

Tapu

Religious Studies Teachers Association of Aotearoa New Zealand



2014 Term 4 November.

God is that
to which
your heart
clings and
entrusts
itself.

Martin Luther
King

Ngā mihi mahana ki a koutou.

You will by now be thinking more about the year to come than the current year, in terms of Religious Studies classes! It is definitely time to congratulate you on what I am sure has been a busy year, with much commitment for the good of your students, and of course to wish you well for Christmas and the holidays.

Next Steps for the Association—comment from Chris Duthie-Jung, NCRS

NCRS believes it is time to see the RS Teachers Association picking up speed. Why? Because of the significant benefits to you, the RS Teachers, in carrying out your roles as effectively as possible. Ask around and you will find that other Association members find their memberships invaluable in their teaching. We're a wee way off that but not so far that we cannot make swift inroads in the coming year. So what does the Association need (and how do we get it!)?

- 1) Identification of Members (by enlarging the *Tapu* mailing list to become a more encompassing Association membership list. We need to know where RS is being taught, what schools, what teachers. To have real clout, we need to be a truly representative Association);
- 2) A Constitution – outlining who we are and what we do (we suggest this can easily be adapted from another Association's Constitution);
- 3) A website base mainly to host supporting materials around RS Achievement Standards (relatively straightforward to develop);
- 4) Association Officers, i.e. an Executive – to be drawn from the membership according to the Constitution rules.

At NCRS we, like you, have a vested interest in seeing the Association grow and become active – all of us want to see RS become a strong and well-supported sector in NZ secondary education. NCRS cannot be that Association however, we can only help you the teachers develop your Association. Our sights are set on an Association application for Scholarship RS early in 2016. But this is simply a good incentive to make happen what needs to be there for everyday teaching support.

What you can do from now on:

Talk amongst your peers about ways to achieve the above.

Compile a list of known RS-teaching schools in your region and send it in to Susan Apathy. (Mainly a matter of state schools that you know of, and any private schools.)

Talk to colleagues about their Associations – what works for them (and what doesn't!)

Start considering whether you could contribute by putting your name forward to be on the Association's Executive for a term.

Early in 2015 we will send out the current membership list to you for checking as to what schools might be being missed. A draft Constitution will be created and also sent out for your comment. At that time we will establish how we go about the the initial promulgation of such a Constitution – delighted to receive your advice on this! Then it will be time to find an Exec, at which point NCRS will get out of the way and assist as we can from the side-lines. (NZCEO is happy to continue provide the secretariat for as long as the executive wishes.)

In essence – start talking and developing ideas and watch this space!

Chris Duthie-Jung, NCRS and TCI. c.duthie-jung@tci.ac.nz

PTO

Understanding Religion at Wellington East Girls' College

John Paul Powley

We began our Understanding Religion course at Wellington East Girls' College in 2013, and have now finished our second year. It has proven very popular, filling three classes at Year 13 for the last two years, and it is set to continue that way in 2015. We originally decided to begin this course because we had noticed that our senior Social Science students often really struggled to understand major world issues that were connected to religion and religious differences. In 2013, for example, we taught our Year 12 classes about Israel and Palestine, and we also looked at women's rights issues in the Middle East. Understanding either of these issues without understanding the religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam is next to impossible.

Our course offers three internal assessments and we go on three field trips. In Term One we focus on Judaism and Christianity, and we visit a local synagogue. To compliment this, our first assessment asks the students to do a close reading of parts of Genesis and Exodus and focus on the covenants there. In Term Two we take the students out to look at the Hindu temple, mosque, Catholic church and Greek Orthodox church that are near our school. Having seen these places of worship and talked with the people there the students write an assessment about how religions traditions in New Zealand have adapted to being in this country.

At the end of the year our focus moves to Hinduism and Buddhism, and we visit a Buddhist monastery in Stokes Valley for half a day. The final assessment asks students to investigate how a religious tradition has responded to a contemporary ethical issue. This assessment is very popular, but we leave it until last to give the students plenty of time to think about the different religious traditions in more depth.

Our Understanding Religion course is still shaping itself, and the three of us teaching the course have learnt a lot over the last two years. There are tensions between students wanting to plunge into controversies, and the teachers wanting there to be a far more empathetic approach (the media are generally not empathetic to religion). There have not, however, been any tensions within the class over the actual content. The general spirit of curious engagement in a "safe" environment has been embraced enthusiastically.

We teach very much alone, and would be keen to hear from anyone else tackling this course, or these standards. We have three Level Three classes, and may extend to Level Two in 2016.

John-Paul Powley, Head of Social Science, Wellington East Girls' College. johnpaul.powley@wegc.school.nz

Hamilton Diocese Religious Studies Moderation Committee

Paul Shannon and Theo Van der Nest

The Hamilton Diocese Secondary Religious Studies Moderation Committee (HSREMC) was established in 2013 when a need arose in the diocese for assistance in the development of NCEA assessment tasks for Religious Studies. Many of our RE teachers did not have confidence in the quality of their tasks and were experiencing variable moderation results from NZQA. The unavailability of NZQA Best Practice Workshops within the diocese was also a factor.

The senior RE teachers from Sacred Heart Girls' College and Saint John's College in Hamilton, together with the diocesan Secondary Religious Education Advisor, started having fortnightly meetings at the diocesan centre where they discussed a specific Religious Studies Standard and its relationship to the Understanding Faith Curriculum (NCRS, 2010) as prescribed by the New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference (NZCBC) (NZCEO, 2013). The meetings also addressed how assessment material can be developed in order to meet the

requirements of the various NZQA Religious Studies Standards (NZQA, 2014) that are available for assessment. The resulting tasks were then stored at the Chanel Diocesan Centre and every school that needed help had access to these assessment tasks with assessment schedules. All meetings opened with a short reflection and prayer and all decisions were minuted.

The Committee decided to expand and began inviting RE teachers from other denominational schools to attend. They also saw the need for RE teachers to be able to share their concerns and the committee began planning professional development courses for RE teachers.

The use of Google docs as a way of sharing material has become a valuable asset. It has resulted in an increased sense of collaboration (NZCEO, 2013) and camaraderie amongst the schools within the diocese, especially those in Hamilton who meet every second week.

References

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Nga Tawa School Teaches Penal Reform Using AS 90822 From Anne Van Gend's newsletter

Anne Van Gend, the Anglican Schools Director, sent in the newsletter of the Anglican Schools Office, and I was very interested to read that Nga Tawa Diocesan School Principal Carmel Spencer is teaching AS 90822 'Explain how a contemporary social action derives from ethical traditions of a religious tradition', using the topic Penal Reform. She has taught it to a dedicated group in the evenings, and it has been a very transformative experience for the girls. It sounds wonderful. They are likely to use the level 3 ethics standard next year.

www.ngatawa.school.nz.

And finally...

Ngā mihi mō te Kirihimete. Ngā mihi o te Tau Hou.

A merry Christmas and a happy New year to you all.



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