

# Pathways Vocational

*"We cannot do great things on this Earth, only small things with great love." Mother Teresa*



*"Vocation has to do not only with what it is we do, but how we do it, and with what understanding we do it." Tom Christenson*

## What is a Lutheran School?

What does it mean to say a school is *Lutheran*?

What did you initially think it meant when you first came into contact with Lutheran schools? How has it changed (if you have experience)?

What do you think our community thinks a Lutheran school is?

What is the **mission** (purpose, calling, assignment) of a Lutheran school?

Who do we **minister** (serve, attend to the needs of) to?

What is “Lutheran”?

Where / how did you know about Lutheranism?

What puzzles or surprises you?

## A KEY READING

### Education for human becoming: what Lutheran educators bring to the task

Christenson, T *SchoolLink* July 2006, Volume 12:2

Education is not just about the teaching of a what (some particular subject or another); it is also about the growing of a who. Education is about the coming to be of persons in the process of learning particular skills or knowledge; it is paideutic in that sense. In

Paideutic – the science or art of teaching

spite of the fact there is a good deal of educational rhetoric about 'holistic education' I believe that not many schools have taken the question seriously, 'What kinds of humans are we developing here?' When we focus only on the 'what' of education we run the risk of producing specialists, many of whom turn out to be one-dimensional persons.

I think it is important to recognise that every effort at education has, somewhere within it, some assumptions about what it means to be human, and how, as humans, we are related to each other and to the world. Education proceeds from something, towards something, with some understanding of what the difficulties are in accomplishing this journey. Very often these anthropological assumptions are not made explicit. Even so we operate with some ideas of what success and human accomplishment look like. These ideas may take the form of an image or an informing story. In any case they operate as assumptions in our thinking, lie embodied in the structures of our institutions, and often become apparent to us only when we try to justify some of our most obvious judgments. There are certainly a variety of anthropological images and informing stories at work in the world, but if I were asked to identify the dominant image or informing story of contemporary western civilisation here's what I would say:

*We are real in proportion to what we have, and we are free in proportion to being able to obtain what we want. Our identity is basically the identity of consumer. We work in order to earn money. We earn money in order to be*

*able to buy. We buy things that will establish an identity for us, that will tell us that we are somebody. We need things that tell ourselves (and others who are our mirror) who we are. As the things we have grow old or out of fashion they become invisible ('I don't have a thing to wear'). Besides this need for identity-giving things we also have a great need to be entertained. We value our freedom and tend to define freedom in a consumerist way, as the ability to make choices and obtain what we want, choices about what we will wear, what we will drive, what we will eat and drink, who we will bed down with. The deepest truths are the truths of market place and economics. These are the metaphors that inform our lives. They are the bottom line.*

Is there a problem with this image of the human and the life style it gives shape to? Several, I would say, but I note three problems here.

1) This view gives us a shallow and one dimensional picture of what it means to be human. A person who literally is what she / he has is a mannequin. A mannequin is built to display and advertise clothes and other accessories. It truly is what it wears. But the last time I checked there are no mannequins worth getting to know, because there's literally no one there. No mind, no soul, no personality, no one who can plan a life, make a commitment, carry on a conversation, have a genuine concern, show care, take an idea seriously, etc. All they can do is model their new gear. All we can do is admire and desire it. They may be hot, cool, or sophisticated, but are they human?

2) This economic model makes almost all human relationships competitive. If we are what we have then we're continually keeping score, trying to match the achievements of some, surpass the achievements of others, and become someone of note in the process. We may form teams and alliances, but we do

so ultimately to advance in the competition. We don't learn how to genuinely care about others, we don't learn how to love. We don't learn how to be a genuine friend. A certain kind of hollowness sets in. A person becomes a package with no contents. The paradigm of human being is no longer a caring spouse or loving parent, it is the celebrity, a person who is famous for being famous.

In my escapist summer reading I ran into the following bit of frightening dialogue:

*'It must be exciting being a, ah, policewoman,' Mrs. Plum said.*

*'Not too much excitement,' Kelly Cruz said, 'Lot's of asking questions and taking notes.'*

*'But it must give you satisfaction, solving crimes. That's important.'*

*'It is,' Kelly Cruz said, 'the trouble is, then another crime comes along and you're slogging again.'*

*'This, talking to you, is the most important thing I'll do today,' Mrs. Plum said.*

*Kelly Cruz didn't say anything.*

*'It's the money you know, having money without having to earn it. The money guts you. After a while all you have left to do is look nice, and drink.'*

*Kelly Cruz stood and put her hand out. 'Thank you for talking to me,' she said.*

*Mrs. Plum smiled absently and began to look for the waiter.*

Robert B. Parker, *Sea Change*

3) A consumerist model of being human literally consumes the planet and its resources. Those of us who live in the US, Europe, Japan, Australia, are sometimes inclined to talk about 'the developing world', ie, those countries on the planet that had not reached our level of income and consumption but soon would do so. As we now know, India and China, the two most populous nations on earth, are now included in the 'developed world,' and are the two fastest growing economies. But we seem to have given little thought to the question whether the planet can support a population consuming at the level that 'the developed world' does. The nearly unanimous answer

we get from scientists and economists around the world is 'no.' What, then, do we do about that? Should we stop encouraging such development elsewhere? What would be our argument? 'The planet can afford a few high consuming people, but it can't afford for everyone to live like this, so we want you to stop it?'

David Orr in his provocative book *Earth in Mind* has written:

*The plain fact is that the planet does not need more successful people. But it does desperately need more peacemakers, healers, restorers, story tellers, and lovers of every kind. It needs people who live well in their places. It needs people of moral courage.... And these qualities have little to do with success as our culture defines it.*

The most important thing that Lutheran schools have to offer is an education shaped by some different images of human being, some different informing stories than this dominant cultural one we've just looked at. In this limited context I want to focus on two. The first is from the creation narrative in Genesis. The second is from the gospels and the letters of Paul.

The opening chapters of Genesis tell a story about how we, as humans, are related to the created world and how we are related to the creator. If we read this story with some care we discover many things about ourselves:

a) We discover that we are creatures, a part of (not apart from) the rest of creation. The creation does not belong to us, it is not ours to do with as we please. It is our home, our source, not our possession. Even what we are called, 'humans' (*adamah* in Hebrew) means from-the-earth.

b) We discover that we, among all creatures, are called into conversation with the creator. The whole of the bible may be read as that ongoing conversation. One only has to read the Psalms to see what variety this conversation takes. We have the gift of language. We are response-able, and we

discover that with this gift also comes the fact that we are answerable. We are responsible because we are response-able.

c) Besides the call to answerability, in general, humans are also given a particular call to stewardship. We are asked to be caretakers of God's world, a world God loves, a world in which God's glory is manifest.

d) The biblical story reveals to us that we are not happy with this creation situation. We don't like being creatures, we want to be like God. We don't like being accountable; we would just as soon deny and hide. We don't like being part of the creation, we aren't satisfied with *shalom*, living well within limits. We want it to belong to us. We want to use it for our own purposes, we want to appropriate it. We want to take over. The narrative shows us that we make a horrible mess of things when we attempt to become masters in a situation where we were meant to be servants.

e) The creation story relates to us that we are all children of the same parents. At some deep level we are relatives, we have more in common than makes us different. This implies that difference is a surface phenomenon, not a deep one. All attempts to see the world in 'us/them' ways tells only a fractional truth. We should be suspicious of all rhetoric that begins with this chauvinistic assumption.

