



THE 2007 T.T. REUTHER ORATION

National Lutheran Principals' Conference
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**FROM THE OUTSIDE LOOKING IN..
AND FROM THE INSIDE LOOKING OUT**

A View to the Third Way

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THE REUTHER ORATION

The Reuther Oration acknowledges the outstanding service of the Rev TT Reuther to Lutheran education in Australia from 1955, when he began duties as a chaplain at St Paul's College, Walla Walla, NSW, to 1993 when he retired from the position of National Director for Lutheran Schools.

Pastor Reuther's life within Lutheran schools commenced when he was a student first at Light Pass Lutheran Day school and later at Immanuel College.

After completing theological study at Immanuel Seminary he took the opportunity to undertake post graduate studies from 1950-1954 at Concordia Seminary, St Louis. Whilst on board ship (returning from the USA) he received a call to become chaplain at St Paul's College, Walla Walla, where he served to 1962.

After serving two parishes (Appila and Coonalpyn) from 1963-1968, he was called to be Headmaster of Concordia College Adelaide, where he joyfully served for fourteen years plus one term until 1983 where he accepted the invitation to become the inaugural national Director for Lutheran Schools.

During his outstanding service to Lutheran schools in Australia, he also completed Master Studies in Educational Administration.

He was an active member of the former Headmasters' Conference, member of the Australian Council of Education Administration, and honoured for his services to education by being made a Fellow of the Australian College of Education.

His ministry to Lutheran schools was highlighted by a professional approach based on a clear theological thinking. In the inaugural Reuther Oration, Pastor Reuther spoke of faithfulness, which was a characteristic that those associated with schools admired in him. He modeled faithfulness.

The Reuther Oration is designed to provoke and promote thinking about an aspect of Lutheran education. The Oration is usually delivered as part of the National Principals' Conference.

RUTH BUTLER

Ruth Butler, the daughter of a Presbyterian minister, was educated in NSW country state schools and gained a Bachelor of Arts and Diploma in Education from the University of New England in 1973. She first came into contact with Lutherans when her husband, Geoff, answered an advertisement for 'practising members of Christian denominations' to apply for teaching positions at Lutheran schools.

She worked part-time in English, History and Christian Studies at St Peters Lutheran College and Grace Lutheran College while raising her four children, and being involved in church and community work. She completed a Bachelor of Letters in Australian Literature in 1980.

Ruth and her husband have actively participated in the establishment and operation of four Lutheran Outdoor Education Centres – Ironbark, Mt Binga, Googa and Ballon. They continue to have an active interest in reflective spirituality, faith expression through the arts and service with a socially-just perspective.

In 1990 Ruth began work full-time at Concordia College and continued in several roles including Head of English and Director of Studies, while completing her Masters in Educational Studies through Luther Seminary.

From 1999 she has served as principal of St Andrews Lutheran College, Tallebudgera.

Beyond the College, Ruth has been chair of the Gold Coast Heads of Independent Schools for two years and has served on the Education Committee of the Independent Schools of Queensland for five years. For Lutheran schools she has been the state chair of the Millennial Principals Project and the Leadership Development Project and contributed to the Women in Leadership committee and the National Issues Forum.

She worships at St Andrews Lutheran congregation where she serves as a prayer and music leader. She is also a member of the District Church Council of the Lutheran Church of Australia.

FROM THE OUTSIDE LOOKING IN.. AND FROM THE INSIDE LOOKING OUT

A View to the Third Way

During this next hour I hope you will hear something you may not want to hear and something to give you hope.

The Lexus and the Olive Tree

Thomas Friedman, journalist for *New York Times* and twice winner of the Pulitzer Prize published a book in 1999 called *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*. He describes a visit to the Lexus luxury car factory outside Tokyo in 1992 which was at that time turning out 300 sedans a day. The vehicles were being manufactured by 66 human beings and 310 robots, the humans mostly being employed for quality control with only a few actually screwing in bolts or soldering parts together.

Later Friedman boarded a bullet train and read a newspaper article about the latest flare up in the Arab/Israeli conflict. He reflected: 'The thought occurred to me that these Japanese, whose Lexus factory I had just visited and in whose train I was riding, were building the greatest luxury car in the world with robots. And over here, on top of Page 3 of *The Herald Tribune*, the people with whom I had lived for many years in Beirut and Jerusalem were still fighting over who owned which olive tree. It struck me then that the Lexus and the Olive Tree were actually pretty good symbols of this post-Cold War era: half the world seemed to be emerging from the Cold War intent on building a better Lexus, dedicated to modernising, streamlining and privatizing their economies in order to thrive in the system of globalisation. And half the world – sometimes half the same country, sometimes half the same person – was still caught up in the fight over who owns which olive tree' (1999, p 31).

