fellowship of evangelical students

perspective

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FES

Engaging the Whole University for Christ

Terence C. Halliday

Pietistic /
Evangelistic /
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What would a 21st century vision be for the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students (IFES) if Christ and Christians are *really, actually and to be observably* engaging the WHOLE university for Christ?

This is a vision that had its beginnings at the 2011 IFES World Assembly in Cracow, Poland. We have since continued to discuss, develop, refine and adapt it on several continents to the present. It is a vision with a global reach, but every country, continent and people must give it a character appropriate for their circumstances.

I begin with two stories which are still alive and continuing.

A while ago I was in an East Asian country meeting with their leading human rights lawyers. Many of them are Christians. They face extreme persecution from their government, including disappearance, torture and death. I was moved by their courage as they confront their repressive government which is terrified about the potential impact of Christianity on rule by the current party. I was also impressed by the efforts taken by these brave lawyers to understand what their Christian faith, the Bible and Christian theology have to say about the future of their country—a country where Christians can worship openly and freely

express their faith. Simultaneously these lawyers are trying to think "Christianly" and "constitutionally." They are imagining their future roles in their country not just as lawyers, but also as Christians. However, they are finding this very difficult.

A couple of weeks before I met with Christian lawyers from this country when I gave a seminar on "Heroic Lawyers" at an elite law school in the United States (U.S.). The seminar was organized by a Christian student organization. This law school is exactly the kind of place where I would expect the best future lawyers of the U.S. and the world would be able to think "Christianly" about the law, legal institutions, legal practice and the constitutions of countries. However, I found these brilliant law students timid and weak in their ability to link their Christian faith to entire legal systems or to the constitution of countries or political mobilization of lawyers. Instead they had their faith in one pocket and their law in another.

Contrast these two stories. In the first story there is a huge *need* for Christian thought to inform and lead a society and a state. In the second story, there is a major *failure* in Christian students to develop the engagement between Christian thought and law, society and politics.

In both cases, in fact, Christian societies in universities have not engaged the great ideas of the university or the great problems of our times in which universities are intimately involved. Put more strongly, in some important ways IFES and its national movements have failed in their ministry to universities. IFES movements worldwide in the 21st century must do much more with "engaging the university," in fact, *"engaging the* ***whole*** *university."*

This may require a very different approach to university Christian ministries—different audiences, different staff, and different imaginations. IFES national movements and university groups need to re-invent themselves. If they do not, a vast institution of enormous influence—the universities of each nation—will be lost for Christ.

What does it mean to engage the "whole" university?

It involves undergraduates AND graduate (postgraduate) students as well as faculty AND research staff, administrators AND workers. It includes everything that the university does: its research and teaching; training in critical thinking; search for truth; as well as its approach to the most difficult and vexing issues in thought and practice, in academic life and in national life.

To engage the *whole* university requires the mutual support and the interplay of four models of Christian ministry. We can think of these as four legs of a stool:

the pietistic
the evangelistic
the apologetic
the dialogic

It is the last of these—the dialogic—where many of us associated with IFES believe that university Christian movements need a new vision.

LEG ONE 1
The Pietistic

- **Focus on the inner Christian life**
- **Bible study and prayer**
- **Fellowship**
- **An orientation to undergraduates**
- **Personal, individual**

In the pietistic model the principal orientation of IFES groups is towards the inner Christian life where the foundational activities focus on Bible study, prayer and fellowship. This is vital and essential to campus ministry. The thematic emphasis is on living the personal Christian life.

Yet, on its own, we discover that this leg of the stool has severe limitations.

- Ministry is oriented to *students* (usually undergraduates), not faculty and not the more mature students.
- Ministry usually does not engage the *minds* of students, the very reason they are at the university.
- Ministry has a limited engagement with Christian faculty as *scholars*.
- No systematic effort is undertaken to catalog (a) who are Christian faculty, (b) how they might be mobilized on behalf of students, (c) how their own gifts and scholarship might be advanced for the kingdom of God in the university.
- Too often, students study *verses*, but they do not learn the great *theological* themes of the Bible.
- Very often there is lack of engagement with the great debates, struggles and research frontiers of the university.

As a social phenomenon, this ministry too often stays away from the center of the university and exists at its margins. It reproduces inside the university what students should receive inside the local church.

The development of the inner life is essential as it is one of the four legs of the Christian stool through which we can engage the whole university. But it is *not* sufficient if we are to engage the WHOLE university for Christ.

LEG TWO

The Evangelistic

- **Winning students for Christ**
- **Seeks to reach the whole campus**
- **Personal evangelism**
- **Evangelistic rally**

2

/ they are lost often because we have ignored their minds / intellectually capable students walk away from Christ

Do we mourn all those that are *lost from* Christ?

The evangelistic leg involves proclamation of the gospel of Jesus to the campus. It may be quiet, in personal sharing of faith, or vocal, in large meetings and public events. This is a fulfillment of the Great Commission—go into all the world and preach the gospel—and that includes the university.

Yet this powerful presence on the campus may not touch the heart of what the university does—what it thinks about it, what are its agendas and what it teaches—because the Christians make no connections between following Jesus and the teaching curriculum or the research agendas or the contributions of the university to public debate.

We rightly celebrate those that are *won for* Christ.

Do we mourn all those that are *lost from* Christ? And they are lost often because we have ignored their minds. They may come from a fine Christian family but somehow they lose their faith at university. *What are we doing for people like that? Why do too many students from Christian families think that Christianity is for Sunday School children, not for scholars?*

How many bright, smart and intellectually capable students walk away from Christ on our campuses? How many say the Christian faith has nothing to do with what I study, nothing to do with the university, nothing to do with its teaching and research.

When we speak of 30 people *won for* Christ, do we think about the 30 or 60 or 90 people who have been *lost from* Christ when they came to the university?

Spreading the Good News of Jesus is a living, breathing part of our presence on campus. But it is *not* sufficient if we are to engage the WHOLE university for Christ.

3

LEG THREE

The Apologetic

- **Identifies a source of intellectual threat**
- **Finds persons or books with authority on the threat**
- **Mount a defense against the threat**

The Apologetic leg recognizes that the big issues universities debate can threaten Christians and their faith. The apologetic ministry engages the university where the university seems to threaten the faith.

Programming for apologetics proceeds something like this:

- identifying a source of intellectual threat.
- finding *either* faculty members, far or near, who have authority to understand and appraise the ideas, equipping campus ministry staffworkers with books or materials that convey authoritative defenses.
- inviting faculty to mount a defense against the threat, by showing that the threat is misplaced, or the threat is rightly understood but can be rebutted, and so on.

The apologetic ministry has many merits. An effective apologetics on campus can also be a great encouragement to students, both for those whom the particular attack and defense is salient to their scholarship.

A thoughtful apologetics is integral to the faith. However, I have real concerns about it as it:

- has a defensive and reactive orientation
- rarely if ever addresses issues that students or faculty are confronting at the leading edge of their disciplines
- does not celebrate the wonder of God's work or the relevance of the biblical revelation to literature and history, to nanotechnology or post-colonialism, ethnomusicology or institutional economics, to comparative religion or optics, to agricultural economics or bio-chemistry

Apologetics is vital as it is one of the four legs of the Christian stool through which we can engage the whole university. But it is not sufficient if IFES and its national movements are to engage the WHOLE university for Christ.

A dialogic ministry takes the university seriously on its own terms. It considers a university ministry to be a distinctive ministry in its own right. It does not simply do what the local church does. Rather than *preaching* at the university, it enters into *conversation with* the university.

Dr Daniel Bourdanné, the General Secretary of IFES, has put it clearly:

> *We should have a discipleship of the mind. The calling for this ministry is in the university, not a primary school. It is the place that engages the mind. That is why engaging the university cannot happen if we do not take seriously the discipleship of the mind. This is our ministry field. This is the place where God has put us.*

LEG FOUR

The Dialogic Model 4

"Engaging the Mind through Conversations in the University" [1]

- **Takes the university seriously on its own terms**
- **Regards the university ministry as a distinctive calling, *not* a reproduction of the local church on a university campus**
- **Engages the *mind* and injects *faith* into all conversations in the university**

We are called, first, to think "Christianly" about everything that goes on in the university.

We are called, second, to enter into conversations with all others on the campus—undergraduates, graduate students, faculty and staff. These are conversations about the issues the university is thinking about and the curriculum the university is teaching. These are conversations or dialogs that are infused by faith.

In fact, a dialogic engaging of the university seeks to draw every person on campus into some kind of contact, engagement and exposure to Christians, Christian beliefs, Christian ideas, Christian virtues and Christian actions.

There are seven principal features of a **Dialogic Model:**

1 It is *proactive*: it brings Christ to the great issues of major universities and the great issues to Christ.

2 It is *expansive*: it nurtures Christian students *and* engages Christian faculty and staff.

3 It is *comprehensive*: it reaches to teaching, the curriculum, research, social and political engagement, the classroom and all the supporting facets of a university administration. Every corner of the university in action has the light of Christ shone into it.

