

Newsletter of The Australian Student Christian Movement

THE SCM POST

ACTIVE | ENGAGED | CRITICAL | ECUMENICAL

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SCMers join Christians from all across the country in a prayer vigil held at the lawn of Australian Parliament House. 13 October 2015.

WELCOME TO THE FIRST OF LIKELY MANY ISSUES OF SCM POST.

In many ways Student Christian Movement has outdone itself. Many of the issues SCM members engaged with in prayers, in theological reflection and actions for change decades ago are now more widely participated in. There are numerous mainstream platforms and frameworks both secular and faith based where students and members of academic and various communities can engage in those issues.

If you take time to go through this newsletter you will find brief stories of what is going on in our relatively small but sincere movement.

This issue patches together a tapestry of stories and pictures that make out our national movement. Of course there is more than this; it is our small gatherings, prayer and Bible study groups, sharing of meal together, little conversations on the mundane as well as on the big questions between SCMerS and friends that weave us together into a community, a whole movement that extends beyond our lives and our borders.

In this issue among many things you will find Ros Hewett highlighting on our involvement with Asia-Pacific region of the World Student Christian Federation and Philipa Hill on her experience of attending sub-regional women's programme in Dunedin, New Zealand as a participant. Henrike Brussaard reports on SCM in Victoria and a contribution from Ray Barraclough on the 50th Anniversary of Australia's Freedom Ride and SCM's involvement with it.

Throughout its life time Student Christian Movement has been at the forefront of social justice movement and offered a space for theological reflection posing awkward and uncomfortable questions to the notions of status quo. 'Bible in one hand and newspaper in another' has been a key feature of generations of SCMerS? Is it the same today?

Is this a legacy SCM can break away from or would like to break away from? How do

we value our past but at the same time respond to the challenges of the present and creatively look towards a future?

We so often hear that as SCM we are "so small". Perhaps for us the important question to ask is not so much whether we are small or big in numbers but 'are we big on faith?' 'Are we big on our vocation in the broader context of the world that we live in?

How do we witness to our faith in a world of pain, suffering, brokenness and an unprecedented number of displaced people?

How do we hold in our hearts God's people particularly minorities who are suffering because of religious, ethnic and cultural identities or sexual orientation? How do we witness to our faith in the face of injustice perpetrated by policies of some of the most powerful countries in the world?

After all a community called to faith by Jesus of Nazareth was perhaps never big in numbers but sincere in its conviction of eschatology, the coming of a new earth and a new heaven.

Enjoy reading news from our little community of faith until next time.

Yours' in Christ

Rev. Tiffany Sparks

For SCM Post Editorial team

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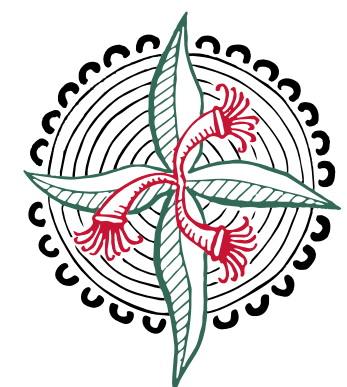
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REFLECTING ON WSCF SUB-REGIONAL WOMEN'S CONFERENCE



Philippa Hill

I had an amazing soul changing experience when I had the privilege to travel to New Zealand to take part in the WSCF Subregional Women's Conference. I have often been asked what the highlight of the trip was for me and every time I open my mouth to answer, I realise that I can't really specify; I felt everything differently but I cannot place more value on one thing over another. I made friends, I learned a lot about a culture I knew nothing about and I became more enlightened and confident about my role as a female. On top of everything the conference gave me the opportunity to travel overseas which is something I'd never done.

My reasons for deciding to apply were kind of lame; free trip overseas and casual or not so casual discussion about the position of women (probably discussions I'd already engaged in). I believed I would learn a tad more on top of the stuff I already knew (not much). My little experience in discussions talked a big game but didn't produce much. Even worse, I'd developed this idea that Student Christian Movement were religiously straight, that I would be the most radical figure there coming from a Pentecostal background. So it was with indifference that I got onto that plane to start my journey over.

The first people I met were Nina and Claudine, and also Sherry who had come over from Taiwan to participate in the conference. We broke the ice and had casual conversation. Was I dreaming? Claudine was from an Anglican background but she was so chill and was hilarious! She also held opinions that I believed quite extreme for an Anglican. Nina and Sherry were so easily accepting and did not place on me a huge expectation to be a certain way. I then met Emily at the bus stop who held significant leadership in the Anglican Church (sorry, remember the Pentecostal background? Can't remember her title) which got my

mind racing; how is this lady going to cope around radical opinions and perspectives? Well, she blew my mind with her carefully considered charismatic beliefs. Christ was for relationship and people were to be accepted regardless of their life preference and who were we to force anything otherwise?

