Annual Review 2018

Spurring Students to Reach Out to and Serve the Other
In recent years I have been observing that as our students are studying, relating to and for some, living within their campus community, they are increasingly faced with two pressing questions.

First, how do our students relate with others in a world of growing, polarising differences? How do we engage those who are unlike us, in religious, cultural, and socio-political views? In addition to that, how do we live out the Good News among the many international students who are studying here, who hail from over one hundred foreign nations, and whose values and cultures are so diverse?

The second question is the consequence of a deeper look at the first. In real life, people break our trust. Both we and those different from us (referred to as “the Other” from here onwards) may often be oppressive, dishonest, and deceptive. As a result, the campus community creates unjust and unforgiving boundaries between the majority and minority, between “the powerful” and “the powerless”. Because of convenience and comfort, the presence and interests of the Other are often ignored or even obliterated. So, the question for us is how our students can continue living and serving together in a world where the Other is disregarded.

The above two questions (see page 5 for further points to ponder) were the key discussion points at our FES Staff Conference held from 9–12 April in Johor Bahru this year. Given the understanding of the prevalence of international students on Singapore campuses, the staff team deliberated on how FES could embrace that reality and strategise our ministry more effectively. Apart from that, we also discussed ways of reshaping our campus ministry structure among the English, Chinese, and Indonesian-speaking students.

Several key principles and action items we agreed to embark upon are as follows:

1. FES is called to provide hospitality to our neighbours, especially to the Other and the international students among us.

2. FES acknowledges that the presence of international students is “a new normal” on our campuses today, and as such, requires a perpetual and systemic effort to reach out and serve them.
3. FES will form a cross-ministry section, the International Student Ministry (ISM) task force, to further advance ISM related matters across campuses and ministry sections.

4. FES gives space to each staff from different ministry sections to discuss with their respective Christian Fellowship (CF) groups and carry out necessary action items relevant to each CF.

5. FES will communicate and consult the above with our student leaders, graduates/alumni, respective working committees and the FES Council/Board.

In the same spirit, the contents of this year’s FES Annual Review is along this line as well. You will read about some initiatives our students made to serve international students through hospitality, food, as well as studying the Word together. Through Project Yum-Cha and Project HomeWorks, our students served the less privileged among them. We also report on a recent interesting and challenging outreach effort among the ITE students. Lastly, this year some students served the Other in Nepal, northern Thailand, and Taiwan.

Though this Annual Review will only give you a glimpse of FES in 2018, we hope that by reading it, you will sail this boat together with us as we uphold our relentless commitment to the Good News of Jesus Christ. At the same time, we need to wield our zealous pursuit of ingenuity and aptness to ensure our work, among students, remains relevant and effective. Kindly pray with us as we continue this journey of discernment and partnership with our God who indeed loves and cares for the Other among us.

Lisman Komaladi
General Secretary
Beyond Hospitality, Cultivating Conviviality

Christian hospitality towards the Other should go beyond friendliness or congeniality, like merely inviting them over for dinner, providing free coffee, or hosting them. Instead, it should be a hospitality that sees their struggle for justice as part and parcel of welcoming the stranger. Letty Russel coins the term “just hospitality”, which she describes succinctly as follows:

Just hospitality is the practice of God’s welcome by reaching out across difference to participate in God’s actions bringing justice and healing in our world of crisis and our fear of the ones we call “other.” Such hospitality is not the answer to difference, but it is a challenge to us, pointing us to a future that God intends where riotous difference is welcomed.¹

Consequently, as we welcome the differences, Miroslav Volf proposes the practice of “double vision,” in which we must learn to see “from here” (from our perspectives) and “from there” (from the perspective of others). In doing so, we step outside ourselves, move into the world of the Other, and then eventually take the Other into our own world.² Practicing the above process will eventually steer a genuine interest in living together with and serving the Other, who thus will remain present in our life.

Lastly, with just hospitality and double vision as the pretext, we can start living out the idea of conviviality. In 1985, using the German word Konvivenz, a German missiologist, Theo Sundermeir developed the concept of conviviality and defines it as “a community of learning, mutual support, and celebration.”³ It does not mean we ignore the differences, but on the contrary conviviality facilitates practices by which differences are made commonplace without a pretentious need to recognise or integrate them. In other words, in a convivial community, all residents must learn how to live together, not negating or subjugating differences, but normalising them.

Some practical expressions our students can do in cultivating conviviality in their campus community are crossing boundaries, stoking curiosity, and cultivating conversation between them and the Other.

