

2022 Episcopal Address

Dear all co-workers, official delegates and special guests,

We thank the Lord for his mercy and grace that you can come to Brisbane safely to attend this year's AC Sessions. I am very happy that after nearly three years of COVID-19, we can finally meet together physically. I hope that in these few days of busy meetings, we also enjoy a time of warm fellowship and the practice of loving each other.

I would like to greet you all in the name of our Saviour Jesus Christ. May the grace and peace of God be with you always! I would like to sincerely welcome Dr. Gordon Wong, Bishop of the Methodist Church in Singapore, Dr. Adrain King, President of the Provisional Annual Conference of the Chinese Methodist Church in New Zealand, and Dr. Lim Guo-ting, Lay Leader of the Provisional Annual Conference of the Chinese Methodist Church in New Zealand. Bishop Gordon Wong will only join us tomorrow morning because, tonight he will be presiding over the ordination of pastors in Singapore. We are very grateful to President Adrain King for accepting our invitation to be the speaker at our opening ceremony.

Of course, I also welcome all co-workers, official delegates from all CMCA churches, theological students and observers to attend this 21st AC Session. This year is an election year. I believe that everyone is very much looking forward to the new bishop and his/her team. Please pray and wait for one more day, as we will hold elections for the new bishop, Board chairs and Board members tomorrow afternoon.

1. Thanksgiving

First of all, I am very grateful to our gracious Lord Jesus Christ for his guidance, care and help. With the wisdom, strength and mercy He bestowed, I was able to finish serving as bishop for four years. These four years of ministry were really not easy. Not only did we have to face the problems of pastors and co-workers and the tensions between the local church and the Annual Conference, we also had to deal with the various challenges brought to the church by the pandemic. Secondly, I would also like to thank those pastors and church leaders who supported us. You have given me genuine acceptance and warm hospitality whenever I visited all of you in the different cities, enabling me to experience the joy of serving. Also, thank you to the prayer warriors who faithfully interceded for me and the ministry of the Annual Conference. Beginning in 2019, I have sent out weekly prayer requests to the members of the Executive Board, the co-workers of the three districts, and the members of the Council of Episcopacy, asking everyone to pray and seek the help and strength of our God.

Although I'm not able to mention the names of all the pastors and church leaders who have helped me, it is necessary to thank the following people:

- Rev Dr Yuk Chong Liong, Rev Dr Justin Tan and President Dr Adrain King helped to serve as speakers for the 2019 Pastors' Retreat; President Dr Adrain King also served as speaker at the opening and closing ceremonies of the Annual Sessions (due to the originally invited speaker, Dr Ying Fuk-Tsang being unable to leave Hong Kong to come to Australia).
- All chairpersons and members who were active in promoting the ministries of the Annual Conference.
- The Executive Board members who gave me support.

- Brother Jason Wong, the Conference treasurer, who helped with the financial affairs and compiled the CMCA “Treasurer’s Handbook”.
- Rev Pin Hien Lam who assisted in updating the revised version of 2020 Book of Discipline.
- Those who have generously donated money to support the purchase of churches, LAMM, theological scholarships Funds, overseas missions, and etc.
- Members of the Council of Episcopacy who cared for and loved the bishop’s family.

2. Bishop’s Responsibilities

In the past four years as bishop, due to the raging of the Covid-19 pandemic, for nearly two years, it was impossible for me to travel to various cities in Australia to visit various churches, not to mention overseas participation in physical conferences and churches in our mission districts. However, we are thankful that we could hold various trainings, meetings and conferences through online platforms. During this period, I tried my best to visit various churches in CMCA, including churches in mission districts. A list of my official visits is provided hereunder:

