

LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE

Matthew 5:16 | First Chapel of 2026 | ACS Independent

Good morning, ACSians

Today is the first day of a new academic year.
And for me, it is my first day standing before you as your Principal.

This year is also unique for another reason. Across all ACS schools, we are marking **140 years of God's goodness** — and we are united by one verse:

*"In the same way, let your light shine before others,
so that they may see your good works
and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."*

— **Matthew 5:16**

In today's Chapel Service, I would like to expand more about this verse - both to set the tone for the rest of the year, but also to share my priorities to each of us.

For this verse does not exist to decorate our banners.
It tells us **why we exist**.

I'm sure most of us here know some history of our school. In days of yore from Western shores, Bishop William Fitzjames Oldham came to Singapore as a missionary. He was approached by some Chinese businessmen to tutor them in English. Bishop Oldham noticed however that the children actually needed much more help, and he sought to provide them education. He believed something deeply shaped by the Word of God: **that as His light, he can bring positive transformation for the people here in Singapore**. And with that conviction, he started the beginnings of Anglo Chinese School on 1 March, 1886.

Now, this conviction of Bishop Oldham continues to define us. His heart was not about success, reputation or achievements in itself. His heart was to be a light to the others. **Light — Christ's light — right at the centre of all that he does.**

Mr Pang personally has been a beneficiary of light in a similar form. Just like how Bishop Oldham brought light to a bunch of kids who needed hope, Mr Pang sought to be a teacher since Secondary 3 - because I struggled as a Lower Sec student, but a team of most wonderful teachers came into my life in Sec 3 and brought me light and hope. Some of these teachers of mine continue to teach till this day - in fact, one of them is actually still teaching here. The teaching staff here knows who I am referring to - but to all students, I'll let you find out more for yourselves. And as you search and discover, I believe you will find that **every teacher of yours have always sought to be a beacon of light to guide you in different ways.**

Each staff here carries the same heart as Bishop Oldham, and this **heart of love** must continue to be our **why**.

Let me say a little more about 'light'. Science tells us something simple yet profound: darkness is not a force in itself. Darkness has no power of its own. **Darkness exists only where light is absent.**

And we see darkness of different forms in the world we live in. I often like to summarize it with the acronym of I.C.U. - and in all the different schools I have been to, I always refer to them as the ICU monsters.

- **Firstly, Individualism** - This sort of darkness comes about, where we refuse to look to the good of others, but always our own self interests. Look at the different conflicts in this world - it often boils down to our selfishness and sin.
- **Next, Change and Complexity** - Another type of darkness, is where we feel lost and anxious in the midst of change and complexity. It is easy to be overwhelmed, for example, with rapidly changing technology that

threatens to leave us behind, or bring about unintended evils such as addictions and cyber-bullying. As we grow in life, we realise that change and complexity brings darkness of even further textures.

- **Lastly, Unhealthy Well Being Trends** - Make no mistake, mental, physical and socio-emotional well being of mankind is a real concern. Darkness comes in the form of hopelessness without light as individuals, families and communities figure out how to cope with burdens of different types.

Now, nobody enjoys visiting the ICU where a loved one is suffering. In the same way, I believe none of us wish for the I.C.U. monsters I mentioned above on anyone - **for it is darkness without light.**

But Scripture reassures us on a simple fact that Science itself confirms:

John 1:5 states "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it."

Darkness cannot exist, where light pervades. Once we shine the light, darkness will not continue to exist.

Jesus also say in scripture (**John 8:12**), ***"I am the light of the world."*** How does Jesus bring light to this world, with the different I.C.U. monsters? If we read through the bible - we realize that Jesus: through his love, shown through his words and actions of different types conquer darkness with hope. It is His love that drives Him to sacrifice himself for all on the cross. **Through his self-sacrifice, he brought light, redemption and hope to all of us.** He didn't just die - He rose again, and that is the ultimate symbol of how all darkness can be conquered and life made new.

I go back to our Theme Verse - Matthew 5:16.

If we track back a little bit more, before Jesus says *"Let your light shine,"* in **Matthew 5:14**, He proclaims:

"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. "

I am speaking about darkness, I am speaking about light - but not in a third person way removed from you. ***While Jesus is our ultimate hope and light - He calls on each of us who follow Him to be light of the world.***

And light does not exist for itself. There is a higher purpose for light. It exists to conquer darkness. We exist to shine, not just to be seen — but to **help others see clearly.**

Beacon of Truth and Light

You see, we may believe that many in Singapore and the world look at ACS with admiring eyes and longing. We describe ACS as a **Beacon of Truth and Light** in our own School Anthem.

And in many ways, our ACSians do us proud, as shining lights that illuminate.

