



*Merry Christmas  
and a  
Happy New Year*



Quarterly Newsletter  
**FOCUS**



**PeraDC Carol Service**



**J'Pura  
Caroling rounds**



**UCCF with the  
Colombo arts Faculty**



**UCCF – Catholic Union  
Carol Service**



**FOCUS**

For Circulation among students and graduates of FOCUS only





November 2009

From Priyan Dias (Staff Team Leader)

I hope this letter finds you well and in active service for the kingdom. This is a report of what we have been up to in the past six months or so. I have just finished developing and teaching at our local church a 7 week course (2 hrs per week) on Developing a Christian Worldview. This is a course that was discussed and forged together with the FOCUS staffworkers, as a contribution by FOCUS to the wider church. The first 4 sessions dealt with the basis of the Christian Worldview – Creation, Fall, Redemption and Consummation, covering both doctrine and implications relating to each. The next 3 sessions sought to apply the worldview to three common areas of life – Marriage, Family & Singleness; Work & Rest; and Lifestyle & Place. Our hope is that FOCUS graduates and friends would use the material, suitably adapted, to teach this course in their churches in all parts of the world (a bit grandiose, what?). The powerpoint slides, if you wish to have them, are available on the FOCUS website (itself well worth visiting now – [www.focus.lk](http://www.focus.lk)). Among other things, it features blogs by Vinoth Ramachandra (who we all know very well) and by Yohan Abeynaike, a FOCUS staffworker who writes with great maturity and insight – you will read him to your profit.

One of the things that FOCUS is trying to do (in a more focused way!) is to “join the conversations of others”. This involves interacting with them on their “home turf” rather than on ours. Some of our staff now “hang out” for even an entire day on a university campus, where they meet friends of FOCUS students. FOCUS academic staff at Peradeniya have been attending a series of talks on Science and Religion at the Department of Buddhist and Pali Studies. In fact they “organized” an invitation for me to give a

lecture on a subject called “Is Science very different from Religion – A Christian Perspective” that was well attended and received – although I am always a bit suspicious when I am too well

received (i.e. does it mean I am not standing in the tradition of the prophets, who were stoned rather than applauded!!). In the course of preparing for the talk I read Rev. Dr. John Polkinghorne's Theology in the Context of Science, which I warmly recommend to those who are either theologically or scientifically inclined, or both (it is a small book too!)

I have to report (for those of you who have not heard already) the sudden recent death (at the age of 52) of Uthum Herat, a schoolmate and friend of mine who was associated with FOCUS almost since its inception. He held a doctorate from Purdue and was Deputy Governor of our Central Bank when he died, but was a most self-effacing person. I had the privilege of preaching at his funeral service. I used Mt 5:5 as my text and explored why a man who had achieved so much had acquired so little – no house, no car, no wife & family and no long life. It appears that Uthum, who most certainly had the mind of Christ, also lived a life, the details of which were uncannily similar to our Lord's. The press has been full of appreciations of his exemplary character and brilliant intellect – he will be missed by the entire nation (though they hardly knew of him), not to mention the small Methodist congregation he was part of for a lifetime.

Our continuing search for a General Secretary (GS) has led us to advertise both in churches and Christian magazines – please have a look at our website too. Perhaps God is leading you to apply for this responsibility, or you know someone else who may fit the bill – please get in touch with us. Our staff team will also be depleted at the end of the year with Sachindra Samararatne and Anushke Gunaratne (both year long short term staffers) hoping to leave us. We pray for both of them and their futures; and for new staff to join – we need in particular a woman staffworker. Anushke is applying for places overseas to do postgraduate study in IT policy. Please pray that he would get both an appropriate placement and financial assistance. Sachindra got engaged to Nilusha. She is a batchmate and fellow “FOCUSite”, who is very amenable to Sachindra re-joining FOCUS staff after a stint in the “real world”. We pray that their life and ministry together will be

fruitful.

Kolitha Dissanayake, our staffworker in Peradeniya, is getting some good support from the FOCUS academic staff there, but all of them need to collectively come up with ways to exploit Kolitha's new role as the (Protestant) chaplain. Meanwhile, largely as a result of Kolitha's faithful visits, we had a camp for students of the new Uva Wellessa University near Badulla. Adrian Morel, a FOCUS graduate who is the consultant paediatrician in Badulla, contributed significantly in organizing it. Paheerathan, our staffworker in Jaffna, organized a student camp there after many years, to which we sent Yohan Abeynaike and Premkumar as speakers. I covet your prayers for the now dormant ministry at the Colombo Medical Faculty through the Medical Students Christian Fellowship, once such a vibrant group. We are hoping to get a medical couple, Drs Roshanth and Kavitha Somasundaram, to help us resuscitate it. We also need to think about how to minister to the Eastern University Student Fellowship, given we have no staffworker in Batticaloa now. Our former staffworker, Umagaran is based in the East though and is now on the Administrative Council....Dinesha Samararatne returned to Sri Lanka (with her husband Suren Watson) after obtaining an LLM from Harvard. She is an outspoken witness for Christ at Colombo University, where she lectures at the Law Faculty. Both she and her husband are hoping to live in part of the FOCUS premises, along with her parents. We think they may both be able to contribute to the ministry through their home (Suren is a former short term staffworker too), but want to ensure that their privacy is not disturbed too much.

The war in Sri Lanka is now over, but the achieving of peace and reconciliation will take more time. The continuing detention of Internally Displaced Persons in camps has caused much heartburn. Political agendas appear to dominate all decision making. Anyway, we are very grateful for the cessation of hostilities and an end to war casualties. We are also happy to be instrumental in helping financially a number of Eastern University students affected by the hostilities.

Sincerely,

Priyan



## God's guidance...Camp & Carols

### Camp:

As an NSE we decided to have a sort of a leadership camp because some of our students are not aware of their role in their respective universities. Later we decided that we should focus more on the new students in the University. Therefore we decided to have a camp especially for the students who have newly joined the universities so that the students can understand their role and ministry in their universities so that they will become good leaders in the future.

God was with us and guiding us from the word "GO" for the camp. The camp committee did not have many students who have experience in organizing camps. It was a new experience for each and everyone in the camp committee. No one was sure what to do. However, God raised the right persons at the right time to handle the organizing.

The theme of the camp was "Transition". The camp was held from the 27th of November to the 29th November in "Arunodaya centre" in Athurugiriya.

God was with every speaker in the camp. Through the speakers God spoke to the students and taught us a lot of new things. We were worried about the worship sessions. God was with the worship leaders and worship sessions. We had a nice camp site in Athurugiriya. Also God gave us good food. The games and the camp fire also went very well.

At a point we were not sure how many students will be coming on camp. We were not even sure whether 25 students will come on camp. However, in the end 35 students participated from Colombo, Sri Jayewardenepura, Moratuwa and Kelaniya Universities. There were also 4 pre-university students.

As a whole the camp went well and students were able to learn new things, identify their role in the Universities and were also able to make new friends and enjoy camp.

I like to take this opportunity to thank all the staff workers for leading us and encouraging us, and the camp committee for putting their full effort to make this camp a success.

I pray that the students who participated in the camp will use the things they learnt and their new experiences gained in the

camp to glorify God's name in their respective Universities and also be better disciples through identifying their roles in the University.

