



Religious Education:

the Hong Kong experience.....



Overview

- **Hong Kong, HKIS (then and now)**
- **Christians in education - Mission, Service and Justice**
- **Models of Religious Education**
- **Biblical paradigm 1 - traditional**
- **The LCA and schools – present context**
- **Biblical paradigm 2 - alternative**
- **Implications**
- **Models of RE – a comparison**
- **The HKIS experience**
- **Reframing the Vision**



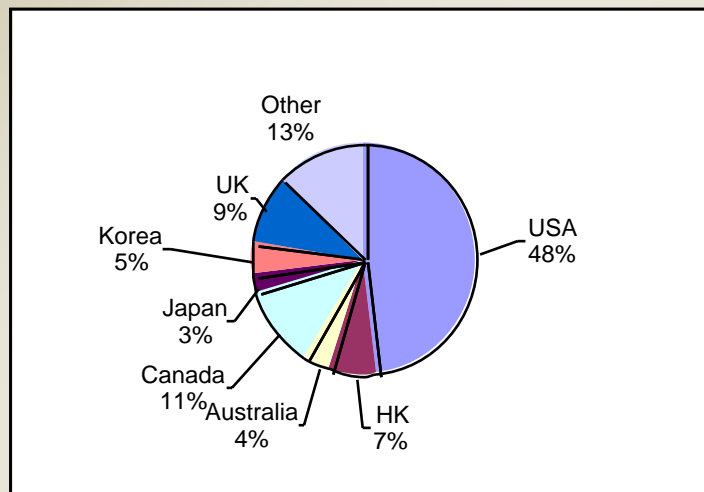
Hong Kong International School: then and now

- Set up in 1966 - at Repulse Bay
- To serve the American Business community - prepare students for US Colleges and Universities
- Tai Tam - 1991
- education for 'the whole child; body, mind and spirit'
- Former LCA approached for assistance - referred to LC-MS
- 'Church of All Nations' Congregation (LC-MS)
- 2600 students & 240 teaching staff
- 4 campuses
- wide variety of differing religious traditions:



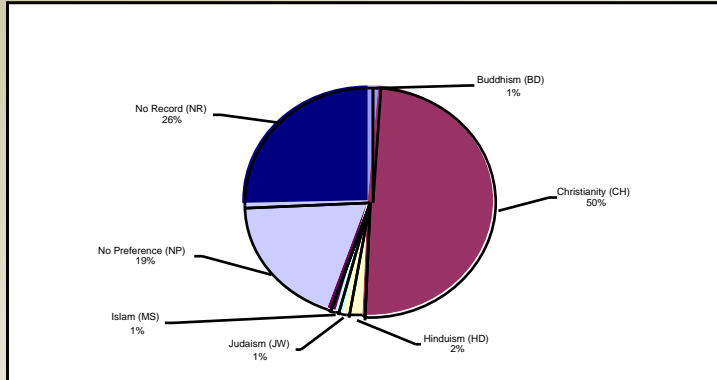
Demographics

Citizenship by country. Source: HKIS Admissions





HKIS Student Religious Identity



Christianity 50%
 Judais m 1%
 Hinduism 2%
 Islam 1%
 Buddhism 1%
 No preference 19%
 No record 26%

Source: HKIS Admissions

Sample: All Enrolled Students 04/05



Why does a Church 'do Education'?

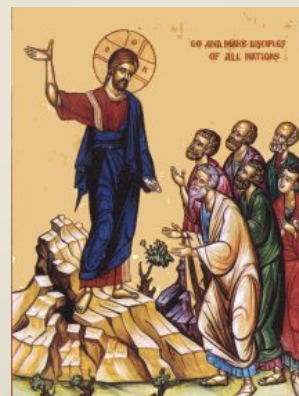
Reason 1: Mission Great Commission.

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.

Matthew 28

Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you."

John 20



Jesus sends the disciples



Why does a Church 'do Education'?

Reason 2: Nurture

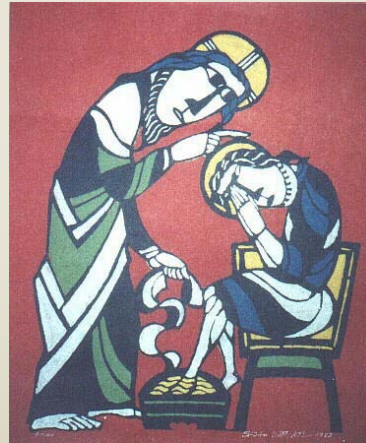
Jesus - Model Servant

“Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve.”