4 It respects the *intellectual* gifts of the students and faculty who inhabit the universities of every nation.

5 It is *relevant*, insofar as it takes on the big conversations of the day at the very moment they are being formulated and debated.

6 *It listens as well as speaks*, insofar it seeks to carry on respectful conversations with Christians and non-Christians alike.

7 It celebrates *intellectual* community that is characteristic of great universities. This might even bring Christians into cooperation with non-religious or other religious groups on campus.

[1] This label is borrowed from Dr Vinoth Ramachandra, the IFES Secretary for Dialogue and Social Engagement.

It can be seen that there are fundamental shifts in orientation from the previous models, the other legs of the stool.

- The Christian MIND is celebrated as enthusiastically as the Christian soul.
- The ministry moves from the EDGE of the campus into its HEARTLAND.
- The ideas and issues at the frontiers of learning and the leading edges of debate are celebrated for what they reveal of God and His work in the Kingdom.
- The barriers between students and faculty are overcome, in much the same way they are in research laboratories, advanced seminars, major research projects on those campuses and their research institutes.

As Bishop David Oginde[1] has said, "It prepares students (and I would say faculty) for positions of leadership in government, public service, and the corporate sector . . . It prepares people for leadership in the professions, in the market and media, in every sphere of society."

[2] Bishop David Oginde is the Bishop of Christ Is the Answer Ministries (CITAM), Nairobi, Kenya

Examples of Engaging the Whole University

Across the world, from almost every continent, we have heard wonderful examples of ways students and faculty have sought to engage the university—in ways far beyond our imaginations. We see and feel the creative work of God's spirit sweeping over the earth, resulting in new fruit and flowers blossoming in one place, and then drifting across the internet to another university, another country and another continent.

1. Undergraduates/Graduate Students/Recent Graduates

In India, the North Delhi Evangelical Graduate Fellowship organized an Intensive Summer Study program where around 40 recent graduates met every day for six weeks, for five hours a day from 2.30pm to 7.30pm. They are expected to read two to five books a week from a mix of readings. Some were Christian books written by theologians and church leaders. Others were absolutely not 'Christian', but are precisely the kind of things thinking people struggle with in India (and the former British Empire) and issues thinking Christians cannot escape. For example, ***From the Ruins of Empire*** by Pankaj Mishra, ***Empire*** by Niall Fergusson, ***The Black Economy in India*** by Arun Kumar and ***The Ascent of Money: A Financial History of the World*** by Niall Fergusson.

The topics covered were superb and of great relevance. Some examples were cloning, black money laundering, international trade negotiations and climate change. Besides heavy reading there were writing requirements like journaling and writing short summaries. Through brutal self-examination they

ask questions like why does the Christian church not produce "effective leaders, statesmen, thinkers . . . of the likes of Amartya Sen, Salman Rushdie, Nehru; and what must the church do about it to produce avant-garde leaders and thinkers in the next 100 years." There were even simulations of international negotiations, all conducted in the context of deep devotional activities.

Further reading: www.summerstudy2013.wordpress.com; http://issjournals2013.wordpress.com

2. Advanced graduate students/faculty

Universities at their best are about ideas, research and journeys to the frontiers of discovery. That is what faculty and graduate students, especially doctoral students, should be doing.

We can see two exciting examples at:

Stanford University, U.S.

The Graduate Christian Fellowship at Stanford University took it a step further by creating an event called *Student Passion talks*. Last year students submitted abstracts for a *Passion Talk* which is thinking Christianly about a short presentation (10–15 minutes) in an area of their research. The topics were varied—artificial intelligence, computer science, psychology and neuroscience.

The staffworker on campus shared on this event:
"It's been a fantastic demonstration, student to student, of how integration of our faith and our research might look. And now that they've actually seen it, it's much easier for those students who have struggled with the concept to envision how they themselves might think and talk about their work and faith."

University of Queensland, Australia

Professor Ross McKenzie, a Christian physicist, reported on an event where more than 20 faculty, postdoctoral students, and graduate students met on the topic *Christians Engaging the University.* The disciplines included international relations, biochemistry, chemistry, physics, computer science, and law. Ten different people each talked for five to ten minutes about their research field and ways they thought it may be related to the Christian faith. Some examples are:

- The political scientist discussed a recent paper he wrote about the issue of the "Right to Protect" and how views of it have a long history and are shaped by Christian ethics;
- A chemistry postdoctoral student discussed initiatives he was involved in to help chemistry education and research in the developing world.
- A quantum physicist mentioned randomness and issues about the sovereignty of God.
- A law professor spoke on the foundations of legal theory and ideas going back to Aquinas, and the tension between law and grace.

3. The Campus as a whole

Guatemala "Arts Festival for Justice"

The staffworker on campus, Isra Ortiz, reported that there is a huge discrepancy between problems faced by Guatemala and the failure of evangelicals to confront these. Christians have too often been silent on violence, corruption, inequality and racism. The goal was to show a different face of Christianity to the University of San Carlos campus. As part of a campus-wide arts festival, a Christian student group came up with the idea of an arts festival focused on justice.

As preparation they read a book on injustice, visited the city dump where the poor lived and joined a May Day march for justice on May 1. They also created a Facebook account which generated different posts—a student wrote a play about injustice, another student wrote a theme song, and some others created a photo collage and a painting exhibition. Through all these activities, Jesus was celebrated as the model of justice.

At the end of the day, more than 100 people had been on stage (there were 35–40 presentations), inviting students to reflect on justice through the arts. In total, around 600–700 people attended the Festival!

On the whole this effort challenged the stereotype that Christians do not care about justice. It also demonstrated how the arts can be a medium for the message of Jesus.

Project Gratitude

Varsity Christian Fellowship at National University of Singapore (NUS): Project Gratitude [2]

Five undergraduates at NUS wanted to mobilize the entire student body to show appreciation for the campus service staff, canteen and toilet cleaners, bus drivers and campus security guards. The intention was to create a "culture of gratitude and compassion" and in the process, demonstrate the virtues of Jesus. The activities that were carried out included giving a piece of fruit or a cup of coffee to a staff member with a small note of thanks for the work they do. The movement rounded up with a month-long art exhibition that told the stories of these unsung campus heroes. The project received campus-wide attention, including the student newspaper, and left the impression that Christians do care about those whom many of us think are beneath our dignity.

[2] Editor's note: Prior to this, there have been other attempts to engage the campus, for instance, the Singapore Institute of Management Students' Christian Fellowship organised a three-day event called *Discover Forgiveness* to help increase awareness of forgiveness and love in our relationships. The event touched the lives of many on campus.

The Process of Engaging the Whole University

As I compiled all these wonderful stories, I made an uncomfortable discovery. Many—maybe most—of these wonderful experiments to engage the university come from undergraduates and graduate students.

It reminded me of a learning experience I had too late in life.

> In the Center on Law and Globalization, we have a major program on systematic violence against women in civil conflicts. We wanted to expand our website, build networks of interested people across the world, and take advantage of the social media. I supervised a young woman of about 25 years of age who kept coming to me for permission to attempt or explore new ideas and directions. I was either slow to respond, didn't respond, had various objections, asked too many questions or had too many reservations. Eventually she got fed up with me and just went ahead to take charge. She didn't ask my permission for anything—she just gave reports of what she was doing. In other words, she did something first and reported it later!

Very quickly, she got hundreds of people across the world linked together in a network that received our *Violence against Women* e-newsletter. She started a Twitter service and drew us into conversations with other networks worldwide which greatly magnified our impact. She established a Linked-In account—hundreds joined. She created a Facebook page—hundreds more joined. In other words, when I got out of the way, the enterprise took off and thrived. I was the problem. She was the solution.

Look at some of the extraordinary experiments that were mentioned earlier. These ministries thrived when young people, students and local staffworkers, were given the space and room to innovate, to be creative and imaginative.

> Young people do not know that something cannot be done. They don't know that something is impossible. They invent. They act.

Conclusion

Where does IFES and its national movements go in the 21st century?

Will our vision treat the university, as a whole, as our mission field?

- Will it bring Christian insight to intellectual struggles over the great problems of the academic disciplines?
- Will we reach faculty as well as students?
- Will we join the battle over the big ideas that alter imaginations and change the world?
- Will we have an impact on every person on the university campus, from the Vice-Chancellor to the toilet cleaner?
- Will we seek to mould the leaders of science and nations with the power of ideas encapsulated in the Christian gospel?

In the last few months I have spent many hours with great heroes of human rights who are also heroes of faith. Time and again they asked *not only* for the sustenance of worship and Bible study, *but also* for the tools to think Christianly about law, politics, markets, and science in their country. They see the future fast approaching. They fear they do not have the tools that will be required of them to meet the future.

