

## AGM 2022 Staff Team Report

It has been quite a year at SCM. We've achieved so much, and we are so proud to share all that is good, but it has also been hard to sit down and write this report because the year began with the sorrow of the restructure which saw us lose Rob Chivers and Caitlin Wakefield at the end of their contracts. Along with other changes this means we have lost a third of the staff hours that we had two years ago, which has been a drastic change. The reality of saying goodbye to great people and having to reduce some of what we can provide for our members is hard. However, I am so proud of how the team has pulled together to keep the movement on track. The financial savings have prevented us from coming to the AGM this year on the brink of a crisis and with time to work hard to make the movement financially sustainable.

Other strategic staffing decisions have come about because of staff moving on. When Emma Temple left, we moved to having two part-time Faith in Action project workers funded thanks to Project Bonhoeffer. Seeing both them and the project grow and innovate great things with and for students has been wonderful. With the departure of Simon Densham and Deanna Davis in the autumn we were able to shuffle some roles around and create three part time roles. The Movement Administrator post picks up some of the personal contact with students, and the Finance and Fundraising Administrator and Fundraiser posts, in addition to dealing with the day-to-day finances, work with our SCM Friends and the trusts who support us, as well as building the base of church support which is at the heart of our fundraising strategy.

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**

This year we have undertaken a significant piece of work with the trustees to refocus our vision. This has meant tightening up some of the language to communicate our purpose and values afresh as well as working to discern the right way to describe and prioritise what students get from SCM. The next GC meeting will vote on a final form of the language, but our discussions have brought us to adding something about being and becoming. SCM has a powerful purpose in creating space which affirms students and doesn't expect or demand anything. It also has a track record of giving opportunities for growth as disciples, activists, leaders and theologians. This refocusing work will help us with at least three key strategic areas; communicating to potential members, helping us put our limited

resources in the best places to achieve our purpose and inspiring people, churches and trusts to support our work financially.

This year we have also supported the trustees with a policy review, making some significant updates to our staff handbook to strengthen our working from home and hybrid working policies, and to create a 'Standard Operating Procedures' document to streamline some of our operational policies.

### **Operations and Admin**

Our operations and admin staff have been working to keep everything running smoothly by taking care of the administrative tasks behind the scenes. This includes organising mailings, sending out membership packs, managing bookings for events, recording SCM's income and expenditure, setting up the Members' and Groups' surveys, and responding to general enquiries.

Deanna, SCM's Admin and Finance Officer, left in November to take up a new role with Breaking Barriers, a charity working to support refugees and asylum seekers to access work and settle in their new communities. As a result we welcomed John Wallace-Howell as Movement Administrator and Jen Nicholas as Finance and Fundraising Administrator to the staff team in February this year.

