



global news

stories and news from Scripture Union around the world

**Hallmarks of our
work in schools**
Page 3

**Stories of Scripture
Union schools work**
Pages 4 & 5

**Finding faith
in school**
Page 8

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Being with children where they are

Dear SU family,

According to a 2016 UNESCO study, one out of five children, youth and adolescents are not attending school due to poverty, social problems or gender discrimination. For primary and secondary school aged pupils the numbers are a bit more encouraging; 91% of all children are receiving at least primary school education, 86% have the opportunity to get lower secondary education.

Most children around the world are spending five days a week in school, often six to nine hours per day. Besides learning through the official curriculum, they are developing friendships, skills and their very own worldviews. During their time in school they are often trying to answer the deeper questions of life.

Even though individual schools may

represent only a certain section of society, on the whole they are reaching all kinds of kids; rich and poor, intelligent and less smart, from healthy family backgrounds and from difficult family situations, and of course from all kinds of religious or non-religious backgrounds.

“We in SU are convinced that it is important to bring the love of Jesus to the places where children are.”

We in SU are convinced that it is important to bring the love of Jesus to the places where children are. That’s why we are using every opportunity to connect with them in one of their key environments – at school. This is happening in many different ways; from Bible clubs in schools run by students and supported by SU staff, values

education with a special focus on life skills, psychological and pastoral care, an official chaplaincy program or teacher training.

In this edition of our *Global News* you will get a glimpse of the different models of our schools ministry around the world. I would like to invite you to pray for our staff and volunteers who are sharing God’s love with children, young people and teachers. We can’t take our access to schools for granted and in some places it is under threat. Please pray that we will use the opportunities wisely. Thank you!

Warmest greetings and blessings,

Monika Kuschmierz
SU International Director



God’s love in action

“I’m so glad I belong to God!”

That was the spontaneous reaction of 11-year old John as he barbecued sausages at a recent end-of-term activity with his SU school club.

In this club, he’s found a community where he feels welcome, where his opinions and questions matter and where he’s finding more about his part in God’s Big Story. And he’s excited!
writes SU’s Children’s Ministry Co-ordinator, Wendy Strachan.

That’s the holistic nature of schools ministry. SU recognises that God’s Good News is good news for every aspect of a young person’s life. For many children, school may be one of the few places where they experience the love of God in the form of an SU volunteer or fellow-student who notices their anxieties and provides assurance or protection. School may be the only place where a young person hears about God in a way that makes sense to them, or identifies a ‘real Christian’.

SU schools ministry looks different around the world: it may be values-based

education, school chaplaincy, Bible clubs, student leadership training, advocacy for children with disabilities or some other focus. Every approach demonstrates the importance of connecting with children in schools, where every week they experience the ups and downs of life. Each provides the opportunity for children and young people to see themselves as God does, and perhaps to exclaim – like John – that they are so glad that they belong to God.





Hallmarks of our work in schools

by Wendy Strachan

In schools ministry, we aim high! The age and inexperience of children and teenagers are not barriers to God's work in their lives and their schools. Expect to be surprised by the Holy Spirit as SU commits to:

Validating the voices of young people

Listening to children is our starting point. Their feelings, ideas and opinions are treated with the same respect that Jesus demonstrated in his interactions with all people. To the extent that children allow us to, we 'share life' with them.

Sharing God's Big Story

We have confidence that God will meet young people as they explore Scripture. When children open the Bible, they discover that in this story there are people who share their own life concerns: bullying, addiction, failure, hopelessness – and the need for inclusion, forgiveness and restoration that God is able to meet.

Creative contextualisation

21st century children deserve 21st century approaches. We will be well-informed about the issues that young people face and ready to experiment with new ideas that will engage their imagination.

A holistic approach

Imagine a school where a breakfast club for hungry children, or an after-school sports program for active teenagers, or a tutoring service for those who struggle with homework, is run by the same SU staff or volunteers who help them engage with the Bible in the SU club. That's a powerful demonstration of God's heart for children.

Integrity

There are ethical and legal responsibilities that surround our involvement in schools. It's essential to consult with the school authorities – expectations differ from country to country.

We comply with these because we are concerned to serve the schools with honesty, and to serve children with the highest standards of care and safety.

Volunteer leadership

SU is led by volunteers of all ages. Children as young as 10 years are already leaders in school clubs – learning leadership qualities that may equip them to be national leaders of the future.