Imagine if they had been trained to think Christianly when they were in universities where:

- sophisticated conversations ranged widely and openly among undergraduates, faculty and graduate students;
- every big issue that comes up in science, arts and letters, agriculture, medicine, law and engineering had been boldly considered as issues of *faith* as well as issues of *scholarship.*
- every issue in society and government and the market was on the agenda

Imagine if the university itself had been transformed by the topics on which scholars did research; by the approaches they took to those topics; by the impact of those topics.

Imagine if we multiplied both of these—*thinking Christianly and engaging the university*—across the nations of this continent and across the world.

Imagine, indeed, if Christ *truly* engaged the WHOLE University!

This is a great and bold and magnificent vision.
May we be worthy of it.

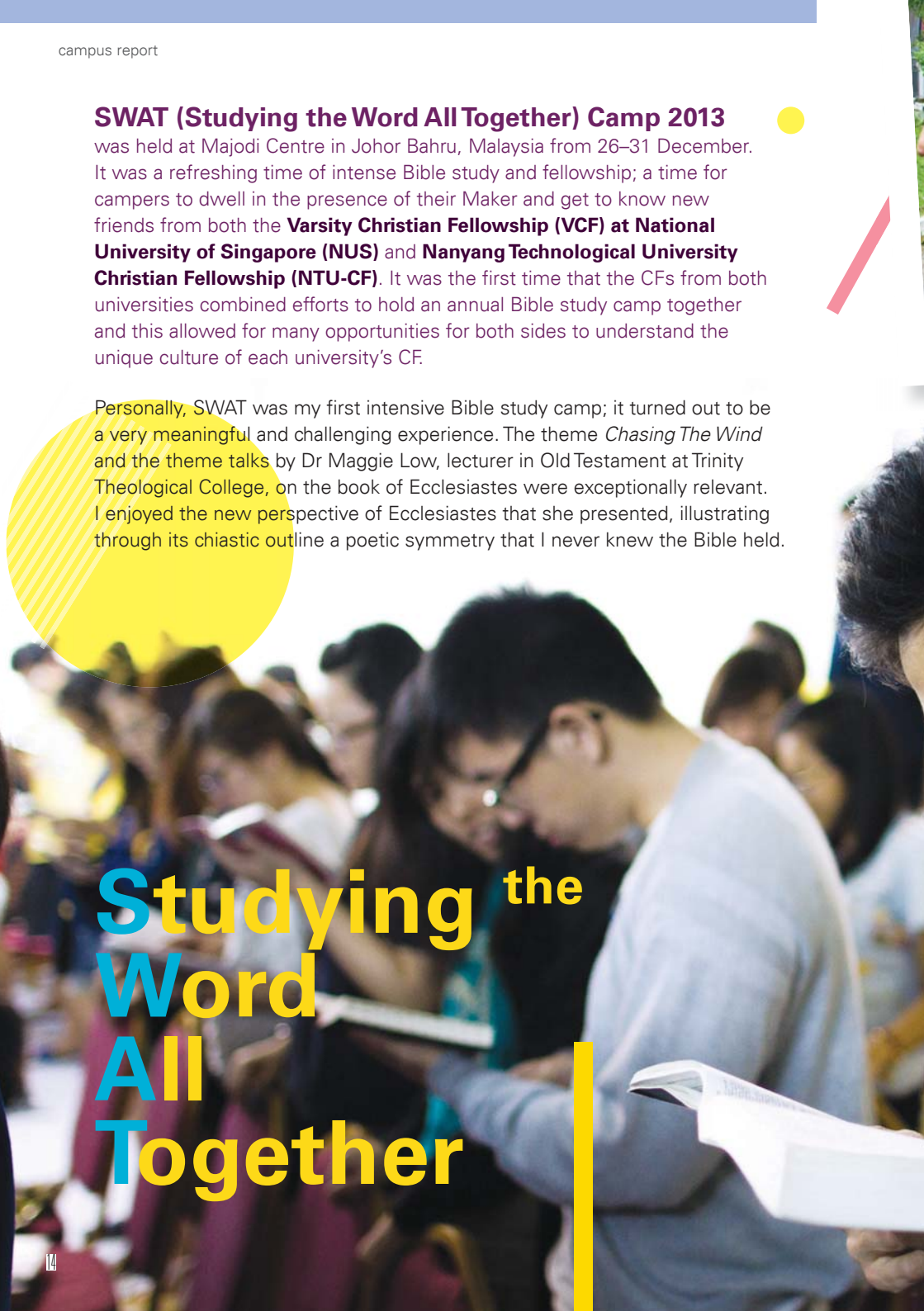
The above article is a shorter version of the paper presented by Terence C. Halliday at the IFES English and Portugese Speaking Africa (EPSA) Regional Leadership Consultation held in Ghana in July 2013.

Terence C. Halliday is co-director of the Center on Law and Globalization, which is a partnership between the University of Illinois College of Law and the American Bar Foundation.

Join Terry Halliday and Vinoth Ramachandra as they build a global network of students, faculty and IFES staff to discuss and debate ideas of engaging the university for Christ. Programs and needs are posted on the IFES internet Listserve called *Engaging the University* as well as the *IFES Engaging University* Facebook page. If you would like to be part of these discussions, please send an email to: thalliday@mailxm.com or ramachandra.vinoth@gmail.com.

SWAT (Studying the Word All Together) Camp 2013 was held at Majodi Centre in Johor Bahru, Malaysia from 26–31 December. It was a refreshing time of intense Bible study and fellowship; a time for campers to dwell in the presence of their Maker and get to know new friends from both the **Varsity Christian Fellowship (VCF) at National University of Singapore (NUS)** and **Nanyang Technological University Christian Fellowship (NTU-CF)**. It was the first time that the CFs from both universities combined efforts to hold an annual Bible study camp together and this allowed for many opportunities for both sides to understand the unique culture of each university's CF.

Personally, SWAT was my first intensive Bible study camp; it turned out to be a very meaningful and challenging experience. The theme *Chasing The Wind* and the theme talks by Dr Maggie Low, lecturer in Old Testament at Trinity Theological College, on the book of Ecclesiastes were exceptionally relevant. I enjoyed the new perspective of Ecclesiastes that she presented, illustrating through its chiastic outline a poetic symmetry that I never knew the Bible held.



Studying the Word All Together

Photographs:

1. Icebreaker games at the start of the camp.
2. The camp theme speaker: Dr Maggie Low

Especially encouraging to me was the message that we were to find joy in our lot – for that was what God intended for us; my group enjoyed many hearty discussions and debates on what it really meant to be contented with "our lot in life".

Being a first-timer at the camp, I attended the IBS 101 workshop, which provided an introduction to Inductive Bible Study (IBS). It was far more interesting than I had expected. In small groups with facilitators, we picked apart the book of Ruth, the parable of the Vineyard (Lk. 20:9–19) and the parable of the Prodigal Son (Lk. 15:11–32), and examined the world behind the text, the world in the text and the world in front of the text.

As we managed to catch a tiny glimpse of the settings of these all-too-familiar Bible passages, the stories and characters began to come alive. Ruth was no longer "simply an obedient daughter-in-law" – she was a Moabite woman, turning her back on her people and the gods of her land to follow the

true God, whom she knew Naomi worshipped. We could almost sense the palpable tension between the teachers of the law and Jesus as He narrated the parable of the vineyard – so evidently drawing a parallel between them and the merciless murderous tenants; and we concluded our four days of IBS 101 by re-enacting a modern remake of the parable of the Prodigal Son, adding a new dimension to it.

The two workshops I attended were *God, is it really You?* – a session that dealt with how we could discern God's voice over all the competing voices and noise of the world we live in; and *Is Faith a Social Construct?* – a class that taught about the progression of human philosophy and faith as a social construct, and provided an interesting theological view on how God could work through "even a social construct" to bring people to salvation.

Perhaps, the best way to express my reflections after SWAT Camp 2013 would be in this little anecdotal story that I penned, after the six intensive days of questioning, learning, sharing, wrestling, and tearing down the boundaries of my faith and the boxes that I had put God in, and finally coming face-to-face with a Jesus who was more personal than I could have possibly imagined.

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The clock strikes midnight, and the Toy Maker rises to his feet. He adds a last touch of varnish to the toy soldier that he clasps so tenderly – the work of several sleepless nights – and finally sets it down; he pauses to admire his handicraft. The Toy Maker's weary face breaks into a smile as he gazes around the room decked with his finest handmade toys. A railway train set, complete with its very own railway tracks and railway station; a brightly painted rocking horse with lovely velvet hooves; a little clockwork drummer boy in overalls with his tiny tin drum.

But the clock is striking midnight; it is Christmas Day and the Toy Maker has work to be done. In a few hours, the shutters of his store will rise. The children will press their noses against the glass, and there will be little snow-tracked footprints in his Toy Store, and the toys will find their new homes.

The clock has struck midnight, the Toy Maker whispers into the night, and the toys come alive.

