

## AGM 2023 Staff Team Report

This has been an incredible year at SCM. The Faith in Action project goes from strength to strength and having two brilliant new project workers each year is a joy for the whole movement. Grace and Naomi O have built on the work of their predecessors and the radical theology and passionate activism of SCM has constantly refreshed input. A huge highlight of the year was the success of the first Berlin trip which, despite every travel delay imaginable, was an incredibly enriching and bonding experience. The summer also saw the launch of Honest Church after months of planning with the working group. The response to this campaign has been incredible. So many people are being empowered to ask for and offer honesty in their welcome of LGBTQ+ students (and non students). It has also given many churches the courage to talk about their welcome to LGBTQ+ people for the first time. The feedback we get about the difference this campaign is making is phenomenal. More recently WATCH (Women and the Church) have joined us as we have extended the campaign to call for honesty about women's roles in churches.

Another area I have especially valued is visiting and speaking at groups and chaplaincies. It makes the strategic and profile raising work I do so much more grounded and authentic when I am spending a lot of time with students beyond GC and this year has allowed lots more of that. This coming summer is full of events again so I look forward to many good conversations and inspiring ideas to come.

The finances are usually the big area of anxiety, but thanks to great fundraising efforts led by Sophie we are seeing a real improvement in that area. The 200 Churches campaign is really making a difference and all sorts of additional benefits come from building relationships with supporting churches. The supporters events we have run this year have been well attended and are such an encouragement. It wouldn't be possible to have all these outward facing innovations without the admin staff who do a phenomenal amount in part time roles, the stability and reliability of the movement is hugely down to them and I am so grateful for all that they do.

Work which is very visible is of course communications and Ruth's work here continues to go from strength to strength. The powerful, positive, progressive voice of SCM is so needed in the church and the world and Ruth manages to capture what our members are saying and what is important to them and curate it in ways which means it is heard by an ever growing audience. I was at a meeting recently where SCM's consistent positive campaigning voice was mentioned as a model that others should learn from. She has also been working with Lisa on creating a Mastodon server to be a safe online place for our community to grow.

As always, we are excited to share below more of the work the staff team having been doing over the past year, and look forward to all that the coming year has to bring.

*Revd Naomi Nixon, CEO*

## Strategy and Governance

We completed our refocus of vision and strategy this year and it has made a real difference to the clarity of our work and the way we talk about it. It was really noticeable at Greenbelt for example that people were learning what SCM is all about really quickly and easily because we had a clear message.

The big change in governance which is coming up is that Tom and Lou are finishing their terms as Convenor and Deputy Convenor. The consistency of their leadership through challenging social and financial times has been phenomenal. We will miss them both so much but it means new opportunities for other SCMerS and that has to be a good thing!

## Communications and Marketing



## Social Media

We continue to see steady engagement across our social media platforms, which this year has increased from four to six! We are now on TikTok and Mastodon, as well as Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube. Naomi N and I have been meeting to discuss our strategy with all of the platforms we use going forward, especially considering my limited time. We hope this work will help to focus our content, and allow time for more creativity!

With the uncertainty around Twitter late last year we spent some time looking for alternative platforms, and have found Mastodon to be a kind and wholesome space where we'd love to see an online community growing. There's more about this in [Naomi's blog](#), and if you'd like to join the SCM server get in touch for an invite link!

I am always looking for students to collaborate with to keep our socials content relevant and representative, so if you would be interested in helping with any content creation for any social media (particularly TikTok!) please do pop me a message.

### *Blogs and Resources*

Our wonderful Faith in Action Project Workers have risen to the challenge of keeping up the high quality blogs which Alana and Lizzy began, and it's been especially great to see Grace's recent blog series on prayer striking a chord with people. Naomi's Christ on the Picket line series has also been so relevant and needed! Other blogs from supporters and members include a series on Unity in Diversity for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, a published "Letter to Bishop X" about equal marriage in the CofE, Ethical Church Shopping, and a provocation for Disability Pride Month. If you'd like to write for the blog you can join our [writers' group on Facebook](#), or get in touch with me at [ruth@movement.org.uk](mailto:ruth@movement.org.uk).

### *Movement Magazine*

Lisa and Victoria continue to do an amazing job publishing *Movement*, our bi-annual magazine for students packed full of theology and the latest SCM news. The last two issues included the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition of the magazine(!), and an exploration of the theme of Conscientisation (pick up the Spring Issue for more on that!).

### *In The Loop*

We send a monthly e-newsletter, In The Loop, to our members and supporters to keep them updated on what we've been up to, provide info on upcoming events, and to advertise opportunities for engagement. John does a great job each month putting these together and they are always well received. We recently consolidated our audiences so that we send the same content to all of our subscribers, which has proved a more efficient use of John's time with no loss of engagement. If you'd like to subscribe to the newsletter you can do so here: <http://eepurl.com/gpWqf>

As always, if you have any suggestions of things you'd love to see more (or less) of on in our communications do get in touch 😊

*Ruth Harvey, Communications and Marketing Officer*

### **Members and Communities**

Over the last year we have averaged between 128-135 members, with the majority having three-year memberships. This is a slight increase of overall members from

the previous year, and the preference for three year memberships has been consistent for some time. Over the last few months, John has worked with Lisa to increase our renewals rate by improving our communication with members who are coming to the end of their membership period. .