Working with churches

SU encourages local churches to partner in schools ministry in their community: to pray, to provide leadership, to serve, to disciple.



A listening ear in the playground

school chaplain uses art to reach pupils in SU Queensland

School chaplains are one of the ways that Scripture Union in Queensland is reaching out and supporting children and young people. The network of chaplains, affectionately known as 'chappies' by pupils and staff, offers dedicated support to pupils.

Chappy at Moranbah and Moranbah East state schools, Desley Kerr, is there with a listening ear for all. She has

seen the impact of domestic violence on children in her schools.

"I know of people who have spent the night hiding outside in bushes because they didn't feel safe to go into their own home. Our children should never be too scared to be home."

Desley was inspired through working in a local organisation that helps

"Our children should never be too scared to be home."

domestic violence victims to help teach her students that domestic violence is not okay, and they have the power to do something about it. With the help of a financial grant, lots of paint, second-hand supplies, and creative inspiration, Desley was able to share

the importance and power of speaking up. She worked across 49 classes and reinforced the lessons with themed works of art.

The results included one child having the courage to come forward and speak to their teacher which led to a change in custody arrangements, and another small group of students who spoke to staff about their concerns for another child.



Partnership in action

by Albert Tamado, National Director of SU Botswana

A special school program pioneered by Scripture Union Botswana, in partnership with other organisations, has been helping transform young lives in schools around the country.

The Spiritual and Moral Development Program, run by SU Botswana in partnership with the charity Seed of Gratitude and other Christian youth organisations, operated in all of Botswana's 34 senior secondary schools during September. Its aim was to tackle a range of social problems affecting students. Outreach teams, with about 10 members in each school, worked to support students negotiating their way through the turbulent terrain of life. The program helped equip them to tackle addictions,



HIV/AIDS, low self-esteem, exam pressure, as well as overcoming spiritual battles, enabling them to become free from negative habits and thought patterns.

Each member of the outreach team received training to deliver the program and used materials from the Scripture Union Lifeskills manual, the Jika Generation manual, the True Love Waits Manual and other accredited materials.

How it all began

Looking back at the roots of SU ministry in schools

From as early as the 1880s, just over 10 years after the birth of Scripture Union, pupils in schools were being reached by SU workers. In 1888 George Pilkington, a Cambridge scholar and athlete, was appointed to the CSSM staff to take missions into public (non-government) schools in England. And it was from here that the first public school boys' camps began. The leaders outlined their plan as follows:

"To collect together as many as possible under canvas, to provide for them all the sports and amusements dear to the heart of boys, and while in the midst of these enjoyments to influence more by example than by words." By 1889 the camps had grown, and they aimed to have boys as secretaries responsible for running each SU branch in their own school. These young leaders distributed SU materials and met regularly together each Sunday (in their Boarding Schools).

As the ministry of SU spread internationally, ministry in schools became a natural expression of reaching out to children and young people. In India, Roddy Archibald had a profound impact through his work in schools. Working with a team of indigenous evangelists, he won the confidence of young people through friendship. In Australia, schools ministry was begun by Dr Howard Guinness in the 1930s, who travelled around speaking in schools with significant results. It was his booklet *Sword Drill* which encouraged daily Bible reading and prayer and he also spread the work to New Zealand. Meanwhile in Scotland, the foundations of schools ministry had been laid in the 1920s and by 1937 Scotland had one male and three female schools workers. In Glasgow High School one school group, started in 1927 by John Laird, was well established and being run by the pupils themselves 10 years later. Public school camps in England, led by Eric Nash, nicknamed 'Bash Nash', went from strength to strength and were instrumental in hundreds of boys taking a step of faith. As SU ministry grew rapidly in parts of Africa in the 1950s and 60s, schools ministry was integral to its growth, seeing many future leaders come to faith in Ghana and Nigeria. SU staff worker John Dean saw the establishment of many new SU groups in Nigerian schools during the 1960s as he travelled thousands of miles distributing books, Bibles and SU Notes.

Today Christians battle with the tide of secularisation in education across many countries. However, SU Movements continue to find creative ways to engage with children and share God's Big Story in schools.

