

Special Character Guidelines



The Kingsway Trust was established in 1986 as a charitable trust for the advancement and promotion of the kingdom of God in Aotearoa/New Zealand. The Kingsway Trust is the proprietor of a network of schools and pre-schools that partner with parents and families to provide Christ-centred, accessible, quality education for children and young people in the Auckland region. The Kingsway Trust serves its network of schools and pre-schools by providing infrastructure and resources, guiding the Special Character of the schools, and maintaining relationships within the network. The Kingsway Trust works in partnership with the New Zealand Christian Proprietor Trust (NZCPT), through which the schools were integrated with the state.

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Introduction

The Kingsway Trust (KWT) schools and pre-schools are non-denominational Christian communities of learning. They were founded to work in partnership with Christian parents to fulfil their responsibility for the education of their children. KWT schools provide a Christ-centred learning environment where all aspects of school life, learning, and relationships are informed by Scripture and shaped by the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The core beliefs, commitments, and values outlined in the documents “Our Faith” and the “Theological Framework,” are expressed through the seven core practices of the Special Character Guidelines: Prayer and other spiritual practices; Valuing and respecting others; Christ-like character formation; Engaging with the Scriptures; Thinking theologically; Delivering a Christ-centred curriculum; and Mission, Vocation, and Service.

Each practice aligns with and is an outward expression of a core area of the Theological Framework.

Theological Framework  Seven Core Practices	
Participation	Prayer and other spiritual practices
Holy Scripture	Engaging with the Scriptures
Human Formation	Christ-like character formation
Community/People	Valuing and respecting others
Knowing/Learning	Thinking theologically
Curriculum/Pedagogy	Delivering a Christ-centred Curriculum
Community Engagement & Work/Vocation	Mission/Vocation/Service

The Seven Core Practices: their purpose and function

The seven core practices guide schools as they seek to provide an environment where students can grow in faith, hope, and love. They are designed to be the structural framework for schools to shape and evaluate their implementation of the Kingsway Trust's vision for Christian education, without being overly prescriptive. Each school is encouraged to implement these practices in ways that are appropriate to their specific context. These practices will also provide the framework for triennial Special Character reviews. Schools can share how they are developing and implementing these practices so that reviewers can provide feedback to the Proprietor who is responsible for each school's Special Character.

While all seven practices encourage growth in faith, hope, and love, each practice aligns more with one than with the others. We endeavour to be communities that are inspired by the love of God, heartened by faith in Jesus Christ,¹ and motivated by gospel hope.

**Inspired by
Love/Aroha
we...**

1. foster a culture and habit of prayer/karakia and sensitivity to the leading of the Holy Spirit, desiring to connect with God and see his kingdom come in every situation;
2. value and treat ourselves and others with respect and consideration, recognising that we are all created in God's image and are deeply loved by God;
3. fix our eyes on Jesus and seek to grow in Christ-like character while extending grace towards others, recognising that we are each a work in progress.

**Heartened by
Faith/Whakapono
we...**

4. provide students with opportunities to read, explore, and study the Scriptures so that they may encounter God, grow in faith and understanding, be renewed in their hearts and minds, and become skilled in interpreting the Scriptures wisely;
5. endeavour to think theologically about all of life, searching out the truth together and listening to one another in humility;
6. deliver a Christ-centred curriculum that is informed by Scripture, inspires curiosity, wonder, and respect for God's world, and enables students to see how Christ is connected to all their learning.

**Motivated by
Hope/Tūmanako
we...**

7. cultivate an intentional outward focus expressed through mission, vocation, and service, participating in Christ's work of reconciliation, restoration, and renewal.
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¹ And the "faithfulness of Jesus Christ." The Greek term *pistis Christou* (Rom. 3:21-22; Gal. 2:16; and Phil. 3:9) can mean both. So when we say, "Heartened by faith..." we are thinking of both Christ's faith/faithfulness and our faith in Christ.

Theological Rationale for these Practices

Christian education is in part a work of counter-cultural formation.