### Carols:

Initially as a fellowship we didn't plan on doing carols this time because some faculties were planning to have separate carols and we didn't have enough number of students. The Catholic Student Movement of University of Colombo approached me and asked whether UCCF can join them and do carols this time. It was a surprise for us. We never expected this approach from the Catholic student movement. We decided to join hands with them. We decided to sing two songs in the carols service and we wanted to sing songs which have clear messages. We chose one Sinhala and one English song.

The Senior Student Councilor has asked the Catholic Student Movement to involve the UCCF in the carol service. The Senior Student Councilor got to know UCCF through the poster campaign we were planning to do earlier this year.

We could not practice a lot because of time clashes. Therefore I was really worried whether we will be able to sing the songs well. I kept my trust only in God. God was with us. We were able to sing the songs well and the carols went well. It was totally a different experience for me. I thank God for giving that opportunity too.

Through these activities God helped me to get close to him and He also helped me to understand that if we trust Him, we can do anything.

P.S. Romesh  
UCCF

**Please find Pictures  
on camp "Transition"  
on the last page**





## BOOK REVIEWS

### True Love in a World of False Hope — by Robbie Castleman

Reclaiming God's desire for sexual relationships will never be easy. People love talking about sex and relationships but often young people today have no clear vision for their sexual life or sexual relationships. In truth, gluttony and drunkenness is as a serious as sexual misconduct but the nature of the sexuality that we have been created with, makes us suffer much more in sexual relationships even long after it is over.

Knowing the ideal and what is expected may help when dating, and may even help to take measures not to fall into sin. But giving one's life over to Christ does not mean that one will not fall into sexual sin. It is helpful to know before one falls into sin the consequences and where one can turn to in search for help.

Some sexual sins may have occurred before one gives him/her self to Christ. How do

you deal with these and how does one confide in one's partner? In any relationship, especially in friendships, it is important to be honest with each other about one's desires, feelings and tendencies if misunderstandings are to be minimal.

The author draws heavily from her own life and experience of working with university students and youth. She deals with flirting, kissing, touching, sexual intercourse, emotional fornication, masturbation and pornography; how it leaves us disappointed and guilty even long after we have been forgiven and have acknowledged that we are forgiven.

What does real love look like and what do redeemed rebels look like? A very down-to-earth book which I recommend to read for dating couples and singles who will one day tie the knot or may perhaps are considering to be single.

Review by Noeline Prins

### A review on The Busy Christians guide to busyness by Tim Chester

If being busy is your THING and if you have always thought it was a big deal then I recommend this book to you. The author has written the book in such a way that it grabs the attention of the laziest of readers. The author addresses our priorities and redirects it into glorifying God without pursuing the desires of our heart. I am a person who wants to handle many tasks during a day just to feel I've accomplished a lot. Maybe me typing this book review is

part of that whole accomplishment mania. Rarely would I say 'no' to someone because I would like to feel that I'm important. The author addresses this by saying, "we don't want to rest

because we want to be indispensable. We don't want to stop being productive because our identities are rated in activity and accomplishment". What else is there for me to say, clean bowled. Are you a perfectionist who doesn't admit it but still wants everything done perfect. The author argues that perfectionism makes a person feel busy. The pareto rule explains that only 20% of ones time is needed to achieve 80% of the task and the efficiency diminishes. So maybe 80% is ok because humans are limited beings which neither you or I are open to accept. It defines success as being faithful to one's belief system and questions the way we limit spiritual activities to church work. Sometimes we find ourselves too busy because of random church work and we try to please God to the extent that even God doesn't require so much of us. Overall its highly practical and easy to read. Enjoy!



පමා වූණක් මවෝ, බලවූද අපි

ප්‍රශ්න සමුදායක් අප හමුවේ තබමින්, නිම වී යන “මව” චිත්‍රපටය ශ්‍රී ලංකාවේ තිරගත වූයේ 2008 ඔක්තෝබර් මාසයේදීය. දැවැන්ත ප්‍රචාරක යන්ත්‍රණයක් සහිතව එවකට තිර ගත වූ “අබා” චිත්‍රපටය හමුවේ, බොහෝ ප්‍රේක්ෂකයන්ගේ අවධානය “මව” වෙත යොමු නොවීය. පසුව බොහෝ දෙනෙකු පැවසූයේ “මව” ට අප සැලකූවා මදි බවය.

පසු ගිය පෝය දින සැසි වාරයකදී, අප “මව” චිත්‍රපටය නරඹා ඒ ගැන සාකච්ඡා කළෙමු. ඒ සාකච්ඡාව පාදක කරගෙන මෙම ලිපිය සකස් වී ඇත.

“මව” චිත්‍රපටය උබෙටෝ පැස්ලෝති, කොන්ට්ටා අයරෝල්ඩ් වැනි විදේශික නිෂ්පාදකයන් සමඟ ප්‍රසන්න චිත‍්‍රාගේ (අධ්‍යක්ෂ), රුවන්ති වික්‍රෝ (තිර රචනය), ඇතුළු සෙසු ශ්‍රී ලාංකික කලා කරුවන් රැසකගේ සහභාගිත්වයෙන්, සත්‍ය සිදුවීමක් ඇසුරෙන් නිමැවුණු චිත්‍රපටයකි.

එහි කතා නායකයා ‘ස්ටැන්ලි’ (ධර්මප්‍රිය බයස්) ඔහු කොළඹ තදාසන්න, මුඩුකකු පරිසරයක ජීවත් වන්නෙකි. පදික වේදිකාවේ පළතුරු විකුණන ඔහුට හරි හමන් ආදායමක් නැත. මල්ලි හා ආච්චලා දෙදෙනා ජීවත් කළ යුතුය. ගෙවල් කුළු ගෙවිය යුතුය. ඔහු අතින් මේ වගකීම් ගිලි හි යන අයුරු, මල්ලි පාසැල් ගමන නවතා කුළු වැට්ට යාමෙන්ද, ගෙවල් අයිතිකරු ගෙඩි වහලය ගලවා ගෙන යාමෙන්ද මනාව නිරූපනය වේ. යහපත් අධ්‍යාපනයක් ලැබීම මෙම ආර්ථික ප්‍රශ්න වලින් ගොඩ ඒමට මගක් වේ යයි සිතන ස්ටැන්ලි, මල්ලි ගේ අධ්‍යාපන කටයුතු ගැන උනන්දු වුවත් තම මූල්‍යම නොහැකියාව ඊට බාධාවක් වේ.

ස්ටැන්ලි යනු කම්මැලියකු නොවේ. යහපත් ජීවන රටාවක් හිමි කර ගැනීමට ආශා ඇත්තෙකි. අධිෂ්ඨානශීලිය. ඔහුගේ දැස් වේදනාවෙන්ද, බලාපොරොත්තු කඩවීම් වලින්ද, වෙනසින්ද බර වී ඇත. කළකිරීම් හා නොසළකා හැරීම් නිසා අරමුණක් නැති ස්ටැන්ලිගේ දැස් දෙස බැලීම ද වේදනාත්මකය. මේ සියළුම ප්‍රශ්න සමුදායෙන් මිදීමට විදේශ රැකියාවක පිහිට පතන ස්ටැන්ලි, කබලෙන් ලිපිට වැටෙන්නේ වංචනික තැරැව්කරුවකු වන ‘රුවන්’ (මහේන්ද්‍ර පෙරේරා) ගේ ශොඳුරක් වීම හේතුවෙනි. දෙවනුව තම හොඳම මිතුරා වන ‘මනෝජී’ (ගිහාන් ඩි වික්‍රෝ) සමඟ ජර්මනියට යාමට කරන උත්සාහය ව්‍යවර්ත වන්නේ තම විසා අයදුම්පත් ප්‍රතික්ෂේප වීම හේතුවෙනි.