4 global news

God's oldest book

how outdoor education helps children discover faith

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in Botswana



More than 27,000 young people were reached through the program, with many receiving basic counselling and advice. Support included help for students facing alcohol and drug abuse, relationship problems, spiritual issues (including Satanism), exam pressure, issues around sexual, emotional, physical, teacher and parental abuse, addictions, bullying, theft, and other sexuality issues.

The program gained momentum with the support of the media, including newspapers and TV coverage, and the Minister of Basic

“Its main aim was to help young people negotiate their way safely through the turbulent terrain of life”

Education also joined in radio interviews with the Director of SU to raise awareness.

Each school noted changes among students following the program. More than 1,000 students attended counselling sessions and follow up meetings. The impact was

not just among students, but the entire school community and the local community including Dikgosi (the village authority) were also affected. Some village authorities set up follow-up ‘kgotla’ meetings for villagers and a future working relationship is being explored.

There were many other positive outcomes from the program, including improved community relations and closer collaboration with government organisations, as well as the impact on individual lives. Many young people gave their lives to Christ which resulted in Scripture Union school groups being revived.

Creation is God’s oldest book according to Steve Meeker, director of SU Croatia-based Leadership Lab International (LLI) and the leader behind an outdoor education program for young people that is helping them discover more about themselves and the Christian faith.

“I’m amazed at the simplicity of taking people under a starry sky and singing praise songs around a fire”

LLI has just completed its eighth year of the Schools in Nature program. This values-based program takes students out of the classroom and into nature, offering a range of outdoor activities, from rock climbing, archery and canoeing to forest walks, wood and bush crafts and team games.

Steve said, “This program is a chance for young people to step out of their comfort zone and learn about their strengths. We’re developing a range of different things; we help with developing trust, team building and enabling students to be socially responsible. They learn from each other’s strengths and learn to support one another’s weaknesses.”

According to Steve, one of the main benefits for young people is getting out of the noise and busyness of life and learning to just ‘be’. “Being out in God’s

creation helps them to experience the awe and wonder of who He is,” he said. “I’m amazed at the simplicity of taking people under a starry sky and singing praise songs around a fire, or the ‘walk and talk’ experience of walking blindfolded as someone leads you through the forest. These are all experiences they will never forget.”

Steve has seen young people changed through the program and said, “There was one little girl who hadn’t been out into nature much and we were making debris shelters. She looked at what we were doing and said, ‘I’m not touching nature.’ Then we gave her some gloves and step by step she began to touch what she’d been robbed of by never coming close to nature. At the end of the week she said, ‘I found out I love nature.’”

Learning from God’s creation helps young people to appreciate their differences, Steve said, “When we look at the trees we see that not one is the same, God made this world full of variety. He made everyone unique in his image and it is through our differences that we can work together.”

A team from Scripture Union Latvia recently trained with LLI to help them deliver an outdoor program at their campsite. National Director, Līga Cepurīte, said, “We are planning a new program that is called *SavaDaba* (Your Own Nature) to be used in partnership with schools as a platform for children and youth to explore themselves and their communities and to share faith through nature. The training was great and we learned exactly what we’d hoped. We believe this will be a great way to evangelise in a natural way.”



Let the weak lead the strong

How pupil leadership is having an impact in Northern Ireland

My name is Connie Lyness. I am 19-years-old and have just left Belfast High school, where I served on the SU committee as a pupil leader. This year I am interning with SU Northern Ireland and involved in Schools Ministry in East Belfast. Being a pupil leader in our school SU group was a significant factor in how God guided me to pursue this internship.

For me, a pupil leader is someone who leads, journeys alongside and disciples other younger people in their school context. I'm excited about the Scripture Union groups in our schools because of the way God is at work through the pupils themselves.

Why have pupil leadership?

Setting up pupil leadership is by no means an easy option. Giving 16-18-year olds the responsibility, platform and space to lead within their school SU group requires patience, guidance and good relationships between staff and pupils. However, the impact of pupil leadership makes it all worth it. By allowing, supporting and equipping young people to take up such roles, they are encouraged to deepen their faith and be examples to fellow pupils and teachers.



“Being a pupil leader has allowed me to discover the gifts that God has given me.”