Mark 10:45

“Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet.”

- John 13:14



Jesus Washing Feet



Why does a Church 'do Education'?

Reason 3: Education as Justice

What is Justice?

Common Usage

Punishment for wrongdoing

(negative)



Biblical View

Announcing healing and inclusion to all

(positive)





Why does a Church 'do Education'?

Reason 3: Education as Justice

What is Justice?

Common Usage

“The men and women of our Armed Forces have delivered a message now clear to every ENEMY of the United States: Even 7,000 miles away, across oceans and continents, on mountaintops and in caves -- **YOU WILL NOT ESCAPE THE JUSTICE OF THIS NATION.**”



State of the Union Address, 2002

Biblical View

“Now is the time to lift our nation from the quicksands of RACIAL INJUSTICE to the solid rock of brotherhood. Now is the time to **MAKE JUSTICE A REALITY FOR ALL GOD’S CHILDREN.**”



“I Have a Dream” Speech, 1963



Why does a Church 'do Education'?

Reason 3: Education as Justice

The Exodus: God’s Work of Justice

“The LORD said, “I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey.” - Exodus 3:7-8



**Pharaoh, God of Oppression
vs.
Yahweh, God of Liberation**



Why does a Church 'do Education'?

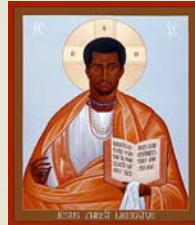
Reason 3: Education as Justice

Jesus, Suffering Servant for God's Great Work of Justice

Jesus the
Suffering
Servant



=



Jesus
the
Liberator

- "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the POOR. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the PRISONERS and recovery of sight for the BLIND, to release the OPPRESSED, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

- Luke 4:18-19



Why does a Church 'do Education'?

Reason 3: Education as Justice

Participating in God's Great Work of Justice

"For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

- Ephesians 2:10

"TIKKUN OLAM" =
"Repair the World"



"The birth of a new humanity of God which is now spreading around the world," James Douglass



Why does a Church 'do Education'?

Reason 3: Education as Justice



Why does a Church 'do Education'?

Reason 3: Education as Justice

Participating in God's Great Work of Justice

"awareness of the larger world - its diversity and complexity - is critical for a Church engaged in, and committed to mission of global peace and reconciliation."

Episcopalian Church statement

...broaden our vision to an ever wider horizon, become capable of looking beyond our own country, our own ethnic group, our own cultural tradition, so that we can see humanity as a single family in both its diversity and its common aspirations. This is education in the fundamental values of human dignity, peace, freedom and solidarity. It evokes the desire to know other people, to be able to share their sorrows and to understand their deepest feelings. Education for dialogue means nurturing the hope that conflict situations can be resolved through personal and collective commitment.

Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue



Models of Religious Education

Model 1: Secular Religion Education

- Study different Religious beliefs and manifestations of Religion.
- Phenomenological and theoretical (distant).
- Learning about Religious Communities objectively (learn about... “elephant is over there”).
- Education seen as secular - therefore Religion is more a sociological study - part of the Social Sciences.
- No practice of ritual or gathering of groups according to religious identity.
- Theoretical.
- Practice of faith and outward expressions of faith discouraged within school community - creates division.



Models of Religious Education

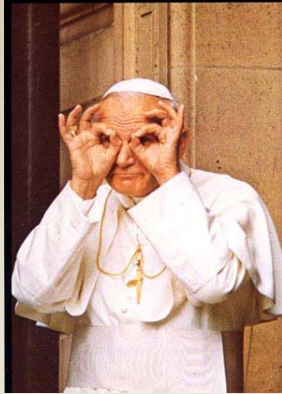
Model 1: Secular Observations/Comments

- Inclusive (artificially) by avoid religious conflicts between students
- Artificial suppression of the composition of society.
- Fails to deliver global understanding and justice.
- Religion as a source of meaning is not shared by the community.
- Prevents/limits an important dynamic of an individual's motivation and sense of being from becoming a positive contributing factor within the community.
- Places secular values above religious values (?)
- Poor modeling of dealing with those things that divide community.
- Does the Church have anything to offer in terms of education?



