

In many of our universities and colleges Christian students have been coming together to start Christian Fellowships. These Christian students often come from various backgrounds: Anglican, AOG, Brethren, Baptist, Lutheran, Methodist, Independent, etc. Often each CF has a different emphasis on teaching, practices and worship styles depending on who is the dominant group in the CF. This poses a challenge to the interdenominational character of the CF. Therefore we need to define more clearly the interdenominational character and its implications for our CFs.









1. What Is Interdenominational?

Our CFs are interdenominational in that we are a fellowship of Christian students from different denominations and churches, committed to the common goal of reaching and nurturing students for Christ on campus. The membership and leadership of our Fellowship are not restricted nor confined to Christians of a particular denomination or group of denominations.



2. Why Be Interdenominational?

- Because the interdenominational character of our CFs reflects our belief in the fellowship of all believers in Christ. Every Christian in the campus is part of the Body of Christ and is a member of the Family of God in campus. The need for Christians from different local churches and denominations to identify and work with each other for the sake of God in campus is expressed through the presence of CFs in the campuses.
 - Because the interdenominational character of our CF enhances our corporate witness. The interdenominational composition of our CFs expresses our unity in Christ and helps enhance our corporate witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ. It shows that despite our different denominational backgrounds and church affiliations, we are united in our faith in Christ and in our witness for Him.
 - Because through the interdenominational character of our CF, the Christian faith and life of Christians are enriched. As members are exposed to interact with Christians from different denominations with their respective historical traditions, doctrinal emphases, worship styles and practices, they come to a deeper understanding of the Christian faith and life.
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3. Are Our CFs Interdenominational?

In a sense, yes because as a policy we welcome Christians from various denominations to be part of the CF. However, some CFs may not be aware of the implications of being interdenominational.

In some cases, the founding members of the CF may all have come from a certain church background and conducts their CF meetings according to their church practices and emphases. This is quite understandable. What they need to realize is, especially if they are not exposed to the differences among other denominations, that others might not be used to their practices. These practices then become the accepted norm for subsequent 'generations' of CFers. New students who come from other church backgrounds and feel uncomfortable with such practices may then shy away from being part of the CF after the first few meetings.

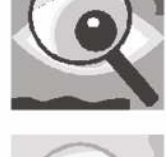
So the CF may not have problems due to differences related to church or denomination background but soon the CF would be made up of Christian students from certain denominations only. This could be seen as disunity and could result in lack of members in the CF to do God's work.

4. What Does It Mean To Be Interdenominational? Its Implications

How does being inter-denominational affect the way we run our CF meetings?

To protect and preserve the interdenominational character of our CFs, do not allow any member to actively promote teachings and practices specific to their local church or denominations. These are teachings and practices, which are related to or concerned with the life of the local church. For example, the style/order of worship, the order/programme of the meeting/service (e.g. to give thanks before or after collecting the offering), the type of meeting/services (e.g. 'receiving'/deliverance meetings), the form of church government/leadership, etc. Being a parachurch organisation (and not a local church), our CF should not be distracted by these things.

Members are also discouraged from promoting any teaching or engaging in any practices that is not acceptable to others in the Fellowships. These are usually secondary issues, which different Christians have chosen disagree on. For example, teaching that only men may be leaders, an effective Christian has to be one who speaks in tongues, spiritual mapping is a must for spiritual warfare etc. If these teachings and practices are emphasised it will disturb and unsettle some members and leaders of the Fellowship, which has potential to divide the Fellowship, destroy its unity and disrupt its mission. We need to remember the Biblical principle of considering others in our conviction and action (Ro 14:1- 15:6).



The interdenominational character of our CFs suggest that we are to accommodate, accept and learn to appreciate some of each other's personal and denominational differences such as the style of worship, style of singing, and ways of praying. We must seek to maintain unity in the midst of diversity, neither insisting on one particular mode of practice nor imposing one's particular style on others.

In practical terms we can arrange for different style of worship, singing and praying to be incorporated into our programmes and meetings. All invited speakers should be made aware of this interdenominational character of the CF and at the same time we could try to invite speakers from a varied range of church backgrounds. If we should choose to discuss issues on which denominations have very different stands then there is a need to be careful in our choice of speaker; that he/she should be a responsible Christian leader who is able to present the different views on the matter/issue. We may also wish to establish a policy on the announcements of church programmes in CF. Being interdenominational, it would not be helpful if the CF is seen as representing or closely associated with a particular church.

Let Us Be United In Our Mission

Are we personally convinced that it is important for our CF to be interdenominational in character in order to fulfil our mission in campus? Then let us make a conscious effort to protect and preserve this character of our CFs and to pass this on to the subsequent generations of CF members. Let us remain united in our diversity and united in our common mission to reach out to others for Christ in our campuses.

