About 300 people gathered at the Singapore Management University's Campus Green in Bras Basah Road yesterday to honour the memory of those who have succumbed to HIV and Aids. They joined more than 4,500 communities in 93 countries in the International Aids Candlelight Memorial.

The gathering, at an open grassy area where a Bodhi tree stands, was marked by song and prayers by the representatives of 10 religious groups in Singapore. There was also the lighting of a memorial candle, observance of a minute's silence, and a procession around the field. Participants held glow sticks instead of candles because of fire-safety concerns.

Action for Aids president Roy Chan said the number of Singaporeans diagnosed with HIV infection and full-blown Aids last year fell from that of 2004. Still, for those afflicted with the disease, it is a costly fight to stay alive.

HIV/Aids patient Theodaeus Chong, 29, needs more than $1,200 a month for his medication. "I have to work more hours to increase my income and this only adds on stress to my body," he said. "I hope the authorities will look at making treatments more affordable for us."