

UNIVERSAL DAY OF PRAYER FOR STUDENTS 2020

Rejoice in Hope

Romans 12:12

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UNIVERSAL DAY OF PRAYER FOR STUDENTS 2020



1922 WSCF General Assembly in Beijing, China

Introduction

This year's Universal Day of Prayers Students (UDPS) marks an important milestone in the common worship and prayer life of WSCF. We celebrate the 125th founding anniversary of WSCF and the 37th General Assembly this June 4 to 12, 2020 in Berlin, Germany. The GA gathers under a theme "Rejoice in Hope" (Romans 12:12) reflecting the yearning of the world and the ecumenical youth movement. We invite you to use this UDPS liturgy and be part of this year's celebration.

"Rejoice in Hope" speaks of WSCF identity as one ecumenical movement composed of diverse traditions, background and contexts. Romans 12:12 reminds us that unity in Christ Jesus is our hope in times of challenges and difficulties. We are called to be one in our spirit, mind and action in the building of the Kingdom. We are called to prophesize and proclaim hope in the coming of the Kingdom. We are to be THE hope in today's world. As young people,

WSCF offers the message of hope in the context of the suffering of the world today. It is our reason for being.

Confronted with trials and tribulations, we turn to God, our source of hope, liberation and peace. Today, we long to hear the message of hope for the future. Hope that is built on foundation in today's work for justice, equality and peace, hallmarks of God's reign here on Earth. A hope that is not void of our understanding of the root-causes of poverty, fragmentation, disunity, violence and war. A hope that is truly based on actions resisting Empire, speaking truth to power and making them accountable, working for justice, equality and peace in the world.

Jurgen Moltmann, German Reformed theologian introduced to WSCF in its 1968 Turku General Conference a Theology of Hope, a concept that is inclusive of the secular understanding and theological meaning of Hope. Fifty years later, we continue to find relevance from Moltmann's theology in discerning our mission in today's world. "Those who hope in Christ,"

Moltmann wrote then, “can no longer put up with reality as it is, but begin to suffer under it, to contradict it. Peace with God means conflict with the world, for the goad of the promised future stabs inexorably into the flesh of every unfulfilled present.” Such hope, he continued, “makes the Church the source of continual new impulses towards the realization of righteousness, freedom and humanity here in the light of the promised future that is to come.”

Today, radical extremism, xenophobia and racism are rising in different parts of the world. The growth of right-wing movements, with populist political agenda calls us to discernment as a global ecumenical family to respond to emerging social realities, to violation and threats to basic and fundamental human rights of people in the world today. The increasing role and influence of Christian Fundamentalism serving anti-rights political agendas should prompt us to re-examine



Jürgen Moltmann (born 1926) is a German Reformed theologian

our faith imperatives in times of political change. The global ecumenical family cannot be silent at this time of turmoil. We are called to task by our Faith in God and discipleship to Jesus Christ, to be one with our churches, faith communities in welcoming the strangers and extending radical hospitality to the migrants, refugees, and those marginalized by unjust systems, seeking hope for a new life.

Historical Background of the UDPS

Every year individuals, churches and communities around the world unite to lift up students in prayer on Student Sunday, also known as the Universal Day of Prayer for Students (UDPS).

Student Sunday is coordinated by the World Student Christian Federation (WSCF), and has been celebrated since 1898, making it one of the oldest ecumenical days of prayer. It serves as one of the tangible signs of our common life and connection between students and alumni of WSCF all around the world.

The UDPS was first celebrated on Sunday 13th February 1898 at the second meeting of what was then known as the General Committee of the World Student Christian Federation. The participants of the Federation’s then ten member movements believed that intercessory prayer should be a vital ingredient in the life of a world-wide body of Christian students. As a result, the early leaders of the federation called on Christian students around the world to join together in February each year for observance of the Universal Day of Prayer for Students.

During the world wars when it was impossible to hold WSCF meetings, the major bond of unity between those separated from one another by the ravages of war was the annual observance of the Day of Prayer for Students.

For more than a century students and

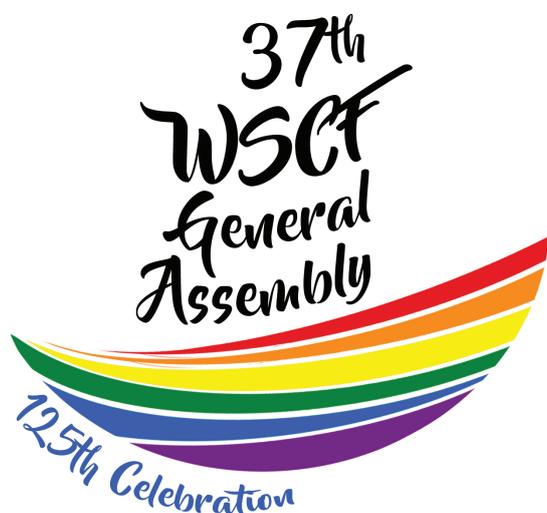
friends of WSCF have observed this Day of Prayer as a way to express their common commitment as witnesses of our faith in God and in each other, to the world both inside and outside our academic communities.