The railway train whizzes around the track with ease. The dolls dance, the toy soldier stands at attention at the railway station, and the little drummer boy plays his tin drum. The Toy Store is alive with the music

MedNurse VCFers at SWAT camp. Ada is standing at the second row sixth from the right.

of merriment and the laughter of the happy toys, and the Toy Maker finally retires for the night.

*****

Before the sun rises, the Toy Maker has already risen. The shutters have to be lifted, the curtains have to be thrown back and the store has to be put in order. But he stops in his tracks with a gasp of horror. The Toy Store is in a fair state of chaos. The magic has gone wrong. None of the toys are where they are supposed to be.

The Toy Maker makes his way over to the toy railway station – his most prized possession. Unlike the rest of the toys running helter-skelter, the toy railway train is still making its rounds on the railway track but with a sort of frenzied desperation, at six times the speed it was supposed to go.

"Stop, stop!" The Toy Maker cries as the toy railway train zooms past him again – and again – and again – and again – six times in a minute. "Stop! What are you doing?"

"I'm – work – ing," the toy railway train gasps in reply. "Oh – how – I – love – what – I'm – doing!" Its hinges have begun to creak and its wooden wheels have begun to squeak from the strain.

The Toy Maker lifts the toy railway train off its tracks and holds it up in midair. "Aren't you tired? You don't have to work this hard. I never meant for you to work so hard."

"But I am happy; isn't this what I was meant to do?" the toy railway train huffs, spinning its wheels in defiance. "I have been working at my job with all my heart!"

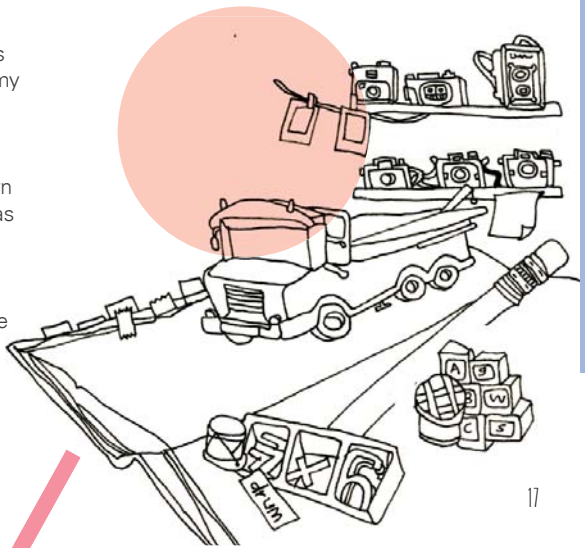
The Toy Maker stops the toy railway train's wheels with one gentle finger. "You have worn yourself out at the hinges already, and this was never your destiny. If you go any faster, I am rather certain you will set fire to the railway tracks. You'll burn everything."
But the toy railway train will not listen, and the Toy Maker walks away in great sadness.

The Toy Maker chances upon the toy ballerina, picking at the seams of her dresses and the tresses of her hair with great vehemence.

"My dear...!" He exclaims in astonishment. "What is the matter with you?"
"I'm not pretty enough," the toy ballerina chokes back a sob, and brushes her tears away with the back of her hand. "I wish you hadn't given me straw coloured hair. And I wish I had beady eyes, instead of these embroidered ones you've given me."

"But ... but," the Toy Maker is genuinely at a loss for words. "You are exactly how I intended you to be. Do you have any idea how long I spent embroidering your eyes? You're beautiful, my dear." The toy ballerina is still acutely miserable. "I don't want embroidered eyes. What do you know about beautiful? You're not a toy!" She glares at the Toy Maker. "I wish you hadn't made me this way."

The Toy Maker turns away, hurt and resigned. "I wish you knew about all the nights I spent designing you ... Why don't you love yourself?" But the toy ballerina does not hear him, and the Toy Maker walks away in great sadness.



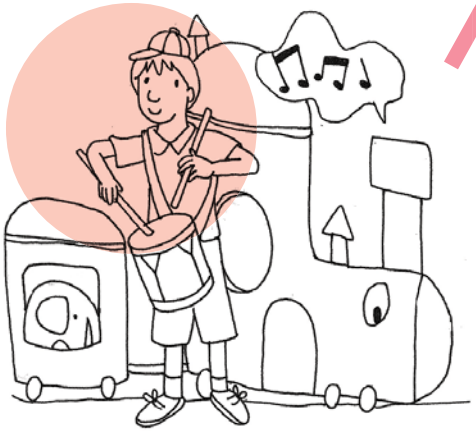
The Toy Maker turns to leave the room, when he stumbles upon the toy little drummer boy sitting silently in a corner. Their eyes meet for a moment, and the sadness written on both faces is almost palpable.

The Toy Maker stops. He asks the forlorn toy little drummer boy kindly, "Why aren't you playing your drum?"

"I ... I can't play the drums."

"No, tell me honestly. Why aren't you playing your drum?" There is no reproach on the Toy Maker's face and he bends down to face the toy little drummer boy. "I made you, and I gave you the drum. Of course you can play the drum."

"I ... I played it for a while. And I began to wonder what the other toys would think of me: if they would think I play it badly, or if they think I shouldn't be a drummer or ..." The toy little drummer boy begins to cry, his tears splashing down onto the shiny surface of his tin drum. "And I'm so tired of thinking about what the other toys think."



The Toy Maker's face breaks into a smile for the first time the whole morning.

"My son, you don't have to care about what the other toys think. I gave you the drum so you could play for me."
"Really?"
"Of course. Go on. Play for me."

The toy little drummer boy wipes at his tears, sniffs, and begins to play. It is a lovely, enchanting beat – the rap of wooden sticks on the tin drum – and he looks into the face of the Toy Maker, who gives him the most encouraging smile. And the toy little drummer boy begins to smile too, and play – with all his might, and with all his heart – until the sound of the drums fills the air, a music that makes you want to dance, a heart-stopping rhythm that drowns out all the noise of strife in the Toy Store.

All the toys stop to listen as the toy little drummer boy plays for the Toy Maker; the Toy Maker waves his hand – and the evil spell is finally broken. The toys can finally return to where they truly belong; to be what they were made to be.

The spell is broken; all is well and it is Christmas morning.

*****

Ada Ngo /
NUS Medicine Year 2

I thank God for placing a burden in my heart to attend **SWAT Camp 2013** and for taking up a role as a Bible Study Leader (BSL) during the camp. It was indeed the most intense and fulfilling Bible camp I had ever attended. I could feel God's presence all the way throughout the camp, speaking to me, guiding me and comforting me. The camp drew me a lot closer to God and He revealed Himself to me in ways I had never experienced before.

Studying the Word All Together

I am especially thankful to my camp group for being such a supportive and encouraging bunch of people. Initially, I was really apprehensive about my role as BSL as I did not believe I had the capability to fulfill that role. However, I trusted God and took a step of faith. True enough, God never fails. He blessed me with the most proactive and spontaneous group members. They were very honest and open about sharing and I was greatly edified by their testimonies. I was touched that they were so willing to open up to people they had barely known and share experiences from the bottom of their hearts, even experiences that they were not too proud of. From them, I learnt what true fellowship meant. I did not need to be afraid about sharing because we are all brothers and sisters in Christ and we are all there to support one another. I am very thankful for the friendships forged and I believe that these friendships will go a long way.

The theme talks on the book of Ecclesiastes were very applicable to my life as a university student. I was reminded 'to enjoy (my) work and accept (my) lot in life—this is indeed a gift from God' (Eccl. 5:19). Over the past year and a half in NTU, I have become increasingly wary of my work as a student. The environment that I study in is one that is very competitive. My focus is just to study hard, keep up with the competition and get the grades I desire. This entire journey has been rather torturous and I can dare say I did not enjoy myself at all. However, through this camp, I have been reminded to 'enjoy my toil' for this is what the Lord has given me. Many a times, I take for granted the fact that I have the opportunity to study in a university and instead, groan and complain about the work I have to complete. I was reminded not to strive for grades merely to edify myself but to do well for God's glory. I was not to work for myself but to work as if I was working for the Lord. Only through this can I truly enjoy my toil.

Petra, front row, second from right, with fellow campers at SWAT

I was also reminded to be contented with the lot given to me by God. We are always greedy for more, never satisfied with what we have. However, Ecclesiastes reminds us that we are but 'striving after the wind'. All these earthly possessions can never satisfy us. Only God can ever satisfy us and give us the happiness that we are searching for. We ought to take a positive attitude when it comes to doing our earthly jobs and constantly remind ourselves that all these are to be done for God's glory.

The IBS sessions were an eye-opening experience for me. Previously, whenever I read the Bible, I would usually read it without asking any questions nor clarifying any doubts. However, the IBS sessions trained me to ask questions about the Bible passages I read and allowed me to sink deeper into the Word as I searched for answers to the questions I had with the help of Bible study tools. This gave me a more in-depth understanding about the Bible passages that I thought I had already known. It also made me question the way I had been studying the Bible all this while, and whether my approach had been too superficial. I was prompted to go back to passages I had previously studied to re-examine them and see whether there were any new insights I could gain.

