



**Student Christian Movement USA**

**Concept Paper for Organizational Launch**

## ***Overcoming Violence***

***Encountering the Past, Engaging the Present, Empowering the Future***

**October 8-11, 2010**

**Morehouse College, Atlanta, GA**

### **I. Introduction**

The Student Christian Movement (SCM-USA) is a student led community passionate about faith and justice. We envision Christianity as inclusive, aware, radical and challenging. Each year our movement comes together for an annual conference and we have other regular gatherings for members to share ideas and make collective decisions about the movement. Between gatherings, the local units exist as communities that maintain contact and dialogue with one another for the sake of collective growth, learning, and action. We are affiliated to the World Student Christian Federation.

Local SCM units are the life of the movement. They are ecumenical student-led communities who meet regularly to explore together a radical faith. Each group has the freedom to decide what they want to do and how they want to organize themselves. Some groups focus on discussion and theology, others share regularly in prayer and worship, some are committed to campaigning and activism, most do a mix of all of these. Some are small, some are big, some are based in a chaplaincy and others at a local church. What they have in common is that they are inclusive, welcoming communities for exploring and living out faith.

Historically Student Christian Movements have been deeply involved in enabling young Christians to respond to crisis and current events from the basis of their faith. These responses have played a part in the confessing church in Germany during WWII, in the formation and

action of churches and students Christians during the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950's and 60's, and today in the response to issues of oppression, devastation, injustice, and war. Some examples from recent issues of the World Student Christian Federation newsletter include:

#### *New beginning for Zimbabwean churches and partners*

*Political anarchy in Zimbabwe continues to threaten the fledging peace attained since the signing of the Global Political Agreement by the country's main political parties, Zimbabwe churches and partners have stated. Leaders from Zimbabwe's largest church organizations, representatives of international ecumenical bodies and church-related advocacy networks met in Geneva in September to reflect on the human rights and humanitarian situation in Zimbabwe one year after the signing of the agreement. Hosted by the Zimbabwe Advocacy Office of WSCF, the meeting was called by the Ecumenical Zimbabwe Network, a group of church agencies committed to advocacy, prayer and solidarity in support of the churches and people of Zimbabwe.*

#### *SCM Philippines aids the flood stricken*

*On 26 September 33.4 cm (12 inches) of rain fell on the Metro Manila area in just 16 hours. The rains, caused by tropical storm Ketsana (Typhoon Ondoy) killed over 400 people and displaced at least 500,000. In response to the devastation, SCM Philippines mobilized young people and senior friends to provide assistance and relief. Their first response was to set up a public information hotline for people affected by the typhoon. SCMP then offered emergency assistance to families in need. WSCF supported SCMP's work by sending an Ecumenical Assistance Program emergency grant of US \$3,000. SCMP General Secretary Ms. Christine Guevarra reported that the emergency grant allowed Filipino SCMPers to provide vital assistance. "We were able to distribute some modest packages of basic needs to around 600 families," Ms. Guevarra said.*

And last but not least:

#### *SCM on the rise in North America*

*More than 80 students from the United States and Canada gathered in San Francisco in January to reinvigorate the Student Christian Movement throughout North America. Plans for the new SCM United States were also adopted. Meeting under the theme "Raising New Prophets: Arising of a Movement" the North American Region of WSCF formed a steering committee to build the movement, named fundraising as a key and gained support for SCM USA from the U.S. Trustees, the North American Region and the Inter-Regional Office. The San Francisco Conference marked the 40th anniversary of the U.S. civil rights movement. Themes at the conference included student engagement in social issues through WSCF, leadership training and the role of students in promoting social change.*

Forty years after the heyday of student activism in 1968, Christian student activists from across the Christian spectrum are rising as a force once again. This Launch hopes to be a beautiful revival to face the great challenges of the 21st century.

