

What an open door!



Dennis Obst is the former Mission Director for the LCA SA/NT District

Partnership in the gospel

The first congregations to establish Lutheran schools in Australia also decided the syllabus for the education program in the school. It is difficult to imagine that in those times there would have been a teacher who was not also a confirmed member of a Lutheran congregation. What's more, the school was there to support and reinforce the Christian (Lutheran) nurture given in the home.

What a contrast to the scene in Lutheran schools today!

For some generations, Lutheran congregations in Australia considered ministry to Lutherans the priority and mission was directed to people of other races in faraway places. Today mission has come home. It's a different world.

A 'partnership' venture

Almost a decade ago, the Department for Lutheran Schools in SA/NT and the District Department for Mission took steps to examine and develop the partnership between church and school. A partnership team to provide over-sight for the journey was formed and a mission statement developed:

The Partnership Group aims to provide leadership, support and encouragement to congregations and schools as they work in partnership to pursue common ministry goals for the transformation of people's lives in Christ.

Significantly the mission statement made no reference to increasing the membership of Lutheran congregations, nor to getting people from the school into the church. There were in fact no institutional goals.

On reflection, it seems to me that Barry Kahl and I shared a common conviction in the power of the gospel to transform people's lives. Therefore we worked together. It was a partnership 'in the gospel'. It was a partnership pursuing ministry goals for the transformation of people's lives in Christ. That's mission.

While we work in institutional settings, the partnership is not primarily an institutional one or one determined by institutional goals.

In seeking to further understand the context for such an active partnership involving school and congregation communities, a series of surveys was conducted. We sought the opinions of staff, students, congregational leaders, school leaders, principals, pastors and chaplains.

Regional workshops were held to explore further and unpack the opinions expressed in the surveys. A large gathering attended a Partnership Day, with prominent speakers focusing on the Lutheran context, the current cultural milieu, and youth spirituality.

Among the discoveries made through the surveys and workshops were:

- » Both school and congregation respondents reflected healthy and respectful relationships between congregation and school.
- » School staff shared strong and positive concern for the spiritual life of students.
- » Congregation leaders expressed some uncertainty in regard to the congregation's quality of hospitality to 'unchurched' families.

- » Among the scores of suggestions for congregations to become more effective in mission were:
 - A call for a more inclusive and accepting approach to people 'unlike us'
 - An emphasis on building relationships
 - Worship styles and language more accessible to people today
- » While there was positive recognition of the need for church/school partnership, one had the impression that the *cultural and attitudinal differences* appeared to make this rather difficult.

For many the notion continued that partnerships do in the end lead to people from the school community becoming connected with the congregation. School and congregation leaders tend to adopt the attitude that the transformation of people's lives in Christ happens best where there are

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Life's journey

the institutional trimmings and trappings of congregational life.

Might we see it differently if we considered partnership to be primarily a partnership 'in the gospel'? In other words, a partnership in ministry – living the Christian life and making a Christ-like difference in the lives of people.

Rather than expecting the congregation's ministry to be enriched by people from the school community, the congregation could consider the school to be the place in which the congregation serves with the gospel.

The Salisbury experience

The Salisbury congregation / kindergarten / play group partnership has been a particularly healthy one. In more recent times the congregation has appointed staff to minister primarily in the kindergarten context. The two part time people, Lyn Bengler and Julie Hahn, are the catalysts for pastoral care and for resourcing parents, respectively. Pastoral care is very much into relationship building. The resourcing of parents is about sustaining and stimulating healthy family life. Apart from

providing many organised activities, both Lyn and Julie have developed lively community connections and find themselves engaged in spontaneous conversations when visiting the local malls and coffee houses. The pastor, Wayne Boehm, is equally committed to ministry with families and the Friday night worship services are accessible to people new to this kind of activity.

While it is often a short term ministry in a kindergarten setting, there is a partnership going on here 'in the gospel' and they are making a difference in people's lives.

A great opportunity

There is no doubt that the rapid growth and development of Lutheran schools have provided us with a rich and vast field in which to carry out ministry in the name of Jesus. This opportunity needs to be grasped by people from both school and congregation communities with imagination and courage.

Such a partnership needs to include a joint exploration of what ministry is and can be in the school community. What are the ministry goals which lead to the transformation of people's lives in Christ in a school context? What does a word and sacrament ministry look like in a school setting of a thousand students plus another thousand or so adults – staff and parents? What ecumenical partnerships might also be included if we are committed to growing disciples of Jesus?

For a healthy partnership, each needs to understand the other. As congregations struggle to find their place in God's mission today, transferring their long held ideas of mission to the school community may well be counter-productive. Walking with people on a spiritual search is a new experience and very different from telling people what to believe. People with ministry experience in schools may actively seek a partnership with congregation members in pursuing common ministry goals for the transformation of people's lives in Christ.

Many congregations focus their mission energies on people who have made a decision to leave the 'church'. Schools are connected to families who have decided to take a step, however small, into the orbit of a Christian community.

What an open door!



Salisbury Lutheran Kindergarten students, April 2004

Signs of church in a school community



John Proeve (top) is the principal and Stuart Traeger (bottom) the college pastor at Cornerstone College, Mt Barker SA



This article was co-written by John Proeve and Stuart Traeger

The Cornerstone College community of staff, students and families is made up of people from a variety of backgrounds, in particular from a variety of faith journeys. Some come from very strong connections to Lutheran congregations, some from various ecumenical congregations, and some, increasingly, from no Christian congregation affiliation. At Cornerstone we don't like to concentrate on these differences, rather we focus on the fact that we are all at different stages along our faith journeys. We embrace numerous opportunities to live out our faith through our devotional life. For those who are already part of a faith community this is an extension and an expression of what they already experience elsewhere. But for those who are interested in growing in their faith and do not have a connection with a faith community Cornerstone becomes their most significant expression of what we call church.

Whilst we recognise that our college is not a church, at the same time the church exists within it. What do we mean by church? The confessional basis of Cornerstone, as for all schools of the LCA, is found in the confessions of the LCA, which define church as 'the assembly of all believers among whom the gospel is preached in its purity and the holy sacraments are administered according to the gospel'. Both the preaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments are the vehicle through which Cornerstone acts as church for those who are not linked to a local faith community.

Word ministry

The proclamation of the word is a significant and integral part of daily life at Cornerstone. All staff lead and participate in daily staff devotions. For those who don't belong to a congregation, this is an opportunity to share and hear personal testimonies, be encouraged in their faith, and to pray for the special needs of individuals and the wider community.

Students and staff together participate in our daily devotional life in home groups, houses and whole school devotions. Involvement is compulsory so the message of God's love is presented in a living, diverse and relevant way but without requiring a faith response.

For some within our community the compulsory devotional life of the college is nothing more than a daily routine that you would expect in any Lutheran school. But for many others it is an opportunity to hear God's word proclaimed, reflect on it and apply it to their lives. This is certainly the case at voluntary worship which is held at lunch times on a fortnightly basis. Here staff and students have the opportunity to respond to God's love by confessing their faith, praising him in song and prayer, and being strengthened and challenged to follow his will in their daily lives.

Student led Bible study groups organically emerge to serve a variety of needs. These groups are self-directed under the oversight of the college chaplain. Students and families seek and receive pastoral direction and support through interactions both formal and informal. Prayer is an integral component of these interactions.

