



## 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

11 September 2017

### A NOTE TO MEMBERS, NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

Dear Pastors and Members of NCCS,

We greet you in the Name of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ!

The Straits Times recently reported that the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has denied short-term work passes to two foreign Christian preachers.

In a statement published on 8 September 2017, MHA explained that these preachers were denied passes because they had made "denigrating and inflammatory comments of other religions" in the past. The statement provides some examples of these derogatory comments of the preachers in question. You may refer to the MHA statement at <https://www.mha.gov.sg/>.

We take this opportunity to advise the pastors of our member churches to exercise due diligence and careful discernment when inviting foreign guest preachers to minister in their congregations. This is to preserve the harmonious religious environment that currently exists in our nation, which allows Christians to fulfil their dual role of seeking the welfare of the city and sharing the good news based on our faith.

In a multi-religious society with a secular government, the norms of engagement that make for peace and a nation's well-being require that all the different faiths be responsible in the freedom each has been given to practice and propagate their respective beliefs. In keeping with this, the language of discourse when relating to other faiths must always be respectful and winsome. Our speech should always be "gracious and seasoned with salt" (Col 4:6). The preaching and teaching over our pulpits must exemplify and be consistent with this. We are not to denigrate another religion or act in ways that jeopardize the religious harmony in our society. This harmony is both rare and precious in times marked not only by a heightening of contention between nations but also contention within a nation itself.

Positively, Christians are to foster trust and mutual respect across different faiths, and do whatever we can to build bridges of friendship that counteract religious polarization and strengthen the bedrock of good relations between different communities for our present and future generations. Religious polarization can so easily be exacerbated by sweeping and insensitive statements, more so by leaders and preachers who are not familiar with or appreciative of the fabric of inter-faith relations we have built up in Singapore over the years. Hence, the need for vigilance by our respective churches to assess and induct those we invite to preach and teach our people.

Scripture reminds us that "in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect" (1 Peter 3:15).

May the good Lord grant us in these challenging times the wisdom and grace we need to be true to His calling to proclaim the Gospel (both in word and deed) as well as promote the common good of all those we share everyday life with, whatever their faith.

May the body of Christ in Singapore shine for His glory!

Yours Sincerely in Christ,

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