Our second informing story is the story of God's love for the world in Christ Jesus. God comes into the world, embraces the world in love, becoming fully human to show us what full humanity is all about. The shocking thing about the story is that this embrace for the world finally takes the form of the cross. But the death of Christ, far from being a tragic end to the story makes it possible for all humans to be raised to a new life in Christ. We are transformed, we become new creatures, for Christ lives in us.

What follows from seeing Christ as the model human?

1) It implies that many things that are so important to the culture (wealth, economic status, political and military might, gender, ethnicity, being a religious insider or outsider) are worth very little to the Christian.

2) It implies that we discover where the boundaries of insider/outsider, good guy/bad guy, respectable/unrespectable are and that we, being freed from their dominance, can reach beyond them in love.

3) It implies that we practice a community that refracts God's love into the world in which we live. The Christian image of the human is Christ Jesus. The Christian understanding of human relationship is agape, unconditional love. The Christian understanding of community is *koinonia*, a coming together that realises the reign of God. The model of responsible human agency is vocation, a way of working that allows us to focus single mindedly on the need of the neighbour. As Luther so clearly put it:

*A Christian is a perfectly free Lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all ... Freed from the vain attempt to justify himself ... [the Christian] should be guided in all works by this thought alone ... considering nothing but the need of the neighbour ... this is the truly Christian life.*

Martin Luther, *The Freedom of the Christian*

I believe that the story that informs our understanding of what it means to be human is one of the most important things about the educating we do. It's more important than teaching a particular language or a particular set of historical or scientific facts, or a particular theory, it's even more important than reading this or that particular author. It's more important because it influences the decisions we make about all these other things, about why we do them and how we

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do them. But it's also more important because it shapes who we become, how we understand ourselves, and what we will do (and not do) with the rest of the education we receive.

To return to the language of David Orr, what kinds of persons does the world desperately need? I think that as Christian educators in the Lutheran tradition we have some good

answers to that question. And we have images of the human that are deep, multi-dimensional, realistic and viable that can inform the education of such persons. We have this gift, the world has this need, therefore we have a clear calling.

**Tom Christenson, Professor of Philosophy, Capital University, Columbus Ohio US**

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND REFLECTIONS

### Social and cultural change in Lutheran schools

#### Pluralism

Our society is becoming increasingly multi-ethnic and multi-faith.

- **What does this mean for Lutheran schools that are experiencing this growth in diversity?**
- **What does this mean for Lutheran schools that do not have students from diverse backgrounds?**



#### Secularisation

Malcolm Bartsch makes the following comment about secularisation and Lutheran schools.

*It is important in this regard, to recognise the impact which secular humanism has exerted on the whole understanding of education, also in Lutheran schools. In spite of theological presuppositions which stress the interdependence of people in community, the value of each individual as a created and redeemed person, the influence of original sin in the lives of people, and so on, Lutheran schools have also become contaminated with individualism, competition, a 'success ethic', and the tendency to see education in economic rationalist terms. Lutheran schools have been in danger of following, more or less unquestioningly, the current educational theory and practice of the state system.*

Bartsch, M. *Why a Lutheran school?* p. 26

- **What is your response to these comments?**
- **How can Lutheran schools witness to their beliefs and values in the face of increasing secularisation?**



#### Privatisation of religion

There has been a rise in the belief that people's religious affiliation and personal faith is a private matter.

- **What does the increasing perception that religious affiliation and its impact on life is a private matter mean for Lutheran schools?**
- **What does the belief that personal choice is more important than denominational loyalty mean for a denominationally based institution?**



#### Changes in family structures

Malcolm Bartsch states:

*From his research, Hugh Mackay has concluded that (1993: 55-56) a 'family consisting of a breadwinning father, a stay-at-home mother and a couple of dependent children is now a small minority, accounting for less than one quarter of all families'. Contributing to this are factors such as '60 per cent of all mothers of dependent children now [having] paid employment outside the home', and also 'new patterns of marriage and divorce'....*

*Schools will also have to assess how far they can go in functioning as a support agency for children and adults with family related problems, particularly with*



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growing 'intensification . . . in teachers' work as time and space are increasingly compressed in the postmodern world' (Hargreaves 1994: 138). As schools take on more and more functions which were once part of the role of the extended family, how will teachers handle their 'commitment to care' (Hargreaves 1994: 145), particularly as they also face possible difficulties within their own family relationships and as they struggle to handle the situation which Hargreaves portrays (1994: 150) as becoming 'trapped in having to construct and maintain a persona of perfectionism'?

Bartsch, M. *Why a Lutheran school?* pp. 28,29

- **How do changes in family structures show themselves in the lives of your students?**
- **How is your school showing sensitivity to this issue and responding to the increasing pressure to take on the role of the extended family?**

### Changes in schooling

- **What pressures do schools face in relation to 'educational fads', market forces and parental pressure?**
- **What can Lutheran schools use to guide their educational decision-making?**



### Nurture – outreach debate

There has been much discussion as to 'whether the prime purpose of Lutheran schools is the nurture of the Christian faith and life of the students, or outreach through the school to children of non-churched families'

Bartsch, M. *Why a Lutheran school?* p. 30

- **In what ways is this discussion helpful and a distraction for Lutheran schools?**
- **What are some of the ways in which your school nurtures the faith of Christian students?**
- **How does the school demonstrate and share the Christian faith?**



### The purpose of Christian Studies

The Christian Studies Curriculum Framework states the following in its rationale:

*Christian Studies as a discipline of learning introduces students to the world of religion and spirituality, which are integral components of the fabric of all cultures. It aims to give students a clear understanding and appreciation of the Christian story through an exploration of the biblical text and Christian literature. It acknowledges that all people are on a lifelong journey of faith expressed in many dimensions of life, for example, relationships, community life, the environment, religious beliefs and traditions, situations of human need and suffering, ethical and justice issues. It presents to students a Christian worldview and a pathway for making meaning in their lives.*

CSCF Curriculum Statements p. 5

- **What do you see as the possibilities and limitations of teaching Christian Studies in a Lutheran school?**



## Christian students in Lutheran schools

As Lutheran schools demonstrate increasing sensitivity to the multi-faith backgrounds of students in what ways could Christian students feel 'discriminated against'.

(Bartsch, M. *Why a Lutheran school?*, p 33)



Writers in religious education suggest that an option for nurturing the faith of Christian students may be the promotion of voluntary groups where students freely choose to attend and are able to interact with adult Christians.

- ***In what ways does your school provide for the nurturing of Christian students faith?***

## Worship

*While worship is crucial and central for Lutheran schools, worship has also become one of the most difficult areas for the schools to handle. Of particular concern is the issue that within the school community, there are students who, as believing Christians, are seen by Lutheran theology as belonging to the body of Christ (the church catholic) while other students do not. For the believing students, worship can 'complement the formal teaching of religion' and can give students 'experiences of prayer and liturgy which can help them to recover a sense of awe and belonging and to feel exuberance and enjoyment in the rituals and ceremonies of their faith' (Crawford and Rossiter 1989: 20). For the non-believing students, it remains an issue as to what level of participation is possible in worship and what forms of worship are culturally appropriate for members of the school community who are not yet committed to the Christian faith.*

(Bartsch, M. *Why a Lutheran school?*, pp 33,34)



- ***What are some of the highlights of worship in your school?***
- ***What are some of the challenges the school is grappling with?***

## The demand for quality education

In LEA documents about Lutheran schools 'quality education' features prominently. This can make Lutheran schools attractive to non-Lutheran parents.