To Friedman, the Lexus represents the human drive for material prosperity, progress and efficiency. It symbolises the best efforts of people to look outside their immediate situation and use human and physical resources and systems to improve things.

Lexus-thinking is important. I thank God for it. It is the very stuff of education which is about growth and development. It drives medical research and my superannuation fund. It allows me to see instant pictures of my grandson in Kyrgyzstan and to make London hotel bookings over the internet. It keeps our school in business. Why? Because many parents pay school fees so their child can learn to build a Lexus, run the Lexus enterprise, or at least read the manual.

By contrast, the Olive Tree represents the human drive for belonging, for everything that roots us, identifies us and locates us in the world – spirituality, individuality, relationships, love, family, home. It symbolises our drive to look inside ourselves and our community for value and purpose.

Olive Trees are important. I thank God for them. The democratic values my country espouses allow me to live in freedom and to have a say in who will govern me. My Christian faith, my heritage, my family, my church and school communities are what ground me and give me a sense of purpose and fulfilment.

The Lexus vs The Olive Tree

But according to Friedmann, the biggest threat to our Olive Tree today is likely to come from the Lexus – from all the anonymous, transnational, standardizing market forces and technologies. These forces can overwhelm every olive tree in sight – breaking down communities, steamrolling environments and crowding out traditions.

The Christian writer Cynthia Moe-Lobeda says: 'our lives are intimately bound up in a moral-spiritual crisis of profound and unprecedented dimensions. The reigning model of economic globalization threatens earth's life systems, undermines cultural integrity and diversity and endangers the lives of many who are poor in order that some might consume exorbitantly and a few accumulate vast wealth (2002, p16).'

She goes on to point out how Western Christians are compromised as we experience the tension between our beliefs and values (Olive Tree) and our material needs and desires (Lexus): 'The pathos of the situation stuns. Christians are called, before all else except love for God, to love neighbour as self. This is our gift and vocation, our primary lifework here on earth, and many of us long to fulfil it. Yet we find ourselves locked into a global political economy that structures exploitation into the very fabric of our lives....We do not wish to buy shirts made in sweatshops, coffee grown on land that should feed its hungry children or metal products from mines that have displaced thousands of people. We are not pleased to be pumping toxins into our planetary home, destroying the life systems upon which life depends. Yet we do (2002 p 16).'

Of course, the Lexus does not have it all its own way. After Friedmann's book was written, its predictions were fulfilled in a dramatic way. On September 11, 2001 a particular Islamist Olive Tree staged a stunningly effective protest. Religious fundamentalists used Stanley knives to bring down the symbolic centre of the global economy and to attack the headquarters of the greatest military force on earth without a shot being fired in defence.

Olive Trees all over the world are not going quietly – whether they are the farmers in France protesting against McDonalds, fundamentalist Christians promoting 'Intelligent Design' in schools, home-schooling parents fighting for their rights, Basque separatists, or Australian flag-waving gangs in Cronulla.

Or Lutheran Christians promoting the virtues of the black hymn book – which is a neat segue into the topic of Lutheran education.

The digger, the child and the ferret

The titanic struggle between the Lexus and the Olive Tree is of course reflected in our church and in our schools. Unfortunately, as they say in Zanzibar: 'When two elephants tussle, it's the grass that suffers.' For wherever there is unresolved tension, someone gets hurt – usually the little people, or those who find they cannot side with one ideology or the other.

I illustrate this with a dream I had in my first year as principal. I dreamt that a huge excavator was digging away on the foundations of our new building but all the while a small child kept running in the way of the digger. My job was to keep catching the child and putting her out of harm's way while simultaneously making sure the digger could get on with the job. At the same time as I was exhausting myself with this a ferret kept popping out of a hole in the dirt and biting me on the arm. My husband said, when I told him: 'You don't have to be Freud to understand that one.'

In my dream the Lexus is transformed into a rather more prosaic machine – the digger at work. Lexus-thinking constitutes everything that drives us in schools to keep doing things better, to get bigger, to perform, to compete, to win. It is the thinking behind building committees, standardised testing, leagues tables, interschool sports, school promotions and development departments, awards nights and accountability and accreditation procedures of all kinds.

My job is to keep my focus on children while maintaining an eye on the balance sheet and the literacy/numeracy scores. At the same time, I am constantly being drawn off my main task by numerous, annoying, often painful demands. 'Ferret' has become the term my colleagues and I now use at school to refer to such 'Urgent but not Important' interruptions. 'Oh, it's just a ferret' we say, which puts it firmly in its place, in our minds at least.