The WSCF publishes ecumenical services of worship on a theme that relates to the Federation's theme of study for the year or responds to current events and issues of concern to the world's students.

Suggested preparation to celebrate the UDPS 2020

- Appoint a small committee of interested persons to organize the service and to assign parts to leaders and readers. Try to involve a diverse group of people to prepare for the liturgy.
- Feel free to adapt the service for your region and/or context.
- Try to organize a good choir to lead the singing. The choir may vary/change the sung parts and select different hymns or songs if desired. Parts to be sung may be spoken if preferred. You can also replace the suggested songs in this liturgy to adapt to your local language and customs.

Rejoice in Hope



June 2020, Berlin

- Brainstorm creative and symbolic acts in the service that would serve to highlight the theme
- Give adequate time for the preacher (student, Senior Friend, or clergy) to prepare a short sermon (recommended 7-12 minutes). She or he may select other Bible readings for the service as the spirit leads.
- If you wish to add a service of Eucharist together with this prayer service, please do so according to your tradition.
- Organize the collection. This year, devote your collection to the All In One Boat Campaign to help support the work of the Federation.
- Inform churches in different parts of the country and invite them to organize this service in their local congregations or fellowship.

We believe a transformation can happen. A world acting more justly, a people speaking up for the poor, and a church bringing healing to broken communities. By joining us this Student Sunday to pray for the global body of students, you are helping to realize this vision.

We invite all our members and friends to unite in prayer for the world, the church, students, and WSCF itself to pray for peace and work for justice in this world.

Rejoice in Hope!

Necta Montes- General Secretary

Mira Neimeh- Executive for Middle East;

Program Director for Peace Building and Overcoming Violence

Garen Yosolkianian- Archdeacon in Armenian church Ecumenical Department-Holy See of Cilicia

Rejoice in Hope

Romans 12:12

Preparation:

(Gather in a large space, prepare live music with the theme of nature or in a luminous place with natural light or bright windows)

Liturgy tools:

- Students bringing their own gospels in their own languages and we open all of them on the same chosen biblical text /the students write the chosen biblical text on a paper and we collect the papers and put them in a workbook for the SCMs which will be a reference;
- Candles of yellow color referring to Hope;
- Table covered with a cloth with WSCF and GA logos;
- Plant of Hope: Philodendron selloum covering the circles (first circle: altar, second circle: hall room) or the table of offerings;
- Incense referring to the constant prayers.

Student gathering:

Welcoming students with a large basket of chopped fruits (pineapple, mango, orange, apple, carrot, pomegranate, grapes, cherries, mulberries, blueberries...) from natural production. The fruit arrangement would look better if the fruits are of the colors of the GA logo. Every student will fill a cup and give it to someone he/she does not know saying: “Rejoice in hope” in one of three official languages (Ice-breaker).



I. OPENING SONG

Song of Hope (Canto de Esperanza)

(English)

May the God of hope go with us every day,
filling all our lives with love and joy and peace.

May the God of justice speed us on our way,
bringing light and hope to every land and race.

Refrain:

Praying, let us work for peace;
singing, share our joy with all;
working for a world that's new,
faithful when we hear Christ's call.

(Spanish)

Dios de la esperanza, danos gozo y paz.
Al mundo en crisis, habla tu verdad.

Dios de la justicia, mandanos to luz,
luz y esperanza en la oscuridad.

Refrain:

Oremos por la paz,
cantemos de tu amor.
Luchemos por la paz,
fieles a ti, Señor.

(Source: The Faith We Sing Number 2186,
Text: Alvin Schutmaat, Music: Argentine
folk melody Tune: ARGENTINA, Meter: Irr.
with Refrain)

BLESSING
196
Unison
Song of Hope

The musical score is written for a unison voice part. It consists of five systems of music, each with a vocal line and a bass line. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 3/4. The lyrics are: "May the God of hope go with us every day, fill-ing all our lives with love and joy and peace. May the God of jus-tice speed us on our way, bring-ing light and hope to ev-ery land and race. Pray-ing, let us work for peace; sing-ing, share our joy with all; work-ing for a". The score includes chord markings: G, Am, D7, C, G, Am, D7, C, G. At the bottom, it credits the words to Alvin Schutmaat (1921-1988) and the music to an Argentine folk melody.

WORDS: Alvin Schutmaat (1921-1988)
MUSIC: Argentine folk melody

ARGENTINA
11.11.11.Ref.

II. CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.
(Romans 12:12)

All Students: Live in harmony with one another.