We must thank God for excellence that exist in our school body. Just over the last few weeks, I give you two examples -

- We celebrate those who represented Singapore at the SEA Games. We rejoice at the stellar performance of our ACSian athletes, some of whom are seated amongst us today. Can I ask you to stand - and let's give them a well deserved round of applause!
- Besides achievements of our different talents, we also give thanks for our stellar IB results - Our Year 7s are coming back later this afternoon to get their physical results from their teachers. I am proud to say that they did extremely well. A big round of applause for our teachers who made a real difference!

Through all achievements, we must remember to be grateful for the unwavering service of many different people who have made our success possible.

I wish to use another illustration right now, that of a moon. You see, ***a full moon is bright, but this is simple Science - it does not radiate light by itself.*** The moon simply reflects the glow and glory from the Sun. **By ourselves we are often insignificant, till others come in to illuminate our lives.** ACSians, when you do well, you must be grateful to all who have allowed you to reflect off their light, and glory must always go back to God.

And this is where I make it clear. At ACS, we must never be blinded by our own pride, thinking too highly of ourselves as shining lights. In its place, I call on everyone to be a **Beacon of Truth and Light**.

- A beacon's existence and purpose is not to be admired from afar.
- A beacon exists for a higher purpose - to shine a light for those in darkness.
- It guides. It steadies. It helps others find their way.

Light is not proven on podiums, certificates or personal achievements in itself.

Light is most clearly seen in **what we do to illuminate others**. And if we do so, we truly bring God the Glory, and we truly understand what it means: The Best is Yet To Be.

As we reflect on our Theme Verse for 2026, I urge us to **bring light, hope and goodness to others**.

Let me give you a very simple concrete example. Some of you may have already visited our newly renovated Student Activity Centre (SAC).

It is a bright, beautiful space specially designed for all ACSians to enjoy. It's new, it's air-conditioned - it's the envy of many across Singapore.

But the existence of a new physical space is not light in itself and does nothing to illuminate ACS and give glory to God.

Rather - it's how we use the space, that others see our good works, and give glory to our Father who is in heaven. Each time we step into the bright new SAC -

- Do we have pride of this newly renovated space, to cherish and to protect?
- Beyond the SAC, do we look after the cleanliness and environment of the whole school because it belongs to us — or just leave it to our hardworking custodians, many who are elderly, to tidy?
- Most importantly, do we use the different spaces in school to encourage, to build one another up, to bring life in each space with simple acts of love? We have our Year 1s (and some Y2s and Y3s) who are with us for the very first time today – can we show love to all of them and one another, and make this space in ACS truly special?

Jesus says, *"Whoever is faithful in little will be faithful in much."*

How we let our light shine before others reveals who we are becoming, and therefore truly live out '**The Best Is Yet To Be**'.

To me: "**The Best Is Yet To Be**." is not a declaration of how good we already are. It is not a blind belief that we will surely arrive. In fact, ***it acknowledges how the world we live in and we ourselves, all of us are far from perfect.***

The Best is Yet To Be however is a wonderful statement of faith, a promise from God to never forsake us, and to make all things new.

And how is this done? Jesus calls on all of us to let our lights shine, to pursue good works - and in that way, we bring Glory to God, and He will mould and transform us to be the best there can ever be.

As I begin this journey with you, this is **my personal conviction**.

I have journeyed through as an educator in many different schools, because I believe education can change lives, just as light changes darkness. I am here because God has transformed me through many personal encounters that I will share more in due time. Many have been the light in my life, and I wish to serve each of you humbly in the very same way.

In the years ahead, there is a good chance, I will not get everything right.
But I commit to walking humbly with God — and with you.

And I pray you do the same. **We will not always be perfect as we learn and we grow. We are not perfect – only our Lord Jesus is.** However, let nothing stop you from courageously shining your light with a humble spirit, and with faith, God will surely transform us.

So as we step into this new year, let us remember our calling.

1. We do not shine to be seen — **we shine so God is seen.**
2. We are not a beacon to impress — **we are a beacon to guide.**
3. And the best is yet to be — **as long as we walk humbly and faithfully with Him.**

May it be said of ACS(I) this year, and for the next 140 years and more:

We did not just do well.

We did good. Our lights shone in the darkness.

And God was glorified.

Closing Prayer

Let us pray.

Father, thank You for calling ACS into being through faith in Your Word.

Teach us to be a true Beacon of Truth and Light — not only in achievement, but in stewardship; not only in excellence, but in love.

Help us care for what You have entrusted to us, to conquer all darkness and challenges of different types, and shine with humility in all that we do.

May everything we do this year give glory to You.

To God be the Glory.

The Best Is Yet To Be.

Amen.