

Gospel reflections

[Matthew 9:35 – 10:8\(9-23\)](#)

The lectionary readings over the last weeks have provided a real focus on what it means to be a follower of Jesus. This continues in this week's gospel reading where Jesus is surrounded by crowds who come to him with their great needs. Jesus has compassion for them and attends to their needs, without any judgement on their worthiness and sends his disciples to go on and do the same. Jesus leaves his entire ministry in the hands of his followers, who are a diverse group and yet, as Rob Bell suggests, this random bunch go on to change the course of human history (Nooma Dust).

This passage has had me pondering the notion of *sending* and what kinds of students we send into the world after the years of learning in Lutheran schools and early childhood services – especially as students and staff have increasingly diverse backgrounds. While we pray and hope that the children, students and staff may come to a relationship with Jesus, we also recognise that this may not happen. What is the role of Lutheran education in continuing Jesus' ministry

Jodie Hoff, the principal at LORDS in Queensland, provided some insights last week in the Leadership Development Program (LDP) Gap Year [webinar](#). Jodie spoke in inspiring ways about how she has led her team to develop a culture of service learning at LORDS. Across the curriculum and year levels, students have the opportunity to inquire into the issues challenging their local and wider community and to work with their community to find authentic and agreed ways of responding to the issues and community needs. Service learning at LORDS is not a program or Christian Studies unit but an approach to teaching and learning where students grow in their understanding of a range of issues and in their capacity to creatively respond to these issues. The learning has been so effective that students continue to contribute to the school's service opportunities well beyond their school years. Jodie also shared that the kinds of work and vocations that students pursued once they had left LORDS was also an indication of the deep learning that occurs at the school. LORDS sends students who have a passion for social justice, equity, peace and care for other into the world. The experience at LORDS will be similar and different to that of other Lutheran education communities as each community will have a vision of the kind of knowledge, skills and dispositions it hopes to nurture within students.

As we reflect on the gospel reading, Matthew makes clear that Jesus' followers continue Jesus' ministry and as Lutheran schools and ECSs we do to. Tom Christenson suggests that Lutheran education is shaped by our understanding of vocation where God uses all kinds of people in the ongoing care for the world and all people. He provides some thought provoking questions to help us reflect on the contribution Lutheran education makes to the ongoing ministry of the church, the development of students and the needs of the world:

- What are the deep needs of the world that we are called to address through the process of education?
- What kinds of persons does the world need in order to serve those deep needs?
- What are the real needs of students who we are called to meet through the educational process?
- How do we educate such persons?
- What gifts (and limitations) do we bring to the task?

We see this thinking in the *Vision for learners and learning* as it describes Lutheran education nurturing children and young people who are 'aware of their humanity, open to the influence of the Holy Spirit, and growing in and living according to a cohesive worldview... 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 and caring, steadfast supporters and advocates.' [*Vision for learners and learning*]

While this vision and mission is not anything new for leaders in Lutheran education, it is something that we cannot take for granted and also fiercely protect. There are so many demands competing for our attention in a market driven and economic rationalist world. However, having a clear vision of the contribution Lutheran education makes to the holistic development of our children and young people is something that our staff and governing councils need to revisit regularly, discuss robustly, and enact accordingly. Lutheran education continues Jesus' ministry when we are communities of worship and service, sharing and living the good news of Jesus Christ. When we live out a dynamic and inspiring vision for each child or student, in developing a love of learning as God's gift for their wonder, growth, [and to inspire them to respond to the needs of the world.](#)

Benediction for Pentecost

May the love of God create in you new life.

May the power of God transform your old habits into new hope.

and

May the Spirit of God grant you wisdom and vision,

emboldening you to proclaim the good news of God's love to all.

Amen.

~ written by Ryan, Pastor at Adamsville Presbyterian Church. Posted on **rethinklife**.

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