



SRE Update

China is Right Here

I often say half-jokingly to people, "You don't have to go to China to be a missionary. China is right here!!" How true this is when it comes to gospel opportunities wide open through SRE ministry in schools.

In the last four years God has led me to teach SRE in NSW schools where 80% of the children are of ethnic background. Many come from families and countries of strong Buddhist, Hindu and atheistic beliefs. These children are in our SRE classes - for us to freely 'pour' the living gospel of Jesus Christ into their lives. Most have never heard any of the Bible stories which we take for granted.

I am often amazed and also saddened that many Aussie kids (including Anglo Australian children) in SRE classes today are completely biblically illiterate. Yet I also give thanks for these precious souls - children who are hungry and searching for basic truths like 'Who made God', 'Where did everything come from', 'What is heaven like', 'Did Jesus really die on a cross?'



In a busy, materialistic, media saturated and technologically savvy age, Aussie kids today still yearn for meaningful relationships with caring adults, wanting answers to life's big questions, and thirsting for spiritual truths the world cannot and does not give. What a privilege God has given to every NSW SRE teacher: this precious opportunity to step into the lives of impressionable children and point them to the One who says, "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." (John 10:10)

I praise God for some friends (pictured) who have caught the 'scripture bug' and joined me in this fruitful ministry!

Pauline Pang, May 2008 (Full time missionary with Children of the World, Campus Crusade for Christ Australia and SRE teacher at four public schools in NSW reaching over 220 children in eight classes each week.)

SRE News from Secondary Schools

In a multi-cultural and multi-faith school population, the reality and the perception of SRE within the government secondary schools is a much discussed question amongst SRE providers. A recent survey of the availability of SRE in secondary schools probably shocked some with its evidence that 74% of secondary schools in NSW have some form of SRE available.

Increased success with secondary SRE has been noted in NSW, where providers have displayed creative thinking to broker a workable SRE presence in local schools, or where Christian groups have invested many resources, and much time and money into this crucial ministry. Realistically, in terms of year levels covered, frequency and duration of SRE sessions, the availability is varied.

The range of models of presentation - weekly, seminar once a term, one term in a year - can hide the fact that secondary schools are losing the SRE period altogether or it has become the time for staff meetings or designated periods off. The SRE period has become lost in the acceptance that this is "the way it is done in this school".

SRE has run into difficulties in supplying personnel, especially those with training relevant to the way the secondary student learns. Other reasons can be inadequate

or unsuitable curriculum, or insufficient finances for this ministry from the SRE providers. These are problems needing urgent attention.

The challenge is for wider participation by and more finances from the SRE providers directed at the Christian education of all students. Until this happens, the mandate of the Rawlinson Report to cater to all government school students will not be met, due to lack of adequate resources, expanding curricula and common practice.

Major challenges exist for both the Department of Education and Training and the SRE providers. All students are entitled, under legislation and under the findings of the Rawlinson Report, to receive a total education in life skills. A common call to a commitment to this ministry is needed now.

Paul Worthington, for the Primary & Secondary Committee of ICCOREIS

In This Issue

SRE Teachers at WYD	2
South Coast SRE	3
A Chaplain's Story	3
Resources	4

SRE Teachers Involved Outside the Classroom - World Youth Day Days in the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle

In the time prior to World Youth Day (WYD) celebrations in Sydney, pilgrims from all over the world spent time billeted in many dioceses across Australia. In our diocese, Maitland-Newcastle, the first group of pilgrims came from Ecuador, with one lonely Mexican.

We couldn't always understand what they were saying or singing about but it was joyous. They were as happy to be here as we were happy to have them. They all loved meeting our native animals up close and personal and hand feeding some kangaroos. Spending time with these people built my excitement until the pilgrims I was to billet arrived.

This second group came from Dubai. Two young girls aged 16 and 17 stayed with my family. From the time we were introduced to them they never seemed to stop talking. They wanted to know so much about us and they just wanted to experience the Australian culture.

A day trip to the Hunter Valley

Gardens for pilgrims and parishioners filled five buses. More eating, more singing and dancing and more photos. I escorted a group of pilgrims into the wine tasting only to find my two pilgrims up at the bar tasting wine. When I told them they really couldn't be in there, one girl told me that she was only being polite: the man had offered her a drink and it would have been bad manners not to accept.

We celebrated a beautiful Mass with our pilgrims before they headed to Sydney to start their week-long celebrations for WYD. It was a very sad farewell and I don't think anyone expected to get so close to the pilgrims in such a short amount of time.