## II. Purpose

The Student Christian Movement of the United States of America (SCM-USA), founded in solidarity with the World Student Christian Federation (WSCF), is a student-led, grassroots organization, rooted in Christ, that actively seeks justice and peace, speaks truth to power, and works to overcome oppression in communities on local, national, and global levels by empowering students and young people to claim their voice, exercise leadership skills, engage in innovative theological reflection, and build transformational networks of relationship in the Church and the wider world. The purpose of this Launch is to restart and organize the Student Christian Movement in the United States of America. Therefore the SCM-USA is convening this conference for the following reasons:

- Develop and empower student leadership (organize national board and regional representatives, and approve by-laws)
- Stand-up against oppression and seek justice through both words and deeds.
- Create a completely inclusive space for students to claim their Christian identity (tolerant of all diverse positions, except those that are intolerant of diversity). And also remain open to those students who abide by these values and wish to be in this community, but do not name themselves explicitly as Christian.
- Dialogue, listen, and critically analyze the world from a Christian perspective
- Lift up the prophetic voices of students, speak truth to power, engage the tension between orthodoxy and prophecy
- Perform innovative theological reflection and production
- Prayer, Spiritual Reflection, Worship (reflecting ecumenical variety)
- Work from a foundation in Scripture, in a container of grassroots-based community for support and accountability.
- Communicate with, and open our hearts to those of other faiths, and how our efforts for God's work may be complementary.
- Pursue all this work in such a way that our efforts can be sustained, with an emphasis on self-care and pastoral care of one another.

## III. Project Description

**Theme:** *Overcoming Violence: Engaging the Past, Encountering the Present, Empowering the Future*

The past leaders of the SCM offer up a dynamic legacy of their struggle and commitment to overcome violence. Monumental figures such as Martin Luther King Jr. and Dietrich Bonhoeffer grace our archives and remind us that to do the right thing is never easy. "Students have struggled, and sometimes even died, to build a movement that follows the radical life of Jesus Christ," said Alice Hageman, an alumni and chair for the trustees of the U.S. Student Christian Movement (SCM). This Launch hopes to honor those leaders who have come before us and hear their stories of being radically Christian in a broken world. We hope to carry these stories and lessons with us as we, young progressive Christian leaders, engage with our own broken pieces. We hope to empower each other to follow in the footsteps of Christ, with tender hearts and bravery.

**Components of the conference:**

**a) Opening Address: *Encountering the Past***

During the Opening Address, members of the Steering Committee will welcome the participants and open the conference in a brief time of worship. Worship will be followed by a general introduction to the Launch, SCM-USA and the WSCF. A panel of Senior Friends and student regional representatives will be hosted in hopes to hear more about the history of the SCM-USA and the WSCF. The purpose of the Opening Address is to encounter the stories of how the SCM-USA and the WSCF have engaged with the world in the past.

**b) Keynote Address: *Engaging the Present***

The purpose of the Keynote Address is to share the stories of present work that ecumenical groups are doing in the fields of social justice and peace work. The planning team holds the intention of finding a speaker to speak on these topics, represent the global and local natures of SCM-USA and inspire all those present to engage faithful in serving the world's needs.

**c) Closing Address: *Empowering the Future***

The Closing Address will be given by one of our dynamic young leaders. The purpose of this address is to celebrate the Launch of the SCM-USA and empower individuals and communities to engage the future work with integrity and sustainability. This address will be a sending off for those present at the Launch and a time to energize, empower and enact the work of the Launch.

**d) Additional Speakers and Workshops**

Additional speakers and workshop leaders will be selected from within the community of participants. Those registering for the Launch will have the opportunity to submit workshop proposals and/or volunteer for leadership roles at the Launch. The purpose of the workshops session is to provide resources for the growth and development of SCM-USA units.

**e) Liturgy, music and prayer**

The SCM is a space to explore creative worship, read the Bible critically and learn new theological insights. Bible study and theological reflections are integral parts of the life of the SCM. During this Launch we will worship God, creating space for the Holy Spirit to speak and move, acknowledging our common belief in Christ, and confessing our need for God's presence and action in our community. Our times of worship also serve as exposure to the many denominations, cultures and traditions that we represent, and an opportunity for living ecumenism.

## **f) Venture and Date**

The Launch will be held at Morehouse College, in Atlanta, GA from October 8<sup>th</sup> to October 11<sup>th</sup>, 2010. Participants will arrive on the 8<sup>th</sup> after 5pm and depart on the 11<sup>th</sup> after 12pm.

## **IV. Support Needed and Costs**

The SCM will raise funds to allow as many people as possible to attend this Launch. The budget represents modest fundraising expectations. Additional funds perused and received will be offered to participants as travel bursaries as needs arise. Students are also encouraged to do their own fundraising and travel pooling.

**BUDGET for the conference: Please see attached**

## **V. Contact Information**

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