

# SINT MAARTEN CHRISTIAN PARTY MANIFESTO



**2016 and...BEYOND...!**



### **Letter from the President**

*Fellow People of Sint Maarten, Supporters and Friends,*

*We the Sint Maarten Christian Party (SMCP) present our Manifesto:*

***“Serving You for a Change.”***

*It contains our guiding principles, goals and strategies.*

*It is a comprehensive proposal of the SMCP to uplift Sint Maarten and take us to the next level of development, through which we would like to serve you, the people and make a positive difference in the lives of every inhabitant.*

*We would like you to study this Manifesto carefully and make the decision to support and vote for the SMCP, thereby giving us the opportunity to implement the proposals in this document.*

*Give us the opportunity to serve you, so we can ensure that we have a strong Parliament and an effective Government that will bring about real changes and progress for a better, safer and more progressive Sint Maarten.*

*It is your support and vote that will help us to bring this Manifesto to fruition so that we can make the changes in our country that you are looking for.*

*On behalf of the Board of SMCP.*

*Blessed regards,*

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jacqueline G. Godet". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a horizontal line underneath it.

*Jacqueline G. Godet*

*President of the Sint Maarten Christian Party*



## **A Word from the Party Leader**

*Dear Voters,*

*I am honored to lead the Sint Maarten Christian Party in the upcoming parliamentary elections on the 26<sup>th</sup> of September 2016.*

*For years the people of Sint Maarten have been clamoring about the lack of accountability, integrity, honesty and transparency in government. There has been lots of talk about bribery, corruption, greed, cuts and deals by politicians and government representatives. Ship jumping has become the order of the day. The people of Sint Maarten are very disenfranchised and frustrated with the majority of their elected representatives. A lot of people that I have spoken to had decided that they were not going out to vote. They felt that elections would not make a difference as it's the same parties and the same faces that are recycled with each new government.*

*Fellow people of Sint Maarten, do not despair! There is hope! A positive change is coming!*

*The Sint Maarten Christian Party (SMCP) is the light, the hope and the positive change at the end of the voting tunnel, come the 26<sup>th</sup> of September 2016. As the SMCP is based on Christian principles, morals and values, we are offering you a parliament and a government that will be accountable, stable and transparent to you the people for the next four governing years and beyond.*

*We will lead and govern Sint Maarten with integrity. Our interest will not be self-interest or self-enrichment. Our goal is to be elected and obtain the majority of seats so that we can work together to make Sint Maarten a safe and prosperous place for all who live here and those who visit our beautiful island.*

*Since 10-10-10 Sint Maarten's elections have resulted in coalition governments which have been short-lived arrangements. Six coalition governments in five years have brought about great instability in government and in the country. It has also sent a negative message to the world. Investors do not deal with unstable governments!*

*Let us make a change on the 26<sup>th</sup> of September by giving the SMCP a clear majority of 8 seats or more, so that we can govern and lead, without the distractions of corruption, selfish leaders and ship jumping. Vote for this Party that will serve you to bring about a change in parliament, in government, in education, in health care, in immigration, in the six-months contracts and our tax system etc.*

*For more information about the SMCP and what we plan to do for you and for Sint Maarten, continue reading this Manifesto.*

*Don't forget to go out and vote on Monday, the 26<sup>th</sup> of September 2016. VOTE SMCP!*

*Yours sincerely,*

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Wycliffe S. Smith', with a horizontal line underneath.

**Wycliffe S. Smith**

**Leader of the Sint Maarten Christian Party**

## Introduction

The Sint Maarten Christian Party (SMCP) was founded on the 4<sup>th</sup> of November 2015 by Wycliffe S. Smith (retired pastor) and J. Edwin Arrindell (clergyman) after much prayer, encouragement and support from the Christian community of Sint Maarten/Saint Martin.