Words can't really describe what it was like to meet young people so enthusiastic about their faith and to feel the abundance of love that was shared. It is a memory that I will cherish forever.

Deanne Stollard, SRE teacher from Sugarloaf Parish



Reflections of a Pilgrim

What is WYD? WYD is an experience of a lifetime and a journey which changes you when you don't even know it is happening.

WYD is a celebration of the joy of life and being alive. It is a mixing and bringing together of people from all nationalities, social status and fields of life through which a sense of appreciation and understanding in some way of the other can take place. It is an expression of youthful energy and infectious enthusiasm.

It is also a celebration of faith and belief in the person of Jesus as saviour and of God's personal love and concern for each of us. It celebrates our fellowship: we belong to the Christian family.

The theme for WYD08 was taken from the Acts of the Apostles, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you and you will be my witnesses." (Acts 1:8)

That sense of Spirit, power and witness was clearly evident during WYD. A Sydney local commented to me on the train as we were coming home from a WYD event, "It is wonderful to have you all here...I have never seen so much pure joy on the streets of Sydney. I am happy to be alive". There was a sense of charity, kindness, generosity, gentleness, patience and self-control as pilgrims waited in long queues, walked in very slow moving crowds, shared food, chatted and swapped badges and other national totems.

For me as a person involved in the catechetical and evangelising ministry of SRE, World Youth Day was a celebration of Christian hope. While there may be division in our Christian family, if we are truly Christian there is still something that binds each of us together and that is the Holy Spirit, and because of the Spirit there is hope.

Rickie Withers, SRE Director, Diocese of Armidale

Advance Notice!

ICCOREIS Forum 2009: Volunteering

ICCOREIS is planning a forum on volunteer recruitment and maintenance, to be held in May 2009.

Details will be available on the ICCOREIS website and in the next edition of *SRE Update*.

For further information, please contact your denominational representative.

SRE on the South Coast

Bemboka is a small country school of about 80 children, 21 of whom are in kindergarten. At this rate the school looks like it will be literally growing! There is currently no SRE at the school as the two former SRE teachers retired last year and there is no one to replace them. We were, however, able to provide an Easter assembly and another one was planned for Education Week. The children seemed to really enjoy the services and the teachers were very appreciative too.

The SRE classes are also going very well at Bega and Bega West Primary Schools. Two of my classes (one

at Bega and one at Bega West) are made up of the whole of stage three and have about 70 children in each. I have an assistant, Jean, who teaches these classes with me, and it is going exceptionally well. The other class that I have is a Year 3 class and the children are little angels (well almost). Praise God that I have such wonderful children this year and that they are really enjoying SRE.

We have a shortage of SRE teachers here in Bega. We pray that if God wants this wonderful ministry to continue he will raise up people to who really want to teach SRE to our children.

David in Bega

A School Chaplain's Story

Thanks to the recent National School Chaplaincy Programme, the agricultural town of Gunnedah in northwest NSW now has its own 'home-grown' chaplain who is working at the local public secondary school.

Heath Douglas was born on Fathers' Day in Gunnedah 30 years ago. He grew up on the family property just outside of town, one of five children lovingly nurtured by Christian parents.

At the age of 16, however, Heath's secure world was utterly shattered when he came home from school one day and discovered that his beloved father had taken his own life. For the next ten years, Heath's life took a downward spiral on a path to self-destruction. Fuelled with anger and a broken heart, he hated the world, hated God, hated Jesus and hated himself.

Eventually Heath began hanging around with a new crowd in Sydney. He thought he had it made when he was offered a job with a private charter yacht in the Mediterranean and Caribbean. Setting off for what he hoped was the adventure of a lifetime, Heath soon discovered that even this fresh start in life was just another dead end - he still felt alone and empty, despite being surrounded by millionaires and luxury.

His amazing journey back to faith began when he was contacted by one of his dad's mates enquiring how he was. It had been a long time since any man had shown a genuine interest in Heath's welfare, so he found himself pouring out his heart to this Christian mentor. His oldest sister back in Australia persuaded him to buy a Bible and just read it for himself, which he cautiously did, hoping no one would catch him in the act! He read it with a view to prove it wrong, but instead he found the love and answers to life that he had been searching for in all the wrong places over the past ten years. Heath says he just utterly fell in love with Jesus. "Since I invited Jesus into my life", says Heath, "I now have that peace which I've always longed for."