FES 2018 in Numbers

461
Number of new students who joined our CFs

$1.7M
Funds to be raised annually

1148
Number of students we are serving

17
Number of tertiary institutes with FES-affiliated ministries

257
Number of regular donors including local churches

PROFILE OF CONTRIBUTORS
Graduates
Students
Local churches

24%
Graduates

71%
Local churches
Percentage of international students we are serving: 43%

Number of graduates sent to the marketplace: 223

Number of students we are serving: 43%

Number of tertiary institutes with FES-affiliated ministries: 17

Number of graduates sent to the marketplace: 223

Percentage of non-Christians attending our CF events regularly: 4%

Contact/small groups that meet regularly: 115

Percentage of international students we are serving: 43%

Number of regular donors including local churches: 251

Number of students we are serving: 43%

Number of staff in FES: 28

Number of new students who joined our CFs: 461

Number of students we are serving: 43%

Tributors:

- Graduates: 5%
- Students: 28
- Local churches: 5%
- Staff: 4%
Stop, Ponder, Align, Call, S.P.C.A. retreat for young polytechnic graduates (March)

Worship session at NUS ISCF camp ‘Chasing Rainbows’ (May)

Morning devotions at NUS VCF Freshmen Orientation Camp (July)

Engaging with youths at a youth centre during the combined university Chinese CF mission trip to northern Thailand (June)
To Affinity and Beyond, FES National Conference (NC18) (September)

Launch of the new FES website (October)

Love Ran Red, a fundraising-cum-social awareness project by JCUS CF (September)

Our Vision
To see a community of Christlike leaders who are salt and light on campus, in the church, and in society for the
The common journey for many of our students involves the remarkable realisation of the true extent of the mission and ministry of God. To seriously worship God and proclaim Him as the Lord of the polytechnics and universities requires students to take responsibility for the shalom, the well-being, of their campuses and the people in it. Alongside this remarkable realisation is the understanding of the polytechnics and universities as microcosms of society involving many more communities beyond students and teachers.

It remains the perpetual challenge for our students, as representatives of the Lord on campus, to extend all manner of His love, grace, and mercies to those who make the campus what it is. In particular, the hall students of NTU Christian Fellowship (CF) chose to extend God’s hospitality to others through Project Yum-Cha (Yum-cha is the Cantonese tradition of brunch involving Chinese tea and dim sum).

Project Yum-Cha was initiated by one of the small groups of NTU CF as a pay-it-forward coffee system in two of the halls. All students from those halls were invited to pay for a hot beverage from the canteen which hall janitors could pick up at their convenience. It was also hoped this initiative would cause students to recognise the janitors in their midst, and to respond with gratitude for their service.

Projects such as Yum-Cha engage not just Christians, but all students to get involved in creating a community on campus where everyone can indeed consider each other to be a neighbour, and no one is a stranger.
For the past few years, the NTU Chinese CF has been involved in befriending international students in NTU, for example celebrating occasions like Chinese New Year and the Mid-Autumn festival together.

Earlier this year, together with the English and Indonesian CFs, a committee was set up to explore platforms to further engage these international students. With the support of a partner church that hosts international students, the committee planned a welcome session for international students to get to know the CF members and vice versa.

The welcome session, held in September, was attended by six international students together with NTU CF members and some of the host families. Subsequently the CF invited the international students to a discussion on the ‘grading system’ in society. However, only one international student was able to come for that session while the CF members turned up in full force.

Though this effort had a seemingly disappointing outcome, please pray for NTU CF as they continue to build relationships with the international students. The planning committee has made plans to further engage international students in meaningful discussions next semester on topics related to moral and ethical issues. Pray also for the partnering church in the hospitality programme for these international students.
Several initiatives were launched by the Indonesian Students’ Christian Fellowship (ISCF) to engage or bless the Other.

In Curtin University (Singapore), the transition to work life (finding jobs, facing interviews, etc.) is a concern among Indonesian students there. In an effort to bless fellow Indonesian students, the ISCF held an alumni sharing session on 18 September as a platform for the graduating batch to discuss issues related to working in Singapore. Several of the members’ friends came, and they expressed their worries and questions, seeking inputs from friends and alumni.

Over at NTU, it relates to serving the communities outside campus. In collaboration with Habitat for Humanity, NTU ISCF embarked on Project HomeWorks to help with the cleaning of some houses belonging to the elderly. On 20 October, 20 students participated in this project. Some students shared that this initiative opened their eyes to the kind of living conditions some people have, and also prompted them to consider things they can and would do in the future.