I enjoyed the two workshops I attended as well, *Beautiful Theology and Church and Politics*. *Beautiful Theology* reminded us not to plainly see God as a utilitarian God, which often resulted in our understanding of Him lacking wonder. God is mysterious and knowable. He makes himself known to us through His Word, His creation, His work in and through other people, His spirit in our heart and through Christ. During the *Church and Politics* workshop, we discussed whether a Christian should serve as both a politician and a church leader, and the potential problems and dilemmas he or she would face. Our groups had varied views, which made the discussion all the more exciting. We also shared our views on various controversial topics such as homosexuality, abortion and euthanasia.

I am thankful to God for all the lessons I learnt during the camp. I hope that all these will not just become head knowledge but I will be able to apply them to my daily life.

Petra Chua
/ NTU, Accountancy Year 2

Research For A Greater Good?

(but with no funding)

During the 2013/2014 academic year, the Postgraduate Christian Fellowship at National University of Singapore (NUS) spent time to explore a distinctive role the postgraduate student ministry can play within the postgraduate community. To this end, two main activities were organised. The first was a discussion on interpreting the Trial of Jesus and the second was a talk, held on 14 March, on *Research for a greater good? (but with no funding).*

The focus of the talk sought to explore a Christian perspective on a problem commonly faced by the scientific community. While researchers often start their careers with noble aims and lofty ideals, the realities of profit-driven research and competitive funding soon hit home. Some are faced with the choice of performing research in a lucrative field that mostly benefits the rich, or developing technology to help the poor who are unable to repay them.

The event began with two speakers from the Faculty of Engineering at NUS, Professor Lim Chwee Teck and Professor Adekunle Adeyeye, sharing their academic journeys. Both Prof. Lim and Prof. Kunle were not initially intent on pursuing academic careers. Their main focus was choosing to let God lead them and seeking God's will through much prayer. Prof. Lim was very thankful that God led him to partner many good Christian professionals as he moved from one field of engineering to another. He also shared the 'for-profit vs. for-good' challenge he faced when interfacing with the commercial sphere, as he has his own company. Prof. Kunle gave very practical advice on making our Christian stand known and engaging people with different values.

The students enjoyed hearing the stories and seemed encouraged to continue in their pursuit of an academic career, which they had already chosen. Hearing the supervisor's side of the story was eye-opening for them. The speakers also shared that the academic sphere has become very competitive. This seemed to be reflected by the many questions asked by the students about the ins and outs of an academic career.

Sadly we were not able to point the discussion towards the wider topic of making choices from a biblical perspective, specifically choices that benefit the wider society. However, we hope that since both speakers emphasised God's leading, the students would take this to heart.

Alan Koh / *Alan recently graduated with a Masters in Mechanical Engineering from NUS*

East Asia School of Business

EASB Christmas Dinner

As 2013 drew to an end, our team of volunteers organised a Christmas dinner for the students who attend the English Corner every Tuesday at the EASB (East Asia School of Business) hostel. The dinner was held at a local home to give our foreign friends a taste of what a community gathering is like in Singapore on a festive occasion, besides strengthening our friendship with them further.

About 30 of us were present for the event held on 10 December 2013. Many local dishes were featured, such as chilli stingray, curry, satay, fried rice, noodles, desserts, and many more. There was a good mix of students in the group as about half of us were made up of Singaporeans, and the other half were our foreign friends, who came from diverse East Asian nations.

After our stomachs were satisfied, we sang a number of Christmas carols and a few of the volunteers from the EASB team presented some songs for enjoyment. This was followed by a time of sharing on the meaning of Christmas through a presentation by Mr Chan Mun Toh, one of the volunteers. All the opportunities that we had in the past year to interact with them culminated in a message of hope that was shared once again to the students in this last meeting of the year; the heart of the gospel was openly made known to them, and that concluded the night's event.

I myself have been a volunteer at the EASB ministry for two years and running. I have witnessed some of our foreign friends coming to know the Lord Jesus Christ, including one who even got baptised on Christmas day last year. I have seen uncomfortable stares sent our way when we shared the gospel itself, yet there were more who are open to hear about Jesus. They asked questions and they were curious.

FOREIGN FRIENDS

diverse East Asian nations

Photograph:

1. Dorcas first from right with two other graduate volunteers - Gloria Soh centre and Tammie Gwee. Gloria and Tammie are also graduates from NP

"The dinner was held at a local home to give our foreign friends a taste of what a community gathering is like in Singapore for a festive occasion..."

Personally, I have been blessed by some of their friendships and their care for the team and myself. Seeing how we have become closer to one another because of the weekly gatherings on Tuesdays and other days in the week makes me really glad, for this gives much meaning to me in serving at the EASB English Corner. This ministry is the Lord's and we are just availing ourselves for God to use us to bless this group of students here at the EASB hostel.

Dorcas Liu / *Dorcas graduated from Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) School of Business Studies in 2011. She was a member of NPCF during her student days.*

Return to the LORD

"Return to me, and I will return to you, says the LORD of hosts" (Mal.3:7b ESV) – This was the key verse of the **Nanyang Technological University Indonesian Students' Christian Fellowship (NTU ISCF)** Camp held from 10–13 December 2013.

The verse quoted above sounds so simple to understand – hardly anyone who reads it will interpret it wrongly. Yet, it is so difficult to put into practice. Most, if not all of us, have failed to do just the first three words at times. We go to church every week, we join countless fellowships and Bible studies, and we also preach the Word of God regularly. Yet, we commit sins again, and again, and again. How long does it take till we realise that we are lost and need to return to our Lord? And, do we ever realise that we are lost in the first place?

Inspired by this verse, I wanted to have but one thing: I wanted a revival, with all the campers returning to Him after participating in the camp. Hence, I prepared everything meticulously so as to provide a conducive environment for the participants to learn and grow in their faith. This train of thought, however, made me constantly apprehensive during the camp. Would everything run smoothly? Did we overlook anything? What could we improve on? Those questions kept appearing in my mind when I was listening to the sermon. That was when I realised that I was not listening, but rather, I was only hearing the sermon. Suddenly, I was reminded of the story of Martha and Mary (Lk. 10:38–42). Thanks be to God! He did not let me drown in all my busyness. He wanted me to return and repent too. That was really a memorable point for me.

With that, I tried to focus on listening to the Word of God that was preached. I thank God for Adrian Nugroho, the FES staffworker who, as our main speaker, gave a very comprehensive exposition on the book of Malachi. We discussed how the Israelites did not serve the Lord wholeheartedly, how we tend to live to please our false gods/idols, and how to tackle these issues. After the talk we chose our own small groups with whom we can share more openly about our struggles with false idols. It was another significant moment for me – rarely do we have a time to share openly with our friends in this fast-paced Singapore society we live in.

There were many other memorable moments during the camp – the overflowing amount of BBQ food that we had, the games we won and lost together, and the tears we shed at the dedication service. Yet, the success of this camp is not measured by how much we remember about it, but rather, by how much we remember God because of it. I will frankly admit that the camp was not 100% successful for me. At times, I still forget about Him and commit sins. Nevertheless, I thank God for this camp as it continuously reminds me to always return to Him.

And I know He will return to me.

Soli Deo Gloria.

Filipus Ferdian / President of NTU ISCF Camp Committee 2013 / NTU, Aerospace Engineering, Year 4

Chinese Work

Combined Uni Bible Camp

Every year, a **combined University (Uni) Bible Camp** is organised for students from the Chinese-speaking fellowships to have intensive Bible study sessions together. This camp is mainly catered for **National University of Singapore Chinese Varsity Christian Fellowship** (**NUS CVCF)** and **National Technological University Chinese Christian Fellowship (NTU-CCF)** students though students from other universities are also welcomed to participate in the camp. The camp, which was held at Jubilee Church from 6–9 January 2014, focused on the study of the Prophetic books and Revelation.

With the guidance of our staff workers, we walked through the history of the Old Testament. From there, we were introduced to the Prophetic books in the Bible and saw the importance of knowing the political situation of that time in order to better understand what the prophets went through. We also learnt about the different kings, good and bad, during that period.

During the study of the Prophetic books, we focused mainly on the book of Habakkuk. This book consists of a conversation between the Lord and the prophet Habakkuk. Through the study of this book, our staffworker showed us new insights which revealed to us the power of our God and His wondrous love for His people.

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We were glad to be able to invite Rev. Dr Pan Chou Wee, a lecturer at Trinity Theological College, to share with us on the book of Revelation. He led us to view Revelation from a new perspective and to be assured of God's promises to His people.

Besides the Bible study sessions, we also played some interesting games planned by the camp programmers who racked their brains to incorporate valuable lessons into the games. It was quite a success, and we all had fun playing them.