Models of Religious Education

Model 2 - Faith Education



- **Emphasis on one Faith.**
- **Participatory and experiential (personal).**
- **Inside track granted to the Faith (I host the party and set the rules).**
- **One faith practice encouraged for the whole community.**
- **One faith group promoted and gather on campus**
- **Compulsory participation in Religious ritual such as Prayer, Worship and other rites.**
- **Opportunities to develop host faith only.**



Model 2: Christian (Faith) Education

Model 2: Traditional

“No one but Jesus”

- **“I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father but through me” *John 14:6***
- **“Salvation is to be found in him alone; in all the world there is no-one else whom God has given who can save us” *Acts 4:12***
- **“Who do you say that I am?” *Matthew 16***
- **“But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it”. *Matthew 7***





Model 2: Christian (Faith) Education

Model 2: Exclusive (Traditional) Biblical Model

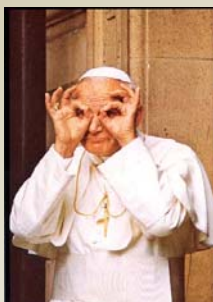
(Other faith communities: "We're right - you're wrong")

- ..the gospel is not only inclusive in its appeal and goal... but it is also exclusive for those who refuse to receive salvation through the crucified and risen Lord Jesus Christ (John 14:6; Acts 4:12). *Bartsch 2001*
- Participation in Christian rituals encouraged - often 'compulsory'.
- Christian school means that Christian dogma must be clearly proclaimed within the community.
- Christian rituals taught in curriculum
- Christian dogma (catechesis)
- Opportunities given to develop Christian Faith
- Christian faith groups meet on campus
- Lacks principles of Justice
- Power model - I'm right, you're wrong. My (unstated) intention and goal is transformation - to encourage you to change your understanding and worldview to the Christian understanding/worldview. I'll hear to what you have to say - but you're wrong. "No-one comes to the Father but through me".



Model 2: Christian (Faith) Education

Observations/Comments



- Exclusive - People of other faith communities have no place in the community (?)
- Fails to honour the diverse backgrounds of student community. Fails to deliver global understanding and justice.
- Schools are fee paying - also exclusive on economic grounds. How does that reconcile with Matthew 28 - Christ for the Middle Class?
- Gives community identity and focus. Allows Christians to explore and practice spirituality.
- Allows Christians to learn and grow as Christians. Others?
- Spirituality becomes an intentional part of learning.
- Risks coercion - does a committed member of another Religious community have the same freedoms as members of the Christian community?
- Ethical question of using State funds for doing mission of the Church.
- Blurs the line between Church and School. Are we heading for communion services for the entire school community? A school is NOT a congregation.
- Blurs the purpose of the school - as 'outreach' centres for the Church - or as providers of quality education for ALL clientele.



Is that it? Just those 2 models?

Christian Education

- Emphasis on Christianity
- Participatory and experiential (personal)
- Preaching/ evangelism model (persuaded/ encouraged to - I host the party and set the rules)
- Christian faith as practice
- Christian groups promoted and gather on campus.
- Compulsory participation in Christian ritual such as Prayer, Worship, and Christian focused devotions
- Opportunities to develop Christian faith only.
- Suppresses diversity - does not deliver justice

Religion Education

- Equal emphasis on different manifestations of Religion (Inclusive)
- Phenomenological and theoretical (distant)
- Learning about Religious Communities objectively (“table is over there”)
- No practice of religious ritual occurs.
- No gathering of groups according to religious identity within school community (unless by outsiders).
- Theoretical.
- The Religious Debate kept out
- Suppresses diversity - does not deliver justice



The LCA Lutheran School

Christian Education

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Religion Education

- Equal emphasis on different manifestations of Religion (Inclusive)
- Phenomenological and theoretical (distant)
- Learning about Religious Communities objectively (“table is over there”)
- Practice of ritual disallowed (or firmly discouraged).
- Gathering of groups according to religious identity within school community not allowed
- Theoretical

- The Lutheran School is an educational community and a worshipping community...
 - ..it is in worship that Christ comes most directly to his people through Word and Sacrament.
 - Lutheran schools see as a challenge that people should read the gospel from the attitudes of the lives of the staff and students within that school as a ‘letter of Christ’.
 - educational leader in Australian schools... the function of the Church in this case is evangelisation rather than education.
- Bartsch 2001*

Blurring of the line between congregational/faith community and educational institution.