- ***How can an emphasis on 'success' and 'excellence' be a strength and concern for Lutheran schools?***



## Church / school relationships

(a) The Church positively encourages Lutheran schools

The Church will:

- support where appropriate the orderly establishment and maintaining of Lutheran schools;
- assist in supply of pre-service and in-service theological resources and training for teachers and pastors at the school;
- assist schools to realise their mission to the Church, the whole Christian community and the wider world;
- positively encourage, pray for and care about the schools.

(b) The school cooperates with the Lutheran Church of Australia and its congregations

The school will:



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- work closely and in harmony with Lutheran parents, families and communities (such as Aboriginal communities) to whom the school is accountable;
- endeavour to employ qualified staff who are active members of the LCA or committed Christians willing to promote the Lutheran identity of the school, and model Christian behaviour;
- promote the graduation of students who will be Biblically and confessionally aware leaders in the Lutheran Church;
- make time and resources available for development of staff in professional, theological and spiritual areas;
- maintain a harmonious relationship with surrounding Lutheran parishes and with the wider state and national Lutheran Church;
- consult with surrounding Lutheran parishes and other agencies (e.g. Lutheran Youth, Tertiary Student Ministry) as to the most effective ways of working together for ministry and worship at the school, especially when a congregation worships on the school property;
- work, wherever possible and appropriate, with Lutheran Church agencies such as Lutheran Community Care and Australian Lutheran World Service.

TOPS Session 5, Core Content

- ***In what ways does your school demonstrate its relationship to the church?***

### People's perception of the teacher's role

*Concern has been expressed, also by some teachers themselves, about changes in the way teachers in Lutheran schools perceive their vocation. An important factor here has been the change during the past two or three decades as teachers in Lutheran schools have moved from salaries and conditions related to other 'Church Workers' in the Lutheran Church of Australia to conditions laid down in state awards. With increases in salary and with greater demand for teacher accountability, there has been a lamenting of a perceived lowering of the sense of 'ministry' in teachers of Lutheran schools. A tension seems to have developed between what might be termed 'piety' and 'professionalism'.*

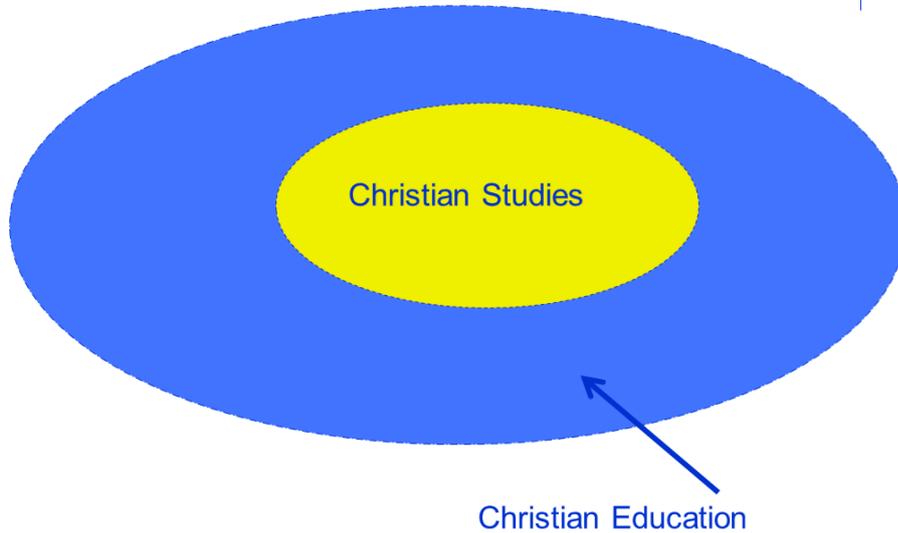
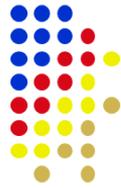


*Bartsch, M. Why a Lutheran school? p. 36*

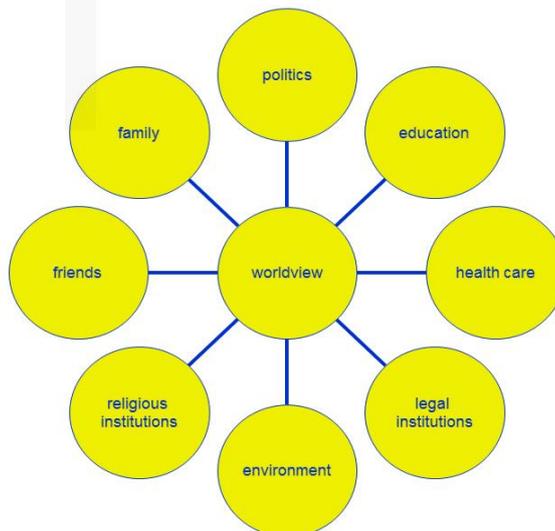
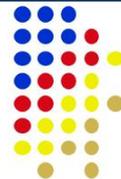
- ***What issues do you see arising from a perception that there has been a 'lowering of the sense of "ministry" in teachers in Lutheran schools'?***
- ***How can Lutheran schools nurture a sense of ministry within its teachers?***

## SUMMARISING DIAGRAMS

Lutheran Schools feature...



Lutheran Schools recognise the importance of world view



*Our worldview has a profound impact upon the values we adopt and our subsequent actions and behaviours. (Julie Mitchell, CCES 2004)*

# A framework for Lutheran schools

## ETHOS



## PARADIGMS

**We believe**

- the Bible is the supreme authority for Christian faith and life
- the Holy Spirit works through the teaching of God's word in our schools to lead people to know and trust in God as Creator, Redeemer, Sanctifier
- all people are sinful and saved by grace through faith in Christ
- because Christians live in grace, all they do is for God's glory not theirs
- each person is a unique creation of God and a person loved by God
- all useful knowledge and learning is God's gift to people for their wellbeing
- service to others through actions and relationships is a reflection of and response to God's love for all



**And because of this we value as core**

- the Bible as the authority informing what we do and teach
- the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of each person
- forgiveness, being forgiven and reconciliation
- that God, by grace shown through Jesus loves, accepts and values each person
- the uniqueness and worth of each person
- God's gifts of knowledge and learning
- a spirit of service reflecting God's action in our lives

Value-based learning is further developed by contextual values particular to individual school communities



**Therefore, in Lutheran schools we see**

- everything we are and do in relation to God
- each member of our school community as someone in relation to God

This understanding of the identity of each person before God motivates us to:

- develop the whole person
- strive for the best
- care for each person
- help each student grow in the assurance of their God-given worth and purpose
- accept the need of discipline for the well-being of the individual living in community
- reflect characteristics of God
- create learning contexts incorporating values that reflect God's relationship with God's world

**Lutheran schools aim to encourage and support students, informed and sustained by the Word of God, to develop their God-given talents so that they may shape and enrich their world**



Meet educational authorities' requirements and state / territory, federal requirements



## LIFELONG QUALITIES FOR LEARNERS

*As central to their mission and ministry, Lutheran schools seek to nurture **individuals**, who are aware of their humanity, open to the influence of the Holy Spirit, and growing in and living according to a cohesive worldview*

while

*Living in community and reflecting characteristics of God through core values, especially love, justice, compassion, forgiveness, service, humility, courage, hope, quality and appreciation*

and

**Contributing to communities by being**

- self-directed, insightful investigators and learners
- discerning, resourceful problem solvers and implementers
- adept, creative producers and contributors
- open, responsive communicators and facilitators
- principled, resilient leaders and collaborators
- caring, steadfast supporters and advocates

