

Riley Li - Chair Vision

United with Christ, United in Christ

Feel free to message me on messenger or on insta (@plum_rilay) if you have any questions or want to talk about my vision! :)

Spiritual Life (350)

- *What is the gospel to you? Briefly share your personal testimony.*
- *Describe your current walk with Christ. Are you supported by a church community and if so, how are you involved?*

I grew up in a partially Christian household, and went to church and attended the usual services and Sunday school. I heard about the story of the gospel early on; however, it was only intellectual knowledge to me and had no bearing on my life. I was only nominally a Christian and, as a logical and skeptical person, felt no emotional connection to God. Once my non-christian peers began questioning me about my faith, I realized that I had troubles believing in God. Along with these doubts, my time in junior high was very challenging mentally, as I struggled with depressive and suicidal thoughts, and I begged God that if He does exist, to give me a sign and make himself known. Looking back now, God gave me many signs at the time that I simply rationalized were coincidences; however, at a youth retreat in grade 9, my prayers for a sign were clearly answered as the pastor prayed over the fellowship. I felt this rush come over me when the pastor said “to follow Him.” This made me realize that God was saying the one thing I need to do is follow Him, and through ups and downs I have believed in Jesus Christ as my Lord and saviour since.

To me, the gospel is fundamentally a message of God’s unfathomable love pouring out to our undeserving selves. Despite my brokenness, mental struggles and rage at God at how He could be good and allow such suffering, He still pours out His love unconditionally and gives us assurance of our salvation.

After all this growth, I would describe myself as a “spiritual child.” I have grown much in my faith, and am confident in Jesus as my salvation. However, I recognize that I have a long way ahead in terms of maturing in my faith. A large part of this maturation comes from my church community, Christ The King. After attending a variety of churches in my first year, I felt that I needed a church community where I could pour into and be poured into by those around me, without defaulting to those I already knew. As such, I have spent the past nearly two years investing in Christ The King and have made strong connections with peers and mentors that I can rely upon for encouragement and accountability. I am involved with small groups and a discipleship group, while serving through set up of service and grabbing pizza for dinner. I would like to continue to grow in my serving and am looking into worship team and/or ushering.

Candidacy (350)

- *What do you believe is the purpose of UTCCF and the UTCCF Committee?*
- *How has God led you to run for committee, as well as the specific position you are running for?*
- *If you are not elected to your chosen role, how will you still serve and carry out your vision at CCF next year?*

I believe CCF's purpose is to encourage our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ, as we walk together in our faith journeys. CCF is a place we can gather and develop Christ-centered relationships with like-minded individuals in the same life stage. I believe that as a campus ministry, another purpose is to use our setting on a secular campus to spread the gospel and show God's love to non-believers. We have the unique opportunity to evangelize to our fellow students, and we are to spread the good news together as a fellowship.

As such, I believe that Committee's role is to help lead and guide the fellowship to fulfill these purposes, and to humbly exemplify servant leadership through serving God. Committee members are not meant to be perfect; however, they are meant to be role models by submitting themselves and trusting in God to work through them. As they are not theologically trained, their purpose is not to interpret and claim authority over scripture. Instead, they are meant to support and foster CCF into a Christ-centered community grounded on scripture.

Over the past month, I have been discerning about whether God is calling me to serve on Committee. Through my indecisiveness, God gave me clear signs pointing towards Chair. My concern was that my innate desire to serve on Committee was my own selfish desire and not placed by God. As I prayed for further discernment, an idea for a vision was placed into my head, and I found myself thinking of it more and more. It was placed into my head during winter retreat, and when I was worried it was simply my own thoughts and not placed by God, I would get constant reminders from sermons, bible studies, and conversations. It felt like even if I wasn't sure about developing this vision, God was developing it for me week after week. At some point, answered prayers became so clear that I realized it would be foolish not to consider running, and I knew this vision would best be realized as Chair.

I felt that in order to run for Chair, I needed to be okay with not serving as Chair. If I am not elected, I believe God is calling me to serve and foster unity in CCF through my personal interactions with newcomers and regular members. I would work to help make everyone feel welcome and comfortable, and to personally reach out to people I don't know to help them feel included. I know that I have limits and cannot do anything without God, and so I would pray for the fellowship to grow together and for all of us to be transformed in love to be inclusive and intentional at CCF.

Vision (600)

- *Where do you see God leading UTCCF in the upcoming year?*
- *Potential things to consider: the past, current, and future state of the fellowship*
- *How has God called you to partner with Him in this vision?*
- *What are some practical points of implementation of this vision?*

The vision that I believe God is leading CCF to next year is centered around **unity**. This unity involves two aspects: unity with Christ (**vertical unity**), and unity with the body of Christ (**horizontal unity**). Vertical unity involves our personal relationship with Christ. Over the past years I have seen so many brothers and sisters in CCF grow in their relationship with Jesus and eagerly seek to become more like Him, which I feel great joy about. However, as a mentor of mine told me, “an individual Christian is an oxymoron.” This unity with Christ is not meant to be kept to ourselves; it is to **overflow as God’s blessing to others**. As David writes in Psalm 133:

*“Behold, how **good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity!**
It is like the precious oil on the head, running down on the beard,
on the beard of Aaron, running down on the collar of his robes!
It is like the dew of Hermon, which falls on the mountains of Zion!
For there the LORD has commanded the blessing, life forevermore.”*

God gives us His blessing of unity, and we are meant to rejoice when we dwell together! While we are quite comfortable with meeting together as friends, we are called to much more, this overflowing blessing of unity that should permeate our lives. We are called to gather intentionally as the body of Christ, rather than just friends. The visible differences that God’s unity invokes are **inclusivity, intentionality, and hospitality**.

