

Harmony Games 2019

Fun and Games To Rediscover Religious Harmony

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This year's Harmony Games was held on 24 August 2019 at the national monument church, Telok Ayer Chinese Methodist Church (TACMC). Various religious groups take turns to host the annual Harmony Games, which aim to foster friendship among the various ethnic and faith communities in Singapore. This year, the event was again hosted by the National Council of Churches.

This year's Harmony Games was represented extensively by a total of 31 registered groups. There were Muslim students from the Islamic studies programme at Madrasah Wak Tanjong Al-Islamiah, Catholic students from CHIJ Saint Theresa's Convent as well as Christian students from Trinity Theological College. Besides the student representation, senior members of our local faith communities were also present, representing groups such as the Singapore Taoist Federation, the Sri Mariamman Temple as well as the Singapore Khalsa Association. While most of the participants came originally donned in their own organisation's t-shirts, when all of them changed into the Harmon Games' official t-shirt, the whole site turned into a sea of blue, forming a strong image of unity.

Harmony Games was split into two main events: the Explorers' Race and Explorers' Board. Participants went around in groups to visit various religious sites such as the Buddha Tooth Relic Temple and Museum and the Al-Abrar Mosque. As the members re-assembled back at TACMC, they were seen excitedly gesturing the Taoist greeting that they had learnt at Yu Huang Gong, or wearing flower garlands that they had weaved together at the Sri Mariamman Temple.

For the Explorers' Board Game, participants played a modified version of Monopoly, facilitated by students from the Boys' Brigade in Singapore. There was much laughter and camaraderie as the participants took turns to collect tokens representing different religious sites. Part of the gameplay also involved familiar kampong games such as *kuti-kuti* and five stones, allowing senior participants to relive their childhood days. It was truly a beautiful sight to see the participants seated together having fun; just like



old neighbours gathered at an HDB void deck for a game of chess and fellowship.

There was unanimous agreement that all participants had a great time and enjoyed the games. The day's event was also graced by Guest-of-Honour and Minister for Culture, Community and Youth, Ms. Grace Fu, who took a short tour around TACMC and learnt more about its heritage.

To close the session, Bishop Terry Kee, President of the National Council of Churches, delivered a short message.

'We do not have to be the same in order to be friends. We can be different and still work together for the common good of all. Today, we discover that we can have good healthy fun even with different race and religion. This is a good opportunity to re-establish friendship and build upon that. We are different but we are all Singaporeans, all human beings, all good friends.'

As I looked across the room and saw everyone united in one voice, young and old, reciting the declaration of religious harmony, I felt comforted to know that harmony across different faiths and creeds is possible. And seeing the younger generation representing their respective religious groups that day; I am assured that harmony will continue in the future.

'Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!' — Psalm 133:1

Photo credit: The Boys' Brigade in Singapore.