In the meantime, while I continued to come to terms with the conference slowly smashing all the generalisations I'd held about sectors and denominations, the conference was up and away after a five hour trip and a quick debrief by our host; Rauhina. We all took part in a ceremonial welcome by the Maori people on the Marae. We learnt the Marae is sacred land belonging to the Maori people and on it they had built a community centre with a congregation area, kitchen and dining area and the all desired bathrooms. I will be forever grateful to the Maori people of the area, and Rauhina, for sharing such a personal area of theirs with us, especially people who knew very little about their culture. It truly was an honour. We slept together in the congregation area on mattresses and while in there we were asked, as a consideration of tapu, not to drink or eat anything in there and not to wear our shoes. Part of respecting tapu also meant not sitting on pillows and not

stepping over people. I can't rightly explain the meaning of tapu but it refers to that which is considered sacred, and by breaking tapu you are invading something which is considered sacred. Just up from the community lodging was an old church with a small graveyard where we'd go to do morning prayers.

I loved my whole existence there. We were up early in the morning then after breakfast was morning prayers. We were all split into different groups and each group was assigned to chores and prayers on certain days. I'm used to prayer time that involves a group of people coming together, praying in tongues and speaking out to pray about something that is on their heart. This prayer time included perhaps a little song of praise, bible readings and constructed prayer and I loved it. I wondered how I was going to enjoy it, but the simplicity of the prayers and the worship combined with the overwhelming beauty of the land and the women there evoked a feeling of great peace and closeness to God.

Prayer time became one of my favourite parts of the day.

Our workshops included; the status of women in the relative countries that were present, women in media, an introduction to the culture of the Maori



ASCM delegates at the WSCF sub-regional Women's conference

people, women centred bible studies and a short film documenting the lives of women all over the world with varying struggles. I learnt so much in the country reports and I have been informing my friends and acquaintances about the status of women around the world. From what I learnt, I concluded that the status of women is pretty consistent across the board. This was a bit of a wake-up for me, as I'd assumed that women in westernised

countries were pretty well off. While we have different laws now that protect us, we still face severe persecution for our sexuality. What I learnt changed the way I saw Australia, it challenged me to take a step back and really look at the practises and expectations of our people, not just women. I realised there is a valid reason why I, at times, don't feel safe in what is considered one of the safest countries in the world.

Since coming back to Australia I haven't been able to stop thinking about what was discussed at the conference. All of the struggles and strengths we discussed are evident in day to day life and it continues to inspire and shock me. I am sincerely grateful to the Student Christian Movement for giving me this opportunity and I look forward to all future events!

REFLECTING ON SCM IN VICTORIA

OUR OWN ACTIVITIES

We always come together on the last Friday of the month, when we meet for a simple meal and bible study from Rev. Sandy Yule (Sarah Ci coordinates this). We continue to look at the Gospel of Luke and we hope to finish this at the end of this year. Although the group changes every week, there is always a small group that comes together for this.

Recently we started to revive the thematic bible studies. The first thematic bible study was about the Lord's Prayer, which was an initiative from one of our group (Adam Van). We hope to continue these and to have a combination of own initiatives, guest speakers and movie nights with discussions afterwards.

In the last year we had a couple of prayer services. In October we held the Universal Day of Prayer for our students and in March this year we collaborated with the "Taizé in Melbourne" workgroup for a joint prayer service, where everybody was welcome. It is a great opportunity to join in fellowship with students and ASCM friends in Victoria.

Adam Van and Ann Ng travelled to Bogota for the WSCF General Assembly.



Henrike Brussaard

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Next to our own activities, we participate in a range of activities of organisations that we support. We were part of the Palm Sunday Rally (Justice for Refugees), the Taizé Gathering in February 2015, the workshop Nonviolent Conflict Transformation (Aidan Stewart, Lydia Liu and Henrike), and fundraisers for

Act for Peace (Adam Li, etc). Five representatives from ASCM attended in the WSCF Sub-regional Women's Program in New Zealand and more recently myself and Pwokusay participated in the newly formed Youth for Ecumenical Leadership group.

SCM and Taizé Melbourne organised a joint prayer service in March this year.



FOR THE YEAR TO COME

Although we are a small group, we already have a lot of activities lining up for the year to come.

We hope to focus this year on creating a bigger network around the ASCM in Victoria. Networking will be our core point for our staff worker, to make sure we have good and firm connections with the chaplains across the universities, the same for the Vic Council of Churches and the NCCA.

Also networking with likeminded organisations, where we continue to look for ways to put our Christianity into practice. We hope to support these likeminded organisations by participating in their events while maintaining contact with and supporting chaplains of the universities.

