

World Student Christian Federation Asia-Pacific
Identity, Diversity & Dialogue(IDD) - A Biblico Theological Conference on Human Sexuality
& The 22nd Regional Committee Meeting (RCM) of WSCF Asia Pacific
Dates : May 5-14, 2017
Venue: Bangkok Christian Guest House, Bangkok, Thailand

The WSCF brings together numerous movements from various countries, cultures, and traditions of the Christian faith. The World Student Christian Federation(WSCF) as a global community of students enjoys the richness of the diversity that comes from the many cultures, contexts, and religious traditions it represents. A core part of our mission is engaging these differences and allowing ourselves to learn from them, as well as discovering the significance of deep unity we share.

There do come points of strong disagreement between members of the community, and another part of our common work is finding out together how to handle and how to address these issues; this work is especially challenging when they are deeply rooted in our psyche due to our upbringing in a society ridden by stereo-types. This at times cause painful differences and disagreements. Our understanding of human sexuality, particularly on homosexuality is another area of difference and disagreement that has been growing in visibility and importance for the last decade. We are not alone in this, for the disagreements around homosexuality have been tearing apart churches and Christian communities in many parts of the world.

The conventional mainline churches have taken a stringent position to exclude the LGBT communities based on moral and religious values. Many churches refuse to create space to explore different theological perspectives and understanding on homosexuality by affirming the biblical position on homosexuality and promoting the derogatory message that “the act of homosexuality is sin and LGBT people are sinners”. In the name of God and religion, today many LGBT communities in different parts of the world are excluded, marginalized and to some extent ostracized by the conformist churches. The conventional teachings of churches have a great impact on the young people and the worst affected section is the young people, who are forced to oblige the doctrinal values of the Church, and afraid to come out of the closet. There are few Churches who are open to the LGBT community and have explored discourse and initiated constructive dialogues on homosexuality and Christian faith with their community to be an open and inclusive Church.

The WSCF has an ecumenical identity and, therefore, it engages many people with different ways of thinking, feeling, and experiencing the world, including, both in the national constituencies and in the Federation people who are marginalized because of their sexuality/ sexual orientation and gender identity. The WSCF exists to accompany the students and young people in their contexts and struggles. In the presence of the cloud of witnesses that have emerged from the WSCF over the past century, we cannot hold in silence the crisis of conscience that now faces the global and local Christian community around the inability to effectively address differences of perspective on this topic and relate to the people especially affected. The WSCF has a prophetic, Christian identity. This means that we are called to advocate for justice, liberation, and peace. Continuing dialogue about sexuality and gender diversity affirms our commitment to our own identity.

Therefore, the question of how to relate to the notion of LGBT rights is a divisive issue, as most of our members come from different churches, that can lead our national constituencies to question

each others' commitment to Christian discipleship and to building God's new world among us. At the 35th General Assembly of WSCF global, a document on IDD was issued with recommendations. However, there is a lack of consensus, particularly on sexual diversity. It is recommended that we initiate discussion and dialogue among the constituencies of the WSCF to generate a meaningful discourse on sexual diversity. Despite our differences on this topic, the WSCF has a common theological understanding that should underlie the difficult conversations around human sexuality, i.e every person equally bears the image of God. As every human bears the imprint of God, we have no option but to affirm the dignity of all people.

In this context, the WSCF AP region is initiating constructive dialogue among young people of SCMs and with the Churches and faith communities to understand the diverse opinion and position of faith communities on homosexuality. It is imperative for the young people to be exposed to various traditions of Christian faiths to understand the different faith perspectives and theological understanding of homosexuality to embrace differences, particularly in the area of different sexual orientation / sexual minorities to build an inclusive community.

Activity: i. A Biblico Theological Conference on Human Sexuality in the field of Identity, Diversity and Dialogue(IDD)

ii. Regional Committee Meeting (RCM)

I. The Biblical Theology Conference on Human Sexuality will bring thirty young women and men from SCMs of 20 countries of Asia and the Pacific. This conference is the follow-up to the School for Ecumenical Leadership Formation(SELF) organized on the theme IDD in 2016. The delegates of the SELF-have proposed to create space for youth to explore different theological perspectives and understanding on homosexuality.

II. After the theology conference, the delegates will attend the 22nd Regional Committee Meeting of the WSCF Asia-Pacific region and work on the concrete action plans/ proramg direction for the AP region, particularly on IDD with recommendations to initiate dialogue with the national constituencies.