Leader: Dear students, from all SCMs in the world. Let us rejoice with those who rejoice in heaven and on Earth, with angels let us pray for those who mourn, because our call as WSCF members is that we be witnesses of God's Promises. In our movements, schools, universities and societies, we are invited to work for the wellness of humanity and reject all dishonesty, crimes and violence. Let us be in constant prayer to bring all our difficulties to the almighty King and Savior Jesus Christ Our Lord.

All Students:

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia

Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia

III. LITANY & CONFESSION

(Invite one leader to pray for each WSCF region)

Leader 1: (WSCF-ME) Remove all our griefs and mourning, lead us, you students, through our constant prayers to be in love and rejoice amidst the difficult political imbalances. Organize O Innocent Lord our witnessing journey as you wish and give us the wisdom to make our times blessed and joyful. In the Holy region, where you lived and preached your Kingdom's Gospel, come again "Maran Ata" and turn all bad to good, we are your people; we are persecuted in different wars, crimes and genocides. Come, make a revolution in the cities where you have lived, preached, ate and taught, as the repentance of Nineveh, the healing of Naaman the Syrian, as the fall of Jericho's Wall, as the sign of Cana, as the manna in the wilderness, as the mass of Elijah: reveal your signs by your students. We beseech You.

All students: Remember God and have Mercy (Hishia Der yev voghormia from the Armenian tradition)

Leader 2: (WSCF-Asia Pacific) We beseech You.

All students: Remember God and have Mercy

Leader 3: (WSCF-Europe) We beseech You

All students: Remember God and have Mercy

Leader 4: (WSCF-Latin America and Caribbean) We beseech You

All students: Remember God and have Mercy

Leader 5: (WSCF-Africa) We beseech You

All students: Remember God and have Mercy

Leader 6: (WSCF-North America) We beseech You



All students: Remember God and have Mercy

Leader 7: We ask You, through our constant prayers and with patience, to help us commit more in our SCM, to be young rejoicer for everyone and confess our sins.

(Silence for 3 minutes)

All Students: Kyrie Eleison, Christeleison
(Latin Tradition or Taize tradition)

Leader: Listen to us, O God, our Savior,
O hope of the ends of the earth and those in the sea
Forgive us our sins and have mercy on us,
For You are merciful and loving
It is You we glory, O Father, Son,
And Holy Spirit, now and forever

IV. REJOICE, PROCESSION AND SCRIPTURES

All Students: “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on Earth peace to those on whom his favor rests” (repeat 3 times) (from the Maronite tradition)

Leader: (Coptic Prayer or any prayer)

All Students: (divide into 2 groups, each group will read one text alternately)

Psalm collection from Psalm 5, 33, 62, 71

Alleluia, Alleluia

71: 5 For you have been my hope, Sovereign Lord, my confidence since my youth.

71: 6 From birth I have relied on you; you brought me forth from my mother womb. I will ever praise you.

71: 14 As for me, I will always have hope; I will praise you more and more.

62:5 Yes, my soul, find rest in God; my hope comes from him.

62:6 Truly he is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I will not be shaken.

33:18 But the eyes of the Lord are on those who fear him, on those whose hope is in his unfailing love.

33:20 We wait in hope for the Lord; he is our help and our shield.

33:21 In him our hearts rejoice, for we trust in his holy name.

33:22 May your unfailing love be with us, Lord, even as we put our hope in you.

5:1 Listen to my words, Lord, consider my lament.



All Students: Trisagion Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us. (3) (from the Byzantine Tradition)

Student 2: Rejoice my soul your creator

Reading from Romans 12:12

Leader: Let us praise the lord

All Students: With Constant prayers

Leader or deacon: Raises or elevates the Bible/Holy Gospel

All Students: This is Life, Hope, Resurrection, Expiation and Remission of sins. Sing psalms unto the Lord our God. Sing psalms unto our immortal heavenly King, who rides in chariots of cherubim.

(Students hold the light of hope by candles and others applaud, the leader raises or elevates the gospel and makes a circle singing "Alleluia" by turning around and the Gospel is in the middle, then they kneel in front of it.)

Silence time of contemplation

Leader or deacon: Shine in our hearts, O Master Who loves mankind, the pure light of Your divine knowledge, and open the eyes of our mind that we may comprehend the proclamations of Your Gospels.

(Alleluia standing and the reading of Gospel)

Reading from the Gospel of Luke

V. WITNESS/REFLECTION OR SERMON

Witness by one of student or preacher about hope in danger (5 minutes), alternately you can read the attached reflection.

VI. HOLY KISS/SHARING OF PEACE

Student: According to Your good will, O God, fill our hearts with Your peace. Cleanse us from all blemish, all guile, all hypocrisy, all malice, and the remembrance of evil entailing death. And make us all worthy, O our Master, to greet one another with a holy kiss. That without falling into condemnation we may partake of Your immortal and heavenly gift in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Leader: After the Holy Word and the witness, Let us salute each other and give holy kiss.