**Beliefs about learners**

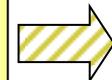
- All learners are valued for who they are and whose they are
- All learners need encouragement and deserve respect
- Learners learn in different ways and at different rates
- All learners have the ability to learn and learn best when
  - They experience success
  - They take responsibility for their own learning
  - They can work both independently and collaboratively
  - Subject matter is meaningful
  - High, explicit learning expectations are present
  - They are authentically assessed and appropriately challenged
- Learners need to learn how to learn and think
- Collaborative partnerships between parents / caregivers and schools support learners and learning

**Beliefs about learning**

- Learning goes beyond the academic: it includes the spiritual, physical, emotional and social and has a transforming role
- Learning has affective and volitional dimensions as well as cognitive
- Learning is lifelong
- Learning involves learners progressing through developmental cycles
- Learning is facilitated when individual needs of the student are met
- Learning occurs in a context and is driven by curiosity, need and inquiry
- Learning builds on previous knowledge, experiences and understanding

**Beliefs about learning communities**

- All people are learners
- Safe and supportive learning environments facilitate active learning
- Effective learning communities respect diversity and encourage reflective practice and productive feedback
- Learning communities are strengthened by having a shared vision and common core beliefs
- Learning communities reflect upon and respond to the world of today in ways that enable their members to face the future with confidence
- Learning cultures need to be intentionally developed



## SUMMARY STATEMENTS

### LEA Mission Statement

*The Lutheran school*

*The Lutheran Church of Australia has a variety of agencies through which it carries out its ministry and mission to the people of Australia and New Zealand.*

*One such agency is the Lutheran school.*

*The church, through its congregations and districts, owns and operates kindergartens, primary schools, and secondary schools. It does this in order to make available to its members and to others in the community a formal education in which the gospel of Jesus Christ informs all learning and teaching, all human relationships, and all activities in the school.*

*Thus through its schools the church deliberately and intentionally bears Christian witness to students, parents, teachers, friends and all who make up the world of the school.*

*Specifically, through its schools the church offers a program of Christian education which*

- *serves students, parents, the church, the community, and the government, by providing a quality education for the whole person*
- *strives for excellence in the development and creative use by all students of their God-given gifts*
- *equips students for a life of service to God in the church and the community*
- *provides an alternative to a secular, humanistic philosophy and practice of education*
- *includes, as a core part of the program, a Christian Studies curriculum which has been developed deliberately and consciously from the perspective of what the Lutheran church believes and teaches*
- *involves the school community in regular Christian worship.*

*The Lutheran school is committed to serving its students by providing quality education which meets the requirements of the state. Such quality education also responds to the needs of students and develops their God-given abilities as fully as possible within the resource limits of the school community.*

Let me declare right up front that Lutheran education is as much about the 'who' as it is about the 'what'. Tom Christenson, professor of philosophy at Capital University, Columbus Ohio talks about this, and so does our *Framework for Lutheran education* first published in 2002: education is not just about the teaching of a what (some particular subject or another) it is also, for us about the growing of a who. Education is about the coming to be of person, in the process of them learning particular skills or knowledge.

Put another way, if we do not know where we are going, then it doesn't matter which way we go – to somewhat misquote Lewis Carroll's *Alice and the Cat*. Lutheran education knows where it is going, it has a road map; we have a vision for learners and learning informed by our theology. We have been bold and put into words, however imperfect, our ethos. We have taken that ethos and put into more words what that means for learners, for learning, for learning communities. We have even been bold enough to try and put words to our vision for learners. Just what is it that they might be becoming as a consequence of being in one of our schools? To quote Tom Christenson, "we have images of the human that are deep and multidimensional, realistic and viable". Those images shape our vision, and they shape how we do education.

Sue Kloeden, *Education without borders*

*I believe that the story that informs our understanding of what it means to be human is one of the most important things about the educating we do. It's more important than teaching a particular language or a particular set of historical or scientific facts, or a particular theory, it's even more important than reading this or that particular author. It's more important because it influences the decisions we make about all these other things, about why we do them and how we do them. But it's also more important because it shapes who we become, how we understand ourselves, and what we will do (and not do) with the rest of the education we receive.*

Tom Christenson, *SchoolLink July 2006*



- What do these statements suggest about the purpose of a Lutheran school?
- The mission of our schools in the comments

## SUMMARY BIBLE WORDS

### The Way, the Truth, and the Life

Lord Jesus Christ,  
you have said that you are the Way,  
the Truth and the Life:  
do not let us at any time stray from you, for you are our Way;  
or ever distrust your promises,  
for you are our Truth ;  
or ever rest in anything other than you, for you are our Life.  
Lord Jesus,  
you have taught us  
what to believe,  
what to do,  
what to hope for,  
and in whom to take our rest. Amen.

Erasmus, 1466-1536

*'I am the way, the truth, and the life', Jesus answered. 'Without me, no one can go to the Father.'*

[John 14:6]

*Teach me your ways, O Lord;  
Make them known to me.  
Teach me to live according to your truth, for you  
are my God, who saves me.  
I will always trust in you.*

Psalm 25: 4,5 (GNB)



## READING 1

### The spirituality of ordinary life

There is another place where God is hidden: in everyday life. The ordinary routine of making a living, going shopping, being a good citizen, and spending time with one's family, are spheres in which God is at work, through human means. Luther described the various occupations – parenthood, farming, labourers, soldiers, judges, retailers, and the like – as all being “masks of God”.

Luther's doctrine of “vocation” may be one of his most original contributions to understanding the spiritual life. If he is critical of mystical ascents to the divine, insisting instead that God descends to the sinner in the means of grace, Luther goes on to lay the groundwork for what might be called a mysticism of ordinary life. If he denies that salvation is a result of our good works, insisting that forgiveness is a free gift, Luther's doctrine of vocation gives good works a very different spiritual significance. If he sometimes minimizes human beings as radically sinful and limited, in his doctrine of vocation, he exalts human beings to a startling degree. In the doctrine of vocation, spirituality is brought down to earth to transfigure our practical, everyday life.

Today, more than in Luther's time, we define ourselves by our work. Our busy schedules, our multiple commitments, the ways we are pulled in so many directions at once, often leave us exhausted. It is not always clear if our priorities are right, or if any of it is worthwhile. Work often seems detrimental to the spiritual life, involving moral compromises, “worldly” priorities, and neglect of our families. The pressures of work, including when we fail or are not as successful as we want to be, also can be paralyzing. And yet, work, of one kind or another, remains at the centre of our lives, the locus of our ambitions and accomplishments.

“What are you going to be when you grow up?” we ask even young children, and we do not have in mind something of the order of “a nice person” or “someone who enjoys nature” or “a person with many hobbies.” We have in mind a job. “I am a teacher,” we say, or “a machinist” or “an executive assistant.” Our very being is tied up in our job description.

To be sure, this conflating of our very selves with our work can be a perverse confusion. We can use our work as a pretext for neglecting what are perhaps more important offices we also hold, such as “I am a spouse” or “I am a parent” or “I am a citizen.” Those who do not get paid for what they do, but who nevertheless do priceless – such as housewives and full-time parents – are made to feel out of sync, as are retired people. Work becomes a mad status game, as we measure one job against another, and value people based on the prestige of their jobs. Nevertheless, we cannot help making work – of some kind – a benchmark of who we are.

