fellowship of evangelical students

perspective

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Editorial

Hello, I am Jeremiah and I will be the new editor for Perspective and most of our FES Publications. I have also taken over as the Head of Communications from Yun Mei, who has since returned from her 4-months of sabbatical leave and is now concentrating on archiving and curation work for FES.

This is the first time I am editing Perspective and it is a privilege to begin the role with this FES 60th Anniversary commemorative edition. This issue is essentially structured into halves. The first half features stories from our graduates from the 1950s to 2000s. The second features stories from our current student leaders. This is a timely and opportune issue to demonstrate the shifts and transitions of student ministry over all these years. A transition from the first 60 to, God willing, the next 60 years. Through my editing, I have been deeply inspired by the boldness and courage of students in the early years of FES and what they were convicted to do because of the call of God. I sincerely hope that this bold spirit displayed so fervently in the past continues to move the hearts of our students and ministries today.

Having said that, this might also be the last issue of Perspective which I will be editing... (continued on the last page)

FOREWORD

Thus Far and Further Still

A Curious Case of Uncultivated and Vulnerable Ground

Then Samuel… named it Ebenezer; for he said, "Thus far the Lord has helped us." (1 Sam. 7:12, NRSV)

Just a few months ago, in *Perspective* March 2019, I wrote that 2019 is to be the "Fallow Year" for FES Singapore – a year of rest and celebration, replenishment and listening. One would expect then for the ministry to experience a time of relative peace and calm, a time to be able to simply rest upon the many years of labour and reflect upon the achievements of the ministry. Peculiarly, God has since put FES through a rather different experience of fallowing these six months.

These six months have been far from being uneventful by the standards of FES. We were forced to deeply examine the ways in which we minister and engage with the students of today and in response executed some strategic initiatives to prepare FES to engage with yet another generation of students to come. Most notably, numerous listening exercises with students, churches, and graduates have been implemented to sense the "nutrients" necessary for FES to continue ploughing and sowing "the land" of student ministry.

Along the way, we responded to opportunities to revive some of our struggling pioneering Christian Fellowships (CF), like SMU, NAFA, and PSB Academy. It always surprises us how God never gives up on His ministry and continually calls us to respond in steadfastness. In so doing, we have learned what it means to run in fortitude with the ever-resilient God.

From a financial standpoint, FES experienced the largest monthly deficit in May 2019. We were compelled to rely fully upon God who then surprised us with a humbling gift from an unexpected source – a man who suffered from cerebral palsy but remembered us because he was ministered to by a student from the VCF Social Concerns ministry in the 1990s.

Yes, God has undeniably helped us thus far. At the same time, this fallow period has also made FES "learn more and more how God works [so we] will learn how

to do [our] work... [and we] will have the strength to stick it out over the long haul" (Colossians 1:11, The Message).

With all this in mind, we present this commemorative 60th Anniversary edition of FES Perspective as two essential halves.

The first half consists of selected *Life Stories* of seven graduates from the different eras of the 1950s to 2010s across the various ministry sections of FES. These stories are meant to inseminate the ground with inspiring ingenuities, ever-relevant ministry convictions, and characters of servanthood. It is impossible to illustrate all the great works of God in and through the lives of all our graduates, but we hope that this selection helps us see how God has always been in at work in FES all these years.

The second half is an array of fifteen *Student Testimonies* from our current student leaders reflecting upon what it means to be a Christian student today, together with a brief timeline of the history of FES and an updated map of the CFs affiliated with FES. We hope that all this helps you to keep in touch with the current state of student ministry and remain ever curious of the intricate challenges that FES faces with the next generation of students.

This issue ends with the closing charge given by Daniel Bourdanné at the IFES World Assembly held in South Africa on 3-11 July 2019. His sermon was short and unassuming but drove home the point of how IFES should strive for the long haul. I believe his message is as appropriate to FES Singapore too, especially as FES is entering its "ploughing and sowing" years ahead. Hence, let me end with these quotes from Daniel's article:

> *We cannot carry the message of God from a position of strength, power, and control. If we have to be the messengers of God's hope, we need to start from the vulnerability posture. We go out as vulnerable people and this helps us to better understand our world, who is broken.*
>
> *IFES is a broken and vulnerable movement, driven by ordinary students, guided by ordinary staff workers. We should maintain that level of vulnerability, because it should be our identity. Brothers and sisters, if we start playing power game, that will be the end of IFES.*
>
> *Vulnerable people, broken people, broken organisation, go and serve the broken world! Go in peace from the Lord in this vulnerable mission!*

LISMAN KOMALADI
FES General Secretary

LIFE STORIES

The First Years of FES

1958 meeting with Wilson Wang at the home of the Contentos.

My journey in Varsity Christian Fellowship (VCF) began in 1953, the year I entered university to study medicine. I had converted just before entering university. My choice of study was due in part to the influence of various doctors who were both strong Christians and very good in medicine. VCF had just started the year before, having separated from the Student Christian Movement, which had become influenced by liberal theology.

VCF helped strengthen my spiritual life. We met regularly to study the Bible, praying for and encouraging each other in the faith. Dr Leon Dale,

a British lecturer in the Geography faculty, was a God-given mentor. I was the VCF committee secretary then and came to know him well. He taught me how to study the Bible and lent me many Christian books (a scarce commodity back then). He would open his house at Eng Neo Avenue every Sunday to all students, and served English tea and cakes. I was very impressed by how he took down the names of familiar students, and prayed for them regularly. There was no FES at the time, so he was the closest thing we had to a staffworker.

Despite being FES' first chairman, I missed the conference that marked its beginning. Besides VCF, Christian fellowships started in three other places: Nanyang University, Singapore Polytechnic, and the Teachers' Training College. By 1959, my graduating year, these movements felt they should make a national body and held a conference about this in Cameron Highlands. I did not attend as I was studying for my final exam. Without me knowing, they appointed me pro-temp chairman. I still remember how I found out! One day, after graduating, I decided to return to King Edward hall to visit Aw Swee Eng, a close friend. I was climbing up the short flight of stairs to the block and saw him standing at the top.

"Hello!", he said. "I have good news for you."

"What good news?" I responded.

"You have been appointed chairman of the new FES committee."

"What?!"

I was very surprised, and honestly, uneasy. I had seen missionaries come through Singapore, many expelled by the Communists in China. Influenced by missionaries such as Hudson Taylor and J. O. Sanders to go to places where the gospel was less preached, I harboured a secret ambition to leave Singapore to be a medical missionary. However, I gradually came to accept that the Lord's will was for me to take up the chairmanship for at least a few years. The gospel was needed in Singapore, and I was meant to be one of those who stayed rather than went.

Starting a ministry like FES in these post-war years was not easy. Singapore's situation was generally difficult, and scarcity was everywhere. We focused on working with the few resources available. There was only one Christian bookshop; we were excited to have any Christian books at all! There was not much money going around either. When I first graduated and started as a houseman, my salary was only $400, which gives you some idea of how low salaries were then. I lived on half that salary. I gave the other half to my brother and his family, as he had supported me through university. It was very much about learning to make do.

In FES's first several years, we did not have a staffworker and we relied on ourselves to do everything. We published a magazine with editing and publication help from others. I managed to buy a motorcycle, and I would go to the printers and do the distribution. All of this happened while I was employed full-time by the Ministry of Health, as the only doctor in charge of port health. I had wanted to work in the hospitals and become a clinician, but I was assigned to public health instead. I was disappointed as it was a 'dead duck' of a career with no chance of promotion. However, looking back, I thank God because there was plenty of waiting and free time which I would spend doing FES work.

When FES hired our first staffworker, Choong Chee Pang, in 1962, we could not even afford to pay him a full salary! Events among the student groups were financed by the students themselves. We emphasised a student-led movement. We tried to ingrain the principle that students are able to do it themselves and be sustainable by themselves. It helped that in those days the students were quite independent.

Part of the reason the ministry could work this way was because of the hardships many in my generation went through. In the earliest days af-

A meeting at Nanyang University Christian Fellowship in the late 1960s

ter the war, we had no food to eat, and sometimes had only one meal for a whole day. In order to survive, we had to learn to be resourceful. Many of us came from a poor background, which helped us understand what it meant to have very little, and to share when we had gotten something. Not having very much also motivated us to save what we did have. We brought these values into VCF, then into FES.

By the time I ended my term as the FES chairperson in 1964 (when Chua Wee Hian joined us) things had stabilised. I saw my main role in those early days as laying foundations for the ministry. It is quite special to be among those who started FES and contributed to its early days, and to see that the ministry is still ongoing today. I am thankful that the Lord laid upon me the heart for FES work and a burden for this ministry.

My days of being on the FES 'frontline' are long past. Many things have changed since then. However, I think some things continue to be important. While there has been a generational shift which needs adaptation, the Bible still needs to be held to and obeyed as the Word of God, as the Truth. Space needs to be given to debate and discuss differences, but I hope younger generations will still hold to fundamental principles. Dedication is another needed value. Those of my generation had to be dedicated to the task, saving what little we had, building up FES and making sacrifices in the process. Learning dedication can be harder today when there are so many ready choices available.