(Salutations and holy peace kiss will be shared)

All Students: (Armenian Tradition)

*Christ in our midst has been revealed. He Who Is, God is here seated.
The voice of peace has resounded. Holy greeting is commanded.
This Church has now become one soul. The kiss is given for a full bond.
The enmity has been removed and love is spread over us all.
Now, ministers, raise your voices, and give blessings with one accord
To the Godhead consubstantial to whom seraphim give praises.*

VII. THE LORD'S PRAYER

Leader: prayer to join all gathering to make the circle around the gospel of Hope and say the united Lord's Prayer.

*Our Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy Name,
Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses,
As we forgive those who trespass against us, And lead us not into
temptation, But deliver us from evil.
For yours is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, Forever and
ever. Amen.*

For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. (Gal 3:27)

Ossi is Khriston eVaptisthite, Khriston enedisasthe. Allilouyiya.
(Byzantine Tradition)

Όσοι εις Χριστόν εβαπτίσθητε, Χριστόν ενεδύσασθε αλληλούια

VIII. CLOSING SONG

“Rejoice in Hope!” (37th GA Hym 1)

Inspired by WSCF General Assembly Theme: “Rejoice in Hope”

*Written by Dianet de la C. Martínez Valdés and Alison Infante Zamora
(Cuba, 2019)*

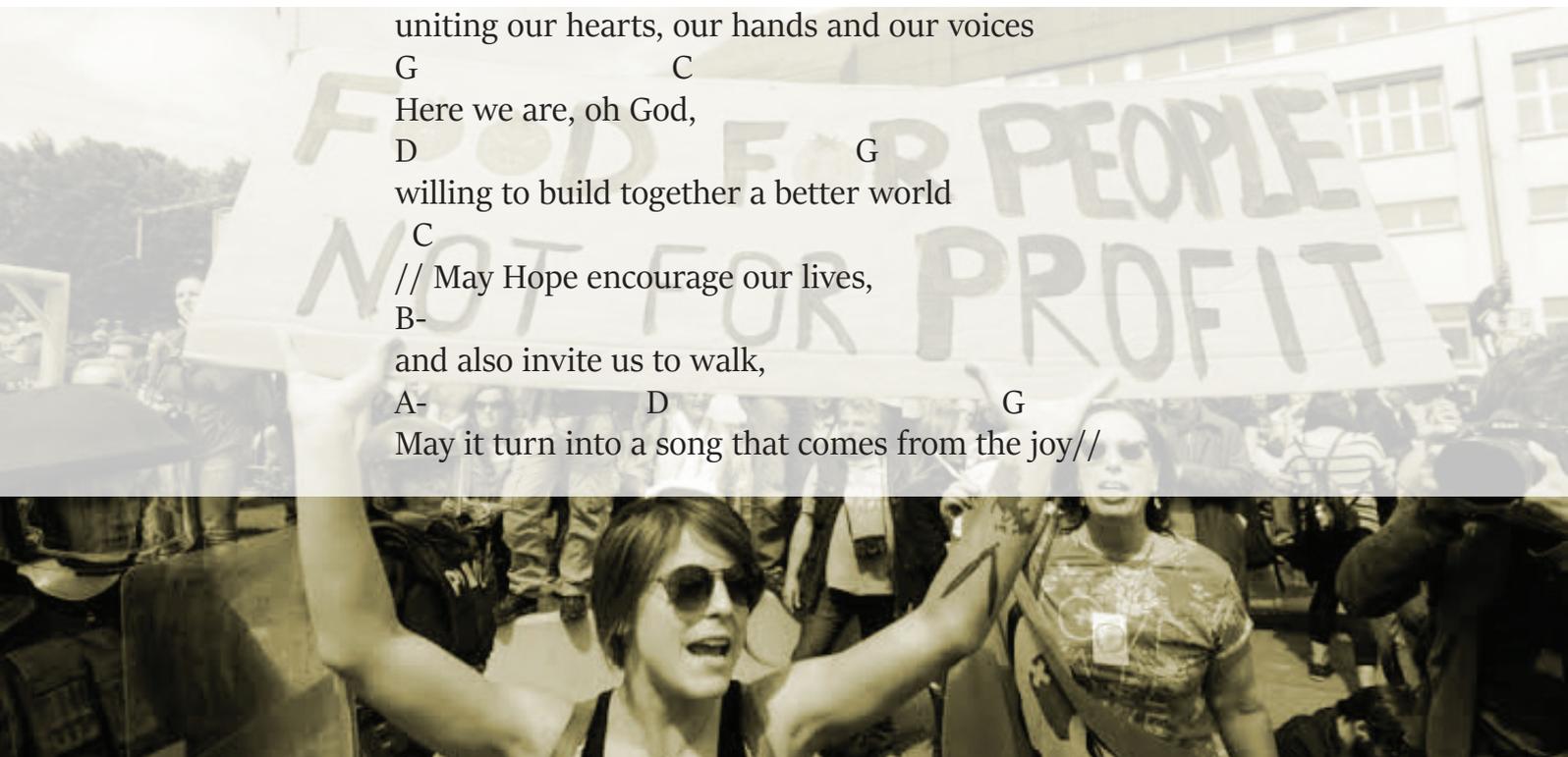
Translation by Dianet de la C. Martínez Valdés

G C
In a world where happens crisis and tribulation
D G
Let us live together with joy and hope!
C
In a world full of injustice and a lot of pain
D G
Let us be the prophets that announce your Truth!