රැකියාවක් සඳහා ජර්මනියට පලා යාමට ගන්නා ඔවුන් ගේ තෙවන උත්සාහය වංචනික නමුත් බුද්ධියෙන් හා අධිෂ්ඨානශීලිත්වයෙන් පූර්ණය. ඔවුන් ගේ ප්‍රයත්නයන් විටෙක සමාජ සම්මතයන්ට පටහැනි වුවද ඔවුන්ගේ සාමූහික හැගීම් ඉතා ඉහළය. අවසානයේ දී “ශ්‍රී ලංකා හැඟීම් බෝල” කණ්ඩායම ලෙස විසිතුන් දෙනෙකුගෙන් යුත් පිරිසක් සමඟ ජර්මනියට යන



ඔවුහු එහි දී අතුරුදහන් වෙති.

ස්වැන්ති ඇතුළු ඔහුගේ සගයන් මුහුණ දෙන හා නිරන්තර වන සමාජ ගැටළු හා අසාධාරණයන් රැසකි. දුගී බව, විරැකියාව, අඩු ඉංග්‍රීසි දැනුම, ගණිතය වැනතිය, මත්පැන් භාවිතය, අශ්ව රේස් ඉන් සමහරකි.

රැකියාවක නිරත වීමට හා ආදායමක් ඉපයීමට සියළු මිනිසුන්ට අයිතියක් ඇත. ස්වැන්ති හා ඔහු ගේ මිතුරා ජර්මනියට යාමට නිත්‍යානුකූලව උත්සාහ කරන්නේ රැකියාවක් ලබා ගැනීමේ අදිටනෙනි. ඔවුන්ගේ අභිලාෂයෙහි වරදක් නැත. එහෙත් ඔවුන්ට විසා නොලැබේ. නමුත් ජර්මන් කාන්තාවන් තම ලිංගික ආශාවන් සන්තර්ජනයට පිරිමි ගණිතය පහසු සොයා ලංකාවට එම සඳහා නිත්‍යානුකූලව විසා බලපත් ලබා ගනී. මෙම ජර්මන් කාන්තාවන්ගේ ශ්‍රී ලංකා ගමන නිත්‍යානුකූලය. ශ්‍රී ලංකා හැනඩ් බෝල් කණ්ඩායමේ ජර්මන් ගමන නීති විරෝධීය?

ඔහුගේ මිතුරන් හා සංසන්දනයේදී ස්වැන්තිගේ අධ්‍යාපන මට්ටම පහළය. ඉංග්‍රීසි දැනුම අඩුය. මේ හේතුවෙන් විවේක තම මිතුරන් මධ්‍යයේදීම හේ අවධානයට ලක් නොවුනු පුද්ගලයකු බවට පත් වේ. නමුත් මේ සියළු මඳි ප්‍රාචීනම මැද ජර්මනියට පලා යාමට ඔවුන් කරන මෙහෙයුමේ තිරය පිටුපස සිට ඔහු දරන නායකත්වය ප්‍රශංසනීය වේ. බොහෝ දෙනා ගේ අවධානය දිනා ගෙන නායකත්වයේ භූමිකාවක් රහස්‍යව රුවන්, සියල්ලන් අමතක කර තනිව පලා යාමට කරන උත්සාහයේදී ස්වැන්ති ගේ මැදිහත් වීම හා ඔහු කරන බලපෑම ඊට කදිම උදාහරණයකි.

ජර්මන් සචාරීය තුළ ශ්‍රී ලංකා හැනඩ් බෝල් කණ්ඩායම වාර්තා කරන එකම ගෝලය

වාර්තා කරන්නේ ස්වැන්ති ගේ උත්සාහයද ඇතුළුවය. නමුත් තම සගයන් ජයග්‍රහණය භුක්ති විදින්නේ රුවන් සමඟ පමණි. ක්‍රීඩා පිටිය තුළ හුදකලා වන ස්වැන්ති තුන්තිම්භනව ඒ දෙස බලා සිටී. පලා යාමට පෙර අවසන් රාත්‍රියේදී සියල්ලන් ශුභ පතන්නේ රුවන්ටය. ස්වැන්ති ව සියල්ලන්ට අමතකය. ඔහු හෝටල් ඇද මත වාඩි වී, බිමට නැඹුරු වී, තම වේදනාත්මක දෙනෙත් සහවා තැබීමට උත්සාහ කරයි. අවසානයේ රුවන් ඔහුට ශුභ පතයි. සියල්ලන්ට ස්වැන්තිව මතක් වන්නේ එවිටය. මෙය සමාජය තුළ සුලබව දක්නට ඇති කාරණයකි. යම් පුද්ගලයකුගේ වෙනස හා කැපවීම වෙනුවෙන් ලැබිය යුතු කීර්ති ප්‍රශංසා හිමි වන්නේ, එතරම් කැප වීමක් නැතත්, සමාජය හෝ කණ්ඩායම තුළ කැපී පෙනෙන පෞරුෂත්වයක් හිමි වෙනත් පුද්ගලයන්ටය.

චිත්‍රපටයෙහි ගෙනහැර දක්වන සංකීර්ණ සමාජ ප්‍රශ්න යේසුස්වහන්සේ දේශනා කළ යහපත් සමාර්තයා උපමා කතාව තුළ හෝ සාකච්ඡාවක් කතාන්දරය තුළ ලඝුකොට දක්විය නොහැක. නමුත් අප විසින් කරන ලද සාකච්ඡාවේ දී සමාර්තයා හා සාකච්ඡාස්ථ ගැන සඳහන් වුණි.

ස්වැන්ති ඇතුළු ඔහුගේ මිතුරන් කැළ විවිධාකාරය. ඔවුන් දුප්පතුන්, මුඩුක්ක වාසින්, මත්පැන් ලෝලීන්, පිරිමි ගණිකාවන්, කුණු හරප කථා කරන්නන්, කෙරාටිකයන්, වැදගම්මක් නැති ටුවින් හෝ වෙති. ඔවුන්ට මේ සමාජය තුළ තත්වයක් හෝ පිළිගැනීමක් නැත. ඒ දවස සාකච්ඡාස්ථ එබින්නේය. නමුත් යේසුස්වහන්සේ ඔහුට

ප්‍රේම කළසේක. එම ප්‍රේමය ඔහුගේ ජීවිතය වෙනස් කිරීමට හේතු විය. අප ස්වැන්ති ඇතුළු මිතුරු කැළ වෙත දෙව ප්‍රේමය දක්වීමට සූදානම්ද? අපගේ ප්‍රේමය, ලෙන්ගතු කම ඔවුන්ට අත්‍යවශ්‍යය.