2018/12/8-9	PNG Methodist Church	Constituting PNG Missions Conference, preaching
2019/2/23-24	Australia West District	Speaking at Leadership Forum & Revival Meeting
2019/3/8-12	Solomon MC	Conducting the dedication service & preaching
2019/3/15-17	CMCNZ	Preaching and conducting deacon ordination
2019/4/20-22	Holy MC	Serving as a church camp speaker
2019/5/17-19, 24-26	LAMM	Teaching Biblical Interpretation Courses
2019/6/24	Singapore	Attending WFCMC Theological Committee Meeting
2019/7/9-10	Sibu, Sarawak	Attending WFCMC Executive Council Meeting
2019/7/27	Carlton & Redeemer MC	Speaking at Wesleyan Seminar on Salvation
2019/8/25	EMP MC	Preaching at EMP MC 30 Anni. Thanksgiving Service
2019/9/30-2019/10/1	Australia West District	Speaking at Australia West District Pastors’ Retreat
2019/10/14	Australia East District	Attending AED Conference
2019/10/18-20	PNG Methodist Church	Presiding First PNG Mission Conference
2019/10/26	Camberwell MC	Attending ASD Conference; Devotional sharing
2019/11/2-3	Holy & Goodwood MC	Speaking at Leadership Forum
2019/11/3	Goodwood MC	Preaching at 30 Anni. Thanksgiving Service
2019/12/29	Mercy MC	Constituting Mercy MC, preaching
2020/1/4	Carlton & Redeemer MC	Speaking at the Methodist Night
2020/1/5	Redeemer MC	Preaching at RMC 3rd Anni. Thanksgiving Service
2020/1/10-20	Trip to Israel & Jordon	Leading a team of 42 people to Israel & Jordon
2020/2/22-23	Australia West District	Preaching at Leadership Forum & Revival Meeting
2020/2/29	Holy & Goodwood MC	Speaking at the Methodist Night
2020/4/12	Pre-recorded Sermon	Preaching on Easter Sunday
2020/6/12-14, 19-21	LAMM	Teaching “Introduction To NT” (Online)
2020/9/22	WFCMC	Attending WFCMC Executive Council Online Meeting
2020/10/17-18	PNG Methodist Church	Presiding Second PNG Mission Conference (Online)
2020/10/24	Australia south District	Devotional Sharing at ASD Conference
2020/12/12	Grace MC	Attending Grace MC dedication Service (Online)
2020/12/25	Pre-recorded Sermon	Preaching at Christmas Service
2021/1/9	Australia South District	Attending ASD Planning Forum (Online)
2021/4/10-11	Carlton & Redeemer MC	Speaking at Leadership Forum & Methodist Night
2021/5/15-16	Holy & Goodwood MC	Speaking at the Methodist Night
2021/7/9	EEU Conference	Speaking at EEU Conference
2021/7/13	WFCMC	Attending WFCMC Executive Council Online Meeting
2021/7/14-15	WFCMC	Attending the 7th Theological Seminar (online)
2021/7/21	WFCMC	Attending WFCMC Theological Committee Meeting
2021/7/25, 8/1, 8, 22	Online Sunday School	Teaching “Introduction to NT”
2021/10/23	ASD and AED	Devotional Sharing at ASD & AED Conferences

2021/10/23-24 2021/11/13-14	PNG Methodist Church Carlton MC	Presiding Third PNG Mission Conference (Online) Preaching at 30 Anni. Thanksgiving Service
2022/3/15 2022/3/20 2022/4/24 2022/5/15 2022/5/21 2022/6/5 2022/6/9-13	WFCMC Redeemer MC CMCNZ-ILI-Online Mercy MC Australia West District Praise MC Singapore	Attending WFCMC Executive Council Online Meeting Conducting Redeemer MC dedication Service Teaching ILI Course on "Setting the Goals" (Online) Conducting Mercy MC dedication Service Speaking at the Methodist Night Preaching at Praise MC 25 Anni. Thanksgiving Service Attending WFCMC Executive Council Meeting and Mission Conference
2022/7/2-3 2022/7/23 2022/7/30 2022/8/20 2022/8/21 2022/9/18	Adelaide Melbourne Launceston Brisbane EMP MC Sherwood MC	Speaking at Leadership Forum in Adelaide Speaking at Leadership Forum in Melbourne Speaking at Leadership Forum in Launceston Speaking at Leadership Forum & Methodist Night Preaching at EMP MC 33 Anni. Thanksgiving Service Preaching at Sherwood MC 28 Anni. Thanksgiving Service
2022/9/29 2022/10/22-23 2022/10/29	WFCMC PNG Methodist Church Australia East District	Attending WFCMC Executive Council Meeting Presiding Fourth PNG Mission Conference Attending AED Conference; Devotional sharing

(Note: The above records do not include my Sunday preaching in different churches. I am very grateful to the pastors of various churches for giving me many opportunities to teach and preach. AC Lay Leader Thomas Ling also attended the leadership forums and Methodist Nights together with me and his help to guide safe church policy making has been invaluable.)