OUR INVOLVEMENT WITH THE WORLD STUDENT CHRISTIAN FEDERATION

Rosalind Hewett on our involvement with World Student Christian Federation - Asia Pacific



Ros Hewett

Claudine Chionh from Victoria is attending the Regional Women's Program in Bangladesh in November. Adam Li from Victoria attended the Human Rights, Justice and Peace program in Indonesia in October. Ros Hewett from ACT attended the Asia Pacific Standing Committee meeting as Vice-Chairperson for the region in Hong Kong in May. Claudine Chionh and Ann Ng helped to organise the subregional women's program for the Pacific in December 2014, held in Dunedin, New Zealand. Ros Hewett attended the Regional Committee Meeting and pre-Womens Program in Bali in October and November 2014.

ASCM appoints John Probhudan Biswas as the National Coordinator



John is based in Newcastle, NSW picking up the role of the Multicultural Access Project Officer for the Hunter with Northern Settlement Services. Until October this year, John has been working as a Disability Advocate for a state-wide Advocacy Association in NSW. Previously he served as the Ecumenical Chaplain to international students at the University of Manchester, UK and comes with experience of involvement with SCMs in Bangladesh, United Kingdom, WSCF-Asia Pacific as well as WSCF-AP/CCA - Youth joint committee.

AUSTRALIANS WORKING TOGETHER FOR CHANGE

Ray Barraclough on Australia's Freedom Ride 1965: 50 Year Anniversary



Rev. Dr. Ray Barraclough

Below Image Source:
ABC



“Almighty God ... we ask now that Thy blessing will rest upon these Australians as they journey out as they endeavour to bring reconciliation and healing among people who have been divided because of the colour of their skin.”

- the Reverend Ted Noffs

(Source: Freedom ride inspires a new generation by Daniel Lewis, Sydney Morning Herald. Published February 5, 2005)

The Student Christian Movement is an historical advocate for change, equality and justice in this world. United by our faith in a God who loves all, not just some. This can be seen in SCM's involvement in the famous and historic 'Freedom Ride'.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the historic Freedom Ride led by Charles Perkins through country NSW. Financial support for the venture came from the Student Christian Movement [SCM] and several members of SCM participated in that famous freedom ride. It entailed students from Sydney University hiring a bus and visiting a number of towns in Northern NSW to challenge segregation and racism that marked the treatment of Indigenous people in that region of Australia.

Professor Ann Curthoys, a contemporary of Charles Perkins at Sydney University in the mid 1960's and member of the Freedom Ride, records the involvement of SCM: '... Farewelling us that evening were Ted Noffs, who said a prayer, and the go Tell it on the Mountain singers, an African American singing group who sent us off with a rendition of We Shall Overcome. One of the students, Darce Cassidy, also worked part time at the ABC as a radio journalist, and he had his tape recorder... We students were a mixed bunch indeed. Some were on the Left, in the Labour club or the ALP club, some were in the Christian societies like the Student Christian Movement...'

NOTE FROM ASCM TO ANN NG



Rev. Dr. Sandy Yule

Ann's work as ASCM National Co-ordinator has been marked by energy, persistence and innovation. My first meeting with Ann as one of her two prayer support persons was on 18 April 2011 and I can testify to her ability to get people involved! At that time, the national movement was functioning in Western Australia and Queensland, but hardly anywhere else. Today, we also have good activity in Victoria and Canberra. More importantly, we have fresh ways of gathering and being active, at least in Victoria. Ann has been central to the development and implementation of these fresh ways, while maintaining effective control of the national budget and the recruitment and organization of part-time staff.

When we decided to develop a special link with the East Timor SCM, it was Ann who took the running in getting this to happen. It was Ann who provided a base for the monthly gathering around a meal, bible study and news of the movement, which is a large part of the story of the revival of the SCM in Victoria. She has had the knack of moving away from a 'branch' mentality, with a programme planned on the assumption that 'all members should come' towards an 'event' mentality which offers numerous options to people to participate. She has managed to balance a focus on involving current students with attention to opportunities for Senior Friends to reconnect with ASCM. She has even had a regard for the SCM archives! If something was

there to be done, she has somehow found the energy to see that it happened. I have been impressed by her ability to balance pastoral care for all involved with a continuing challenge for fuller and deeper participation.

I am happy to report that the signs are good that she has not withdrawn from the ongoing work of the SCM in Victoria. There is much more that could be said in acknowledgement and gratitude, but let me simply conclude with a heartfelt...

Thanks Ann!