සමාර්තයා කථාවේ දී තුවාල ලත් තැනැත්තාට උපකාර අවශ්‍යව තිබිණි. පුජකයා හා ලෙවියා ඔහු හැර ගියෝය. සමාර්තයා පමණක් ඔහුට උපකාර කළේය, සැබෑ අසල්වැසියෙක් විය. පුජකයා හා ලෙවියා සේ අප ද, ඇද සමාජයේ සිටිනා, අපට උපකාර කළ හැකි මට්ටමේ සිටිය හැකි, ස්වැන්ති ඇතුළු ඔහුගේ මිතුරන් වැනි අයට හැර දමා යනවාද? නැතිනම් සමාර්තයා මෙන් ඔවුන්ට යහපත් අසල්වැසියකු වීමට අප සූදානම්ද.....? යමෙකුට ආයෝජනය කිරීමට මුදල් ඇති නම්, මෙවෙනි තරුණ පිරිස් වෙත රැකියා සම්පාදනය කිරීමේ අරමුණින්, එම මුදල් ආයෝජනය කිරීමෙන්, ඔහුට හෝ ඇයට මෙවන් තරුණ පිරිසගේ යහපත් අසල්වැසියකු විය හැකි නොවේද?

“මව්.” චිත්‍රපටය වර්තමාන සමාජයේ පවත්නා ගැටළු දෙස අප දැස් යොමු කරවන සුළු විශිෂ්ට ගණයේ නිර්මාණයකි. සමාජයේ ඇති සංකීර්ණ ගැටළු ඉතා සංවේදී ලෙසින් ග්‍රහණය කර, කලාත්මකව හා සංයමයකින් යුතුව ඉදිරිපත් කර ඇති අයුරු ප්‍රශංසාත්මකය. ජාත්‍යන්තර සිනමා උළෙලවල් තියෝජනය කරමින් සම්මාන හිමි වුවද, එවන් චිත්‍රපටයකට ශ්‍රී ලංකාවේ දී එතරම් ඉහළ ප්‍රේමාත්මක ප්‍රතිචාරයක් නොලැබීම කණ්ඩායමට කාරණයකි

සුජීවා අමරාගනි (පෙරා ඩී. සී.)

**The Arts-related discussion programme** organised by FOCUS was, for me, a very thought-provoking one. It was divided into two sections: a discussion with Dr. Vinoth Ramachandra in the morning, and a movie in the afternoon. The discussion highlighted many things worth taking into consideration. One was that one cannot compartmentalize one's life into one's “faith” and “everything else”. We were faced with the statement that if a person claims to truly believe in something – be it Christianity, Buddhism, atheism etc., it should logically shape the way the person lives, and interacts with other people. For example, if a person believes that there is no real point to life, but strives to surround himself with things of beauty and find enjoyment, there is created a discrepancy between his faith and his life – which means that there exists a fallacy in one or the other. If a person believes that God (in the form of a perfect being who determines what is right and wrong) does not exist, then they must question where the desire to be good, and their concept of justice and fairness, originates from, and indeed why and how they exist

themselves. The Arts, as well as the Sciences, are modes whereby people seek the truth – be it through experimentation, or through learning about what and how people think. Therefore the idea of truth was a major theme in our discussion. We also examined relativism from a logical point of view. In the modern world, relativism is considered the most diplomatic position to hold: accepting that everyone's views are right, since they are relative to people's backgrounds, etc. We found that, while some beliefs are similar to each other, and can therefore be accepted together, there are others that are mutually exclusive, and that therefore, not all claims to truth can really be accepted as valid. Furthermore, the idea that all roads lead to God assumes the existence of an outsider in a position to make that claim: a position that no human being actually holds. Instead of holding the view that everything that claims to be true, or even the view that nothing that claims to be true is true, we were encouraged to consider learning about the different “truths” that people believe – i.e. the different faiths we come into contact with

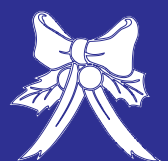
– and consider the logic of the progression of ideas promoted by that particular faith, and come to our own conclusions, and encourage others to come to their conclusions, that way.

The idea of truth continued in the second part of the programme, where we watched the movie “Wag the Dog”: a satire of power, corruption and the blind acceptance of the media's portrayal of the truth. The discussion after the movie also brought out these themes, as well as some deeper symbolic references below the surface.

As an Arts student, I appreciated the way this programme showed the Arts' potential to portray truth or the search for truth, being it in a film like the one we watched, a painting, or even social and political theory. It was this aspect that gave my studies at university a deeper meaning and encouraged me to learn more.

-Shamanthi-





නත්තල් ප්‍රශස්තියක් ....!!

දෙවියන්වහන්සේ මිනිසත් බව ගෙන මෙලොවට ආ සේක. මිනිස් සංස්කෘතියක් තුළ ජීවත් වූ සේක. සැරිසැරු සේක. කොටින්ම දෙවියන්වහන්සේ අප සමඟ වූ සේක.

අපේම කෙනෙක් වූ සේක. නත්තල් කථාන්දරයේ හරය එයයි. නමුත් ශ්‍රී ලංකා ද්විපය තුළ අදටත් “නත්තල් උත්සවය” පිටස්තර වූ ආගන්තුක වූ උත්සවයකි. එය අපේම දෙයක් වී නොමැත. යම් යම් අයුරින් දේශීය සංස්කෘතිය හා මුසු වී තිබුණ ද, එයින් අපට සැහිමකට පත්විය නොහැක.

නත්තල් උත්සවය කෙසේ වෙතත්, සමස්ත ශ්‍රී ලාංකීය කිතුණු සභාව දේශීයත්වයට නැඹුරු වී නොමැති බව සභාවට එරෙහිව නැගෙන ප්‍රබල අවලාදයකි. විටෙක දේශීය සංස්කෘතිය හා මුසු වීමට සභාව දැරූ ප්‍රයත්නයන් නිසා, කිතුණු හර පද්ධතීන් අතිසි බලපෑම් වලට ගොදුරු වූ බවටත්, (තවත් විටෙක එයින් බයිබලයේ සත්‍යතාවයන් නැසුණු බවටත්) නැගෙන තවත් චෝදනාවකි.

මේ සියළු අභියෝග මැද ශ්‍රී ලාංකීය කිතුණු සභාව, දේශීයත්වය කරා යන ගමනට විශ්ව විද්‍යාල කිතුණු සිසුවන් ලෙස අප ද එක් විය යුතුය. පසුගිය දා ජේරාදෙණියේ විශ්ව විද්‍යාලයේ “නත්තල් කැරොල්” දේව මෙහෙයේ දී මේ සම්බන්ධයෙන් අපි සුළු උත්සාහයක යෙදුනෙමු.

දකුණු ඉන්දියානු ආභාෂය ඇතිව සිංහල සංගීත කලාව තුළ දක්නට ඇති ගායනා විශේෂයක් ලෙස “ප්‍රශස්තී ගී” හැඳින්විය හැක. ප්‍රශස්තී ගායනා වර්ග කිහිපයකි.

- 1 රාජ ප්‍රශස්තී
- 2 දේව ප්‍රශස්තී
- 3 භූත ප්‍රශස්තී
- 4 බුද්ධ ප්‍රශස්තී

මෙහිදී රාජ ප්‍රශස්තී, රජ තුමා වර්ණනා කිරීමටත්, දේව



ප්‍රශස්තී, දෙවියන් වර්ණනා කිරීමටත්, භූත ප්‍රශස්තී, ඇසට නොපෙනෙන භූත ගණයා වර්ණනා කිරීමටත්, බුද්ධ ප්‍රශස්තී බුදුන්වහන්සේ වර්ණනා කිරීමටත් යොදා ගෙන ඇත .

