

DOCTRINAL STATEMENTS AND THEOLOGICAL OPINIONS (DSTO)

VOLUME 2 J. CHURCH-SCHOOL ISSUES

The public ministry in the Lutheran school

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1. THE LUTHERAN SCHOOL

- 1.1 The document 'The Lutheran Church of Australia and Its Schools' [DSTO II J1] describes the Lutheran school as an agency of the Lutheran Church of Australia. It exists 'to make available ... a formal education in which the gospel of Jesus Christ informs all learning and teaching, all human relationships, and all activities in the school'.
- 1.2 The Lutheran Church of Australia, through its districts and congregations, establishes schools to serve the community, witness to the gospel, and draw people into Christian fellowship, nurture, and worship.
- 1.3 The Lutheran school serves students, parents, the church, the community, and the government by providing a quality program of formal education.
- 1.4 Education 'informed by the gospel' means that the gospel is at the centre of the school. Thus the gospel
 - critiques all educational philosophies and practices
 - affirms the uniqueness, within the totality of God's creation, of each individual, created in the image of God
 - affirms the gift of salvation
 - enables the new life in Christ
 - is reflected in the lives of teachers, who understand and live out the gospel.
- 1.5 The gospel is present in the school through the proclamation of the word, the administration of the sacraments, and the mutual encouragement and consolation of the people of God.
 - 1.5.1 The word of God is proclaimed in preaching, in the teaching of Christian studies, and as part of the formal teaching program.

- 1.5.2 Through the sacraments the gospel is presented in a visible form. It strengthens the faith and encourages the fellowship of the community.
- 1.5.3 As a community, Christian staff and students work together. Each Christian person is both saint and sinner. Together Christians grow, witness to the love of God in Christ, and stand by one another. They experience and speak the gospel of God's forgiveness.
- 1.6 Through the proclamation of the word, the administration of the sacraments, and the mutual encouragement and consolation of the people of God, Christian staff and students are equipped, enabled, and empowered to witness and to serve.
- 1.7 As a community informed by the gospel, the school will always act in ways which observe the distinction between law and gospel. Sometimes the school will be compelled to act according to civil justice (for example, contractual questions). At other times the school will exercise forgiveness in the spirit of the gospel.
- 1.8 The church is present in the Lutheran school as staff, parents, and students are gathered by the gospel and nurtured by word and sacrament. This community of the faithful will be active in all the functions of the church, namely worship, nurture, fellowship, witness, and service.

2. THE PUBLIC MINISTRY

- 2.1 In the statement, 'The Ministry of the People of God and the Public Ministry' [DSTO II D1], the Lutheran Church of Australia affirms that the public ministry is 'public, foundational, and ecumenical, since it is by the public proclamation of the gospel and the public administration of the sacraments the Holy Spirit creates, upholds, and extends the church throughout the world'. Accordingly, if the gospel is to inform the Lutheran school, the public ministry needs to be present.
- 2.2 Thus the primary role of the pastor at a Lutheran school is to exercise the public ministry of the church through a proclamation of the word of God and the administration of the sacraments.
- 2.3 In fulfilling their ministry, school pastors empower the principal, Christian staff, and students to witness and to serve.

3. FUNCTIONS OF THE PASTOR IN A LUTHERAN SCHOOL

- 3.1 In general it is expected that the school pastor will
 - serve as worship leader: proclaim the word of God and administer the sacraments
 - exercise spiritual/pastoral care for the principal, staff, students, and any schools families who do not have a spiritual home
 - teach Christian studies and, in particular, disciple the disciples through nurture
 - equip the people of God in the school community to witness and to serve
 - promote and support Christian fellowship (*koinonia*)
 - act as a resource for staff by providing Bible studies and opportunities for reflection on theological and ethical concerns
- 3.2 Each school needs regularly to assess how it can best use its pastor(s). It must decide how the pastor can operate most effectively and also the extent of the need for the pastor's time. The following factors should be considered:

- the needs of the school community
- the size of the school community
- the gifts of principal and other staff
- the relationship with local congregations.

4. PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 People involved in the public office of the ministry of word and sacraments at a Lutheran school should be known as pastors.
- 4.2 In general there should be only one pastor on the staff of a Lutheran school, except where additional need is demonstrated in terms of the ministry of word and sacraments.
 - 4.2.1 Congregations with primary schools should designate adequate time for their pastor to minister in the school.
 - 4.2.2 Primary schools which are double streamed should consider employing at least a half-time pastor.
 - 4.2.3 Boarding schools should generally have at least two pastors.
- 4.3 Schools should designate and then adequately support a pastoral team, which may include pastor(s), counsellor(s), and teachers of Christian studies.
- 4.4 The school pastor should liaise with appropriate congregations about pastoral oversight and membership.
- 4.5 The Board for Lutheran Schools and the Council of Luther Seminary need to promote the ministry of the teaching of Christian studies, and publicise the courses available at Luther Seminary.
- 4.6 The Lutheran Church of Australia, its districts, and congregations must be aware of and be prepared to support the creation of congregations in and through Lutheran schools.