

# Table of Contents

Session 1 - God's grace as revealed in Jesus is central to a Lutheran understanding of spirituality .....	4
What are important aspects of spirituality from a Lutheran perspective? .....	4
Reflections of learning and practice .....	4
Important aspects of spirituality from a Lutheran perspective? .....	4
Session 2 – Lutheran education is centred in the belief that God invites all people to join God in ongoing creation and care for the universe.....	8
How does creation theology inform the why and how of Lutheran education? .....	8
Reflections of learning.....	8
How does creation theology inform the why and how of Lutheran education?.....	8
Reflections of Practice .....	10
How does creation theology inform the why and how of Lutheran education?.....	10
How does creation theology shape an aspect of your work with students? .....	10
Reflection of learning .....	10
How does creation theology shape an aspect of your work with students?.....	10
Reflection of practice .....	11
How does creation theology shape an aspect of your work with students?.....	11
Session 3 – God has created us for relationships and Christian spirituality finds expression in love, service and our vocations. ....	12
Why does Lutheran education value community? .....	12
Reflection of learning .....	12
Why does Lutheran education value community? .....	12
Reflection of practice .....	13
Why does Lutheran education value community? .....	13
In what ways has the learning about community informed your understanding of Lutheran education and your contribution .....	14
Reflection of learning .....	14
In what ways has the learning about community informed your understanding of Lutheran education and your contribution.....	14
Reflection of practice .....	15

In what ways has the learning about community informed your understanding of Lutheran education and your contribution.....	15
Session 4 – God's word inspires and guides Lutheran education communities .....	16
How can we know about God?.....	16
Reflection of learning .....	16
Reflection of practice .....	18
How does God's word form and inform Lutheran education communities and my role?.....	18
Reflection of learning and practice .....	18
What are the most significant aspects of Lutheran theology for Lutheran education? .....	20
Reflection of learning and Reflection of practice .....	20
References.....	23

## **Session 1 - God's grace as revealed in Jesus is central to a Lutheran understanding of spirituality.**

**What are important aspects of spirituality from a Lutheran perspective?**

**Reflections of learning and practice:**

**Important aspects of spirituality from a Lutheran perspective?**

### **Spirituality**

A current buzz word in society is spirituality. Instagram shows popular users going on 'spiritual' retreats with *#spirituality* showing 12.9million posts ranging from focussing on your goals, keeping relationships and daily affirmations. The readings from Session One told how people are comfortable with the terminology 'spirituality' but society is turning away from religious and church terminology. So what is spirituality and what are the important aspects of spirituality from a Lutheran perspective? In Session One we were asked to explore what spirituality meant to us. I thought that someone was spiritual if they believed there was something 'bigger' in the world other than themselves. I was quite off the mark. At its core, spirituality is all about relationships (Grieger, 2018). From a Lutheran perspective spirituality includes worship, prayer, study of the Bible, living out one's faith in vocation, academics, practicing in debates and in areas of philosophy (Bartsch, p.46). Christian spirituality starts with the first step of having faith in Jesus Christ and as we respond to the action of God in our lives we continue to receive gifts (Bartsch, p178). In the past I thought I was teaching students about Jesus so they could learn about the way he treated others and hopefully they too would treat others like this. For example on a recent Christian Studies unit I taught about love and forgiveness and had deliberately focused on these messages as the culture of the classroom was full of many individuals who needed reminders of these traits. I now understand that learning about Jesus is more than this. In teaching our students the stories of Jesus: Feeding The Hungry, Healing the Sick, Caring for his Disciples we are

offering opportunities for students to build a relationship with him and consequently grow their spirituality. The relationship is the core part of spirituality. Other areas where I offer students the chance to build a relationship with God is through weekly Chapel, daily devotion, prayer time and by offering my own experiences with my relationship with Jesus. When thinking of spirituality and relationships I was immediately reminded of our school philosophy which is REACH. The R stands for Relationships which is connecting and serving others within a supportive and inclusive community. By having this at the core of our school it allows us to aim to nurture an environment where learners grow in assurance of their God-given worth and purpose.