Christian educators have sought to shape the lives of students by teaching Christian beliefs and values, encouraging certain behaviours, and equipping students to view the world from a biblical perspective. In this way they have encouraged students to *think* and *act* Christianly. Many have also sought to inspire students' *hearts* and *imagination*s. They have appealed to both head *and* heart. Recent studies have shown how important this is, because human beings are desiring beings—they are deeply shaped by what they love. They are also teleological beings, with longings and hopes for the future. What is significant for Christian education is how these loves and longings are formed. Human beings are embodied creatures, whose loves and longings are shaped by material, embodied, habit-forming practices.² These practices shape our imaginations and “prime us to approach the world in a certain way, to value certain things, to aim for certain goals, to pursue certain dreams, to work together on certain projects.”³

Our students are already being formed by cultural practices, that encourage them to value and desire certain things, and to pursue certain dreams.⁴ Such practices form students into certain kinds of people, whose loves, hopes, and dreams may or may not be aligned with the gospel. Therefore, Christian education is in part a work of counter-cultural formation. We long to see students' loves, longings, and imaginations inspired by a vision of the good life that aligns with the kingdom of God.⁵ The seven practices outlined below aim to encourage this.⁶

Guidelines for Teaching Staff

Teachers are indispensable when it comes to inspiring students to become authentic followers of Jesus Christ, growing in Christ-like character and expressing God's love to the world. Below you will see numerous examples of how each of the seven practices can be expressed. Let these examples inspire you. Be sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit, to the needs of your students and to what is age appropriate. Do what works for you and your students. Draw on your own strengths and creativity and feel free to be spontaneous and to add to these examples. The important thing is that students have opportunities to engage in each of the seven practices on a regular basis throughout the school year.

² James K.A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation*. Cultural Liturgies, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 52-53, 63, 69.

³ Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 25.

⁴ Such practices include regular visits to the mall, sports events, eating out, movie going, social media, visits to the gym, surfing the net, watching Netflix, video gaming, online gaming, etc.

⁵ Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*, 26. For an introduction to the kingdom of God see “Gospel and Hope” in the Theological Framework.

⁶ We acknowledge that the seven practices listed below are not entirely what Smith envisaged when he spoke of material, embodied practices, although many of the examples given fit this description. We have endeavoured to incorporate the best of Christian education over the last hundred years as well as recent research.

Inspired by Love/Aroha

1. Prayer and other spiritual practices

Inspired by the love of God, we foster a culture and habit of prayer/karakia and sensitivity to the leading of the Holy Spirit, desiring to connect with God and see his kingdom come in every situation. Our teachers pray regularly for one another and for the students in their care.

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Faith, Hope, and Love

Prayer and other associated spiritual practices provide students with opportunities to connect with God and to grow in faith, hope, and love. Prayer helps students deepen their *faith* in God as they reflect on God's good gifts, thank God and celebrate what he has done, share with God what is on their minds, and experience answers to prayer. Prayer inspires *hope* as students become sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit and begin to see how their prayers can align with God's purposes for the world. Prayer also helps students become aware of God's presence and God's *love* for them, for others, and for all creation.

Prayer and the Theological Framework

Prayer is an outworking of our Participation in Christ. It is about communion and connection with God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It's about being receptive to God and allowing God to work in us and through us. Prayer also contributes to healthy Human Formation; unites and strengthens us as a Community/People; is an essential component of Community Engagement; transforms our Work/Vocation; sheds light on our Knowing/Learning; and provides inspiration for the delivery of Christ-centred Curriculum/Pedagogy.

Classroom Practice

Our teachers provide students with opportunities to develop a *daily* habit of prayer/karakia. Below you will find a list of examples of different kinds of prayer students and teachers can engage in:

- simple prayer/karakia (such as a blessing, prayer of thanks, grace before a meal, or prayer for a personal need);
- individual and corporate prayer for the wellbeing of those we know (e.g. prayer with a child who has been hurt in the playground, with a student struggling with a learning problem or personal crisis, or for a fellow classmate who is sick);
- individual or corporate prayer/intercession for people or issues of concern in Aotearoa/New Zealand and the world;
- prayer journaling;
- learning and praying some of the prayers of God's people in history (e.g. the Lord's prayer, the prayer of St. Francis of Assisi, etc);
- praying through some of the Psalms;
- praying karakia in Te Reo Māori;

- writing personal prayers to God;
- engaging in contemplative forms of prayer;
- listening prayer.

