

EPILOGUE

Authentic Lutheran Schooling

The continuing dialogue of theology and education is critical if Lutheran schools are to remain true to their vision and purpose as authentic Lutheran educational institutions. Drawing on the dialogue between theology and education represented in this volume, the following are suggested as qualities and characteristics of an authentic Lutheran school:

- a community built on the relationship between the triune God and the individuals who make up that community, recognising that within that community there are those who participate in a relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ given by the Holy Spirit, and those who do not;
- a community centred on worship of the triune God and deliberately and intentionally witnessing to the grace of God in Christ to all who come into contact with that community;
- a community which fosters life-long learning for students and staff in their knowledge and understanding of, and response to, God's revelation in his word and a community that sustains the Lutheran faith tradition in a dynamic interrelationship with contemporary life and thought;
- a community which is a school of the Lutheran Church of Australia and as such is part of the ministry and mission of the LCA and its congregations;
- a community searching for truth through revelation and reason, learning to judge truth which is provisional from truth which is absolute, and recognising that Jesus Christ is 'the Truth', and that the 'fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom' (Prov 9:10);

- a community in which individuals recognise that God addresses them in his word through both law and gospel and is therefore conscious of operating under both God's 'left hand' [the law] and 'right hand' [the gospel] to carry out God's purposes in and for the world;
- a community of inquiry incorporating students and staff as life-long learners in an educational program of excellence built on a Christian world-view and based on God's revelation in his word and current educational understanding and practice;
- a learning community which values academic freedom and which sharpens the critical awareness of students regardless of their religious background;
- a community where Christian Studies is an essential curriculum component taught with sensitivity to the spirituality commitment of the students and engaging in respectful dialogue with insights from other denominations and religions, but clearly and consciously presenting what the Lutheran church believes and teaches;
- a community which recognises that the process of education belongs under the 'left hand' work of God through which God preserves creation and upholds the structures of society against the effects of sin and evil and prepares all people for their various areas of responsibility in the world;
- a community which is led by educators who are committed to, and who exemplify, those qualities and attributes which create, foster and maintain authentic Lutheran schools, who are spiritual leaders in those schools, and who identify, mentor and support emerging leaders;
- a community affirming that the final responsibility for education belongs to the parents of children as they have been given that responsibility by God even though they may use the resources of the state and/or church to assist them to carry out this responsibility: and a community which supports and encourages Christian parents and caregivers in the Christian nurture of those for whom they are responsible;
- a community which stands in awe and wonder at the mystery of creation and which explores that creation with the best insights and

resources of the human mind and which operates between creation as it now is and the new creation in Jesus Christ, recognising already in this present world signs of the world to come;

- a community that recognises the fallen nature of the whole of creation and the resultant impact of sin and evil in the world but which is also a community of hope, believing that in Christ ‘all things hold together’ (Phil 1:17);
- a community that takes seriously a biblical anthropology which recognises the sinful nature of human beings but which celebrates the God-given potentialities of every human being and recognises and values the uniqueness of every person in that community, helping them to identify, cultivate and creatively use the gifts and abilities which they have been given while developing as integrated individuals intellectually, spiritually, socially, emotionally and physically;
- a community which appreciates the individual learning styles of students and which provides appropriate multiple pathways of learning;
- a community that is inclusive of characteristics such as race, colour, disability, economic or social status, and personal faith commitment, and in which all members of that community experience the love and care which flow from the grace of God;
- a compassionate community that is motivated by the love of Jesus Christ which extends pastoral care to all who are in that community and all who are attached to that community and which encourages all in that community to be involved actively in extending such love, care and concern to each other;
- a safe community for all sustained by a careful application of law and gospel which assists students to develop self-discipline and respect for others and that seeks to achieve reconciliation in situations of interpersonal relationship breakdown or conflict through promoting programs such as ‘restorative justice’;
- a community which assists all in that community to see themselves in vocation as they live interdependently and serve in the various areas of responsibility into which God has placed them, keeping in balance the demands of their different responsibilities;

- a community that nurtures a service mentality, motivated by theology of the cross and demonstrating faith active in love, which respects and values the dignity and humanity of others, and which creates sensitivity, raises awareness of and motivates responses to social and justice issues such as discrimination, oppression, injustice and suffering in the local and global community;
- a community which helps those within that community to live with ambiguity and dynamic tension between choices in ethical decision making and which guides them as they learn to respond with confidence and humility, and with belief and passion;

The challenge for educators operating within Lutheran schools is to integrate qualities and characteristics such as these into a coherent philosophy of education which will provide the basis for their teaching and learning in Lutheran schools. In this way, insights from the God of grace who speaks and acts and who invites us to respond in love and worship of him and in love and service to those in our local and global community, will provide the foundation for all which is taught and done in Australian Lutheran schools.