Recalling my journey with VCF and FES, I appreciate anew how those of my generation and students from subsequent generations have been built up and deepened in their faith by this ministry. I pray that for all of us for whom FES has played a significant part in our Christian journey, that we would be united in serving the Lord amidst all our differences.

DR CHEW PIN KEE served as the first chairperson of FES from 1959 to 1964. During his days as a medical student in the University of Malaya (now known as the National University of Singapore), he was an active member of the VCF. He currently owns and runs a private clinic in the west of Singapore with one of his two sons.

LIFE STORIES

The Impact of a Uniquely Singaporean Chinese Student Ministry

My first encounter with campus fellowship started even before I entered the university. In 1962 Dr Choong Chee Pang, then Nanyang University Christian Fellowship (NUCF) member, encouraged and managed to persuade a few Chinese-speaking youth like me to attend the FES Annual Conference at Port Dickson. Little did I realise that the conference paved the way for my life-long involvement and conviction in student ministry. At the conference, I was amazed by how fervently the students in the CF studied the Bible and how biblically sound the speaker's talks and expositions were. This first encounter put an indelibly edifying memory in me.

I enrolled in Nanyang University in 1965 and immediately joined the NUCF. Almost all of us NUCFers stayed in the campus hostels then. So, in addition to regular Sunday evening fellowship meetings, I vividly remember that we had plenty of time together discussing life and faith matters over meals, group bible studies, and prayer meetings in our dormitory rooms. The bonding among us being deep and strong, no doubt helped in the sense of "trapping" us in a secluded Nanyang campus with poor and inconvenient access to transportation at that time.

I only discovered much later that we, the Christian students, were not the only Christians around on campus. There were also numerous Christian lecturers and professors who stayed in the campus dormitories. Not only did they frequently attend our gatherings, they also occasionally opened their homes to us and provided us an oasis for delicious home-cooked food. More importantly, their hospitality provided us the space for intentional soul care and encouragement for each other. At the same time, they became a living embodiment for us by demonstrating what a Christian life of work, family, and ministry would and should look like.

Looking back, my time in NUCF was indeed one of the best periods in my life.

Upon graduation, I became more involved with the NU Graduates' Christian Fellowship (NUG-

CF) which has been instrumental in shaping the Chinese churches in Singapore for the last five decades.

In 1997, for example, NUGCF started mission work with refugee villages in Northern Thailand where people were able to communicate in Chinese (Mandarin). It prompted some of us to reach out and serve them. We began with short trips, quickly followed by more meetings and discussions. We then started one mission school for kindergarten-age children there. By God's grace, the NUGCF managed to set up three kindergartens over the years and sustained this ministry up till 2016. Since then, as we believe in indigenous ownership and management, we handed over the whole operation of these schools to the locals. I believe that this is one little thing graduates could do to participate with God in world mission.

Lastly, it must be noted that there was no question of the relevance and impact of the Chinese-speaking ministry in the 1960s, particularly in NU where courses were taught in Chinese. In recent times however, many people have asked me if Chinese-speaking ministry is still relevant and makes any difference given how campus students mainly read, study, and speak in English today.

I would unequivocally say it is still much needed so long as the Chinese-speaking student ministry is aware of the following. First, it must be more intentionally missional, especially in reaching out and serving the increasing number of Chinese-speaking international students in the campus (i.e. students from China and Malaysia). God has brought them to our shore and Chinese is the language of their heart. Second, the Chinese-speaking student ministry must remain the platform to challenge the local students to embrace the identity of a uniquely Singaporean Chinese Christian, who lives out their Christian life worthy of the gospel of Christ, not just as an import from the English-speaking world, but also grown out of and shaped by local Chinese distinctiveness.

David Wang with his spiritual mentor Dr Choong Chee Pang (left) in 1980 at the NU campus

DAVID WANG MEI HSIONG joined Nanyang University (NU) in 1965 and graduated in 1969. He was the principal of various schools: Chai Chee Secondary School (1985–1989), Presbyterian High School (1990–1995), Cluster Superintendant MOE (1996–2001) and Anglican High School (2002–2004). David also served as the Chair of NU Graduates' Christian Fellowship (NUGCF) in various years from 1971 to 2007.

1970s

LIFE STORIES

The Ancient Art of Engaging the Campus for Christ

PCF Retreat Camp in May 1975

Vincent preaching at a fellowship meeting

When I entered Singapore Polytechnic, I was a new Christian. Converted in 1972, I was enthusiastic to join PCF, which also underwent a spiritual revival at that time. During my time, PCF had three subcommittees taking care of three SP campuses: Ayer Rajah Campus (ARC), Princess Mary Campus (PMC), and Prince Edward Campus (PEC). On each campus, there were two main programmes organised regularly throughout the year. One is a lunch-time meeting (every Tuesday) and the other is the fellowship meeting (every Thursday).

On a good day, especially at PEC, the attendance at lunch-time meetings could reach up to 250 students. It was around 10% of the total population of SP and PCF was the strongest Christian presence on campus then. Why was it so popular? Most of the people who came for lunch-time meetings were seekers who wanted to know more about Christianity. Many talks were on Christian apologetics (e.g. Is there a God?). Another possible reason for its popularity, as I remember what Dr Peter Cooley (the PCF advisor then) noticed, was that PCF provided a calming and edifying presence. The campus was quite chaotic during those days as many students disappeared for days doing various counter-productive activities.

We were told to look out for each other, especially those who joined the fellowship meetings. All the students took this advice very seriously. We spent plenty of time organising casual gatherings for the PCFers. We even occupied one specific corner at PEC Canteen where we used to gather, hang around, and check up on one another through the week. We called ourselves Christians first (or PCFers first), and students second. We jokingly admitted then that was why most of our grades were not that great.

I remember one incident in the beginning of the 1974 academic year. As part of the "poly tradition", the seniors were rowdy and often hostile to the new students. They would bully the new students with various orientation pranks and nonsensical idiosyncrasies. I could sense that many freshmen felt intimidated and scared. It created a tense atmosphere even before school started.

At one of our PCF Exco meetings, we discussed how we, as Christians, might do something about the situation to turn it around. So, we, a group of seniors from PCF, decided to protect the freshmen on the day of orientation day and escorted them to collect their welcome package. We made sure that the freshmen did not have to be the victims of those threats the seniors put on them. Were we terrified? Of course, we were. Moreover, some of us knew the seniors who were notorious for bullying. They were our classmates which we would possibly have to work together with in class projects. However, as we believed that defending the weak was the right thing to do, we persisted and got ourselves ready for the possible backlash from the seniors. Gratefully, it never happened.

Little did we realise that this unpresumptuous initiative made a real heartfelt impression upon the freshmen. They wondered who we were – a group of seniors, whom they never knew, but were caring and bold enough to protect them from school bullies. During further conversations with the freshmen afterwards, we encountered opportunities to live out the message of the Good News. Perhaps this is one little "ancient" thing which we did and can be considered as what FES now calls "engaging the whole campus for Christ!"

Looking back, my life in PCF has fundamentally shaped the way I lived my life many decades after. If I may, I would like to end by encouraging the future generation of students to read two of the most read books by the PCFers of my time: *Give Up Your Small Ambitions* and *Take My Life*, both by Michael Griffiths. Read them and I trust that your life will no longer be the same!

VINCENT HOON studied Electronic and Communications Engineering in Singapore Polytechnic (SP) from 1973 to 1976. He served as the chairperson of the Polytechnic Christian Fellowship (PCF) Exco in 1975/76. Vincent was a missionary in the Philippines for many years, and then pastored in different churches under the Anglican Diocese of Singapore. He now oversees the English Ministry at Church of True Light.

LIFE STORIES

The Recollections of Early FES Staff Work

Pamela Loke (middle, with a CG)

My time as a student in VCF was one of much learning and spiritual growth. While a good deal of that growth and mutual learning came through interaction with my peers in VCF, FES staffworkers at the time, Thomas John and Chng Guat Eng, greatly influenced me as well. It was in my time in student ministry that I felt the call of the Lord to serve him in missions, and VCF helped me see the mission field among students. I joined FES in order to work with students, and Serene Wee, Charlie Lee and myself emerged as the second generation of staffworkers.

The three of us were somewhat of the trailblazers for staff work as the work was fairly new. We were still figuring out what staff work entailed and the best way to go about it. John Stott's explication of salt and light greatly influenced the way I understood the task of student ministry. We hoped students who had gone through the ministry would impact society by being authentic salt and light in the working world as well as in their personal circles. My desire was for our work to produce graduates who were mature in the Lord and prepared for a lifetime of service and devotion to Him and the work of His kingdom.

Subsequently, the way CFs were run was distinctively student-led. The students would lead committees, organise functions, and plan conferences, while the staffworkers would be the supporters, sounding boards, and the ones who would rein in decisions which were less than judicious. We would counsel when student leaders were challenged or disappointed, exercise discipline or reprimand on occasion, and taught as needed. Through such opportunities for student leadership and responsibility, many students came to clearer and firmer convictions, and greater spiritual maturity.

