



30 January 2021

Dear NCCS Member Churches and Friends,

I bring you warm greetings from the leadership of NCCS.

We first heard of the dreadful news of a Protestant youth's plans to launch a terror attack at two mosques during the briefing by officers from the Ministry of Home Affairs. It left all of us in a state of shock and disbelief. Following the release of the news to the general public, NCCS responded with a "Statement On A Self-Radicalised Singaporean Christian".

At the same time, MCCY proposed a visit by the NCCS leadership to one of the targeted mosques to show our support and solidarity for our Muslim leaders and friends. It is an important gesture on our part to demonstrate our on-going commitment to stand with our Muslim community in such a difficult and challenging time. Our delegation was received by Dr Nazirudin Mohd Nasir (Mufti), Mr Esa Masood (CE Muis), Hj Khalid Shukor Bakri (Chairman Masjid Yusof Ishak and Hj Izuan Mohd Rais (Chairman Masjid Assyafaah).

As we conversed, I felt an overwhelming sense of grief and pain that this incident has caused to our Muslim friends. The Church in Singapore has to identify with our Muslim community the pain and anxieties they must have felt when they learnt of this horrendous news. However, their responses reflected calmness, graciousness, and deep appreciation of the mutual trust we share. Instead, what has happened did not affect the warm relationship that has been built over many years. "We are just a phone call away," was the way the Mufti affectionately described our relationship to the media. And so, we must thank our Lord for this special and unique bond that we share with our Muslim friends, one that must not be taken for granted, not now, not ever. When a crisis hits us, we are able to draw from our invaluable "trust" bank, that we have deposited over the years.

In our dialogue session at the mosque, everyone sensed the need to encourage our youths to develop friendship with people from other religious groups, especially in schools, polytechnic and university. Indeed, it is a wake-up call to all who have responsibility over our young people, especially both teachers and parents, to guide and mentor them in the right path of love and respect for all people, regardless of race or religion. We need to take time to listen to their struggles and connect with their deepest emotions of frustrations, anger, and bitterness. There needs to be greater transparency and accountability in the use of the internet among our young people. As guardians and parents, we need to set healthy boundaries when our teens enter the digital space, which is often borderless.

After the visit, I participated in a radio talk show in which Dr Mohammad Hannan Hassan (Dy CE MUIS) said that he can empathise with us at this moment because all along it has been the arrest of radicalized Muslims who planned terrorist attacks. He knows how we feel. However, he went on to emphasize that, on the flip side, this incident is creating greater opportunities for our people to connect more deeply, in particular, among the younger generation. It is heart-warming to hear that some pastors are already meeting the leaders of their nearby mosques. It will be wonderful if this mindset and acts of love spread nationwide. There are also plans for a church to have joint inter-faith event with the Harmony Centre and a mosque. This is an opportunity for us to reach out to our Muslim neighbours.



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

Together, let us alert our members and parents to the influence of the far-right ideology that is easily accessible via the internet. Although extreme right wing may not be a new phenomenon, there has been a recent increase in the frequency and lethality with some individuals, groups and movement pursuing transnational aims, and our young may be most vulnerable.

We need to pray for the detained youth as he goes through a time of rehabilitation. The Government authorities will be doing their best to provide counselling at every level, and may seek our assistance if necessary, so that the youth will be helped holistically. Let us pray for the grace of God to work in his heart so that he will truly experience genuine remorse and transformation.

Let us also remember in our prayers, the parents and family members of the youth as they grapple with their own sorrow and pain. Remember especially his parents who must have been crushed by guilt and a sense of failure. Finally, pray for NCCS that will also be reaching out to the Pastor and Leaders of the youth's church at the appropriate time.

Sincerely in Christ,

Rt Rev Keith Lai
President
National Council of Churches of Singapore