

Spotlight on CHARIS Affiliate Couples For Christ

Established since 1987



Now in its 25th year in Singapore, Couples For Christ (CFC) has come a long way from when it was first introduced to our island nation through the efforts of a couple, Peter & Mary Low, from the Church of Nativity, who was looking to serve together, as a family unit. Their search led them to a Ministry founded in 1981 in Manila, which had initiated a new approach to evangelizing married couples, and they soon had the same going in Singapore.

Over the years, CFC has grown into a worldwide Ministry, present in over 150 countries, and is recognised by the Vatican as a Private International Association of the Faithful. CFC's vision is to build 'families in the Holy Spirit, renewing the face of the earth' and its mission is 'to bring good tidings to the poor'. It offers a range of ministries for its members to serve in. Amongst these are:

- **CFC Family Ministries** which are communities relating to one's life stage e.g. Kids For Christ, Youth For Christ, Singles For Christ, Handmaids of the Lord and Servants of the Lord.
- **Answering the Cry of the Poor (ANCOP)** which caters to the poor both physically – through building physical shelters and Child Sponsorship Programmes; and spiritually – through evangelising and sharing the Word of God.



In Singapore, CFC is registered as a Religious Society, and has more than 1,500 members. It is based out of Catholic Archdiocesan Education Centre (CAEC) at Highland Road. Patrick Thong, its National Director, has served in CFC since 1997 and shares that the fellowship CFC provides through regular household prayer meetings - a basic structure of CFC which is a key driving force to keeping members engaged and active. These household meetings extend to service projects, enabling members to reach out to the community at large in an organised way, to evangelise and provide help.

An example of such projects is the collaboration with various Care Corners (*started by Christian groups in 1981 to serve the needy, particularly the blue-collar workers neglected by a fast expanding economy*) to clean homes in Singapore. This is an on-going initiative spearheaded by Gary Argulla (Head, Social Ministry) who has been with CFC since 1989. Gary remains excited at how CFC allows multiple avenues for members to answer different calls to service – whether to serve the young or the old, locally or overseas.

CFC Singapore's focus in 2012 is to build and strengthen family life, build personal holiness so that it extends beyond the church premises, to all aspects of everyday life, and to build the Church of the Poor (ANCOP).

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This year, it also hopes to start similar missions to nearby Malaysia, namely the towns of Johor Bahru, Melaka and Penang. Patrick and Gary are passionate about the opportunity to serve, drawing lessons of humility from the way others live their lives simply, in harsh and difficult environments, yet strengthened by complete love and faith in God.

One defining feature of CFC is the continuous training it provides its members – from the comprehensive mission preparation sessions to spiritual nourishment ones that run tandem with a members' length of service within the Ministry. Prospective members are required to attend a 13 week programme called the Christian Life Programme whose aim is to evangelise and provide personal spiritual renewal and deals with the basics of Christian living and living in the power of the Holy Spirit.

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Did You Know...

Couples For Christ originated in 1981 from the Philippines and is not just for Couples!

It has ministries and programmes for various age groups and demographic profiles.



CFC stresses service as a family.



CFC's organises two types of mission trips:

- 'Hardware Building' – open to anyone keen on an experience of missions
- 'Software Building' – only for members who have participated in extensive pre-mission training and are equipped to run its evangelising programmes and retreats



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Key Activities...

Beyond Singapore, CFC supports its counterpart in East Timor via funding and regular Mission Volunteer (MV) trips to evangelise and run programmes like Marriage Encounter Retreats and other formation programs.

Mission volunteer trips are also lined up for the rest of the year, including trips to other CFC Singapore's mission areas such as Chiang Mai in Thailand, China, South Korea and Myanmar.

Missions completed this year include:

April 2012 – East Timor

Conducted conferences for Singles for Christ members; and organised a formation retreat and music ministry workshop for members of CFC

February 2012 – Greater Mekong

Conducted fast track Christian Life Program