that has never been subject to the competitive tender process. The CV will make adjustments to the price based on site-specific factors (e.g., location, lease tenure) and year-on-year differences (e.g., inflation).
- The supply and timing for the release of new PW sites are determined based on several factors, such as population demography, worship patterns and adequacy of existing worship/prayer spaces for the different religious groups. This ensures that there is an adequate supply and a good geographical distribution of various types of PWs to meet the needs of our multi-religious society.