The committee did something different this year by bringing the campers out for lunch on the third day of the camp so that the campers will be able to get to know each other better. Indeed, everyone enjoyed the fellowship lunch. We hope to have more of this kind of outdoor activities in the future.

Another highlight at the camp was the birthday celebration. As there was a 'January birthday baby' in the camp, we decided to celebrate her birthday. We were thankful that she was willing to spend her birthday in the camp with fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. We gave her a surprise, and it turned out to be a success.

On the whole, we had a good time of fellowship through the games and meal times, and most importantly, a wonderful time of worship through the songs and lessons. Besides getting to know more about the different prophets, we also drew closer to God. As we hope to continue to grow together spiritually in love, we look forward to more collaborations between both campuses, so that our brothers and sisters in Christ from different universities will have further opportunities to fellowship together.

Glory be to our God, for it is He who made this camp a success! May each of us continue to be His salt and light on our campuses.

Chia Hui Juan, Vina / NTU, Chinese, Year 4

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Photographs:
1. After a session on Revelation with Dr Pan Chou Wee (front row second from left).
2. Vina, second from the left with fellow campers
3. Lunching Out
4. Birthday Celebration

NSC Outing to *Logos Hope*

1

The **FES National Student Council (NSC)** had its first outing on 25 January 2014. The objectives for the outing were to fellowship with some of the potential successors of the various Christian Fellowships (CFs) who will be involved in NSC activities in the near future. We also planned to visit the ship *Logos Hope* that had docked at the Promenade at VivoCity during the Chinese New Year period.

25 of us met at VivoCity for lunch before visiting the ship. Over lunch we had the opportunity to interact with the newcomers and receive updates on the ministry of each CF. Before setting off to *Logos Hope*, we were divided into six groups and given an assignment. After visitng the ship, each group has to suggest a solution based on that experience. We prayed, and then set off for the ship.

Logos Hope sails around the world with the aim to bring knowledge, help and hope to the communities the ship visits. Their stop here had the theme *Gathering of Hope – Engaging Under-Served Communities.* The aim was to bring warmth and hope through organised meals held onboard the ship for migrant workers and other under-served communities.

The main highlight of the vessel was the bookstore, which sold books at prices below its retail value. Besides Christian books, there were books from many other categories such as cooking, lifestyle, and even business.

There were also a number of exhibits on display, one of which was based on the "Parable of the Prodigal Son". It consisted of a lane, which we walk through, with panes along the path. While in the Bible it states that the son squandered away his fortune, the exhibit displayed the equivalent of squandering, for example being laden with heavy debts. Past the exhibit was an area with more memorabilia on the theme of 'Hope'. A video highlighting the issues faced by various people in Singapore was played. There was also a board for people to write messages to encourage people to have hope.

After visiting the ship, we gathered to share our solutions to the assignment. This was followed by a multiple choice 'questionnaire' on the vision and mission of the NSC, led by Hanyi, chairman of the NSC. The exercise reminded us of our vision to be a prophetic presence, in word and action, to members of the various CFs and campuses. It also affirmed our mission to nurture an integral and hermeneutical community by reading the times and discerning God's calling for His people on campus.

Photographs:

1. *Logos Hope*
2. Messages expressing hope
3. Current and future student leaders. Jian Ann is standing at the back row third from the right.

Personally, I felt that the visit to *Logos Hope* is relevant to the vision and mission of NSC. These are my observations and thoughts:

- When I was purchasing books at the cashier, the staff asked me how my day was. This is quite rare in our culture.
- One snippet of the video that was played showed the difficulties faced by a family with a primary school age son who has an addiction to gaming. Another snippet was about a single mother's worries about the impact her living environment, which is frequented by drug addicts and prostitutes, will have on her child.
- The books were sold at a very low price. It goes to show the ship's desire to promote the sharing of knowledge without allowing finances to be a barrier.
- The question assigned to my group was "If you have to open a shop at VivoCity, what would your shop sell? How would you go about doing it?" I considered the choice of selling 'materialistic' wares or otherwise. What do people truly want when they shop? Is it to stand out? Or to boost their self-esteem? Should we sell such items? Linking this back to our mission, we do want to carefully discern and read the times.

I thank God for the work done in NSC this past academic year. It was encouraging to see how God works in each individual leader and also how much we had learnt from this excursion. Visiting *Logos Hope* and learning of her purpose and vision also reminded me of the theme from last year's combined Polytechnic CF camp – *It's so HEART to be in your shoes* – when we discussed issues faced in our family, on campus and in Singapore. Through this outing, I am challenged to continue to support this vision in whatever way I can.

Wong Jian Ann / SCF TP Chair / Temasek Polytechnic, Law and Management Year 3

Sabbatical Reflections

From June to December 2013, FES Senior Staffworker, Siah May Lan, spent five weeks at Regent College, Vancouver, Canada as part of her six-month sabbatical leave. She shares with us some highlights of her time there.

Vancouver was an ideal place for me to spend part of my sabbatical break. The good climate and the abundance of fresh vegetables and fruit were just some of the plus factors that made it an even more enjoyable trip.

At Regent College I took three courses under the Summer Programme, namely *J.R.R. Tolkien: Writer for Our Time of Terror* by Ralph Wood, *Six-Continent Christianity* by Andrew Walls and *The Recent World History of Christianity* by Mark Noll. These courses were enriching in their own subject matter. The course on Tolkien gave me a deeper understanding of the biblical themes in his writings like *The Lord of the Rings Trilogy* and some other shorter essays. The other two history courses refreshed my past learning on the historical development of missions in the world today and the close connection of the early church history then. There were some other interesting courses that I would have liked to take but due to time and financial constraints, I could only settle for three courses done within a month.

During those five weeks, I stayed alone in a basement suite in one of the staff's house, about ten minutes ride away from Regent. Having this accommodation gave me a lot of space to rest and reflect on my life and ministry. I also had a taste of what a full-time student's life in Regent is like – attending classes and chapel daily, browsing in the library, hanging out with other students and visiting places of interest.

I thank God for the wonderful opportunity given to me to take this five-week study-cum-holiday trip during my sabbatical. Besides being able to see the beauty of the city of Vancouver and the natural landscape sights which God created, I particularly enjoyed the time of fellowship with some friends whom I got to know there. As we shared testimonies of God's work in our lives, we were able to encourage and spur one another on in our Christian journey. Praise be to God!

Siah May Lan / FES Senior Staffworker

Welcome

Elaine Chan is the newest addition to the FES staff team. She officially joined FES on 6 January.

Elaine will be working as a ministry staff, taking care of the Host Family Programme, supporting International Student Ministry, as well as assisting the General Secretary's Office in event/project coordination and organisation.

Graduated from Central Queensland University with a Bachelor of Business (in Marketing), she has been working in the banking and marketing industry for the past fifteen years. Before joining us, she worked as Marketing Manager in Inspiration Learning (an education provider company). Being eager to follow God's calling and give herself to the ministry, she decided on a career change and was eventually led to join us.

Elaine worships at Telok Ayer Chinese Methodist Church. She is married to Christopher Lim, a project manager/ engineer and they have three children – Claudia (13), Chloe (10) and Christian (2½).

Congratulations

FES staffworker (Chinese Work) Lim Chee Tat married Estella Liu Xin on 22 February 2014 at Covenant Presbyterian Church. We congratulate the couple and pray for God's grace and blessings to be upon them as they begin their new phase of life together.

prayer point

Photographs:

1. NTU-Exco: back row, left to right, Jeremiah (staffworker), Jiajun, Ernest, Shawn, Emil. Front Row, left to right: Phuong, Priscilla, XingXi, Odelia
2. Celebrating Chinese New Year with international students
3. NTU-CF - Welcoming new members

NTU-CF

"You are the salt of the earth... You are the light of the world...", from Matthew 5:3–14, have been the verses driving **Nanyang Technological University Christian Fellowship's (NTU-CF's)** vision the last 31 years. But what does it mean to be salt and light? What is a Christian Fellowship; a Christian community? What is the purpose and identity of this interdenominational, evangelical student ministry? These were some of the questions that we set course to tackle this year through our direction of discovering what it means to be a *Christian Community: Growing inward, Reaching outward*.

You are the salt of the earth ... You are the light of the world ...

In NTU-CF we have small groups (SG's) that fellowship, study, discuss and apply the Word of God together. These smaller groups belong to the larger community that meet for Fellowship Nights (FN's), where sharing from and dialogue with external speakers challenge us as a community to engage with issues like apathy, dignity of labour and sustainability. Both groups hold to one purpose of the Christian community that never changes: to exist not solely for itself but to be a witness – to reach outwards – to people and communities on campus and beyond.