The narrator of the novel, *We Need to Talk About Kevin* by Lionel Shriver succinctly describes the impossible task of the teacher of 1998 (and things have only become worse):

'It wasn't an easy time to be a schoolteacher, if it ever had been. Squeezed by the state for higher standards and by parents for higher grades, under the magnifying glass for any ethnic insensitivity or sexual impropriety, torn by the rote demands of proliferating standardized tests and student cries for creative expression, teachers were both blamed for everything that went wrong with kids and turned to for their every salvation. This dual role of scapegoat and saviour was downright messianic, but even 1998 shekels Jesus was probably paid better (Shriver, 2003, p390).'

While elephants fight...

But you have heard a similar lament before, many times. Now, I would like to identify some reasons why the demands on educators are so particularly stressful and draining for committed teachers and leaders in Lutheran schools. I think it is because we genuinely find ourselves committed to opposing ways of thinking and we often feel our integrity is under threat.

Even though Christian educators may not always approve of it, we find ourselves buying into the underlying assumptions of the global economic factory:

Competition is the Way

External Measurement is the Truth

Material Success and Status is the Life

On award nights, we do not wish to demoralise 'ordinary' students who try hard and come second or twenty-second by publicly rewarding winners. We do not want struggling students to live down to our expectations and label themselves as 'vegies' by putting them in streamed classes to ensure the gifted ones excel. We are sorry that some Christian families cannot afford to send their children to our schools because we have set the fees too high for single or low-income families. We do not like turning away certain children with disabilities because we 'do not have the resources' i.e. we have spent the money on other priorities. Yet we do.

But most educators, and particularly Christian ones, are also driven by quite different principles, those that value people over performance:

Relationships are the Way

Group norms and values are the Truth

Belonging to community is the Life

Sometimes we feel pressured by these principles when we know we really should be more objective. We wish we didn't feel obligated to give a Congregation member a job when there are other better candidates. We know we shouldn't give in to staff members wanting particular class placements for their own children. We know we should not keep quiet when church services for school families are boring or irrelevant or the congregation is unfriendly. Yet we do.

Governments are similarly double-minded. Tests and flagpoles; benchmarks and values posters. As the elephants fight, there is a huge emotional toll at the grass-roots – teachers trying to do everything with too little time, and school leaders suffering from ethical indigestion. I think I might coin the term 'the Lexus effect' for that sinking, even desperate feeling we get when we hear about yet another standardised test or raft of compliance obligations.

(On the other hand, 'the Olive Tree' effect could be that combination of irritation and fatigue we feel when forced to sing 'Give me Oil in my Lamp' on Sunday morning or five Altogether etc. songs in a row.)

Fish or fowl

For Lutheran educators the tension is even more acute because of the Two Kingdoms theory and Luther's own example. As Tom Christenson puts it, the stance of Lutheran education is one of '*critical faithfulness*'. We are committed to integrating faith AND reason. There is no EITHER/OR. We embrace 'critical thought as an expression of faithfulness' (2004, p122).

If our schools are failing to perform as businesses or as learning communities we cannot excuse ourselves by saying: 'Oh, well, our main task is to preach the Gospel and that is going well.' And if our young people are being thoroughly turned off by our Christian message or it is silenced by fear of what our non-Christian clientele might think, we cannot pat ourselves on the back because our budget is balanced and tertiary entrance scores are high.

Some could argue that by not prioritising business/educational outcomes over Christian mission or vice versa, by being neither fish nor fowl, we are risking doing neither thing very well. But then, it is in the nature of educators never to be truly satisfied with our performance. Even Tim Hawkes of Kings School, when arguing the continuation of government funding referred to 'hit list' schools as those that 'look good from the air.' And we simply do not know how to judge the quality of our Christian care and mission. As Mike Middleton said so succinctly at ACLE I: 'We value what we measure. We don't measure what we value.'

Flying fish

But I refuse to believe that we have to be fish OR fowl. I prefer to believe in the possibility of an adaptation called 'the flying fish'. Moving too far to the pole of the Lexus or the Olive Tree will not be in the best interests of children – or rather, most children.

The competitive world of extreme performance is predicated upon a winner's script: there simply has to be losers. With few exceptions, those who succeed are those who are already in front, while the others fall further and further behind. As research shows (ISQ Briefings, April 2007) disadvantaged children are further marginalised by school structures that separate the less-able or less-motivated students from others. It seems extraordinary to me that a Labor government in Queensland will set up selective secondary schools and mandate streaming in Maths and Science from next year. Actually, it doesn't surprise me – State Schools have exactly the same pressures as we do – to balance the demands for performance with the needs of kids.