In the meantime, in our, as we say, workaday world, we are preoccupied by other issues, by questions about how to have a good family and how we should raise our children. We are caught up in economic issues, needing more money and spending it on things we need and like. We are affected by politics, by the responsibilities and frustrations of citizenship, by governmental policies and the legal system.

All of these arenas – which consume most of life – are illuminated and given significance and direction when they are seen in terms of the doctrine of vocation.

### Masks of God

God is sovereign over every aspect of His creation. He did not just create the universe in one big bang, then let it run on its own. He

## Pathways Vocational – Vocation

keeps it in existence, “sustaining all things through his powerful word” (Hebrews 1:3). God governs and is intimately involved in everything that He has made, that is, everything that exists. This sovereignty includes the laws of physics and the motions of galaxies, the affairs of nations and the fall of a sparrow (Matthew 10:29), and His providence extends over nonbelievers no less than believers.

Lutheran theology speaks of two kingdoms, that God rules both the spiritual and the earthly realm, though in different ways. This notion will be discussed in the next chapter, but for now it is important to remember that God is the king of them both. In both His spiritual and His earthly kingdoms, God is active, and He works through means. In the spiritual realm, He works, as we have seen, through the Word and the Sacraments. In the earthly realm, He rules through vocation.

In the Lord’s Prayer, we ask that God give us our daily bread, which He does. He does so, not directly as with the manna to the Israelites, but through the work of farmers, truck drivers, bakers, retailers, and many more. In fact, He gives us our daily bread through the functioning of the whole accompanying economic system – employers and employees, banks and investors, the transportation infrastructure and technological means of production – each part of which is interdependent and necessary, if we are going to eat. Each part of this economic food chain is a vocation, through which God works to distribute His gifts.

God heals the sick. While He can and sometimes does do so directly, in a spectacular unmediated miracle, in the normal course of things God heals through the work of doctors, nurses, and other medical vocations. God protects us from evil. This He does by means of the vocation of police officers, attorneys, judges – also through the military vocations. God teaches through teachers, orders society through

governments, proclaims the Gospel through pastors.

Luther pointed out that God could have decided to populate the earth by creating each individual and each generation separately, from the dust. Instead, He invented families. God ordained that new life come into the world – and be cared for and raised into adulthood – through the work of a man and a woman who come together into a family. Husband, wife, father, mother are vocations through which God extends His creation and exercises His love.<sup>1</sup>

All of this simply demonstrates that, in His earthly kingdom, just as in His spiritual kingdom, God bestows His gifts through means. God ordained that human beings be bound together in love, in relationships and communities existing in a state of interdependence. In this context, God is providentially at work caring for His people, each of whom contributes according to his or her God-given talents, gifts, opportunities, and stations. Each thereby becomes what Luther terms a “mask of God”:

*All our work in the field, in the garden, in the city, in the home, in struggle, in government – to what does it amount before God except child’s play, by means of which God is pleased to give his gifts in the field, at home, and everywhere? These are the masks of our Lord God, behind which he wants to be hidden and to do all things.*<sup>2</sup>

God, who pours out His generosity on the just and the unjust, believer and unbeliever alike, hides Himself in the ordinary social functions and stations of life, even the most humble. To use another of Luther’s examples, God himself is milking the cows through the vocation of the milkmaid.<sup>3</sup>

All of the vocations are thus channels of God’s love. Gustaf Wingren, the Swedish theologian who authored the classic book on the subject, summarizes the point:

*In his vocation man does works which effect the well-being of others; for so God has made*

## Pathways Vocational – Vocation

*all offices. Through this work in man's offices, God's creative work goes forward, and that creative work is love, a profusion of good gifts. With persons as his "hands" or "co-workers," God gives his gifts through the earthly vocations, towards man's life on earth (food through farmers, fishermen and hunters; external peace through princes, judges, and orderly powers; knowledge and education through teachers and parents, etc., etc.). Through the preacher's vocation, God gives the forgiveness of sins. Thus love comes from God, flowing down to human beings on earth through all vocations, through both spiritual and earthly governments. Thus, God is graciously at work, caring for the human race through the work of other human beings. Behind the care we have received from our parents, the education we received from our teachers, the benefits we receive from our spouse, our employers, and our government lurks God Himself, bestowing His blessings.*

The picture is of a vast, complex network of human beings with different talents and abilities. Each serves the other. Each is served by others. We Americans have an ideal of self-sufficiency and often dream of being able to grow our own food, build our own homes, and live independently of other people. But our proper human condition, once again, is dependence. Because of the centrality of love, we are to depend on other human beings and, ultimately and through them, on God. Conversely (and eliminating the welfare syndrome), other people are to depend on us. We are to work for the good of other people. In God's earthly kingdom, we are to receive His blessings from other

people in their vocations, and they, in turn, are to be blessed through us.

Before I became a Lutheran and before I studied the doctrine of vocation, I had the bad habit of always trying to do home repairs on my own, without having the remotest ability to do so. The result was always frustration, wasted time, and bungled jobs, plus higher repair bills than they would normally have been. Attempts to fix an electrical outlet would only result in a hole in the wall and almost getting myself killed. I now realize my problem: I have no vocation for that sort of thing.

Today I joyfully draw on the vocation of plumbers, electricians, and carpenters – also auto mechanics, barbers, cooks, bankers, and artists. Individuals who do have do-it-yourself talents should by all means use them; having such diverse abilities is itself a gift from God, a collection of callings. But the point is, in our earthly lives, we do not have to do everything. Earthly life – and this is operative with non-believers no less than believers – consists of giving and receiving, serving and being served, in a network of economic and social and personal interdependence.

The task of serving as a mask of God is a daunting one, defining as it does the scope and nature of Christian service. "God bestows all that is good on us", says Luther, "but.... You must work and lend yourself as a means and a mask to God."

Veith, G. *The spirituality of the cross*, pp 71-77

### **Questions to consider in response to your reading:**

- *What did this make you think about?*
- *What questions does this make you want to ask?*
- *What callings do you believe you have in your life?*
- *Reflect on your metaphor shared earlier... does this reading lead you to modify it in any way?*
- *How does this understanding of vocation challenge me? Affirm me?*

## READING 2

### Vocation

Christenson, T. *The gift and task of Lutheran higher education*, pp 49-50

It should be obvious that Luther's understanding of grace and freedom will have implications for his understanding of work. Before Luther, the word vocation (Latin: *vocatio* and German: *Beruf*) had been applied only to people who had a "religious vocation," people called to be priests or monks or nuns. Luther challenged that usage and the view of human work it presupposed, that some are doing God's work but others are not. Luther argued that the station of every Christian was a calling from God to serve the needs of our neighbour wherever we are as we are able. It isn't that we need to serve God separately from our other work. We serve God through our service to each other. Luther used the word vocation, therefore, to apply to the work and duties of every person. The fish-pickler, the shoemaker, the schoolteacher, the mayor, the street cleaner, the prince, the pastor, the parent, even the student – each of these has a work and a responsibility given to her or him by virtue of this station. I said "even the student" because we often suppose that students are preparing for a vocation but we seldom think that they already have one. Yet that is exactly what Luther asserts. God calls each student to be a good student and to serve, by being so, the school, the community of learners, the development of one's gifts, and eventually the wider world.