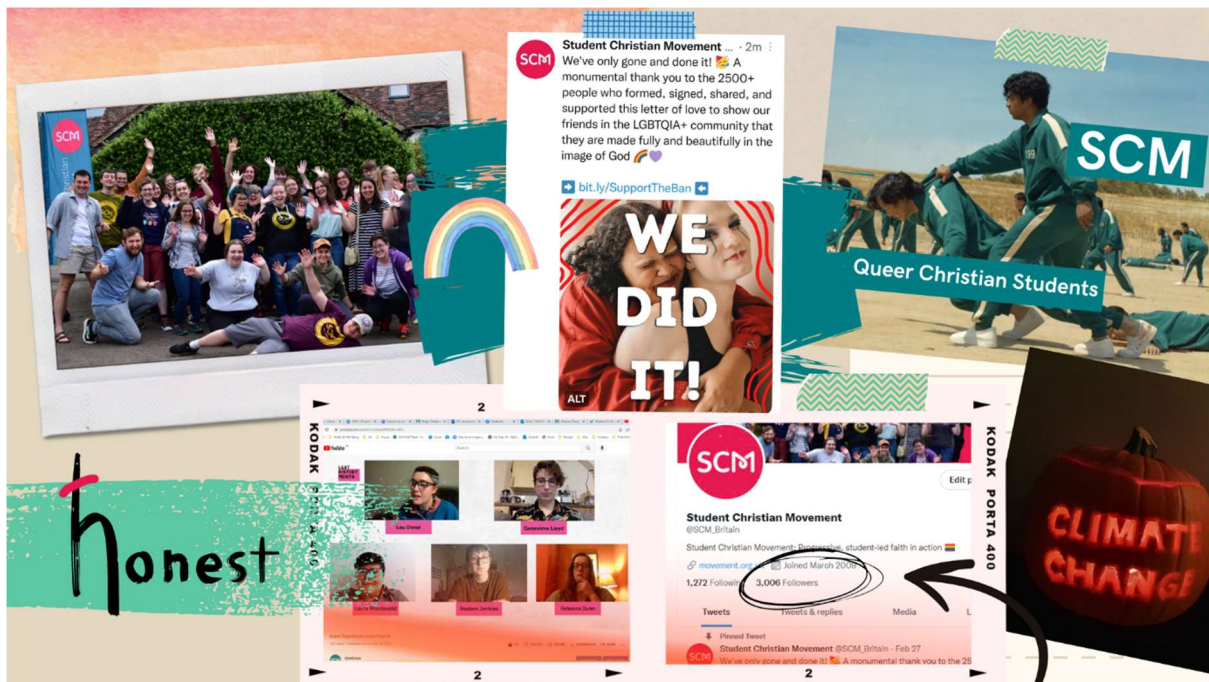
John is the first point of contact for SCM's members and community leaders, and has been making sure that the *Movement* magazine and care package mailings go to the right addresses, and that everyone is kept up to date with all the latest SCM news through the In the Loop newsletter. He has also the lead on putting together the Members' and Groups' surveys to gather feedback from the movement which will help us monitor SCM's impact and inform our planning for the future.

Jen's role is to support our finance management and fundraising work, and she has been making sure that all of our bills are paid on time, donations are recorded and that people are thanked for their support. She also supports our fundraising work by helping to send out appeals and ensuring that our database of supporters is up to date.

We have recently begun devising a new operational plan following on from the work that the trustees have been doing around SCM's vision. The plan draws together all of the work of the staff team, setting out targets and methods for recording impact, and then feeds into our fundraising work and planning for the future.

*Lisa Murphy, Operations Manager; John Wallace-Howell, Movement Administrator; Jen Nicholas, Finance and Fundraising Administrator.*

## Communications and Marketing



It's been another great year in comms land! We've continued to utilise online events and livestreaming to remain as accessible and COVID-safe as we can, and also to reach a wider audience. We have continued to see growth on our social channels, including reaching our target of 3000 followers on Twitter. We've made many a meme, and we also launched our TikTok account which saw Lou Dover (LGBT+ Rep on General Council) making some cracking videos about progressive Christianity. If you'd like to be involved in making content for TikTok please do let me know, I'm always looking for enthusiastic helpers in this area! We started putting our blogs on Instagram as abridged infographics, which has been aided by having Lizzy and Alana in post to write the blogs and create the graphics. It has been a really engaging way to share blogs that might otherwise not have as wide a readership. We will definitely continue with this format!

In online community building we have explored [an SCM Discord server](#) which will be open to all members to join by the time you're reading this – we'd love some dedicated moderators for this so if you spend a lot of time on Discord and would be up for being involved drop me an email or DM.

My personal highlights over this year include being involved with delivering our Black History Month [programme of events](#), including editing and livestreaming the service of reflection which Ciaran Nevers so kindly put together for us, and livestreaming the panel on decolonising education with NUS UK. It was so exciting to partner with a big name like NUS and the conversation was so informative and so pertinent, it felt really exciting to be part of it in the background. More recently it was great for SCM to play such a key role in the Support The Ban work where we managed to gain over 2600 signatures from church leaders in support of a full legal ban on 'conversion therapy'. Whilst the latest news on the Government's U-turn has

been majorly disappointing, our initial response from Mike Freer MP was encouraging, and I believe our letter will help to make sure there is eventually a full ban.

