This Edition

Exploring Mission

Joint Confirmation Prep

Sports Serve

Experiri is a quarterly newsletter presenting stories of innovation in school ministry from Australia and beyond. Each edition will provide three or four 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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Innovation #1

Innovators: Adelaide Diocese

The Reverend Natasha Darke (St Peter’s Girls)
The Reverend Dr Theo McCall (St Peter’s College)
The Reverend Ben Bleby (St Peter’s College)
The Reverend Sonya Paterson (Pulteney Grammar School)
The Reverend Andrew Mintern (Senior Chaplain for Schools)

“coming together for Confirmation preparation gives students a sense of being part of something bigger”

What was the need or challenge being addressed?

There are twelve schools in South Australia, most offer opportunities for students to prepare for confirmation. Often chaplains run these sessions on their own with a fairly small group of students. Instead of all running groups separately, the chaplains wondered, “Is there a way of sharing this and bringing the students together for some part of the preparation?”

What was the response to the need?

On Tuesday 27th August about sixty students from Pulteney Grammar School, St Peter’s College and St Peter’s Collegiate Girls School (plus three siblings from two other schools) gathered at St Peter’s Cathedral for a day of confirmation preparation. The day was divided into different sessions. After an opening liturgy led by Andrew, there was a fun icebreaker activity led by Ben, followed by a welcome to the Cathedral by the Dean, The Very Rev’d Frank Nelson. Then we broke into three mixed groups for a tour of the Cathedral with Cathedral staff, which was great fun and highly informative. After morning tea Natasha led an interactive small group session on “Who is God?” using visual and scriptural images. Then Sonya led a session on sacraments followed by Peter Sandeman (CEO of Anglicare-SA) speaking on discipleship and social justice. Following lunch each chaplain spoke of their own faith journey chaired by Andrew, then there was a free for all time of questions to the panel of chaplains chaired by Theo, and the day concluded with a closing prayer time.

What was the impact?

The desired impact has been for students to feel they are part of a bigger group rather than perhaps feeling like the odd ones out in preparing for confirmation. Coming away from their school environments heightened the sense of this being a special thing to be involved in. The impact for chaplains was to share responsibility and enable us to focus on specific areas. Exploring the Cathedral was a real highlight and gave the students a chance to feel a greater sense of connection with this special place.

What were the greatest challenges?

The greatest challenges were avoiding the day being just a talking head at the front - the Cathedral was a great venue in many ways but a bit limited in others (pews, hard floors, no AV equipment). Managing a larger number of students was an issue too and if, as expected, this event is more popular next year, more staffing support and more small group work may help greatly.
Innovation #2

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“What was the need or challenge being addressed?”

Sports Serve initially captured the desire of student sports leaders and key staff to address the overall sports culture of the College by increasing both participation levels and performance outcomes. More so, the Sports Serve initiative invites students to be hopeful about how God can use them for his purposes in the area of sport, transforming and renewing society as agents of the creation mandate. We wanted students to engage with a God who lives in the space of their passion for sport and where they could explore what it means to be a growing leader and to follow Him.

“What was the response to the need?”

Sports Serve’s vision is ‘to nurture and grow students in sports, leadership and faith so they can serve God and others in the College, community and the world’. The Sports Serve Leadership Team meets fortnightly. This includes College Sports Captains, House Captains and interested others, all in Years 10-12. They explore and solve challenges, shaped by the gospel and kingdom values. Leadership of sports houses and experiential service-learning coaching programs have featured. Other initiatives include a mission focus each two years around either the Soccer World Cup (The Ultimate Goal) or the Summer Olympics (More than Gold).

“What was the impact?”

Our new College Captain had previously commenced a before school Swim Squad as an act of service to the College. At other times, the group will serve our After School Hours Care program by organising and coaching sports and sharing what they have been learning in our regular meetings. We are planning for a holiday sports service and outreach mission next year. A number of other schools have also been to training we have held this year, and are to commence their own Sports Serve groups with potential for a broad movement to grow.

“What were the greatest challenges?”

The greatest challenge is to remain authentic in this approach to whole-life discipleship. This is a sport group, not another lunchtime Christian group. Faith is explored in a learning community that genuinely engages in the medium of sport; it is not simply a ‘bait and switch’ approach to ministry. The initial process of finding space for this initiative for a busy school and busy students was a challenge but the initiative is now well established in the leadership development and broader ministry program of the College.
Innovation #3

“bringing students together to learn about the new face of Christian mission”

What was the need or challenge being addressed?

Mission and development practices have changed drastically in the last half-century, but not everyone is aware of what constitutes effective development. The Anglican Board of Mission has perceived a need for educating Anglican students and staff on the most effective and sustainable development practices that seek to transform our own mindsets from one of charity to one of solidarity.

What was the response to the need?

The Anglican Board of Mission in partnership with Uniting World have run one-day ‘One World Wontok’ poverty and development conferences in capital cities around the country in the last two years for students in years 9-12 from Anglican and Uniting Church schools. These conferences seek to engage students experientially with the complexities of poverty and encourage critical thinking on what responses are appropriate to global issues of poverty and development.

What was the impact?

The conferences are gaining momentum every year. Students and staff have reported the conferences opened up a whole new understanding of the issues associated with global poverty and development and stimulated social justice groups to engage into a more mature dialogue with others. Delegates and teachers have modeled conference activities in their own classrooms around the country as well as in chapel and assemblies.

What were the greatest challenges?

Finding a school day in the year that suited the timetable of all Anglican Schools in the areas has been the greatest challenge. Some schools could not attend due to timetable clashes and others due to existing commitments to secular or non-Anglican development organisations. Supervising staff and delegates who attend the conference face the challenge of putting newfound knowledge into practice in their school in ways that reflect the necessary transition from charity to solidarity.

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