

Thanksgiving Report 2020

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"We know we were made for so much more than ordinary lives
It's time for us to more than just survive
We were made to thrive"

Song lyrics from "Thrive"
by Casting Crowns

We adopted the theme "Innovation" for 2019's Thanksgiving Report not foreseeing the impact of Covid-19.

This greatest disruptor of 2020 has radically transformed our world. For Cru Singapore, ground-up initiatives such as **REDProject (Reaching Everyone Digitally)**, **COVID-19 Conversations**, **UNVEILx youth equipping series** were birthed during the height of lockdown. Overnight, our staff had to grow adept at video-conferencing, live broadcast and mobile chat applications. In-person conferences were pivoted to become webinars and YouTube Live events.

Campus Ministry gained inroads into our tertiary institutions by hosting community outreach webinars, covering topics such as pornography addiction and mental health, with some events reaching up to **400 students**. Also, **LeaderImpact** launched seeker-friendly Groups online among marketplace leaders in Singapore.

Athletes in Action Singapore hosted Friday Night Live on Instagram (@athletesinactionsg), facilitating heartfelt conversations with various luminaries in the local sports scene. They also championed a slew of online offerings through Circuit Training, The Assist, The Ultimate Training Camp (UTC) Online and Philipians Playbook.

Amid this wave of digital transformation, we also quietly started our first mental wellness arm, **ThriveSg**, enabled by a strong and capable team of volunteer counsellors.

Watching our staff members gearing up for a new era of ministry has been heartening for me, even though it was a major adjustment for many. Through them, I learnt that evangelists and missionaries will inevitably innovate when their hearts beat passionately for both Jesus and His sheep.

2021 looks to be yet another challenging year. Shall we encourage one another to keep walking in the Spirit, allowing Christ be on the throne of our lives moment-by-moment? I believe there is no other way for us to not only survive, but Thrive.



As you read the rest of the Thanksgiving Report, may you be awed by the creativity of our God and trust Him to help you thrive, and **Make Disciples Everywhere**.

Blessings,

Goh Hock Chye
Country Leader
Cru Singapore



Impact of Your Gifts and Digitalisation

2020



Caring for Our Neighbours

200 healthcare workers were gifted with either a devotional book or baked treats.

100 migrant workers were given Dettol and rugs during Circuit Breaker

Digital Mission Trips

21 trips with **158** digital missionaries sent to **6** countries.

575 spiritual conversations and **166** Gospel sharings took place

8 people received Christ



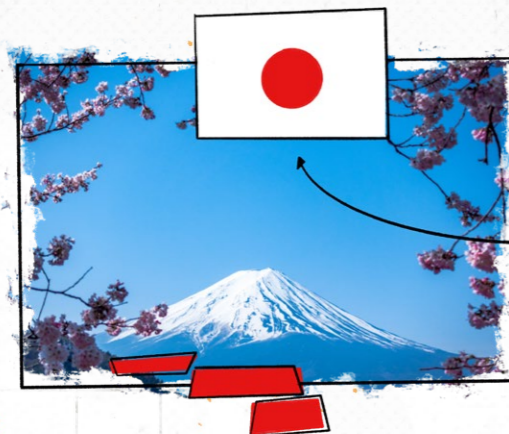
Digital Strategies

Over **120,600** unique visitors from Singapore accessed Cru global web properties to **find out about more about the Gospel** and **what it means to live a Christ-centred life**



Conference

Over **6500** participants were **equipped** and **discipled** through **40** online gatherings on topics ranging from **theological issues**, to dealing with **temptation**, to **responding well to the Covid-19 crisis**