### *Members survey*

We conducted our 2021-2022 Members survey this time last year. Some of the key findings were:

- Members taking action for social justice actions have increased from previous years.
- Members saying that SCM had helped “deepen faith and prayer life” and made them more “confident in speaking about my faith”.
- Workload and Mental Health remain the two biggest issues affecting students.
- Including marginalised groups is the cause members want SCM to respond to most.
- Everyone said they would recommend SCM to others

### *Communities*

This academic year John has worked with Ruth to launch the SCM Community Leaders group chat. It has been a great way to develop closer links with our Communities and find out what they've been getting up to. It's also been great to see them work together and support each other.

### *Resource*

Last summer was a very busy one with National Gathering, the first Bonhoeffer in Berlin trip, and the first Greenbelt since before Covid. This left us unable to put the usual time and effort into *Resource*, and we're really sorry. We are already working on plans for *Resource 2023*.

*John Wallace-Howell, Movement Administrator*

## **Faith in Action**

The Faith in Action project has been running since 2012, and is a major part of SCM's work. Supported by Project Bonhoeffer, the aims of the project are to

- increase the understanding of Bonhoeffer's approach to faith and the meaning of Christian Discipleship amongst students and recent graduates;
- enable students and recent graduates to reflect theologically on their experience of life, work and study, and live out their faith in action; and
- develop the skills and confidence of students and recent graduates to challenge the structures of injustice and be leaders of social and political transformation.

In autumn 2021 we transitioned to a new phase of the project and recruited two Project Workers, with Alana Romganoli appointed to the Theology and Resources role and Lizzy Norman-Sargent to the Social Justice role. Alana and Lizzy spent their year running workshops with SCM communities, writing blogs and reflections

on the themes of faith and social action, and creating resources such as the online Social Action Directory, the SCM Cookbook, and The Little Book of Peace which was published in partnership with the Fellowship of Reconciliation.

We are now in the second year of this format, and appointed two new Project Workers, Grace Stewart and Naomi Orrell, in September 2022. Grace and Naomi O have been building on the work of Lizzy and Alana through workshops and blog writing, as well as introducing new initiatives such as the Trans Theology Group and Lent Challenge. Looking ahead Grace plans to create a series of resources around faith and neurodiversity, and Naomi O will be coordinating SCM's presence at The Big One climate event in April.

*Lisa Murphy*

### *Affirming Christianity*

Work has continued on the Affirming Christianity project, which will be a series of short courses for SCM and Church groups to use. All the courses will assume the participants are already inclusive Christians who want to grow in their progressive faith.

Our first short course 'How to be a Good Christian Ally' which we are creating in partnership with OneBodyOneFaith should be ready for launch in the summer. The second is with the Urban Theology Unit and will be on the topic of Progressive Evangelism, although the title is to be confirmed. We continue to have a lot of ideas and a lot of interest from partners in working together on this, so we hope it will be a significant piece of work over several years.

### **Events**

National Gathering: We had 28 people at the National Gathering in total. The theme of the weekend was 'reinventing radical', so we spend time considering our role as Christians called to be radical in our faith, hearing from three very passionate speakers, Victoria Turner, Simon Cross and our own Naomi Nixon. More broadly, it was great to spend time together, especially in the beautiful sunshine. Highlights included the service with the Community of the Cross of Nails and the mindfulness bread-making session!

Greenbelt: We had lots of great engagement at the SCM stall, with a few new members and friends signing up. It was also great to see lots of familiar faces! We ran a panel with SCM members, discussing how the panellists found their churches and what their churches did to help the whole experience, as well as the differences between moving away to a new city versus staying at home. The panel was really well attended by both students and chaplains and lots of people stayed around after to chat! We also launched Honest Church on the stall, inviting passers-by to engage with the campaign in several ways:

- To take a selfie of themselves on a deckchair, committing to an Honest Church, and to share it on social media

- To reflect on the level of welcome that their church currently offers using a taxonomy using case study prompts and to stick a sticker on our pinboard of churches
- To take away the toolkit to reflect on how their church can be more honest

Berlin: As Naomi mentioned above, despite every travel delay imaginable (and I really do mean *every* travel delay) our 4-day trip to Berlin was moving, informative, and all-round brilliant. From visiting Pastor Niemoller and Bonhoeffer's houses to seeing the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church and the Chapel of Reconciliation (where everyone got to ring the bell for the 12 o'clock service!), each story we heard and memorial we saw expanded our understanding of reconciliation and peace work, and challenged us to act and forgive in our own lives. I don't think any of us left Berlin unchanged. If you'd like to join us for this year's trip I would heartily recommend it!

Supporters' gatherings: In the last year, we have run three events for our supporters (including individual Friends, church links and chaplaincy contacts), one on Zoom in June, one at Greenbelt and one in February in Coventry. It has been so great to meet our supporters in person, especially after the pandemic and for me as the new Fundraiser. We are planning another event for June!

*Sophie Mitchell, Fundraiser*