At the end of the session we were asked to find an image that we associated with spirituality. I chose this image because the two puzzle pieces are connecting, like a relationship. Also a huge part of why I'm here, my purpose, is summarised by the heart

– showing and giving love

## **Grace**

I had been a dancer from the age of 5 – 15 and heard the adjective graceful more times than I could count. I'd always associated it with a movement that was fluid, a posture that was strong and an appearance that caught the attention for all the right reasons. To use grace to describe the way people treat others I previously thought this meant being kind and doing the right thing.



God's grace is a gift that is freely given to us, we don't earn a thing. Previously I had assumed that I had to earn God's love and to be accepted by him I would have to do good things. I now know his gift is freely given and we don't earn a thing. This reminds me with my teaching in a Lutheran school there should be no guilt or coercion tactics but instead building students up with the confidence that they are accepted and loved by God for who they are. Being this way allows me to be an educator in a Lutheran School that is authentic and true to our theology. Within my practice I have found it effective to use the Fruits of the Spirit to establish group norms in the classroom and connect with them throughout the year.

Below are some ways that I connect with the Fruits of the Spirit personally as a teacher at Calvary:

**Love** – connecting and serving others, teaching REACH, restorative justice, taking care of God's creation, Health lessons for loving yourself (taking care of the body)

**Joy** – fun games, fitness, playing at the end of the day when school finishes early, play at the end of the day 3:00

**Peace** - Relating to God and others through the values of love, compassion and forgiveness.

**Patience** – Showing patience to our students, being patient with colleagues

**Kindness** – Justice and compassion through restorative practice. Reading Bible stories with the class and seeing how Jesus and others forgave.

**Goodness** - Acknowledging uniqueness and strengths, striving for personal best and encouraging students to take responsibility for their learning journey.

**Faithfulness** - Developing positive relationships based on mutual trust, respect and honesty



Display on wall showing our Fruits of Spirit. Used to establish class norms in Term 1,

**Session 2 – Lutheran education is centred in the belief that God invites all people to join God in ongoing creation and care for the universe.**

**How does creation theology inform the why and how of Lutheran education?**

**Reflections of learning**

**How does creation theology inform the why and how of Lutheran education?**

The Growing Deep document highlights some key ways creation theology informs the why and how of Lutheran Education as follows:

- Lutheran schools and early childhood services are communities which acknowledge God as creator and join in the ongoing creation and care of the world and all people.
- Lutheran schools and early childhood services are communities that recognise that God has intentionally created each person and that each person is uniquely gifted to live in relationship with God and others.
- Lutheran schools and early childhood services are communities where grace abounds. While recognising the brokenness of humanity, they reflect the unconditional love of the Father, revealed through the saving work of his Son, Jesus.
- Lutheran schools and early childhood services are communities that value learning as God's gift to people for their wonder, growth, and to inspire them to respond to the needs of the world.
- God created the world Genesis 1:1-2:4
- Living creatures in God's creation
- God creates living creatures Genesis 1:20-25
- Animals are under the control of people Genesis 9:2-3
- Responsibility to care for creation

- God places people in control of the earth Genesis 1:26-28; Genesis 2:15, 19-20; Genesis 9:2-3
- You let us rule everything your hands have made ... Psalm 8:6-8
- He has given the earth to us humans Psalm 115:16
- God creates the universe. We are here to live here to create relationships and live with another



## **Reflections of Practice**

### **How does creation theology inform the why and how of Lutheran education?**

Within Calvary Lutheran Primary School we support creation theology through:

- Christian Education
- Christian Studies
- The learner map, in particular relationships and Christ Centred
- ALWS fundraising
- Chapel
- Nude food and understanding environmental issues
- Rewarding achievement for milestones that are linked to the learner map.
- Promoting a culture that supports families
- High level communication including morning devotion and Principal communicates what's going on
- Wendy's breakfast club and how she supports families
- Restorative justice

### **How does creation theology shape an aspect of your work with students?**

#### **Reflection of learning:**

### **How does creation theology shape an aspect of your work with students?**

An aspect of my work this shapes is encouraging respect and love for our environment using the terminology God's creation. Wherever possible I use opportunities to incorporate this language. Some examples of when I have used this are: a little girl on yard duty was aggressively kicking a tree, students jumping on insects, students littering and congratulating those who are able to ride / scooter to school. I have also gone with the class with a garbage bag and collected litter around the school talking about how it's important and our

responsibility to look after God's creation. Our school has recently changed its lunch box policy to have no packaging which was a fantastic opportunity to talk about the responsibility of caring for God's creation.