On the other hand the insular world of extreme social or religious parochialism will only benefit the few: those who are 'in' as opposed to those who are 'out'. If Lutheran schools retreated to our previous mandate – just nurturing our own in the faith – we would quickly find our schools emptied, starved of funds and our opportunities for mission curtailed. At St Andrews, we would lose 93.5% of our students. If our focus is only on student welfare and spiritual life why not just run a counselling service? As an Australian principal used to say (quoting an Indian Jesuit he heard in New Guinea): 'If you were running a hospital and everybody was converted, but they all died, you wouldn't think it was much of a hospital. We are running a school here.'

Shooting the elephant

So faithfulness to our God and to our students means we cannot move to the extremities. Nevertheless, whenever an emotionally-charged crisis erupts, decision-makers are often tempted to take a hard line in one way or another.

To stand in the middle looks like weakness. I have never forgotten George Orwell's autobiographical essay, *Shooting the Elephant*. George Orwell, an agent of the British Government in Burma, is confronted with the task of shooting an elephant that has gone on a rampage. When he finds the elephant, it has calmed down and is grazing peacefully. Nevertheless, he feels obliged to do the powerful thing to maintain the credibility of his position and that of the British Empire – he shoots the elephant and it dies slowly, thus violating life and his own conscience.

The natural default of human beings appears to be EITHER/OR thinking. Richard Rohr, Franciscan Priest of the Centre for Action and Contemplation, says the unreflective mind is inherently dualistic. He explains this with reference to the story of Adam and Eve eating the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. The usual way we create order out of chaos in this world is by taking upon ourselves the authority to decide what is Good and what is Evil – and more importantly WHO is Good and who is Evil. This leads to violence in its many forms (Rohr, 2004).

The Lutheran philosopher Tom Christensen writes: 'We should be critical of ways of knowing that are reductionistic, one-dimensional, shallow. ...We should be critical of knowing that separates, that oversimplifies, that object-ifies the known and abstracts the knower from living relationship' (2004, p 124).

Sucker's choice

A useful book called *Crucial Conversations* has helped to crystallise my thinking on this subject. It goes beyond the Lexus/Olive Tree dichotomy to look at the helpful and unhelpful ways we deal with conflicts of all kind. This book doesn't quote the Bible, but it does quote Stephen Covey, which for Lutherans comes close.

The writers, Patterson et al, say that in life conflict often leads to a win/lose solution. They call this kind of either/or thinking, 'sucker's choice'.

'In order to justify an especially sordid behaviour, we suggest that we're caught between two distasteful options...Pick your poison. What makes these *Sucker's Choices* is that they're always set up as the only two options available. It's the worst of either/or thinking. The person making the choice never suggests there's a third option that doesn't call for unhealthy behaviour' (2002, p 39).

Did you read the chilling words of the Virginia Tech gunman who massacred 32 students? 'You forced me into a corner and gave me only one option. The decision was yours. Now you have blood on your hands that will never wash off' (*The Courier Mail*, April 20,2007 p 4).

Consider the way a senior student from one of our schools describes the development of his world-view in a Christian Studies assignment:

'The day I stepped into (my new Lutheran school), I knew ... the whole structure within the school was wrong.... It was the race between 'leaders and followers' or those who were 'cool' and those who aren't....So, the innocent and stupid me got knocked to the bottom of this social ladder....From those two years, I have learnt that those who have power, influence can crush whoever they like....I have found out, money in this world is important...money brings influence...From that point on I scrapped the myth of 'all are equal'. There is no such thing. So from then on, money, business, influence dominated my life. I have to win. I have lost too much already...In my world right now, I have only three friends...And rather unsurprisingly, all three of them are friends I got to know from the internet....The 'friends' I have (at school) will be just another set of stones in my path, ready to be disposed of, used and stepped on if I need. At the end of my schooling years...I will wash away everything about my 7 years here. I will forget everything, and the only thing I will keep is my knowledge that I have paid for.' Because this student feels relationships and community have failed him he has committed himself to the view that money, power and cyberspace will bring him happiness.

In a recent Bill Leak cartoon, called Two-Up (Heads you win, Tails you lose), John Howard is portrayed as the 'sucker' who thinks you have to choose between having a good economy and global warming: 'I'm running this show and I say it's one or the other!' The little man protests: 'They both win!' In other words, we may be able to find a way to meet both economic and environmental objectives.