Pamela (1st from left) at a VCF conference

Another key focus at the time was to develop the Christian mind. One aspect of this was building a rational foundation for faith among the students. We drew on and encouraged the reading of robust books by notable Christian thinkers, as it was important that the students were able to give a reasoned answer for their faith. We were also interested in developing a Christian perspective on a variety of issues in life – of work, leisure, immigration, gospel proclamation in relation to doing humanitarian work, abortion, and faith in light of our Asian heritage. This emphasis on the transformation of the mind was also expressed in the choice of speakers for campus mission weeks as well (which resembled the church revival services of that day) – we invited respected Christian intellectuals and experts in various disciplines.

Although my time as a staffworker is long past, I continue to remember my time of service with great fondness. I grew in self-understanding and humility: self-understanding as I gradually saw more clearly the areas of ministry I was gifted in, and humility in recognising that no one staffworker (or ministry worker) can be all things to all people, and that God had bestowed different gifts upon me and my colleagues. I also treasured the way in which we supported each other. We learnt from each other, prayed for each other, and demonstrated a willingness to allow our gifts for ministry to be expressed differently. As for my students, it was not merely that I served and gave of myself for them, but they also gave me energy and vision in turn. Even after I left FES, this experience laid the groundwork for my later work in International Student Ministry in the United States.

I believe that the work of student ministry was and continues to be vitally important. In Singapore, the work of student ministry at the post-secondary level has allowed for Christian values and ideals to be expressed in various levels of our society, and the work done now will continue to be important for the shape of Singapore's society in the future as well.

PAMELA LAU Lau joined FES after graduating from NUS and was a staffworker from 1977 to 1980. She worked largely with VCF. She went on to do doctoral work in philosophy in the United States and was actively involved in International Student Ministry for many years.

LIFE STORIES

Discovering My brethren Through the CF

Registration of the NTI Christian Fellowship (NTICF) in 1983 at the Registry of Societies. Fook Thim is second from right

I became a believer at a Billy Graham Crusade in 1978 and subsequently joined a Brethren church. I grew up with Brethren ways of worship and church life, and this reality formed the contours of my Christian world. One can only imagine my initial surprise when through VCF, I was acquainted with other Christian traditions and met fellow believers who expressed their faith in different ways. When I first discovered that 'speaking in tongues' is thought to be a manifestation of the Holy Spirit, I wondered how *that* practice would be received in my conservative church. This thought was only the beginning of a long journey of discovering who my brethren were.

In my first year at NUS, I got to hang out and work with fellow Engineering students from other denominations through VCF. I must admit that it was easy to overlook the differences in the body of Christ when you have grown to love the different parts deeply. That year, the first-year engineering students came together to put up a skit on campus to celebrate Christmas along with our non-Christian friends. I witnessed the different gifts that we brought to the table: Pow Look was the preacher in the skit; Jane Goh, Sauw Kook, and Sok Bee sang wonderfully; numerous others worked hard behind the scenes. Without a range of abilities, our event would not have seen

Skit put up by the first year engineering VCFers at the Christmas @ Forum 1981

the light of the Nativity – *Magis*, shepherds, and sheep were all needed in our Christmas skit, as does the Church.

My time in VCF helped me to appreciate diversity in the Church. More importantly, I realized that our mutual differences only served to make the Church more resilient to the vagaries of her environment. I was better prepared for the multitude of challenges and issues that Christians are called to face in life. I guess you can say that my time in VCF inoculated me against the belief that *my* way was the *only* viable way of expressing the Christian faith and helped me to love the differences in the bigger Christian body more deeply.

The same can be said of student ministry: we might think that VCF is all there is to the ministry of FES. I had my eyes opened when I pioneered NTI Christian Fellowship (NTICF). I first heard that NTI would be set up in 1982, the second year of my studies. Imagine my excitement when I heard about this opening. I wondered if we could have one Christian Fellowship at the new campus, one that is not limited by organisational affiliation (be it FES, Campus Crusade, Navigators, or The Tabernacle Church) as in NUS? The FES leadership at that time was open to the idea. So we gathered all the believers who were headed for NTI and mooted the idea of NTICF, a single body representing all believers in the new campus.

Alas, this project fell through, but I am still deeply grateful for NTICF. It has formed me in many important ways. The friendships, the good and bad times shared together – these made our fellowship feel more like a family and continued to nurture my appreciation for the Church's diversity. Moreover, since NTI was isolated geographically, the student body was small and everyone lived on campus. Hence, Christians could not live a double life or put on a façade. We had no choice but be wholistic witnesses both in and outside of the CF. That earned the respect of the NTI administration because we engaged the campus authorities and our peers with confidence, conviction, and compassion.

Upon graduation in 1985, I returned and served in my Brethren church. All my commitments thereafter were church-based and I have yet to serve in other para-church organisations. I never had the same wonderful experience of working with a diversified body of Christ since. My four years spent with VCF and NTICF left an indelible impression on me that there is more to Christian life than what is practised in my church. It shaped my worldview and made me more appreciative of my brothers and sisters in the family of Christ who express their faith in different ways.

FOOK THIM had a rather eclectic journey in FES: he was first part of National University of Singapore's (NUS) Varsity Christian Fellowship (VCF) in 1981, and then joined Nanyang Technological Institute (NTI) when it was set up in 1982 (now known as Nanyang Technology University), pioneering the Christian Fellowship there and serving as the president for two terms.

LIFE STORIES

Integrating our Christian

It is often said that the true impact of CF can only be seen in the way students lead their lives upon graduation. Here are the stories of two graduates who, having grasped their Christian identity in an integral perspective in their CF days, chose the road less travelled in their journeys as teachers in public education.

Elijah with CVCF alumni

Elijah with staffworker, Loe Joo

Having grown up in a Christian family and attending church from a young age, I had accumulated much 'head knowledge' by the time I entered university. Being in CVCF helped me to apply what I professed to know and built up my personal convictions. I remember my staffworker, Loe Joo, who constantly challenged me to see my Christian identity as my primary identity on campus, more so than a student. This question of identity has since continued to stay with me.

My biggest growth in CVCF occurred during my time in the Exco. There was a great sense of responsibility as we had real autonomy as student leaders. Each decision we made was carefully weighed. I learnt from such decision-making that there was no 'sitting on the fence' – we cannot simply follow the crowd, but had to instead decide whether we want to follow the way of Jesus or not.

These lessons then influenced my teaching career as I had to ask myself the same questions of identity and purpose. When presented with a choice to apply for an academically higher-achieving school or a lower-achieving one, I chose the latter. I saw that to be the more faithful option. Consequently, upon my assignment to a neighbourhood school, I was given a misbehaving, academically-weak class, which I struggled very much to teach.

However, I remembered that as a Christian teacher, my mission was to teach, impact, and influence my students positively. At the encouragement of another Christian teacher, I began to work at building relationships with my students, then understand and engage them as individuals. This meant some sacrifice, as my workdays were significantly longer than those of my colleagues in the 'good' schools. But I saw it as my mission for that year: to love my students and to help them see purpose in life. My formation in CVCF helped me to understand that.

ELIJAH ONG served in the NUS Chinese Varsity Christian Fellowship (CVCF) Exco in 2007/8 and as the chairperson in 2008/9.

Identities in Public Education

In my first year in VCF, the focus of the curriculum was 'integral mission'. It was the first time VCF had selected this as its focus. I remember significant confusion in my Contact Group (CG) as we discussed this concept in our Bible studies. It significantly impacted me, though. I was still a young Christian, having only been one for about two years. I became aware of how my understanding of the gospel was incomplete. Going through the Fellowship Teachings and the CG Bible studies helped me see that the gospel needed to interact with my studies and with real human communities around us. In other words, I had to live out the gospel and not confine it to only certain parts of my life.

The word 'integral' in integral mission can have two senses. The first is that of combining one thing together with another. The second is that of having integrity, to be consistent in both what we preach and what we do. These viewpoints about integral mission were what I took away that year.

There are several ways in which this has shaped my teaching career. While training to be a teacher in NIE, I was presented with a choice between two schools of polar academic quality. I believed that choosing the academically-poorer school would more faithfully integrate my life's values and my service to God within my career. I committed to reach out to the students who needed more support. Accordingly, I have been spending much time helping my students with various socio-emotional issues.

Qi Xiang (middle of top row) with VCF Exco 2012–2013

I also strived to inculcate in my classrooms a sense of equality between me and my students in our social interactions (without erasing professional boundaries). Some of these students have never had the experience of interacting equally with a person in authority. They tend to find themselves in a disadvantaged position, perpetually on the receiving end of discipline. I would say that my effort to relate differently to them has made a difference in their socio-emotional well-being. Suffice to say, the lessons I learnt from wrestling with integral mission made an impact not only upon my choices, but the people around me.

