

Chinese Methodist Church in Australia

24th Annual Session of the Annual Conference

Episcopal Address

Bishop Milton Nee
27th November 2025

We give thanks to our Heavenly Father for His guidance and care throughout 2025, enabling the Chinese Methodist Church in Australia (CMCA) to continue growing and advancing in faith, love, and hope.

As Bishop, I wish to extend my heartfelt appreciation to all pastors of the Annual Conference (AC) for your faithful leadership and shepherding; to the three District Superintendents for your dedicated oversight and promotion of district ministries; to the lay leaders for your valuable assistance at the Annual Conference level; and to all Board chairpersons and committee members for your united cooperation and proactive participation in ministry.

Special thanks are also due to our AC Director of Youth for diligently promoting youth ministries across the country; to the AC Methodist Adult Fellowship and the AC Women Fellowship Presidents and committee members for encouraging fellowship life and retreats; to the Principal, Administrative Assistant, Board Chair and Directors of the LAMM (Logos Academy for Ministry and Mission); and to the Chief Executive Officer and Directors of the Methodist Medical & Mission (MMM). I also express my gratitude to our three part-time and full-time staff at the Annual Conference Office whose faithful service and commitment have ensured the smooth and expanding work of the Annual Conference. Praise the Lord! Through the united efforts of all, the *connectional spirit* of Methodism has been preserved and passed on.

This year, we have embraced the theme **“Be Equipped to Serve, Use Spiritual Gifts”**. I believe this theme has borne good fruit throughout all levels of the church. Many brothers and sisters have received training through various programs, and the number of students enrolled in LAMM has also increased. We are delighted to see several new local preachers joining the ministry, and one new AC theological student undertaking full-time studies in Perth. In addition, two part-time staff have joined the AC Office to strengthen accounting and administrative support.

May “Be Equipped to Serve, Use Spiritual Gifts” not only serve as our theme for 2025 but also as an ongoing vision for the future of the Church. Let us resolve, in the days ahead, to continue equipping believers so that every part of the church may humbly submit to pastoral leadership and serve together in unity—building up the body of Christ in love, growing firmly in grace, and being grounded in truth.

Looking ahead to 2026, with the theme **“Persevere with the Mission, Be a Blessing to the Community”** I hope that the CMCA, having served for more than thirty-one years, will excel in demonstrating Christ’s love through practical service to the wider community.

In *Luke 10:33–37*: “*But a Samaritan, as he travelled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him...Go and do likewise.*” Jesus tells us through the parable of the Good Samaritan that the heart of social concern is to *love your neighbour as yourself*. Christian social concern flows from recognising the needs of others, not from a mere sense of duty or obligation. It makes no distinction of race, status, or culture, but responds to need wherever it is found—just as the Samaritan helped the wounded Jew.

To care for those in need is also a powerful testimony of faith. As James writes, “*Faith without deeds is dead.*” When the Church responds to the needs of society with loving service, the gospel of God’s love becomes alive in action. As John Wesley reminds us, “*There is no holiness but social holiness.*” Christian social concern is not an optional addition to faith—it is the natural expression of loving God and neighbour. The command of Jesus still calls us today: **“Go and do likewise!”**

1. Theological Foundation of Christian Social Service

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus declared, “*You are the salt of the earth... you are the light of the world*” (*Matthew 5:13–14*), reminding us that Christians are called to influence and illuminate the world. If the Church confines itself to ritual and ignores poverty, illness, and injustice, it loses the transformative power of the gospel (*James 2:17*). Christian social service is the natural outflow of living faith.

1. God’s Creation and Human Stewardship

Humanity, made in God’s image, is entrusted with the stewardship of the earth (*Genesis 1:26–28*). This includes responsibility for the environment, social structures, and the vulnerable. Christian social service fulfils this divine mandate as an act of obedience to God.

2. Incarnation and the Model of Services

Christ, the Son of God, became flesh (*John 1:14*), entering the pain and poverty of humanity—healing the sick, comforting the sorrowful, feeding the hungry.

Christian social service follows His example of humility and compassion toward those in need.

3. The Community of God’s Kingdom and the Commissioning of the Holy Spirit

After Pentecost, believers shared life together in love and generosity (*Acts 2:44–47*), embodying the body of Christ (*1 Corinthians 12:27*). Therefore, caring for the poor, the lonely, and the marginalised is a witness to the Church’s unity and compassion. The Holy Spirit calls Christians to be “peacemakers” (*Matthew 5:9*), to stand as restorers and intercessors amid brokenness. In this way, social service becomes a ministry commissioned by the Holy Spirit.

