

# *Pathways*

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## Foreword

The Lutheran Church of Australia (LCA) operates schools in order to make available 'a formal education in which the gospel of Jesus Christ informs all learning and teaching, all human relationships, and all activities in the school' [*LCA & Its Schools*].

As teachers play a vital role in the ministry of the school, the LCA 'commits itself to the promotion and support of its schools by ... providing means and opportunity for the professional theological pre-service and in-service education of teachers' [*LCA & Its Schools*]. Through the accreditation process the LCA formally acknowledges teachers when they have completed its formation, developmental and study requirements.

**Pathways** is the professional development program required for staff new to Lutheran schools under the LCA *Staffing Policy for Lutheran Schools* [2006]. The **Pathways** program comprises three elements:

➤ **Pathways: spiritual focus**

This program has a spiritual focus and is required of all staff (including graduates of Australian Lutheran College's Lutheran Strand)

➤ **Pathways: theological focus**

This program has a theological focus and is required of teachers who need to gain accreditation as a teacher (A $\dagger$ ) or accreditation as a leader (A|)

➤ **Pathways: vocational focus**

This program focuses on the Lutheran understanding of vocation and how this relates to the role of teachers in Lutheran schools. It is required of teachers who need to gain accreditation as a teacher (A $\dagger$ ) or accreditation as a leader (A|)

**Pathways: spiritual focus** has now been in use for some years. Following feedback from presenters the course has been revised and the resources are now presented as a series of 8 one-hour sessions which are available electronically on the LEA website.

The work of Anne Dohnt and Malcolm Bartsch in the writing, development and production of this resource is gratefully acknowledged. Others have contributed to the developmental and review phases by providing helpful feedback.

This material is commended for use in Lutheran schools. It will enable staff to reflect on why the LCA operates its schools, their own spirituality and how the spiritual focus of their school informs the education offered. This commitment to the professional development of its staff reflects the high regard in which the LCA holds all those who work in its schools.

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Each one of us follows our own particular pathway through life. Sometimes our direction is determined by our conscious decisions as happens when we find ourselves at a point where our path divides and we have to choose which way to go. Sometimes we are simply stumbling along, not at all sure just where we are going. Sometimes our path may seem very lonely, but at other times we are moving along with a crowd. Sometimes our path is clear and well-worn, but at other times we struggle to see a path at all.

However, just as when we are walking in the bush we may find that a path we are following joins another and then later a third, so in our pathway through life we may also experience converging pathways. The *Pathways* program provides an opportunity for teachers in Lutheran schools to focus on and to explore three separate pathways which converge to form a clear and well founded direction for teaching in a Lutheran school. While each of us has our own individual combination, each of the following three pathways is fundamental for us:

- a spiritual pathway
- a theological pathway
- a vocational pathway

### ***Pathways: spiritual focus***

Because we are spiritual beings, each person is influenced by their spirituality as they proceed through life along their individual pathways. While that spiritual dimension may be difficult to define, its impact on our being human is fundamental to who we are, and to how we view ourselves and others. It provides the assumptions out of which we live and in which we locate meaning. It impacts on our whole person, body, mind and spirit and provides the motivation for how we relate to other people and to the whole of creation.

Our spiritual pathway is formed and shaped by many different influences. It may have its point of origin in a response to nature, or in a sense of something greater than ourselves. It is fundamentally influenced by our beliefs and values, whether we are conscious of these or not. Our interactions with other people are also highly significant, both positively and negatively.

Within this broad expression of spirituality, there are those whose spiritual pathway is centred on the experience of a faith relationship with God, and particularly with Jesus Christ, God as a human being. There is the recognition that their Christian spirituality is the result of the working of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

However, Christian spirituality does not involve just our emotions or feelings. It recognises who we are as people of God, and it also determines how we live as disciples of Christ in the world. In this way, spirituality is very practical and, by the power of the Holy Spirit, it is lived out as a life of faith and obedience in all of our relationships. Hanson (p 11) writes 'a spirituality is a lived faith plus a path'.

In the Lutheran school community, there are many different spiritual pathways. Some of these may run in different directions. Some may run parallel to each other.

Others may converge and move together. Where that happens, individual spirituality is strengthened and supported by communal spirituality.

This exploration of a spiritual pathway is to help new teachers become aware of their own spirituality. Some may have a well formed and clearly articulated expression of spirituality. They may be comfortable in a number of spiritual disciplines. Others may be aware of elements in their life which they recognise as influential but which they cannot yet grasp or understand or define. All expressions of spirituality are to be valued and honoured.