The pastoral care of staff (spiritual, emotional and social) is overseen by the principal, deputy principal and college pastor. This care is not only tangible but also prayerful. The Christian Living program can also be seen as a ministry time. The course material provides further insights into God's word through which the Holy Spirit enables students to grow in their faith.

The celebration of significant church calendar events such as Ash Wednesday, Passion Week and Advent/Christmas provides wonderful opportunities for sharing the gospel. A tradition within our community has been the year 12 passion meditation where students through drama and music present a reflection on the passion story. Such has been the impact of these meditations over the years that they are now shared with the wider Adelaide Hills community.

Sacramental ministry

The sacraments of baptism and holy communion have a special role to play in Cornerstone being church to its community. Children of staff have been baptised as part of whole college worship celebrations. Student baptism has occurred within the context of voluntary worship. In all of these situations

the college has been seen as the nurturing spiritual community and the college pastor has been responsible for the preparation of the family or students for baptism. Ongoing support of the children is provided and specifically observed within staff devotions on the anniversaries of baptism. Where students have a link with external church/ youth communities, contact is made with the respective congregational pastoral leaders to facilitate ongoing nurture and faith support.

The sacrament of holy communion is celebrated amongst staff at three worship services throughout the year. To foster our oneness and shared Christian faith, the opportunity exists for staff to commune or to receive a blessing. Holy communion has also been celebrated as a part of student voluntary worship.

Cornerstone College is a community of people where some openly profess the Christian faith, some are searching and seeking to know more about the Christian faith and some do not have a faith in God. This provides a unique ministry challenge and opportunity for us to be 'church' to those we serve.

The ground work

Cornerstone's letter of appointment for all staff emphasises their call to ministry within the College community:

At Cornerstone, appointment to staff is appointment to ministry. Within the college every member of staff is involved in ministry. Some have direct opportunities to teach the Christian faith and to lead in devotions. All have the opportunity to witness and model the Christian life in the day-to-day experiences of school life through their love, service, obedience, forgiveness, compassion, humility and honesty.

All staff are serving God in the development and growth of young people. Education is one of the significant ways in which God sustains his creation. At the same time Christian staff, through the work of the Holy Spirit, have the opportunity to witness to God's love through Christ, to bring others into faith relationship and to nurture the faith of young people.

With an understanding of what the church is, along with the training and equipping of staff, the ground is set to be able to live out the signs of church as we serve our community.

What young people think about the church



Rev Dr Philip Hughes is the senior research officer for the Christian Research Association.

Levels of confidence in institutional structures

A few years ago, I was the minister of a church. I had two distinct groups in my congregation. One was older, mostly people over 60 years of age. The other was younger: university students who had come to the city from rural areas. If I had asked the older congregation to lead a service, they would have said that that was my job as the professional leader. If I had insisted, they would have formed a committee, elected a chairperson and a secretary, and gone systematically about the task. I often asked the young people to take a service, and they were generally very willing. Indeed, they saw worship not as something done by the professional or as something they observed. They expected to be actively involved in worship.

While these young people were quite positive about the Christian faith and the local church, they did not approach things by means of structured institutions as their grandparents would have done. From their grandparents' perspectives, their preparations for leading worship would be seen as chaotic. There were

no set times for the group to meet. These young people lived in housing owned by the church. They would email each other about ideas from time to time as they happened to think of them. It would all come together on the day.

The disregard among younger people for institutional structures has frequently been noted. They are certainly not keen advocates of committees and older people are sometimes frustrated by the fact that younger people are unwilling to put time and effort into maintaining the institutional structures that they have developed.

Figure 1 shows the attitudes of different age groups of Australians to various institutions. The data shows there are some similarities in the patterns to different institutional structures. To that extent, there are commonalities in the attitudes of different age groups to institutions. In general, older people, especially those over 70 years of age, have higher levels of confidence in the institutions of Australian society. There is a significant dip in the attitudes of those people 40 to 49 in regard to levels of confidence in all three institutions.

On the other hand, the patterns are by no means the same across the age groups for the three institutions. Younger people are much more positive about schools and the education system than are older people. The levels of confidence in the Australian parliament are not very different among the various age groups.

Young people are more open to institutions than many of their parents. More young people under the age of 40 have positive attitudes towards the churches than people between the age of 40 and 59 years. At the same time, it should be noted that less than 25 per cent of all those aged under 70 years of age have much or a great deal of confidence in the churches. Fifty-five per cent of those under 30 years have very little or no confidence at all in the churches, as do about 42 per cent of those aged 30 to 69. Thus, young people are more divided in their attitudes than are older generations. Unfortunately comparative data is not available for young people under the age of 17.

Authority

Recent projects of the Christian Research Association have involved discussions with many young people involved in church youth groups. Several times, we have heard young people comment that they were not keen on sermons. Why should they listen to someone when there was no opportunity to respond, or to engage in discussion? On the other hand, we have also heard some very positive comments about youth leaders and pastors they admired – not because of the position, but because they were performing their roles well. Young people have little respect for position as related to institutional structures. This does not mean that they have no respect for authority. Rather, they respect people who do a job well. They certainly expect public events and activities to run smoothly and effectively. As far as young people are concerned, authority is earned rather than given by a person's position.

These attitudes are also significant in the ways younger people regard the wider church. They identify strongly with the local church and its particular activities and events. They have comparatively little time for the church as a national, or international body. They identify and have much greater interest in the local body of people.

The current attitudes to the church have a history of 40 years or so. In the 1970s, many young people of that time rejected institutions with a great deal of anger. At the time of the Vietnam War, the rise of feminism and the sexual revolution, there was a strong feeling among many people that the institutions such as the churches had betrayed people. Some of these people rejected the church and religious institutions altogether, others turned to alternative spiritualities. Many of these

people remain strongly antagonistic to religion and the churches. Some of these people are the parents of the present generation of young people. To some extent, young people are influenced by their parents' attitudes. However, it is uncommon to find the militancy among the young people that their parents have shown. While many young people have no time for churches and religion, few are actively antagonistic. Rather, religion and the churches are mostly off their radar, dismissed as irrelevant to their lives.

Forms of community

Another issue is the way in which community is formed. Many of the present church attenders grew up in the church. From childhood it was an important part of their community. They found within the church a wide group of people among whom they developed their special friendships. They did things together within the context of the church: social activities, sporting activities, as well as educational and worship activities.

In contemporary society, few Australian young people feel that they grow up into communities, although this sometimes occurs in rural settings. Most young people feel that they must form their own group of friends, their own community. School provides the best opportunity to do this and many of the relationships that are formed at school last many years beyond the classroom. The community of peers now keeps in touch as much by electronic forms as it does by being in the same physical location. Young people use a great variety of electronic forms of communication including Facebook, SMS, mobile phone calls, to keep in touch, even hour by hour.

The result of this is that 'community events' when the young people get together are arranged at the last minute. They are not organised on a continuing, regular basis, like a youth group which meets every Friday night. Young people make decisions as they go. They do not commit themselves in advance. They go along to the 'best option' at a particular time. Hence, the very nature of church activities as a regular expression of community is somewhat strange. Many young people who do connect with churches or youth groups do so on an irregular basis.

Positive attitudes

At the same time, there are some young people who are committed to the faith and see the church as an important resource for

In contemporary society, few Australian young people feel that they grow up into communities... Most young people feel that they must form their own group of friends, their own community.



that. The idea that God is a protector, ready to help in times of trouble is very important to many young people, and through church that relationship is expressed and maintained. The values of cooperation, of helping others, of compassion and social justice are important to many young people and the church is seen as a place where those values are confirmed. And sometimes, there are opportunities for expressing those values through the activities of the church. There are many young people who find the community of the church supportive. They find friends there. There are leaders whom they respect and who provide support.