3. Reflections on the past

3.1 CMCA main ministries and important events in 2019-2022

2019

- Feb 6-16, A six-member short-term mission team of Methodist Medical & Missions went to the villages of Warangal, Telangana in India.
- Mar 2, EB meeting resolved that each local church could register their own ABN. However, all local churches under CMCA are still required to operate according to the Book of Discipline.
- 7/8-12, 51 young leaders from different cities participated in the EEU conference.
- 7/19-28, Board of Evangelism organized evangelistic meetings in seven cities across the country. Speaker: Dr. Gordon Lee; Theme: Seven Tips for Beautifying your Life.
- 8/2-4, 10-11 Worship Seminar "Authentic Worship" was successfully held in Perth and Melbourne. Speakers: Methodist Elder and a Professor on worship Rev Dr Constance Cherry from USA and Rev Ping Eik See.
- 8/25, Eight Mile Plains Methodist Church celebrated its 30th Anniversary Thanksgiving service.
- 25-30/9, Rev Scott Ang led the Canberra evangelistic team. A total of 33 team members from six churches shared the gospel with the Chinese students on the campus of the Australia National University.
- 11/3, Goodwood Methodist Church celebrated its 30th Anniversary Thanksgiving service.
- 12/1, Deacon Ordination: Rev Michael Ting; Elders Ordination: Rev Shirley Ling, Rev David Tiong, Rev Kam Loong Lee and Rev Alan Lau.
- 12/10, brothers and sisters from the Immanuel Methodist Church Audio-visual Group starred in "If I Could Sing" for the first film at Rocks Church, with over 400 people participating!
- 29/12, Wishart Preaching Point of Eight Mile Plains Methodist Church was constituted as Mercy Methodist Church.

2020

- LAMM modules for 2nd Generation Youths: Christian Spirituality (19 attended); Introduction to OT (15 attended); Introduction to NT (16 attended).
- 2/15, ASD organised a one-day seminar at Glory MC entitled “Rebuild the Family Ministry, Revive the Church”, with a total of 4 lectures by Brother Chiong Siong Khai.
- 3/29, Sunday Service moved to online worship due to the government restrictions on the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 4/10, Due to restrictions on places of worship, a pre-recorded Good Friday service was provided for all churches. A contemplative service on the “Seven Last Words of Jesus’ was put together and livestream from YouTube.
- Due to Covid-19 restrictions, instead of having EEU conference, ACMYF had decided to organize online webinars via Zoom in July.
- 8/7-9, 1st Family Discipleship Seminar, Speaker: President Tie King Tai. Theme: “Coming Home.” About 550 people attended via online platform.
- 11/27-28, First time CMCA AC Session was conducted via online platform. Official delegates from each city gathered at the designated location for meeting via Zoom.
- 11/28, Elder Ordination: Rev Tony Tang. (Ceremony to be done in 2022 AC Session)
- 12/12, Grace Methodist Church held the dedication service for the new church building. Due to the closure of the border, Bishop Albert Wong appointed Bishop Emeritus James Kwang to officiate the ceremony.
- Support for cross-cultural Persian Ministry: The target donation in 2020 was \$55,000. The actual donation was \$55,000.
- CMCA has adopted the NCCA’s Child Safety Policy as our over-arching guide. CMCA is fully committed to safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults.

