

### **Dr the Hon LAM Ching-Choi, BBS, JP**

Dr LAM Ching-Choi is chairman of both the Elderly Commission and the Community Investment and Inclusion Fund, and an unofficial member of the Executive Council. He is also the chief executive officer of Haven of Hope Christian Service and was a member of Lingnan University's Council from 2004 to 2010. Dr Lam's many public engagements and distinguished career in social service are rooted in his down-to-earth and humanistic worldview. As a child, Dr Lam grew up in abject poverty, where even basic necessities like food and shelter could not be taken for granted. Through academic achievement he was able to move up the social ladder and enter the medical profession, but his childhood experience has stayed with him and has shaped his dedication to public service.

Dr Lam has a unique sensitivity to how material conditions such as poverty and poor health affect not only people's physical condition but also their emotional and spiritual well-being. It is his calling to "go deep" into what causes pain and suffering that makes for his humanistic approach to social services. Dr Lam's early professional experience laid the foundations for his desire to be close to the community. As part of his training, Dr Lam worked in a large public hospital's neonatal intensive-care unit. There he saw how social problems such as teenage pregnancy, alcoholism and drug use could lead to premature births, with neonatal complications that often carried over into childhood and beyond. He wished for a longer-term relationship with his patients, and for this reason after completing his professional training he chose to work in the small, private non-profit Evangel Hospital in To Kwa Wan. There, he was able to get to know the patients under his care, and began to sense how he might make a lasting difference by engaging closely with the needs of community members. Dr Lam later became medical director of Evangel Hospital, where he worked to expand its presence in local neighbourhoods by establishing clinics in housing estates.

Dr Lam's service to his community attracted the attention of Haven of Hope Christian Service, which invited him to become the chairman of their Community Health Committee. Dr Lam accepted the invitation, later rising to become their chief executive officer, a position he holds to this day. What motivated the founders of Haven of Hope in their work was a mission to secure resources in order to provide important services, which might otherwise not be available to community members. Under Dr Lam's leadership, Haven of Hope pioneered community outreach programmes that became the model for others to follow. He sees his role as being that of a connector, and a problem solver. While some organisations may choose to prioritise advocacy before service, Dr Lam believes that the best advocacy is when one can demonstrate that an idea or a model can deliver results. Through his solid track record and his unique ability to make the needs of the grassroots comprehensible to policymakers, he is able to make valuable contributions to various consultative committees.

For Dr Lam, genuine community engagement encompasses much more than delivering things that are "nice to have". In his view, the problem of poverty is not just about money; it is also about self-confidence and self-respect. How can we make a real difference if we cannot see past the surface? Dr Lam understands that spiritual pain can hurt just as much as physical pain. How can we ease the suffering of a cancer patient if we ignore their emotional pain? Dr Lam believes in taking a holistic approach to social services. To do so, he is mindful to maintain meaningful contacts with his community. He encourages those around him to look for linkages between daily life and wider social issues. For instance, as an avid cyclist, Dr Lam does not think of cycling as simply a hobby or a form of exercise. As he rides, he asks questions about road design and usage, the feasibility of bicycles as a form of transport, and how more people might be encouraged to take up cycling for exercise. Dr Lam believes that all everyday experiences can be related to some forms of community service or societal improvement.

As the chairman of the Elderly Commission, Dr Lam is aware of the immense challenges an aging population brings. In line with his philosophy of service, he believes that population aging requires the whole community, and not just the government, to take responsibility. His goal is to raise awareness about population aging in mainstream public discourse, so that the broader Hong Kong society, including families and the business sector, might face it together by making necessary changes. Dr Lam is also a firm believer in the value of social capital, of which relationships and trust are the building blocks. Social capital can bridge the service gaps that governmental organisations and policies cannot adequately address. His leadership of the Community Investment and Inclusion Fund has played a crucial role in filling these gaps.

Mr Chairman, in recognition of his distinguished service to the medical and social-welfare sector, as well as his contributions to bettering Hong Kong society, may I present Dr LAM Ching-Choi to you for the conferment of an honorary fellowship.

*Citation written and delivered by Professor Annie CHAN*