Being a pupil leader has been invaluable in God bringing me to where I am now. It has allowed me to discover the gifts that God has given to me and it encouraged me to pursue a life ‘worthy of my calling’ (Ephesians 4:1). School was no longer just my place of education, but it became the frontline for my faith. The Bible includes stories of young leaders being used in mighty ways in God’s Kingdom. People like David, Mary and many of

the disciples, were teenagers when God called them to take part in His Kingdom work. Worldly wisdom would suggest such important roles and responsibilities should be given to those who have the qualifications and the experience, however the Bible shows that God takes joy in letting the weak lead the strong.

What does pupil leadership look like and how can SU facilitate it?

Pupil leaders are involved in helping to run SU groups in post-primary schools, usually working alongside a teacher to help with the weekly programmes and special events. Bible verses, such as 1 Timothy 4:12, tell us how we shouldn’t look down on anyone because of their age, however pupil leaders are still in need of guidance and accountability. Many schools have an SU Committee, who attend SU Northern Ireland (SUNI) ‘Making Your Mark’ training weekends each year. Pupils not only benefit from the Bible teaching and training provided by SU staff and volunteers, but are also able to learn from each other, share ideas, pray and encourage each other for the year ahead.

I loved having the space to share passion, faith and heart for our schools. Pupil leadership encourages young people to seek Christ’s Kingdom in the places where they are, in their schools; it offers them the chance to take an active role in seeing God transform their lives and the lives of those around them.

‘Agents of change’ in Guatemala

Young people at secondary schools in Guatemala are benefitting from a new values program which is being rolled out by Scripture Union. *Together for Good Conduct* is a prevention program run in the country’s middle schools, which brings a message of love, peace and hope for young people. Its main goal is to counteract the influence of antisocial groups; preventing and rescuing students from violence, gangs, drugs and other threats which they face.

Director of SU Guatemala, Eduardo Marroquin said, “It’s the second year we’ve been running the program which we adopted from UB Honduras (originally known as *No More Violence*), who also accompanied us through the first year, helping with support and training our volunteers. We have two partner churches that were trained and are implementing it in their communities. In 2017 we ran the pilot scheme and reached 60 students from two grades. This year we

reached five groups totalling 190 students.”

Eduardo said the results of the program could be clearly seen in the way it strengthened relationships within families and changed behaviour. Some of the boys from one group decided to put their discussion on solidarity into action and, after gathering food, they went to share it with a man who was over 100 years old. One of this year’s students, Adriana, said “I really liked the issues covered such as justice, values and decisions. All these discussions left me something special, which I want to put into practice. I would like to tell many young people about the importance of good values in their lives.”

Young people are taught how to avoid bad influences and ways to stay busy to avoid getting into local gangs. They were encouraged to study hard and remain close to their parents. Another student, Allan, said “It helped me to be a better person, to be more understanding and to be more patient.



“Schoolies has been instrumental in helping young people discover faith for the first time.”



Celebrating with school leavers

SU Queensland ‘Schoolies’ program and why it works

According to a program leader for Scripture Union Queensland, one of the biggest moves we ever make is the day we leave school and move into whatever comes next. For many young people, the start of work or university can also signal the end of links with church and faith.

Schoolies is a long held tradition in Australia where young people finishing school go away together after their exams to celebrate – it is often just a drunken binge. A number of SU’s in Australia have established a series of alternative ‘Schoolies’ to help give teenagers a better option which helps them work through tackling this momentous transition as

they move into a new phase of life.

Andrew Beavers is the Programs Development officer for SU Queensland. He says the Schoolies program offers school leavers the chance to celebrate with their peers in a safe environment and build vital bridges to help them as they move into unfamiliar territory. It was the Schoolies program that helped Andrew become involved in church and led him to work with the SU camp teams. He said, “I was a Schoolie myself in 2000 and I’ve been going ever since. The program has been running for 40 years, since Keith Drinkall had the idea of running a school leaving party to help the leavers celebrate.”

Andrew said, “We have five different events that run each year, which include boat trips, cultural trips, resort or island trips and also the sunny coast camps with about 150 kids taking part in a range of

activities. The Schoolies program has a big impact on young Christians, helping them make vital links with their peers and forge friendships that help support them in the years ahead. Local churches also participate in the events, helping connect young people with a community of Christians when they move away from home. Schoolies has been instrumental in helping young people discover faith for the first time, as Christian students invite their friends to join them for the week and are able to share their faith.