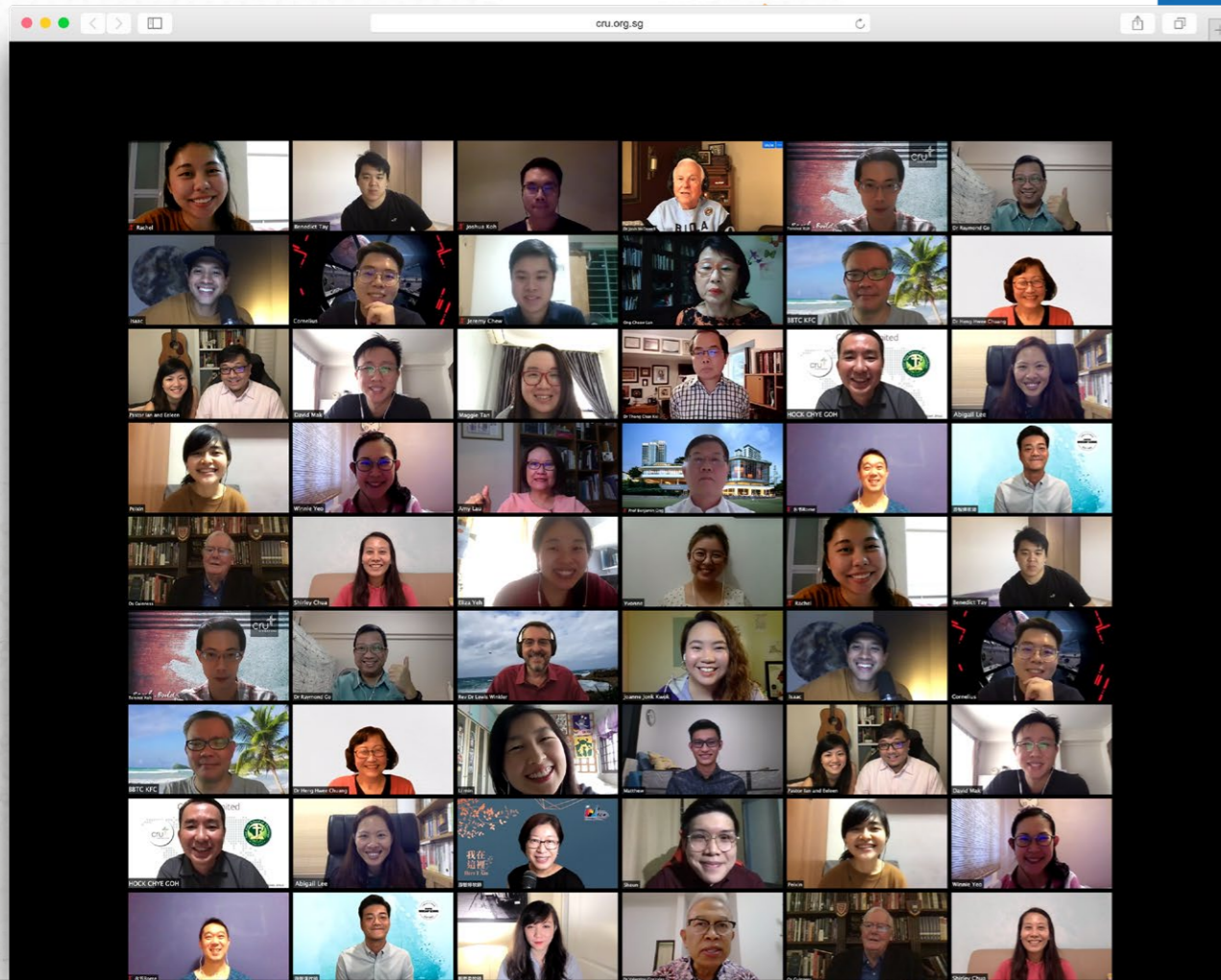


4 STINTers* sent to Japan

*STINT is a Short-Term Internship: a one-year missions exposure programme

- January**
- February**
- March**
 - Every ministry's move to small groups and online platforms
 - Collab2Reach (C2R) and UNVEIL pivoted to YouTube Live events
 - Launch of C2R Conversations and UNVEIL HTHT
- April**
 - Launch of 'Poly Survival Tips' campaign from the Campus ministry's Polytechnic team
 - Launch of Athletes in Action's (AIA) #circuitbreaker circuit training campaign
- May**
 - Launch of Covid-19 Conversations (May-June)
 - Launch of Crea's Zoom Art Jam
 - Launch of BeyondBorders (May-July)
- June**
 - Launch of 'Christian Living' series on social media
- July**
 - Leader Impact Group Lunch Talks
 - Launch of 'Back-to-School' campaign from Campus ministry's University team
- August**
 - Remote facilitator training by The Significant Project for Malaysia Campus Crusade for Christ's The Significant Woman (TSW) & Men Of Impact (MOI)
- September**
 - Ultimate Training Camp (UTC) VIRTUAL by AIA
- October**
 - Launch of ThriveSg
 - Leadership transition of Country Leader from Lam Kok Hiang to Goh Hock Chye
 - Launch of 'Changes that Heal', a 5-week online discussion for Poly students on becoming a whole and healthy individual
 - Crea Arts first decentralised gathering
 - Launch of UNVEILx: #AskMeAnything series
- November**
 - In-person Art of Marriage resumed
- December**
 - Cru Singapore's first virtual Staff Summit
 - UNVEILx: Sean McDowell Conference

DISCIPLESHIP REDEFINED: Conferences Go Digital



Over a year ago, this team was formed with the sole purpose of running Cru's first physical conference, UNVEIL: Breaking Free. This year, Cru's Conference Team found itself becoming one of Cru's most utilised teams.

In 2020 alone, Cru Singapore has organised an unprecedented 10 conference or event series, with 40 online gatherings and a combined attendance of over 6500 participants. This feat started with the Conference Team's calculated move to shift two pre-planned physical conferences—UNVEIL for youth, and Collab2Reach for ministry and youth pastors, leaders and workers—online.

David Mak, former Conference Team Leader, shared, "As the Covid-19 situation worsened in February, it boiled down to one question, 'If the content that we're presenting to the local churches is critical and vital—which rules out cancelling the event totally—what can I do to reach more?' So, we made the decision to swerve into the digital space."

"We felt like this was a God-ordained moment and wanted to seize the opportunity to reach and engage even more believers online."

Describing how it was like rolling out two conferences as year-long online series instead, current Conference Team Leader, Maggie Tan, added, "We felt like this was a God-ordained moment and wanted to seize the opportunity to reach and engage even more believers online. Despite the loose ends we had to tie up—getting buy-ins from speakers, searching for emcees, arranging venues, and learning how to live-stream—we saw God move through this and are grateful to be part of it."

OPENING DOORS DURING LOCKDOWN

As the nation went into lockdown in April, Singaporeans faced a new set of adjustments—being cooped up 24/7, drawing new boundaries between work and home and managing increasingly different family dynamics.

"During Circuit Breaker, we were hearing news of youths falling prey to gaming and pornography addictions, and an increase in mental health issues. It ended up working well that we spread out both conferences over the months to be able to more meaningfully engage the youth and equip the leaders throughout the Circuit Breaker," Maggie recounted. "We saw this transition as a season of discipleship for all of us. We thought it was important to offer good content

"To see God move and touch lives like that made everything worth it"

for believers and, at the time, not many other churches or organisations were providing material yet. Honestly, we had no ideas for any series in mind. We just wanted to plug a gap and support believers in their faith through this difficult time," she continued.