සුනේත්‍රා කංකානම්ගේ විසින් රචිත “සංගීත රස ධාරා” නම් ග්‍රන්ථයේ ප්‍රශස්තී ගී සම්බන්ධයෙන් ලියා ඇත්තේ මෙවන් සටහනක්ය.

“දකුණු ඉන්දියා රාජ සභා ආශ්‍රිත ව පැවති ප්‍රශස්තී ගායනා මහනුවර යුගයේ ශ්‍රී ලංකාවේ රාජ සභා ආශ්‍රිත ව ද, ව්‍යාප්ත වූ ගායනා විශේෂයකි. දකුණු ඉන්දියාව සහ ලංකාව අතර පැවති

විවිධ සබඳතා හේතුවෙන් නොයෙකුත් සංස්කෘතිකාංග ලාංකිකයන්ට හිමි වීමේ එක් අවස්ථාවක් වශයෙන් මෙය හඳුන්වා දිය හැකි ය.

රජුට ප්‍රශංසා මුඛයෙන් ගැයෙන මේ ගීතයන් හි අරමුණ වනුයේ රජු සන්නේෂයට පත් කිරීම සහ දිරි ගැන්වීමයි. මෙම ගී රාජ සභා අශ්‍රිතව සිටි වන්දි හට්ටයන් නම් ගායක පිරිස විසින් ගායනා කරන ලදී. අත් රබාන, උඩැක්කිය, පන්නේරු, තාලම්පට වැනි වාද්‍ය භාණ්ඩ සහාය වාද්‍යයන් ලෙස භාවිතා කළ අතර ඒ සමඟ නර්තනයේ ද යෙදිණි. සංස්කෘත ද්‍රව්‍ය වචන මිශ්‍ර භාෂාවකින් ප්‍රශස්තී ගී රචනා වී ඇත. ටීර රස ජනනය කිරීම මෙහි මූල්‍ය පරමාර්ථය වේ.

අපගේ කැරොල් ගායනා මෙහෙයේදී ගායනා කිරීම සඳහා නත්තල් ප්‍රශස්තියක් අපි නිර්මාණය කළෙමු. එහි තනුව පැරකුම්බා සිරිනෙහි අන්තර්ගත “වරමානී ශුභ වර්තේ” ගීතයට අනුව විය. සර්පිනාව, වයලිනය, තබලාව, හා තාලම්පට යන වාද්‍ය භාණ්ඩ අපි භවිතා කළෙමු. පහත දක්වන්නේ අප ගේ ඒ නත්තල් ප්‍රශස්තියයි.

අප ගේ කිතු සමිඳුන් ගේ නාමේ

පසසමු පසසමු අද බැතියෙන් පිරී තුටු හඳකින් මෙලෙසේ

නත්තානේ කුඳු අතරින් හමනා - සීත සුළං රැළි ගත සීත පිනනා

දෙදහස් වසරක් නැකම් කියනා - බෙන්ලෙහෙම් පුරවර කුමරු ඉපැදුනා

මහවැලි නදියේ සුන්දර දසුනා - දෙවිඳුන් දුටු මනහර බව සොබනා

රැ තරු අහසේ බැබළී දිලුනා - සුරතලු ගී ලොව දසන විහිදුනා

මිනිසත් බව ගෙන දිවිඳුන් අතරේ - සමගිය සාමය ලොව වෙත පිදුවේ

නැඳුණු බිඳුණු සිත් සුවපත් වූයේ - දෙවිපිය පෙමෙහි අරුමය රැවිදේ

ජේරා ඩී. සී

## Transition 2009

I thank GOD for giving me the opportunity to join the FOCUS Camp: Transition 2009. The camp was organized mainly for the first year and second year students. As a first year student of University of Moratuwa, it was a great opportunity for me to discover who I am and what my role as

a Christian in the university. I have not been to a camp before, and the FOCUS camp was a new experience to me. The camp was held in Arunodhaya Centre in Athurugiriya. The environment there was really

great, and it was a nice break from all the work and studies. We had 5 sessions during this three day camp. They were based on Identity, Gospel, Work, Disciplines and Relationships. All of them were important to me as a first year university student. Praise and worship times were conducted by different universities. During the quiet times we went through the bible. Really great and challenging games were organized by the FOCUS staff. We really enjoyed our selves during the games. The camp fire was also a wonderful experience. We enjoyed a lot during the camp fire.

I made lot of new friends from different universities, and spent a wonderful time in the camp. I thank and congratulate the camp committee for their wonderful job.

Janith Weerasinghe  
SCFUM





Subject: Rush for Professor...  
Date: Sat, 26 Dec 2009 11:37:26  
From: <weerasinghes@gmail.com>

These past few weeks there has been a scramble among staff in the Universities in Sri Lanka to apply for Professor (owing to the process apparently being made more difficult from 2010)! It highlighted something I had blogged about (in my mostly defunct blog!) sometime ago which can be found at <http://manaskaraya.blogspot.com/2007/11/doing-research-in-sri-lanka.html>

While some of my reasons have changed a bit since, I'd like to hear your response to it...

BTW, I do apologize for any who may have applied... my views are obviously coloured by my experience and may not apply to you! And of course I have deep respect for the Professors within the FOCUS group (as well as several outside it): as you know, all Sikhs are Singh's but not all Singh's are Sikh...

Ruvan Weerasinghe

## 🌿 - Reflections

Tuesday, November 27, 2007

Why I'm not (and won't be) a Professor  
A cursory glance at the world's dictionaries (or indeed Wikipedia) confirms that the title Professor does not carry a unique definition. In France for instance, my daughter's pre-school teacher was Professeur Gendt. In other countries such as the USA, Japan and several others, it refers to someone who is a member of faculty of a college or university. There are also various other definitions around the world ranging from referring to a person who is on tenure to the head of an academic department.

I must confess that in all of these senses, I am a Professor and am often referred to as such by various communities that meet at International meetings and conferences for the past decade or so (I used to correct them at the beginning but realised its futility as most of them couldn't understand what I was making a fuss about!).

In most commonwealth countries however, the term has a more specific meaning. It is the highest position within the hierarchy of academics in a university

or college. The Latin term itself refers to a person who professes to be an expert in some art or science, a teacher of highest rank. This highest of meanings is what characterises the definition in these countries, including Sri Lanka.

Unfortunately, much of what constitutes that high ideal is missing in academics who are conferred that title in our university system today. Of course many of them possibly do profess to be experts in some art or science and so would qualify under the Latin definition (though whether they are so, is often unclear since the term expert itself has no unique meaning!). I do not consider myself as someone who has dedicated his life to research and academia to an extent that fits this lofty definition. To be sure, like everyone else, till around 2002, I did march along that road to promotion, collecting points to earn my right to be called a Professor, as could be seen by my online CV (in a frozen state since then). I wrote academic papers, presented them at conferences, supervised research projects, did my bit of administration, spent sabbaticals in prestigious research centres and reformed my teaching. I even totted up my points to see if I had enough to be at least an Associate Professor!

