

50TH ANNIVERSARY DINNER WELCOME SPEECH BY BISHOP LU GUAN HOE, PRESIDENT/NCCS & BISHOP/THE LUTHERAN CHURCH IN SINGAPORE

Guest of Honour Senior Minister Lee Hsien Loong; Mr Edwin Tong, Minister for Culture, Community and Youth and Second Minister for Law; Mr Desmond Lee, Minister for National Development, Minister-in-charge of Social Services Integration; leaders of religious organisations, honoured guests, pastors and lay leaders of the Christian community, ladies and gentlemen:

A very good evening to you and thank you for joining the celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the National Council of Churches of Singapore. We are honoured to have Senior Minister Lee Hsien Loong here with us to grace NCCS' special milestone.

On behalf of the Christian community represented here, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Senior Minister Lee for his contributions to Singapore's progress as Prime Minister for the past 20 years. Your stewardship and love for the people, has helped our people become more respectful of each other's religion, which is why we can experience the racial and religious harmony we have today.

We are glad that you will continue to share your valuable experience with, and provide wisdom to, your younger colleagues. We wish you continuing good health and that you will be able to enjoy more time with your family. Thank you.

NCCS was established shortly after the independence of Singapore and one of its early priorities was to build bridges of understanding among churches with different denominations, diverse varieties of traditions and heritage, and different expressions and forms of worship. NCCS patiently encouraged churches to be part of this fellowship and we thank God that our family of churches has grown bigger over the decades.

This big family is well-represented this evening, and your attendance testifies to the unity of the Christian community in Singapore.

And thanks to this unity, NCCS can embrace the expanded role of representing Christians in the public square, a work that we started doing more than a decade ago and some of the significant moments are shared in Part 2 of our anniversary commemorative booklet, under "Engaging Society". This booklet can be found on your table, and I hope you will find time to read how the NCCS contributed through consultations with the Government on matters of national interest. Thank you, pastors and church leaders, for your confidence and support, and for entrusting this responsibility to the NCCS.

We would also like to thank Philip and Jonathan Ng of the Far East Organisation for helping to make this event possible. When we first approached Mr Philip Ng to host this event with NCCS more than a year ago, he said yes without hesitation, and explained that it would be his honour to bless NCCS in this manner. He specially chose this beautiful glass Marquee for this thanksgiving dinner, "to show hospitality to God's people in the Name of our Lord." And we are happy that Jonathan, the CEO of Far East Organisation is with us this evening.

Finally, this is an evening of thanksgiving as well as a time of fellowship among Christians who represent the entire family of Christian churches in Singapore. It is truly an occasion for

celebration. We are also thankful for the presence of the General Secretary of the Council of Churches of Malaysia, Rev Dr Philip Lok who is here with us tonight.

Once again, a blessed welcome and a big 'thank you' to SM Lee and all our honoured guests for taking time to be with us despite your busy schedule.

I hope that you will enjoy this evening's dinner and that all of us will be enriched by the fellowship among friends, for Christian fellowship is truly a gift of God.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all! Amen.