**Reflection of practice:**

**How does creation theology shape an aspect of your work with students?**

Being a student of Public Schooling, the notion God created the universe in 7 days intrigued me. When I began teaching at Calvary I wondered how science perspectives fit in with the concept of creation. I have explored creation theology during Christian Studies and Devotion times, talking about how God created the Universe mainly using Genesis as a reference. Children have always listened attentively and reflected a deep understanding, with little inquiry around the topic. Although, I do work with younger children and their scope of inquiry can be somewhat limited. I have always wondered how much insight I would be able to offer if a child had questioned the Big Bang Theory aspect. In Session Two, I found the readings and discussions from *Lutheran Theology, and Eight Focal Lutheran Themes* valuable. I can see that first and foremost Lutherans value the Bible to affirm it's truth and see science as a perfectly appropriate human response to trying to understand who created the universe. However, they don't make the assumption that the only truth worth asserting is the scientific truth. They teach what we know, what we assume and what we conclude based on this. (Christensen, p38)

This is an area of growth for me. I will continue to support the school's philosophy and where needed stick with the: what we know, what we assume and what we conclude method. If I'm not in a position to do this I am grateful to have a science teacher who I would seek support and mentoring.

## **Session 3 – God has created us for relationships and Christian spirituality finds expression in love, service and our vocations.**

### **Why does Lutheran education value community?**

#### **Reflection of learning:**

#### **Why does Lutheran education value community?**

I value being alone but feel most alive when I am surrounded by those who I am connected to. We are created as important individuals but by understanding how God values relationships we grow to realise we are created to live in relationships (Bartsch p62-64). As staff we are regularly engaged in developing avenues for building relationships in the community and now understanding how God values relationships I can see why we continually nurture and grow our community relationships at Calvary Lutheran Primary. Other than family, the immediate community members I think of are those who share our School's faith: the Calvary Kindergarten and the onsite Calvary Church. These community connections provide avenues for staff members and their members to connect with our students and provide them with relationships and support where needed. Lutheran's value community and see that God works in the community with Christian's as his assistants or as they are referred to in A God who speaks and Acts as 'Right Hands' (Bartsch, pg188). But what about members of our community who don't share the same Lutheran faith as our school? I recall a recent staff meeting that became extremely heated around if teachers who were not members of the community of faith should be allowed to teach at our school. Staff members exclaimed: 'absolutely not!'. So where would this leave other members of our community who help and weren't of the community of faith: the local Childcare Centre, Speech Pathologists, Occupational Therapists, some families at the school. Bartsch reminds us that these people are not 'less of a

part of the way' and that God works with all people and everything is under his care and control (Bartsch, 188-189).

### **Reflection of practice:**

#### **Why does Lutheran education value community?**

In Session One we understood that relationships are an essential aspect to spirituality. This common thread came back around in Session Three where we looked at how God is in a relationship. I was familiar with the Trinity and how through His work people get to know God as: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Prior to Connect I had related it to identity, drawing parallels to myself as a Mum, a daughter and a teacher. I have had a shift in thinking now understanding that Christians believe God is three persons and in a relationship with each other (Bartsch, p62-64). I also began reflecting on how I had been incorporating the Trinity into my Christian Studies lessons.

Another post Connect revelation I came was the mention of the 'shy' member of the Trinity (Bartsch 15-19). Upon reflection on my Christian Studies planning this year I can see I have had a focus on God the father, God the person, God the Son but I have not been including the Holy Spirit as much as I could have. This is a future area of growth for me.

I will also continue to incorporate community links and connections. Christian Studies is a subject where I would like to utilise our local Pastor more than I have been in the past and in future as much as possible.