KWAN QI XIANG served two terms in the NUS VCF Exco, the first as Teaching and Programmes Coordinator in 2011/12, and as the chairperson in 2012/13.

LIFE STORIES

Even Christians Need to be Evangelised to

Allow me to summarise my ISCF experience in four words: "Reaching In, Reaching Out." Now allow me to explain why I chose these words and how my ISCF experience has impacted me even now as a working adult in the marketplace.

Reaching in. A brother once shared in an ISCF fellowship meeting that even Christians needed to be constantly evangelised to. This is because of the proneness of our sinful human nature to follow our ego and self-reliance. We are further tempted by Singapore's meritocratic system which reminds us of the necessity of self-help and hard work. Hence, Christians need to be constantly "evangelised" or reminded that the Christian faith is not just about salvation and the afterlife, but also about glorifying God and trusting in His sovereignty in all aspects of our lives. His sharing convicted many who were present at this meeting, including myself.

The temptation as a graduate is to do "business as usual". There is a tendency to become a Christian atheist who is carried away by the demands of one's job and is mainly concerned about the monthly paycheck. This person is also thinking primarily about financial security and improving one's standard of living. However, I am convicted of the constant need to reach in, an idea which consists in being part of a Christian community which practices daily worship and devotion to God. I find that these practices are important to constantly realign my sense of purpose with God's; they also serve as a constant reminder to live my life in a way that would bless others.

Reaching out. My time in ISCF and FES has helped me develop the conviction that we are God's ambassadors in the campus. My eyes were opened to the fact that university students are counted as the privileged. Only 5% of the Singa-

Ines (third from the left of top row) with NUS ISCF Exco 2014–2015

pore population can enter this "elite" institution. Many of these students will go on to be future leaders of society and have a huge impact in the world. As fellow Christian students in the university, we are not outsiders with limited access or opportunities to interact with our peers. Rather, we are called to reach out to these future leaders who are in this specific mission field that God has sent us into. If not us, then who?

I brought this same conviction into my workplace. I first arrived at my workplace thinking that I might be one of only a few Christians there. When God placed me in my company, I saw it both as a privilege and responsibility. This meant that I needed to be accountable to God for my conduct before my bosses and colleagues at my workplace. The seed to reach out, which was planted during my time in student ministry, led me to build sincere and close relationships with my colleagues. To date, I have grown so close to some of my colleagues that they are comfortable with sharing their personal life and even private struggles with me. It has presented me with opportunities to share my life with them— how I have gone through the ups and downs of life myself, but also how God has been my anchor through it all. Other than getting opportunities to ask about their own beliefs, I have also gotten opportunities to share what I believe in as a Christian.

Looking back, I can say that ISCF and FES have been truly formative for my spiritual life. It has taught me the importance of reaching in to evangelise myself and develop the practice of constantly realigning my purpose with that of God. My relationship with God, the biblical concepts and convictions I have gained, and the family in Christ are just some of the things that God's has gifted me with during my time as a student. These have all been treasures that I continue to hold on to even after graduation.

Therefore, I am always grateful for the opportunity to study in the university and to have made meaningful friendships there. After graduation, I have found it harder to make new friends. Hence, I encourage students to build genuine relationships with your friends in university— foster and cultivate these relationships intentionally, and maintain these friendships even after graduation as best as you can. Who knows? God might use you to reach out to your friends after graduation. So please, treasure this precious time in university!

INES CHRISTY SATYAWAN served in the NUS Indonesian Christian Fellowship (ISCF) exco for two terms: first as Missions Coordinator in 2014/15 and then as the Treasurer in 2016/17. She is now working in a multinational petrochemical corporation.

FES SINGAPORE

Highlights of Our 60 Years

1950s: BEGINNINGS

1952: Formation of Varsity Christian Fellowship (VCF) at the University of Malaya

1956: First meeting of Nanyang University Christian Fellowship (NUCF) Teachers' College Christian

1959: Fellowship (TCCF) and Singapore Polytechnic Christian Fellowship (PCF) were started

1959: FES was formed to coordinate and support the growing student ministry in Singapore

1960s: FOUNDATIONS

1960: First FES AGM

1963: Chua Wee Hian joined as the first fulltime staff worker

1965: Choong Chee Pang joined as the first fulltime staff worker for the Chinese speaking ministry

1969: Bobby Sng became the first General Secretary of FES

1970s: GROWTH

1970: FES Chinese Work Committee was set up to coordinate the Chinese-speaking ministry

1972: Ngee Ann Technical College Christian Fellowship, now called Ngee Ann Polytechnic CF, was affilliated to FES

1974: FES office was located at Bible House, Armenian Street

1977: FES hosted the IFES East-Asia Regional Conference for the first time

1979: VCF grew tremendously and had a membership of 900

1980s: MATURITY

1980: NUCF ceased to function with the merger of the universities

1981: Nanyang Technological Institute Christian Fellowship, now called NTU CF, was formed

1982: FES Student Centre was set up at the premises of St John's-St Margaret's Church

1984: FES published its first two monographs: *Decision Making* and *The Student and His Church*

1985: The Missions Education and Exposure Training (MEET) programme was launched

1990s: CONSOLIDATION AND OUTREACH

1990–1993: Pioneering work began in SIM, TP and NYP

1993: FES office moved from the Student Centre to the Graduate Centre at North Bridge Road

1994: FES Bible Conference, and the annual Inductive Bible Study training were initiated for the English section CFs

1998: First Indonesian Students' Christian Fellowship (ISCF) was started at NTU

2000s: REINVENTING AND RESTRUCTURING

2001: FES office moved to Upper Bukit Timah Road and brought together staff from all the sections of FES including GCF

2003: The Indonesian Ministry officially became part of the FES structure

2007: FES and GCF offices moved back to North Bridge Centre

2008: The first FES National Conference 'Integrated Life, Integral Mission' was organised

2009: 50th anniversary of FES; pioneering work began in a few private institutions; FES began to have greater involvement in international student ministry

2010s: PIONEERING, INTEGRATION AND ENGAGEMENT

2010: 40th anniversary of FES Chinese Work

2011: 'Vision 2020: Witness to the Whole Campus for Christ' was launched; Meals at Home programme for international students was revamped; various CFs initiated campus engagement projects

2012: James Cook University Singapore CF became affiliated to FES

2013: FES National Student Council was formed

2014–2017: *Engaging the Campus* and *Why Study?* were published and widely used by IFES for initiatives on engaging the university

2015: An integrated FES financial and administrative system was implemented

2017: Dual role of FES General Secretary and GCF Graduate Secretary, sparked initiatives on young graduates' ministry