2021

- LAMM modules for 2nd Generation Youths: Biblical Interpretation (22 attended); Church History (7 attended); Christian Worship (11 attended).
- 2/26, Redeemer Methodist Church acquired a building at 3, Hartley Road, Seven Hills, NSW 2147 to be used as a church.
- 5/19, Mercy Methodist Church acquired a church building at 13, Plumbs Road, Tanah Merah, QLD 4128.
- 5/23, Immanuel Methodist Church celebrated its 25th Anniversary Thanksgiving service.
- 7/5-9 EEU Conference, a total of 54 young people participated.
- 7/25, Gospel Methodist Church celebrated its 10th Anniversary Thanksgiving service.
- 8/13-15, 2nd Family Discipleship Seminar (Chinese), Speaker: Rev Moses Tey. Theme: “God’s Kingdom Blessings: The Gospel and the Family.” About 400 people attended.
- 8/27, Board of Missions conducted an online Webinar. Theme: Mission Trend for 21st Century. Speaker: Rev Dr Grace Wong. There were three other workshops: City Missions, Dilemma of Japanese Church, Cambodia Dormitory Ministry.
- 9/10-12, 2nd Family Discipleship Seminar (English), Speaker: Rev Moses Tey. Theme: “God’s Kingdom Blessings: The Gospel and the Family.” About 300 people attended.
- 9/19, Kingsway Methodist Church celebrated its 30th Anniversary Thanksgiving service.
- 11/14, Carlton Methodist Church celebrated its 30th Anniversary Thanksgiving service.
- 11/26-27, CMCA AC Session was conducted via online platform for the second year.
- 11/27, Deacons Ordination: Rev Sean Koh and Rev Ivan Low. Elders Ordination: Rev Jian Hua Yu, Rev Sean Kong and Rev Michael Ting. (Ceremony to be done in 2022 AC Session)

- Board of Christian Education offered Online Sunday school classes: Biblical Interpretation (E), Introduction to NT (C), Introduction to OT (C).
- Support for cross-cultural Persian Ministry: The target donation in 2021 was \$44,000. The actual donation was \$40,000.

2022

- LAMM modules for 2nd Generation Youths: Christian Theology (16 attended); Methodist Studies (10 attended).
- 3/13, Board of Missions held a seminar on “Introduction to Digital Missions” to explore new ways of overseas missions on online platforms.
- 3/20, Redeemer Methodist Church held the dedication service for the new church building. It was officiated by Bishop Albert Wong.
- 4/19-28, Rev Scott Ang, the chairperson of Board of Evangelism led an evangelistic team in Launceston and Bernie to evangelize local residents.
- 5/15, Mercy Methodist Church held the dedication service for the new church building. It was officiated by Bishop Albert Wong.
- 6/5, Praise Methodist Church celebrated its 25th Anniversary Thanksgiving service.
- 6/9-13, WFCMC held a Mission Conference in Singapore. CMCA had 99 online participants.
- 7/10, Dr. Gregg Okesson, Lecturer at Asbury Theological Seminary, USA, gave two mission lectures in Sydney.
- 7/12-13, Dr. Gregg Okesson, Lecturer at Asbury Theological Seminary, gave special talks in Melbourne on the topic: Public Witness in a Complex World.
- 8/12-14, 3rd Family Discipleship Seminar (Chinese), Speaker: Rev Dr Adrain King. Theme: “Christian Family & Passing the Baton of Faith.” About 300 people attended.
- 9/24-30, Rev Scott Ang, the chairperson of Board of Evangelism led an evangelistic team in Canberra.
- 9/16-18, 3rd Family Discipleship Seminar (English), Speaker: Robin & Ruth Lim. About 100 people attended.
- Board of Christian Education offered Online Sunday school classes: Exodus in the Bible (C), Christian Calling and Vocation (E), Revelations (C), Church History (E).
- Support for cross-cultural Persian Ministry: The target donation in 2022 was \$33,000. The actual donation was \$37,000.
- Except for one church in Brisbane, all other churches have signed the Deed of Covenant with the Annual Conference, a resolution that was passed in 2019 AC Sessions.
- The roof replacement project of the Methodist House was completed in September at a total cost of \$157,107.50.

3.2 Reflect on CMCA 2019-2022 Main Theme & Sub-themes

The 2019-2022 CMCA Theme is “Building a Church after God’s own heart.” From the teaching of our Lord Jesus, I think a Church that is after God’s own heart is: (1) A church that pursues unity in one spirit; (2) A church that prays together in one spirit; (3) A church that nurtures disciples; (4) A church that lives out the love of God; (5) A church that actively involves in global missions. In each of these peculiarities, I suggest two practical actions:

- To pursue unity in one spirit: (1) Dealing with self; (2) Follow the Book of Discipline.
- To pray together in one spirit: (1) Burden for our own personal prayer; (2) Renewing content of prayer meetings.