C B- A-
But if it is apathy prevailing,
D7 G
and there is no more strength to fight
A D
May your Spirit come to fill us with commitment
C D
To make your Kingdom of love become true.

Chorus:

G C
Here we are, oh God,
D G
uniting our hearts, our hands and our voices
G C
Here we are, oh God,
D G
willing to build together a better world
C
// May Hope encourage our lives,
B-
and also invite us to walk,
A- D G
May it turn into a song that comes from the joy//



“¡Alegres en la Esperanza!”

Inspirada en el tema de la Asamblea General de la FUMEC, 2020: “Alegres en la esperanza”

Letra y Música: Dianet de la C. Martínez Valdés y Alison Infante Zamora (Cuba, 2019)



G C
En medio de mundo en crisis y tribulación

D G
¡Vivamos con alegría y esperanza!

C
En un mundo lleno de injusticias y dolor

D G
¡Anunciemos cual profetas tu Verdad!

C B- A-
Y si la apatía prevalece,

D7 G
y hay menos fuerzas para luchar

A D
Que tu Espíritu nos llene y comprometa

C D
A hacer realidad tu Reino de amor.

Coro:

G C
Aquí estamos, oh Dios,

D G
uniendo corazones, manos y voces

G C
Aquí estamos, oh Dios,

D G
dispuestos a construir un mundo mejor

C
//La esperanza nos anime,

B-
nos invite a caminar,

A- D G
Y nos llene de alegría para cantar.//

This order of worship follows the Armenian church tradition and was prepared by Archdeacon Garen Yosolkianian

Reflections on the journey of hope of a Cuban young woman

“Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.”

Romans 12,12 (English Standard Version)

By Dianet de la C. Martínez Valdés

I would like to start by remembering a well-known phrase by a Uruguayan writer, Eduardo Galeano (1940-2015), who once said (inspired on the words of Fernando Birri, and Argentinian film maker):

“Utopia is on the horizon, I walk two steps, it walks two steps away, I walk ten steps and the horizon runs ten steps further, no matter how much I walk, I will never reach it. So, what is utopia for? For that, it helps to walk”.

And that’s what my testimony is about: a road of hope towards a horizon of justice. It is the testimony of a path of commitment and spiritual growth; a journey of faith shared in community, which celebrates life and seeks solutions in the midst of crises, scarcity and problems. It is the testimony of a path that has been walked together with young people who are critically concerned about injustices and who assume responsibility for denouncing them and acting in order to eradicate them; an ecumenical journey that generates encounters that welcome differences, shorten distances through a sensitive and respectful dialogue, and practices solidarity.

The image of the path is very revealing for me in a world where more people want to build walls to delimit, deny, separate; and it challenges me to continue overcoming obstacles knowing what the horizon that is necessary to walk to is. Telling our life stories, and our realities, is a way of not remaining immovable. For this reason, I am very grateful for the opportunity to share the testimony of my experience as a Cuban / Latin American, with WSCF and in relation to my encounter with the text of Romans 12, 12 on the preparation journey for our General Assembly.

From my life experience: the first ecumenical steps

I grew up in the Presbyterian-Reformed Church of my hometown, Sancti Spíritus, in the center of Cuba. The church was for me a very important space of participation in which I could contribute with my musical gifts. I was part of the musical band and we used to practice every week to be prepared for Sunday worship service. I enjoyed so much all the work on liturgical renewal incorporating Cuban rhythms into the liturgy. At age of 18, I began to coordinate the ecumenical group of young people of the SCM in my city and that was an essential changing point in my faith understanding and praxis. The church and the ecumenical space opened

a new horizon of meanings and senses for me. I discovered the history of the ecumenical movement in Cuba as a bridge of dialogue between the Marxist-Leninist atheism (which has prevailed as the predominant ideology since the 1960s) and the religious faith. In this ecumenical movement, the young voices of the SCM-C laid the foundations for a critical reflection in a perspective of hope facing the apparent divorce of the faith and the revolutionary project that Cubans were living. The SCM-C was presented to me as an opportunity to rethink my role as a young Cuban woman in my country, to develop a more active leadership in my church and in my community, to empower other young people, to advocate on relevant issues within the Cuban scenario and also connected with the struggles of young people in Latin America and in the world. There have been many processes and actions generated over the past years in the life of the SCM of Cuba. It could be difficult to mention all of them but it is important to highlight their horizontal, participatory, inclusive, critical and proactive perspectives. The Bible has been always at the center of our reflections and dialogues in community as an identity element and as a source of light and inspiration for our lives and contexts. The possibility of a direct communication with different Cuban social and political organizations has made possible to achieve an effective advocacy in the communities in which there are youth ecumenical grassroots groups.