What makes the difference that leads these young people into positive relationships with the church? It is not easy to say, because the same experience or activity which is positive for one may be negative for another. Positive relationships with the church are usually built over the years, often from childhood. Parental influences are an important factor. However, during the teen years, this needs to be confirmed through positive peer relationships. If young people find peers who become good friends who are also enthusiastic about the church activities, it is much more likely that positive relationships built in childhood will be further developed.

An additional factor is that young people need to feel that they are valued within the community of the church, both by its leaders, by the pastors and elders, and also by the people. One form in which this often occurs is when young people participate in some specific way, such as playing in a band, or having the opportunity to share their experiences, and when that participation is encouraged and confirmed by the congregation. Indeed, many young people who are involved in a church have specific forms of responsibility and public involvement.

Acceptance

In talking with young people in youth groups over the last year, a number of young people spoke to us about the fact that they feel that they have been judged or are likely to be judged by people in the churches. Many young

people are very sensitive of disapproval. Some expect that they will not be approved within the church community, that their hairstyles or their dress will not be accepted, their lifestyles will be considered unacceptable. Others have stories of struggling with alcohol or drugs, or with relationships that will render them unacceptable to a church community. This is seen as a rejection of themselves personally, not just a rejection of the hairstyle or lifestyle. Most young people who feel that they are judged in such a way will avoid the situation in which this occurs. Churches are not seen as places of grace, but of high and particular moral standards, suitable only for those who are maintaining those standards.

However, most young people do not get to that point of wondering whether they will be accepted or not. The Church is simply not on their radar: even among young people who go to church schools. They certainly hear a lot about it, but young people are adept at tuning out to what is not relevant to them. Church is not considered relevant. It must prove its worth. It must show that it is actively involved in making the world a better place. It must prove its place as one of acceptance and wellbeing. And then, just perhaps, it will be considered.

*Rev Dr Philip Hughes has been the senior research officer for the Christian Research Association since its foundation in 1985. For the last decade, he has been involved in extensive studies of young people particularly through schools and youth groups. He published his initial research in *Putting Life Together: Findings from Australian Youth Spirituality Research* (2007). He is currently doing a second round of surveys and interviews with young people. The Christian Research Association, which is directly supported by the Lutheran Church of Australia, can be contacted through its website: www.cra.org.au.*

The Percentage of Australians of Various Age Groups Who Have Complete Confidence or a Great Deal of Confidence in Schools and Education System, Churches and Religious Organisations and the Federal Parliament



Source: *The Australian Survey of Social Attitudes*, Australian National University, 2009.

Figure 1: Attitudes of Different Age Groups

School and church partnerships: a Catholic perspective



Paul Sharkey is the Director of Catholic Education in South Australia

It is a privilege to be asked to reflect on the partnership between the school and the broader church and I do so as an outsider to your Lutheran faith tradition. As a leader of a system of Catholic schools, I sit here wondering whether the challenges and aspirations I articulate in these reflections seem strange or familiar in the Lutheran context.

One of the more important statements in a recent Strategic Plan developed for Catholic schools in South Australia reads as follows:

We create formative experiences that are inspired by our Catholic faith and which resonate with the cultural contexts of our families. We do this by finding the courage to develop strategies and experiences which bring family and Church together in profoundly and radically different ways from those we have known in the past (Catholic Education SA, Strategic Plan).

Why do we need courage? Why do we need to develop strategies and experiences which bring family and church together in *profoundly and radically different ways from those we have known in the past?* The simple practical reality is that too few of the families who enrol their children in our schools experience the broader church beyond the school as being life-giving and meaningful in their lives. It can no longer be assumed that families who come to our schools are actively engaged in the life of the church and this disengagement has big implications for the religious dimension of the school. We are challenged to engage in a *Primary Proclamation* of the gospel, a proclamation that does not presume a prior commitment to Christ or his Church. We find ourselves with St Paul back in the Areopagus struggling to find new points of connection between the faith we love and the lives, minds and hearts to whom the gospel is being proclaimed. Pastoral strategies and patterns of partnership that may have served us well in the past need to be reformulated if they are to continue to be experienced as meaningful by families in our day.

It seems to me that three patterns of partnership between schools and the broader church are observable over the past half-century. The first form of partnership

understands church to be the community which gathers in a parish on a Sunday and does not see the Catholic school as having an ecclesial identity. The school is Catholic to the extent that its families are in church on Sunday. The problem with this form of partnership is that the religious identity of the Catholic school rests on factors which are beyond the control of the school. Whatever else they might be good at, schools have little or no control over what families decide to do on a Sunday. For the most part, they also have little control over what the parish offers those families who do attend.

I know many school leaders who say that 'the school is the church' for most families in their school. Empirically, it is hard to argue with this position which I see as the second form of partnership that has emerged over the past half-century. Most families in our schools (more than 80%?) are not engaged in the broader life of the church beyond school and, if the school is seen as having an ecclesial identity, it makes sense to say that school is church for these families. There are theological and practical problems with this position though. On a theological level, it is impossible to be Catholic on one's own. One can only be Catholic when one is joined to the broader communion of the church. On a practical level this second form of partnership fails when the student graduates from school. Essentially the student also graduates from church in the 'school is church' partnership model. Whilst any number of rich formative experiences may have been offered to the students while they were at school, when the enrolment ceases so do the ecclesial experiences. Students and

their families no longer have a faith community that they belong to. It's all over at graduation.

The third form of partnership seeks to provide ecclesial experiences for school families that survive graduation. In this form of partnership the goal is not only to have a good relationship with the broader parish but to create community experiences which engage school families in a sustainable way with the community of the wider church. These community experiences have many faces: they may begin in a social or a sporting arena, they may have their origin in a program of outreach or justice, it could be a cooking class, a prayer experience, a ritual or an experience of pastoral care in a time of crisis. There are two common elements in the experiences associated with this model of partnership. Firstly, they are grounded in the life of the school. The families do not need to go to another place in order to access the experience; the events, relationships and programs are experienced naturally in the life of the school. Secondly the experiences include members of the wider church so that when a family's child graduates from school, they are still perfectly able to continue accessing the experiences if they wish to make that choice. In this model, those families who feel drawn into the community of faith whilst their child is at school still have a place to go when their child graduates from the school.