- To cultivate disciples: (1) Reorient the direction of discipleship; (2) Reorganize the direction of Fellowship gatherings.
- To live out the love of God: (1) Showing concerns within the body of Christ; (2) Establishing Methodist Care Centre in the community.
- To actively involved in global missions: (1) Cultivating 'World Christians'; (2) Cultivating 'Missionary by Profession'.

In order to achieve the theme of "Building a Church after God's own heart," we have drafted four sub-themes in 2019-2022: 2019 – Abiding in the Lord to bear much fruit; 2020 - Building healthy families to serve the Lord; 2021 - Caring for the Community to reach the lost; 2022 - Equipping the church for cross-cultural missions.

Participation in building a church after God's own heart is a starting point in the training of every person who serves to establish a good relationship with God. It is also the foundation of our faith. In order to assist brothers and sisters in all Methodist churches to be grounded and rooted in spiritual faith, the Board on Christian Education drafted a blueprint on Spiritual Growth of Christians in the Annual Conference in 2019. The blueprint enables a believer to grow progressively from being a hearer of the Word to being a learner of the word, from being a learner of the word to being a doer of the word, from being a doer of the word to becoming a preacher of the word.

Having established a firm foundation for our faith, we should be disciples after God's own heart in the family, society and in the world. From 2020 to 2022 CMCA had held three national Family Discipleship Seminars. Through internet live-streaming, brothers and sisters in all local churches were invited to attend. In the first year it was conducted in Chinese. In the second and third year, we had the Chinese and English Seminars held separately. Apart from this, from 2021 we designated the second Sunday of September as "Family Sunday," to help people value family ministry, pass on their faith, and build Christ-centred families.

It is also essential for Christians to be disciples of God's will in the society. Social Care ministry is one of the most important ministries of the Methodist church. John Wesley placed great emphasis on caring for the needs of the community and giving practical action. In 2021 the Board of Christian Social Concerns produced a video clip to introduce the ministries of the Board, and hosted an online seminar on "The Church and Social Concerns." The joint effort with MM&M in launching social concerns activities overseas has received strong support from various churches. More than AUD\$100,000 was raised to support ministries of helping the poor overseas. This year, this Board has held several online seminars on social care-related topics, calling on churches to donate money to help flood victims in Malaysia and Australia - New South Wales and Queensland, and has received generous support from everyone.

Disciples who are after God's own heart must also have a global perspective and participate in overseas missions, because the God we worship and serve is a God of Missions. God sent his only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to the world, to care for the needs of all mankind, to pay the price of life for the world, to save those who trust in him from the power of sin, to give them abundant life, and to issue the Great Commission to preach the gospel of the kingdom and make all nations become disciples of the Lord. Our church should be a missionary church.

When asked about the foundation of mission, Dr. Seamands, a contemporary mission leader used by God, once said: "The mandate of missions is not based on a few verses, but the whole Bible; not just some commands, but the essence of the whole Bible. Throughout the Bible, God has given the church an obvious goal—'missions.' According to the Old Testament, the living God is a missionary

God; according to the Gospels, the resurrected Christ is a missionary Christ; according to Acts, the Holy Spirit is a missionary Spirit; according to the Epistles, the Christian Church is a missionary Church.”

Last year Board of Mission planned to send one full-time long-term missionary (in partnership with a mission agency) in 2025, fully funded by the Board of Mission, with one additional missionary each year thereafter. By 2030, we expect to have seven long-term missionaries sent and funded by CMCA to the world. This is a very large project and I believe it presents a great challenge to the Conference, especially with regard to long-term missionary candidates and the source of funding to support the missionaries. In July this year, God specially arranged for Dr. Gregg Okesson, a lecturer at Asbury Theological Seminary, to give two missionary lectures at Carlton Methodist Church after attending a conference in Sydney. In addition, we have experienced that God is moving some brothers and sisters to actively donate to support regular mission expenses and long-term mission funds.

