



THE PRINCIPAL AS SPIRITUAL LEADER

According to Lutheran Church of Australia (LCA) policy: 'schools are part of the mission and ministry ('an integral part of the ministry' according to the model constitution) of the LCA those that lead them must be able to identify in all ways with this mission and ministry. The principal is required to provide spiritual and theological leadership to the school and the LCA requires that pastor and principal operate in a spirit of mutual ministry'¹.

Our Foundation

The leadership framework of Lutheran Education Australia (LEA), *Growing deep*², provides a structure to enable Lutheran schools to be places of service and transformation and contribute to the ministry of the LCA. The Lutheran lens identifies key theological concepts that underpin Lutheran education. Viewed from a theological perspective, the Lutheran school context in which principals live out their vocation as principals is a complex and challenging one but also one which presents them with many opportunities and blessings.

Growing deep foundational statements	How this applies to principals ³
Lutheran schools and early childhood services as part of the mission of the Lutheran church, are communities of worship and service, sharing and living the good news of Jesus Christ.	All of the individuals who make up the community of a Lutheran school are spiritual people. However, they express their need to experience awe, mystery, and a sense of the transcendent in very different ways. Christians believe that the community of the Lutheran school is also the context in which the Holy Spirit through the Word of God and the sacraments calls people to faith in God and nurtures the faith of those who already believe. Lutheran school principals, as part of their vocation, are spiritual leaders in their schools. While they have final responsibility for the spiritual life of the school, principals will in this area, as in other areas of their responsibility, delegate authority to others; in the area of spirituality, particularly to school or congregational pastors.
Lutheran schools and early childhood services are communities which acknowledge God as creator and join in the ongoing creation and care of the world and all people	This responsibility as spiritual leaders is incorporated in the Lutheran understanding of the vocation of principal which recognises that God continues to work in creation using human beings to carry out his purposes.

¹ Lutheran Education of Australia, 'Church membership and the Lutheran school principal', (Adelaide, SA Lutheran Church of Australia, 2016) (Available from

<https://www.lutheran.edu.au/download/churchmembershipandthelutheranschoolprincipal/>)

² Lutheran Education Australia, "Growing Deep Leadership and Formation Framework." (2018).

³ Malcolm Bartsch, 'The principal as spiritual leader', (Adelaide, SA Lutheran Education Australia, 2014) (Available from <https://www.lutheran.edu.au/download/directions-4-principal-as-spiritual-leader/>)

Growing deep foundational statements	How this applies to principals ³
<p>Lutheran schools and early childhood services are communities that recognise that God has intentionally created each person and that each person is uniquely gifted to live in relationship with God and others.</p>	<p>God gives individuals various gifts and abilities which they can use to serve others and he places them in situations where they can use and develop these gifts and help others to do the same. However, theology of vocation also challenges Lutheran school principals to recognise the need to maintain balance between the various areas of responsibility which they have both inside and outside the school</p>
<p>Lutheran schools and early childhood services are communities where grace abounds. While recognising the brokenness of humanity, they reflect the unconditional love of the Father, revealed through the saving work of his Son, Jesus.</p>	<p>Lutheran theology distinguishes God as working within the world in two ways – with the law and with the gospel, with justice and with mercy [‘the two hands of God’]. As spiritual leaders in their schools, Lutheran school principals are challenged to function clearly under the ‘two hands of God’, even though maintaining this distinction is very difficult at times. On the one hand [‘right hand’] they have the responsibility under God as the spiritual leaders of the school to ensure that the Word of God with the gospel of Christ at its heart is clearly proclaimed in the school and informs all learning and teaching, all human relationships, and all activities of the school</p>
<p>Lutheran schools and early childhood services are communities that value learning as God’s gift to people for their wonder, growth, and to inspire them to respond to the needs of the world.</p>	<p>One the other hand [‘left hand’] it means that principals are educational professionals who have the responsibility under God of ensuring that their school is the best place of education it can be and that it complies with all state requirements.</p>
<p>Lutheran schools and early childhood services are communities open to the influence of the Holy Spirit, who invites and equips for a life of worship, learning and service.</p>	<p>Theology of the cross presents the paradox that with the eyes of faith given by the Holy Spirit, the love and glory of God is seen most clearly in the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. As Jesus himself said, he came ‘not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many’ [Mat 20:28]. Being disciples of Christ is therefore a call to service as God in Christ has served us.</p>
<p>Lutheran schools and early childhood services are communities of hope, nurtured by the promises of God’s word, love and forgiveness which empower staff and students to embrace the future with confidence.</p>	<p>As spiritual leaders in their schools, Lutheran principals will model Christian service and encourage such service in and through their schools. However, they will also recognise that it is in this area of their vocation as spiritual leaders in their schools that they may experience theology of the cross most keenly as they deal with difficult situations and times of suffering, tragedy or distress in their communities</p>