Thus, we have managed to mobilize young people from all over the country to help in emergency situations due to natural disasters, humanitarian crises, etc. which has been an important contribution to the testimony of the ecumenical youth in the context of a socialist society. An important learning has been to walk the path accompanied by the Senior Friends in a true intergenerational dialogue. The horizon of this ecumenical walk has been extended from the experiences that the WSCF opens with its constant challenges. Today I assume my life, my goals and my vocation not only considering the immediate conditions of my context, but also understanding myself as part of the “oikos”, which demands from all of us to “Rejoice in Hope”: “rejoice” which is not reduced only to feel pleasure; and the “hope” that cannot be only contained or explained in the understanding of utopia provided by Galeano.

I believe, therefore, that the theme of our General Assembly today is very important and very relevant for youth, and we must reflect on it from our different contexts and experiences.

Living in hope: the challenges imposed by the context, the strengths offered by the faith

What are the hopes of young people today? For many in my Cuban and Latin American context, hopes are based on migration, on having personal material possessions at any cost that allow access to technology, to a good car, to dress in fashion, to travel as an entertainment option ... it is this

way how the ideology of consumption is lived: “you are” as long as “you have” and “having” becomes a sign of privileges in the social structure, of alienation or disinterest in the difficult situations that others may be facing. In Latin America, the hope of many women of my generation is to feed their sons and daughters with their own work and not depend economically on a man, it is to have the right to decide on their body and not be sold as merchandise, it is not to be expelled from their lands by foreign transnational companies, it is to have access to the same kind of work and to the same salary as men. Sometimes hope is just surviving. Unfortunately, this way of living is far away from the “good life” in the understanding of the “Sumak kawsay” (quechua) cosmovision of our native peoples/cultures in Latin America which promotes the practice of a community living in harmony and equity with one another and with Nature.

These situations described above continue and will continue to be generated until social, political and religious systems and structures are not sustained on the basis of justice and social equity. Not a few churches in our region have become a business with the so-called “theology of prosperity,” and the fundamentalist religious and socio-political discourse has opened space for right-wing governments throughout the continent. Human rights issues, and specifically issues of gender equity, have been manipulated from the faith to legitimize the patriarchal, white, heterosexual hegemony; the image of the successful man with a good-obedient wife, and therefore the violence against women and discrimination against all people who don’t follow the “norm”. (femicide, forced displacement, waves of migration, armed conflicts, increase of social gaps ...)

The foreign interference, mainly of the United States, endangers the sovereignty and democracy of the peoples of our hemisphere and establishes chaos and disorder to achieve their intentions of political and economic domination. In this way, they have tried to deny the right to self-determination of the countries of the region and to impose an economic model that generates inequality and dependence on the United States. This policy aims to dictate laws and models of democracy, which would be something like “look at the speck of sawdust in the eye of others and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye” (Matthew 7, 3), because it is not a secret the contradictions within the American society where there are also realities of inequality and limitations of civil rights. There are many examples of interference by the United States and international organizations in our Latin America. For example, I would like to point out that Cuba has recently begun to suffer the effects of the application of the third chapter of the Helms Burton law that intensifies the economic, political and financial blockade of the United States on the island. As if the 60 years of hard blockade were not enough, now this chapter is activated, which is an unprecedented reality, warning of a new special period that we are already experiencing in daily life: shortage of staple foods (bread,

oil, chicken, rice, Eggs ...), lack of medicines and essential medical supplies in hospitals, restrictions for Cubans to travel to the United States and also prohibition of travel by US citizens to the Island.

Unfortunately, for many young people, eradicating these realities is not part of the horizon of their hopes because they believe, unlike Galeano, that these utopias, besides being unattainable, are not even worth to make them walk, so they remain immobile, apathetic, skeptical.

Without having the experience of participation in the church and the Student Christian Movement of Cuba, perhaps today I would have been a young woman without hope of a better country, without a critical and proactive look at the constant economic crises we are living and the uncertainties of the context. But for the ecumenical youth of the WSCF, hope takes on a different meaning and our theme offers us clues that we cannot underestimate.

How do we update Paul's words today in realities like those that have been described? "Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer." (Romans 12, 12)

1) We cannot live in hope without recognizing, naming, those who live in situations of hopelessness; 2) We cannot be patient in tribulations without denouncing the injustices that provoke them; 3) We cannot persevere in prayer without also having a transforming praxis.