*“I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all **humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.** There is **one** body and **one** Spirit—just as you were called to the **one** hope that belongs to your call—**one** Lord, **one** faith, **one** baptism, **one** God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”*
~ Ephesians 4:1-6

Ephesians 4 embodies these three aspects. We are to be **intentional** in maintaining the unity of the spirit, which binds us together, and that involves more than passive gathering. We have to invest in each other, and know that we gather as the body of Christ and to build encouraging Christ-centered relationships. We are to be **inclusive** of everyone, even those we don’t know well, because we have one faith and one God who is Father of all. How do we do both of these things? By being **hospitable** to each other through showing humility, gentleness, patience, and by bearing with one another in love. This isn’t easy; sometimes, for no ill reason, we just don’t get along with each other. What are we supposed to do then?

*“remember that you were at that time **separated from Christ**, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having **no hope and without God in the world.** But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been **brought near by the blood of Christ.** For he himself is our peace, who has **made us both one and has broken down in his***

flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility."

~ Ephesians 2:12-16

Paul writes in Ephesians to a church divided into Gentiles and Jews, and reminds them that they were all once separated from Christ. However, it is Christ that paid His blood to **make them both (us) one new man**, making peace between them. Paul writes this to people I believe had much more division than us! This shows how we cannot bridge divides or personal issues between us ourselves; we need to rely on Jesus, who removed all division, to keep us together. We may not agree on everything, but I hope that we will see past any disagreements and be eager to maintain unity despite them, which we need to put effort into and pray about.

I believe God has called me to partner with Him by encouraging the fellowship through openness and reaching out. Chair is the most visible position in the fellowship, and I want to lead by example in personally encouraging intentional connection across the fellowship. However, I know that I have my limits, and I know I must prayerfully rely on Him for energy. I also know that I cannot work towards unity alone; the whole point of unity is that it involves everyone! I believe I am also called to encourage other leaders/members to pray about and make their own strides towards a fellowship united in Christ.

I believe some ways we can invite this blessing of unity into the fellowship is through prayer, reaching out, outreach, and vulnerability. This unity is a blessing from God, and thus we must humbly ask Him for unity to overflow in us. Reaching out to newcomers to help them feel included is also critical, as it not only includes others, but is also an outward statement that we gather to fellowship with Christ, not just as friends. This overflowing unity is meant to reach out to those who know and do not yet know Christ. For the non-believers, it is especially important that we go out and fulfill the great commission, spreading His gospel to campus together. I personally have felt more unity when I stand behind an outreach table, and I believe that our encouragement of each other to proclaim the same gospel message together is both an expression and a way to grow our unity. Lastly, I believe being vulnerable with each other shows our intentionality of gathering in CCF, which is to pour out our joys and struggles to other believers and to walk **together** with them.

Personal Evaluation (350)

- *What God-given gifts do you see in your life? How do you see God using these gifts to further His kingdom at UTCCF?*
- *What are some areas of weakness in your life? How are you taking grace-driven steps to overcome them and become more like Christ?*

One of the spiritual gifts I believe God has given me is my ability to make people feel welcome and loved. Though I used to be a reserved and quiet person, God has helped me open up and be willing to talk to new people and help them feel comfortable. I believe that God is calling me to use this gift to welcome everyone, regardless of how well I know them, and that this would help foster inclusivity. I pray that God would use me to show His love and hospitality, and that people would feel like they can always approach me about anything.

Another gift that God has placed in me is my ability to be vulnerable and show compassion to those in pain. I am grateful for the struggles God has placed in my life, and the courage He has given me to be open about them, as I find great joy in pouring out all my struggles to those around me. I hope that I can be someone that can empathize and care for others in their own struggles.

I have significant weaknesses that I need to rely on God to overcome. One of those weaknesses is my timidity, as I find it difficult to make hard decisions and tend to avoid conflict. As Chair, I know that making hard decisions and not being afraid of not pleasing everyone is a critical responsibility. In times of conflict, I tend to try and take a neutral stance, but not having the courage to make a clear decision can cause more harm than taking a stand. I cannot fix this problem alone, and I have been and will continue praying for God to grant me that strength. I will also rely on others to hold me accountable and call me out when I fall short, and I would like to ask all of you reading this for prayer as well!

Lastly, I need to overcome my pride as, despite the discernment God has given me, I still have worries that part of me is running for the visibility and position rather than to humbly serve God. I know I have so much room to grow more humble and I am praying that Jesus would transform my heart to serve only out of love of Him, which is a continual process that I am asking others to keep me accountable for.