We have continued to run SCM Online events with varying attendance rates, but those who do attend find them interesting and useful. We have been recording most of these events, so if you can't make a particular evening you can catch up [on our YouTube channel @SCMBritain](#). It was unbelievably great to have the National Gathering in person, and also to be able to offer the keynotes and worship livestreamed over YouTube. It was a really [successful hybrid event](#), and I enjoyed being able to play with our new camera and catch up with some of you! If you haven't already, [do book for this year's gathering](#) where we'll be returning to The Poplars at Ledbury.

We had a membership marketing push before and around Welcome Week which brought in some new faces, and we ran our National online Welcome Week again, with a pared down schedule to accommodate staff changes. With in person freshers fairs making a return we may not put as much emphasis on running a national week again, but we will most likely run one or two events around this time, especially for people who don't have SCM Groups base at their universities.

Coming up Naomi and I have been working on Honest Church, a new initiative which will provide students with a toolkit to ask their church leaders to be more honest about their views on LGBT+ Christians (whether positive or negative). This feels like a really relevant time to launch this initiative with the Support The Ban work, and our recent LGBT History Month roundtable on Queer Experience in Church. Do [give that a watch](#) if you've not already!

As always, if you have any suggestions, 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**

In the last year we have had on average 125 members, with most taking out a three-year membership. There had been a dip in the number of renewals which is partly due to people no longer being eligible for membership, and also being without an administrator for a few months. John will be contacting all those whose membership is due for renewal and encouraging them to sign up again.

Our 2021 Members and Groups' Surveys were completed last April, and gathered feedback on everything from why people sign up for membership to how membership has impacted on respondents' faith. Highlights and key findings from the surveys include:

- Most people find out about SCM via word of mouth, and we heard stories of how some respondents' parents met via SCM!

- Members join primarily because they see SCM as being an inclusive and progressive space, but also because they want to be part of a wider community and have support in exploring their faith.
- 78% of respondents felt connected to the wider movement, and those that did not feel connected identified Covid restrictions and lots of time spent on Zoom as being the main reasons.
- 93% of respondents felt that the care packages they received had benefited their mental wellbeing.
- Our members are passionate about the inclusion of marginalised groups, climate change and the environment, student mental health and food poverty.
- 84% of respondents had taken part in some form of social action.

### *Care Packages*

These packs of encouraging gifts have become a staple part of SCM membership as it is something we can offer to every member, no matter where they are or whether they are in a group or not. This year we've sharpened the purpose of what we do with each pack including an 'at home' prayer station, a prompt for activism, a gift, a sticker and post cards all connected to the theme of the pack. In the summer, after the worst of the disconnection of the pandemic and a cold spring our theme was 'getting outside' and in advent the focus was on refugees. Our next pack is due very soon and will be on the theme of 'discipleship when overwhelmed'.

### *Resource: Learn, Prepare, Lead*

A small number of leaders attended our annual *Resource* training which was held online in early September. Sessions included a bible study on Leadership, social media training, an introduction to leading a campaign, and the lifecycle of a group. One participant said, *"I enjoyed the variety of workshops as it meant I learnt a lot about different aspects of being on an SCM Committee. Being able to talk about the elements of creating a successful group made me much more confident in my position as a group leader."*

If you're taking a leadership position with your group for the next academic year, or are interested in starting an SCM community at your uni, save the date for the 2022 training – 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> September!

## **Projects**

### *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 the last year we have transitioned to a new phase of the project following the departure of our previous Faith in Action Project Lead, Emma Temple, who left to take up a new role as a content creator last July. In this new phase, we recruited two Project Workers to focus on the two main areas of the project, with Alana Romganoli appointed to the Theology and Resources role and Lizzy Norman-Sargent to the Social Justice role.