As God's people we are called to discover and fulfil His mission, to be a prophetic and transformative community that acts and reacts to the needs on campus in a Christ-like manner. The International Students Ministry is one way we have responded to God's command in Deuteronomy to "love the foreigners residing

Nanyang Technological University Christian Fellowship

among you", where we engage and welcome foreign students who are often neglected and stigmatised in the university.

The growth of a Christian community also comes from engaging with other Christian communities, amplifying our passion and teaching us to appreciate the diversity and unity in the body of Christ. It was a blessing to be a praying community with CF's all across Singapore on World Students Day last October, and a hermeneutical community at a combined Bible camp with VCF in December 2013.

Thanksgiving and prayer points:

We are still discovering ourselves as a Christian community and there is a pressing need to realise our duty to move beyond ourselves and into the campus to uncover and obey God's mission.

Our unexpected increase in membership and the changing dynamics of NTU with increasing student intakes and new courses have caused changes in our structure. It also comes with heavier responsibilities on leaders and seniors to step up and create a permeating culture that rightfully reflects what CF stands for. As the time for a handover of leadership approaches, we thank God for his faithfulness and grace every step of the way and pray that he will raise leaders who are willing and hungry to learn and do His will.

Please pray that NTU-CF will be able to evolve, respond to and perceive NTU the way Christ would, and that we will grow to be a united, missional Christian community – salt and light – for His glory.

Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.
– Hebrews 12:2

Imsurenla Priscilla Jamir /
NTU-CF President /
Psychology, Year 3

VCF

Varsity Christian Fellowship (VCF) is a terribly exciting ministry to be in. It's exciting because it has such *potential* and such *presence*. The minds, hearts and strengths that enter a university are going to leave the university as children and parents, savants and servants, voters and hopers. What we see here and now have real impacts on how we live there and then. And yet, it is not just a future hope but also a very present reality.

VCF is part of the Community Engagement Network in our university (National University of Singapore), which is a new coming together of various cultural and faith groups. We are involved in a nascent project, *Conversations of Hope*, where over dinner and dialogue we hear and share what is on our hearts as young persons, openly and honestly bringing our cultural and faith perspectives to bear on these issues and dreams. Our involvement with *Conversations of Hope* has opened our eyes to see VCF not just as a massive, messy collection of cosy Christians but also as a leader in a larger community on campus who *can* shape Singapore by listening to others, by asking meaningful questions and by modeling what have previously only been possibilities. We have a real place in this university. Opportunities for dialogue have been opened and it has forced us to re-evaluate what it really means for us to be followers of Christ; and to be salt and light that is 'salty and bright'. It's all extremely exciting and for that we are very thankful to God.

Photographs:

1. VCF Exco: from left to right, Shanna, Daniel, Yvonne (staffworker), Wilbur, Esther, Kenneth, Jing Han, Benjamin, Hanyi (Chairman). Not in the photo: Joey and Ada.
2. Pioneering ministry at the School of Computing
3. A contact group meeting in one of the halls

CONVEOF

2

1

If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.
– John 15:7

Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."
– John 20:21

"Come, follow me." Officially, we have 273 members spread across standing committees, halls, residences and faculties. Informally though, we have distributed about 715 Contact Group (CG) guides used in our CGs who meet weekly. Getting to know God through His world and His Word has led us to see that as the Father has loved Christ, so has He loved us, and so are we to love. As the Father sent Christ, so Christ is sending us. The Word became flesh and dwelt amongst us. These truths are shaping our ideas of fellowship and following, our understanding of mankind and mission.

Quite practically, our activities move beyond just being Christians who support each other, to being salt on campus. How can we as individuals and as a community embody the fullness of life and also the wholeness of God's work? Because we are students, we have that safe space to explore and experiment different ideas; to dream and do, but often we only dream of doing and more likely than not, not even dreaming of the possibilities.

RSATIONS
HOPE

dinner and dialogue •
hear and share •
cultural and faith perspectives •

3

Continued overleaf

NUS Varsity Christian Fellowship

Will you pray that we will be prophets?
'Prophets' who are perceptive and incisive. We hope for each of us to see and grieve with and for the brokenness around and in us, and then, that we may fearlessly sound the clear clarion call of hope. May God bring forth visionary leaders among us.

Will you pray that we will be poets?
Poets who dream, and are creative and expressive, being unafraid to plumb the depths of what it means to be and speaking with vivid pictures and potlucks, essays and actions, as each is gifted. Each playing their part, being faithful by being their unique 'colour' in this massive picture God is painting.

prophets • poets • people
WILL YOU PRAY?

Will you pray that we will be people?
People who may learn to love, specifically to receive (love) and rebuke (in love). It is difficult to allow ourselves to be loved because it goes against our indoctrination of independence, and it is equally difficult to speak honestly because our society and perhaps even our church is full of cloying niceness, too afraid to offend.

Esther Phua / Vice-chairperson Varsity Christian Fellowship / NUS, Philosophy Year 2

I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.
– John 12:24

SIM ISCF

Singapore Institute of Management (SIM) - Indonesian Students' Christian Fellowship (ISCF) has about 20 students who meet for weekly teaching fellowship (sometimes combined with prayer meetings) and small group meetings. This year, the CF is emphasising on *understanding and sharing Biblical faith, hope and love in the students' daily life.*

SIM Indonesian Students Christian Fellowship

Photographs:

1. SIM ISCF Exco training camp 9–11 September 2013, from top left to right: Christiana, Angel, Kezia, Stephanie, Anita; bottom left to right: Stephen (President), Heryanto
2. The ISCFers had an outdoor fellowship to Bukit Timah Nature Reserve in September last year. Michael, their staffworker is at the front row, extreme left.

We give thanks for God's guidance and blessings in SIM ISCF, especially for this past one term that is about to end in May 2014. Praise the Lord for some pre-believers who have been attending our fellowship meetings and have had opportunities to listen to the good news of Jesus Christ. Through our interaction with them, we have been able to share about our convictions and show our love to them.

Prayer Points

2

- In the past one year of the ministry, the fellowship has been struggling to reach out to the freshmen. As a result, only a few freshmen have been attending the fellowship meetings. Please pray for our efforts to continue to reach out to more freshmen until the end of the school term in May, and pray that we will be able to reach out to a new batch of students in the coming school term (August 2014).

- Currently, the fellowship is undergoing a leadership transition as the current executive committee is finishing their term at the end of March. Please pray for the transition process. A few potential key leaders have been identified and some have expressed willingness and desire to take up the leadership mantle. Pray for more potential leaders to stand up and take up the baton. Pray too that God will continue to prepare and equip the student leaders to lead the fellowship in making an impact in their school and in society.

Michael Senjaya Kang / Head of FES Indonesian Ministry

NUS CVCF

Being the only Mandarin-speaking Christian Fellowship on the **NUS** campus and a standing committee of Varsity Christian Fellowship (VCF), **Chinese Varsity Christian Fellowship (CVCF)** exists to engage students who are more comfortable conversing in Mandarin or are from Chinese churches. CVCF has approximately 30 members who meet weekly for cell group activities such as Bible study and combined fellowship events.

Photographs:

1. NUS CVCF Exco: from left to right, Jackson (staffworker), Luo Xi, Linghui, Qui Ling, Tak Shun, Yu Xuan, Jeremy, Junhan, Grace
2. Evangelistic Rally 2013 during Mid-Auntumn Festival
3. CVCFers at the FES Chinese Work Big Family Gathering 2013

The main theme or direction of CVCF for this academic year is *New Creation, New Heart and New Wineskin*, which emphasises the transforming power of Christ in a believer's life. We hope that the theme would challenge members to live their daily lives according to teachings from the Bible and ultimately grow to be more Christ-like in all areas of life.

New Creation, New Heart and New Wineskin

I am thankful for all the committee members that God has provided us. They have a heart for the ministry – serving CVCF members and those in need willingly despite their pressing academic workload. Although they may not have prior experience serving in this ministry, they are nevertheless keen and willing to learn. We are also grateful for the freshmen and new members that God has put in CVCF. Even though

2

we have a large number of graduates leaving CVCF every year, God has been faithful in providing us with new members who are passionate in undertaking the vision of campus ministry.

Our members have been facing pressures from academic demands, which sometimes may deter them from growing spiritually. This becomes increasingly evident when the semester comes to an end and students will be so busy with meeting deadlines that there is little time left to be dedicated to God. However, I do believe that in situations like this, God will always remind us in different ways that He will help us and provide for all our needs. Visibly or invisibly, He is always there, guiding us through difficult situations. Praise be to our amazing God!

3

I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.

– Ezekiel 36:26-27

Prayer Points

Pray that:

- God will provide us with sufficient new Exco members in the upcoming elections and grant them wisdom to lead the fellowship in the next academic year.
- All our members will continue to grow spiritually and become increasingly Christ-like in all aspects of their lives.
- CVCF can provide our members with a sense of belonging.