Implications for Practice⁴

The Growing deep leadership framework also clarifies and develops an understanding of how God's word, Lutheran theology and spirituality informs leadership across all areas of responsibility. A number of implications and responsibilities, challenges and opportunities arise from the principles and context stated above. These include the following:

Principals

- ✓ Are active communicant members of the LCA⁵, able to articulate the core teachings of Lutheran theology and to provide leadership in witnessing to the Christian faith and in living out that faith clearly and openly in the school. *Growing deep capability – Growing oneself – Deepening faith*
- ✓ Set aside time for nurturing their own spirituality, including the contemplative aspects of spirituality, through study of God's Word and an active prayer life. *Growing deep capability – Growing oneself – Deepening faith*
- ✓ Recognise that the Holy Spirit works within the school community to call people to faith and to strengthen the faith of those who believe. *Growing deep capability – leading the team – nurturing faith*
- ✓ Integrate their expressions of spirituality and their theological insights into their professional practice and activity. *Growing deep capability – engaging the community – modelling integrity*
- ✓ Participate regularly in congregational worship and school worship and in frequently leading school worship. *Growing deep vocational practice – Strengthening Lutheran identity*
- ✓ Foster an active prayer life and study of God's Word in the school community together with the school or congregational pastor. *Growing deep capability – leading the team – nurturing faith*
- ✓ Promote and lead in the spiritual formation of staff in the school and in the accreditation of teachers new to Lutheran schools. *Growing deep capability – leading the team – nurturing faith*
- ✓ Value the teaching of Christian Studies in the school by ensuring that time, resources and in-service are provided for Christian Studies teachers. *Growing deep vocational practice – Strengthening Lutheran identity*
- ✓ Lead by example in undertaking theological studies and in encouraging and supporting teachers in their theological studies and development; *Growing deep capability – leading the team – nurturing faith*
- ✓ Demonstrate and foster an attitude of service in the school and in the world based on theology of the cross and to promote social justice under God's 'left hand' work in the world. *Growing deep vocational practice – community building*
- ✓ Recognise the reality of sin in the lives of all members of the school community and to develop approaches in pastoral care and counselling based on a sound grasp of law and gospel. *Growing deep vocational practice – Strengthening Lutheran Identity*
- ✓ Cultivate a Lutheran ethos within the school by promoting the customs, celebrations, rituals stories and personalities which foster the values and beliefs central to the school and thereby help to create a community of hope, compassion and welcome. *Growing deep vocational practice – Strengthening Lutheran Identity*

⁴ Malcolm Bartsch, 'The principal as spiritual leader', (Adelaide, SA Lutheran Education Australia, 2014) (Available from <https://www.lutheran.edu.au/download/directions-4-principal-as-spiritual-leader/>)

⁵ Lutheran Education of Australia, 'Church membership and the Lutheran school principal', (Adelaide, SA Lutheran Church of Australia, 2016) (Available from <https://www.lutheran.edu.au/download/churchmembershipandthelutheralschoolprincipal/>)

- ✓ Work together collegially with the pastor of the school or congregation recognising the particular role of each in the school. *Growing deep vocational practice – Leading effective organisation and management*
- ✓ Demonstrate commitment to the public teaching and practice of the LCA and to promote the ministry and mission of the LCA. *Growing deep capability – focusing on outcomes – develops strategies*
- ✓ Balance the various areas of responsibility to family, school, church, society, government and self which principals carry in their vocation. *Growing deep capability – Growing oneself – living positively*

School governance assist principals to do this by:

- ✓ Supporting principals in their vocation and to providing opportunities for principals to grow spiritually through such options as retreats, time out, theological studies, mentoring and reflection.
- ✓ Praying for principals in their vocation, also as the spiritual leader of the school.
- ✓ Actively recruiting Lutheran principals and senior leaders.
- ✓ Requiring leaders to be accredited as a leader in Lutheran schools.

BLEA assist principals to do this by:

- ✓ Ensuring that there is an intentional, on-going program of spiritual and theological formation for principals individually and as a group.
- ✓ Carefully monitoring principals who may be struggling in their vocation, particularly in their role as spiritual leader in the school, and to providing appropriate support, encouragement, and opportunities for growth.
- ✓ Identifying and providing appropriate preparation for potential principals.
- ✓ Working together with ALC in providing opportunities for theological study to prepare principals and to stimulate ongoing theological development for principals.