Darrell Jodock offers the following explanatory expansion of vocation:

I mean by vocation an over-arching self-understanding which (a) sees oneself not as an isolated unit but "nested" into a larger community and (b) gives ethical priority to those behaviours that will benefit the community.

As a consequence vocation has to do not only with what it is we do, but how we do it,

and with what understanding we do it. Each of these dimensions has the power to change the others. We may be led to do a different thing, or to do things differently, when we re-understand what we are doing as a divine calling. Similarly our performance of an ordinary task can lead to a new understanding of what needs to be done, as well as why we are called to do it.

In some of Luther's sermons he becomes quite upset by the old habits of his parishioners. They still think that they ought to be doing something peculiarly religious, perhaps by working at the church, by going on a pilgrimage, or doing some penitential works. Luther tells them to return to their workaday duties. Neither they nor God nor their neighbour will be served by their pious deeds. But probably there is someone who needs shoes, or needs bread, or needs legal counsel. "Return to your work," Luther says, "that is what God calls you to do."

In the section on freedom we noted that God's grace leaves us free to focus on the task at hand. We do not have to keep our eye on some extraneous transcendent punishment/reward system. So we are left to care for, and focus on, and take an intense interest in those things that are right in front of us. The service of God is present, just as in a sacrament, in the concrete and particular. "Purity of heart is to will one thing," Kierkegaard wrote as the title of one of his works. We needn't keep one eye on God while working in the world; we can keep both eyes on the needs of our students, our children, our clients, on the tasks of farming, planning boards, or cleaning up the kitchen. We serve God inasmuch as we serve these things. Vocation does not require double vision nor double-mindedness.

## READING 3

### Vocational Thinking

A Lutheran understanding of vocation not only orients us to our role and work within the school. It provides a lens through which we can view many aspects of school life.

#### Vocational thinking is countercultural

The message today insists that happiness and contentment in life can be found in gratifying our own desires and seeing to our own needs. Vocational thinking challenges such thinking.

*Lutheran schools also have to deal with the challenge in contemporary educational thinking which links education closely with preparation for the work place but with emphasis strongly on individual benefit rather than service to society.*

(Bartsch, M. *Why a Lutheran school?* p 124)

*The purpose of one's vocation, whatever it might be, is serving others.*

Veith, G. *The spirituality of the cross*, p. 77

#### Vocational thinking provides direction for learning

*Inquiry, knowing and learning continually shaped by the question, "How does this serve the needs of the world?" will be appreciatively different from knowing not accompanied by such a question.*

Christenson, T. *The gift and task of Lutheran higher education*, pp. 126, 127

*Learning in a Lutheran setting should always have this practical piece, the place where theory is connected to practice, the place where classroom work is connected to the problems of real people in a real place.*

Christenson, T. *The gift and task of Lutheran higher education*, p. 142

*Learning shaped by the idea of vocation will be closely connected to service. Theory must be critiqued by a doing that serves.*

Christenson, T. *The gift and task of Lutheran higher education*, p. 129

Christenson suggests that the concept of vocation will help us reconnect the idea of knowledge and academic learning to social usefulness. He suggests we continually ask, as part of our efforts at knowing, *How is this related to the deep needs of the world?*

Christenson, T. *The gift and task of Lutheran higher education*, p. 128

#### Vocational thinking guides the life of the community

Vocational thinking values difference and the contribution of all.

*Vocation means that those who are closest at hand, family and fellow-workers, are given by God: it is one's neighbor whom one is to love. Therein vocation points toward a world which is not the same for all people. The same course does not fit all circumstances. Each of the social factors arising through the vocational actions of different people has its own character; and the life of society in this way develops in rich variety . . . Each is to do his own work, without eyeing others or trying to copy them.*

Wingren, G. *Luther on vocation*, p. 172)

*Affirmation of vocation makes us suspicious of hierarchy and rank, even while we are respectful of positions and responsibilities. Teachers may be respected for what they know, and do, and can communicate, but this does not imply that they are higher than their students or the other persons who keep the university running. We are tempted to be too impressed by what degrees, ranks,*

## Pathways Vocational – Vocation

*and specialties mean. We should be suspicious of such things. They may distinguish something useful, but they also may be ways of inflating ourselves and demeaning others.*

Christenson, T. *The gift and task of Lutheran higher education*, pp. 128-129

### Vocational thinking impacts on the way we view students

*Lutheran theology teaches that both the church and the world are to be served through God-given abilities which are developed through education. Lutheran schools need to prepare all children, girls and boys, the rich and the poor, the intellectually gifted and the intellectually challenged for that service. All can contribute to society because, according to the Lutheran understanding of vocation, all have a place in that society and a vocation to fulfil. Luther remarked (LW 46:231): 'For a good building we need not only hewn facings but also backing stones.'*

Bartsch, M. *Why a Lutheran school?* p. 124

### Vocational thinking requires critical reflection

*Another facet of the affirmation of vocation is the need to critique our professions and the institutions that house and structure them. We are called, as Luther put it, "to work in the service of our neighbor to the greater glory of God." But it should be quite obvious that our work and our professions do not always do that. How often does the legal profession serve the needs of humans who most stand in need of the protection of law and justice? Instead it seems to me that it serves the ends of litigation, making us more dependent on attorneys and more cynical about the whole business. To what degree does the medical profession well serve the ends of health and the needs of those who need health care the most? To what degree do our institutions of education serve the learning needs of people? Here again we have an institution that tends to make people more dependent on the system and less enabled to learn on their own. There is more than one way a person may be learning-disabled. One may be disabled from learning, but one may also be disabled by learning. We should carefully examine the way we do our work, asking whether it really serves the deep needs of the neighbour or whether it is structured to advance some other agenda.*

Christenson, T. *The gift and task of Lutheran higher education*, p.129

Discuss:

- **Which area/s do you think need/s the greatest prominence in a Lutheran school? Why?**

To show the way a Lutheran understanding of vocation impacts on the work of a teacher in a Lutheran school develop:

- a mind map
- a diagram
- a brochure for promoting teaching in a Lutheran school to undergraduates.

## SUMMARY STATEMENTS

### A Lutheran understanding of vocation

A Lutheran understanding of vocation is much broader than just our occupation. It relates to our understanding of the way God continues to care for and preserve creation. Lutherans believe that God uses people, whether they recognise it or not, to fulfil his purposes in creation.

Vocation comes from the Latin word meaning 'call'. It is the 'calling' a person has. Christians believe vocation has a biblical meaning. It refers to the 'call' to serve Christ in all that a person does whether employed or not, paid or not. Most people are seen to have multiple 'callings', for example to be a husband, father, teacher and voluntary youth leader, for Christ.

God uses the good works that teachers and indeed all people do as part of their calling for the benefit of others. Through these works God continues his general care of the world since: *In this context God is providentially at work caring for His people, each of whom contributes according to his or her God-given talents, gifts, opportunities, and stations. Each thereby becomes what Luther terms a 'mask of God' . . .*

Veith, G. *The spirituality of the cross*, p. 74

According to the teaching of vocation we may view our work in a Lutheran school as a calling to serve Christ. This divine calling then provides a sense of value and responsibility. It affirms teachers and other staff in their calling, places a great value on what they do and how they do it. They will seek God's wisdom and guidance. God will be a resource for peace and power in their work.

All teachers and staff who serve in Lutheran schools are encouraged to be professional and conscientious, seeking a high standard of performance to the best of their ability, as they use the gifts that God has given them in service of others. All teaching, including that in secular schools, can be seen as a ministry for God as it is a part of the general care that God provides for creation.