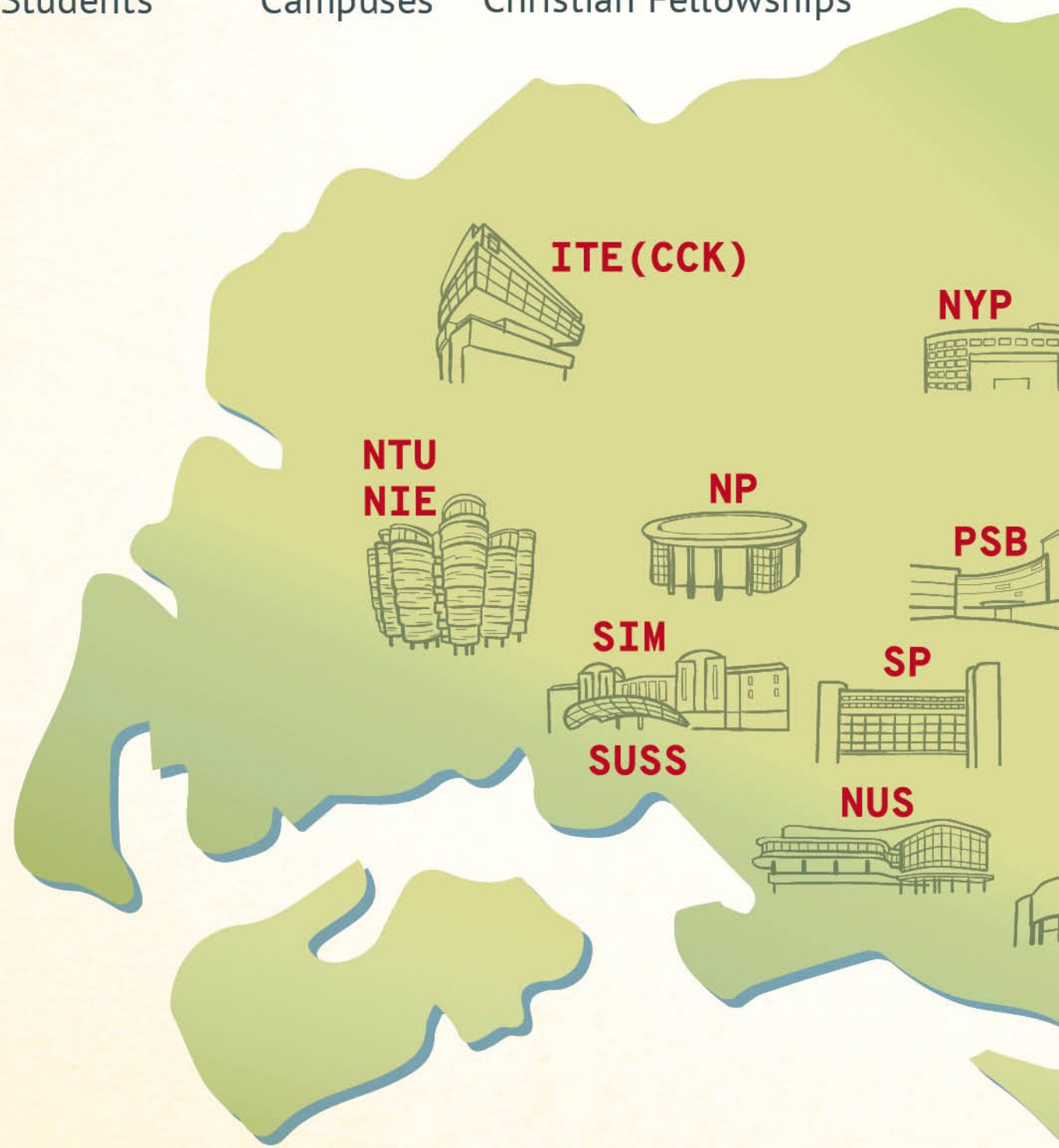
The CFs of FES Singapore

Currently we are serving

1148
Students

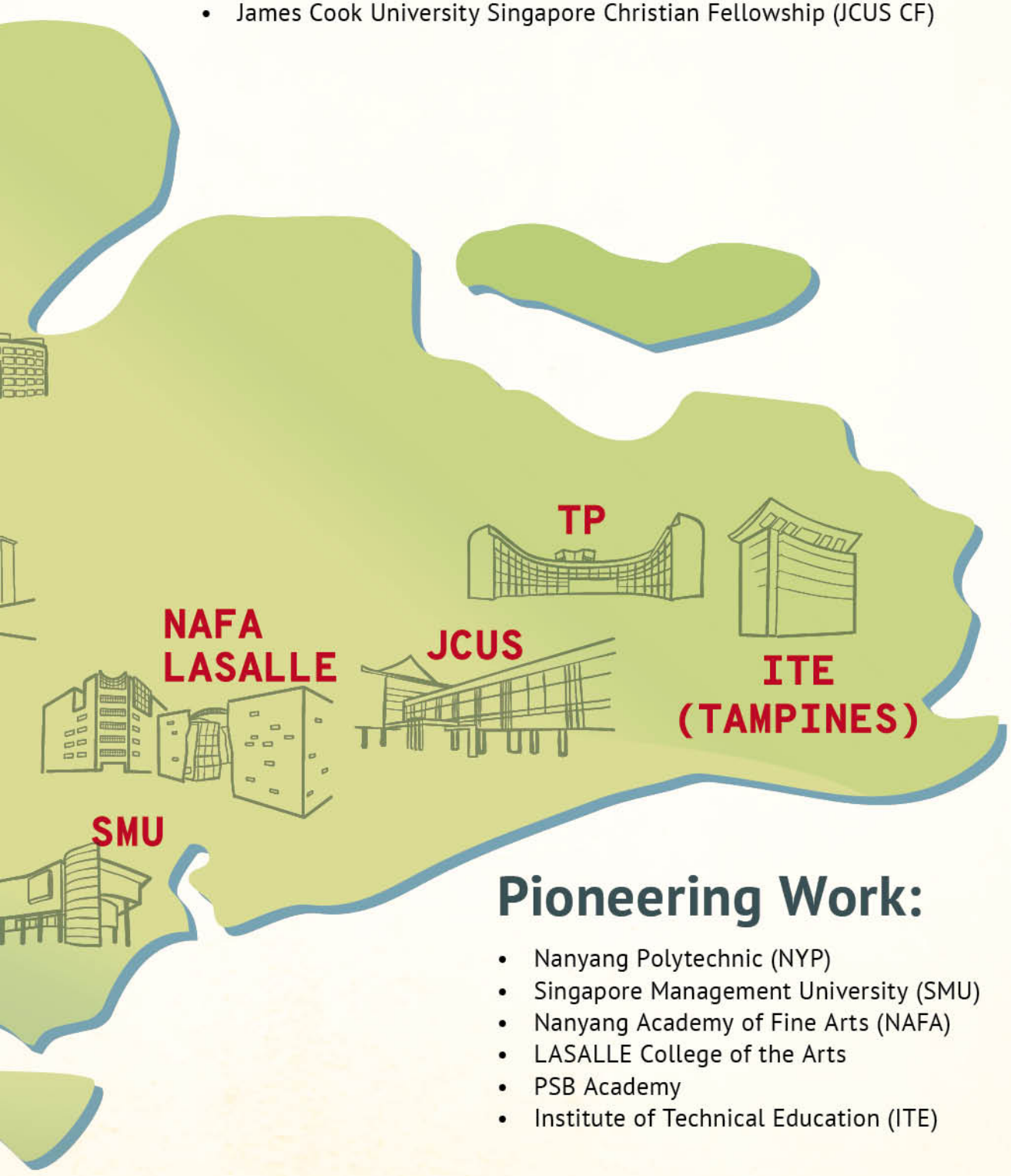
17
Campuses

23
Christian Fellowships



FES Affiliates:

- Varsity Christian Fellowship, National University of Singapore (VCF)
- Polytechnic Christian Fellowship, Singapore Polytechnic (PCF)
- Ngee Ann Polytechnic Christian Fellowship (NPCF)
- Nanyang Technological University Christian Fellowship (NTU-CF) including National Institute of Education Christian Fellowship (NIE-CF)
- Singapore Institute of Management Students' Christian Fellowship (SIM SCF)
- Temasek Polytechnic Students' Christian Fellowship (TP-SCF)
- James Cook University Singapore Christian Fellowship (JCUS CF)



Pioneering Work:

- Nanyang Polytechnic (NYP)
- Singapore Management University (SMU)
- Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts (NAFA)
- LASALLE College of the Arts
- PSB Academy
- Institute of Technical Education (ITE)

STUDENT TESTIMONIES

National University of Singapore

VCF was firmly established in October 1952 with a membership of 20 and a committee of five. It has now grown to encompass students from faculties, halls, and residences all over NUS. As NUS itself expands, so the organisation of VCF becomes more diverse. In recent years, VCF has averaged contact with 500 students each year with a membership of 200. This is spread across nine faculty CFs, six hall CFs, and three residence CFs.

Although CVCF is now recognised by NUS as part of VCF, the first CVCF Executive Committee was formed as the Singapore University Christian Fellowship (SUCF) back in 1967. It had to temporarily re-register itself as Joint Campus CF when Nanyang University (NU) students were brought in before eventually merging as NUS in 1980. CVCF today has a regular membership of 25 students.

The ISCF is also recognised by NUS as part of VCF and was officially started in 2000, soon after NTU ISCF, in response to the increasing number of Indonesian students in the tertiary institutes in Singapore. The fellowship today has a regular membership of 40 students.

NUS Varsity Christian Fellowship (NUS VCF)

To be a Christian means to become a new creation in Christ and to continually live out a transformed life, with love towards God and others. To be a Christian student, I believe, calls for the same, in the specific context of the campus. The challenge, as Vinoth Ramachandra writes in *Engaging the Campus*, is "to explore what the lordship of Christ actually means in the different disciplines… to speak Christianly into issues that occupy university life." Herein lies the challenge to stand awake, to watch, to pray, and to respond in love.

VCF has challenged me to be discontented with a comfortable faith, to seek to understand, care, and love beyond myself. Through social engagement workshops, I came to share in God's heart for the marginalised in society. Through the FES missions programme, MORPH, I learnt that the mission of God was not limited to cross-cultural evangelism and short-term trips but involves serving society and caring for creation. VCF has challenged me to think deeply and equipped me to serve thoughtfully in my local church.

TRICIA TEE
Social Work, Year 4

NUS Chinese Varsity Christian Fellowship (NUS CVCF)

Farewell for graduating students

When I first entered university, I did not want to join any Christian fellowship. I was already attending the young adults' fellowship in my church and wanted to use my time in school for more interesting endeavours. However, I was convinced to attend CVCF's orientation camp at the very least.

There I met a group of brothers and sisters who truly loved God more than themselves. They were not simply trying to be a "good Christian student", but they passionately strived after God's heart. I saw them read and take the Word seriously, care and pray for each other, and desire to proclaim the gospel. All this was often done by sacrificing their precious time that could have been spent polishing assignments or going out to have fun. In a time when the University is seen as a necessary ticket to employability, it is strange yet inspiring to see students devoting themselves not towards the grasping of said ticket, but in service to God and their brothers and sisters in Christ.