4. Looking Forward to The Future

4.1 The Theme for Next Year

On 16th July, the Executive Board meeting adopted “Be Disciples of Jesus, Proclaim the Gospel” as the theme for next year. This is a very important and familiar topic, yet many Christians, including Christian leaders, need to put more of this into practical actions. This was emphasised and practised in their spiritual lives by members of the Methodist Church in the early days. John Wesley told his preachers, including lay preachers, that apart from saving souls, there’s nothing else they should do. The most important reason for Methodist churches in England, United States, India and South- East Asia to be established in those days was because Methodist believers upheld the command of “Preach the Word”. Hopefully the Spirit that inspired our pioneer John Wesley will continue to inspire our pastors, deacons, committee members as well as brothers and sisters in Christ. Let us live out in practice as Christ’s true disciples.

In the Gospel of John, the Lord Jesus mentioned three times “If you....., you are my disciple”. John 8:31 states: To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples.” The first characteristic of a true disciple is “to uphold the Lord’s teachings”. In simple words, it is to obey the teachings of the Lord, or to live according to the Lord’s teachings. John 13:34-35 states “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” The second characteristic of a true disciple is to love one another. Therefore, we can say that a true disciple in the eyes of Jesus is one who practises loving one another. John 15:8 states “This is to my Father’s glory that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.” The third characteristic of a true disciple is to bear much fruit. What fruits? The NT mentioned at least 4 types of fruit, namely (1) Fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23), (2) Fruit of Praise (Heb 13:15), (3) Fruit of good deeds (Col 1:10), (4) Fruit of soul winning (Rom 1:13, 1 Cor 16:15). God wants us to live out the characters of Christ, to praise Him in words, to do good deeds in action. In doing all these, the main purpose of God is so that we would be able to testify for Him with our lives and to lead others to Him. This is the necessary path of evangelism.

4.2 Seven Suggestions

(1) Proactively Supporting the Administration of the Conference

In the past four years of my office as the bishop, personally I feel that support for our Annual Conference and its administration from our pastors, local church leaders and members of Methodist churches can be further strengthened. Many leaders are only concerned about their individual

churches. Some leaders even feel that their individual churches don't receive anything in return for their annual monetary contributions to the Conference. Some even feel that after all, their individual churches have their own ABN and self-autonomy, so why the need to follow the administration of the Annual Conference? Have such leaders forgotten the fact that they themselves are members of the Conference? In solidarity with the Conference, I hope that everyone would ponder over the administration of Methodist churches and the spirit of Methodism. Otherwise, some churches would become an independent church in the system of the Methodist Church.

Personally, I would like to appeal to pastors and representatives of local churches to render support to the leadership of the next bishop, unless his or her plans and actions are not in line with the biblical truth or are detrimental to the ministries of the Conference. Pastors and local church representatives should also lead their members in rendering support to the bishop as well as the Conference administration. Even if the successful candidate for the office of bishop is not who you voted for, you still have to abide by the choice of the two-third majority of the representatives. Otherwise, the ministries of the conference would be hindered.

(2) Pastoral Support Plan

Pastors often encounter stress and challenges in their ministries. The few years of training in seminaries do not fully equip them for life as a pastor. The experience of pastors being burned out is not something new. This is also one of the main underlying factors for the resignation of pastors. Burnout can result in a low level of job satisfaction, lack of drive, low morale, low job quality and also increase the frequency of transfers. I hope that the Board on the Ministry will come up with a pastoral support plan, for example, arranging suitable mentors to establish a spiritual teacher-disciple relationship. The book, "Mentoring Matters: Building Strong Christian Leaders" by Rick Lewis is a good starting point to explore the subject.

Why do we need mentors? In the book, "As Iron Sharpens Iron" co-authors, father and son, Howard and William Henricks, suggest the following reasons: (a) Mentors can facilitate true growth and changes: A mentor is basically a teacher. He is not like the teacher in a classroom with a series of fixed teaching materials. But rather he teaches you according to the problems you raise. (b) A mentor is worthy of being exemplified: spiritual growth does not take place in a vacuum. We may have all kinds of knowledge, but unless we live them out in life, we have no proof of our learning. If we have someone meeting us regularly and mentoring us in our lives, it would be much easier and effective for us to reach our goals. Furthermore, it will be easier to get rid of some bad habits.

(3) Nurturing Leadership Successors

Nurturing leadership successors is an important administrative strategy, whether it is in the church or in evangelical organisations. The church should not only bring people to Christ to increase church membership. The church should also multiply more leaders through leadership training. Church leaders should be able to first identify potential leaders and know how to equip these prospective candidates for future church leadership positions. Possible steps in leadership nurturing: identify prospective candidate; provide training opportunity; uncovering their gifts; affirming their good qualities; entrusting responsibilities and authorities; and regular evaluation.