A final word on vocation”

*This means that vocation is played out not just in extraordinary acts – the great things we will do for the Lord, the great success we envision in our careers someday – but in the realm of the ordinary. Whatever we face in the often humdrum present – washing the dishes, buying groceries, going to work, driving the kids somewhere, hanging out with friends – this is the realm into which we have been called and in which our faith bears fruit in love. We are to love our neighbours – that is, the people who are actually around us, as opposed to the abstract humanity of the theorists. These neighbours constitute the relationships that we are in right now, and our vocation is for God to serve them through us.*

(Veith, G. *God at work* p 59)

## SUMMARY DIAGRAM

What is the 'shape' or 'form' of your vocation right now?

Respond through

- Journaling or drawing in this space
- finding a partner to share your words and / or “shapes”

## SUMMARISING STATEMENTS

**The following excerpts explore a Christian understanding of how people are uniquely gifted for service of God and others.**

'What do you want to be?' is indeed a good question. But what you are in many ways is a given. Even your wants – your desires, your dreams, your choices – are a function of who you are.

That is to say, God – making use of your family and your culture – created you as you are. The doctrine of vocation has to do with the mystery of individuality, how God creates each human being to be different from all of the rest and gives each a unique calling in every stage of life. Thus you have particular talents, which you are to understand are his gifts. You have a particular personality, with interests, likes and dislikes that not everyone shares. Such is the plenitude of God's creation that no two people – or snowflakes or leaves or anything God has made – are exactly alike. Vocations are likewise unique, with no two people taking up exactly the same space in the family, the nation, the church, or the workplace. Finding your vocation, then has to do, in part with finding your God-given talents (what you can do) and your God-given personality (what fits the person you are) . . .

Vocation is, in part, a function of the particular gifts God has given us; but we cannot know our vocation purely by looking inside ourselves. Our choices are constrained by givens that are outside our control . . . Vocation comes from the outside, having to do with opportunities and circumstances, doors opening and slamming in our face. Since God works through means, He often extends His call through other people, by means of their vocations.

Veith, G. *God at work*, pp 52-55

. . . you are also distinctive. You have your own identity which sets you apart. You are called where you are. Just as you don't have to seek God out – God seeks and finds you – so you don't have to go looking for your calling or your vocation. On the contrary, you are called to live a distinctive life of faith which evidences itself in love for your neighbour, precisely in your own particular social and historical matrix.

Strelan, J. *Some earthly good*, p 6

In God's design, each person is to love his or her neighbours and to serve them with the gifts appropriate to each vocation. This means that I serve you with my talents, and you serve me with your talents. The result is a divine division of labour in which everyone is constantly giving and receiving in a vast interchange, a unity of diverse people in a social order whose substance and energy is love.

Veith, G. *God at work*, p 40

## REFLECTIVE BIBLE WORDS

### Psalm 139

#### *A David Psalm*

<sup>1-6</sup> GOD, investigate my life; get all the facts firsthand.  
I'm an open book to you;  
even from a distance, you know what I'm thinking.  
You know when I leave and when I get back;  
I'm never out of your sight.  
You know everything I'm going to say  
before I start the first sentence.  
I look behind me and you're there,  
then up ahead and you're there, too—  
your reassuring presence, coming and going.  
This is too much, too wonderful—  
I can't take it all in!

<sup>7-12</sup> Is there anyplace I can go to avoid your Spirit?  
to be out of your sight?  
If I climb to the sky, you're there!  
If I go underground, you're there!  
If I flew on morning's wings  
to the far western horizon,  
You'd find me in a minute—  
you're already there waiting!  
Then I said to myself, "Oh, he even sees me in the dark!  
At night I'm immersed in the light!"  
It's a fact: darkness isn't dark to you;  
night and day, darkness and light, they're all the same to you.

<sup>13-16</sup> Oh yes, you shaped me first inside, then out;  
you formed me in my mother's womb.  
I thank you, High God—you're breathtaking!  
Body and soul, I am marvelously made!  
I worship in adoration—what a creation!  
You know me inside and out,  
you know every bone in my body;  
You know exactly how I was made, bit by bit,  
how I was sculpted from nothing into something.  
Like an open book, you watched me grow from  
conception to birth;  
all the stages of my life were spread out before you,  
The days of my life all prepared  
before I'd even lived one day.

<sup>17-22</sup> Your thoughts—how rare, how beautiful!  
God, I'll never comprehend them!  
I couldn't even begin to count them—  
any more than I could count the sand of the sea.  
Oh, let me rise in the morning and live always with

you!  
And please, God, do away with wickedness for good!  
And you murderers—out of here!—  
all the men and women who belittle you, God,  
infatuated with cheap god-imitations.  
See how I hate those who hate you, God,  
see how I loathe all this godless arrogance;  
I hate it with pure, unadulterated hatred.  
Your enemies are my enemies!

<sup>23-24</sup> Investigate my life, O God,  
find out everything about me;  
Cross-examine and test me,  
get a clear picture of what I'm about;  
See for yourself whether I've done anything wrong -  
then guide me on the road to eternal life.



Trials in vocation drives us to prayer . . .

*Prayer, from our perspective, brings God into our vocation. We commit what we do to God, surrendering to His will and trusting His providence. To cite another remarkable quotation from Wingren, 'Prayer is the door through which God, Creator and Lord, enters creatively into home, community, and labour.'*

Veith, G. *Spirituality of the cross*, p. 88

## My journey to this place and time...

Reflect on your journey through a final response to these questions:

1. Why am I here?
2. How can I contribute to the mission of the Lutheran Education where I work?
3. Where to from here?

### Called

Christians believe that God calls them into a relationship and that they find their identity through this relationship with God. As John Strelan states in his online book, *Some earthly good*,

(<http://www.lca.org.au/prayer/ofSomeEarthlyGood.cfm>) ;

*'People become who they are before God by means of what the Bible calls God's 'call'.*

Throughout the Bible God calls men and women (Abram, Moses, Gideon, David, Mary, Paul).

God's call continues today as John goes on to say:

*The story continues down through the ages.  
With you and me it's the same story: nobodies become somebodies, enemies of God become friends, 'not my people' become my people, those with no future are given a future, futility is turned to purpose and destiny.  
The call of God creates you to be who you are: a child of God. Of that you can be certain.*

[Strelan, J. *Some earthly good*, p 5]

So what is my vocation? How do I find one? Or, as the self help books put it, how do I find the vocation that is right for me?

*The Christian doctrine of vocation approaches these issues in a completely different way. Instead of 'what job shall I choose?' the question becomes 'what is God calling me to do? Our vocation is not something we choose for ourselves. It is something to which we are called . . . Our vocation is not one single occupation. As has been said, we have callings in different realms – the workplace, yes, but also the family, the society, and the church.*

[Veith, G. *God at work*, p 47]

### Prayer of St Francis

#### Verse 1

Make me a channel of Your peace.  
Where there is hatred, let me bring  
Your love.

Where there is injury, Your pardon,  
LORD,

And where there's doubt, true faith in  
You.

#### Verse 2

Make me a channel of Your peace.  
Where there's despair in life, let me  
bring hope.

Where there is darkness only light,  
And where there's sadness ever joy.

#### Refrain

Oh Master, grant that I may never seek  
So much to be consoled as to console.

To be understood as to understand,  
To be loved as to love with all my soul.