Our teachers also provide students with opportunities to *regularly* engage in other spiritual practices, such as:

- meditation on a few verses or a parable from Scripture;
- singing songs/waiata about God or worshipping God through song;
- expressing faith through various artforms such as music, dance, drama, and visual arts;
- hearing, watching, or writing stories that inspire a love for God, others or creation;
- sharing stories of how God has helped them during a difficult time or answered their prayer;
- celebrating Christian festivals such as Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost through art, music, food, drama, and other expressions.

Recommended Reading

Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices that Transform Us*. Revised and Expanded. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2015). (Note especially the sections on celebration, gratitude, worship, journaling, devotional reading, and prayer).

Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: Study Guide Edition* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1989).⁷

*Tom Wright, *The Lord and His Prayer* (London, UK: SPCK, 1996).⁸

⁷ This book is a little dated but is still a valuable resource. Note especially the chapters on Meditation, Prayer, Worship, and Celebration.

⁸ Highly recommended. This little book takes the reader through every line of the Lord's prayer. It will help you understand what Jesus meant and what it means for us today to pray the Lord's prayer.

2. Valuing and respecting ourselves and others

Inspired by the love of God, we value and treat ourselves and others with respect and consideration, recognising that we are all created in God's image and are deeply loved by God.

Faith, Hope, and Love

Every human person has been created with dignity and value. Therefore, we are exhorted to *love* our neighbour as ourselves. Jesus reaffirmed this when he taught his disciples to love one another, and even to love their enemies. Such a culture of love and respect will attract students toward *faith* in Jesus Christ and will give them *hope* for the future. When students feel valued and respected by others, and experience the love of God, they will be enabled to love and respect others.

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Valuing Others and the Theological Framework

The practice of valuing and respecting others aligns most closely with Community/People. It enables school communities to form a culture of trust, understanding, and grace. It also strengthens school communities and makes them attractive to others.

This practice also connects with other areas of the Theological Framework. The rationale for valuing and respecting others is found in the Scriptures. This practice is also a pre-requisite for Knowing/Learning and Christ-centred curriculum, since all knowledge is grounded in relationship. It promotes Human Formation as teachers encourage growth in Christ-like character and pay attention to the physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual needs of their students. It is essential for effective Community Engagement, and it will contribute to the success of students in their Work/Vocation.

Classroom Practice

Our teachers help foster this practice by modelling respect toward others and by providing students with encouragement and opportunities to:

- perform acts of kindness and service;
- use encouraging words;
- treat themselves and others with care, respect, and good manners;
- welcome new families and students;
- express their appreciation of others;
- share resources and show generosity;
- work individually and collaboratively;
- express their language and culture;
- learn about and respect the cultures of others;
- learn about and value the bi-cultural heritage of Aotearoa/New Zealand;
- learn about and celebrate the heritage of their school;

- respect their own property and the property of others;
- practice the art of listening well;
- support and comfort those going through times of grief, sadness, and pain;
- celebrate the progress and achievements of one another;
- celebrate birthdays;
- learn how to make peace;
- exercise forgiveness and make amends for wrongs.

The practice of valuing and respecting themselves and others is:

- taught and modelled by teaching staff and management;
- reinforced in the playground, in the classroom, and on the sports field;
- employed through restorative practices of justice;
- and celebrated and rewarded in class and school gatherings e.g. assemblies.

When fostering such behaviours teachers need to be mindful that some students might take advantage of the kindness and generosity of others and attempt to manipulate them. Our schools will do all in their power to prevent such forms of bullying.

Recommended Reading

Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices that Transform Us*. Revised and Expanded. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2015). (Note especially the sections on Community, Service, Blessing Others/Encouragement, Compassion, Control of the Tongue, Forgiveness, Justice, and Truth Telling).

3. Christ-like character formation

Inspired by the love of God, we fix our eyes on Jesus and desire to grow in Christ-like character while extending grace towards others, recognising that we are each a work in progress.

