

Unite



“Welcome to Unite!”

hollered the greeters stationed at the entrance to the Shine Auditorium. The tantalizing smell of popcorn filled the atrium on the evening of 3rd August as the queue for bubble tea grew with each passing minute. Over on another side of the foyer, some could be seen taking selfies with the splendidly decorated backdrop; posting and sharing them via Instastory or Telegram.

As the doors to the Shine Auditorium opened and seats began to fill, a few members of the audience were invited on stage to participate in a round of games. Hilarity ensued as they attempted to guess the name of worship songs through charades, or humming with their mouth full of marshmallows.

‘Better Together, Stronger Together’

But this was not the opening act of your typical worship concert. Neither was this an entertainment act at a carnival. This was the precursor to *Unite*, a night when youth from our Methodist churches and schools came together to worship God as one body in Christ.

“*Unite* is a call for youth to come together as a single whole unit for a common purpose and action,” says Benedict Ooi, Youth Worker with TruthMin and also Chairperson for *Unite*, “to lift the name of Jesus, to expand our youth’s perspective that we are bigger than just our local church and together, we are ‘better together, stronger together’.”

That *Unite* managed to bring together more than 100 volunteers from different churches was a testament to being ‘better together, stronger together’. These youth and young adults served selflessly and sacrificially in different areas, ensuring that the event went smoothly. One can only imagine the time and effort put in but the worship team and dancers of Vessels Unveiled. The ushering and decoration teams also played an important part in ensuring that all who came had a wonderful experience. Alongside them were a group of pastors who, as Ooi described, “believe in sowing in youth,” taking time to serve as prayer ministers for that evening.



God’s Great Story and Our Place in His Plans

After a time of worship, Rev. Shaun Chong brought the message to those in attendance. First, he impassionedly reminded us that the world may tell us that we’re important, or how we feel is important. However, the truth is that it is not about us, but God and His plan. This call to look beyond ourselves was followed by a reminder that God’s plans are bigger and better than ours. As such, we need to move beyond replicating what seems to work for others, thinking that if we do the same, the Spirit of God would be there as well.

Finally, Rev. Chong exhorted those in attendance, and youth ministries in particular, not to compare among themselves. Instead, we ought to celebrate each other’s faith and successes because we are united in God’s great story.



John Wesley on a “Catholic Spirit”

This reminder certainly calls to mind of one of John Wesley’s sermon “Catholic Spirit”.¹ In that sermon, Wesley was not of the opinion that all Christians could or should be united externally in one institutional church. The catholic spirit Wesley had in mind was not a call to be identical or similar. In fact, he assumes that not all Christians will be able to think alike, and therefore, not all will be able to practice their faith in the same way.²

Nevertheless, Wesley writes,
“... although a difference in opinions or modes of worship may prevent an entire external union, yet need it prevent our union in affection? Though we cannot think alike, may we not love alike? May we not be of one heart, though we are not of one opinion? Without all doubt we may. Herein all the children of God may unite, notwithstanding these smaller difference. These



remaining as they are, they may forward one another in love and in good works.”³

Rev. Chong ended the message by leading all who were present to go on our knees in prayer as we pledged our commitment to God’s great plans.

Joining Hands

After a short worship in response to the Word came a time of prayer. Representatives and youth leaders from our TRAC churches took turns in leading the people in prayer:

- For a sense of Urgency in following Jesus and to be reconciled with our brothers and sisters;
- For an Unlocking of the Spirit’s power, wisdom and revelation as we know Christ more, even as we confess our need for the Holy Spirit;
- That knowing our identity and authority as God’s children may Unleash in us a boldness to tell the world that he is our Saviour and King;
- For Unity, standing together and tearing down divisions between churches as we contend for our own ministry and other church’s ministries as one body.

Lau Shi-Mei, youth worker at Covenant Community Methodist Church, was one of those deeply impacted by this time of prayer. In that moment when everyone paused to pray together for Unity, she recalls, “we linked hands to represent unity and prayed as one body. It was so special seeing youths from different churches just uniting as one and praying together. At another point, we prayed with the person next to us. I remember praying with someone I didn’t know very well, yet there was such unity that came forth as we prayed for what was on God’s heart.”

The joining of hands during *Unite* symbolised our desire to “stand firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel.” (Philippians 1:27) But for Wesley, the joining of hands entails a deep love for one another. Wesley expects the one who joins hands with him to, firstly, love him “as a friend that is closer than a brother...with the love that is ‘long-suffering and kind’...that ‘covereth all things’...and ‘believeth all things’, is always willing to think the best, to put the fairest construction on all [his] words and actions...”⁴ Secondly, to pray for him that he “may have a fuller conviction of things not seen, and a stronger view of the love of God in Christ Jesus.”⁵ Third, to provoke him to love and good works. And lastly, to love him not in word only, but in deeds and in truth.⁶

Unite 2019 is the beginning of something bigger indeed. May we look forward to the day when this generation will truly be one that seeks after God on its knees – both in the secret place with God and in community.



Photo credits: Matthias Ho (Wesley MC), Kegan Ang (KKMC), Rachel Lim (Bedok MC), Nathaniel Ng (Wesley MC)

¹ John Wesley, “Catholic Spirit” in John Wesley’s Sermons: An Anthology, ed. Albert C. Outler and Richard P. Heitzenrater, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991), 299-309. The use of “catholic” here refers to universal in extent, not the Roman Catholic Church.

² Greg Stover, “Love, Unity and Catholic Spirit: What Does Wesley Say?” Wesleyan Covenant Association. 8 February 2019. <https://wesleyan-covenant.org/2019/02/07/love-unity-and-catholic-spirit-what-does-wesley-say/>

³ Wesley, “Catholic Spirit”, p301.

⁴ Ibid. p306.

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Ibid