The LCA Lutheran School

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- Lutheran schools see as a challenge that people should read the gospel from the attitudes of the lives of the staff and students within that school as a 'letter of Christ'.
- educational leader in Australian schools argue for a missionary role in Lutheran schools... the function of the Church in this case is evangelisation rather than education.

Bartsch 2001

Blurring of the line between congregational/faith community and educational institution.

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The LCA Lutheran School

Are Australian Lutheran Schools 'Communities of faith'?

- Queensland High schools 2000 - 22% Lutheran
- Nationwide (1996) - 34% Lutheran (current levels lower)
- "...it would be difficult to argue that Lutheran schools form a confessional community because of their clientele..."
- "In describing the school as a community of faith, there can be a danger of implying circumstances which may not be totally accurate..."
- "It is critical not to treat a Lutheran school as a homogenous Christian community..."

Bartsch 2001



School ≠ Church



The LCA Lutheran School

“I don’t think there are any true compromises...: The school either has to stay purely Lutheran (or Evangelically Christian, or whatever religion it claims to be) or it should declare itself non-religiously affiliated. This strange ‘Christian but respecting beliefs of all’ credo is, ironically, not very Christian. It seems to be a spineless catch-all...”

Anna

Grade 12



Religious Education - The Third Way

Biblical (Emerging) Paradigm

Multiple Gospels - multiple voices

- **The Good Samaritan. *Luke 10***
- **Jesus in the temple talks about Namaan the Syrian. *Luke 4***
- **The Canaanite Woman wins a theological debate with Jesus. *Mark 7 and Matthew 15***
- **“When did we see you hungry?” *Matthew 25***
- **The promise to Ishmael the Egyptian *Gen 21:18 & 21:22***
- **Ruth the Moabite *Ruth***



Religious Education - The Third Way

The Biblical Case for Inclusivity

Two Examples from the New Testament

The Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10)

The story of the Syro - Phoenician Woman (Mark 7)



The Third Way: The Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25 - 37)

On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?" He answered: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind' ; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live."

But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead.

A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.

But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'

"Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."



The Good Samaritan

- Story told in response to the question: "what must I do to receive eternal life?" *Luke 10:25*
- "What does the Law say?"
- Loving God = Loving neighbour. One cannot be separated from the other. One's actions reflect one's relationship with God.
- The story is of a Samaritan helping a Jew - not a Jew helping a Samaritan. More than a story about 'loving enemies'
- The model of right relationship (and correct understanding of God) is the Samaritan.
- The Samaritans were seen by the Jewish community as perverters of the faith. They had their own religious understanding, their own unique rituals and places of worship. They were seen (and disliked) on religious grounds - as standing outside the faith. Further - as being a different faith altogether.
- The modern equivalent of the Samaritans?
- Islam? Mormons?



The Good Samaritan

The Christian community has baptised the Samaritan.



Paradigm 2 - Faith of a Syro-Phoenician Woman

Mark 7: 24 - 30 (Matthew 15:21-28)

Jesus left that place and went to the vicinity of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know it; yet he could not keep his presence secret.

In fact, as soon as she heard about him, a woman whose little daughter was possessed by an evil spirit came and fell at his feet.

The woman was a Greek, born in Syrian Phoenicia. She begged Jesus to drive the demon out of her daughter.

"First let the children eat all they want," he told her, "for it is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to their dogs."

"Yes, Lord," she replied, "but even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs."

Then he told her, "For such a reply, you may go; the demon has left."



Faith of a Syro-Phoenician Woman

- The woman is from Syrian Phoenicia (Mark) or Canaan (Matthew 15). Both of these denote outside the community.
- A woman - low status.
- A demon possessed daughter - the distance continues. Daughters have little status because they hold no birthrights - and she is clearly cursed. Who would help the demon possessed daughter of a woman from outside the community?
- This woman is about as far from acceptable to the Jewish Religious community as is possible.
- However - she engages in a theological debate with Jesus.
- Jesus raises her status by engaging the debate
- She corrects Jesus' theological explanation for why he can't help her.
- Jesus affirms her understanding and her arguments.
- Jesus affirms correct understanding - theological insight - from one far outside any accepted tradition



Implications for Religious Education

Third Way - Emerging (Inclusive) Model

(Students of other Religious/philosophical understandings: Many voices)

