

Southland Connect March 2010

Dear Friends,

We trust that Term 1 has gone well for you. It is traditionally the term in a school where everyone can gain confidence that the 'system works' – that is, that the teachers can get to know the students, the students the teachers, and both learn the routines, challenges and joys of life together.

And again we are approaching Easter. Does it slip by in your school, or is it a focus for major remembrance, renewal and response? I have been thinking on some of the verses in I Corinthians 15 again of late – see what you make of them:

... if Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation has been in vain and your faith has been in vain... If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins... If for this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied (excerpts verses 14-19)

So if we are Christian teachers, then our teaching only has truth in it if we believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. What might be some of the implications for our schools? Here is a list of questions for us:

- a. Do the traditions of hope in my school centre around the resurrected Jesus?
- b. Do all the students come to know the story of the resurrected Jesus in an engaging way?
- c. Can we tell this by
 - i. The young students becoming excited by the Easter traditions in our school?
 - ii. The middle ones growing in confidence and awe of the mystery, love and grace of the Easter story? And
 - iii. The senior ones demonstrating their commitment in wanting to be involved in the Easter story?

May God continue to bless you in this journey.

Below is some ongoing news from us to you...



The Grad Dip Ed / M Teach (Secondary) has progressed further!!!

We are conducting our next orientation week after Easter for some more Grad Dip Ed students. Please note that we will be doing this before each term this year, in order to start any students who are still hearing about this exciting new program and who are wanting to commence before next year.

Remember that if you are a Principal who wants to start someone teaching in your high school who has a first degree in a specialist area, but who does not have registered teacher training, then you can start them as a **CONDITIONAL TEACHER** if they enrolled in a course like ours! The NSW Institute of Teachers encouraged us that our accredited distance education teacher training program would be a good option in this situation.

Also remember the M Ed and M Ed (Leadership) programs – we have had good interest from executives, senior teachers and pastors. Copies of the new prospectus are included in this letter for you to distribute as you think will be helpful. It can also be downloaded from our website.

Fee Help is Here!

We have had our official letter to say that ALL of our education programs at Morling College (including the Grad Dip Ed and M Teach) have been approved for this facility (remembering that Southland is the Education arm of Morling College). Fee Help is the equivalent of HECS loans for registered independent tertiary providers.

Southland Consultancies

The focus of this service is to provide a focal point for combined research and development between Southland and participating schools. What we are offering is to partner with you on a yearly basis to help you develop in any of the areas of curriculum, pastoral care and educational administration.

A number of schools are working with us on this at the moment – for example, one campus is using us to assist in the development of their executive in terms of their *educational development planning processes* as they grow; another is considering how we might partner with them in systematically *reviewing quality teaching* in their school through a Biblical lens that can identify the best that is currently available to them; another educational senior is *reviewing a research project* with our assistance.

If you would like to know more, please email me (at stephenf@morling.edu.au) and I will contact you about the generic format that can be shaped to the needs of your school.

A Connecting Question

When we reintroduced this last year, we gave the example of uniform and Christian schools. That is:

- How do we provide a disciplined environment in terms of standards of dress that does not sink into legalism, harshness and / or politics?
- Should we try having a standard of dress without school uniform?
- What about uniforms for staff?
- What are the Biblical principles behind the part of Australian schooling?
- Who has a really good policy that exemplifies these things?

Please send in your responses to these questions – either the parts that you would like clarified further, or some of your responses that we can share with others...

A Research Thought...

Did you see this report in the last *Education Review*? It had a sub heading that read as follows:

The research found that a student's connection to school is the most important factor shaping future wellbeing¹

The article was based on the research of Meredith O'Connor from the University of Melbourne. The article further explained:

O'Connor's analysis showed that a happy school experience has the most consistent impact on the five facets of positive development: social competence, life satisfaction, trust in public authority, civic engagement and tolerance for others (p. 10)

¹ An Education for Life Feature article in *Education Review* February 2010 pages 10-11

Another researcher who is quoted in the same article was arguing for more ‘social and emotional learning’ in the schools – and she noted that this is not best done in didactic (content driven lecture style) modes of teaching. Instead, she recommended that it “²must be centred on an interactive and reflective model of learning”.

Is this (i.e. the sense of belonging described in this research) consistent with the vision and mission of your school? If so, what are you doing to intentionally protect and develop it each year in your school community?

A Devotional Thought...

Jesus reported that people should know we are his by our love (John 13:35). Paul said in Titus that we should work to make the Gospel attractive (2:10). This appears to be very different to the Atheists convention that was held recently in Melbourne. As Rod Lyn reported in his school Newsletter on the 18th March:

... if the Christian God really is dead, then there’s not much to stop people here from being barbarians... Is this what morally superior people do when God has gone? In that case, bring God back.³

This honest report from an agnostic is perhaps reflective of what CS Lewis used to say at the Socratic club at Oxford – follow the evidence where ever it leads you... what honest evidence are we leaving in our schools for our students?

HONESTY WILL MAKE YOUR PARTICULAR DESIRES STAND OUT PARTICULARLY⁴

Shalom,

Stephen

² Dr Sue Roffey, op cit, p. 11

³ Andrew Bolt in the Melbourne Sun Herald

⁴ DESPARATELY WICKED: Philosophy, Christianity and the Human Heart Patrick Downey, IVP Academic 2009 p. 33



A Practical Footnote

Please note that in order to increase the reliability of our email communication, we are changing the address of our generic contacts. If you send it by the older ones, then it will re-direct you to the new ones. That is:

info@southland.edu.au is becoming info.southland@morling.edu.au

principal@southland.edu.au is becoming principal.southland@morling.edu.au

Let us know if you encounter any problems with this. SJF