The creation of these wider community experiences is deceptively difficult to orchestrate in the life of the school. Educators, strangely enough, do tend to think in schooling terms. Similarly, parish leaders often look to shift families and programs out of the school



Paul Sharkey pictured with students from Mount Carmel Catholic School, Rosewater SA

community into a 'parish' setting before they recognise the activity as being properly ecclesial. I have come to believe that the professional training of educators and parish leaders seriously circumscribes their vision and significantly inhibits their capacity to move into this third partnership model. Increasingly I believe we need to open traditional educational or pastoral approaches out into modes of practice which are informed by community development capabilities. I have developed the following 'community development wish list' for a church team located in a school whose mission is to exercise a ministry of outreach which invites school families into the broader life of the church. Those who would engage in such ministry need to develop the following capabilities:

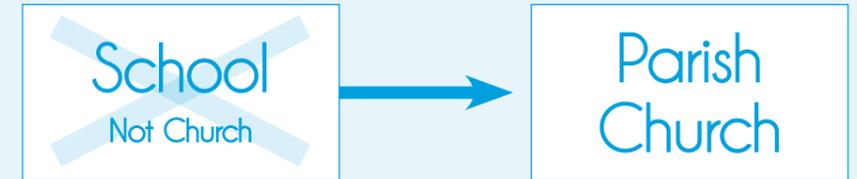
- » a living faith that provides a compelling witness
- » a capacity to reflect theologically from a Catholic place
- » an ability to understand and appreciate the contemporary outlook and mindset of families – especially those families not currently engaged in the life of the church beyond school

They also need to be:

- » able to network and offer effective invitations to families, especially those families who are in special need or those who are not engaged with the life of the church
- » creative and able to devise pastoral strategies and structures that connect and resonate with those families in new ways
- » developmental, appreciating the church's understanding of the unfolding stages or 'moments' of conversion, which begins with the desire of the human heart for love and beauty, then moves into discipleship, then abandonment of self in Christ and finally, moved by the Spirit and nourished by the sacraments, prayer and charity, journeying towards perfection
- » co-creative, building the capacity of community members so that the community develops initiatives that matter to them – as distinct from 'delivering services' to community members that professionals feel they need

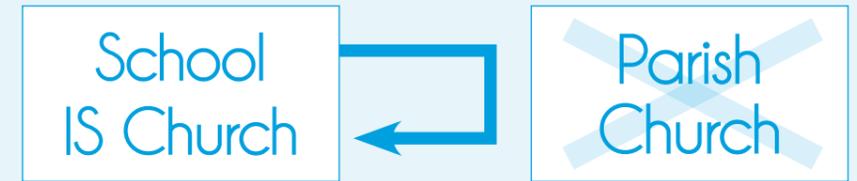
I'm not suggesting that any of this is easy. As indicated, the third partnership model I have just described is deceptively difficult to orchestrate in the life of the school. It requires school and parish 'professionals' to infuse

Model 1 Relationship: The School is NOT Church



Catholicity of Catholic School is measured by the movement of people from the School community which is understood not to be Church into the Parish Church that gathers on Sunday.

Model 2 Relationship: Church EQUALS School



School is THE Church for families in the school because more than 85% of these families do not experience the broader parish - eg. At Mass on Sunday

Model 3 Relationship: Growing Church out of School

Family Centred Church

A single ecclesial community that builds Church out of the school community by creating strong and multi-layered bonds to other parts of the local Church.

1. Recognisably much more than a school
2. Organic integration of all constituent elements

FAMILY IS CHURCH	SO IS PARISH	SO IS SCHOOL
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So are a range of other integrated services:

- Diakonia** (Service)
- Koinonia** (Community)
- Didache** (Teaching)
- Kerygma** (Proclaiming)
- Leiturgia** (Liturgy)

their practice with insights and principles that can initially seem feasible but ultimately are foreign to the professional training and practice of those involved. Challenging shifts in professional outlook need to occur if this third model is to grow out of the life of the school into the broader church. Equally challenging questions also arise in the domains of funding and governance. Colleagues I work with generally agree with my critique of the first two

partnership models above but have not always been drawn to the third model I am presenting for their consideration. As you can imagine I have been quick to invite them to tell me about their Model 4. If they don't like my third model I ask them, 'What partnership model do you see as being an appropriate vessel for a ministry of outreach which invites school families into the broader life of the church?'

Engaging students beyond the schoolyard



Paul Weinert is the Assistant Director: National Projects, Lutheran Education Australia

LEA's vision for *Service learning in Lutheran schools* relates service to the core values of Lutheran schools. Justice, service and hope are three of the key values in the *Lifelong Qualities for Learners* statements. These values compel the Lutheran school to engage its students in a range of activities beyond the schoolyard. Service learning, global school partnerships and community service activities provide avenues for students to extend their horizon beyond their own needs and to engage in responding to the needs of their wider community, both locally and globally.

As part of the Lutheran Church of Australia, Lutheran schools seek to walk with the church in its various activities. Thus, Australian Lutheran World Service is the preferred development agency for Lutheran schools. The Board for Mission provides a range of activities and challenges for Lutheran schools through increasing connections in South East Asia. LEA's special charter is to work with

the Lutheran education departments in other countries, especially Papua New Guinea and Indonesia, to help build the capacity of these departments to do their work.

At the national church level the Board for Mission, Australian Lutheran World Service and Lutheran Education Australia work closely together on behalf of the LCA. Each has a unique contribution to make in the global and mission endeavours of the LCA. Some of the specific contributions of each are as follows:

Board for Mission

- » Facilitates and supports the growing of relationships and partnerships between the LCA and its agencies with overseas partner churches
- » Helps LCA and its agencies have a mission focus
- » Establishes partner relationships between LCA identities and those in partner churches
- » A South East Asia (including Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, PNG, Thailand) focus
- » Provides opportunities for supporting mission projects such as orphanages, school for the blind, etc, and opportunities for staff and students in volunteer work

ALWS

- » Has a focus on development issues
- » Justice, human rights, refugees
- » Six countries: Sudan, Mozambique, Nepal, Cambodia, Indonesia, PNG
- » Indonesia post tsunami capacity building and PNG with AusAid grant capacity building
- » Immediate relief response to global tragedies

LEA

- » Global relationships with Lutheran schools general
- » Supportive of Board for Mission endeavours in PNG and Indonesia by working with national Lutheran school boards, supporting them in their work
- » Projects with global Lutheran school departments – curriculum and capacity building
- » A particular project is to re-engage with Evangelical Lutheran Church – Papua New Guinea education
- » Encourages school partnerships with other Lutheran schools

LEA is committed to promoting the work of the Board for Mission and ALWS in Lutheran schools with a view toward developing a culture of service. These LCA agencies' development and mission projects are commended. The three agencies, while having different foci, certainly collaborate on a range of projects, many of which are designed to assist schools to connect to overseas communities.

LEA is the first point of contact for schools when beginning the journey toward establishing an international school partnership. However, before getting to this point schools are encouraged to move through a process of deep reflection in terms of examining the service learning options that best fit their context. It is critical that schools that wish to establish partnerships do so only after broad consultation at the local and regional level and careful research. Once a school has moved through this initial process, a school representative should contact LEA to discuss which agency would be best suited to cater for the school's needs. It must be stressed that LEA does not manage the partnership process but merely acts as a conduit for the school to be guided toward the appropriate LCA agency. Church agencies such as BfM and ALWS will then take the discussion to another level in terms of offering advice and guidance as schools embark on the exciting journey of discovery that comes with connecting with another culture.

It is particularly important that the type of partnership a school embarks on complements the mission and ministry work of the LCA. The BfM and ALWS invest significant human resources to build up relationships within partner overseas churches. These partnerships are highly strategic in terms of where resources are invested; ensuring that capacity building in the church community is a priority. Therefore, any new school partnerships should be working hand in hand with the strategic intent of the LCA. When schools are a 'part of the solution' in terms of the LCA strategic vision for a particular church community, the outcomes on the ground can be effective and sustainable. However if a school partnership is arranged without proper advice and a connection to the 'bigger picture' it can actually be detrimental to the often delicate balance of cultural sensitivities, internal politics and complex relationships in these communities.