One challenge ISCF faces when ministering to the Other is integrating into the locale they are in. Perhaps influenced by language barriers, integration tends to be directed towards fellow Indonesians. There needs to be a greater awareness and attention to the Singapore context they are in. CFers can encourage each other to befriend and listen to the needs of not just their fellow Indonesians, but also the locals and people of other nationalities.
When you hear Institute of Technical Education or ITE for short, what’s the first impression that comes to your mind? In Jack Neo’s 2002 movie I Not Stupid, characters referred to ITE as an acronym for “It’s The End”, which many still believe. People usually view ITE as the end of the line, where students who flunk their ‘N’ and ‘O’ levels go to. The students are seen as “hopeless” and without a future.

But ITE can be a stepping stone. It is all about perspective. ITE is not the end, but instead the start of something better (Is To Eternity). FES took up the challenge and a step of faith in pioneering student ministry in ITE.

God opened a door for FES to partner the ITE East youth centre in early February 2018. It was a collaboration between ITE and Bethesda Care and Counselling Services Centre. Every Wednesday (12–2pm), FES staff and associate staff workers will mingle with the students. We are also honoured to be involved in their campus leadership orientation for students which gives us opportunities to know more student leaders.

During normal school days, the centre would be packed with students. This gives us open doors to foster bonds and build up one another through community during lunch breaks. The students are open to music, friendship and even to the gospel. Presently, we are befriending 10 to 15 students.

Do pray alongside us as we reach out in ITE. It isn’t a programme; it’s a process of building a relationship that points them to Christ. May the Lord continue to grant us wisdom, patience and resources as we serve Him in ITE.
Since 1992, International Student Ministry (ISM) has been part of the FES ministry in different forms, such as International Friendship Group, English Corner, host family programmes and Meals at Home. This year, an effort was made to move together in a more concerted manner to serve among the international students on campus. Some of these efforts include campus-based intersectional initiatives such as the Food Trail by NAFA and LA-SALLE’s SKETCH ISCF and English CF on 22 August, and NUS VCF’s Prince George’s Park International Christian Fellowship (PGP ICF) which started in the second half of 2018.

The ICF in PGP has attracted students from different nationalities – China, New Zealand, Brazil, the US, and Indonesia. At the same time, the FES staff team also formed a taskforce to oversee the initiative and development of ISM across different campuses, as well as help CFs find resources pertinent to their initiatives. These initiatives include designing small group materials for ISM meetings.

The greatest challenge ahead would be for the whole FES community – students, leaders, and alumni – to embrace ISM as an integral part of our ministry, moving forward together with the same vision.
Morph is FES’ programme for students from university CFs. It aims to support and strengthen the wholistic understanding of Christian witness and mission among students. For the 2017/2018 academic year, Morph had 12 students divided into three teams. The teams went on a month-long missions exposure trip between May and July 2018 – one to a country in the Middle East, one in East Asia and another to Nepal. Christopher Wong, from SIM SCF and who was the Nepal team leader, felt the trip was like a spark, igniting in him a desire to follow God’s will. This is what he has to say about it:

My greatest takeaway is seeing how God has changed me through this trip. Through visitations to NGOs and the staff workers we met, I was inspired by how they persevered to seek God and waited patiently for His answer to their ministries. They were willing to sacrifice their jobs and comfort to set up a ministry to do God’s work and serve people. After meeting them, I became more intentional in seeking God’s purpose for my life as I wanted to emulate them and follow His will.

For the polytechnic CF members, we started Ministry Exposure Leadership Training (MELT) in November 2017 as a ministry, missions and leadership training programme. As this was the first year that MELT was launched with three components in the design, it involved more planning and organisation. But we are grateful for the good response from the eight students who went to Taiwan for an exposure trip in March 2018 and the two students who had a local attachment with the FES pioneering ministry.
FES is an interdenominational Christian organisation serving among tertiary-level students and graduates in Singapore. Our vision is to see a community of Christlike leaders who are salt and light on campus, in the church, and in society for the glory of God.

FES Affiliates • Varsity Christian Fellowship at National University of Singapore (NUS VCF) • Nanyang Technological University Christian Fellowship (NTU CF) including National Institute of Education Christian Fellowship (NIE CF) • Singapore Polytechnic Christian Fellowship (SP CF) • Ngee Ann Polytechnic Christian Fellowship (NP 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) • Military Christian Fellowship (MCF) • Graduates’ Christian Fellowship (GCF) • Nanyang University Graduates’ Christian Fellowship (NUGCF)

Pioneering work • Nanyang Polytechnic (NYP) • Singapore Management University (SMU) • Curtin University Singapore • Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts (NAFA) • LASALLE College of the Arts • Management Development Institute of Singapore (MDIS) • PSB Academy • Institute of Technical Education (ITE)

Serving God among Students and Graduates in Singapore

The front cover drawing on the Parable of the Good Samaritan expresses our desire to see all of us in the FES ministry reach out to and serve others as taught by Jesus in this parable.