1- Being "joyful in hope" is not only an affirmation that the future can be better; it is also a critical reflection / protest against the reality that the present is not what we expect it to be. While there is a hungry person in the world, there is a problem of hunger in the world! While a person is a victim of violence; there are problems of violence in the world! While a person dies because of inequality and social injustice, wars, drug trafficking, migratory policies of non-acceptance and lack of protection, etc.; there are serious problems of inequity and injustice! While there is a single action against the harmony of nature; we face an ecological crisis! ... How many have to be hungry, how many have to suffer violence, how much our environment has to be destroyed, how many have to die to be enough and stop the folly of this world, our world? God counts on us to make his kingdom possible.

Galiano's concept of utopia has to be re-signified in relation to our understanding of the kingdom of God. The term utopia could be formed in two ways. First, the most known meaning, whose word in Greek would be "οὐτόπος", no-place. I would prefer to understand it by appealing to a second possible meaning if we form the word with the prefix "εὖ"-τόπος, good-place. If we assume this second meaning, the kingdom of God would be for us, that good-place that we help making it possible every day instead of something that will step further, unreachable as we try to get closer to it. We must live hope reading and discovering the signs of God's kingdom in the present. Being part of a community of students with a history that

precedes us of conquered struggles and dreams, and continues to walk with concrete objectives of leadership training, ecumenical experience, justice project, public advocacy, etc. it is, without a doubt, a sign of the Kingdom of God that nourishes hope in the present.

These signs of the kingdom that we evoke are wonderful reasons to rejoice. The hope in the kingdom of God invites us to walk because it has not been yet materialized in its fullness. So living in hope claims for us to be prophetic voices facing the injustices caused by the tribulations in our world, not only the tribulations that have to do with my direct experience or my concrete reality, but the tribulations of our entire world. Many times, in our approaches, we focus on the consequences of the realities of injustice, but we must also analyze the causes and systems that generate them. There is a reality of hegemonic domination that denies the possibility of living in an equitable world and we cannot ignore that fact. It is urgent that youth assume an active role, naming and denouncing the despotic powers (from the most daily and small, to the most global and threatening ones for life) and announcing the hopes of the Gospel that allows for alternatives, for imagining beyond what is said is possible, for systems built on neighborliness, abundance, and justice achieved through solidarity.

We should fully respond to the exhortation to “rejoice”. Joy is a resource to face any tribulation. Joy reveals what is truly important in life: it is the complicity with those who are part of the walk; it is an experience of gratitude to God for life “that has given us so much” as Mercedes Sosa evokes with her singing; joy can be translated as an incentive, a positive energy, and creativity. Sometimes the church is very serious. Our rites and dogmas do not allow us to live the faith with joy and happiness. WSCF can also impact the life of churches with a practice of faith from the celebrative, the playful, the youthful dynamism. That has been the experience and should continue to be in the future.

Besides joy, another route that nourishes hope is the theological thinking that has also affirmed us in hope. It is not difficult to evoke Jürgen Moltmann with his “Theology of Hope” (1966) without forgetting the connection with his next book, “The Crucified God” (1972), reminding us that there is no resurrection without crucifixion, and that the crucifixion of Jesus was the consequence of his life towards liberation and against the powers that caused injustice. There are many other theologians, women and men, whose different approaches and perspectives have opened us to theologies of hope from their struggles: for gender equality (example: feminists, LGBTIQ +, etc.), racial, ecological, people with disability, peasants, native cultures, etc. Some names, just to mention examples are: Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz, Ivonne Guevara, Nancy Cardoso, Sergio Arce, Leonardo Boff, Rubén Alves, etc.

It is also necessary to acknowledge the impact of the anonymous theologians, whose names may never appear in academic publications.

They are those with whom we live in our day to day lives, in our frequent spaces; could be also someone who will never know how important his/her testimony has been for someone else. They have faces of children, co-workers and classmates, teachers, our family and our friends, or even strangers. They constantly teach me about the theology of hope that in Cuba is also a theology of resistance, resilience, and revolution. WSCF has been prophetic on this and it is still challenging today to continue visualizing the theology that comes from the young voices around the globes that testify about God's action in our world through their life stories.

-Invite to see the short film “Alumbrones” by Ana A. Alpizar, Cuba. 2011

How does this story connect with hope?

The story takes place in 1994, one of the most difficult years during the special period in Cuba. Something interesting that it is hard to notice without the subtitles in English, it is the given title to the movie. Although the plot moves around blackouts in Cuba, the title in Spanish is “Alumbrones” (light-ins, or light-on). It is already a positive entrance to the story. In this material, children offer us a life lesson with their wisdom and their capacity of resilience through creativity, play, the encounter with the neighbor.