The third way

Parker Palmer, who is listed as one of the ten most influential American educators elaborates upon the concept of a 'third way' in his recent book, *The Hidden Wholeness*.

'From colleges that treat win-lose competition as the best way to make students learn...to religious institutions built on the idea that they alone know the mind of God... to political institutions premised on the notion that might makes right, to cultural institutions that give superiority to people of one race or gender – in all these ways, and more, violence is woven into the very fabric of our collective existence' (2002, p 174).

Parker urges us to resist: 'What does it mean, in specifics, to act non-violently? The answer depends on the situation, of course, and a thousand situations might yield a thousand

answers. Yet running through all of these answers we will find a single 'habit of the mind': to be in the world non-violently means learning to hold the tension of opposites, trusting that the tension itself will pull our hearts and minds open to a third way of thinking and acting.'

Standing in the tragic gap

'The insight at the heart of non-violence is that we live in a tragic gap – a gap between the way things are and the way we know they might be. It is a gap that never has been and never will be closed. If we want to live non-violent lives, we must learn to stand in the tragic gap, faithfully holding the tension between reality and possibility in hopes of being opened to a third way' (2002, p174-5).

To Richard Rohr, this way is represented in the Genesis story by the Tree of Life, which, like the Cross of Christ, holds in tension the rival claims of justice and mercy, of truth and love. Christ hung between the good thief and the bad thief, crucified at the command of the political and military rulers of his nation and at the behest of his spiritual community.

Competition is not the way, relationships are not the way: 'I am the way', said Jesus.

External measurement is not the truth, group norms and values are not the truth: 'I am the truth', said Jesus.

Material success and status are not the life; belonging to community is not the life: 'I am the life', said Jesus.

But there is a cost – for Jesus, and for us if we follow his example. The Franciscan mystic Bonaventure said: 'Jesus was crucified on the collision of opposites. Whenever you hang on the co-incident of opposites and whenever you try to hold together the opposing energies of everything including yourself, you will be crucified.'

Parker Palmer elaborates on the pain of standing in this 'tragic gap.'

'I harbour no illusions about how hard it is to live in that gap. Though we may try to keep our grip on both reality and hope, we often find the tension too hard to hold – so we let go of one pole and collapse into the other. Sometimes we resign ourselves to things as they are and sink into cynical disengagement. Sometimes we cling to escapist fantasies and float above the fray. Having been drawn to both extremes, I have tried to understand why' (2002, p175).

The principal as prophet

This then, is a reason why following our vocation as Christian educators and leaders is so difficult, and why we often suffer. I used to think that if I suffered, or didn't know exactly the right way to do things, that it meant I wasn't cut out for the job of principal. I have been encouraged by reading writers such as Scott Peck and Parker Palmer who insist that if we suffer and find making some decisions difficult, that it may just be because we are cut out for the job.

Scott Peck writes: 'Spiritually evolved people, by virtue of their discipline, mastery and love, are people of extraordinary competence, and in their competence they are called on to serve the world, and in their love they answer the call. They are inevitably, therefore, people of great power, although the world may generally behold them as quite ordinary people, since more often than not they will exercise their power in quiet or even hidden ways. Nonetheless, exercise power they do, and in this exercise they suffer greatly, even dreadfully. For to exercise power is to make decisions, and the process of making decisions with total awareness is often infinitely more painful than making decisions with limited or blunted awareness (which is the way most decisions are made and why they are ultimately proved wrong' (1978 p 79).

Have you thought of yourself as a prophet? Rohr says that throughout history prophets have tried to put together the inner and the outer life, and anyone who tries to do that is going to be a threat to the system. A prophet is never completely normal – and neither are we. But that's what we are called to be. That is our work.

Taking a prophetic role requires courage, and it is certainly not weakness. Consider the Gospel story of, as my husband calls it, 'the men caught in self-righteousness' (John 8:1-11).

Jesus resisted the call to unforgiving justice when faced with the problem of what to do with an adulterous woman. Nor did he relax into cheap grace – ‘Go and sin no more’. Instead he challenged the accusers themselves, eloquently, without speaking a word and peacefully, without raising a banner. Jesus was handed the sucker’s choice of breaking the law and letting the woman go or sustaining the law and letting go all he stood for. Instead he devised a third way that caused her accusers to recognise her humanity and their own.

Parker again: ‘I want to revisit the ego’s fear that holding tension will make us look weak and keep us from getting results. As proven by the named and the nameless, that fear is not supported by the evidence; the people who achieve the greatest good are those who have the greatest capacity to stand in the tragic gap. Of course, results come more slowly when we hold the tension instead of calling for a vote or sending in the troops’ (2002, p180).

