



Geneva, Monday, October 5, 2009

A pastoral letter from the World Student Christian Federation following a week of disasters and tragedy in the Asia Pacific Region

The World Student Christian Federation's students from all over the world mourn the loss of lives, homes, and communities this week in the Philippines, Indonesia, Tonga, and Samoa. These disasters have forever changed the surviving communities of these countries. We pray for strength and courage for all survivors who have weathered the storm, who must begin the work of grieving their losses and of re-building livelihoods and neighborhoods after terrible damage. May the survivors lay the dead to rest with humanity and dignity. May the international community respond in solidarity through generosity of prayers and resources that will revive our neighbors' hopes and capacities in this trying time. May the Filipino, Indonesian, Tongan, and Samoan government and community leaders receive God's grace to salvage and use relief resources with the highest level of integrity.

We offer particular prayer and concern for our brothers and sisters in the Student Christian Movements (SCMs) in the Philippines and Indonesia. We especially lift up in prayer and acts of solidarity the SCM members and senior friends whose lives have been lost, whose homes have been destroyed, whose workplaces have been decimated, and whose communities have been forever changed. We also pray for the many students and senior friends who are working tirelessly in the relief efforts. We appeal to the WSCF global community to embrace them in whatever manner God calls us to do.

Finally, while it is essential to care for and seek to comfort victims and survivors, it is also imperative we seriously analyze the global context of natural disasters in a time of extreme economic inequality and irreversibly devastating climate change. We decry the global economic system that privileges some survivors with tools for survival and recovery, while hundreds of thousands of others are left with nothing. We acknowledge strong scientific evidence that floods, hurricanes, and tsunamis are increasing in frequency and intensity because of climate change. We repent of the Christian history of consuming in unsustainable ways and of preaching a theology of domination over

creation. We call for a serious examination of economically and ecologically unsustainable actions worldwide, but most especially those done by the global north. We urge individuals and societies to take concrete actions to slow climate change, and therefore ameliorate its exacerbation of natural disasters. We call upon our government leaders to carry the grief of this week of disasters and tragedy into the Copenhagen summit and hope that this time of widespread pain and suffering may propel government leaders to become more determined to agree upon thorough environmental sustainability sanctions.

In Grief and in Hope,

Mr. Horacio Mesones,
Chairperson

Rev. Michael Wallace
General Secretary

World Student Christian Federation

A prayer for the people of the Philippines, Indonesia, Tonga, and Samoa

One: People have lost homes, personal possessions, places of worship, schools, public infrastructure.

Many: Help them rebuild.

One: People have no food, water, and shelter.

Many: Bring the basic necessities to those in need. Help communities and relief agencies work with speed and discernment; help aid to arrive on time.

One: People have lost loved ones.

Many: Help them to find the bodies for burial and closure; where this is not possible, help people find other ways to grieve. Bring healing and hope to those who have lost family members and friends.

One: People have lost a sense of security.

Many: Let people feel a sense of dignity restored as they find solutions for the future.

One: People have struggled with God.

Many: Let people know Your loving presence with them.

O God, we are overwhelmed in the presence of such loss and suffering. Make us instruments of assistance and comfort to one another, and especially to those who have lost much. Guide us all with your Holy Spirit. Comfort your people. In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen. Amen.