It was through this consideration that the Covid-19 Conversations and #NTE_x (New Testament Explorations) webinar series came about. David explained, "It started with a suggestion by a senior Cru staff to hold 60-75 minute webinars that might help people through this time. The positive response to our initial episodes was a surprise and showed us there was a real need and motivated us to do more."

My name is Angie, I live in Salzburg, Austria. I got to know of the #NTE_x Cru event from my dad who learned it from his friends at Campus Crusade in Mongolia. I am 22 years old and we just started a discipleship group with the Youth all over Europe! Youth from Germany, Czech and Austria are coming together and studying the Bible together and doing fellowship and getting stronger in Christ. Therefore, I want to say thank you for your teachings and enabling us to share it further to our disciples! You have helped me, my dad and also our believers in Europe. Thank you so much for the humble wisdom you shared with us! God Bless!
— Angie (Team MCF-Youth Europe), participant of #NTE_x (New Testament Exploration) series.

OVERCOMING FEAR, STEPPING OUT IN FAITH

Recalling the first webinar, Covid-19 Conversations: The Christian Response to the Public Health Crisis, Maggie said, "It was nerve-wrecking, no one had done it before or attended any zoom webinars then. We were worried about potential technical issues, but God blew our minds. All our participants were so patient as we tried out different sign-up methods and learnt to respond on-the-go. This webinar saw one of our largest turnouts with 360 participants."

David laughed, "This digital transition was truly undertaken by faith as none of us are 'techies'. However, thanks to the support of our tech-savvy friends, we pulled through a steep learning curve."

As webinars became the norm, the team took on a range of topics and engaged experienced speakers to meet different needs and speak into prevalent issues.

Covid-19 Conversations saw speakers and organisations such as Josh McDowell and Ravi Zacharias International Ministries (RZIM) tackle topics such as dealing with temptations while staying home and how to find peace amid uncertainty, respectively. In preparation for school to start, the team collaborated with RZIM for 'ReFresh: Ready for Uni', a 3-day online conference for students to learn about abiding in Christ.

TRUSTING GOD AND TOUCHING LIVES

Despite challenges and uncertainty, it was encouraging to see hearts and lives encounter Jesus. "One of the most encouraging testimonies came from Austria. Angie attended the #NTE_x series just as she started a discipleship group with youth from all over Europe. She thanked us for making the teachings accessible and how it has been such a blessing to her group and believers in Europe," Maggie described.

"To see God move and touch lives like that made everything worth it," she continued with a smile.

"Even though this year threw us a curveball, it has taught me to never look down on small beginnings and trust God to reach more and disciple better in this digital era. No matter the situation, He is able to help us grow and fulfil His purposes through us," David concluded.

Missionaries During Covid: Grounded in Singapore

Being immersed in the culture and lives of the locals is a defining aspect of being a missionary to an overseas community. With the onset of Covid-19, many Cru missionaries meant to be based overseas found themselves either called back to or grounded in Singapore, uncertain when they would be able to go to their mission field.

We hear some experiences from these missionaries and how they continue to reach out in their ministries amid uncertainty.

No disruption to the Lord's plan

Loh Weng Kong and Jaine Chung, missionaries to Japan

Coming back from Japan where they have lived and served in for 25 years, Weng Kong and Jaine returned to Singapore in March this year and this has been their longest stay here since 1994.

Weng Kong shared, "At first, it was frustrating not being able to return to Japan. However, I'm thankful we can still meet regularly online with our teams in Japan and USA. We were able to get more things done and set more goals for our projects. Amazingly, I was able to complete the Japanese and English versions of the evangelistic manga I was working on."

Adding on, Jaine said, "While Covid-19 may have disrupted our plans and schedules in many ways, there is no disruption to the Lord's plan. I am reminded of Proverbs 19:21 that men have their plans but only the Lord's purpose prevails. Romans 8:28 sums it up so well for me—that He causes all things, even this pandemic, to work together for good. Although it's not been ideal, He has given us much needed and precious time with family through this season. He has weaved in every detail that has happened in the past months and made it beautiful in His timing."



Adapting, adopting and applying creative ways to reach out

***Jonathan and Michelle, missionaries to a Creative Access Nation**

Although physically brought back to Singapore, Jonathan and Michelle's hearts remain overseas. "We are planning to return to our adopted country as soon as the infection numbers reduce significantly. We realise that it's not our timing, but the Father's timing. It's not our plan, but the Father's plan for us," Jonathan shared.

"In the meantime, we will learn to continue operating in this "new normal"—working remotely to connect with the lost, equip and mentor our disciples. Adapting, adopting and applying creative new ways of reaching out is the triple "A" strategy forward for us," he continued.

Michelle brought up this example, "Together with our disciples, we overcame obstacles and learnt new ways of doing outreach. One challenge was starting a conversation over an unstable internet network with a contact who was learning to speak English. It required from us much effort, a lot of creativity and a change in mindset. Thankfully, we were still able to build bridges and seeds were sown. Another challenge was the difference in time zones which meant we had to be awake while most of Singapore is asleep."