## Why start a Christian Party?

For many years, church leaders and churches have been praying and will continue to pray consistently for Sint Maarten and its government. This is a Christian's obligation according to scripture. During a prayer meeting held the 9<sup>th</sup> of November 2014, church leaders felt led by God to appeal to Christians to, not only pray, but to serve all the people of Sint Maarten by effecting positive change in parliament and consequently in government.

## What is the Christian Party?

A "Christian party" is not a new phenomenon in politics. Most countries in Europe and South America have parties based on Christian principles.

In the Dutch kingdom, there are at least three parties founded on Christian Principles, including the Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA) in the Netherlands. In Aruba and Curaçao, there are the faith-based parties: The Aruban People's Party – *Arubaanse Volks Partij* – (AVP) and The National People's Party – *Partido Nashonal di Pueblo* – (PNP), respectively.

The Sint Maarten Christian Party **is not a denomination neither is it a church**. It is a party that consists of a group of persons who have accepted to live and work according to the teachings and principles of Jesus the Christ!

Principles that stem from this fundamental Christian teaching are:

- **accountability**
- **ethics**
- **honesty**
- **integrity**
- **justice**
- **loyalty**
- **respect**
- **transparency**

These principles are universal and can also be found in other major religions. Based on these principles, the SMCP is of the opinion that it can offer genuine leadership when in Parliament and in Government.

### **The Guiding Principles of the SMCP**

1. The Sint Maarten Christian Party (SMCP) acknowledges the sovereignty of the Almighty God over all the affairs of man, including government.
2. The Sint Maarten Christian Party (SMCP) will be guided by Christian values, norms and principles.

### **Vision of the SMCP for Sint Maarten**

We envision a Sint Maarten where people feel safe, there is affordable healthcare, gainful employment, quality education, equal business opportunities for all, unbiased justice and a protected environment.

### **Mission of the SMCP**

To promote good governance through Christian principles, norms and values.

### **Our Core Values**

Accountability, honesty, integrity, loyalty, respect, transparency, team work and service.

### **The Objectives of the SMCP**

1. To attain seats in parliament and positions in government in order to be able to serve the people of Sint Maarten and to help improve the quality of life for all.
2. To restore and promote accountability, transparency, integrity and decency to public life and to governance.
3. To form, as needed, alliances with political parties that ascribe to SMCP's guiding principles and are willing to pursue similar objectives in the interest of good governance.

### **Our Slogan**

***“Serving YOU for a Change!”***

## **Focal Points**

There are many challenges facing Sint Maarten and the SMCP realizes that it must make choices and set priorities as it is not possible to resolve every problem simultaneously. When elected to Parliament and appointed to Government the following areas will serve as the basis for the governing program.

- 1. Parliament**
- 2. Government**
- 3. National Development**
- 4. Crime**
- 5. Education**
- 6. Tourism**
- 7. Economic Development**
- 8. Finances**
- 9. Health Care**
- 10. Environment and Well-being**
- 11. Our Youth**
- 12. Our Senior Citizens**
- 13. Our Christian Heritage**
- 14. Post-Election Agenda**

## **1. *Raising the Bar* – Parliament**

The Sint Maarten Christian Party is contesting the parliamentary elections and the first order of business is to let you the people know how we intend to serve you when elected to the legislative branch of Government.

We will:

- a. establish a Code of Ethics for Parliament and enforce it;
- b. apply cost conscious measures to combat excessive absences and travel abroad;
- c. develop the legal framework to address important policy issues that have been omitted from our present laws and ordinances;
- d. draft legislation in matters related to our priority areas;
- e. make amendments to outdated legislation, especially in priority areas, if necessary;
- f. implement the recommendations made in the various integrity reports and by the General Audit Chamber;
- g. present recommendations for electoral reform;
- h. revisit Sint Maarten's relationship with the Netherlands in view of current and future agreements and relationships;
- i. draft legislation that will give both the Dutch and English languages equal weight in Parliament/government and in court.

## **2. Good governance and reform – Government**

The SMCP is prepared to take part in the executive branch of Government (Council of Ministers).