ISAAC LAU FEI HENG
Computer Science, Year 4

NUS Indonesian Students' Christian Fellowship (NUS ISCF)

Welcome Tea 2019

It is not easy to be a Christian student today. It is challenging to remain faithful while others are busy studying and thinking how to graduate early and earn money quickly. Students are expected to excel in everything and ignore everything else which would distract from success and independence.

I feel this is amplified as an Indonesian student. While I am blessed with the privilege of studying overseas, it comes with the parental expectation of studying hard to get a well-paying job. So, I feel blessed to be in NUS ISCF where students are challenged to remain faithful despite the workload and parental expectations. We are committed to learn as a community, but we also serve each other in this fellowship. It is a life-changing experience that is priceless.

I am especially thankful for the seniors who intentionally invite the Indonesian students to the fellowship. It is a community where love can be shown to others and a place for students to encounter Christ. The emphasis is upon the spirit of community as one body of Christ and I want this spirit to be passed down through the generation of students to come.

NATALIA TANTONO
Nursing, Year 3

STUDENT TESTIMONIES

Nanyang Technological University

The Nanyang University Christian Fellowship (NUCF) was formed in 1957 due more to the development of unforeseen circumstances than deliberate planning. An island wide curfew was imposed during one of the worst riots in the history of Singapore in 1956 which forced students and staff to remain within the Yunnan campus over the weekend. Christian students and staff decided to hold their own Sunday worship and fellowship, thus laying the foundation for the NUCF.

The merger of NU and the University of Singapore (SU) in 1980 led to the closure of NUCF although NUG-CF continued as a registered society. However, this was quickly followed by the formation of the Nanyang Technical Institute CF (NTICF) in 1982 led by Mr Liu Fook Thim with an Exco of 7 members. NTICF had 170 members by the time NTI and the Institute of Education (IE) were merged to become NTU, leading NTICF to be renamed as NTU CF in 1991.

The first FES Indonesian Student Christian Fellowship (ISCF) started in NTU in 1998 in response to the increasing number of Indonesian students studying in the tertiary institutes in Singapore. Today, NTU-CF serves at least 100 committed members across the English, Chinese, and Indonesian ministry sections.

NTU English Christian Fellowship (NTU ECF)

I chose to be a student of mathematics to learn more about God and to learn how He chose to order and reveal the world to us in nature. I was greatly inspired by Euclid saying that "the laws of nature are but the mathematical thoughts of God".

Yet after four semesters of study, it has been a struggle to see any beauty in mathematics. It is a difficult subject and the temptation to study to score for an examination gets real when the stressful weeks creep in. In those weeks, this verse from Jeremiah 29:13, "You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart" always gives me hope. I cling to the hope that if I seek God wholeheartedly in what I study, I will come to see and experience joy in my studies, as God will reveal himself.

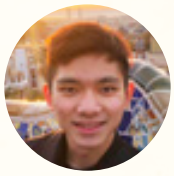
NTU CF has given me the space to vocalise such thoughts, ideas, and struggles of being a Christian student. It is a space where I can fellowship with students like myself, bumbling around the university while trying to hear and discern God's still and small voice in every corner.

REBEKAH GOH XIN YUE
Mathematical Sciences, Year 3

NTU Chinese Christian Fellowship (NTU CCF)

Being a Christian today is about living a life that glorifies God and edifies people around us. That is difficult as I find myself often in non-Christian communities which always challenge my faith. As a foreigner without as many Christian communities or close friends in church as the Singaporeans do, every time my faith was challenged, CF would always be my recharging station which helps me stay firm to my convictions and build my relationship with God.

Something impressive that I have learnt from my CF seniors is the integral role of a Christian student. That means that I am not only a student focused primarily on my studies but also a Christian who brings faith, studies, and school communities together. This has deeply influenced my life and understanding in my three years of university thus far and I hope to pass this lesson down to the generation of students who come through the CF.



KEVIN LOW YI LIANG
Civil engineering, Year 4

NTU CCF Welcome Tea 2019

Project Homeworks

NTU Indonesian Students' Christian Fellowship (NTU ISCF)

Being a Christian student entails the mission to live out the Gospel in the academic world while maintaining a strong fellowship with fellow believers. We are called to be distinct and to challenge cultures contradictory to Scripture, but at the same time be always sensitive to others so as to live peacefully together.

In my Christian Fellowship, we remind each other that we are salt and light wherever God has placed us. On the other hand, loneliness is a prominent sentiment which I have observed among the students of Singapore. We, including myself, often do not care if our schoolmates are around or not. But it is extraordinarily difficult to keep the balance in the CF today. When we focus too much on building strong bonds within the fellowship, we realise our reduced impact upon the campus. But when we put more weight on the sharing of the Gospel to others, people forget the members and the community crumbles as well.

Despite this difficulty, including the fact that the CF is run by students who are morally and cognitively limited, CF still remains as a community committed to follow God's Word as their guiding light.

WILLIAM NATHANAEL
Materials Engineering, Year 2

STUDENT TESTIMONIES

Singapore Institute of Management

The Student Christian Fellowship (SIM SCF) was first officially recognised by the school authority in 1993. In those pioneering years, the CF devoted most of their time and efforts in building the Fellowship but soon began to focus on reaching out to their peers and engaging the school. The Executive Committee maintained good relations with the Student Union (SU) and would regularly participate in the various activities organised by the SU, such as volunteering themselves as group leaders for the one-day orientation programme for new students, which afforded them a good platform to interact with freshmen.

The CF of 40 regular students today continue to meet in fellowship meetings, small groups, and outreach activities. Recently, efforts have been made by SIM students to continue the pioneering spirit of FES by pioneering a new group in their neighbouring campus of SUSS.

SIM Students' Christian Fellowship (SIM SCF)

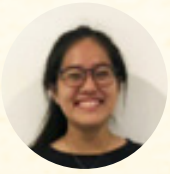
School is more than a place to pursue my degree. I see school as a mission field. It is where my eyes have been opened to the lost and the broken.

Being a Christian student means being salt and light everywhere I go: setting a good example as a representative of Christ, being intentional in building relationships with those around me, and displaying His love to those who have yet to see and experience it. Wanting to be salt and light involves a lot. It means stepping out of my comfort zone, especially for a reserved and socially awkward person like me, to interact with others.

As difficult as it sounds, having a fellowship of brothers and sisters in Christ has helped me to walk this journey more assuredly. CF feels like a haven where I can be vulnerable and be met with love. But it is a platform for growth as well. CF is also a place which reminds me that weakness is okay because it is in our weakness that we see God's strength, and that the power of the Holy Spirit is never defined by our limitations.

SIM ECF camp

Thank God for CF :')



FRIONNE HENG
Psychology, Year 2

International Friendship Day

Playing games at SIM ECF camp

SIM CCF recent outing with some ECFers

Singapore University of Social Sciences Christian Fellowship (SUSS CF)

Being a Christian student today means to study subjects that are hopefully applicable in the modern context, while at the same time living out Christ-like values within one's community. It requires us to learn how to navigate this world that God has placed us in as transient pilgrims who are in but not of this world.

One of the challenges I face as a Christian student is being a good testimony for Christ. I am always tempted to follow the ways of the world and live for myself. It is the CF which helps ground me in God's Word through Bible studies and roots me in a community of believers where we can edify, build, and sharpen one another. Essentially, CF has challenged me to serve God and live for Him rather than myself.

GLEN ABRAHAM LIANG YUXUAN
Translation and Interpretation, Year 2

STUDENT TESTIMONIES

James Cook University Singapore

JCUS-CF was started in 2011 in their Upper Thompson campus by a student named Samuel Ng. Samuel first enrolled in NTU Engineering but soon decided to switch his discipline to Psychology and found JCU a fitting choice. He had joined NTU CF before and soon discovered that there was no similar CF to be found in JCU. Together with the help of FES, he then approached the school administrator to discuss setting up a CF in JCU. Unexpectedly, the school administrator shared that she had been praying for a Christian CCA in the school for quite some time! In this case, both the desire of the students and the school administration were met, no doubt brought together by the hand of the Lord. The CF formed and started its first corporate meeting with about 10 regular undergraduate and postgraduate Psychology, IT, and Business students.

The school has since moved to Sims Drive. The CF has seen a regular attendance of 20 students who now meet in both large and small group settings. Recently, after two years of work and prayer, JCUS CF has been officially recognised as a registered society under the Registrar of Societies (ROS) in June 2019.

JCUS Christian Fellowship (JCUS CF)

Being a Christian student today comes with a lot of inner struggles. In this current generation, conversations and opinions tend to be quickly polarised as either far left or right. In this context, a Christian student is one who can be little carriers of hope in which we can bring Christ into the different aspects and phases of life. I see each one of us being a spark of life in our different environments and contexts, people who can provide an alternative view to challenge the dominant perspectives on life's common issues.

Our bonding day on 25 April during our study break

CF provides such a platform for discussing topics about life and our growth in Christ. It is a community which has challenged me to see and think differently because of the varied lenses and perspectives which we bring from our denominational identities, lifestyles, and upbringings.