The Lutheran school also has its own spirituality - its own spiritual pathway. New teachers will require time and space and opportunities for reflection to see how their individual spiritual pathways relate with the pathway of the school. Do their pathways converge? Do they allow for mutual support and strengthening?

However, a Lutheran school will reflect a spiritual pathway which is consistent with Lutheran theology. This will include an emphasis on the gospel and the freedom which comes in Jesus Christ. It will focus on the word of God and depend on the grace of God. While it will emphasise the personal nature of spirituality, it will also stress the centrality of communal worship and corporate spirituality as well as the importance of the sacraments. It will also seek to express itself in service for others, using the gifts given by the Holy Spirit.

## ***Pathways: spiritual focus***

# Structure and approach

Understanding the structure and approach of *Pathways: spiritual focus* is critical for its success in the school. It is not a leader-directed program of instruction which is trying to pass on particular content. It is not looking for any particular outcomes, except to create a supportive, open and accepting environment in which sharing and growing can occur. The main activities in the workshops include reflecting, sharing, responding, praying, using processes which are appropriate for adult learners.

Because individuals come into the program from a variety of backgrounds and experiences with various expressions of spirituality, the context is a 'haven of hospitality' which welcomes each person in a non-judgemental way. The atmosphere of the group is informal and inclusive, encouraging active participation and interaction by all participants. Therefore, those who lead the workshops are sensitive to the various needs of the individuals involved in the activities.

There is a simple structure for the workshop. Some basic stimulus material is provided on which individuals are encouraged to reflect in various ways. This then leads to a time of sharing during which participants are invited to share their reflections in their own way. The workshop ends with prayer which draws together some of the themes of the reflections. All this is done in a caring, inclusive manner. The sensitive nature of some responses which may be given also needs to be respected.

It is important to distinguish this exploration of spirituality from other induction procedures which orient new staff to the Lutheran school and their responsibilities within the school. While it is a crucial part of the initial induction, spirituality is ongoing, lifelong growth for staff members as they learn to live out their spirituality in all areas of responsibility in their life and within the communities to which they relate.

*Pathways: spiritual focus* is designed to provide opportunities and experiences for staff new to Lutheran schools to:

- be introduced to the Lutheran school, its culture, and its mission and ministry
- become familiar with, and participate in expressions of, spirituality within the school
- appreciate the support of the school community in the ongoing exploration and nurture of their spirituality
- reflect on their value as a person created by God and the implications this has for their identity and relationships
- appreciate the relevance of the biblical story for their spiritual growth
- explore service in the school in the light of an understanding of vocation

## Resources

This material contains the workshop resources for presenters of *Pathways: spiritual focus*. There are also resources to be used by the participants.

The material provided for each session normally begins with the following **resources for the presenters:**

- purposes of the session
- reflection stimulus

- focus questions
- biblical focus
- theological focus
- concepts in focus

It is suggested that participants be given a folder in which to retain the **resources** distributed for each workshop as well as any response sheets, personal reflections, journal entries, etc, which they produce during the workshops or in their own time of reflection between workshops.

These resources have been provided to give the presenter an opportunity to reflect on ideas and issues which may be discussed in the workshops and also to provide some background material which may help in preparing the workshop.

### **Workshop delivery**

Various **options** are provided for the **workshop**. Presenters select an option most appropriate for the needs of the staff, recognising and honouring the background which each staff member brings to the workshop. Each workshop follows the same simple flow pattern: **stimulus, reflection, sharing, prayer**. Presenters may feel that they wish to substitute a different activity for the one suggested. In doing this, however, it is important to retain the interactive and inclusive style of the workshop and not move into a lesson of instruction.

Although *Pathways: spiritual focus* has been prepared as eight workshops each of which would engage the participants for about an hour, presenters may choose to present the material in a variety of ways depending on the format that best suits their school context.

Presentations options:

- deliver individually through one-on-one discussion between principal and staff member
- use as eight one-hour whole staff devotions for one school term
- link sessions to provide longer sessions without compromising the content
- deliver as a one day workshop
- deliver as a retreat experience

# *Pathways: spiritual focus*

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The following versions of the Bible have been used:

CEV	Contemporary English Version
GNB	Good News Bible
NIRV	New International Reader's Version
NIV	New International Version
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
RSV	Revised Standard Version
TEV	Today's English Version