In this regard the SMCP will:

- a. appoint Ministers who are competent and committed to serve you the people according to Christian principles of accountability, honesty, integrity, loyalty and respect;
- b. promote efficient service and transparency in all areas of government;
- c. treat our civil servants with dignity and respect no matter what political affiliation they may have;
- d. promote customer service towards the people who come to government departments seeking assistance;
- e. establish additional service centers in the various districts, in order to make government services more convenient;
- f. develop accessible e-government systems;
- g. review the various integrity reports, prioritize the recommendations and begin to implement them;
- h. present a realistic budget to Parliament in accordance with the National General Accounting Ordinance;
- i. establish community service days.

### **3. *Creating the future Sint Maarten – National Development***

Two of the many reasons for Sint Maarten's chaotic development are:

1. the lack of long term planning;
2. that existing plans and projects are discontinued due to constant changes of government.

The SMCP does not intend to discontinue plans, programs and projects from previous governments which are sound and beneficial to the people of Sint Maarten. We intend to work towards creating a prosperous and developed Sint Maarten, where our citizens are directly involved in charting the way forward and their collective desires and input help to direct our future.

The SMCP will provide a long term vision embraced by the desires, energies and spirit of the people of Sint Maarten. This long term vision will be laid out in a national development plan which will serve as the blueprint of Sint Maarten for the next fifteen to twenty years.

The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) is currently assisting Sint Maarten in preparing a National Development Plan.

The SMCP will:

- a. review the existing work that has been done to design a National Development Plan for Sint Maarten;
- b. create the environment for the public to participate in developing the NDP, by means of surveys, symposiums and town hall meetings;
- c. identify historic moments to establish and promote national and cultural identity;
- d. pursue plans for the development of a multi-purpose facility to accommodate various activities such as conferences and the performing arts;
- e. pursue the feasibility on establishing a National Development Bank on Sint Maarten.

#### 4. Safety and National Security – Crime

Residents and visitors have expressed great concern about safety and protection. The goal of the SMCP is to stem the tide of crime and restore protection, safety and a sense of community for all in Sint Maarten. The SMCP believes that crime is a matter of interest and importance to everyone and that every citizen has the responsibility to report crime and corruption. In order to effectively reduce crime, government and the people must join efforts.

The SMCP will:

- a. establish physical outposts in all districts for community police to be permanently there;
- b. have the police seek to restore and maintain public order and encourage the court to deal swiftly with minor offenses;
- c. ensure that training, equipment and supplies are provided to deal effectively with crime;
- d. review the remuneration and insurance packages of the police force;
- e. work to rehabilitate and reintegrate offenders into society;
- f. revive and reform the rehabilitation programs for young offenders and introduce incentives for employers and citizens who assist with their rehabilitation;
- g. set up a system to report crime digitally;
- h. introduce incentives and concessions to encourage greater reliance on home security equipment;
- i. implement the CCT system in Philipsburg as well as in other communities (similar to the French side);
- j. enforce the regulations that are in place to control the security industry;
- k. promote sports, education and employment programs as preventative alternatives to crime;
- l. explore the possibility of establishing the “Communities that Care” program as recommended by the Social Economic Council – *Sociaal Economische Raad* – (SER);
- m. enforce immigration regulations in an expeditious and humane manner.

## **5. Empowerment through Education and Training – Education**

According to the late Nelson Mandela:

***“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world!”***

The SMCP sees education as a means to bring about change in Sint Maarten. and will focus on:

### **5.1 Pre-Natal education**

- a. develop pre-natal education programs for fathers and mothers in order to get them involved in the development and education of their child before he/she enters the world.

### **5.2 Early Childhood education and care 0 to 3 years**

- a. develop parenting programs whereby parents and guardians are supported in their responsibility to play a more active role in the life of their children;
- b. review and regulate the educational programs and policies used in pre-schools and day care centers;

### **5.3 Elementary Education**

- a. review the existing elementary curriculum and make it more technology based and 21<sup>st</sup> century relevant;
- b. encourage and review the placement of additional trained educational assistants in the schools;
- c. introduce continuous professional development for all teachers;
- d. introduce performance evaluation for all teachers in order to maintain high quality standards;
- e. introduce the subjects “Tourism” and “Environmental Studies” in the Elementary School curriculum year 4;
- f. encourage the development of Math and Science teacher specialists.