Serving in CF has also helped me to sharpen my perspective on ministry. It has given me a glimpse of how it is possible that Christians in Singapore (and all around the world if given the chance) can come together and worship God as one body in Christ despite our differences.

LEAL TAN
Psychological Science, Year 1

STUDENT TESTIMONIES

Polytechnic

Temasek Polytechnic (TP) was established in 1990. In the same year, FES staffworkers from both the English Section and Chinese Work quickly moved to pioneer a student ministry there, starting with the Stirling Campus. The work started off with only four students who were willing to commit to this pioneering work. By the end of the year, however, there were almost 15 students in the CF who organised and participated in fellowship meetings, lunch-time prayers, and camps. Student work continues in TP today with 12 regular students despite the unwillingness of the school to officially recognise the group after so many years.

Ngee Ann first started as a Technical College in 1968. The Christian Fellowship was soon officially recognised by the school in 1971 and held its inaugural meeting on 24 November 1971. The CF affiliated itself to FES the following year and elected its first ever Executive Committee. Following the renaming of the school, the CF then became Ngee Ann Polytechnic Christian Fellowship (NPCF) in 1982. The CF was well-regarded in those days and was consistently entrusted with the task of hosting the Freshmen Orientation Conventions for the campus.

The roots of the Singapore Polytechnic Christian Fellowship (SPCF) began as PCF in 1959. Back then, PCF formed with the aims to challenge and motivate a deeper sense of fellowship and witness among the students. It started with a size of 20 students and once numbered 216 in 1975. The fellowship went through numerous organisational issues as the campus itself split until finally establishing itself in its current Dover Road campus since 1978.

Polytechnic student ministry remains strong and vibrant today particularly after much effort put into combined activities such as trainings and camps, even across ministry sections. It has allowed students from the different polytechnics to share their mutual struggles and encouragement and to find affinity in the larger purpose of student work. Taken altogether, our polytechnic ministries now minister to 100 students, including continued pioneering efforts in Nanyang and Republic Polytechnic.

TP Students' Christian Fellowship (TP SCF)

To be a Christian student today can range from having to struggle with inaccurate views and offensive statements from peers, to being a blessing to the people you meet in school and living through every day knowing you are part of a bigger plan.

I am from a school where religious organisations are not allowed. We cannot officially book rooms for our meetings and we cannot publicise our activities and events on campus. It is therefore not conducive to meet in school, and when we do have meetings, they can easily get disrupted. Then again, because the group is small, we are mobile and the bond between us is strong.

Despite these challenges against the CF, I always look forward to deeper levels of conversation and understanding of each other and the faith in the CF each week. Each session reminds me to be comforted by the fact that God is looking out for me and that there will always be close and loving friends whom I can count on to support each other.

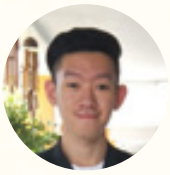
SAMUEL LAU EE BIN
Environmental Design, Year 2

TP Chinese Christian Fellowship (TP CCF)

I feel that being a Christian student is a blessing from God. In my school, religious groups are not recognised. It is a weekly challenge for us to find a place to meet in school and have CF. At times, it feels dangerous to have CF in school. Yet I feel that it is God's grace for providing a place for us to conduct CF. We only need to have faith in God that He will provide for us and protect us.

Being a Christian student also means that I will face challenges in living as a testimony that glorifies God. For example, when classes take the same tests but on different days, many of my classmates would ask friends from other classes for the questions to score well. Would I do the same as a Christian?

Going to CF every week reminds me to seek God and rely upon Him whenever I am pulled away by busyness in school. Despite the busyness, stress, and frustrations from my desire to do well in my studies as everyone else, participating in CF has directed me to look to Him for guidance and to cast my worries upon Him.



CHEONG JUN WEI
Business Process & Systems Engineering, Year 3

SP Christian Fellowship (SP CF)

Here is a quote I heard before but do not remember from whom or where from: "Don't be a student that happens to be a Christian. Be a Christian that happens to be student." To some, Christianity feels like a trap and a restriction of one's freedom. But to me, Christ is freedom.

To me, being a Christian student is to understand where God stands in your life. With so many responsibilities at this age, it can be diffi-

cult to manage and prioritise what is important. It is easy to be overwhelmed by uncertainty and the need to excel in school.

When I was new to CF, my seniors showed me what a real community looked like. They did not just show it with words, but with actions and a genuine care for the people they were serving. Even as they got busy with heavy workloads, they always took the time to help and advise us. I am amazed and touched by their willingness to serve, and this is something I would like to pass down as the spirit of CF – a genuine heart to serve the people around you.

CHAN KENG MEI AGAPE
Information Technology, Year 2

NP Christian Fellowship (NP CF)

Being a Christian student and taking my faith seriously is tough! The temptations that Christian students face are endless. It might be peer pressure to put studies before God, or to be persecuted just for being a Christian. At many times, the voices of the world can be so loud that it is easier just to give in to them. Yet I know that I cannot live serving both the gods that govern the world and the God who governs heaven at the same time. Either I love the God of heaven, or I love the gods of the world. This is the tension that I constantly face. In this sense, the call to be a Christian is a radical one. I have been called to serve God alone and wholeheartedly.

I think that the most important thing in my walk with God thus far has been to embrace this struggle. Because to struggle is to care. In my struggles I have become like a broken vessel and that is the only way in which the light can enter.

EZEKIEL WONG
Engineering Science, Year 2

To me, being a Christian student is about being salt and light among the secular community in school. CF has helped me to view living as a Christian holistically, and to explore different ways to engage this community and not simply stick to or rely upon traditions. In so doing, I am amazed by how CFers have shown their dedication by not letting their studies get in the way of putting God first. It can be tough to juggle attending CF activities while staying on top of assignments, but by the grace of God many still try their best and attend CF to learn more about the Word.

In all this, I must say that my CF seniors have been tremendous support. They have taken the initiative and time to interact and to know new members, sowing seeds in their lives and nurturing them. They have also taught me the importance of giving back to the community. I want to carry on this legacy that our seniors have left for us and do my best to pay it forward to the next batch of CF juniors.

NATALIE LIEW
Business Information Technology, Year 2

STUDENT TESTIMONIES

NAFA-Lasalle

The way SKETCH (ISCF at NAFA/LASALLE) began is a beautiful reflection of student initiative. One day, an NUS ISCF student invited three of his friends from NAFA and LASALLE to meet with two FES staffworkers to learn more about FES and to be challenged to start a student ministry on their campus. These three students responded quickly by taking the initiative to plan for the first gathering on campus. On 25 September 2012, eight students attended this inaugural fellowship meeting. They named the ministry SKETCH, denoting the first step in designing, to remind themselves of the purpose that they set at the beginning of the ministry, which is to pursue Christlikeness, the true image of God (Rom. 8:29).

Joanna Christie (LASALLE 2014) in PISTOS, November 2012

NAFA-Lasalle Indonesian Student's Christian Fellowship (SKETCH ISCF)

SKETCH Welcome Tea 2019

Being a Christian student means different things for different people. Although we all try to love, we have our own struggles, gifts, and callings. While we are not always loving and doing what we are called to do, we keep on learning and growing. When we first receive, then we are able to give. For we love as God first loved us.

I learnt from Selma, a senior in SKETCH, of the importance to attend to the needs of the members and to care for them individually. I often saw her asking how the SKETCH members were, inviting them to hang out together, and welcoming others into the fellowship. It was Selma who made me feel welcomed, accepted, and cared for. Now that I get to serve in the fellowship, I also want to care for other members in a similar way which I have experienced and show to them that there is indeed a community that welcomes them and is there for them.

EUGENIA PRISCA TANIA
Music, Year 2

LISTENING TO OUR STUDENT LEADERS

Current Perceptions of School, CF, and the Bible

As part of the year of fallow and listening, a group of FES staffworkers led focus groups with student leaders in August 2019 to learn more about the current state of student ministry. This is part of a larger year-long listening exercise which started in March 2019 and is to help direct us to the needs of ministry ahead. We share here only some of our interesting preliminary findings of a small but diverse sample size, represented by most of our ministries across campuses and sections.

Perception of School

We asked the leaders to complete this sentence: To me, school is like...

And we received a variety of views, ranging from the more positive-sounding metaphors like "mission field" and "bridge to life" to neutral ones like "crossroads" to negative ones like "rollercoaster" and "prison".

Life Ambitions

We asked the leaders to share their life ambitions and how school and CF relate to their ambitions.

We generally found that their Christian faith and CF life has given them the impetus to serve and glorify God. But there is difficulty in explaining how their time in school or their studies help them to achieve this Christian ambition.

Help in Times of Need

We gave students a list of possible people or places they might turn to in times of struggle.

The surprising top and immediate choice for many of the students was to be alone, followed by being with friends, and then asking for help in church.

Perception of Classmates

We asked the leaders to complete this sentence: I would describe my classmates as...

Again a wide-ranging description of classmates from "nice people" to "strangers" to "social climbers" and "backstabbers".