**In what ways has the learning about community informed your understanding of Lutheran education and your contribution.**

**Reflection of learning:**

**In what ways has the learning about community informed your understanding of Lutheran education and your contribution.**

### **1 Corinthians 12:12 – 31**

*<sup>21</sup>The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!" <sup>22</sup>On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, <sup>23</sup>and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, <sup>24</sup>while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has put the body together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it,<sup>25</sup>so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. <sup>26</sup>If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.*

1 Corinthians 12:12 – 31 sums up community and Lutheran education. We are all part of what is needed, we are part of the same community and we all need each other. With each other we are stronger. We are able to harness each other's strengths, gifts and talents for that community.

My notes from Session Three read: 'When you find something that is a way to serve God, you take what you love and take it to the world so your life has purpose – this is your Vocation'. This is somewhat self-serving as it implies it's mostly about you. Further reading into Session Three lead me to the most beautiful quote:

*'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' (Christeson pg49)*

Through our vocation we have the power to change others.

**Reflection of practice:**

**In what ways has the learning about community informed your understanding of Lutheran education and your contribution.**

One of my Vocations is that as a teacher at Calvary Lutheran Primary and all our staff have the power to change the lives of others in a positive way. I draw strong links between community and my vocation. I do what I do even more effectively by forming strong links with the community. I can also affect the lives of the community in a positive ways if I am in touch with them. For example I can affect the life of my student by providing change through quality education and role modelling grace. Within the community recently, a family member of a student in our class unable to financially provide, I was able to get them in contact with our School Chaplain who has connections with Foodbank. As a teacher I have also grown through Session Three teachings to understand that I am not just a teacher at the school but as Darrell Jodock would state, I am 'nested into the community'. I love the thought that I am part of the Calvary Community as opposed to how I previously viewed it that there was the Calvary Community and I was an extension of it.

At the end of Session Three we were asked to locate a colour, symbol and image that represents the word vocation. See response below:

**Symbol:** phone (the calling),  
**Picture:** God is calling you to something you love (vocation),  
**Colour:** Pink something that you should love



#### CALIBS SAYS THANK YOU TO FOOD TRUCK DELIVERY DRIVERS

In September 1st in Christian Studies, Year 2 students explored how food trucks and food bank delivery programs help others. For their end of term project students chose a structure in the community to thank for supporting others through COVID-19. Calib chose to thank food truck delivery drivers. Because of their work we might not be hungry and our delivery is quick to get to our door for delivery orders.



A student from my class thanking the local supermarket for their service during COVID-19

When teaching Christian Studies recently, as a class we looked at the structures God has created to support society. Each student created a thank you project for a structure for the Service they provided during the peak of COVID-19. In hindsight there were so many parallels that we could have discussed around vocation, in an age appropriate way. I have made notes in my lesson plans for next year so that I can incorporate these ideas into the unit.

## Session 4 – God’s word inspires and guides Lutheran education communities

### How can we know about God?

#### Reflection of learning:

The Bible is the story of God working as the Trinity and how he works for and with me (2010, Pathways doc). If you had told me before lesson 4 that parts of the Bible are written in satire I would have replied with ‘NO WAY!’. The key message at the end of Session 4 I took away was it is our role to interpret scripture. I learnt a new term: Hermeneutics which is how we understand scripture when we apply our way of thinking. To know about God it’s essential to check and explore how the texts have been experienced through the generations by using Biblical commentaries, Kids Books and Art Work. The Bible is the Word of God, of the most influential books in history and the result of literary Geniuses (BibleProject, YouTube). It’s a tool in supporting the Gospel of Jesus Christ and one of the most important aspects of teaching in a Lutheran School. Although, in society today we see it being involved in very serious debates. Take for example the controversial topic of same sex marriage and what some argue

the Bible has to say about this going against God's will. A YouTube video in Session Four took us to an episode of a television show called Westwing where the main character quoted many verses of the Bible that condemn our current way of living when measuring against the Bible mocking that we should be selling children, murdering those who work on Sabbath and punishing those for touching the skin of a pig (a football). From this clip I concluded in my teachings at a Lutheran School in future I may be questioned but the key message is we should be using the teachings of the Bible for good and not to tear people down.



