

**Proposal Topic:**

**1: A Third Way: Jesus and Paul as teachers of critical and creative thinking**

There can be no true education and no progress towards a more equitable, peaceful and sustainable world without the teaching of critical thinking. What is hurting our world, hurting people, hurting our souls, is a lack of critical and authentic engagement with ourselves, our fellow human beings and our planet. This workshop will explore how two of the greatest teachers of 'the third way', Jesus of Nazareth and the apostle Paul, can be utilised in the Christian Studies/RE classroom to engage students in activities that enable them to take a genuine, critical and socially conscious stand in the world. This workshop will also consider how this approach can use Christian Studies as a vehicle to fulfil elements of the new National Curriculum General Capabilities.

We will look at how the revolutionary teachings of Jesus and Paul can be unpacked to our students in order for them to be transformed in heart, body and mind to propel them into using the ultimate knowledge of the Great Wisdom for the betterment of others.

Mode:

Presentation with workshop elements. Practical classroom activities will be explored and demonstrated.

Target audience:

Christian Studies teachers, school leaders, all those interesting in philosophy, ethics and religious studies **2: Lessons from an African refugee school in the Middle East**

Your school exists contrary to local laws, your deputy principal has been missing for 3 months, you have 2 months to raise \$40,000 to keep the school running, your best teachers have no formal qualifications and would barely pass grade 8 in Australia and you are the only formally trained teacher on staff. Welcome to the life of a principal of an African refugee school in the Middle East!

This presentation explores the practicalities and benefits of donating your educational expertise to schools in the developing world, reflections on being involved in service learning personally and how this relates to the student service learning experience. It also considers:

- How can the refugee experience teach our students about ethical behaviour and cross cultural learning?
- How does one work with people from different families, tribes or nations in a society in which cultural norms and community needs are continually changing due to trauma and upheaval?
- How can these experiences inform the desire of Lutheran schools to be providers of quality education?

In this honest, challenging and often humorous presentation we consider how the ultimate reality of God brings hope to all situations and how sharing the blessings we have as Australian educators can have an impact the community locally and globally.

Mode:

Paper presentation Target

audience:

**Proposal Topic:**

School leaders, Christian Studies/RE/Humanities teachers, service learning leaders, pastoral ministry workers and those interested in undertaking cross cultural work.

**3: Stealing contemplative moments inside and outside the classroom**

“The Chinese word for "busy" is composed of two characters: ‘heart’ and ‘killing’. When we make ourselves so busy that we are always rushing around trying to get things “done”, or “over with”, we kill something vital in ourselves, and smother the quiet wisdom of our heart. Unpractised in the art of quiet, we hope to find our safety; our belonging, and our healing by increasing our levels of accomplishment. But our frantic busyness makes us deaf to what is healing and sacred, both in ourselves and in one another.” – Wayne Muller

Take a break from the hectic life of Lutheran education (and perhaps a busy ACLE schedule!). Rest and learn some practical contemplative practices for yourself and your students, including basic meditational practices, Lectio Divina (breaking open the Word), mindfulness, chant and the contemplative stance in the world.

The presenter studied with leading teacher of contemplative spirituality, Richard Rohr, and has applied contemplative practices in school, integrating them into the classroom, school worship, student meditation groups and contemplative retreats. His recent work in the Middle East further exposed him to contemplative practice within Eastern Christianity and Islam.

You will leave this workshop having practical tools to allow you, your students and colleagues, to access the Living Water that sustains us all.

**Mode:**

Practical workshop. Participants will be guided through practical exercises and their application for individuals, staff and students.

**Target audience:**

All who seek to bring contemplative practice into their lives and the lives of their students.

**Proposal Topic:**

## **Full presenter biography**

### **Thomas Brennen**

MEd, BMus (Hons), BEd (Sec) BA

A teacher at Concordia College, Highgate, Thomas Brennen spent the majority of 2012 and 2013 serving in Cairo leading a school for African refugees and lecturing in Education and Theology at a refugee vocational training college. Thomas has been published in the Lutheran Theological Journal and the St Francis Magazine for Arab World Studies and has presented widely on the topic on contemplative practice. He is a presenter for the 2013 Dialogue Australian Network conference on the topic of using the 'third way' teachings of Jesus and Paul to engage students in critical and creative thinking. He also has two articles due for publication in the Dialogue Australasia Network journal this year – 'Stealing contemplative moments with students in the classroom' and 'Lessons from a Middle Eastern refugee school for Australian schools'. He was awarded the Irene Scholarship by LEA in 2011 to study contemplative practice with Richard Rohr in Albuquerque, New Mexico. A religious educator at heart, Thomas maintains a keen interest the role of worship, contemplative practice and rigorous critical study in the area of religion as foundational to forming healthy, critically thinking and socially conscious young adults. Having graduated from ALC with a Master in Education in 2010, Thomas is currently a PhD candidate at Adelaide University in the field of Lutheran Education.

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\*Please note that Thomas' online presence is currently suppressed due to restrictions of working in the Middle East. It will be returned to its previous state following his period of service in the Middle East in June 2013.

## **A shorter presenter biography for publication**

Thomas Brennen is on the staff of Concordia College, Highgate and spent the majority of 2012 and 2013 serving in Cairo leading a school for African refugees and lecturing in Education and Theology at a refugee vocational training college. He has previously given workshops and published papers on the role of worship in schools, contemplative spiritual practice, teaching and learning in cross cultural contexts and rigorous study in the area of religion as foundational to forming healthy, critically thinking and socially conscious young adults. Thomas is currently a PhD candidate at Adelaide University in the field of Lutheran Education.