Haw Yu Xuan / NUS CVCF Chairman / Life Sciences, Year 4

Students' Christian Fellowship Temasek Polytechnic

SCF TP

The Students' Christian Fellowship at Temasek Polytechnic (SCF TP) currently has five to ten regular members. In March, four of them will be graduating and leaving the fellowship. As the CF often struggles with sustainability issues, please help us by ***praying*** *to God to send new Christian students from TP to join the CF and together with other CFers, see the vision to be a united witness for Christ on campus.*

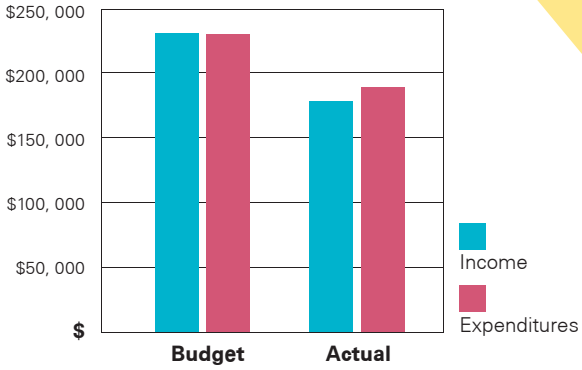
If you know of Christians who will be joining TP as a student or who are already studying at TP, let them know about the CF ministry and pass their names to the FES staffworker in-charge, Sherry Hua (email: sherry.hua@fessingapore.org), who will be able to give them more information about the CF ministry.

FES Income and Expenditures 2014 (Jan–Feb)

	Budget	Actual
Income	$ 233,485.82	$ 176,371.23
Expenditures	$ 232,898.86	$ 187,680.26
Surplus/(Deficit)	$ 586.96	($ 11,309.03)

Notes:

1. In 2013, FES experienced a considerable **surplus** of **S$211K**
2. FES 2014 budget is at **S$1.4M** with a break-even target
3. The first two month of this year has been rather alarming. While expenditures were well controlled, we saw income significantly lower than expected. This applies mostly for all three sections of FES



IFES EARC 2014

2-8 JULY 2014
PORT DICKSON METHODIST CENTRE, MALAYSIA

The EARC 2014 programme will feature:
Bible expositions on the book of Isaiah
by Dr Daniel Bourdanné (IFES General Secretary)

Plenary sessions:

- ***EPIC Re-Orientation*** *– of our purpose and God's calling in our lives*
- ***EPIC Reconciliation*** *– history, racial, inter-nation*
- ***EPIC Renovation*** *– involvement in our world, corruption, nature/ ecological issues, economic imbalance, social justice*

18 workshops to challenge us to be E.P.I.C. – Engaging, Passionate, Incarnational and Christlike in a changing Asia.

REGISTRATION:

Around 60 places have been allocated for FES Singapore delegates (students and staffworkers). Students who are interested to attend EARC 2014 are to **register** at **http://fessingapore.org/earc2014/** by **2 May 2014**.
Cost: $300 (includes $50 transport fee to and from the venue)

Enquiries: Adrian Nugroho *(adrian.nugroho@fessingapore.org)*, EARC 2014 coordinator for FES Singapore.

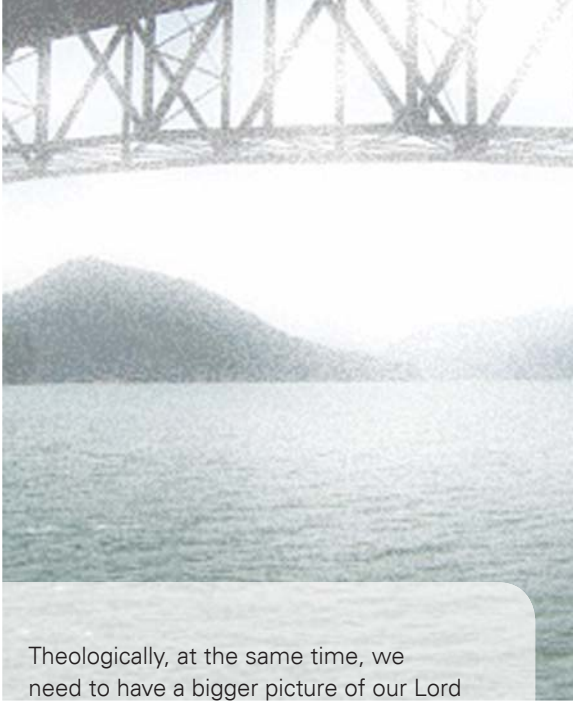
Meanwhile, **PRAY WITH US** that:

- EARC will be a representation of East Asia and that participants will catch God's heartbeat for the region
- There will be a sense of unity and togetherness as a larger student movement
- Movements that are facing difficulties will be able to send delegates
- God will provide the funds needed for each participant's travel and conference fees, as well as the costs shared by the Host Country and the other East Asia movements

Official conference website:
http://ifesearc2014.org/
For regular prayer updates:
http://ifesearc2014.org/prayer/

Fishes and a Lake[1]

Towards Engaging the University as a Whole



A few years ago at an International Fellowship of Evangelical Students' (IFES) event, Daniel Bourdanné, the IFES General Secretary, made an illustration of the university as an "ecosystem of a lake". He suggested that IFES should concern itself not on how just to get fishes (i.e. reach out to students) out of the lake, but instead reach out to the whole partakers of the ecosystem.

In other words, we should not be a ministry that simply takes students out of the ecosystem after being "saved" (by making them busy with many inward-looking events or creating a safe and insulated ghetto, for example), but instead work towards a ministry among, as well as by students serving the university at large. Consequently, FES staffworkers, supporters, and partners are then to equip the students to do the latter.

Theologically, at the same time, we need to have a bigger picture of our Lord Jesus Christ, as mentioned in Colossians 1:20: *"through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross."* All things in universe hang in Him. Christ, through His death and resurrection, had reconciled *all things* to Himself. Take note that it is *all things* – not only human beings.

Hence, one of our primary roles as staffworkers is to make sure Christian students and faculty constantly look outwards wholistically beyond mere programmes. Sometimes, evangelism is just perceived by students as a programme, like a "university mission", or a gospel rally, or an evangelistic Bible study course, etc. Evangelism is seen as an invitation to non-believers to enter our context, speak our language, and be like us. Such methods may possibly merely touch the fringe of the non-believers belief system.

[1] These are notes taken from the IFES Living Stones Conference 2010 held in Port Dickson, especially from Dr Daniel Bourdanné and Dr Vinoth Ramachandra's sessions.

Therefore, the metaphor "bridge building" is more useful for the varsity context. At one end, there is the world of the university, with all its conversations (sports, social network, terrorism, human rights, etc.). At the other end, there are biblical values with rich Christian traditions. We should bring these Christian values and traditions into the world of the university. We must fully engage the conversations of the world and be unafraid to speak to them from the Christian perspective.

In order to do that, it requires dialogue – starting and joining the conversation on any trending topic on the respective campuses. To be dialogical is to allow a genuine two-way conversation. It certainly involves risks and exposes ourselves and our vulnerabilities to the non-Christian world. Nevertheless, we need to start by *listening first* before talking.

Conversion to Christ is just the beginning of the journey of a Christian student. As we have a new identity in Christ, along the way we should not be afraid to ask questions when engaging with pre-believers. Whether we realise it or not, since "all things are under Him", our Lord is with us too. We are to discern the presence of Christ in our conversations and make His presence felt and acknowledged.

Lastly, engaging the university is not only for the sake of the Gospel, but also for the sake of the Church – to eventually deepen the church's understanding and maturity towards Christ-likeness. We must answer to the world why it makes a difference when we follow Christ as a community of believers.

Let's creatively start engaging our university for Christ!

Lisman Komaladi
/ General Secretary

FES Affiliates

• Varsity Christian Fellowship (National University of Singapore) • Polytechnic Christian Fellowship (Singapore Polytechnic) • Ngee Ann Polytechnic Christian Fellowship • Nanyang Technological University Christian Fellowship (including National Institute of Education Christian Fellowship) • Singapore Institute of Management Students' Christian Fellowship • Students' Christian Fellowship Temasek Polytechnic • Informatics Christian Fellowship • James Cook University Singapore Christian Fellowship • Military Christian Fellowship • Graduates' Christian Fellowship • Nanyang University Graduates' Christian Fellowship

Pioneering work at Nanyang Polytechnic, Republic Polytechnic, Curtin University, Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts, LASALLE College of the Arts, East Asia School of Business, Management Development Institute of Singapore and Singapore Institute of Technology

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• The Right Rev. Dr John Chew

Vice-Presidents
• Dr Ernest Chew
• Dr Lawrence Chia
• Rev. Dr Choong Chee Pang
• Rev. Timothy See
• Bishop Emeritus Dr Robert Solomon

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FES is an interdenominational Christian organisation that seeks to reach, nurture and equip tertiary students in Singapore to be a faithful evangelical witness on campus and in society, making and building disciples of Jesus Christ who will be effective salt and light of the world.

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