



Banner created for Gateway Campus Church/Avondale School STORM Co trip to Maclean in 2011. The handprints were of the children from the community who came to Kids Club that year.

Photo courtesy of Mel Lemke.

STORM-CO, South Pacific Division

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Wayne French, D.Min., has been in Youth ministry for much of his 42 years of ministry. He was Conference Youth Director for North NSW Conference for 14 years during the years that Storm Co. was started. He did his doctorate in Youth Ministry at Fuller Theological Seminary and has recently retired from Avondale College as Chaplain and Lecturer in Youth Ministry for the past 14 years.

STORM CO is an acronym for 'Service-to-Others-Really-Matters Company.' It is a youth-outreach event that was initiated in the South Pacific Division and is designed to build community through service!¹

Mission Statement

STORM CO is a youth initiative of the South Pacific Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, organized under the banner of youth ministry. Its mission is to send teams of trained young people to work for, learn from, and encourage individual communities, sharing God's love by building bridges to all peoples through an adventure in service to others.²

STORM CO is built on five foundational principles:

1. No Agenda! STORM CO teams enter a community with the express purpose of building a relationship with that community. A team will go first to listen, and then to serve.

2. No Expectations! STORM CO teams commit to service. They will work for a community and learn from them. Their goal is to serve without compensation.
3. No Walls! STORM CO teams are committed to support Christianity above denominational barriers. They have a mandate to encourage others in their walk with God.
4. No Limits! STORM CO teams maintain a relationship with the community. Their goal is to return and be an ongoing positive influence in the community.
5. No Fear! STORM CO teams are built through worship. They will not be afraid to stand for their God as they serve in the community.³

The fulfilment of the mission statement is dependent upon these five foundations. Each foundation statement expresses a characteristic of a STORM CO team that is essential to a STORM CO mission trip. In isolation, each foundation is nothing new or surprising. These principles are found in many areas of service. However, combined together, they form a radical approach to mission that challenges traditional religious activity. These principles form the basis for a “servant” model of leadership that is inherent in the development of STORM CO teams.

Rain in the Storm

The name STORM was chosen as a symbol of something that brings relief to a parched land. Rain cleans, refreshes, and encourages the community it falls upon. A storm comes to all who stand under its cloud. It does not stay within preconceived boundaries. It does not exclude any person or thing. It brings rain, which causes life to grow. Everyone knows when a storm arrives. It is the intention of the STORM CO team to be like a refreshing storm.⁴

Scripturally, rain is representative of the Holy Spirit, which is God's presence in humans. God has rained down His love to all people, and the act of the Christian is to be that rain to others (see Deuteronomy 32:1, 2; Isaiah 45:8). God will use whatever it takes to communicate His Word to this earth. STORM CO is to be used to plant the seed, and to bring refreshing rain that will allow it to grow (see Isaiah 55:10, 11).

STORM is also an acronym: Service to Others Really Matters. When a trip fulfils the symbolism represented in STORM, the result is an adventure in service.

The Story of STORM CO

In 1999 a group of senior high school students from Brisbane, QLD, wanted to do something with their faith that was practical. They did not have enough money or time to prepare for an overseas mission trip, but they wanted

to do something adventurous for God. Their chaplain, Jerry Unser, suggested a trip to the outback of Australia to see what they could do to help out physically and spiritually.

The pastor in Moree, NSW, offered a place to stay. So they saved their money, prepared some games, drama, and music, loaded up the cars, and drove west, calling themselves the SWAMP (Students With a Missionary Purpose). The SWAMP team spent 10 busy days meeting adults and children, cooking, performing, and helping people in whatever they could find to do. They camped together in a church hall, and the group bonded closely. It was an adventure, and it was fun.

The teams went home changed and could not wait to go out again. The conference youth director Mel Lemke, caught the vision, and organized a trip to an Aboriginal community. Other outback towns were added as young people told their stories, and teams multiplied. Adcare director David Jack caught the vision and provided groundwork for STORM CO to work under the Adcare banner in Queensland.

In 1999 the South Pacific Division responded to the grassroots growth of STORM CO. The Division voted to form a stand-alone committee made up of interest holders from various departments to support the STORM CO movement in Australia, New Zealand, and the South Pacific. Thanks to the men and women who serve on that committee, each influential leader in their own ministry areas, STORM CO teams were recognized and supported.

The mission of STORM CO has now expanded across international boundaries and has spread to many countries around the world. Storm Co training has been done in the South Pacific region, Canada, Africa, and Europe.

Source

Unser, Jerry. *STORM CO Guide Book*. Warburton, WA: Signs Publishing Company, 2000.

NOTES

1. The information in this article is provided from the personal knowledge of the author who as a conference youth director was involved with STORM CO since its inception. More recently as head chaplain and lecturer at Avondale College he has continued to be involved with training young people to conduct STORM CO events. He has personally been involved in scores of such events.
2. Jerry Unser, *STORM CO Guide Book* (Warburton, WA: Signs Publishing Company, 2000), 8.
3. *Ibid.*, 9.
4. *Ibid.*, 14.

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