Interceding for team members and student volunteers

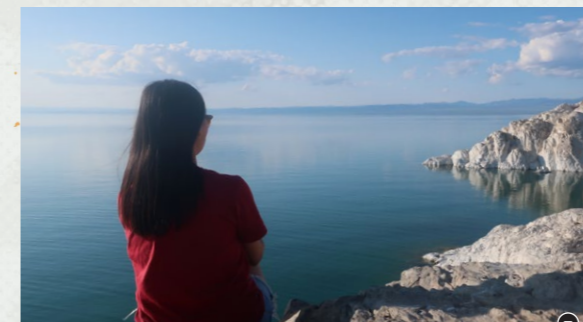
Tan Chih Chiang and Wimonrat Sawatcheewan (Bee), STINTers with Thailand Campus Crusade for Christ (TCCC)**

Despite plans being put on hold, Chih Chiang and Bee continued to do good work and grow relationships through this season.

"My wife, Bee, and I had planned to serve a one-year STINT with TCCC this year. Our original plan was to go to Thailand in July to prepare ourselves for the university academic year starting in August. However, due to Covid-19, our plan was pushed back and we were not able to travel there and join our team members to do ministry together physically," Chih Chiang explained.

He continued, "Thankfully, we are able to join the TCCC Staff Team virtually via Zoom calls. We meet up weekly for prayer and ministry updates. Although we are not able to join our team for evangelism and discipleship in the university, we intercede for our team members and key student volunteers as they labour in the campus."

Bee added, "We had the opportunity to be involved in Cru's digital missions initiative, REDproject (Reaching Everyone Digitally), and shared the gospel to university students in Thailand during a digital mission trip. We have continued to build friendships with our contacts from the REDproject trip and I'm also following up with Fai and Nana, Thai friends that I met over Facebook."



Pointing others to hope in Christ

***Lisa, missionary to Mongolia**

After living in Mongolia for the past 2.5 years, Lisa has not been able to return to Mongolia due to its borders being shut. Despite this, she says "I thank God for technology! I am able to continue reaching and maintaining contact with some of my students in Mongolia, and disciple them online."

"I'm also involved in Cru's digital missions initiative, REDproject, where my team coordinates and organises digital mission trips overseas. I get to connect with people from different parts of the world, build relationships with them, and, God-willing, share the gospel with them too."

During this season, Lisa realised, "In this digital space, maybe it's the lack of human interaction due to lockdown, maybe it's the security of being behind a screen, but people—even strangers, actually—I meet tend to be more open and willing to share about themselves and their lives. Sometimes it feels like I'm an Aunt Agony, but I'm thankful for the opportunity to be able to listen, encourage and point them to the hope that I have in Christ."



Connecting with students through English class

Ashley Yang (second row, middle) and Ho Jin Cheng (extreme right), STINTers with Japan Campus Crusade for Christ (JCCC)**



The Japan STINT team was grounded in Singapore as travel ceased in March 2020. However, they have since left for Japan in late November.

During this season, both Ashley and Jin Cheng shared that discipleship was more challenging because of the lack of face-to-face interactions, as well as not being able to physically do ministry together with their disciples in Japan.

Nonetheless, they still found opportunities while stationed in Singapore. "We had the privilege to be involved in a Japanese professor's English class at two Japanese universities since October. He is also a Christian and, through his connection with JCCC, our team was invited to join his classes over Zoom. He not only gave us opportunities to interact with the Japanese students, but even encouraged us to talk about our Christian worldview and share about Jesus!" Jin Cheng described.

Ashley added, "During this English class, I got to meet a law student who was not spiritually open but really wanted to improve her English. She readily added me on the messaging app, LINE, and though she was not confident about her English-speaking skills, she was excited to come for the JCCC English conversation sessions we were helping to lead. She later invited a high school friend studying at another university in Tokyo to join us."

*names have been changed for confidentiality
**STINT is a Short-Term Internship: a one-year missions exposure programme

Students embarking on Beyond Borders digital mission trips, the digital missions initiative for Campus students, from home and the Cru office



Exploring New Ways of Evangelism

The concept of digital evangelism is probably difficult for most to fathom. How can we meet new contacts and build relationships purely through online communication? Cru's outreach efforts took a creative turn to explore this possibility as face-to-face interactions and opportunities to meet new contacts decreased drastically as Covid-19 ran its course globally.

It started with the question: how can campus students continue cross-cultural missions with the ceasing of international travel? Leong Wai Ling, Campus Ministry Strategy Head, said, "When I knew sometime in January that we could not bring students on mission trips, I was a little disappointed. I prayed about it and remembered an idea an international Campus staff shared with me about digital outreach within the local community. This sounded interesting, but I wanted to have a cross-cultural element to it."

With this in mind, she approached Lillian Seow, Head of Digital Strategies, and Rome Chew, Head of Missions, to see if there was a practical way to put this idea into action. Working collaboratively, Lillian, together with Joeyee Koh and Yvonne Ng from the Missions team, explored making digital missions a reality. Thus, REDproject (Reaching Everyone Digitally) was conceived. Since the initiative's start, 21 teams with 158 digital missionaries have reached out to East and West Asia, Thailand, Mongolia, Japan and Myanmar with more than 85,000 exposures.

Based on their learnings and experience, a guide for digital missions was developed by the pilot team. "After the pilot REDproject trip, I worked with Joeyee and Yvonne on the REDproject guide that has been shared with our global Cru ministries as well as other churches and missions organisations," said Lillian.

Cross-cultural outreach from home

Joeyee and Yvonne from the REDproject team shared: "A REDproject trip is a cross-cultural and cross-border mission trip done digitally. A mission team can choose to meet online or together in small groups, in line with Covid-19 restrictions. All you need for a REDproject trip is a smartphone or laptop and a stable internet connection."