- Education promotes peace, dialogue - affirms community and diversity - and thus delivers Justice
- Context - starting point ('*who is my neighbour*') becomes the clientele or community not an imposed agenda.
- all voices valued. Dialogue, conversation and affirmation(?) ("*For such a reply...*" - Mark 7).
- intrinsic value given to perspectives that lie outside the Christian tradition - multiple faith perspectives and discussion as equal partners around the table.
- no compulsion or mandate to convert.
- doesn't begin with the attitude that Lutheran doctrine has some kind of inside track that overpowers other people within the community.
- no hidden agenda. The Christian work of the school is seen primarily in the light of service and delivering justice. Similar to that of a hospital or an aged care facility - a service to the community.
- the diversity of beliefs within the community are honoured, respected and celebrated and part of the greater Biblical mission of healing.
- removes the pressure to 'grow the Church' from the agenda - hidden or otherwise.





3 Models of Christian Education

Christian Education

- Christianity only valid understanding.. Point out error of other faiths.
- Participatory and experiential (personal)
- Inside track granted to Faith (I host the party and set the rules)
- Christian groups promoted and gather on campus
- Compulsory participation in Religious ritual such as Prayer, Worship, and other rites
- Opportunities to develop Christian faith only
- Suppresses diversity - does not deliver justice

Religion Education

- Equal emphasis on different manifestations of Religion
- Phenomenological and theoretical (distant)
- Learning about Religions Communities objectively (“elephant is over there”)
- No practice of ritual or gathering of groups according to religious identity
- Theoretical
- Leave religion and potential conflict at home
- Suppresses authenticity - does not deliver justice

Religious Education

- Emphasis on Religious understanding as it occurs in a diverse community
- Experiential and theoretical
- Dialogue model (Round table)
- Option of participation in Christian and other faith groups
- Participation in a variety of rituals can be explored - even those not Christian
- All faiths equal participants and given value - Christianity becomes the focal point of dialogue.
- Encouraged to explore and practice own Spirituality and Religious identity.
- Honours diversity and delivers justice



HKIS Mission Statement 1997



HKIS
Mission

Dedicating
our minds to inquiry

our hearts to compassion

our lives to service and
global understanding

*an American-style
education grounded in
the Christian faith
and respecting the
spiritual lives of all*

The HKIS Mission Statement:

What do we, as a Lutheran International School in a multi-faith context, value for our students?

What are our core Christian values and mission?

What are the needs for this community in its context?

- *Dedicating minds to inquiry*
- *Hearts to compassion*
- *Lives to service and global understanding*
- *American style education*
- *Grounded in the Christian faith*
- *Respecting the spiritual lives of all*



HKIS 6 Student Learning Results

Spirituality: Students will understand and respect Christianity and other religions and will identify and develop their own spiritual identity.

•**Academic Excellence:** Students will achieve their intellectual potential by striving for and attaining the highest standards of academic excellence.

•**Chinese Culture:** Students will gain an understanding of China and an appreciation of the Chinese culture.

•**Character Development/Values:** Students will demonstrate respectful and caring attitudes at school and in the community, as well as the courage to stand up for what is right.

•**Self-motivated Learning:** Students will take responsibility for their own learning, set challenging goals, and monitor their progress.

•**Contributing to Society:** Students will develop the skills they need to form genuine relationships in our diverse society and to make contributions to our community.



The HKIS Experience



Spirituality: Students will understand and respect Christianity and other religions and will identify and develop their own spiritual identity.

What is 'Spirituality'?

Spirituality is a journey of reverence, which explores the meaning of our lives and connections with God, other people, and the world.



The HKIS Experience

How does it look on the ground?

- Much less resistance to Religious Education classes from students. HKIS no longer has delegations approaching the HoS to request no longer doing Religion classes.
- Worship no longer compulsory. The HS has gone to doing 7 'Chapels' - 'Community Gatherings' per year. These are non-liturgical and focus on 'Spirituality' - and seek to be inclusive. All Religious communities represented at the school are sought to be included.
- Curricular: Students are required to undertake 1 full unit of Religious Education prior to graduation. Half in Biblical Studies & half in World Religions.
- Students are openly encouraged to explore their own Religious tradition and heritage - and become more familiar with it in order to improve the quality of Religious dialogue in the community.
- Students discuss and argue *during breaks* about issues from the perspective of their own Religious Community. (Voluntary Multi-faith dialogue outside the classroom).