Objectives:

- To understand the diverse faith perspectives and theological understanding of homosexuality
- To re-read the Bible together to discover the diverse gifts of God
- To initiate constructive dialogue among young people particularly among the SCMs, Christian community on LGBT from faith perspectives
- To create concrete action plans/ proramg direction for the AP region, particularly on IDD with recommendations to initiate dialogue with the national constituencies during the 22nd RCM.
- To build inclusive community by creating space for the LGBT community within SCMs, churches and faith community to hear their stories and voices to learn and share to a wider community

Anticipated outcomes (for each of the areas of work and the activities described above)

- A group of young people would have exposed to the diverse faith perspectives and theological understanding on homosexuality and LGBT rights
- The exposure visits and the discourse with the faith communities and church leaders will empower them to initiate dialogue in their own community back home
- The exposure program will enable the group to reflect on the notion of homosexuality and homophobic mentality of people
- A wider community will be benefited by the personal stories and experiences shared by the group after having exposure to the conference and the communities.
- There will be a concrete action plan/ guideline for the SCMs to initiate dialogue on IDD

II. 22nd Regional Committee Meeting

The WSCF AP Regional Committee is the highest policy making body of the WSCF Asia-Pacific Region. It is composed of official delegates from WSCF affiliate and associate member movements in AP region, WSCF AP officers and staff, observers and guests/partner. The RCM meets once in every two-years to perform the functions under the 'mandate in the WSCF AP By-laws'.

Specific Functions of the RCM:

The functions of the Asia-Pacific Committee are to :

- a) review and assess the situations of the member movements of the region in the context of the work of the Executive Committee and the worldwide situation of the Federation;
- b) consider the ideas, problems and aspirations of the member movements of the region;
- c) determine and review objectives, policies and priorities for the region;
- d) devise the ongoing program of the region;
- e) recommend affiliation or association of the movements;
- f) elect regional staff to be appointed by the Executive Committee;
- g) coordinate the activities of the regional staff and national staff within the region;
- h) prepare the regional budget to be submitted to the Executive Committee;
- i) elect members of the Regional Standing Committee;
- j) elect regional representatives to the Executive Committee in accordance to the Constitution of the WSCF; and
- k) decide on a date and venue for the next meeting of the Committee.

Apart from these mandated functions, the RCM is also a space for prayer, theological reflection, dialogue, ecumenism and celebration. It is an opportunity to learn together as an ecumenical family about issues and challenges confronting our SCMs. Moreover, strengthen the host SCM with the regional and global support and solidarity in the work of SCM in their local contexts.

We are expecting around 30 to 35 delegates including observers and guests from SCMs of ***Australia, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Thailand, Timor Leste, and New Zealand***

The RCM will be attended by both delegates, and observers. They are: Student members /General Secretaries/ National Coordinators of member SCMs of WSCF AP, WSCF AP Officers, Key staff of AP regional office, observers, guests/partners

Host of RCM: Every RCM is hosted by a national movement. This is also an opportunity for the delegates of all the SCMs of the region to understand and know more about the host SCM and particularly about the contextual realities of the host country. Some of the previous RCMs were hosted by the following SCMs of the WSCF AP region:

- 21st RCM – SCM Indonesia (GMKI) – Balia, Indonesia
- 20th RCM – SCM India - Bangalore, India
- 19th RCM – SCM Indonesia – Tomohon, Indonesia
- 18th RCM – SCM Hong Kong – Chinese University, Hong Kong
- 17th RCM – SCM Bangladesh – Dhaka, Bangladesh
- 16th RCM – SCM Thailand – Chinagmai , Thailand
- 15th RCM – SCM Thailand – Chiangmai , Thailand
- 14th RCM – SCM Philippines – Tagatay city, Philippines
- 13th RCM – SCM Taiwan – Hsin Chu, Taiwan
- 12th RCM – SCM India – Delhi, India
- 11th RCM – SCM Hong Kong – Hong Kong

Tentative Program:

May 5 Friday	Arrival of female delegate and beginning of RCM Pre-women’s Meeting/program
May 6 Saturday	continue the Pre-Women’s Meeting /program and Arrival of male delegates
5pm	Inauguration and welcome dinner for all the delegates
May 7-9 Sun-Tues day	IDD Theology conference (9 th afternoon - Exposure)
May 10-13 Wedday-Satday	RCM business session
May 14	Departure