Andrew said, “One group of friends all went on a Schoolies event together. They were invited to go to church afterwards. Those students went to church and started attending life groups and became committed Christians... There are dozens of stories like this and it’s why I’m so passionate about Schoolies. It really works.”

As I am listening to the issues, I am trying to put them into practice.” Other students talked about how the program had helped them cope with problems and the situations they face, especially developing better relationships with their family.

“I realised that I needed to change my character a bit with people so that they could also treat me in the way I would like to be treated and have a closer relationship to God. That is the most important thing and what I value most in the program,” said Katty.

2017 student, Jenifer, said “The talks we received helped me make some personal changes in my life. And now, as I share it with other kids, I am able to give a little of what I have experienced. I do want to continue working for more agents of change.”

“It helped me to be a better person, to be more understanding and to be more patient.”

Eduardo said, “Three of the participants from the 2017 program have become agents of change and were invited to be part of a group of young people who are working with the local authority on a youth policy. This policy has been finalised and is in the

process of being approved for implementation. We thank God for these opportunities where our young people are already influencing society for the good.”

Next year, SU Guatemala aims to improve and extend their work in schools.

They currently work in five secondary schools and 22 primary schools. In 2019 they aim to double their group of trained volunteers, which will allow them to reach more schools across the region.





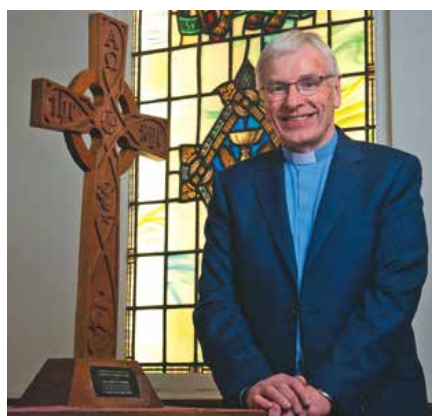
Former SUI chairman found faith at school

The next moderator for the Church of Scotland, Colin Sinclair, says he owes his life to the work of SU in his local school.

Former Chairman of Scripture Union International, the Revd Colin Sinclair, has been appointed as the next Moderator for the Church of Scotland. Colin, will take on the year-long ambassadorial role at the Church of Scotland General Assembly in May 2019.

Currently the minister for Palmerston Place Church in Edinburgh, Colin stepped down from his role with Scripture Union International in November 2017. He has been involved with SU since he left school. It was as a pupil at Glasgow Academy that Colin first became interested in the Christian faith. To escape getting into trouble after a prefect saw him taking the wrong staircase, Colin dodged into a darkened room where a Scripture Union camp video was showing. "I enjoyed the film, thought the activities looked great and felt I could put up with the 'religious stuff'," he said.

After attending the camp that summer, Colin said, "I did love the camp and had great fun, and I liked the leaders. But to my surprise I also enjoyed the meetings with their lively singing and straightforward message about Jesus Christ. I went back to camp the next year and decided then to



"What I love about Scripture Union is the opportunity to pass onto the next generation faith and the Bible and get them out serving in a world in need."

follow Jesus Christ. So, started an exciting adventure of faith that has lasted over 50 years."

Before studying for ministry in the Church, Colin worked in Zambia as a Scripture Union Training Officer in an exchange that enabled two Zambian students to study in the UK. This was the beginning of a lifelong commitment to Scripture Union.

He was just 20 years old, with an honours degree in Economics, when he took up

the job, which involved travelling around Zambia, living out of his car and speaking at schools, churches, hospitals and colleges. The job ended up lasting three years.

"Those three years changed my life," he said. "Being away from everything familiar, I was able to sort out which parts of my faith were mine and which were not. I encountered people from many different countries and with many different beliefs. I met all the Church of Scotland missionaries there and everyone was very supportive. I learned to trust God. I owe everything to Scripture Union."

Colin has served in a variety of roles with Scripture Union. He was General Director of SU Scotland for eight years. Colin and his wife Ruth together ran a Scripture Union holiday camp for teens in the Highlands, at Alltnacriche near Aviemore for 27 years, alongside running a busy parish.

"What I love about Scripture Union is the opportunity to pass onto the next generation faith and the Bible and get them out serving in a world in need," he said. "I've loved seeing young people who started off as SU campers become leaders themselves, whether it is to become elders in the church or to go into vocational ministry or to take their Christian faith into different avenues of public service."

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