Faith, Hope, and Love

Our teachers seek to inspire in their students, growth in Christ-like character, recognising that genuine formation occurs when a person responds to the work of the Holy Spirit in his/her life.⁹ We do not want students to conform to expected standards of behaviour out of a sense of legalism or simply to win the approval of others. We seek the outworking of genuine *faith* in Jesus Christ.

We endeavour to inspire students with a vision of the kingdom of God that will captivate their hearts and imaginations and redirect their loves and longings. We offer a biblical vision of the future that is characterised by reconciliation, restoration, renewal, and *shalom*. This stands in contrast to the idols of current culture such as individualism, greed, consumerism, materialism, and hedonism. Inspired by the *love* of God and this *hope*-filled vision of the kingdom of God, students will want to respond to the call God has placed on their lives and will begin to see how they can participate in the mission of God to bring restoration and renewal to all creation. As they respond to the promptings of the Holy Spirit they will grow in *faith, hope, and love*, and in Christ-like character.

This practice holds holiness and grace together. We encourage students to grow as disciples/authentic followers of Jesus Christ, while also being gracious toward others, just as Jesus was gracious with those he met. There will be times when we need to be patient with one another, recognising that we are each a work in progress.

Christ-like Character Formation and the Theological Framework

This practice most closely aligns with Human formation. However, it is also informed by Scripture, is an outworking of Participation, is connected to Knowing/Learning and Curriculum/Pedagogy, is strengthened through Community Engagement, and prepares students for effective Work/Vocation.

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⁹ Traditionally the church has used terms like "sanctification" or growth in "holiness" to talk about the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. However, these terms tend to be filled with people's ideas about what practices constitute holiness. Therefore, we have chosen to focus on something more concrete i.e. "Christ-likeness," particularly because we are working with children and young people. Since the work of the Holy Spirit is to renew us or conform us to the image of Christ, then growth in holiness (or sanctification) is about becoming more like Christ. Therefore, we encourage students to focus on Jesus Christ, who he was, what he said and did, and how he related to people, and to respond to the Spirit of Christ who lives in all those who believe.

Classroom Practice

Our teachers, in cooperation with parents, help foster this practice by providing students with opportunities to:

- turn towards God and put their faith in Jesus Christ;¹⁰
- grow as disciples/authentic followers of Jesus Christ;
- grow in faith, hope, and love;
- be gracious with others;
- use their gifts and talents for the glory of God and the benefit of others.

Our teachers provide students with opportunities to discuss, reflect on, and practice the following character qualities:

- humility and servant-heartedness;
- honesty and courage;¹¹
- loyalty and faithfulness;
- kindness and gentleness;
- patience and perseverance;
- diligence and a willingness to work hard;
- discernment and wisdom;
- thankfulness and appreciation;
- and being a good sportsperson.

These character qualities are:

- taught and modelled by teaching staff and management;
- reinforced in the playground, in the classroom, and on the sports field;
- celebrated and rewarded in class and school gatherings e.g. assemblies.

Recommended Reading

Paul G. Hiebert, "Conversion, Culture and Cognitive Categories" in *Gospel in Context 1 (4)* (1978), 24-29.¹² <https://danutm.files.wordpress.com/2010/06/hiebert-paul-g-conversion-culture-and-cognitive-categories.pdf>

James Bryon Smith, *The Good and Beautiful Life: Putting on the Character of Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: Hodder and Stoughton, 2010).¹³

¹⁰ For the use of the word "turn" in place of "repent," see the Theological Framework, Appendix B: Meaning of Terms.

¹¹ Courage is a Christ-like character quality. We want our students to exercise courage alongside care and respect, so that when the need arises, they will be able to raise the hard questions, speak on behalf of others, stand up for what they believe and challenge injustices.

¹² This article discusses what we mean by the word "Christian," and whether we understand this word as a bounded or centred set. It can help us reflect on where we stand in relation to Christ and the way we view other Christians. It can also help those engaged in cross-cultural mission, for it raises awareness about how language and concepts differ from one culture to another.