2) This video for me is very connected with the second encouragement of the text of Romans 12, 12. To be “patient in tribulations” is not to remain motionless, calm, inoperative. I think that as a good Cuban, it is not possible to speak of hope without referring to our history of resilience, struggle and revolution. There is a very popular phrase in Cuba “It is not easy, but it is possible”. Living in a resilient country that has decided to develop an alternative model to that of the Empire has not always been easy for our people, rather it has been very challenging, but it has been possible for 60 years. The experiences of overcoming crises through solidarity, creativity, alternative ways to the homogenous, globalized hegemonic models are a valid testimony in a world that is closed to “other possibilities”.

The Church in Cuba has also been an example of how to manage patiently with tribulations under adverse circumstances, offering words of hope to the Cuban people and also helping through concrete gestures those most in need. In the middle of a radical social project that opted for dialectical materialism as official ideology, many religious leaders migrated, however, there was always a remainder that kept the temples open and worshiped God. They were true examples of patience in the tribulation. As part of that Christian people, the Christian Student Movement of Cuba opted for a dialogue from the Christian identity, with

the new revolutionary process understanding that the important thing was not to lock oneself in the temple and avoid social responsibilities, but to learn and be enriched from one another. Politically, the church has also made a significant contribution to relations with other peoples. I take as an example, the relations between the United States and Cuba: while governments have adopted policies of distancing and denial of a coexistence of respect and support; Churches and also ecumenical organizations such as WSCF have promoted synergies, have fostered encounters and relationships based on affection and mutual learning.

Suffering should never be normalized, nor assumed as part of the “status quo” of our imperfect and unequal humanity. It is not “normal” for women to suffer any kind of violence from their husbands because they are the “head of the family”; it is not “normal” that some young people go to Universities because they have the means to pay for their studies, while others cannot because they were born in a low-income family, or in a family of emigrants, or in a family of black people; it is not “normal” for children to have to work to eat and survive; It is not “normal” that in the name of “development” companies take out and destroy the natural resources, damage the environment and that people suffer from more and more diseases, have no drinkable water, cannot benefit from the healthy products they grow ... Sometimes, theology has given us false clues as to how to live in tribulations and has made us believe that in order to get closer to the essence of Jesus Christ it is necessary to endure everything, accept everything, and that earthly suffering is not eternal because we will have peace when we are with him in paradise. Suffering is suffering and must be eradicated; the only suffering that redeems us is the one that is assumed as part of the struggle for justice, for the right of everyone to live fully, for the liberation of oppression.

3) The last exhortation of our text “persevering in prayer” becomes today a condemnation against the assumption of many that there is nothing transcendent. We live in societies that are increasingly materialistic, consumerist, individualistic, increasingly secularized. A human being is more than the one that produces for society! The biblical text calls us to cultivate our spiritualities, to recognize our vulnerability before God, to be humble and to stop considering ourselves gods and goddesses that can control the lives of others and of nature.

Persevering in prayer, is also a call to commit ourselves as people of faith with the project of Jesus that is translated into concrete gestures of healing, restoration, transgression, transformation. Prayers cannot be a mechanism of alienation and escape from our social responsibility, trusting that God works in the world punishing “the bad guys” and doing justice on their own; and that our mission is reduced to a spiritualistic and liturgical practice, under the assumption that “we are a chosen people for salvation in the next life with Christ”. The hope that prayer offers us, that

intimate, personal and communal connection with our God, must promote in us a social action towards our community of faith and towards the greater community as a country and as inhabitants of the “oikos”. Many socially committed people are social activists only, and they forget the presence of the Transcendent God. The youth of the WSCF cannot separate the advocacy, and the social commitment from our theological, pastoral and spiritual responsibility. Both conditions are linked, and Jesus gives us the keys to live an integrating faith experience.

Towards WSCF General Assembly in 2020: general considerations

Participate in the regional meetings of the WSCF and then in the Executive Committee, have offered me the opportunity to contribute from my testimony and my practice of life in Cuba and also to enrich my understanding of other realities through intercultural dialogue.

The way WSCF works and is structured, establishing an inter-relation between grassroots movements, regional articulation, and global integration, makes a difference and shows an alternative to a world whose proposals are increasingly homogenizing, vertical, monological and centralized.

It is my hope for our General Assembly that it will be a time to challenge us and commit us to continue being a youth student community with diverse faces; that rejoiced in hope and patient in tribulations, can set out on paths that never reproduce the injustices that the hegemonic empires outline.

It might be necessary to make some structural and programmatic changes reading the signs of these times, but I hope that they never sacrifice the identity and the contribution that WSCF has made in sensitive topics such as economic and ecological justice; youth empowerment, gender equity and justice, the option for nonviolence, shared and horizontal leadership, recognition of diversity and plurality (regions, languages, traditions, denominations, etc.), biblical and theological reflection as a basis for our reflection and our incidence, etc.

-Invitation to sing “Rejoice in hope” by Dianet de la C. Martínez Valdés and Alison Infante Zamora, a song inspired by the theme of the WSCF GA, 2020.