4. The Presence of God’s Kingdom and Social Renewal

Jesus proclaimed, “*The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!*” (*Mark 1:15*). Social service is both a manifestation of God’s Kingdom now and a foretaste of the new heaven and new earth (*Revelation 21:1–4*). As we work for justice and healing, we participate in the prayer, “*Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth.*”

As Wesley once said, “*There is no holiness but social holiness.*”ⁱ Christian service flows from reverence for God and obedience to the command to love one’s neighbour (*Matthew 22:37–39*). When the Church practices social care, the world sees the reality of the gospel—being salt and light, witnessing to God’s Kingdom until Christ returns.

2. John Wesley and Christian Social Concern

John Wesley (1703–1791) said, “*Without holiness in the world, there is no true religion.*”ⁱⁱ He reminded us that true faith is not withdrawal from the world but engagement with it—sharing Christ’s love and blessing those around us. Faith means loving God, and our deeds show love for others.

1. Faith in Action

Wesley emphasised, “*Faith without works is dead*” (*James 2:17*). In 18th-century England, he founded medical clinics, loan societies, and visited prisons and orphanages. He said, “*If you are truly saved, you will long to be a blessing to others.*”ⁱⁱⁱ Spiritual renewal must always lead to social transformation.

2. Grace in Practice

Wesley’s doctrine of *Prevenient Grace* teaches that God’s grace moves not only individuals but also societies toward justice, peace, and mercy.^{iv} Christians who serve in education, healthcare, and poverty relief are co-workers with God in bringing about His kingdom on earth.

3. Called to Sanctify Society

Wesley spoke of both *personal* and *social* holiness, declaring that “there is no

holiness apart from community.”^v He led believers to engage in education, medical work, temperance, and abolitionist movements, boldly condemning slavery.^{vi} Faith, therefore, renews both individuals and societies.

Faith that Transforms the World

Wesley’s life testifies that faith must become action. He reminded the Church: “*All that you have is God’s trust, given to benefit others.*”^{vii} Today, the Church’s social service is the extension of the gospel—bringing transformation through Christ’s love and revealing God’s mercy to the world.

3. Being Salt and Light in Australia

Wesley once exhorted: “*Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can, as long as ever you can.*”^{viii} This reminds us that faith must be lived out in loving our neighbours.

As the Church in Australia, we must pay attention to seven key groups in need:

1. **Those struggling with mental health** – Approximately 4.56 million Australians experienced mental health issues in the past year.^{ix}
2. **The homeless and housing insecure** – Around 122,494 people were homeless in 2021.^x
3. **Divorced and single-parent families** – About 1.06 million single-parent households, representing 15.9% of all families.^{xi}
4. **Children in poverty or distress** – Over 820,000 children live in poverty; 18,900 are homeless, with rising anxiety and behavioural issues among ages 5–14.^{xii}
5. **Youth with mental health challenges** – About 1.68 million aged 15–19 face psychological difficulties, with 25–40% affected.^{xiii}
6. **The elderly and socially isolated** – 3.18 million people experience loneliness, including 380,000 seniors aged 65 and above.^{xiv}
7. **Indigenous and marginalised communities** – Indigenous Australians represent 3.2% of the population but account for 28% of the homeless.^{xv}

The Church’s Role as Salt and Light

As a visible expression of God’s Kingdom, the Methodist Church should respond to these needs with Christlike compassion through diverse ministries such as:

1. **Pastoral and Counselling Ministries** – Spiritual care, prayer, and emotional support for those facing psychological struggles; encouraging and training Christian counsellors.
2. **Homelessness and Community Support** – Providing meals, temporary shelter, employment counselling, and outreach; inspiring believers to pursue social work vocations.
3. **Family and Children’s Care** – Supporting single-parent and vulnerable families through childcare, parenting, and budgeting programs; training family ministry workers.
4. **Youth Formation and Mentoring** – Developing youth fellowships, mentorship programs, and cross-cultural engagement; nurturing Christian youth workers.
5. **Senior and Loneliness Ministries** – Visits, activities, and prayer support to bring warmth and fellowship; equipping volunteers to serve the elderly.
6. **Indigenous and Cross-Cultural Ministries** – Providing education, empowerment, and faith-based support to Indigenous and minority communities; raising cross-cultural missionaries.

May Matthew 25:40 continue to inspire us: “*Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.*” May our Church, following the footsteps of Wesley, bring light to those who are lonely, hurting, and forgotten. Amen.

4. Promote Economic Development and Enhance Service

Purpose of the Church Development Fund

The CMCA’s primary sources of income are the offerings from local churches and preaching centres, as well as modest returns from the Methodist Hostel and bank interest. While these funds cover AC office salaries and various Boards’ expenses, they are insufficient to expand staffing or provide additional pastoral support.