Over the past ten years through the dedicated efforts of LCA agencies relationships with Lutheran schools of Papua New Guinea and Indonesia have flourished. This work has been increasingly collaborative and has contributed to some long-standing initiatives, which have made a significant contribution to capacity building within those church communities. The following excerpt from the LEA draft International handbook gives a recent historical overview of the relationship building which has formed the basis of LCA work in these communities:

Papua New Guinea

Our schools are a vital part of the ministry of our churches and we seek to walk closely with them in a range of activities. Our churches have a living vital relationship that goes back over a hundred years and schools have been a significant part of this relationship. Indeed Lutheran schools have been one of the great legacies that the LCA has given the ELC-PNG.

Today the LCA through the BfM exercises a very special relationship with the ELC-PNG based on a long and distinguished history. As part of this special relationship the Board for Mission has encouraged LEA to work with the Lutheran Education Department (LED) of the ELC-PNG in building up its capacity to fulfil its responsibilities to provide quality Christian education. ELC-PNG schools desire to further their relationships with Australian Lutheran schools. As part of this activity, there has been strong encouragement to establish partner relationships with Lutheran schools in Papua New Guinea.

In recent years as part of the LCA's support of the ELC-PNG, Australian Lutheran World Service has established a presence in PNG to support the various agencies of the ELC-PNG.

Indonesia

Lutheran Education Australia over the past decade has responded to requests from four of the twelve Batak Churches (HKBP, GKPS, HKI, GKPI) to support their schools. In developing relationships with the schools LEA has operated under the umbrella of the LCA's Board for Mission. Whilst there have been many facets to the development of these relationships, the overall intent of the relationships has been to build the capacity of the respective church school boards to support their own schools.

In 2001 the General Secretary of HKBP visited Australia and requested the LCA to assist with the North Sumatra Batak schools. The LCA's Board for Mission Director then took the LEA Executive Director on a fact finding visit to Indonesia where he was introduced to church leaders and their schools. LEA has seen as one of its strategic objectives the fostering of global relationships in alignment with the international work of the LCA.

The more developed relationships are with the HKBP and GKPS and these relationships have included:

- » LEA assistance for both school boards in developing strategic plans. The partnership activities have always been in support of these strategic plans. For the past ten years the Executive Director of LEA has annually visited Indonesia to meet with the governing bodies.
- » A number of Lutheran schools in Australia have partnerships with Indonesian Lutheran schools.
- » Attendance at each of the Australian Conferences on Lutheran Education in 1999, 2004 and 2008 by Indonesian Lutheran school representatives.
- » The LCA/LLL Indonesian capacity building project through which LEA and ALWS have worked to erect two school buildings. Board for Mission and LEA staff have been involved in the opening of these buildings.
- » Sponsorship of Indonesian students by Australian Lutheran schools.
- » Literacy project support, eg, Books for bikes.

Earlier in the year there were several preliminary internal LEA discussions with regard to organising an international partnerships



Paul Weinert, left, at SMA YP HKBP School, Pematang Siantar, with staff and trainee teachers from Nommensen University

workshop that would involve representatives from ALWS, BfM, LEA and the three Lutheran school regions. This workshop was organised to further the current service learning focus of LEA, however the main purpose of the workshop was to look at strategies for greater interagency collaboration to ensure any engagement of schools in partnerships is highly coordinated across all church agencies and serves their strategic intentions.

As an outcome of this workshop it was decided to convene a reference group to develop a guideline to assist schools to examine service learning options in a thoughtful and reflective manner. A key element of this document will be a protocol for engaging in international partnerships but this option will not be the only course of action highlighted. The document will detail the role of the ALWS, BfM, LEA and the regions with an emphasis on specific roles as well as at what point, and how, they would engage with schools. The document will be based on a collective vision of all three agencies of the church and will include strategic initiatives for a more coordinated interagency approach to service learning and international partnerships.

It is hoped that out of this process will eventuate a clearer pathway for schools wishing to express their servant heart through fostering an international partnership. At times negotiating this type of initiative can be time consuming and complex. Schools need clear pathways and sound advice.

The LEA vision is that through increased LCA interagency cooperation coupled with succinct and user-friendly guidelines schools will feel confident to venture into this aspect of service learning, which can deeply enrich a school community.



Junior school students from SMA YP HKBP School, Pematang Siantar

Regional news: Lutheran Education Queensland

'We thank God for the ongoing commitment from the congregational members...'

At Kingaroy, St John's Lutheran Primary School has remained a school owned by the congregation. St John's is very pleased to be linked to their congregation and acknowledges the support and ties that exist between the church and school communities.

Over time there have been many opportunities for the congregation and school to get together. There are celebrations, fundraising and anniversaries that draw the communities together for fellowship.

Opportunities for shared worship times have also been an occasion to join together over the years. In recent times as the school has grown and classes increased in size these

worship times have been held on a Sunday evening every fortnight during term time at the school. The evenings include student classes sharing about their Christian Studies. Congregational members have supported these informal worship times. An annual highlight has become the presentation to the year 2 students of a copy of their own Bible purchased by the congregation. The

...one of the year 2 students came to my office on the Monday morning as he was running late for school and said, 'Mrs Folker, the reason that I'm late for school is that after receiving my Bible last night I stayed up late reading it so I slept in this morning!'

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congregational chairman presents the children with their Bible. It has become a very special event over the years with many special stories shared about what this has meant to families in the school community.

On the most recent occasion this month one of the year 2 students came to my office on the Monday morning as he was running late for school and said, 'Mrs Folker,

the reason that I'm late for school is that after receiving my Bible last night I stayed up late reading it so I slept in this morning!' Another conversation involved a parent telling me about reading the Bible with her child the night of the presentation and after the child had fallen asleep taking the Bible out into the lounge and reading it for another hour. Things she had read were so interesting that she wanted to know if the Bible could be brought home on the holidays so she could read some more. These are real life stories of God's Holy Spirit working in the lives of the families in the school community. We thank God for the ongoing commitment from the congregational members who continue to pray for and support our school community.

Helen Folker

Principal
St John's Lutheran Primary School,
Kingaroy Qld



Year 2 St John's students reading their Bibles before school



'Mrs Shirley plays games with me and reads books with me. I like it because she is really nice.'



'Mr Cec is funny. We have lunch together. It makes me feel happy.'

Mentoring program impacting students

Think of World Vision and it conjures up images of support of children in developing countries. Not as many people are aware that World Vision also runs a program called *Kids Hope* in Australian schools. Under this program volunteers go into classrooms and spend an hour a week with identified children. As World Vision does not support the program in private schools, members of the Living Faith congregation have taken the concept and applied it to a mentoring program between congregation members and school children.

A partnership, working together

Prince of Peace Lutheran College and Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, as mission entities of the Lutheran Church of Australia, have developed a Partnership Covenant to express how they can work together symbiotically. It is an acknowledgement that they can accomplish more together in impacting the lives of people than either of them can accomplish individually. It is a way of giving traction to each of their mission statements: the college's *Nurturing God-given potential* and the church's *To live and share the grace of God so our communities experience His transforming love and peace*. While these might all be nice words, it is how they are expressed and lived out which is important.

A number of initiatives have already taken place:

- » Kathy Stolz (teacher at the college and member at the church) organised the provision of meals to distressed families in Ipswich following the January 2011 Queensland floods. In a space of eight weeks, in excess of 600 frozen meals were provided to people in need through the ministry arm of St John's Lutheran Church, Ipswich. This was a united approach to *making a difference* with children at the college putting together packs for meals to be placed in, and both school parents and church families making the meals, and church people organising the distribution to Ipswich.
- » Every month during term time, different year levels in the primary school participate in a Sunday morning community worship service. Each year, the year 5 students take this service at a time when the first communion course begins. This coincides with teaching about the sacrament in Christian Studies. Children at the school as



Prince of Peace school and congregation supporting the flood victims

well as children of the congregation have taken the opportunity to begin the first communion journey together.

