



## National Council of Churches of Singapore

新加坡基督教全国教会理事会

Majlis Kebangsaan Gereja-Gereja Singapura

திருச்சபைகளின் தேசிய மன்றம்

19 November 2018

Mr Keith Tan  
Chief Executive Officer  
Singapore Tourism Board  
Tourism Court  
1 Orchard Spring Lane  
Singapore 247729

Dear Mr Tan,

### **The National Council of Churches of Singapore Expresses its Concern on the Christmas Light-up along Orchard Road**

We refer to this year's Christmas light-up along Orchard Road, organised as part of a three-year collaboration between The Walt Disney Company Southeast Asia (Disney) and Singapore Tourism Board (STB).

We are concerned that the light-up, with its exclusive focus on Disney characters, has no meaningful connection to the season of Christmas. Christmas, at its heart, is a festival in the Christian calendar, which commemorates the incarnation and birth of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

We recognise that Christmas is widely celebrated in Singapore and many parts of the world by people who are not Christians, as a time of feasting, gift-giving and spending time with family and friends. We welcome and cherish these precious expressions of human joy and togetherness. We also recognise the legitimate interests of the STB and the Orchard Road Business Association to leverage on the general mood of celebration associated with Christmas to draw more tourists and Singaporeans to spend at Orchard Road.

The NCCS is, however, deeply concerned about the increasing secularisation and commercialisation of Christmas in Singapore. Being an essentially religious festival, Christmas should not be viewed primarily as a money-making venture or an opportunity to market a particular commercial brand. We note that the public celebration of the other festivals in Singapore with religious roots (e.g. Deepavali, Hari Raya Puasa, Vesak Day) are carried out with much less commercialisation and a much greater emphasis on the religious nature of these special days.

It is against such a backdrop that this year's light-up is particularly disappointing for us. We are not against the use of Disney characters per se, but we wonder if they should be the sole focus of what is essentially a Christian festival. The original meaning of Christmas has been effectively buried under the thick layer of this extensive and sophisticated brand promotion exercise.

We hope you will take these views into consideration when planning for the Christmas celebrations in Singapore in the subsequent years, especially in view of your three-year collaboration with Disney.

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Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any queries regarding the content of this letter. May we take this opportunity to wish you and your staff a very joyous and blessed Christmas, with much love, peace and joy shared amongst family and friends.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a series of loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Rev Dr Ngoei Foong Nghian  
General Secretary,  
National Council of Churches of Singapore