Hebron Bible-Presbyterian Church members engaging contacts on a REDproject trip

The team experimented with possible platforms to reach out to new contacts and found that language learning applications and Facebook were effective channels for reaching out. They also harnessed the potential of targeted advertisements on Facebook which allows Cru's content to reach specific countries and age groups, hence opening opportunities for engagement. After the pilot run, the team realised that many overseas university students they were reaching had interest in learning English. Language learning apps were then used to connect with students who were interested in conversing in English.

Using these platforms have opened new doors for evangelism, even widening the scope for ministry. Yvonne elaborated, "Previously, we needed to travel hours to do village outreach. Now, we can still reach out, albeit in a different manner, without the long hours of travel. You can actually have a greater reach within the same amount of time!"

Beyond achieving breadth of outreach, the team also experienced meaningful conversations that built depth of connection. "I made a few new Thai friends during our pilot mission trip to Thailand. I had the opportunity to have spiritual conversations and share the gospel with some of them, and one of them opened up about how her mother had passed on some three months ago. I had the chance to be a listening ear and friend to her. She told me that I am like an older sister to her. I hope that I am able to demonstrate Jesus' love and her heart will be opened to God slowly," shared Joeyee.

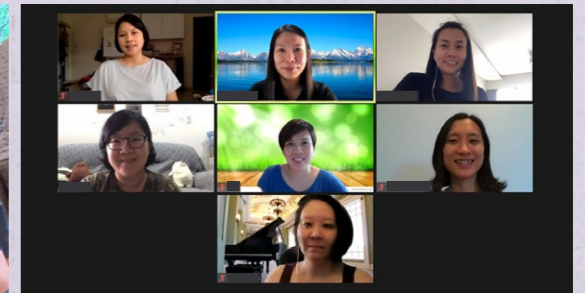
HOW TO BE INVOLVED

REDproject is highly versatile and is open to anyone who has a heart for missions and is willing to take time to go on a digital missions trip. Rally a few friends and form a team, or indicate your interest as an individual. The REDproject team can be contacted at redproject@cru.org.sg

Scan the QR code for more information on REDproject.



RAISING WOMEN OF WORTH:



Embracing the Significance of Being a Mom

For Grace Tan, who serves in Wow Mom, it started with the simple desire to know God more.

Cru Singapore's range of ministries serve different communities at various seasons of life with the vision of building disciple-making movements everywhere. One such ministry is Wow Mom (Women of Worth, Mums on Mission). Wow Mom aims to affirm women of their worth in Christ and equip wives and mothers discover and live out their purpose.

Passionate about helping women understand their significance as a mother, Jodi Yong, Wow Mom ministry coordinator, shared, "As mothers, we sometimes lose sight of how important our role is, or we lose our sense of identity. Wow Mom wants to empower mothers to know their value in Christ and be able to teach and set a godly example for our children, as well as reach our circles of influence to encourage others and point them to Jesus."

Grace Tan, a mother of three daughters, experienced this development as she journeyed with the Wow Mom community as a participant in 2019 before taking the step to lead two Wow Mom groups. "I first heard of Wow Mom through my friend, Sophie, who was also leading a Wow Mom group at the time. She shared that a group of mothers gathered to study the Bible and encourage each other through motherhood," she said.

Grace continued, "At the time, I wanted to know the Bible better and find a community to grow with. After praying and seeking God, I decided to join Wow Mom and was placed in Sophie's group by divine arrangement."

Wow Mom groups focus on understanding God's word and empowering women through their experience of motherhood. Grace explained, "Wow Mom groups are different from church cell groups because we learn to apply biblical truths as a child of God, wife and mother. It's a safe place to be ourselves, share transparently and be real with our struggles, happiness, anger or disappointments."

"I love meeting to share about our lives and families. We joke, cheer on, and pray for one another. We also have a WhatsApp chat

group where we share our joys, prayer requests and even good deals!" Grace laughed.

After growing in her Wow Mom group for a year, Grace was challenged to take the next step to start leading this year. She recalled, "There were so many concerns going through my mind. Will I be a good example? Do I have a heart for mothers? Is this what the Lord wants?"

"I remember taking a few weeks to pray about it. God spoke clearly to me about two things. Firstly, He gently reminded that it's not about me. He said that, like Paul, He can use me regardless of my past and flaws."

"Secondly, God shared His heart for mothers with me—how much He loves us, and the significance of a mother and wife in His eyes. Wives can influence and encourage their spouses to grow

God wants to partner with and grow us to be the mother and wife He has called us to be and enable us to shape godly families

strong in the Lord which helps their husbands lead the family well. Mothers influence their children's values, speech, behaviour and more. God wants to partner with and grow us to be the mother and wife He has called us to be and enable us to shape godly families," Grace continued.

With these confirmations, Grace took on the responsibility of leading two groups and never looked back. "I'm so amazed at how God connects us. In just a few sessions, we can feel like we have known each other for years. It has truly been a joy and honour to be part of these deep connections. I thank God for the opportunity to serve these amazing mums," she ended with a smile.

A Day in the Life as Campus Staff

School campuses usually bustling with life took on a more subdued atmosphere due to Covid-19 safe management measures. Cru's Campus Ministry team had to adapt quickly to continue engaging students as physical meetings were severely impacted.

Join Terence Koh, University Cluster Senior Team Leader, and Rebecca Kwa, Polytechnic Cluster Executive, as they give us a glimpse of how life is like as campus staff the past year!



Holding the community together

Continuing to build relationships was one of the main focuses of the Campus Ministry Team as Covid-19 measures kicked in. "One of the challenges was figuring out how to engage the students, especially during the months where physical meetups were not possible. Thankfully, most students did not have much issues with online meetings so the team reorganised the style and flow of our weekly meetings to make the content shorter and more discussion-based," said Rebecca.