Heath spent three years at All Souls Church, London before returning to Australia, and this year began his work two days a week as a chaplain at Gunnedah High. Currently he is participating in a Ministry Training Scheme at the Gunnedah Anglican Church and pursuing his own commercial interests in carpentry. As a chaplain, he has spoken to assemblies and councils, and keeps his office door open for kids to drop in during recess and lunch. During a weekly lunch club he shows an Extreme Sports video, featuring testimonies of sporting figures. Helping to coach rugby at school and jamming along with those who play guitar and drums is his way of getting alongside kids. Painful though the journey was that brought Heath back home, he says he absolutely loves his job now and the opportunity it presents for him to challenge others to take Jesus at his word, "Seek and you *will* find." (Matthew 7:7)



Karen Deane, SRE Coordinator, Gunnedah

National Child Protection Week

**Children See
Children Do**

Make your influence positive

7th to 13th September 2008.

Organised by the National Association for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (NAPCAN).

For further information see the NAPCAN website, www.napcan.org.au.

Resources



Aussie Bible Lessons for Today's Kids

There are changes in the air.

Scripture Plus is changing names. This month *Scripture Plus* will be relaunched as *GodSpace*.

Designed to resource SRE teachers and building upon a great foundation, *GodSpace* is a resource that is well in tune with what is expected by today's kids. It includes coloured visual aids, lessons for various ages, songs, and engaging kids' magazines. Take your children on a journey to discover a deeper understanding of God's love for us all.

Catering for 4 to 12+ year olds, *GodSpace* is organised around a three year curriculum, publishing a new book

each semester. Each year, Book One will include Easter and Book Two will include Christmas. The Lesson Manual contains 20 lessons for each of four different age groups. Additional assembly outlines are also included.

The new *GodSpace* will continue to link the Bible to the contemporary world in a way that makes sense to kids. It will still be relational, so that as well as gaining information, kids are encouraged to share their own lives and experiences.

GodSpace will be produced and distributed by a new company, Burst Christian Resources.

Want to find out more? Then email the team at info@godspace.org.au for a *GodSpace* Sampler or check out the website at www.godspace.org.au.

*Rev Cheryl Clendinning, GodSpace
Production Coordinator*



Chaplaincy Training

In my new role as a lay chaplain at Anson Street School in Orange (a school for children with mild to severe special needs), employed under the National School Chaplaincy Programme, I had the opportunity to attend a week-long training course during the July school holidays. The course *Chaplaincy in Educational Settings* has been developed by the School of Christian Studies in Sydney to give chaplains the knowledge and skills to deliver quality chaplaincy services. This course becomes a unit at Degree/Graduate Diploma/MA levels by the satisfactory completion of three graded assignments.

Ten school chaplains, (two ordained and eight lay) from city, regional and rural NSW attended. Together with our course facilitator, Dr Grant Maple, we explored various models of chaplaincy in primary and secondary government and non-government schools in NSW. We discussed how varied our roles could be and looked at how school chaplaincy programmes have developed and are operating in other Australian states.

We studied the theology and ecclesiology of chaplaincy, how faith develops, professional ethics, confidentiality and legal issues as well as professional development, supervision and the issue of self care. During the course of the week we explored issues facing children, adolescents and young adults.

We were reminded that the role requires us to be available to help students explore moral, ethical and

spiritual issues without imposing our own beliefs. Also, that teaching SRE is usually NOT part of the chaplain's role in NSW schools. It was noted that the school chaplain's role is to support students from multi-faith backgrounds.

Principals from one secondary and two primary schools shared how they envisaged the role of school chaplains and affirmed them as a vital part of the school team. Representatives from Scripture Union NSW discussed the Queensland chaplaincy programme and the establishment of the national programme. Representatives from genR8, CEP and Anglican Youthworks discussed suitable programmes and resources to use. Professor Alan Rice discussed stages of spiritual development, the Christian worldview and worldview of other faiths. Melissa Baker, a Baptist chaplain to the NSW Police Force and a lecturer in pastoral care, discussed elements of pastoral care and the importance of supervision and self-care for us.

The School of Christian Studies (SOCS) is to be congratulated on developing such a comprehensive course which enabled us to benefit from the programme. It was a great opportunity to share our own experiences and to build up a support network to help our individual needs.

*Anne Neville. Published in Anglican News, Bathurst Diocese.
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For more information about chaplaincy training go to www.socs.org.au.

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