The third way in Lutheran schools

Einstein said: ‘No problem can be solved using the same consciousness as that which created it.’ And we have many problems in our Lutheran schools. There are some things that are simply not working, or not working well. It is possible that if we don’t solve these problems we may lose our position in the marketplace, in Christian mission, or in both. To resolve the tensions we experience we may be tempted to take one extreme position or the other – to choose the Lexus over the Olive Tree or vice versa. To focus on the standards, values and demands of the world outside or the Lutheran community inside. To compete or retreat. Fight or flight.

But maybe there is a third way. A way that will allow us to renew and strengthen personal and community spiritual lives while reaching beyond the safe, the local, the traditional. A way that will help us to improve students’ learning and opportunities while promoting social justice and responsibility. A way that will enable teachers and leaders to engage in the struggle while still experiencing a sense of peace and hope.

What might this way look like? There are no set procedures to follow and as Palmer says, there are a thousand answers for a thousand situations. The way I find will not be the way you find. The way will be found ultimately through our personal relationship with Jesus (‘the Way’ himself) as we listen to him and simply obey. As the prophet says in Isaiah 30: 21 ‘Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, ‘This is the way; walk in it.’”

I offer the following examples of ‘third way’ thinking and acting in response to problems in our schools, our church and the world.

Looking outside: reaching beyond

Lutheran schools are faced with this problem: our church is too small; our school system is small; we think too small. Enough has been said about the declining membership of the church and the need for more committed Lutheran teachers and leaders. Should we abandon our heritage or become more exclusive? A third way might find us remaining grounded in the principles of our faith while gaining strength through meaningful engagement with people of other denominations, nations, systems and socio-economic classes.

Example 1: Engaging with the world

Consider Rob Hoff – constantly looking beyond the environment of Lutheran schools to other schools, people from other industries and walks of life, to other countries, to other ways of doing things. But still keeping in touch with his family and the local communities he serves.

Example 2: Partnership with other Christians

Consider the welcome that is given in our system to those of us, support-staff members, teachers and leaders, who were not born Lutheran. We feel privileged to serve and to be served in Lutheran schools. Here I would like to make two points. In the main, Lutheran distinctives are not. Many people in other churches are committed to the same basic principles of Christian faith as Lutherans are – I certainly was before I became a Lutheran. It is what attracted me to Lutheran schools in the first place. What IS admirable about Lutherans

is that we have the courage to try to practise what we preach. But even that is not distinctive. All the same, it is what keeps me in Lutheran schools and in the Lutheran church.

Second point. Our pride is limiting us. I was put off for a long while in joining the Lutheran church because of the insularity and mistaken sense of superiority that was evident there. I have heard, time and time again, about the wonderful contribution our theology makes to the wider church through dialogue (or would do if we did it more often). I rarely hear about what we could also learn from others. But we can and we need to.

Example 3: Extending our mission

Consider Sunshine Lutheran School in Victoria, and their principal Diane Milnes. Diane says that she was dismissed from her teaching post in a Parent-Controlled school in 1991 for 'asking too many questions and encouraging her students to do the same'. Later she served as a principal in another Christian school and in 2001 found herself principal at Sunshine Christian School (run by the Uniting Church). Sunshine has inadequate facilities, poor resources and is situated on three house blocks with a maximum enrolment of 90 students. The SES is 83, 94% of the students have English as a second Language and over 70% receive special government benefits. The students come from every area of the globe, many are new arrivals and many have a vibrant Christian faith.

In 2003 the Uniting Church notified the school that they were intending to sell the site. The options given the school were: close, buy themselves out or find other governance. According to Diane, to close was not an option. 'It was God's school – a wonderful community of families, staff and children, delighting in Christian education.' To buy the school was also not an option because there was no money at all. The school community began to pray and seek other governance. They tried the Christian Schools Associations because they had solid biblical foundations, but the school still needed to support itself financially and provide a school board. (This was impossible because the people in the school community did not have the skills or understanding of management.) They tried an ecumenical association, but the school community felt their religious views were too broad.