- » In 2010 a Sunday night youth led worship service began out of the Henderson Road Campus. This year the young people who attend that service decided to move the service to the Rogers Parade Campus, as they sought to develop a meaningful worship space and make meaningful links to the worshipping community at the church.

These are just a few examples of how this partnership finds expression. Each year the leadership teams from both communities

meet together to share yearly planning and programs, discuss ways to encourage bi-directional community relationships, and promote opportunities to participate in the mission and ministry activities of each partner.

Garth Hunt

Principal
Prince of Peace Lutheran College,
Everton Hills Qld

We now have eight volunteers and several more awaiting training – these are mostly senior members of the congregation who give an hour a week to spend with children who need that little bit of extra attention. They may work alongside of them in the classroom, share an eating time together and play board games or do puzzles. Sometimes a friend may be invited along to share an activity.

Although a degree of commitment is called for, there are times when our seniors are away and during these times the relationship is kept up through a postcard or letter.

It does not take long to build up a relationship between the two, so much so that after the Christmas break children were asking when 'Mr Cec' and 'Mrs Shirley' were coming back. The look of delight on the children's faces when they saw their mentor again was a sight that warmed the heart.

While I can write about the concept it's the words of the children that best describe the value of the program. Here are some of their thoughts about it:

- » *I like being with Mrs Jill because it makes me feel calm.*

- » *Mr Cec is funny. We have lunch together. It makes me feel happy.*
- » *Mrs Shirley plays games with me and reads books with me. I like it because she is really nice.*

Anne Maczkowiack

Principal
Living Faith Lutheran Primary School,
Murrumba Downs Qld

Regional news: Lutheran Schools Association (SA/NT/WA)

Schools and congregations in partnership

In our combined south-central, northern and western region we have in recent years commissioned a special focus to proactively and intentionally explore and encourage school-congregation partnership. This was underpinned by a strategic initiative of the LSA Council. In pursuit of action on the school-congregation partnership objective we distributed a discussion paper on the subject (available online www.lutheran.edu.au LSA region/LSA spiritual development/school-congregation partnership). This paper was used as a catalyst for discussion at a series of events mostly in a combined presentation / workshop format at multiple venues right across our vast region as we together explored the question 'Lutheran Schools: the new church?'

The profile of our Lutheran schools and the context within which we operate have significantly changed during the course of recent generations. The reality is that for the vast majority of our clientele, their local Lutheran school is the closest thing to church that they have experienced. It may not be church as many of us understand it, but Lutheran schools have become the spiritual home for a rapidly increasing proportion of young people and families – and even staff. Lutheran schools are poised to help our church define a new paradigm of what it means to be church in the 21st century, as we together redraw the boundaries of church beyond the church building to include the car park, the schoolyard, our staffrooms, classrooms, our school community in general and indeed the community at large. Encouraging schools to seriously become sacramental communities is a critical part of this new paradigm.

What follows are two examples from within the LSA, where school-congregation partnership is being modelled with excellence. You are invited to immerse yourself in these stories and pick up the sense of excitement and optimism for yourself.

Neville Grieger

Spiritual Development Facilitator
Lutheran Schools Association (SA/NT/WA)

Rattlings

A couple of years back Neville Grieger visited our staff and got us thinking about the changing nature of our school communities. I had to admit, the nature of the Lutheran school in which I started teaching 26 years ago was very different from the nature of the Lutheran school in which I find myself today. Years ago the majority of our clientele were Lutheran and those who weren't were generally Christians of other denominations. The faces that you saw in the school car park were the same faces that you saw in the pews on a Sunday. When I led school worship or wrote a devotional I never had to think, 'Will they get it?' Those were the days when everyone 'got it'. In fact they got it so well the fear of heresy loomed large over everything I said or wrote about.

Fast forward to 2009. The good news was I didn't have to worry about heresy anymore – more often than not, no one had a clue what I was talking about.

Neville understood these changes all too well and challenged us to consider how we might go about reconnecting the school community of today to God's word in a way that everyone would find familiar and unthreatening. Mention Bible, worship or bible study and the shutters came down faster than a broken roller door.

We knew it was critical to find a way to bring God's word to our community, a way that would not be wrapped up in secret 'doctrinary church speak'. Neville shared a concept which he called WOGRAIU (Word of God rattling around inside us). He spoke of connecting people to the gospel through the guise of ordinary everyday objects and ideas. Some schools were already trying it. We went to Redeemer and saw it in action. They used ordinary objects to talk about God with students and parents. The week we were there they were sharing family photos during their worship. All through the school there were family photos in classrooms and amazing conversations about the service. Kids talking about the service, imagine that!

This led to a complete rethink about our own approach to school worship, school newsletters, and devotions for staff and students. We brainstormed 40 objects which would be our RATTlings. They had to be 'non Bibley', ie, not nails, chalice, dove. Just the stuff of everyday things that rattle through our life. Cups, phones, buttons, all these were considered suitable. We wanted people to think about these things – most of them very ordinary – and see how God might be involved in them.

Each Monday the rattling object for that week would be introduced at staff devotion and then used in class devotions. The item would be rattling through the school in our class newsletters, our school newsletter, and conversations through to Friday when it would form the theme of worship. By Friday everyone was rattling! We had a lot of fun sharing with students through our *rattlings* but we also had a bottom line: whether the rattling was chickens or teacups the message of the gospel must be evident and shine through clear and true. *Rattlings* were doorways into a beautiful place, they weren't the beautiful place.

At the same time we renamed our worship from 'worship' to SHOUT! Of course it was still our time of worship and the essential elements were still there but we took a serious look at making those elements more accessible to our community. We took out words like 'invocation', 'confession' and 'absolution' and reworded them to be 'the welcome', 'saying sorry' and 'celebrating forgiveness'.

Nearly two years on and here's what we're seeing: everyone's talking about the *rattlings* – staff, students and parents. Staff was the unexpected bonus on this journey. Through *rattlings* we have grown stronger and closer as a team. People who were hesitant or shy to share about faith related matters were now opening their hearts as they explored their beliefs. There is a lot of fun and humour associated with our rattling discussions. They are still God centred conversations but the obstacles/barriers are done away and the joy of a real relationship with God is obvious. In short, there is a sense of unity and connectedness throughout the school at every level.

That's our story; it doesn't have an end point because we are constantly thinking about the changing faces and needs of our school community. The truth of God's saving grace is timeless and constant. The ways in which he reveals himself, enters our lives and hearts, are endlessly creative.

Anne Marschall

Assistant Principal
Our Saviour Lutheran School,
Aberfoyle Park SA

Communion in a primary school?

At Golden Grove we try really hard to practise what we preach. Rather than saying 'we should' or 'why don't we?' our preference is to say 'why not?' Why not have students leading the music and running the PA? Why not have students presenting the message and writing the prayers? Why not administer the sacraments?

And so we try really hard to make Friday chapel a 'serious' worship service, but pitched quite directly at primary school aged children. Friday chapel is considered to be the 'third worship service' of the congregation. As a part of that the decision was made in 2007 to have holy communion at Friday chapel and these days it is an expected thing during week 1 of each term.