Perception of CF

We asked the leaders to complete this sentence: My CF community is like...

Many students associated CF with metaphors like "home", "family", "shelter" and "a safe place".

Bringing Friends to CF

We asked if CFers have brought or invited their friends to CF before.

Surprisingly, most of the students have not done so because CF is unsuitable for new or young Christians, or out of fear of being mocked by their friends.

Have You Read Me?

We wanted to find out how much of the Bible our students have read. They filled in a graph indicating whether they had fully read, partially read, or not read each book of the Bible.

Top 5 fully and partially read books:

1. Genesis
2. Exodus
3. Psalms
4. Ruth
5. Matthew

Top 5 fully read books:

1. Genesis
2. Exodus
3. Ruth
4. Joshua
5. Judges/Matthew

AFTERWORD

A Broken Organisation of Broken People for a Broken World

Daniel Bourdanné served as the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students' (IFES) General Secretary since 2007. He stepped down as the GS at the IFES World Assembly 2019, which took place in South Africa from 3 to 11 July 2019. As the outgoing GS, Daniel delivered this final address and exhortation for the future of student work at the closing session of the World Assembly.

Many of us were moved from the inspiring and challenging stories that we have heard all week of student work from all around the world. These stories have the potential to spur us onward in sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ – to move forward as messengers of hope.

After this assembly, we return to our broken world. For some of us, going back home is akin to going back to the 'valley of dry bones' described in the book of Ezekiel. We see the political, economic, and military might of our political leaders displayed. There are reasons to be scared because the world we live in today is full of uncertainty.

As IFES undergoes a new phase of leadership transition, our hearts may also be full of fear. There is fear of the unknown and fear for the future of IFES. Perhaps we are terrified of facing our own hearts that have known hurt, and we do not want to add more to it. Oftentimes, the biggest fear we have is not fearing our oppressor, but fearing our own heart.

We will certainly face big challenges in our ministries. In North America now, accessing campuses have become a real challenge. There is no longer freedom to have Bible studies on campuses. In other places, we are not allowed to share the good news of Jesus. There is the risk of imprisonment, even death. When I was a staffworker ministering at one point in a part of a country, there were occasions where doing ministry meant having the readiness to die.

We leave this assembly and return to face different challenges. Here is the good news for us all as God sends us back to our places: Jesus does not send us out to face our fears, nor does He send us out to face our challenges. He sends us to meet Him. Jesus is the only one who is able to overcome our fears. He is the only one that provides security to IFES – not our Constitution, not our doctrinal basis, not our ethos, and not our networks. He is the one who will provide the security for our ministry to go forward.

Jesus told his disciples that as the Father has sent him, so he is sending them with the message of hope (John 20:21). Jesus' message to His disciples still applies to us today. His call to His disciples and to us to not be afraid and to depend on the Father's promises is echoed throughout Scripture; the Bible is full of promises encouraging us not to be afraid.

In Exodus 15:16 (NIV), Moses and the Israelites sang, 'Terror and dread will fall on [Canaan]. By the power of your arm, they will be as still as a stone – until your people pass by, oh Lord, until the people you bought pass by.' The confidence of the Israelites in the Lord is a sign to us. It is as if God is telling IFES: 'Do not be afraid, for I have redeemed you, I have called you by your name. You are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you and when you go through the rivers, they will not overwhelm you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be scarred. The flames will not set you ablaze.'

The gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke recorded the time Jesus calmed a storm. One day Jesus said to his disciples 'Let us cross to the other side of the lake.' So, they got into a boat and set out. As they sailed, Jesus fell asleep. Then, a squall came down upon the lake so that the boat was swamped by the waves. The disciples were in great danger, and they went and woke Jesus saying, 'Master! Master! We are perishing!' Then Jesus got up and rebuked the wind and the raging waters, which immediately subsided.

It is interesting to observe that this situation preluded a more challenging encounter on the other side of the lake. There, Jesus encountered a demon-possessed person. It was a strong spiritual battle.

Brothers and sisters, likewise, every transition in the Christian world is a spiritual battle. If we miss this point, we fail in not understanding it clearly. Like the disciples, we get lost in our human and rational logic. As children of the Enlightenment, our intellect often becomes an idol, thus causing us to miss God's reality.

We need to trust Jesus and not be afraid. Jesus rebuked the wind. Is it rational for someone to rebuke the wind? Is it not foolish? But this is exactly what Jesus did. He was preparing the disciples for a tougher experience on the other side of the lake. After they crossed the lake, they faced a man possessed with demons but Jesus casted the demons out.

As we go back to our respective places and individual contexts, I would like to take this opportunity to remind us of this reality. We had a fantastic time here at the World Assembly. Perhaps it can be compared to Jesus calming the storm: rebuking the wind victoriously. That first victory has a purpose. It helps us to cross the distance, in preparation for the demons and strongmen we face on the other side.

However, do not just look at the strongmen lurking without! They may be within. The strongman may be our selfishness, our lack of obedience to God. He may be our fear of the future. He may be our desire to control everything, just like Adam who wanted to be like God and have absolute control, as recounted in Genesis 3.

The Lord is inviting us to be ready because demons and strongmen are waiting outside. As we go out, we need to be ready to face them. Yet, do not look too far away. Look also into our hearts. What things are our hearts full of? Are we car-

rying holiness in our hearts? It is important for us to be aware of this.

I would like to end by suggesting that God is not sending strong people nor a strong organization into the world. Instead, we are a broken people. IFES, an organisation spread across 170 countries, is also a broken organisation. God is not sending well-positioned people, but broken people and a broken organisation to serve in a broken world.

We should remember that the work of salvation is carried out through vulnerability. God's vulnerability. God sent Himself. He offered Himself to vulnerability, to die on the cross. We cannot carry the message of God from a position of strength, power, or control. If we have to be messengers of God's hope, we need to start from a posture of vulnerability. We go out as vulnerable people and in fact, this helps us to better understand our broken world.

If we do not go through brokenness and vulnerability ourselves, it will be difficult to minister to a broken world because we cannot understand them. This is why incarnation is a very strong theological posture – the Son of God came and lived among us. He did it and made himself vulnerable in order to understand us.

So, we are going into the world from a position of vulnerability. We should not play power games. In fact, stop doing so! We should be willing to be vulnerable, so that we can understand our mission to vulnerable people. This is the embodiment of the principle of vulnerability revealed and demonstrated by Jesus through his life.

IFES is a broken and vulnerable movement, driven by ordinary students, guided by ordinary staff workers. IFES has never been a successful financial organisation. We should maintain that level of vulnerability, because it should be our identity. Brothers and sisters, if we start playing power games, that will be the end of IFES.

We can easily be destroyed by our success. Perhaps God is cautioning us against taking glory for ourselves over what we see as success. When I travel and mention the name of IFES, people are in admiration and become excited, and it is easy to bask in that glory.

Brothers and sisters, if we do not take the posture of vulnerability, unity among us is impossible. Let us leave this place not as conquerors parading our power. Instead, let us leave this place, invited by Christ to gradually or even painfully develop the courage to be weak. Yes, the courage not only to be weak, but to be ready even to die at the hands of our opponents, who rule the world with their muscles, with military and economic power, or with the power of technology.

We are invited to oppose them with 'weakness'. And that is patience. That is truth. That is love. That is service. That is modesty. That is respect. We are encouraged to return home not with a triumphalist gospel, the likes broadcasted by super apostles, super spirituals, super theologians, or super pastors.

We are invited to return to our places, to preach the good news of Jesus through our attitude of brokenness. We are invited to return, having the same assurance that the Lord gave to the Apostle Paul: 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' (2 Cor. 12:9, NIV).

Vulnerable people, broken people, broken organization; go and serve the broken world! Go in peace in the Lord, in this mission of vulnerability!

DANIEL BOURDANNE
IFES General Secretary
(2007–2019)

Perspective 1983

Perspective 1990

Perspective began in 1982 as a simple single-sheet newsletter. It has since acquired readers and contributors from all over Singapore and the world, and gone through numerous changes in design and style. Its purpose, however, has remained the same: to update readers on the FES ministry and offer Christian perspectives on student life and witness. Yet there has been a discernible shift in the reading and learning habits of students today. It has resulted in the need for more versatility in our communication channels in order to meet readers where they are. We wish to continue catering to our ever-growing and diverse readership, from the typewritten era of the 1950s to the Internet natives of today. As such, the FES communications team has the intention to move *Perspective* into the exploration of mixed media, utilizing print, videos, and social media to minister to students. The team also intends to shift *Impetus,* once the joint publication of FES-GCF, to become the voice to and for our graduates in print and digital format. If you wish to learn more about the variety of ways which you can be involved in FES student ministry, pick one of the following:

Perspective 2010

Perspective 2018

Email us at *connect@fellowship.sg*

Follow us on **Instagram** (*@fesfellowship*) to see what the CFs are up to

Follow us on **Facebook** (*@fesfellowship*) for events and announcements

And look forward to a more vibrant presence on *https://fellowship.sg* soon!

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