¹³ This book takes us through Jesus' "Sermon on the Mount" and provides insights for growing in Christ-like character.

Heartened by Faith/Whakapono

4. Engaging with the Scriptures

Heartened by faith in Jesus Christ,¹⁴ our teachers provide students with opportunities to read, explore, and study the Scriptures so that they may encounter God, grow in faith and understanding, be renewed in their hearts and minds, and become skilled in interpreting the Scriptures wisely.

The Holy Scriptures are God's inspired written word to us through human authors. They reveal who God is, who we are, what went wrong, and what God is doing to put things right. They tell the unfolding story of redemption which culminates in Jesus Christ.

The Old Testament anticipates Christ, shows the need for Christ, and attests to Christ. The Gospels reveal Christ, and the rest of the New Testament testifies to Christ and shows what it means to follow him and participate in his mission until he returns. The Scriptures provide us with an understanding of the world and our place in it, and they tell us where history is going and how we can be part of it. The Scriptures also provide us with a vantage point from which to view, affirm, and/or critique the patterns of this world.

Faith, Hope, and Love

Our desire is that through engagement with the Scriptures, students will come to *faith* in Jesus Christ and grow in *faith* as they follow him. Our teachers encourage students to develop a love for Scripture by providing them with age appropriate opportunities to engage with the Scriptures in ways they will find rewarding. Our teachers also want students to be captivated by the *love* of God and the *hope*-filled vision of the kingdom of God provided by Scripture.

Scripture and the Theological Framework

This practice most closely aligns with Holy Scripture. However, it also informs all other areas of the Theological Framework, such as Human Formation, Participation, our Knowing/Learning, how we relate as a Community/People, our theology of Work/Vocation, our Curriculum/Pedagogy, and our Community Engagement.

Reading Scripture as Disciples of Jesus Christ

The diverse books of Scripture are embedded in one overarching narrative that runs from Creation to New Creation. By keeping this grand narrative in mind, we are reminded of where we fit in the overall drama and what this means for how we read and apply Scripture. We are not ancient Israelites. We are disciples of Jesus Christ. Therefore, we live now as people of the

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¹⁴ And the faith/faithfulness of Jesus Christ.

new covenant looking back to remember what Christ has accomplished and looking forward to see where the story is going and how we can align our lives with this.¹⁵

Therefore, when exploring a passage of Scripture with students, there are some questions we do well to keep in mind. We can begin by asking, “What does Scripture say?” This encourages students to pay attention to what is actually written. At this point students may also want to explore the meaning of some biblical terms/concepts and find out more about the people, places and cultural practices mentioned. A good Bible dictionary can help here. Then we can ask, “To whom was this written, when, and why?”¹⁶ “What kind of genre is being used, and what difference does that make?” And “where does this passage fit in the overarching story and what does it contribute to that story?” If the passage is from the Old Testament, we can also ask, “What light does Jesus’ life, teaching, death, and resurrection shed on this?” Then we are ready for the final question, “Given what God has done in Christ and where the story of Scripture is going, what might this passage have to say to us today?”

Age-appropriate Teaching of Scripture

Our teachers endeavour to teach Scripture in ways that are age appropriate. Pre-school aged children and those in Years 1 to 3 will benefit greatly from learning about Jesus. If Christian faith is about following Jesus Christ, then children need opportunities to learn about Jesus, to know that he loves them, and to hear Gospel stories that reinforce this. When students see Jesus for the wonderful person he is, they will want to follow him. Students this age can also be introduced to some of the important stories of the Bible and learn where they fit in the grand narrative.¹⁷ They can memorise portions of Scripture, retell stories from Scripture to a friend, role play stories from Scripture, and turn Scripture into art, music, dance, or drama.

Children in Years 3 to 6 will benefit from learning the overarching narrative of Scripture, in addition to what has been said above. Then they can begin to understand what God is doing in history, why Jesus came, where history is going, and how they can be part of it. They can practice retelling the overarching narrative of Scripture. They can learn how to meditate on a passage of Scripture (e.g. a parable). They can write their thoughts about Scripture in a prayer journal. They can learn how to work with a passage of Scripture, thinking about what it means in the light its surrounding verses and chapters. Students in Years 5 to 6 can also learn where the major periods of the Bible fit within a historical timeline.¹⁸ And they will benefit from being able to ask questions and raise doubts and concerns in a safe environment. If teachers are unsure how to facilitate or answer a question, they can admit they don’t know or explore the

¹⁵ Tom Wright, *Surprised by HOPE* (London: SPCK, 2007).