### **5.4 Special Education**

- a. emphasize training, testing and early intervention as it relates to special education;
- b. develop policies for special education for primary and secondary learners;
- c. research and develop policies for gifted learners.

**5.5 Secondary Education**

- a. revisit secondary education curriculum and make it 21<sup>st</sup> century relevant;
- b. introduce a tourism curriculum in all classes of Secondary Schools;
- c. encourage summer school classes in basic- English, Entrepreneurship, Math, Money Management and Technology skills;
- d. ensure that the vocational education that is offered coincides with the job market;
- e. introduce a national qualification framework for labor.

**5.6 Higher Education**

- a. ensure that the legislation on higher education is submitted to parliament;

**5.7 Adult Education**

- a. promote professional education, second chance opportunities and training courses;
- b. support the promotion of the National Institute for Professional Advancement (NIPA).

**5.8 Study Financing**

- a. review the scholarship/study grant policy;

**5.9 Public / Private Partnership in Education**

- a. encourage the private sector to invest in educational programs and facilities and offer incentives to those who do so.

**5.10 Education cooperation with French Saint Martin**

- a. promote and establish a close relationship with French Saint Martin in the areas of culture, education, sports and youth affairs.

## **6. Rebooting Sint Maarten's main industry – Tourism**

Tourism is the main industry of Sint Maarten. This sector is also one of the most competitive sectors in the Caribbean. It is important that the development of this economic pillar is supported and promoted by government and everything must be done to enhance the visitor experience on Sint Maarten.

The SMCP will:

- a. focus on cleaning up and beautifying Sint Maarten;
- b. improve the infrastructure of Sint Maarten such as: roads, parking, street lighting, etc.;
- c. revisit the tourism masterplan and the progress of its implementation and make it relevant to today's tourism needs;
- d. ensure that the marketing budget is increased for established markets and for exploring new markets;
- e. promote and structure a close relationship with French Saint Martin and Anguilla which would reduce our marketing costs in order for the three destinations to benefit from tourism;
- f. encourage the establishment of activities and businesses as spinoffs related to tourism;
- g. encourage hoteliers to maintain accommodations at current international standards;
- h. draft legislations to protect timeshare investors;
- i. establish a tourism awareness program for the entire country and encourage local tourism;
- j. review the Mullet Bay situation in terms of tourism development in areas such as retirement living, along with other spinoff businesses such as, assisted living and farm-to-table;
- k. develop and promote the stay-over tourism product;
- l. diversify tourism by promoting sports tourism, event- and conference tourism, medical tourism, education tourism, eco-tourism and faith-based tourism;
- m. ensure that tourism related establishments pay the required taxes and fees;
- n. ensure that all efforts to develop and promote tourism will be carried out in a manner that allows sustainability and the protection of the environment.

## **7. Creating jobs and realizing ideas – Effective Economic Development**

Economic Development is one of the most important drivers of job creation and economic growth in a country. Entrepreneurship is the catalyst for Economic Development. In spite of its importance, entrepreneurship is not actively encouraged by our government. A proactive role of government in supporting entrepreneurship is justified and requires a systematic approach. The SMCP recognizes the important role that entrepreneurship has played in the development of Sint Maarten's economy and it remains essential in its future.

The SMCP intends to serve the people of Sint Maarten by promoting and encouraging entrepreneurship.