"The HKIS way of looking at Religion is the way I feel Religion should be viewed."
Mark - Lutheran



The HKIS Experience

How does it look on the ground?

- Students are encouraged to organise 'Fellowship' groups based around their own Religious community on campus.
- All Religious dialogue and discussion is considered healthy and encouraged.
- Students often report that they feel their beliefs are respected - they don't feel pressured or forced into belief.
- Very high majority of Christian students feel positive and comfortable. The most discomfort comes from the more Evangelical Christians who feel discomfort that it isn't more like a single Faith community.
- Church of All Nations Congregation - attached to UP & LP becomes the Worshipping centre for the Community - not just the school community - but the wider expat community. There is a Lutheran Spiritual community attached that is central to the life of the school.
- The Head of School (under the structures of the LC-MS) must be a rostered member of the LC-MS

"While Christianity is present at HKIS, its not presented in such a way that it overwhelms students".

Nick - grade 12



The HKIS Experience

Definition of 'Religiously Educated'

A **religiously educated person** is someone who is capable of making a **personal commitment in the midst of pluralistic beliefs** and life stances and is, at the same time, ready to **enter into genuine dialogue with people of other cultures and other religious traditions** so as to live in harmony with them. Religious education at HKIS is an academic program about different religions that combines the mind and the heart in **developing academic understanding and a strong sense of one's spiritual identity**.



Student Voices

"HKIS is full of diversity. Part of that diversity is all the different religions. Although HKIS is a Christian school, it has never restricted anyone (speaking from my own Muslim perspective) from celebrating their own belief and religion."

Shireen, gr 11 (Muslim)

"HKIS respects and does not enforce religion on people, though this is a Christian school. No one is pressured to practice a religion but expected to respect all religions."

Christa (non-Christian) gr 11

"HKIS respects individual spirituality. Even though HKIS is a Christian school and does make its identity known, people can be open to Christianity or they can choose their own spiritual journey."

Grade 12 student (Christian)

"I feel that I have lots of freedom here at HKIS to explore and develop my own spiritual identity. When there are prayers, the people who aren't Christian are respected and invited to sit in silence. We aren't forced to pray..."

Maxine gr 11

"I have felt that HKIS is the most free school to develop my faith than any other school I have been to. I have been able to join youth groups and community service trips. These are the kinds of activities I like to do to grow in my faith"

Mark gr 10 (Christian)

"Christianity is presented in more of a mild way. I don't feel that I'm being forced to believe in Christianity."

Grade 10 student (non Christian)



Student Voices

"I am a Christian, yet I find it completely unacceptable and insulting to other religions when we're forced to go to community gatherings and say, "God is good...all the time. ...this is a Christian based school, but our school isn't called "Hong Kong INTERNATIONAL school" for nothing, we should be mindful of other religions as well. *Kailee Loughlin Grade 11*

"While I do recognize our school's Lutheran heritage, it is also necessary to consider the fair percentage of our community that does not subscribe to the Christian faith. Although the Christian greeting used in the last Gathering was optional participation, I must ask is this not oppressive and alienating to students who do not choose to participate in the greeting? And does it follow the HKIS message to exclude members of our community, particularly during the greetings of our Community Gatherings? ... should be about students sharing their own experiences with spirituality, rather than having a certain faith imposed upon them." *Amanda Gallinet Grade 12*

"I don't think there are any true compromises...: The school either has to stay purely Lutheran (or Evangelically Christian, or whatever religion it claims to be) or it should declare itself non-religiously affiliated. This strange 'Christian but respecting beliefs of all' credo is, ironically, not very Christian. It seems to be a spineless catch-all..." *Anna Grade 12*



Toward a New Vision....

Traditional....

**"No one comes
to the Father
but through
me"**

...PLUS

'The Good Samaritan'





Toward a New Vision

Justice means.....

*Starting point:
'Right with God'
to include
'Response to Human
need'*



Toward a New Vision

Justice means.....

*Care, Value and Respect
for only Christians
to
Care, Value and Respect
for all*



Toward a New Vision

Justice means.....

Monologue

(exclusive)

to

Dialogue

(inclusive)



Questions.

- **In what way (if any) is HKIS approach different to the LCA approach?**
- **What can be learned from the HKIS experience?**
- **What lessons can be applied to the Australian experience of Lutheran schooling?**
- **What thoughts, impressions, reactions, questions do you have concerning the presentation?**