

Adult, aware and accepting

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Focus article on the Finnish Lutheran SCM

The Finnish Lutheran SCM "Suomen Kristillinen Ylioppilassliitto – SKY" celebrated its 110th anniversary on Sunday 6th May 2007 with a jubilee mass and a festival celebration. The mass and the party were visited by a number of senior friends and current active members, and speeches were heard from both historic and current perspectives.

Singing the revolution

Music played an important role in the celebrations. The music of the mass was taken from the folk mass of El Salvador that SKY had published in the 1980s, and was performed by the SKY song group. In addition to this Latin-American mass, SKY has published various Christian songs during 1960s-1980s ranging from striking left-wing marches to beautiful Christmas carols. To celebrate its 110th-anniversary, a selection of these songs was published in a CD format. The vivid and many-sided history of SKY which includes a clear sense of social responsibility is strongly present in these songs.

Three SKY seniors were invited as honorary members during the 110-celebrations. Archbishop emeritus John Vikström was thanked for his lifelong work for Christian spirituality and justice. WSCF grand old man Risto Lehtonen was given credit for all he has done for the WSCF movement internationally and nationally. Mrs. Liisa Tuovinen was appreciated for her work striving for the welfare of families and the rights of sexual minorities.

It all started with the ladies

The Finnish Lutheran SCM dates back to 1897 when a group of female university students formed the first SCM group in Finland. Men formed their group two years afterwards, and in 1909 these two groups and a third one joined together to form



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SKY as an SCM. Thereafter many groups have joined or left SKY, and in total 17 different organisations have been a part of SKY. Nowadays, SKY has 7 member organisations of which three are active, and, in addition, one or two new local groups are about to be established in different towns. SKY is a bilingual organisation that has both Finnish and Swedish as its official languages.

SKY has always had close contacts with the Lutheran Church in Finland, and it has had a big impact on many features in the Church. For example, the first university chaplains were employed by SKY. SKY also developed the concept for confirmation camps which today gather almost 90% of 15-year-olds to summer camps to learn about the Lutheran faith. However, from the 1960s onwards the Lutheran church in Finland has taken care of both these forms of work.

Ecumenical and international aspects have been crucial part of SKY's identity from the beginning. SKY and the Orthodox SCM in Finland, "Ortodoksinen Opiskelijaliitto – OOL," form the ecumenical cooperation council SKOY that is the Finnish member of WSCF. Though separate organisations, the two SCMs keep in close contact and organise various activities together, and both naturally keep in contact with the WSCF family abroad. The Nordic contacts have been of great importance to SKY throughout its history, and SKY is currently the chair of the Nordic-Baltic Cooperation Council.

Inventing Christianity today

The current activities of SKY are based on the activities in the local organisations. These in general include tea & talk-style thematic evenings once a week, offering discussions and exchanges of opinions

on several topics from spirituality and theology to fair trade and climate change. In addition, seminars, retreats, excursions and trips are organised both on local and national level. SKY also publishes two high-quality magazines that discuss theology, philosophy, art and society four times each per year - one in Finnish, one in Swedish.

In 2006 SKY has, for example, celebrated the Universal Day of Prayer and organised a weekend-retreat with the Orthodox SCM, visited theatre and musical performances, sent representatives to both Finnish and German Church Celebrations (Kirchentag), and discussed themes like ecumenism, medicine & ethics, personal spirituality, selfishness, and mission.

Relating to the "Family" theme of WSCF-Europe, SKY has taken up two initiatives to contribute to the elaboration of the theme. First, following the Strasbourg conference, a Bible study for women using non-formal learning methods was established. The free atmosphere and the possibility to approach gender and biblical views in creative ways has been well appreciated by our members. Secondly, SKY is evaluating the possibility of translating the Sexual Harassment Guidelines of WSCF into Finnish, and may distribute it as a means to widen the knowledge of how to relate to these problems within a church or organisational setting.

Does your SCM have an anniversary coming up? Would you like to share some of your SCM's history with the readers of Mozaik? OR Has your SCM had an interesting and inspirational project that you would like to share with other SCMs around Europe and beyond? If so please contact the editor on wscfmozaik@yahoo.com.