The current Professor promotion scheme in Sri Lanka, is so minutely specified, that it can be targetted by any academic without any interest in research or teaching leave alone the lofty ideal of contributing to the global body of knowledge! Indeed anything in life that is so tightly specified often falls into the pitfall that renders the system quite useless. In case of doubt, consider whether we really are identifying all those who are really gifted learners in our Grade 5 scholarship exam – or is it only those who can retain the most from a particular year in school (Grade 5) that is turning out to be as good a definition of hell for them as we can devise!

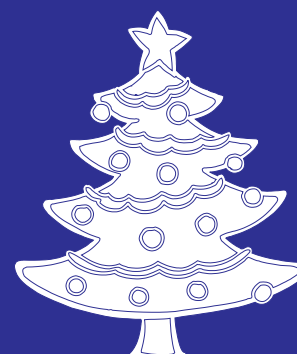
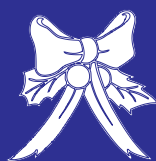
As someone has said, in most cases, we value what we can measure (read: reading, writing and arithmetic – or for that matter: quantitative, analytical and verbal; and call it IQ) rather than trying to measure what we should value (read: kinesthetic, spatial, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal skills also;

including measures such as EQ).

All this is not to refute the claim that Sri Lanka has indeed produced some men and women who have dedicated their lives in the pursuit of knowledge and its sharing. Indeed there are even a handful to be found in the universities these days! There are also several who were never bestowed the title since they were either not in university employment or their contributions were not recognized at the time.

This brings me to my top 10 reasons for not being (and not striving to be) a Professor.

10. Some of the best researchers in my field, and many other fields I am aware of, around the world are simply Mr. (and some Dr.)
9. Professor is nothing more (and arguably, nothing less) than a designation in a university – not a qualification to be flaunted in public for all purposes
8. If professors call themselves Prof. why not directors, Dir., managers, Man., executives, Exec. or indeed architects, Arch., philosophers, Phil. or composers, Comp.?
7. Whether one is a Distinguished Senior Professor at Harvard, MIT or Stanford, or an Associate Professor (or Assistant in some cases) at one of the many tens or hundreds of colleges of a little known university in some far flung country, your title would be the same, simply Prof.
6. The fraternity (of Professors) is not one particularly honouring to belong to anymore in Sri Lanka – check out any university Senate here these days!
5. The quest to give yourself in service, and that of collecting points to become a professor are not always aligned – often one is done at the expense of the other
4. The title Prof. is often used as a title of elitism rather than one signifying a dedication to a life spent in the creation and dissemination of knowledge
3. Professorship has made most who posses it become conceited and puffed up rather than making them humble and indebted to the





society that nurtured them (as I personally believe it should)

2. The title Professor is aspired to more often than not by those who rely on it as their main source of identity (which I personally am not in need of)  
And my top reason for not being (nor wanting to be) a Professor is:

I. I do not consider myself as having spent my life (or spending what's left of it) in the pursuit of knowledge creation and dissemination the way the masters of scientific research did in the past (nor I suspect are many of my colleagues who have joined that fraternity or are frantically striving to!)

## Uthum Memories

**From: Kumar Sinniah**

He has been in our thoughts and prayers and I wonder if other GCF's have some wonderful memories to share online about Uthum.

One of my fond memories of Uthum is meeting him at the airport in Zurich on my way to Sri Lanka. I saw this guy walking towards me with a long umbrella in his hand. He was the only person inside the airport who was carrying an umbrella. As he came closer, I realized it was Uthum and I told him that it wasn't raining inside the airport for him to carry the umbrella. Then he said, agh... but it is raining in Colombo! Sure enough when we landed it was pouring. That incident seeing him inside the airport pacing with his long umbrella still cracks me up. Always a great guy.

**From: Evan Ekanayake**

The day that Priyans Father died i was standing at the gate of no 21 A Alwis place and wondering where the crowd was and looking lost when a sort of oldish guy walked up too and spoke in a really polite and articulate way to me asking where the Dias funeral house was, I said i was also looking for it and then some one pointed

it out to us. We walked down together to Priyans sisters house further down the road and talked a bit. He struck me as extremely polished though in those famous sandals ( cloth bag??) and simple clothing i'd got used to seeing on some of the older GCFers. When we got to the Dias funeral house we parted company without knowing who each was.

I was later called and introduced to this same person by Priyan. He was Uthum Herath. Once again we chatted in Priyans sisters garden, and he told me about the early days when FOCUS came in to existence and i told him about what was happening currently. Of course .. those were the days when we were thinking dreaming eating and drinking the FOCUS HOME so ( unsurprisingly) i went on about all that to him..that was the first and last time i spoke to Uthum Herath and i was totally impressed and proud to think such a person knew the lord and was also a early associate of FOCUS..

I saw him once more at the FOCUS and GCF family day held in Moratuwa ..( or some were south) where again he shared a short funny and eloquent memoir of his time in FOCUS.

Uthum, I felt so privileged to even have had one conversation with you. I will continue where we left off in when i meet you heaven.

**From: Jude Fernando**

What a week! I have very good memories of Uthum. I still remember two camps (Trinity and Augsta Hill) where I slept next to his bed. I cracked so many practical jokes on him. We laughed all night. He was so funny, but serious. Every now and then I used to see him. I know how much his colleagues at CB loved him. Last week was very interesting. So many of us prayed for him and got closer to God. Sometime, it is other peoples suffering that get us rethink our relationship with God and gets us closer to Him. So we thank God for Uthum's life.

I think Uthum is the first to go in our FOCUS family (of course young Ratnaraja and Two killed in Guruthalawa St. Thomas, but Uthum was with focus from early days)

So Uthum.....as Evan says, lets meet at the place where we all want to be.

**From Amal**

My last recollection of Uthum was at

Shello's two months ago. He was in a jocular mood as usual, whispering profound statements on the lighter side of my efforts in transport!

A casual conversation I had then has led to a meeting next Friday where Central Bank employees have invited NTC to introduce the CityLiner office transporter to them. But like many of the things he initiated this too he will not be alive to see. Im sure we will live to discover more of his contributions as time unfolds.

Of many things I can recall, I think what stands out is the example of how he did things quietly and unobtrusively. At times, many of us found his solitude and privacy irksome as we knew his potential to contribute in wider spaces. But that was Uthum. In fact the very day he had fallen sick, we were expecting him at the Policy and Governance Group meeting. Again he was one person who we almost always missed at those meetings.

If anyone had met Uthum so would you have met his beloved umbrella. When Premila broke the news to Aloka our daughter, she immediately recalled him as Uthum the Umbrella Uncle! Yes, in my abc too U stands for Uthum - that name was really synonymous with an umbrella.

GCF has lost more than a member. It has lost a unique dimension to a ministry as a Christian in Sri Lanka. I thank God for having introduced me to Uthum early in my life and for his example of silent but significant service.

**From: Premkumar Selliah**

It was late 80s where we used to meet for the monthly meeting of SOCS in Colombo. After every meeting Uthum had the habit of taking some of us to a thosai Kadaai to have Thosai or Iddli that is a normal Jaffna meal. Since I had to travel all the way from Anuradhapura, I was a regular participant of that meal. I can vaguely remember Sunil Wickramasooriya too had joined in one or two. Many of us are not aware that Uthum had been an early Jaffna university student. That would be the reason for his liking towards Jaffna food.