¹⁶ A look at the surrounding verses and chapters can help here. A good study Bible can also help.

¹⁷ This includes some of the important stories from the Old Testament e.g. the Creation accounts.

¹⁸ For example, Abraham and his family lived during the first half of the second millennium BC; the events recorded in Exodus, Joshua and Judges occurred during the second half of the second millennium BC; the time of the kings (David, Solomon, etc) occurred during the first half of the first millennium BC; and the exile and return from exile occurring in the second half of the first millennium BC. The New Testament covers events during the first century AD.

answer together with their students. It is better to give an honest answer than a simplistic one, or to shut down a genuine question.

Students in Years 7 to 13 will benefit from all the above. They can also work through whole books of the Bible. The book of Acts can be particularly inspiring for students this age. They can explore some of the historical books of the Old Testament and learn about the historical, cultural, and geographical background of events recorded there.¹⁹ This is also a good age to introduce some of the Psalms and Proverbs, and important passages in the Prophets and the New Testament Epistles. Students this age can also learn how the Old Testament anticipates Christ and is fulfilled in Christ,²⁰ and what it means to follow Christ living between the end of Acts and the last chapters of Revelation.²¹ They can practice working through a passage of Scripture, retelling the grand narrative of Scripture in 3 or 5 minutes, or writing the gospel message using everyday language.²² Students in Years 12 to 13 will also benefit from learning how the Bible came to exist as it does and why we can trust it. They are also at an age where they may wish to explore biblical topics that speak to contemporary culture or current events.

Classroom Practice

Our teachers provide students with regular,²³ age appropriate opportunities to engage with the Scriptures. For example, students can:

- learn the overarching narrative of Scripture;
- learn about the key events of Scripture e.g. the Exodus;
- learn some of the key concepts/themes of Scripture e.g. the kingdom of God;
- learn where individual books and stories fit within the overarching narrative and how they contribute to this;
- work with passages from Scripture, reading them in context;
- raise questions about the meaning of particular words, verses, and passages;
- memorise portions of Scripture (in context);
- discuss how Scripture relates to their experience of the world;
- hear the good news about Jesus Christ and the significance of his life, teaching, death, and resurrection;
- consider what it means to be disciples of Jesus, living between the end of Acts and the last chapters of Revelation;
- learn how literary context,²⁴ historical context, and genre inform meaning;
- become skilled in reading and applying Scripture wisely;
- learn about the nature of the Bible (i.e. what kind of book it is), how it came to exist as it does, its historical value, and why we can trust it as God's inspired word;

¹⁹ If students are introduced to the historical background of Scripture at school and know where to find such information, it is less likely they will be misled by claims in the media that some new discovery has proved the Bible wrong. Such claims are often misleading, exaggerated, or based on insufficient data or a faulty premise.

²⁰ By this we don't simply mean that Jesus fulfils some prophecies of the Old Testament. Rather, he fulfils all the Old Testament e.g. he is the new Adam, the true Israel, the sacrificed lamb, the great high priest, the temple, the true image of God, the promised Davidic king, the reigning Son of Man, and he fulfils all the requirements of the law.

²¹ That is, living in the years after Christ's ascension and before his return in glory, when the kingdom has come in part but not yet in all its fulness.

²² For example, the kind of language they find in mainstream media. This will help the students grapple with what the gospel really means and how to convey this to others in words that are familiar.

²³ Preferably, at least two to three times a week.

²⁴ That is, the verses and chapters surrounding a given passage of Scripture.

- engage in games/activities that reinforce learning e.g. the Bible Timeline Challenge;
- retell stories from Scripture or the overarching story of Scripture;
- give a short devotional message arising out of study of a passage of Scripture;
- express Scripture through various artforms e.g. art, poetry, music, dance, drama;
- share with others what a passage of Scripture means to them.