It is very much our aim to make worship relevant and to connect with our school community where they are at. Is there any better way of connecting a school community than through 300 students 25 staff members and up to 100 parents coming forward to either receive the body and blood of our Lord, or a blessing from their pastor or principal?

When you ask the question 'why not' can you come up with any reasons for not using such a wonderful gift for connecting a community with its Lord and each other?

Daryl Trigg

Principal

Carly Bergen

Worship Coordinator
Golden Grove Lutheran Primary School,
Golden Grove SA



Friday chapel... pitched at primary school aged children



Pastor Richard reminded us of our connectedness with Jesus



Rod Wearn spoke on preparing the students of today for the world of tomorrow

Western Australian Conference of Lutheran Education

The second Western Australian Conference of Lutheran Education held on Friday 3 June 2011 embraced technology, and its theme 'Faith in our future' was moulded around Hebrews 11:1: *Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.*

The theme encompassed the idea that in this fast paced world of rapid technological change Lutheran educators can have faith in our future knowing that our God is steadfast and will remain connected to us always.

WACLE 2 was held at Living Waters Lutheran College (Warnbro Campus) and involved all staff from the three WA schools, Living Waters Lutheran College, Warnbro Campus, Halls Head Campus and Ocean Forest Lutheran College in Bunbury.

Following registration and a chance for attendees to enjoy a morning coffee and chat, the day began in earnest with Pastor Richard Schulze's 'e-worship'. With the altar adorned with iPhone candles and an iPad Bible, Pastor Richard reminded us of our connectedness with Jesus. The fabulous Living Waters staff band enhanced the inspiring period of worship.

Rod Wearn, LSA ICT Consultant, then spoke to the assembly on preparing the students of today for the world of tomorrow. Rod Wearn showed us how something as simple and

accessible as a video camera can transform a classroom experience for our students.

Electives covered technology topics such as using *Google Apps*, animation, creating digital stories, Mathematics and the Australian Curriculum connect tool, IWB's in early childhood, Excel basics and its application in the classroom, IT strategies for Japanese classrooms, creating photograms, exploring kids and their culture, spirituality in a digital world, atomic learning, creating graphics with inkscape, using school communication tools and IWB use in Literacy and Numeracy.

A long alfresco lunch allowed attendees to enjoy the sunshine and mingle. Providing time for networking and casual conversation between personnel from the different schools was a priority for the WACLE 2 organising team.

Another elective session followed lunch, after which WACLE 2 attendees gathered together once again to hear addresses from the three principals, John Mason (Ocean Forest), Andrew Kelly (Halls Head) and Mark Rathjen (Warnbro). All three men revealed their secret passion for stand-up comedy as they amused the gathered with witty musings on the day's theme.

WACLE 2 closed in prayer, followed by a happy hour celebration which saw further friendships and connections forged over a glass of WA wine.

Terri Taylor

WACLE 2 Committee Chairperson

Regional news: Lutheran Education South Eastern Region

Intentional, integrated ministry and mission

Church planting of St Philips Lutheran into Good News Lutheran School

From 2004 to 2006 St Philips took the decision, as a mature congregation, to move from Duncan's Road Werribee and be planted in Good News Lutheran School, in order to develop a joint gospel focused and Christ centred mission and ministry into in the Wyndham community. Since this move in 2007 there has been a steady growth in worshipping members, from an average attendance of approximately 50 to a present average attendance of about 100, and a growing ministry and mission to the community and the school.

Having the church plant on site with the school clearly demonstrates the togetherness of school and church in mission and ministry. The principal and others who take school tours always begin with the church plant and explain the relationship between church and school in ministry and mission to the community. Open days for the school are also open days for the church, with members of the congregation offering morning and afternoon tea in the church foyer and being available to visitors to explain St Philips' ministry and mission and how it serves the community together with the school. Young families have joined the congregation because the church is on site with the school.

The pastor and principal meet at a set time every week. An important part of these meetings is the opportunity for pastor and principal to pray meaningfully with and for each other and the collective ministry and mission within this community. The pastor plays a major role in training and supporting the school staff in coming to understand

the school ethos as a gospel focused, Christ centred school.

The parish/school pastor uses school facilities to cover parish office activities. The present pastor has a relatively mobile office and each Monday to Thursday most mornings he operates out of the school staffroom. This gives ready access to any staff or families of the school community who may need pastoral care, as well as being available through the administration office of the school for any members of the church and any enquiries from the general community. This degree of cooperation and integration has now extended to developing a clear working relationship between the church and school councils, which now have regular meetings together.

Worship as intentional, integrated ministry and mission

Both church and school communities see worship as a primary element of their ministry and mission within the community. Both St Philips' Sunday worship and Good News Lutheran School's mid-week chapel are seen as public, corporate worship. Usually the gospel for the coming Sunday is the text focused on in the mid-week chapel. This gives a sense of coherence between worship on Sunday and the mid-week chapel.

From next year, we will need to increase our mid-week school chapels due to beginning year 7 and not having adequate room within the church complex. We will trial having two mid-week chapels, one after the other, on Wednesday mornings. Both chapels will still be open, public worship and members of the community will be welcome to attend. St Philips congregation is also looking at the possibility of adding a second worship service weekly in the near future. They are looking at introducing a more informal, youth and young adults worship, at an evening time slot on the weekend.

There have been a number of baptisms of school family members in both school and church worship over the past two years. In all cases, active members of the congregation have been engaged as sponsors for those being baptised. When school students are baptised in the school worship, there has been an intentional connection with an active congregational family who have children in Good News. This has enabled congregational sponsors to bring the baptised child to congregational worship.



Good News student, Liberty, at her baptism

Intentional, integrated ministry and mission through fellowship

Every year Good News holds a welcome BBQ or picnic for the new families to the school. St Philips has made a concerted effort to be involved in this event to make some connections and develop friendships across church and school boundaries.

GROW women (for women's fellowship) and Shed Men (for men's fellowship) are two groups that have been developed by St Philips for gender specific fellowship. Each has intentionally connected with members of the Good News school community in an effort to develop a sense of joint community that is founded upon the love and grace of Jesus Christ for all. FRIENDS is another fellowship group that has been established by women from both the congregation and school community to provide a monthly type of sixth place in which new women to the area can connect, build relationships and come into contact with this Christian community.

Camps are another intentional way in which fellowship is increased between the school and church community. The pastor usually attends some part of each of these. St Philips also holds a family camp every two years. Families of the school community have always been invited to join with the congregation families at these camps.

Small Group Ministry has been a key focus for fellowship within the St Philips congregation. Over the past couple of years, with the increase of attendance at weekly worship through the school community, some new small groups have been established. Good News Lutheran School and St Philips church plant are situated at a fairly central point within the Wyndham city area. One of the best ways that St Philips could reach out over this developing area would be to develop regional house churches, based on a small group model, focusing on local evangelism, fellowship, nurture and care.

Intentional, integrated ministry and mission through nurture

Both church and school communities are involved in faith development and helping to grow people's faith and trust in God through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour. Both offer a variety of different courses to the members of both communities so that all can take advantage of these areas of nurture.

A large number of Bible study groups have been developed which reach across both the church and school communities. In the area of faith development, first communion instruction, confirmation instruction, introduction to Christianity and Alpha courses, introduction to Lutheran distinctives courses and courses on what Lutherans believe have been offered through both the school and church communities. There is always much more to be done in this area, but it is an exciting work in progress.