Therefore, a **Church Development Fund** is being established under the supervision of the **Board of Finance**, with a **Development Fund Committee** tasked to oversee its execution and regularly report to the Board of Finance and the Executive Board. When sufficient funds are raised, management will transition to a newly formed **Board of Church Development Fund**.

Committee Responsibilities

The Committee will promote and raise funds across the nation, including accepting donations from external supporters. All funds will be deposited into a designated interest-bearing account.

Governance

All expenditures or allocations must first be reviewed by the Board of Finance and approved by the Executive Board. Bank transactions require dual authorised signatures.

Long-term Plan

Once the fund reaches the target amount, it will be transferred to the Board of Church Development Fund for continued investment management.

Sources of Funds

The sources of funds may include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. **Cash Offerings** – Contributions received from donors in the form of cash.
2. **Property Donations** – Donations of real estate by donors, such as apartments, houses, or commercial buildings.
3. **Bequests** – Contributions specified by donors in their wills, either as cash or real estate.
4. **Rental Income from Properties** – Income generated from properties purchased with cash received by the Committee/Development Fund, or from properties donated and subsequently rented out.
5. **Capital Gains from Property Investments** – Profits realised from the sale of purchased properties.
6. **Bank Deposits** – Interest income earned from funds invested in savings accounts.

Five-Year Church Development Fund Budget Plan

Funding Objectives		Total Annual Revenue	
Cash Donations	AUD 1,000,000	Interest	AUD 40,000
Property Assets	AUD 2,500,000	Rental	AUD 120,000
Total Value: AUD 3,500,000		Projected Annual Revenue AUD 160,000	

Conclusion

Dear brothers and sisters, as we look back on nearly four decades of the CMCA's journey, we see God's gracious hand guiding and sustaining His Church through every season of renewal and expansion. Let us cherish the precious *connectional spirit* of Methodism and move forward together in faith and unity.

Now is the time to boldly live out our vision—“**Persevere with the Mission, Be a Blessing to the Community.**” The Scriptures and the Methodist heritage remind us that true godliness extends beyond worship within the church; holiness must also be expressed in service to society.

May the Chinese Methodist Church in Australia continue to live out its calling to be *the salt and light of the world*—steadfast in faith and active in service. May Christ’s love empower us to care for the broken and the forgotten, and may the connectional unity of Methodism strengthen the body of Christ.

May God also bless the development of our Church Fund, that we may be enriched not only spiritually but also in resources—so that we may be a greater blessing to others.

To God be the glory. Amen.

ⁱ John Wesley, *Sermon 24: Upon Our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount, Discourse IV*, in *The Works of John Wesley*, Vol. 1 (London: Wesleyan Conference Office, 1872), 245.

ⁱⁱ John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, Vol. XI (London: Wesleyan Conference Office, 1872), 367.

ⁱⁱⁱ John Wesley, *Sermon 92: On Zeal*, in *The Works of John Wesley*, Vol. VII, 54–56.

^{iv} Randy L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley’s Practical Theology* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1994), 23–28. Theodore Runyon, *The New Creation: John Wesley’s Theology Today* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 95–102. Richard P. Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodists* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1995), 145–150.

^v John Wesley, *Sermon 24: Upon Our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount, Discourse IV*, in *The Works of John Wesley*, Vol. V, 298.

^{vi} John Wesley, *Thoughts upon Slavery* (1774), in *The Works of John Wesley*, Vol. XI, 59–79.

^{vii} John Wesley, *Sermon 50: The Use of Money*, in *The Works of John Wesley*, Vol. VI, 126.

^{viii} 约翰·卫斯理,《论金钱的使用》(Sermon 50: The Use of Money, 1744), 载于 *The Works of John Wesley*, Vol. VI (伦敦: Wesleyan Conference Office, 1872), 第 126 页。

^{ix} Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), *National Study of Mental Health and Wellbeing*, 2024, Catalogue No. 4326.0.

^x Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), *Census of Population and Housing: Estimating Homelessness*, 2021, Catalogue No. 2049.0.

^{xi} Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), *Household and Family Characteristics*, 2022, Catalogue No. 4130.0.

^{xii} Social Mission for Australia (SMFA), *Poverty and Child Wellbeing Report 2024*; The Salvation Army, *State of the Nation Report 2024*; Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), *Australia’s Children 2023*.

^{xiii} Mission Australia, *Youth Survey Report 2024* (Sydney: Mission Australia, 2024).

^{xiv} Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), *Social Isolation and Loneliness in Australia*, 2024.

^{xv} Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), *Census 2021: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Profile*; Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), *Homelessness and Indigenous Australians Report 2024*.