Terence shared, "We as staff tried our best to meet virtually with students via videoconferencing but it was not the same. However, some level of depth in relationship-building and discipleship was developed once personal one-to-one physical meetups with the students resumed."

Students stepping up and reaching the lost

Despite constraints, there has been growth in the areas of overseas missions and student leadership, which these leaders are thankful for. "Our greatest encouragement came from the BeyondBorders, a digital missions initiative for students. BeyondBorders gave students the opportunity to use their summer holidays to spend meaningful time growing in their

relationship with God and peers, while experiencing meaningful cross-cultural evangelism opportunities. Many of these students became excited to live intentionally as a witness and encouragement to their friends around them," said Terence.

Rebecca commented, "As a result of the need to change, the student leaders also stepped up to contribute their ideas. These opportunities helped them grow in their ownership of the ministry. Another positive outcome is that our students have grown in concern and prayer for the world at large."

Starting the day

Terence: I start my day imagining my focus and updating my NUS staff team group for mutual accountability. The mornings are also when I attend meetings or prepare for upcoming staff and discipleship meetings or coaching sessions with students.

Rebecca: In the morning, I would usually make a cup of tea to start the day and take some time to do my daily devotions and pray through the things I have to do.

Follow us on our day!



Spending time with students

Rebecca: I have been texting and meeting students online for bible study or ministry planning. Sometimes we meet physically one-on-one or in small groups. They have largely gotten used to online meetups, although some do miss physical gatherings. They are also quite stressed out by schoolwork and projects during the semester.

Terence: I have weekly Zoom meetings with some year two and three students where we go through the Man of Impact material, and occasionally read Bible passages reflectively and worship together. In addition, I journey with a year-one group where we do the Christianity Explained material. I also join another year-one group to lend support to a new Spiritual Multiplier that I mentor, who leads the group, and I get to know the new students too.

I have personal one-to-one breakfast and lunch meetings with various students where we discuss their personal issues, talk about school, and share life. I also bring up topics for intentional discipleship.



Social media engagement

Rebecca: In addition to working with the polytechnic students and other polytechnic cluster members, I also manage the Campus ministry's social media accounts. One social media campaign was "Cru Christmas Week". I started by coming up with campaign objectives, and brainstorming ideas that would meet them. The aim of this campaign was to engage and bless our followers who are mainly between 18-35 years old, so I asked myself questions like "What would interest them?" and "What kind of items do they like?"

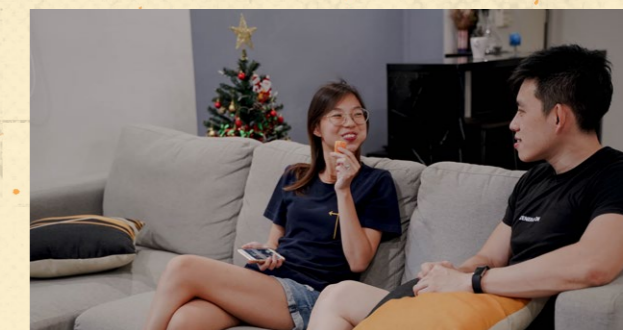
Hosting webinars

Terence: I was very privileged to host three webinars by great authors and speakers this year. I especially enjoyed hosting the webinars on porn addiction because it is a topic so close to heart. I'm glad to contribute in an area where intentional spaces for conversation, and practical help are provided. There are real people who are looking for hope, not just for freedom from addiction, but hope in whether they can crawl out from the prison of shame and become who they are meant to be in Christ; regardless of their starting point.