Teachers can also share with students why the Scriptures are important to them.

A Word about Biblical Resources

There are many biblical resources available to assist teachers in the delivery of this practice. Some are better than others. Some primary school resources focus on extracting morals from biblical stories, whether or not they are intended by the text. Others provide activities for students that bear little relation to the biblical story in question. Look for resources that help students make sense of Scripture and make connections between Scripture and their own lives. Look also for resources that will inspire in students a sense of wonder at how great God is, that will encourage in them a love for Jesus, and will captivate their imaginations with a vision of what God has been doing in history, where history is going, and how they can be part of it.

Those in management would do well to permit teachers the freedom to use biblical resources creatively, to work to their strengths, and to respond to the needs of their students. Schools would also do well to invest in a good Bible dictionary series e.g. the IVP Dictionary series.²⁵ This would enable teachers and senior students to learn more about key biblical concepts, people, and places. Schools may also want to invest in a good Bible Atlas and some commentaries. Most commentaries are technical and academic. However, Tom Wright's series of commentaries for everyone are pitched at a good level for senior students and teachers.²⁶

Recommended Reading

Roshan Allpress and Andrew Shamy, *The Insect and the Buffalo: How the Story of the Bible Changes Everything* (Auckland, NZ: Venn Foundation, 2009).²⁷

*Craig G. Bartholomew and Michael W. Goheen, *The Drama of Scripture: Finding our Place in the Biblical Story*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014).²⁸

Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, 4th ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014).²⁹

²⁵ This series includes the *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, the *Dictionary of Paul and his Letters*, the *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, the *Dictionary of Old Testament Prophets*, etc. These could be held in the reference section of the school library. Digital versions are available through Bible software like Logos Bible Software.

²⁶ For example, *Acts for Everyone*, *Matthew for Everyone*, etc.

²⁷ This short book introduces the reader to the grand narrative of Scripture and explains why it is important to read Scripture with the whole story in mind.

²⁸ Highly recommended for all who teach Devotions and Biblical Studies. This book introduces the reader to the grand narrative of Scripture. It follows a Creation, Fall, Israel, Redemption, Church, New Creation framework, and covers many of the concepts discussed in the Theological Framework.

²⁹ This book introduces the reader to the Bible and provides valuable guidance on how to read it well.

5. Thinking Theologically

Heartened by faith in Jesus Christ,³⁰ we endeavour to think theologically about all of life, searching out the truth together and listening to one another in humility.

When Jesus was asked, what is the greatest commandment, he replied, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your *mind*, and with all your strength."³¹

Jesus expects his disciples to love God with all their minds. This entails that Christians think, not only about their work but also about their faith and what this means for how they live.

Heartened by faith in Jesus Christ, we endeavour to think theologically about all of life, searching out the truth together and listening to one another in humility.

We aspire to grow in our ability to think theologically and to bring the resources of Scripture, experience, reason, and tradition to bear on whatever topic is at hand.³² We recognise that we do not have all the answers about how God works in the world. God knows everything, we don't. "For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known."³³ We recognise that our finitude limits what we can know, and our fallenness can distort what we know. However, we also acknowledge the work of the Holy Spirit in renewing our minds.³⁴ Therefore, as humble inquirers on a journey, and with a degree of epistemological humility, we seek to become communities of learning, growing together in faith and understanding so we can better fulfil our vocation.³⁵

Faith, Hope, and Love

There are many ways we can begin to think theologically about life. Here is one approach based around the lenses of faith, hope, and love. When working with a textbook, film, story, news item, or advertisement, we can consider the following questions:

Faith: What ideas are raised here and how are they dealt with? What wisdom is conveyed here? Does this say anything about people's beliefs/values? What does this urge us to believe/value or commit ourselves to? To what degree, if any, does this align with Scripture or the gospel? Does this say anything about how we might live fruitful and purposeful lives?

Hope: Does this say anything about universal hopes, dreams, concerns, or fears? Does this speak about the kinds of crises people go through in life, such as stress, loss of work, sickness, death, loss of property, poverty, war, natural disasters? If so, what does it say about these things? Does it offer consolation or a resolution, and if so, how does this align with gospel hope?