After so many years I had the opportunity of meeting Uthum (of course with the umbrella in his hands) at the GCF get together at the AQUA, Moratuwa and we shared the sweet memories of the SOCS and the meal thereafter. If my memory serves right, he concluded his speech there by saying "...and that is the genesis of FOCUS



and my involvement with it."

Though I am sad on his departure, I thank God for Uthum for his simpleness, for his commitment towards the FOCUS and GCF at that time.

May the good Lord be with the family members of Uthum at this time of sorrow and console them.

#### From Nilhan Niles

On Friday afternoon I had a conversation with someone who stated his opinion that the more educated and "qualified" a person was, the less humane and more arrogant he or she became. This with examples from a number of mutual acquaintances.

Friday night I saw Sumathy's mail on Uthum's passing, and I remembered this conversation. If my friend had met Uthum he would have speedily revised his opinion. A more humane and humble person I have yet to meet.

My earliest memories of Uthum was when I was a schoolboy. Uthum was a visiting preacher at KMC, and generally disinterested though I was at the sermon, Uthum's sermons generally kept my attention, and I remember being impressed with his clear-cut ideas and his sense of humour.

Many years later I had the privilege of making his acquaintance during my occasional visits to the Mt. Lavinia Methodist Church, where he worshipped regularly. I don't remember an umbrella, but Uthum did have many other Father Brown-like qualities. His gentle smile, his humble bow (even to those who were much junior to him), his quiet words of encouragement, and his no-nonsense attitude towards Scripture and the core Christian beliefs (which I remember coming out clearly in a sermon he preached at an Easter Cantata at the Dehiwala Methodist Church) stand out in my memory.

Uthum has gone to be with the Lord. We who are left behind can give thanks for this little giant, who showed us so well that it was possible to rise to great heights professionally and still walk humbly with our God.

#### From Dileni

Suresh and I met Uthum for the first time at a FOCUS camp when he had just returned from the U.S. after higher studies. Soon after that we were going to the U.S. ourselves, for post grad studies. We were shocked and dismayed when the Visa

officer refused to give us visas. We both had close connections (which we had declared) with people who had gone to the U.S. as students and changed visa status. Our strategy was to get letters from people we knew who had gone to the U.S. and elsewhere as students and had returned and were serving Sri Lanka. Uthum, though he barely knew us, willingly wrote us a letter to give the visa officer. (Ranil Abayasekara was someone else who did the same!).

Later, Suresh got to know Uthum better when he worked in the same building. On a day that I happened to be visiting Suresh, Uthum came down (or up?) in the middle of a busy schedule to say hi. I was admiring the view of the sea from the window and had my back to the door, when a quiet voice said "We charge for the view, you know". I cannot stop wishing that he were this side of the horizon still, at a time when his contribution here matters so much.

I still have the email he wrote when I asked him to contribute to the FOCUS 25th anniversary book--reluctantly declining due to his hectic schedule, but expressing the hope that the volume would be most comprehensive.

#### From Harsha

One of the most remarkable features of Uthum Herat was that there was something memorable in almost every single encounter one had with him! Here are a few highlights from my experience.

a) When Uthum was attending Jaffna University, and came back home to Mount Lavinia on vacation, he would periodically drop into my home for a chat. I was struck by the frequency of his visits back to Mount Lavinia, and asked him how often universities were on vacation. He explained that the university had three scheduled vacations per year, and an innumerable number of unscheduled vacations called strikes!

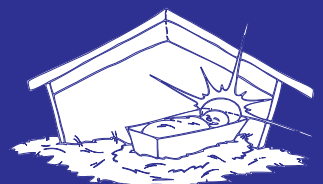
b) When I completed my GCE A/L and was entering university, I went to see Uthum at his home to ask him about university life. One of the things he said was that "you will find, when you go to university, that the world of S.Thomas College is only a small slice of Sri Lankan life. The university will show you just how small that slice is, and how broad and varied Sri Lanka really is." This was, of course, perfectly true. And I remember this comment, all these years later (let me leave it to the mathematicians in GCF to calculate the exact number of years!).

c) One day, after I graduated from Colombo University, Uthum (who was then working in the Central Bank and whom I had not met for a few years) suddenly visited me at home (complete with his umbrella!). He explained that he had read the university degree results in the newspapers, and called on me that very evening to offer his congratulations. This was, of course, typical of his thoughtfulness.

d) When Uthum was at the IMF, and I travelled periodically to Washington for work, we used to meet up once every trip for dinner. Uthum would remark that the pace of life in Sri Lanka had become more hectic than in the U.S. As evidence in support of his statement, he would point out that we met more often in Washington than in Sri Lanka!

e) Uthum, in recent years, would come for meetings of the Mount Lavinia chess club, provided they were held in Mount Lavinia, and not as far afield as, say, Dehiwela or Ratmalana! On his last visit, when the chess club met at my home in August, I showed him a photograph I had copied, dating from about the 1920s, which had a group of ladies in front of the Kurunegala Residency. One of the ladies was our common ancestress, Uthum's great-grandmother and my great-great-grandmother. After looking at the photograph he remarked that, "as is to be expected, our common ancestress is the ugliest lady in the picture!"

f) Finally, my earliest story. Uthum used to play for the S.Thomas College senior chess team, when I was still a small boy wearing blue shorts to school and playing for the S.T.C. junior chess team. The senior Royal - Thomian chess match was scheduled to be played one Saturday, at Royal. I was walking towards S.T.C. one day to attend chess practice and to ask the seniors whether I could come that week-end and watch the match, when I met Uthum on Hotel Road, just outside the school. He told me that "you will have to take my place in the chess team for the match against Royal, as I have to go with the College S.C.M. to attend a CISC meeting on Saturday". (Uthum was the Secretary of the S.T.C. Student Christian Movement). I protested that I could not take his place in the team, but he brushed the protests aside, stating that the CISC meetings were very important. And so, he opened the door for me into the S.T.C. chess team!



# Fellowship News and Prayer points

## UCCF

We have been meeting on Thursdays at 12 in the science faculty for our Bible studies. We are now doing studies on the Gospel of Luke. The study on the Gospel of Luke challenges us a lot. The life of Jesus in this earth, his teachings and how Jesus trained the disciples challenged us. These study series also helps us to identify the qualities we should have to become true disciples.

We have got some new students for the fellowship from the first year. We thank God for them.

We did a joint carol programme with the Catholic Students Movement. It was held on the 17th of December in the UCSC auditorium. We sang two songs in the carols. It was a new experience for the members in the fellowship to work with the Catholic Students Movement. We thank God for giving the opportunity.

We participated in the "Transition" camp 2009 in Athurugiriya. It was the first camp for some of us. The camp helped us to identify our roles in the University. The first session was on identity and it helped us to identify our identity in the University. The next session was on the Gospel. It taught us what the real Gospel is. The session on work helped us to learn what the bible says about work. The session on disciplines helped us to understand our weaknesses in our spiritual life and it helped us to rectify and come close to God. The final session was on relationships and it helped us to understand about the relationships.

Prayer requests:

- o Pray for the new students who joined us, so that they will continue being witnesses in the University.
- o Please pray for our fellowship so that more members will come for the

fellowship meetings thus enabling us to be disciples and to carry out our ministry well in the University.

## SCFUM

End of another eventful year, many things have been done through out the

year as the Student Christian Fellowship of University of Moratuwa. We are thankful to God as a fellowship for the guidance on this blessed year. Within the year we carried out events that allowed us to get to know various groups within the University. One such event was the collection of essential items for the IDP's at Vavuniya. In that we were able to get the help of many student groups of the university and to convey the message of unity at others need.