Finding rest and spending time with family

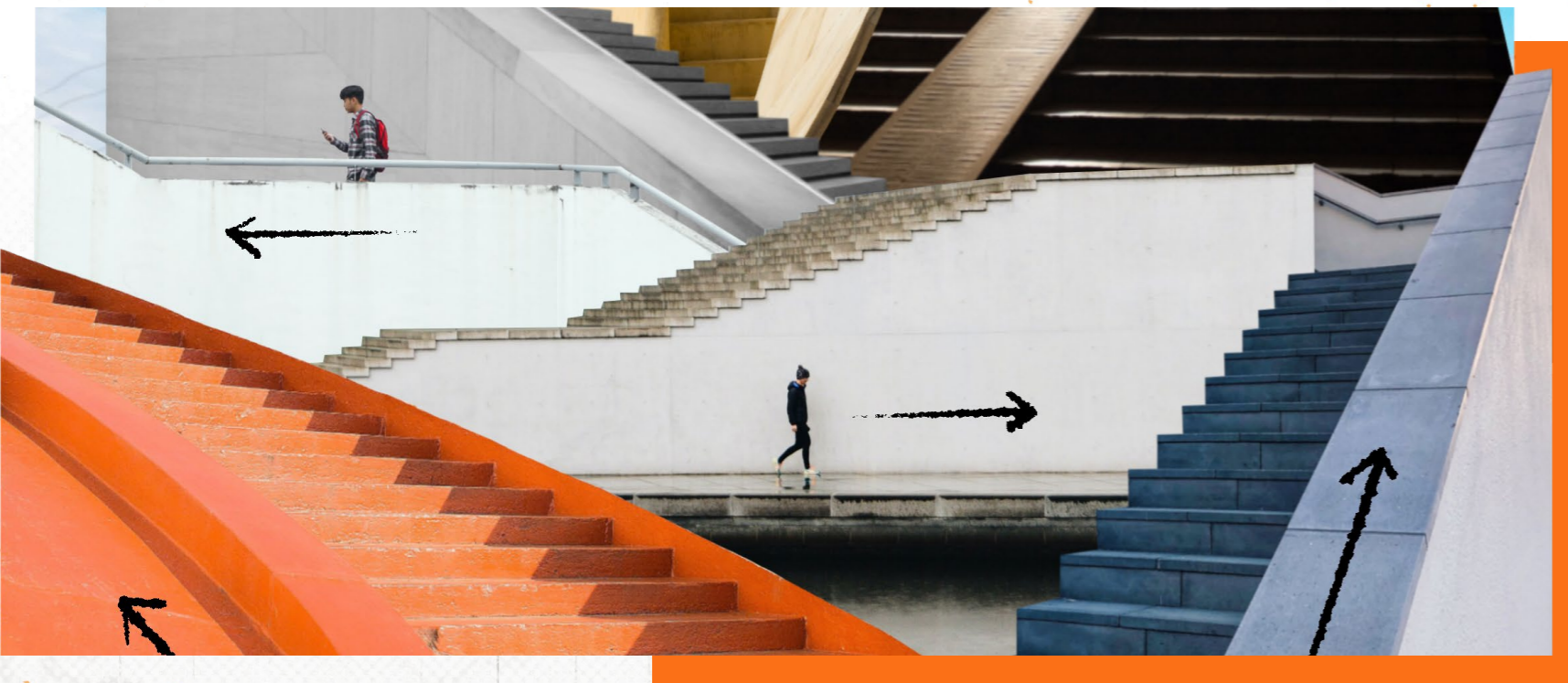


Terence: With work from home arrangements, my wife and I get to eat and connect over meal times together. If I have a regular work schedule for the day, then, in the evening, I will enjoy dinner with my wife and do things I enjoy like watch anime, play computer games, check out movie trailers, read trending news or a book, or listen to a sermon. During ministry peak times, there is little room to exercise regularly so I would find spots in the morning or evening to do some simple static exercises.



Rebecca: My husband and I usually have night ministry meetings or church events, so we try to grab dinner together nearby before the meeting starts. Occasionally I would head out to meet friends or disciples for dinner too.

Our time spent together is typically on weeknights after our meetings, or on Saturday afternoons. Now that we both work from home, we also get to spend time having lunch together which has been great. We usually relax by watching shows and exploring places to chill at.



In this Changing World, How Can We Help Young People Find Their Career Futures?

By Joanne Koo

Is the response you get when asking a young person what they want to do after graduation, “I’m not sure...”? This seems to be the norm, with research showing that 70% of young people today do not have a clear vision of their career future.

Today’s young people face several dilemmas—an increase in options due to a global economy, increased pace of change, as well as alternate realities on social media. Largely accorded to the advances in technology, the scope of jobs are uncertain with 85 million jobs to go in the next 5 years but 97 million more to come, according to a 2020 report released by the World Economic Forum.

As a youth worker or parent guiding a youth, you might be thinking: how do I help?

The following **SOAR framework*** might be helpful in guiding our young people clarify their **Strengths**, **Options**, **Aspirations** and **Reality Check**.

► Strengths

One of the best pieces of advice I received, was to pray and ask God for insights into a child’s strengths. While interest inventories have a place (e.g. MOE Skillsportal Site), chance events as simple as diving deeper into conversation could provide young people the best opportunities for self-discovery. As adults or mentors in their lives, you can pose honest, open questions, rather than directive statements, to help them discover inner truth, skills, gifts and values and make meaning of their experiences.

Through observing young adults who found their paths, educators found two key ingredients for thriving in life—a compelling purpose and supportive relationships. “A purpose” is defined by Stanford University Professor William Damon as a “deeper reason for the immediate goals and motives that drive most daily behaviour”.

Take advantage of opportunities such as holiday gatherings to open a dialogue with your young people. “Why does this matter to you? Why are you doing it?” Practice the art of asking good questions and listening for their answers with an open mind. You may want to adopt a 10-2-2 rule, e.g. 10 minutes, 2 questions, 2 affirmations.

Convey your own sense of purpose and the meaning you derive from your work. In my case, conversations around current affairs at the dinner table with my Dad helped prepare me, an Economics graduate, for my first job interview with the Foreign Service.

► Options/ Opportunities

In the last twenty years, a field of social learning “Planned Happenstance” has emerged in career counselling to help clients reframe career indecisiveness. To shift from “what if nothing interests me?” to being open to possibilities and picking up skills to seize those opportunities.

Instead of assuming a pre-planned job pathway of being a doctor/lawyer/accountant, parents could start introducing children to potential mentoring conversations among friends, relatives and church or cell group about the work they do. How did those opportunities happen? What skills do I need to develop to get there? Brainstorm on opportunities in church or community to develop skills and meet people. What are some careers in the Bible? How different are they from the ones today?

► Aspirations

Developing a positive outlook and curiosity about the world are two attitudes that would benefit young people to cultivate. This would shape the way they perceive and respond to challenges. Are they willing to struggle through, learn to problem-solve and find options or alternatives or view them as setbacks and roadblocks?