## **Reflection of practice:**

Another adaptation post Connect is I am to incorporate into my classroom and eventually at a staff devotion. I regularly use Parables in Christian Studies but in future I am going to use other scripture, for example fiction Bible texts and the Bible so we can compare. This will be done while respecting the core message of the Bible and confirmed by the statement that Lutherans believe when interpreting the Bible nothing should conflict the central message of the Bible (LuthEdAus, unknown). Therefore, as I am not an expert in this area I would only explore in this manner when I had a confirmed key understanding of the central message and not draw any new conclusions without mentoring or support. With an understanding of the central message at hand I see the practice of Hermeneutics as a hugely beneficial task for students to explore what the texts are telling us about God and develop research and critical thinking skills.

After discovering Bible Gateway has a read function I have utilised this during relaxation time in the classroom. I have chosen a Bible reading that I feel is useful for the day and as I let it play children have either lay and relaxed or coloured in and drawn.

## **How does God's word form and inform Lutheran education communities and my role?**

## **Reflection of learning and practice**

I used to think the Bible was rigid in its way of thinking and strict with rules. In fact I am realising Christian's believe The Bible tells us what Jesus did for us in his life, death and resurrection as well as aiding us to understand who we are (2012, Pathways doc.). It teaches us about Law and Gospel. The law helps

us function in a particular way. We know this is vital for the survival of society as well as for the peak functioning of Calvary community. At its core the gospel is aimed to be a

*'joyous message which does not rebuke nor terrify but comforts consciences against the terror of the law, directs them solely to Christ's merit, and lifts them up again through the delightful proclamation of the grace and favour of God, won through Christ's merit' (Bartsch, 98).*

Our school community is in a low socio-economic area and consists of many families who are suffering financial hardship. Additionally, we have children who go home to family members who are suffering and going through very difficult hardships. Our Calvary community needs to feel the comfort and even for our non-Christian families we need to find a way to make the Gospel relevant for them (Bartsch, p97). Bartsch states that the Gospel gives scripture its center and heart. It is what keeps it alive, happy, flourishing and steady. Just as we also hope for a steady, happy and flourishing Calvary community.

## What are the most significant aspects of Lutheran theology for Lutheran education?

### Reflection of learning and Reflection of practice

Given the scope of this question I found myself reflecting on not just Session 4 but the whole course.

The first significant aspect from a Lutheran education perspective is spirituality. Incorporating space for worship, prayer, study of the Bible, living out one's faith (Bartsch, p.46) nurtures students in the Christian faith by allowing them to build a relationship with Jesus. It is our primary objective at Calvary Lutheran Primary School. Our Statement of Aim states Calvary Lutheran Primary School *'aims to provide a program of Christian Education which will seek to work collaboratively with parents and caregivers to pursue excellence in learning for each child while nurturing them in the Christian faith'*.

The second significant aspect a Lutheran education perspective is grace. The love of God shown to the unlovely and the peace given to the otherwise restless is often referred to as the most important concept in the Bible. It is at the forefront of everything that I do in the classroom. I show my students grace, we set up our classroom at the beginning of the year around the Fruits of the Spirit and I teach that Christians believe God loves us just the way that we are.

Thirdly, a significant aspect of Lutheran education is creation theology. I understand that Lutheran schools and early childhood services are communities which acknowledge God as creator and join in the ongoing creation and care of the world and all people. I support our students journey in understanding this through the Christian Studies and Christian Education drawing from resources such as the Children's version of Genesis 1:1-2:4. As

Creation Theory crosses over science I have concerns I may not have the right answers and I have proposed seeking support from our Science teacher when this happens. I have stated throughout this writing that I am keen to employ Hermeneutics into the classroom acknowledged I will seek support to confirm I understand the key message before exploring too deep.

I also found myself reflecting on other significant aspects by speaking to the front office staff. I initially spoke with our Administration staff and asked them if they had any information on Lutheran's significant aspects which they gave to families enquiring to enrol, to which they answered no. I presented them with the question: if I was a parent who had been to the local Catholic school down the road and I came to you and asked what was special or unique to Lutheran Education, what would you tell them or give them. There was no official paperwork but their response was around kindness, grace, forgiveness and the ability to build relationships in a smaller school setting. It was rewarding to hear that our enrolments have some understanding of Lutheran Theology in schools. An area for growth could be a fact sheet 'Why Lutheran School?'. Especially for families who are not of faith who may be able to connect with some of the values and not feel fear of the unknown.