A leader must be able to trust and delegate responsibilities to his subordinates. A leader must be open-minded to accept budding leaders. A leader should also know the time for his retreat. There is no need for one to hold on to the same position in the church. I would like to encourage every church to nurture new pastors and leaders on a regular basis.

(4) Emphasis on Training Small Group Leaders

In the OT, Moses adopted the small group approach to shepherd the needs of the Israelites. Nehemiah also adopted the small group approach to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem. In the NT, Jesus adopted the small group approach to train the 12 disciples. The early churches also adopted the small group methodology to establish the church. Small group ministry in the church definitely falls in line with the desire of God. Our pioneer John Wesley set up class meeting in the church. He formed groups, each comprising of 12 people. One of the members in each group would oversee the spiritual condition of the members. This led to a vast increase in the membership of the Methodist church. Personally, I feel that Christians today should emphasise the training of small group leaders. Governing authorities, as well as the society today, do not have a friendly attitude towards Christians and Christianity. Moreover, this situation would only worsen. One day Christians would probably encounter stronger persecutions, even to the point where we will not be able to freely get together to worship the Lord. When such freedom of worship is lost, adopting the small group approach would be our option in times of crisis.

(5) Support for Ministries in Remote Areas.

While our church is involved in overseas missions, let us not forget about the local mission. We should also support evangelistic ministries in the remote areas. Thanks be to God, Praise Methodist Church through the late Rev Peck Kui Kwang has planted the North-West Preaching Point in Burnie. Currently, the ministry is being led by Pastor Johnny Hii. He is currently working on the establishment of meeting places in Devonport and Smithton. For further details on North-West Preaching Point, please refer to the attached report from Praise Methodist Church.

Apart from appealing to everyone to uphold mission ministries in the remote regions in your prayers, I also hope that churches which are financially stronger would consider rendering financial support as well. This is because churches in the remote regions, unlike urban churches, have fewer people and therefore collect lesser amounts of financial offerings.

(6) Employment of Salaried Staff

30 years ago, the only people who received remuneration in churches were reverends and pastors. Churches which were larger would probably also employ an office clerk. All other church workers were volunteers. However today it is difficult to find a volunteer worker to run certain ministries in the church. Times have changed. Everyone is busy. In order to meet various financial needs in life, to nurture children, to pursue more wealth and enjoyment, people today find it hard to allocate much time to the church. Therefore, we need to employ salaried workers. For example: Missions Director; Christian Social Concerns Director; Family Ministry Director; the person overall in charge of Safe Church; Bishop's Secretary, etc. Of course, the Conference can only do what is possible within its financial capacity.

(7) The Need to employ a Legal Counsellor

Due to the complications of social relationship, the policies of the government and new regulations, there is a greater tendency for interpersonal conflicts and conflicts between individuals and organisations to be resolved through legal means. Apart from this, due to tighter control by the governing authority over certain sectors and social activities, it is now far easier for individuals and organisations to inadvertently break the law, be outlawed as they are deemed illegal, or even face legal actions.

Although our Annual Conference is a religious institution, we are not immune to such developments.

At the moment, our Conference lacks internal legal support that we can rely on. Whenever we encounter any legal matters, very often we fail to obtain effective and timely guidance. As a result the efficiency of the administration is affected. At the same time our Conference also faces potential legal risks as we have no clear understanding of our legal position. Hence in order to avoid legal risks and to facilitate confident running of the Conference, I suggest we employ a legal counsellor to provide legal advice on daily matters and to provide other legal services when the need arises.

Conclusion:

There are other important ministries of the Conference. Please read the reports from the various board chairpersons. Lastly, your humble servant once again appeals to all pastors and representatives to complement and supplement each other in building up a church after God's own heart. May the Lord help us to uphold biblical truths and courageously withstand the tide from the world of darkness. Methodist citizens have to live a life that glorifies God in this crooked generation. May we make "Be the Lord's disciple, Preach the Gospel" as the goal of our lives.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Albert Wong", written over a horizontal line.

Bishop Albert Wong