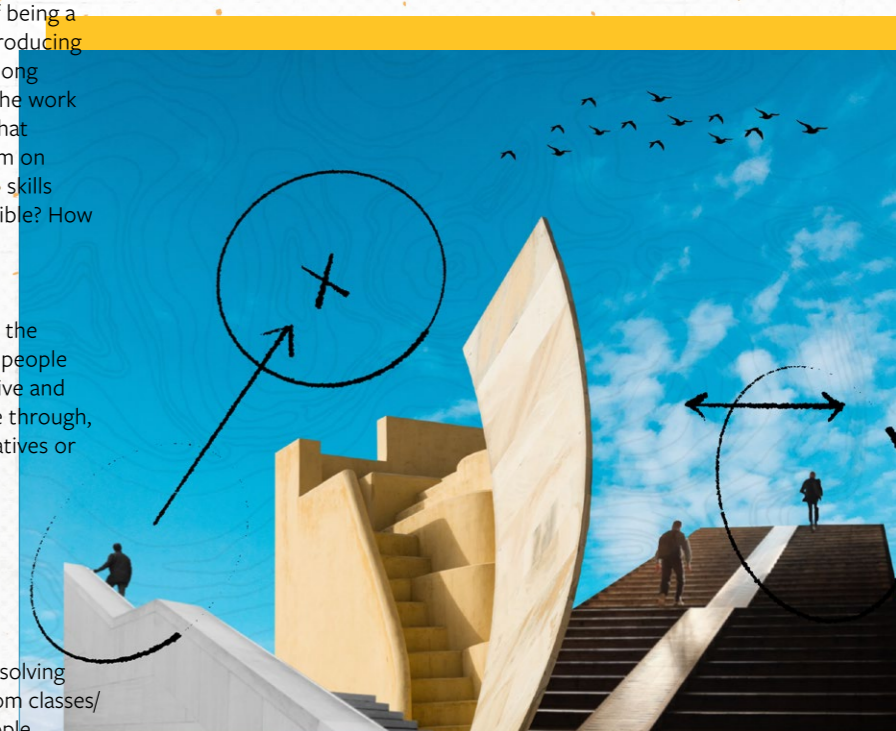
Experts estimate that 70% of our skills come from solving challenges, 20% from watching others, and 10% from classes/reading. Start building these attitudes in young people through asking thought-provoking questions: “If you can change something about the world, what would it be?”; “What’s a challenge you faced, which you can help others going through something similar?”

Get them thinking about how they can make a difference in the lives of others, as 1 Peter 4:10 said, we are called to use our gifts to serve others as faithful stewards of God’s grace.

► Reality Check

Professor Damon suggests that it is important to give young people a sense of agency to take responsibility for their actions. For instance, helping them think through the trade-offs between job satisfaction (people you respect, work you enjoy), lifestyle (hours worked) and income (pay off student loan).

Ian Ang, Co-founder of Secretlab, and youngest winner of EY Entrepreneur of The Year, reflected how his mother’s insistence that he fill out an excel sheet with projected expenses before he could claim his school allowance helped him become pragmatic about business expenditure. Interestingly, Ian’s long hours playing in eSports competition not only helped him find his tribe, but also gave him the idea to develop an ergonomic chair for eSport tournaments. This



proved even more successful during the Covid-19 work-from-home season, where he found an unexpected fanbase in armchair Zoom warriors.

Finally, James Citrin, noted expert on leadership and professional success, suggests that parents resist the urge to relate “everything back to your experience which can come across as this is the road you should take”. Instead, encourage them to learn how to take ownership and read the map for themselves, despite the winding path their careers will take.

Even though these might sound like a lot to support our young people through finding their careers, it comes down to building a good relationship with them and being able to have good, and at times difficult, conversations. As believers, we also have the most important thing on our side—with the Holy Spirit as our guide, have fun, explore this exciting season together and do all things for the glory of God.



Scan for the online article, which includes research sources!

Joanne Koo, MBA (INSEAD) has a special interest in helping people discover their strengths and aspirations to lead more a meaningful professional career and write a richer life story. Her career spans the public sector, Korn/Ferry and INSEAD. She has also taught in Masters programmes in NUS and SMU. She currently also trains aspiring career counsellors in Job and Labor Market Analysis.

*Based and adapted from soar-strategy.com

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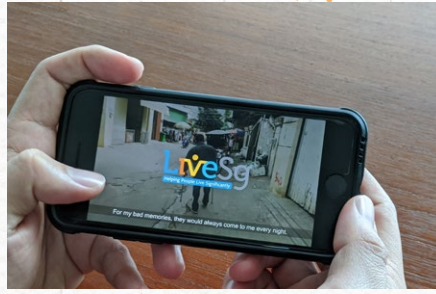
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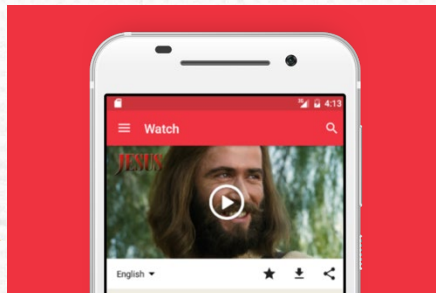
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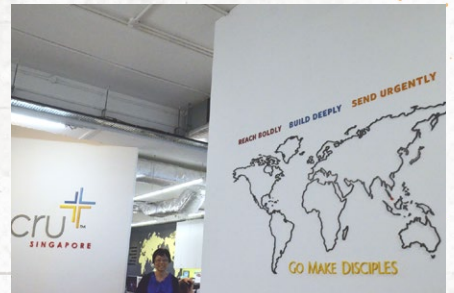
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CORPCOMMS@CRU.ORG.SG
CRU.ORG.SG
TEL: 6589 9600 FAX: 6589 9649
18 VERDUN ROAD
#04-01 SINGAPORE 267280

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