Continual discussion and communication will be required between those responsible for the Christian Studies curriculum and its development within the school and the development and delivery of Sunday school and Alpha Kids within the congregation. Since a large number of children and young people attend both deliveries of faith development, it is essential that each have their own specific feel and focus. Through this shared wisdom it might also be possible to develop areas in which church and school deliveries of faith development can be both independent and complementary.

Intentional, integrated ministry and mission through caring

Both church and school communities have been willing and supportive of each other in caring for the various needs that present within their specific communities. There are groups within both communities looking at developing various avenues to deal with welfare needs as they arise. Some of the areas in which both church and school have worked together have been gathering and distributing hampers for the needy around Christmas and looking at the development of a community garden to benefit those unemployed and going without in other ways. Both church and school communities also get involved in offering care and support to Indigenous and global missions.

Within the school the pastor has oversight of the pastoral care, but its delivery is essentially through the staff of the school. This requires pastoral availability and pastoral training of the staff so that they are able to deliver the required pastoral care that is essential and unique within a Lutheran school. The pastor also has oversight of pastoral care within the congregation, supported by the deacons and small group leaders.

Intentional, integrated ministry and mission through outreach into the wider community

Both school and church have developed methods to reach out into the local community with the gospel. St Philips has returned to running a playgroup on Friday mornings in the church plant. Good News also runs a pre-school aged music group each Wednesday after chapel which is open to all within the community. Good News also has involvement

Nhill Lutheran School – school family services

As an outreach initiative to school families, the Nhill Lutheran Parish holds school family services every time there is a fifth Sunday in the month.

The activities after the service are enjoyed by all. The children participate with enthusiasm and their involvement encourages attendance at the service.

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The school family services involve a class of students assisting the pastor in leading the worship service. Each class in the school takes a turn in helping lead a service. While it is expected that all children from the class participate in the service, it is not compulsory. The children are involved in ways such as welcoming people, reading the Bible readings and prayers, singing songs with actions, projecting student art work using the data projector, presenting a skit based on the Bible readings and helping with taking the offering.

The class that helps assist with the service also has an opportunity to plan an activity for after the service. At the first school family service this year, the year 5-6 class organised a car wash fundraiser. Since then other activities have included a talent show and a life-size board game played in the church car park. This was a type of Bible quiz with *Snakes and Ladders* and *Monopoly* all rolled into one. The Sunday school teachers have also prepared and organised activities for the children.

The activities after the service are enjoyed by all. The children participate with enthusiasm and their involvement encourages attendance at the service. Following each service there is also a free BBQ lunch for everyone.

with a basketball club giving contact into another area of the community. Involvement within sporting competitions also gives useful outreach avenues for St Philips. Finally, it is clear that every Christian within St Philips and Good News Lutheran School is a missionary within their own field of influence.

Mark Winter

Pastor
Werribee Parish, Werribee Vic

Blessings that come from holding school family services include having students involved in God's ministry, having school families who do not normally attend church coming to worship and people engaging in fellowship following the service.

God is blessing us through our school family services.

Grant Fiedler

Principal
Nhill Lutheran School, Nhill Vic



The children are involved

Life's journey



Stephen Rudolph is the Executive Director of Lutheran Education Australia

I write this article in my first week as Executive Director of Lutheran Education Australia (LEA). Far from having a sense of this new calling as yet, my mind and recent experiences have been full of immediate school matters to consider and deal with.

For just over 33 years I have been a Lutheran school principal and the agenda of schools has been full of matters such as: NAPLAN, Australian Curriculum, *My School* website, Better Schools Project, state accreditation, BER, risk and health and safety, DER, school funding, behaviour management and pastoral care; and in recent weeks a federal government initiative for a one-off bonus for the nation's top teachers. In Lutheran schools, you can also throw in congregation-school relationships, service learning, Christian Studies, mission and ministry challenges, *Pathways* and *Equip*, just to add to the significant complexity of Lutheran schools in today's Australia.

The earliest and best conclusion I have come to is that I have a great deal of listening and learning ahead of me as I endeavour to construct effective ways in which LEA and the three regions can support our schools, principals and teachers in your daily service to your communities.

This ongoing and future learning applies to all who serve in Lutheran schools, for society continues to change and throw up new challenges. My most recent realisation of this confronted me when reading *The Weekend Australian Magazine* (4-5 June 2011) the day before I started work as the Executive Director. I was fascinated to read not just of

'helicopter parents', whom we have observed and negotiated with, but now Ole Jorgenson, a principal in the USA, has come up with a new description of overbearing, overinvolved Generation X parents, namely, 'snowplough parents'. Jorgenson states, 'Gone are the days of the *helicopter parents* hovering obsessively to make sure little Taylor is prepared for successes ... Gen Xers are now *snowplough parents* knocking all potential obstacles out of their children's paths to pack their young resumé's with successes ... These parents ... blame every setback on the school.' *The Weekend Australian Magazine* observes 'you let nothing stand in the way of your child's success, even though you may be robbing them of the opportunity to build resilience. Your kid won't thank you for it, other parents won't like you for it and teachers will loathe you for it.'

When one considers the full agenda principals and teachers are daily confronted with, now Jorgenson throws us an additional challenge! And I now sit in a warm office, somewhat removed from my Lutheran school career challenges at Redcliffe (Qld), Dimboola (Vic), Wagga Wagga (NSW), Novar Gardens (SA), Croydon (Vic) and Indooroopilly/Springfield (Qld), and have not yet received a difficult parent email and/or phone call all week.

It is apparent that in life's journey as we serve in the LEA family, we all are presented with daily opportunities quietly and steadfastly to let our lights shine as we relate to others. My new calling gives me the opportunities to serve with my colleague Directors to bodies such as General Church Council, District Church Councils, Australian Lutheran College, Lutheran Laypeople's League, federal and state governments and numerous others. Lutheran school principals and teachers, I wish to strongly commend and encourage you as you face the complexities of schools, and yet do so using your immense professional capabilities and reflecting the spiritual dimension of life.

In Lutheran schools, we surely treasure the spiritual and the opportunities we have to share the good news of Jesus' salvation. In the pressure and hectic-ness of our personal and professional lives, please take the time to read the following extract I recently received from a Catholic principal colleague:

In the Lutheran schools visited, the Lutheran ethos is seen in the teachers' care of students and the ways principals and teachers supported students. Great attention is given to the welfare of students and their families. An example is the attention to and no tolerance attitude to bullying and the enormous efforts made to include parents, as well as students, in such a focus. Lutheran schools are holistic in their approach to the students rather than focusing only on academic success. There is a supportive atmosphere and a deep spiritual care in your schools. Lutheran school principals and teachers speak of the support that the students consistently offer each other as indicative of the Lutheran school ethos.

Such a powerful observation is deeply reassuring and provides a clear acknowledgement of the great strength we have in our principals and teachers. I wish to acknowledge your courage, compassion and spiritual conviction. It shows out in our Lutheran schools as we deal with the complex and numerous daily challenges, and as we also dare to patiently understand the 'helicopter' and 'snowplough' parents of today's world.

In my initial foray into this new role, I have great confidence in our Lutheran schools and our principals and teachers. Whatever challenges we face, we have people who serve our students, parents and communities with compassion and understanding.

Thank you!

Serving the Lord together

A full list of references for the articles in this issue is available from the LEA office.