#### Verse 3

Make me a channel of Your peace.  
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;  
In giving of ourselves that we receive,  
And in dying that we're born to eternal  
life.

**Sebastian Temple**

### Reflection:

- **What has brought you to our school?**
- **How does the Christian notion of a 'call' resonate with you?**

## SUMMARISING STATEMENTS

### What do you want to be? What are my gifts?

The following excerpts explore a Christian understanding of how people are uniquely gifted for service of God and others.

'What do you want to be? Is indeed a good question. But what you are in many ways is a given. Even your wants – your desires, your dreams, your choices – are a function of who you are.

That is to say, God – making use of your family and your culture – created you as you are. The doctrine of vocation has to do with the mystery of individuality, how God creates each human being to be different from all of the rest and gives each a unique calling in every stage of life. Thus you have particular talents, which you are to understand are his gifts. You have a particular personality, with interests, likes and dislikes that not everyone shares. Such is the plenitude of God's creation that no two people – or snowflakes or leaves or anything God has made – are exactly alike. Vocations are likewise unique, with no two people taking up exactly the same space in the family, the nation, the church, or the workplace. Finding your vocation, then has to do, in part with finding your God-given talents (what you can do) and your God-given personality (what fits the person you are) . . .

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Veith, G. *God at work*, pp 52-55

. . . you are also distinctive. You have your own identity which sets you apart. You are called where you are. Just as you don't have to seek God out – God seeks and finds you – so you don't have to go looking for your calling or your vocation. On the contrary, you are called to live a distinctive life of faith which evidences itself in love for your neighbour, precisely in your own particular social and historical matrix.

Strelan, J. *Some earthly good*, p 6

In God's design, each person is to love his or her neighbours and to serve them with the gifts appropriate to each vocation. This means that I serve you with my talents, and you serve me with your talents. The result is a divine division of labour in which everyone is constantly giving and receiving in a vast interchange, a unity of diverse people in a social order whose substance and energy is love.

[Veith, G. *God at work*, p 40]

Discussion:

- ***In what ways do you find this information helpful / challenging / alarming / refreshing?***
- ***How does this make you feel about your gifts and abilities?***
- ***In what ways is this information helpful for you as you work in your school?***

## Pathways Vocational – Working in a Lutheran School

Discuss with other participants:

- ***What did you find interesting about the process of completing the questionnaire?***
- ***What was interesting in their discussion with a school leader about their gifts?***
- ***How does having a sense of your gifts and abilities make you feel about yourself and your work in the school?***
- ***What aspects of your work as a teacher in a Lutheran school give you opportunity to utilise your gifts?***

## Spiritual gifts

**Administration:** the gift that enables me to formulate, direct, and carry out plans necessary to fulfill a purpose. *Biblical References: I Corinthians 12:28, Acts 14:23.*

**Artistry:** the gift that gives me the skill of creating artistic expressions that produce a spiritual response of strength and inspiration. *Biblical References: Exodus 31:1-11, Psalm 149:3a.*

**Discernment:** the gift that motivates me to seek God's will and purpose and apply that understanding to individual and congregational situations. *Biblical References: John 16:6-15, Romans 9:1, I Corinthians 2:9-16.*

**Evangelism:** the gift that moves me to share the Christian message with others. *Biblical References: Matthew 28:16-20, Ephesians 4:11-16, Acts 2:36-40.*

**Exhortation:** the gift that moves me to reach out with Christian love and presence to people in personal conflict or facing a spiritual void. *Biblical References: John 14:1, II Timothy 1:16-18, III John 5-8.*

**Faith:** the gift that gives me the eyes to see the Spirit at work and the ability to trust the Spirit's leading without indication of where it all might lead. *Biblical References: Genesis 12:1-4a, Mark 5:25-34, I Thessalonians 1:8-10.*

**Giving:** the gift that enables me to recognize God's blessings and to respond to those blessings by generously and sacrificially giving of one's resources (time, talent, and treasure). *Biblical References: II Corinthians 9:6-15, Luke 21:1-4.*

**Hospitality:** the gift that causes me to joyfully welcome and receive guests and those in need of food and lodging. *Biblical References: Romans 12:13, Romans 16:23a, Luke 10:38.*

**Intercession:** the gift that enables me to pray with the certainty that prayer is heard and when requests are made, answers will come. *Biblical References: Matthew 6:6-15, Luke 11:1-10, Ephesians 6:18.*

**Knowledge:** the gift that drives a person to learn, analyze and uncover new insights with regard to the Bible and faith. *Biblical References: I Corinthians 12:8; I Corinthians 14:6, Romans 12:2.*

**Leadership:** the gift that gives me the confidence to step forward, give direction and provide motivation to fulfill a dream or complete a task. *Biblical References: Romans 12:8, John 21:15-17, II Timothy 4:1-5.*

### Consider also, your gifts in terms of

- skills (at work, at home, etc)
- life experiences (and wisdom!)
- your personality type
- interests
- ways you relate to others
- what others appreciate about you

**Mercy:** the gift that motivates me to feel deeply for those in physical, spiritual, or emotional need and then act to meet that need. *Biblical References: Luke 7:12-15, Luke 10:30-37, Matthew 25:34-36.*

**Music-Vocal:** the gift that gives me the capability and opportunity to present personal witness and inspiration to others through singing. *Biblical References: Psalm 96:1-9, Psalm 100:1-2, Psalm 149:1-2.*

**Music-Instrumental:** the gift that inspires me to express personal faith and provide inspiration and comfort through the playing of a musical instrument. *Biblical References: Psalm 33:1-5, Psalm 150, I Samuel 16:14-23.*

**Pastoring (Shepherding):** the gift that gives me the confidence, capability and compassion to provide spiritual leadership and direction for individuals or groups of believers. *Biblical References: I Timothy 4:12-16, I Timothy 3:1-13, II Timothy 4:1-2.*

**Service (Helps):** the gift that enables me to work gladly behind the scenes in order that God's work is fulfilled. *Biblical References: Luke 23:50-54, Romans 16:1-16, Philippians 2:19-23.*

**Skilled Craft:** the gift that enables me to create, build, maintain or repair items used within the church. *Biblical References: Exodus 30:1-6, Exodus 31:3-5, Ezekiel 27:4-11.*

**Teaching:** the gift that enables me to communicate a personal understanding of the Bible and faith in such a way that it becomes clear and understood by others. *Biblical References: I Corinthians 12:28, Matthew 5:1-12, Acts 18:24-48.*

**Wisdom:** the gift that allows me to sort through opinions, facts and thoughts in order to determine what solution would be best for the individual believer or the community of believers. *Biblical References: I Corinthians 2:6-13, James 3:13-18, II Chronicles 1:7-11.*

**Writing:** the gift that gives me the ability to express truth in a written form; a form that can edify, instruct and strengthen the community of believers. *Biblical References: I John 2:1-6, 12-14, I Timothy 3:14-15, Jude 3.*

## SUMMARY BIBLE WORDS

### *Prayer or Reflection*

*May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.*

*Romans 15:13*

*And I pray that Christ will make his home in your hearts through faith. I pray that you may have your roots and foundation in love, so that you, together with all God's people, may have the power to understand how broad and long, how high and deep, is Christ's love. Yes may you come to know his love – although it can never be fully known – and so be completely filled with the very nature of God. To him who by means of his power working in us is able to do so much more than we can ever ask for, or even think of: to God be the glory...*

*Ephesians 3:17-20*

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