-Sandy Yule

IN OTHER NEWS FROM ACROSS THE NATIONAL MOVEMENT

Annual General Meeting took place on 4 July 2015 at the Deepdene Uniting Church, Victoria. No major changes in the National Executive Committee. Ann Ng has relinquished her responsibility as the National Coordinator after 4 years of dedicated commitment in this role. Her unwavering dedication and service to the movement was thankfully acknowledged by everyone involved. Senior friend Aileen Natera, Helen Martin and Peter Fensham were also able to join us for the AGM.

At 2015 AGM Senior friend Peter Fensham brought greetings from Dr. Margaret Henderson, who turned 99 last November and still going strong. She was the first woman to graduate from school of medicine from the University of Melbourne. Peter Fensham informed us that a part of Janet Clark Hall was named in her honour.

In Western Australia, a small group continues to meet in Dianella Anglican Church once or twice a month for discussions based on the 'Living the Questions' DVD series. Our pastoral Care Officer Barrie Baker has initiated discussions with Steve Mckinnon of TEAR in Western Australia to build up links between that organisation and WA SCM, whereby our group can have a role in supplementing TEAR's strong justice activities with enhanced faith-based underpinnings. Kate Watts continues to work as our Development Worker.

In Queensland Andrew Hammer is our Student Worker at the Australian Catholic University and Bart Seaton at the Griffiths University offer significant presence of SCM. Bart hosts a cafe discussion and Zen Group who meet for an hour of silence every

week at QCGU (Griffith Uni at Southbank). SCM also hold Luncheon at the St Francis Theological College at Milton. Revd Tiffany Sparks leads regular Taize prayers at the St Paul's Anglican Church in Ashgrove.

A group of senior friends from NSW has met earlier in October to explore SCM's work in NSW. A project officer is soon to be appointed who will be hosted by the Chaplaincy at University of Newcastle.

Kingson Selvaraj from South Australia was part of the ASCM delegation to Micah Australia conference in Canberra. We hope to strengthen this relationship.

With support from senior friend Christine Ledger and leadership from Ros Hewett and Andika Mongilala Canberra has a SCM group with regular monthly gathering. Angelia Pardede from GMKI (Indonesian SCM) has been elected as the president of SCM ACT.

ASCM sent a delegation to 'Voices for Justice Conference' organised by Micah Australia on 9-13 October 2015. Delegates also took this opportunity to meet with members of the Canberra SCM and senior friend Christine Ledger. Delegates also took part in the Refugee Rally on 11 October as part of the nationwide demonstration of support for the refugees.

A national action plan for the movement is at consultation stage. Many thanks to all who have taken time to write with ideas of strengthening the movement. Please send in your ideas, feedback to the National Coordinator by email to info@ascm.org.au.



Top:
ASCM delegates marching in Canberra as part of the nationwide rally in support of the refugees on 11 October

Middle:
Canberra SCM meeting with senior friend Christine Ledger and delegates from WA, Victoria and Queensland

Bottom:
Delegates with senior friend Helen Martin, Peter Fensham, Sandy Yule and Shawn Whelan at the Annual General Meeting 2015 held at Deepdene Uniting Church, Victoria

AUSTRALIAN STUDENT CHRISTIAN MOVEMENT

ASCM is committed to creating safe spaces where students can grapple with issues of faith and social justice in an open and inclusive environment offering opportunities to pray, reflect and engage locally as part of a national and global movement.

Like what we do?

Get involved. There are many ways you can do so:

- become an active member. If you are a student, chaplain or member of the academic community join us by making contact with one of our regional project workers or area council or national coordinator.

Not a student or member of the academic community?

- become a friend even if you don't have time to actively participate. Hold us in your personal or community prayers and please let us know so that we can keep you informed about what is happening across the movement.

None or all of the above and you wish us well?

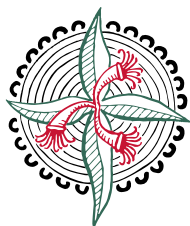
- You can become a supporter you can do this either by offering financial support or other ways you think you can ie talk about us, direct us to resources that might be helpful in growing and strengthening the movement.

For more information

Please subscribe to our mailing list via ascm.org.au

Visit and like our facebook page at facebook.com/AustralianStudentChristianMovement

Please remember the ASCM when you are considering what to do with your estate. We rely heavily on the Trust Fund each year to help us survive and grow. Visit our web site www.ascm.org.au for more details.



Editor in Chief: The Rev. Tiffany Sparks, info@ascm.org.au

Design: Damon Scarfe, the_bearded_one@outlook.com

Authorised by John Probhudan Biswas, Australian Student Christian Movement,
PO Box 4386, University of Melbourne, Victoria 3052.

Twitter: @australianscm

Instagram: @australianscm

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/AustralianStudentChristianMovement>