The fellowship also had to face few challenging times in this period of time. Major one was the passing out of almost all senior members. It was time of concern for us as there was a lack of experienced students. But our God being a providing God, helped us through the experienced staff of FOCUS who helped us in many ways. We thank and praise God for the new people who joined the fellowship within the past couple of months. We were able to find many contacts from both the new batch and the senior students. Many of them were very interested in the fellowship and were encouraging to work with. We had our AGM on December 17th 2009 with the help of members and especially the involvement of the lecturers. In that it was evident that the lecturers were very helpful and interested to help us with their experience, even with their very tight schedules. Many new faces were added to the new committee. But from the past few months experiences, it is clear that they all have the passion of being a witness for God.

The Fellowship currently meetings on Thursdays for the Bible studies and discussions, are held on various issues of society. We have started the book of 'ACTS' as a series of studying. For the Past couple of months, Wednesday's morning prayer time could not be continued as we usually did. But with the new members committing themselves to the fellowship we are trying to start it as soon as possible.

We praise the Lord for giving us the opportunity to serve Him in the University. Through all these activities we are able to gain experience as individuals to choose the correct path for our lives. As the new year begins we are hoping for a fresh start. A Program to express our appreciation to the minor staff and a few other programs are in the list for the new year. For these we are praying to God for the best of the

personal commitment from our members. We are also praying for members who are going through some tough times. Yet again we thankfully praise God for all the blessings we had through out.

## JAYAWARDANAPURA

We thank God for the past year which was filled with activity and bonding. We are thankful for the 10 new first years that joined last semester from which about 6 attend regularly for meetings.

We now have around 20 members in our fellowship, and about 10-12 members attend regularly for meetings.

We want thank God for the FOCUS staff who continued to work with us last year. Especially want to thank God about Sachindra aiya who guided us and helped us in so many ways.

We organized a Christmas Program for the first time last year. We thank God for making it a success and for everyone who contributed generously.

Prayer points

- o Pray that more members will join the fellowship and continue the university ministry in J'pura.
- o Thank God for the new contacts found from the science and management faculty.
- o Pray that God will give every member in the fellowship the ability to lead a bible study.

## JUSCF

We thank God for helping us to meet new students and bring them into our fellowship. We, as one body, got together to build up His kingdom in the university. There are more than twenty five students on their wheels to build up His Kingdom in the university. As usual we gather twice a week regularly (Tuesdays and Thursdays). We have half a day program once a month. From last month the university has provided us with a convenient room known as "Meditation hall" in the students' complex. We were using a lecture hall known as "old canteen block". We are planning to have a Christmas program in the university chapel in January. As most of the students are to appear for the examination, we are unable to hold it in December. On the last Thursday of every month a guest speaker is invited. We visit and encourage a few students those who are going to enter the university next year.



They will be joining our fellowship. We thank God for making it possible to have a GCF meeting after few years. We do hope this will continue regularly.

We thank God for His leading and for providing for the needs of our fellowship throughout this year

We thank God for helping us to hold a camp in September 2009 after few years

We thank God for bringing new students through our visits and efforts

We thank God for the new senior treasurer

We thank God for providing a convenient room for our usage (we had been praying for this for a long time)

We thank God for all the people who came from Colombo and ministered us

We thank God for FOCUS and its generosity which provides timely help to the students who are affected by the ethnic war

We thank God for easing our transport between Jaffna and other parts of Sri Lanka. We hope it will be a golden opportunity for our fellowship

Pray for...

Pray for our freshers who have just joined our fellowship. They are regular for our meetings and much involved in our ministry. Their names are, Srikanth, Kumarasingam, Maryistala, Lenin, Ruffna Nicholas, Ravikumar, Piratheepan and Menaha

Pray for the program which we are going to hold in January 2010

Pray for the new student leaders and core group as they take their responsibilities as a new committee soon

Pray for the students who are passing

## SGM and Induction Service of Savithri Sumanthiran as our new General Secretary

Will be held on  
6th February 2010  
at

Kollupitiya Methodist Church

The SGM will be at 9.30am followed by the Induction service thereafter.

*Please inform other GCFers and join us on this special day!*

out this year. Eesan, an active member of our fellowship, and Dayany, our organist, are passing out this year.

Pray for the commitment and regular attendance of the students. (Even though we have 25 students in our fellowship only half of them attend the meetings regularly)

Pray for our Christmas visits. We have scheduled to visit all the students of our fellowship and a get together to build up our relationships with each other.

### KELANIYA

We thank God for His blessings throughout the past years and the ways in which He has used us to share the gospel in our University. With the new batch joining, two new students have also become part of our fellowship. We have been able to meet up a few times and we look forward to the coming year in which we will be able to spend more time expounding the word, sharing and praying. Please uphold us in your prayers as we prepare to face new challenges in the coming year.

### PeraDC / PUSCM

I am really thankful to Jesus for the blessings that He has given Pera DC through this year. After a long vacation, university started around September for a new academic year 2009/2010. For the past twenty five years we were not a registered group & PUSCM was registered on behalf of the non Christian students, because of that it was a bit of difficult to organize things officially under the name of Pera DC. So we decided to register ourselves as PUSCM. We arranged an AGM in October for the re-registration of PUSCM. However, only 20 people could meet that day. So we decided to have a special AGM on the following week. It was amazing to experience God's grace & it was a successful meeting as we could get enough signatures for the re registration. In this Academic year, there was an Orientation program organized by the Faculty of science for the freshers. We presented some of our last year activities as PUSCM. However, most of the Christian students were catholic. Therefore no one joined us from Faculty of Science except for 4 new students. 2 students from the Dental faculty, 1 from the Medical Faculty & 1

from Engineering faculty. What was special here was that the one who joined from the Dental Faculty converted as a Christian in March 2009. We are really happy for her.

As usual we meet for Bible studies on Tuesdays. These days we are studying Colossians. The Second week of December we had our Carol Service. By God's grace the service was conducted well. Many non-Christian students participated & a group of people came from Moratuwa & Colombo Fellowships and spent some time with us. We are really happy & thankful to them. We are also thankful to our GCF staff for their assistance and cooperation.

### Staff News

Praise God for the great blessings he has given us, Savithri Sumanthiran will be appointed General Secretary in the coming month of February. We thank God for the leadership given by Priyan during the years and the other responsibilities borne by the council as well. We look forward to a new decade of ministry in FOCUS.

A new female-staff worker, Achini a recent graduate from the University of Colombo management Faculty is expected to join staff in January. Her addition will be a strength to the existing staff team.

Thank God for Sachindras work in FOCUS. He recently attended the Urbana '09 conference in the USA, as a speaker on "Climate Change: A South Asian perspective". He has also received an appointment at ICTA (Information and Communication Technology Agency). We praise God for the work he has done in FOCUS as staff, and wish him the best as he goes to work at ICTA.

The Regional General Secretary meeting will be taking place during the end of January, we pray for Yohan who will attend behalf of FOCUS.







**Camp FIRE**

**discuSSioNs**  
**FOCUS**

**National Camp 2009**

**FOOD**



**sInGiNg**



**Ice bReAkeRs**



**ChILLiNg tIMEs**

