This Edition

Iona Pilgrimage

Service Camp

Anglican Ethos in the Classroom

Experiri is a quarterly newsletter presenting stories of innovation in school ministry from Australia and beyond. Each edition provides single page profiles of innovative strategies that have been developed in response to challenges or emerging issues for chaplains or others in the school, including Heads and Religious Educators. If you are interested in contributing to Experiri see our contact information below.

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St Columba College, located in the Northern Suburbs of Adelaide, is a faith community based on Anglican and Catholic traditions and has its own special character. The Iona Pilgrimage was established to enable some of our Senior School students to ‘walk’ in the footsteps of Columba, the Patron Saint of the college, and explore his life, values and mission. The pilgrimage through London and Canterbury allowed the students to visit sites of significance to the history and traditions of the Anglican and Catholic churches.

What was the response to the need?

The concept of ‘Pilgrimage’ to Iona meant that the journey became much more than just a sightseeing tour. It was also a journey of considerable spiritual significance that allowed the participants to explore their spirituality and personal response to God’s invitation to faith. The pilgrimage included excursions to Westminster Abbey, Canterbury Cathedral and Westminster Cathedral, where the pilgrims took part in a variety of liturgical celebrations.

What was the impact?

The students gained an insight into the turbulent history and conflict that occurred in the Christian Church in England. This deeper understanding of the college’s two faith traditions enabled the students to make connections between their spirituality and their knowledge, allowing them to make informed decisions about their faith. The few days spent in Iona facilitated a more spiritual, reflective time, giving students the opportunity to encounter God in stillness and silence, in nature and in ritual and in relationship with each other.

What were the greatest challenges?

The extent of the journey meant that it was not possible to take large numbers of students to Iona, so one of the aims of the pilgrimage was for the students to establish links with the rest of the school community. Students visited classrooms to talk about their experiences and were involved in liturgical celebrations based on the life of St Columba. A Pilgrimage blog was created to facilitate communication with both the school and the wider community and the students took the responsibility for contributing to this. In this way, the pilgrimage was a journey for the whole school and many classes, especially in the Primary School were able to make their own response to the pilgrimage.
What was the need or challenge being addressed?
We identified two issues. The first was providing a free-of-charge service learning experience for students that could match our international experiences. The second was to enhance some of our community partnerships in the local area.

What was the response to the need?
The Mackay Children’s Holiday Camp was established to address our challenges. The camp, based on the successful Sony Foundation Children’s Holiday Camp Program, is an opportunity for Year 11 students to take on the role of primary carers for local young people with special needs. Significant consultation was undertaken to ensure that we had the community support. We also have established a strong connection with the Churchei Sony Camp to embrace their experience with running these types of camps.

What was the impact?
The impact of our first Mackay Children’s Holiday Camp was far greater than we could have expected. Our Year 11’s relished with the opportunity to take on the added responsibilities of being the primary carers for our 10 campers. Our Year 12’s and staff volunteers ensured that all of the activities ran smoothly and that all jobs were completed efficiently. All involved in the camp were extremely proud of their efforts in giving back to local community. Most of the people involved cannot wait for the 2015 camp. This is a great indicator of the success of the camp and the impact on all involved.

To ensure success in our community, it was decided to put the local community at the forefront, hence why it was decided to name the camp after the city of Mackay, not our School. This decision was very well received and we are grateful for the large amount of community support.

What were the greatest challenges?
We always had the understanding that establishing the camp would require a lot of work. The greatest challenge was balancing this amount of large amount of work between a small number of staff when we are busy with our daily roles as educators. As a group, the planning team used the mantra that ‘it will be easier next year.’ As the Camp Coordinator, I am extremely thankful to the staff that sacrificed their time to set the camp up. Out of the challenge of getting it all done, it was wonderful to see staff setting a great example to our students that leading with service does require sacrifice.
Innovation #3

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“practical guidance for teachers on how to express an Anglican ethos in their classroom”

What was the need or challenge being addressed?

It was identified that while Heads may have the most impact organisationally on the Christian and Anglican ethos of a school, it is teachers who have the greatest impact on students through their daily interactions with them. Clearly if a particular ethos was to be developed in a school the classroom is the primary unit needing attention. It was felt that something needed to be produced that would guide teachers on how they may express an Anglican ethos in the classroom in concrete and practical ways.

What was the response to the need?

A single page document called “Anglican ethos in the classroom” was developed that provided fourteen ways that teachers might develop Anglican Ethos. These statements were generated by considering the existing ethos statement in Queensland as well as national and international commentary on what makes an Anglican ethos. Current issues and problems confronted by those trying to build an Anglican ethos in schools were also taken into account and addressed. Wide consultation was sought in creating the document. In developing the document it was hoped that all teachers in Anglican School whether they are Christian or not might find the statements useful and be able to apply them in their practice.

While most of the statements are easy to understand professional development on the document will be critical to its successful implementation.

What was the impact?

The document has only just be released but it has so far been well received by those who have seen it. A trial professional development session was run in one school and the feedback was that the document has been embraced. Some schools have already used it as the basis of their own professional development.

What were the greatest challenges?

The greatest challenge was to make the document truly reflective of an Anglican Ethos. It is recognised that any one of the statements will not be particularly Anglican and may be common to many Christian denominations. It is hoped however that as a set of statements they do represent the Anglican way of Christianity. It is also recognised that this document does not say everything that it could say, but that it is a first and important step in helping teachers think about and create a classroom with a Christian and Anglican feel.