“We are now half way through the first year of this new phase of the project which continues to go from strength to strength. Between us we have run six workshops so far on theology or social action with SCM communities in Winchester, Birmingham, Durham and Leeds, as well as online sessions. One workshop resulted in the group appointing a new role of Campaigns and Outreach Officer to their exec team which was great to see! In the coming term there are sessions booked with Birmingham SCM and we will both continue to contact groups to book in further sessions.

At the start of the academic year our main focus was on creating Faith in Action content for the website, including blogs on different social action issues and points of theological reflection, bible studies and workshop outlines on topics such as slavery in the Bible. As requested by members, we put together a list of ethical food labels and explored what these label actually mean, in order to equip members with the knowledge to make an ethical choice that felt authentic to them when food shopping. This content creating work has continued through the year and we've also had four blogs be written by members – we're always looking for more students to get involved in writing for the website so do get in touch if you would like to contribute!

The spring term has seen the re-emergence of Theology Thursday Sessions, with topics covered so far ranging from Mental Health and Wellbeing post Pandemic, to the Church's role in politics and activism. We also ran a poetry workshop with Stories of Hope and Home to celebrate the stories of those who are seeking asylum in the UK.

We're currently working on a number of different things including planning future Theology Thursday sessions, updating the Called to Be vocations resource, and working with our partners at UTU Sheffield to develop a 'module' of the Affirming Christianity course. Lizzy is also working on creating a directory of social action organisations which we hope to have online shortly, and there are more Theology Thursday sessions in the pipeline too.

### *Campaigns*

The campaigns theme chosen by members at the 2021 AGM was Food, and the big piece of work we are currently working on for this is the cookbook, with Lizzy collecting recipes for this since early January, along with recording some cook-along videos.

In response to the situation in Afghanistan at the start of September and concern over the Nationality and Borders Bill, along with feedback from some partner

organisations and Project Bonhoeffer, SCM also designed a more long-term campaign focus to address issues related to conflict and its wider impacts. We have created a year-long campaigns plan based around different international and national days, to help focus both work on the food campaign (eg the ethical food labels blog was created for Fair Trade fortnight) and the wider SCM long-term focus, with some work combining both focuses together, for example the cook-along video filmed by Lizzy was done to mark Holocaust Memorial Day and to promote the cook-book and the importance of thinking ethically about our food.

In the next few months we will be working with our partners the Fellowship of Reconciliation to create a 'Little Book of Peace' resource, and a campaigns toolkit to give some hints and tips for running a successful campaign.

*Lizzy Norman-Sargent and Alana Romagnoli, Faith in Action Project Workers.*

### *Affirming Christianity*

Affirming Christianity has taken form and got under way this year. It 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.

### **Partnerships**

We have significantly increased the shared activities with partners this year. SCM enjoys an excellent relationship with many other organisations and this puts us in a great position to be able to pick up and run with important things like our 'Christians support the ban' campaign. However, we also have longer term plans with partnerships which are part of the strategic work of SCM. The table below gives an outline of our current partnerships which fall into this category.

Name of organisation	Shared Activities
Iona Community	Shared speaking opportunities, and Iona Student Week co-host. Young Adults Group (YAG) and Common concern networks open to SCM members. <i>Movement</i> and Care packages sent to YAG members. Year membership of Iona offered to SCM graduates.
One Body One Faith	Working on the Allyship course together, and their Director, Luke, has joined SCM's Council of Reference.

Fellowship of Reconciliation	Sharing speaking engagements and creating a Little Book of Peace together.
Cross of Nails Community	SCM has become a member of the International Cross Of Nails Community and we will shortly be presented with a cross to recognise our commitment to peace and reconciliation. SCM are also supporting their summer event.
Greenbelt	SCM will be attending the Greenbelt Festival with a stall and hope to host some student meet-ups.
Inclusive Church	IC have added an SCM representative trustee to their board. Jack Woodruff has taken up this position.
Progressive Christianity Network	PCN are funding us to do a feasibility study around co working with graduates. Naomi is a trustee representing SCM on the PCN board.
UTU	Affirming Christianity course on evangelism
Project Bonhoeffer	Funding for the Faith in Action project.