The SMCP will:

- a. streamline the bureaucratic process that hampers the startup of businesses and making funding more available;
- b. assist and strengthen Small Business Support Organizations (SBSO's) which create programs to stimulate business and entrepreneurship development;
- c. encourage agriculturists to cultivate cash crops that will be available for consumer use on a regular basis;
- d. commission the development of a strategic plan to encourage the culture of enterprise for the people of Sint Maarten;
- e. set up an entrepreneurship training institute to develop new business- and innovative leaders of all ages;
- f. legislate tax incentives for innovative start-up businesses;
- g. develop an incubation program for start-up entrepreneurs;
- h. revisit the legislation on the short-term labor contracts and research the implementation of a living wage;
- i. put legislation in place to encourage e-commerce.

## 8. *Financial Management and Fiscal Responsibility – Finances*

Over the years there have been many discussions of revamping and simplifying the tax system. Many attempts have also been made to improve the financial management, tax compliance and financial reporting of government. A realistic balanced budget has been proven to be difficult to accomplish and often times has not met the Kingdom Regulations on Financial Supervision. The budget would be made to balance on paper, but did not reflect the reality of the ministries' expenditure and the country's revenue. The tax system of Sint Maarten is partially a replica of that of The Netherlands and Curaçao. As the system was not holistically taken over, problems are inevitable, if not adapted. This tax system is not compatible with the socio-economic and cultural context of Sint Maarten. The SMCP will review our tax system to make it more simplified and relevant to the socio-economic needs of Sint Maarten and promote tax compliance and collection by implementing elements of **Fiscal Responsibility**

such as:

- a. replacing the Turnover Tax (TOT) by exploring the possibilities of new indirect taxes, as recommended by the Social Economic Council;
- b. exploring the possibilities of reducing the Profit Tax;
- c. seeking to reduce the wage tax bracket percentages;
- d. having a progressive transfer tax on the value of real estate to help curb property speculation;
- e. exploring the possibilities of levying a road tax based on vehicular weight and value;
- f. tax- exemptions and/or incentives for companies that contribute socially and environmentally to the development of Sint Maarten and its community.

and elements of **Financial Management**

such as:

- a. establishing through the Central Bank, a minimum saving- and maximum lending rate at commercial banks;
- b. outsourcing certain government functions to government entities that will be established;
- c. establishing a capital investment policy;
- d. introducing a progressive remittance tax and other forms of control to help curb money leakages to foreign countries.

### **9. Improve and Expand Health Care for our citizens – Health Care**

The quality of health care on Sint Maarten leaves a lot to be desired in terms of service, equipment, cost and qualified specialists. Sint Maarten is spending excessive amounts of money sending patients overseas for medical attention.

To serve the people of Sint Maarten in the area of health care the SMCP will:

- a. commission a comprehensive inventory of our healthcare workforce (local and abroad), providers and medical equipment which will result in a comprehensive recruitment and investment plan to complement and build on the existing plans to construct a first class healthcare complex/hospital;
- b. ensure that medical facilities and equipment are in place so as to decrease the number of patients that have to be sent overseas for medical attention;
- c. contract medical specialists from within the region and abroad to work for short periods in Sint Maarten to avoid patients having to be sent overseas for long periods while working on establishing our own pool of medical specialists;
- d. ensure that a National Health Insurance Plan and affordable medication are in place for all citizens;
- e. establish health care agreements with other countries where quality health care is not as expensive.

### **10. Environment and Well-being**

The Sint Maarten Christian Party is aware that the garbage disposal in the middle of Philipsburg is a health hazard for the neighboring inhabitants as well as for Philipsburg as a whole.

The SMCP will:

- a. review the numerous studies regarding the waste-site and begin to work on the execution of the least costly yet most effective recommendations to remedy this situation;
- b. commission a study regarding garbage collection and disposal;
- c. encourage the production and use of clean energy by GEBE and citizens;
- d. develop a policy for mental health care and an awareness campaign to erase the stigma associated with mental health;
- e. develop the necessary policies for the disabled including an awareness campaign and access infrastructural policies;
- f. launch an awareness program to encourage business places to provide special services and discounts for the disabled.

## 11. Engaging Our Youth

The SMCP will ensure that our youth are better engaged in community development to help instill appreciation and a sense of pride for Sint Maarten as their home and their future and as such are more committed to participate in nation building and national development.