The area not mentioned to me by the Administration staff member was the foundation of Lutheran Schools, which is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Although, this is supported in Calvary Lutheran Primary School's Statement of Aim which states Calvary Lutheran Primary School '*aims to provide a program of Christian Education which will seek to work collaboratively with parents and caregivers to pursue excellence in learning for each child while nurturing them in the Christian faith*'.

I also spoke with our Finance Manager who confirmed it starts even before students become Calvary students and at the time of enrolment. Theology of the cross determines that our policies are inclusive and open for groups such

as the educationally disadvantaged, the socially marginalised, and the financially poor.

When assessing students it is important that we show our priorities are consistent with the theology of the cross rather than that of glory (Bartsch, p125). Students should be encouraged for their individual abilities and not solely on their academic contribution. Calvary reporting does have a strong academic focus with a portion of our reports dedicated to personal attributes under our school philosophy section. This is supported by the fact that the theology of the cross requires a Lutheran school to strive for excellence in all that it does (Bartsch, p125).

Lastly, we touched on the aspect of vocation. At the moment my year 2 class doesn't think too deeply about this, we did learn about others vocations during service learning. When reflecting about vocations I thought more about myself. About my vocation as a mum, wife, daughter, sister and daughter in law. What's even more I come to work each day and know I have the power to change others for good. I am blessed to say that my job as a teacher is also my vocation.

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Assessment rubric

Outcome	Exceeds expectations	Meets expectations	Not yet meeting expectations	Comments
<p>Articulate how your learning in Connect has influenced your understanding, practice and contribution to your Lutheran school or early childhood service</p>	<p>Detailed evidence of engagement with and critical reflection on your learning through <i>Connect</i>.  Descriptions and discussion of how the learning influences your practice is analytical, contextualised, insightful and supported with reference to readings and professional conversations.</p>	<p>Evidence of engagement with and critical reflection on your learning through <i>Connect</i>.  Descriptions and discussion of how the learning influences your practice is clear and supported with reference to readings and professional conversations.</p>	<p>Evidence shows little engagement with and reflection on your learning through <i>Connect</i>.  Descriptions and discussion of the how the learning influences your practice are limited.</p>	<p><i>Clear evidence that you have engaged with and referenced a range of readings.</i></p>
<p>Analyse and describe the ways Lutheran theological perspectives can shape practices in an early years' service, school or classroom.</p>	<p>Demonstrates in-depth understanding of a theological concept with astute analysis of ways it can shape practice with specific examples from your context.</p>	<p>Demonstrates understanding of a theological concept with analysis of ways it can shape practice in your context.</p>	<p>Demonstrates minimal appropriate theological understanding with general description of the ways a theological concept can shape practice.</p>	<p><i>In-depth exploration with relevant examples of how the theology informs your practice with students.</i></p>
<p>Identify and critically reflect on unresolved issues or remaining questions to develop a plan for further learning that will advance your understanding, practice and contribution to Lutheran education.</p>	<p>Insightful discussion of identified unresolved issues or remaining questions and how they inform further learning.  Detailed description of how learning plan will advance your understanding, practice and contribution to Lutheran education.</p>	<p>Discussion of identified unresolved issues or remaining questions and how they inform further learning.  Logical description of how the learning plan will advance your understanding, practice and contribution to Lutheran education.</p>	<p>Minimal identification and discussion of unresolved issues or remaining questions and how they inform further learning.  Limited information about how the learning plan will advance your understanding, practice and contribution to Lutheran education.</p>	<p><i>Good questions about science and religion and it is good to see that you have a plan for exploring this further. Please see the CSCF p25,26 which explores that the Bible does not answer all questions about the origins of the universe. There is a spectrum of Christian belief about the origins of the universe from big bang theory to more literal approaches to understanding Genesis.</i></p>