A week before the school needed to give an answer to the Uniting Church, Diane was coming home from golf on the usual route she had followed for the past three years. She was praying out loud: 'God, you're leaving it awfully late – I know you want the school to continue – what do you want us to do?' Suddenly she saw a church she had never noticed before: St Philips Lutheran Church, Werribee. She said to herself: 'Lutherans – they have schools.' Diane also knew that the foundations of the Lutheran school system were solidly scriptural so she contacted Roger Schwarz of Good News Werribee and asked: 'What do we have to do to become a Lutheran school?' Roger said: 'Ring Ken Bartel at Lutheran Education South-East Region but you'll probably lose your job as Lutheran schools only have Lutheran principals.' Diane thought: 'As I'd lost my job before by asking questions, that didn't really worry me. I rang Ken and in December 2004 the handover began from UCA to LEA. In 2006 we became a member of the Lutheran education system.'

Example 4: Engaging with young people

We need a way of working in teaching and mission with young people who are culturally poles apart from most teachers and pastors. We need a way that is beyond attracting young people with spectacular sound and light shows and material rewards and that is also beyond tests and standards and teaching the catechism line by line. I suspect the third way may include learning from peers. Hear how Jenny explains the mandala she developed for her Christian Studies project: 'The mandala...depicts my discovery of God as my saviour when I came to this school. The outer circle, with the darker colours, represents my life before Christ....The white line represents the barrier between my old life and a life with Christ...The bird is a dove as the Holy Spirit who worked through my friends in encouraging me to attend church and therefore broke this barrier.'

Looking inside: renewing community

Lutheran schools face another set of problems because we experience significant conflict not just externally but internally. Consider the following examples of 'third way' thinking to resolve tensions within the community.

Example 1: Student welfare and behaviour management

In this area Christian leaders need to find a way which is beyond Leviticus and more like Exodus. But not like the chaotic nightmares in Revelation. Here I submit the Pastor Maurice Fielke method.

Once at St Peters outdoor campus, Ironbark, Maurice was confronted by a group of furious girls who were accusing each other of stealing money. None of the staff could get to the bottom of the problem – who had done the stealing, or if, in fact, it had happened at all. ‘OK,’ said Maurice, ‘Who has lost money? You? How much? \$10. You? How much? \$5.’ And so it went on around the group. Then he opened his wallet and held out \$10 to the first student, \$5 to the second and so on. ‘OK,’ he said, ‘From now on, anyone who steals, is stealing from me.’ The stealing stopped immediately.

Example 2: Excellence with equity

We need a third way to help the capable to achieve without separating them from those who struggle. Because the ones we call ‘the gifted’ need to learn to appreciate the different gifts of others. They need to know that gifts are given to give away. I submit the example of Immanuel College, Novar Gardens’ visit to our school recently. This was a joyful inclusive celebration, where experienced musicians sat alongside beginners and both learned through sharing.

Example 3: Conflict resolution

The principles of Restorative Justice are ‘third way’. The Round Table Policy developed by staff at our school, St Andrews, Tallebudgera is based upon these principles. Through a process of structured mediation people in conflict (including staff, students and parents) are helped to reach a point of reconciliation, resisting the temptation either of payback or of passive submission.

Example 3: Church/school relationships

Sometimes these relationships are marred by disputation or apathy. People may respond to alleged deficiencies in the church (or the school) by attacking it or abandoning it. I present Martin Luther on a third way of engaging with the church – especially when we are seeing the church as ‘them’ rather than us. Paul Althus explains: ‘The rule of sharing with sinners, however, determines our relationship not only to individuals but also to the entire church. For it too can sin. Then, it is also necessary to fulfil the ‘law of Christ’ and to take the burden of the church upon one’s self. If the church degenerates, and if popes and priests fail, love and community must be preserved. Such a time does not therefore call for division and separation...on the contrary, such a situation demands the closest connection and participation. This is not the time to run away from but, on the contrary, to run to the church and to work within the church for its renewal’ (1966, p 312).

Example 4: Repentance

There are some simple principles in the Christian life. Sin separates us from God and from each other. Freedom from sin allows us to grow as individuals and together. At the Lutheran Church Summit of 2005 representatives from all over Australia came together to identify our problems and plan for the future. The event was inspirational because during this time we squarely faced up to some of the sins that have been holding us back as a church. We then participated in a rite of public repentance. The rite may have been an old one, but it may give birth to something new.

Travelling on: restoring hope

Teachers and school leaders often struggle with a sense of weakness, inadequacy and hopelessness. Effective people urgently need emotional and spiritual sustenance if they are to be retained at all levels in our profession. We need to receive encouragement from the Comforter and be obedient to his guiding voice. Yet the work of the Holy Spirit has often been neglected by those of us in the Lutheran Church. Jesus said: ‘Which of you, fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead?...How much more will your Father in Heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him?’ (Luke 11:11-13). We only need to ask.