In this current environment our youth are not only concerned about their future but also the current issues affecting their lives, many of which are focal areas in this manifesto.

The SMCP will engage our young people in matters affecting them and will:

- a. champion language enhancement in schools by revisiting how language is taught in our education system;
- b. revisit the secondary school curriculum to allow for work and community service projects at all levels;
- c. encourage entrepreneurship development youth;
- d. increase access to sports facilities and training programs especially for our youth who do not have the financial means;
- e. synchronize all government youth initiatives in order to ensure that they meet their objectives and that there is no duplication of efforts and wastage;
- f. increase communication with youth Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) and NGO's servicing youth, in order to facilitate a structural working relationship with government towards a national youth agenda;
- g. initiate structural initiatives towards public/private partnerships to ensure time-off from work, for parents' involvement/participation in the school/educational activities of their children;
- h. engage in meaningful discussions towards mitigating the challenges faced by young people born on Sint Maarten to foreign parents and those raised on Sint Maarten who experience immigration issues upon completing secondary school locally;
- i. engage in meaningful discussions towards concrete action that would address youth unemployment and underemployment on Sint Maarten.

## 12. *Taking Care of our Elderly – Senior Citizens*

Our elderly population has increased dramatically over the last ten years, according to a comprehensive report on the status of our senior citizens of 60 years and older, commissioned by the Department of Social Development in 2013. The Report lists many recommendations that the SMCP will work to implement when in government.

Some of these recommendations are to:

- a. intensify social control in neighborhoods through a “look out for our elderly” campaign on the one hand and stimulation of integration and participation in the community on the other hand;
- b. encourage businesses to offer extra services to senior citizens such as: easier access to their facilities, seating arrangements, senior citizens’- counter and discount;
- c. medical insurance for the elderly and coverage for diets;
- d. preventative health care (introduction of free consultation hours for elderly chronically diseased);
- e. reorganization of the transportation system and arrange for discounts for the elderly;
- f. increase of the old age pension (AOV) and offer tax discounts;
- g. implement a basket of minimum goods and services for our elderly;
- h. have GEBE offer discounts to all senior citizen’s responsible for their utility bills;
- i. promote the “aging in place” concept through a restore and enhance elderly home repair program.

### 13. Appreciating and Respecting Our Christian Heritage

Sint Maarten has a rich Christian heritage which has shaped and served our people well for many generations. We are now a country made up of people with multiple faiths. As Christianity is the foundation of our island it should be respected. The SMCP is committed to freedom of belief and worship as a basic human right and sees faith-based organizations as playing a positive role in the continued development of our country and as such we will endeavor to preserve and protect our rich Christian heritage.

The Sint Maarten Christian Party will adhere to the Campaign Code of Ethics issued by the Christian church organizations.

The Sint Maarten Christian Party will encourage the people to attend the 5 national ecumenical services that are held yearly, namely:

- **The National Day of Prayer** – **2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in January**
- **Emancipation Day** – **July 1<sup>st</sup>**
- **Constitutional Day** – **2<sup>nd</sup> Monday in October**
- **Sint Maarten Day** – **November 11<sup>th</sup>**
- **Thanksgiving Service** – **2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in December**

### 14. Post-Election Agenda

Most political parties and their candidates come to you prior to the elections to get your vote. But after elections they are no longer visible to you. The SMCP believes that you are always important and we are making ourselves available to serve before and after elections. When in parliament or in government the SMCP will continue to inform you of what is taking place as well as consult with you on major issues and decisions that concern you the people so that you can continue to participate in the governing process of Sint Maarten.

The party will do this via:

- a. general membership meetings;
- b. the media and social media;
- c. town hall meetings.

## Conclusion

The SMCP when given the opportunity to be in parliament and/or in government will make a change in the areas listed above as well as in other relevant areas. We are appealing to all eligible voters to make a difference now. Your future will be in capable hands when you give the SMCP the opportunity to serve you the people of this great nation and make a change ... and the change is NOW!



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