



# Notre Dame de Sion School Team

August, 2014

Dear Friends in Sion Schools,

It is a great pleasure to be writing a joint communication from both the Congregational Leadership Team and the newly formed Congregational NDS Schools Team, inviting all NDS Schools to participate in the third International NDS Schools meeting. Many developments have taken place since the first meeting in Strasbourg: networking among NDS Schools, exchange programs with students and a newly formed Congregational NDS Schools team.

We the Congregational Leadership Team have suggested that the invitation to this third meeting be extended to include:

- schools ( two in Australia and one in Hungary) that have their origins with Sion and although no longer under the Sion umbrella, are in relationship with us,
- the two infant schools in Brazil which were the initiatives of Sisters of Sion, i.e. the Creche (Curitiba) and S. Miguel (Salvador)
- Sion Kindergarten in Romania
- and the two schools of the Religious (Brothers) of Sion in Brazil

We are pleased to welcome you to the NDS Schools network. On behalf of the Congregational leadership, we would like to thank the Congregational NDS Schools team, Bernedete Silveira and the local Brazilian logistical planning team, for all the work that they are doing to prepare the meeting in Brazil in 2015.

We, the Congregational School Team, join the Congregational Leadership Team in anxiously anticipating another wonderful opportunity to meet as Sion brothers and sisters united in our love of the Sion mission and how it lives in our schools around the world today. We are excited to welcome the schools mentioned above to our network of Sion Schools, united in our love for and dedication to living the Sion mission in our schools and throughout our lives!

We write to give you an overview of the plan for our meeting next May. Please know that more information will be forthcoming and that some of the information below is **still preliminary**, but we wanted to share this information at this time so that you will include it in your planning for 2015.

**When:** *Monday, May 4, 2015 (9:00am)-Sunday, May 10, 2015 (6:30pm).* Most school representatives would travel to Rio de Janeiro on Sunday, May 3, 2015 and would probably leave late on Sunday, May 10, 2015 or early in the day on Monday, May 11.

**Where:** *Rio de Janeiro, Brazil*

**Who should attend:** *Two representatives from each school (one person who is the director/administrator of the school and one person who is working in the area of social justice/campus ministry), members of the Congregational Leadership Team and Sisters and Brothers of Sion (particularly those living and working in Brazil), and members of the*

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Congregational School Team (Sr. Mary Reaburn, Sr. Jackie Chenard, Alain Cussey, Sigurd Ramos Marin, Bernadete Silveira, Alice Munninghoff). This meeting is for people who are working in the schools and it is not designed for Board members or those in school governance outside the school. There may be an opportunity for that type of meeting at another time. The projected total = approximately 60-65 people which will be a nice size group.

**Theme:** *Educating for Social Justice in Sion Schools.* The program will include presentations from guest speakers around this theme as well as many opportunities for all of us to share and reflect upon the presentations. We hope to have one or two graduates from the Brazil schools share with us what a Sion education has meant to him or her and how the mission of Sion has influenced him or her in life following their years at the school. We also hope to leave Brazil with a clear vision of “Where do we go from here” and united in our commitment to work for social justice in our own parts of the world. We may very well agree on one specific area in the struggle for justice that all Sion Schools will unite around and work together to address.

**Accommodations:** *Casa Abel Meeting House* —The house offers both single and double rooms. All rooms have bathroom, air conditioning and fan, TV, and refrigerators. Moreover, many rooms overlook the lagoon, which is an extension of the ocean. The auditorium has comfortable chairs, air-conditioning, technology, and microphone. There is a chapel, gymnasium, games room, swimming pool (Olympic style), and basketball court. The Casa Abel is located close to the city center of the city Araruama. The rates for accommodations appear to be reasonable and competitive. Cost of meals is included in the room fees.

**Additional costs for the schools:** The schools will be asked to pay for **the housing/food and transportation for their team members** (total of 2 per school) and for the registration costs (yet to be determined). Registration fees will partially cover: (1) Cost of **Facilitators and Translators**; (2) **Stipends** for speakers; (3) **Use of technology**, etc. at the meeting center; (4) **Side trips** around and outside Rio de Janeiro to historic sites and to the other Sion Schools which will require hiring a bus; (5) **Miscellaneous** other costs associated with putting on such a program/workshop. The cost of all of this is yet to be determined, but rest assured that our team is working to keep costs affordable while still providing a rich and meaningful experience for all of us.

**School Sharing around the theme “Educating for Social Justice in Sion Schools around the World:** Each school will be asked to present how their school is promoting Social Justice in its curricular and extra-curricular programming, its service learning programs, etc. We are suggesting that this information be shared in a “marketplace” type of format rather than formal presentations to the whole group as in the past. Therefore, each school would be asked to bring examples of their service learning/social justice programs, etc. Schools may choose to have powerpoints, videos, exhibits, or other ways of displaying their reality of the theme. The participants will go from table to table and learn about what is happening in Sion schools worldwide. Translation will be provided when needed.

**Additional Features of the Program:** While we are still in the planning stages of the event, our sisters and brothers in Brazil (under the direction of our wonderful Congregational School Team

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member Bernadete Silveira) have secured several speakers for the week. We will also have an introductory session led by the Congregational School Team that will introduce the work of our team, our Mission Statement and the Charter that has been sent to the schools and we will lead a discussion around how the schools are implementing that Mission and Charter. Additionally, several speakers will present on the topics such as: "History of the Congregation of Sion in Brazil," "Panorama of Education and Socioeconomics in Brazil," "Spirituality and Social Justice," and "Spirituality, Social Justice and the Gospels." The team in Brazil is also planning trips to visits the historic, cultural and religious sites of Rio de Janeiro and surrounding areas, including the Sion Schools in the area. We hope to have a social justice "immersion" experience that will give us an authentic experience related to our theme. I know the team in Brazil is identifying some wonderful spots for us to experience local cuisine and culture, as well, as we grow and share in our love for Sion and all that she is in our lives!

**Timetable/Schedule of Events:** A draft of the schedule is currently being developed. While we are not prepared to distribute it at this time, as it is still being developed, please plan on being at the meeting location and involved in our work from Monday, May 4 in the morning until Sunday, May 10, 2015, evening.

**Registration:** The Brazil Team will handle the registration and the schools will be hearing from them regarding the procedure for registering participants.

**It is our sincere hope that all of our Sion family will be together in Rio de Janeiro in May 2015 to celebrate together the gift that Sion is in our lives, in the lives of our students, and to the world!**

**Blessings and Peace,**

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