Example 1: Ego-death

Richard Rohr says that spiritual strength and growth, paradoxically occur when we experience ego-death, which usually takes place because of suffering: 'The ego will only give up control when it has to. You won't pick up the cross until it is put on your shoulders' (2004). Jan Baker describes her early days at her new school when she felt overwhelmed and often doubted her capacity to fulfil her role as principal. One day when she was feeling this most acutely a mother knocked on the door of her office. 'I just had to share something with you,' she said, 'God doesn't call the qualified – he qualifies the called.'

Example 2: Reflection and prayer

Through reading the Scriptures, reflection and prayer we often gain access to a third way. John Heffernan speaks of his effort to deal with his anger and hurt when a parent was taking him to the Anti-Discrimination Board because she did not gain a position at the school on the grounds that she wasn't a Christian. After reading the Bible one day, John realised he needed to pray for her – which he proceeded to do. Some time later the woman began to attend church and her children were baptised. Prayer changes us, changes other people and the world we live in.

Example 3: Service without stress

We need to find a way to be busy without being pressured; to serve without losing our dignity; to suffer pain without losing our joy. I am not quite sure but I think the third way might look a bit like our elder statesman, Fred Stolz. Fred went to a principals' conference years ago when everyone undertook some kind of a test to determine how stressed they were. He received a surprisingly low rating. Yet here is a man who has worked very hard for a very long time. Perhaps Fred, and others like him have learned the secret of true service that Rachel Remen describes: 'True service is not a relationship between an expert and a problem...it is a relationship between people who bring the full resources of their combined humanity to the table and share them generously...Over the long run, fixing and helping are draining but service is renewing. When you serve, your work itself will sustain you, renew you and bless you, often over many years' (in Pallisier, 2006).

Example 4: The power of hope

We need to demonstrate to our communities that there is a way of living in the world that does not rely on false optimism ('All you have to do is dream') nor cynical realism ('Why bother?'). That does not fight back, but also does not sit still. I turn now to the story of Bishop Tutu in Jim Wallis's book *God's Politics: Why the Right Gets it Wrong and the Left Doesn't get it*. Wallis writes: 'The former South African Archbishop, Desmond Tutu, used to famously say, 'We are prisoners of hope.' Such a statement might be taken as merely rhetorical or even eccentric if you hadn't seen Bishop Tutu stare down the notorious South African security Police when they broke into the Cathedral of St George's during his sermon at an ecumenical service. I was there...The incident taught me more about the power of hope than any other moment in my life. Desmond Tutu stopped preaching and just looked at the intruders as they lined the walls of his cathedral, wielding writing pads and tape recorders to record whatever he said and thereby threatening him with consequences for any bold prophetic utterances. They had already arrested Tutu and other church leaders just a few weeks before and kept them in jail for several days. After meeting their eyes with his in a steely gaze, the church leader acknowledged their power ('you are powerful, very powerful', he said) but reminded them that he served a higher power greater than their political authority ('But I serve a God who cannot be mocked!'). Then, in the most extraordinary challenge to political tyranny I have ever witnessed, Archbishop Desmond Tutu told the representatives of South African apartheid, 'Since you have already lost, I invite you today to come and join the winning side!' He said it with a smile on his face and enticing warmth in his invitation, but with a clarity and boldness that took everyone's breath away.

The congregation's response was electric. The crowd was literally transformed by the bishop's challenge to power. From a cowering fear of the heavily armed security forces that surrounded the cathedral and greatly outnumbered the band of worshipers, we literally leaped to our feet, shouted the praises of God and began ... dancing. We danced out of the cathedral to meet the awaiting police and military forces of apartheid who hardly expected a confrontation with dancing worshipers. Not knowing what else to do, they backed up to

provide the space for the people of faith to dance for freedom in the streets of South Africa (Wallis, 2005, p 348).

This story reminds us that following the third way can be both liberating and joyful. I trust that you have enjoyed such experiences (maybe not so dramatic) when the powers of darkness have retreated in response to the light of goodness or truth. After such occasions I say to myself: 'It was worth establishing the school for that one child, or for that one hour.'

God bless you by giving you such moments.

But for the other times, there is the statement by the Spanish composer Pablo Casals: 'The situation is hopeless, we must take the next step.'

I conclude with this cartoon by Leunig entitled: *How to Get There*.

*Go to the end of the path until you get to the gate.
Go through the gate and head straight out towards the horizon.
Sit down and have a rest every now and again.
Keep going towards the horizon.
But keep on going.
Just keep on with it.
Keep on going as far as you can.
That's how you get there.*

And if all else fails, dance.

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