³⁰ And the faith/faithfulness of Jesus Christ.

³¹ Mark 12:30; Matt. 22:37; Luke 10:27.

³² The four resources of Scripture, reason, experience, and tradition are sometimes referred to as the Wesleyan Quadrilateral. While we draw on each of these resources, they are not equal in value. Scripture is our primary source and authority. The word "tradition" refers to those core beliefs and practices of Christian orthodoxy handed down by the church in each generation e.g. the Apostles Creed. For us, as evangelicals, our "tradition" includes certain core beliefs we inherited from the Reformers e.g. *sola fide* i.e. we are justified by "faith alone" and not by works of the law.

³³ 1 Cor. 13:12.

³⁴ Rom. 12:2; Col. 3:10.

³⁵ Stackhouse, *Need to Know*, 105.

Love: Does this say anything about the human need to be connected, to love and to be loved? Does this reveal anything about God's love? Does this urge us to do anything? How does that align with what God calls us to do? Does this say anything about how we might bless/serve others? Does this suggest how we might develop/care for God's creation?

Thinking Theologically and the Theological Framework

This practice most closely aligns with Knowing/Learning. However, it is also informed by Trinity, Cross, Scripture, Participation, and Faith, Hope, and Love. Thinking theologically is linked to Curriculum/Pedagogy and Work/Vocation, and it informs how we relate as a Community/People and engage in service and mission.

Classroom Practice

Our teachers provide students with age appropriate opportunities to grow in faith and understanding, and to learn, discuss, and offer their thoughts on such topics as:

- God the Father, Son (Jesus), and Holy Spirit (i.e. the Trinity);
- the Bible and what it says;
- what it means to be human;
- what it means to be a disciple/authentic follower of Jesus Christ;
- the nature of the world;
- relations between God, human beings, and creation;
- God's sovereignty, providence, and purposes in history;
- the problem of suffering and evil;
- the purpose of prayer;
- important Christian men and women in history and what they did;
- the contributions, mistakes, and lessons we can learn from Christian history;
- Christian denominations as diverse expressions of Christianity;
- where the boundaries of orthodoxy lie;
- pressing issues of faith and/or practice where Christians disagree;
- how to discern what is true or false, right or wrong, misleading or deceptive, wise or foolish;
- how Scripture and the person of Christ can inform all areas of life;
- how we might respond to the challenges of life or concerns the students have;
- the gospel and culture, and the opportunities and challenges facing us today;
- how we can draw on Scripture, reason, experience, and tradition to make wise decisions;
- the gospel, bi-culturalism and the Treaty of Waitangi;
- the gospel and other religions;
- how students can participate in Christ's work of restoration and renewal in the world.

Teachers can also share with students their own faith journey and provide them with opportunities to express (e.g. through speech, writing, art, and music) what God means to them and how he is working in their lives.

Students in Years 10 to 13 will benefit from learning something about Christian history and theology. This can help them understand what the church has done well, where the church has made mistakes in the past and why, why there are many denominations and what we can

learn from them. It can also help to clarify what is central to Christian faith and practice (i.e. those orthodox beliefs and practices held in common),³⁶ and what is secondary (i.e. those beliefs and practices where Christians disagree).³⁷ It can also help students to recognise that as disciples of Jesus Christ, *how we live* is as important as *what we believe*.

By providing students with opportunities to think through their faith, and to draw on the resources of Scripture, tradition, experience, and reason, students will be equipped with the skills necessary to think through new questions and challenges in the future. They will be open to learning and discovering more from God's word and encouraged to grow in wisdom and discernment. Such opportunities will help students develop an intelligent faith, a biblical faith, a resilient faith, and a relevant faith. And just as students can learn how to read Scripture well, they can also be taught to read culture and to weigh the ideas that undergird culture in the light of Scripture and the gospel of Jesus Christ. Like Paul, we seek to "take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ,"³⁸ to sift out the good from the bad, truth from falsehood and wisdom from foolishness, and to find those points of contact that align with Christian faith.

Recommended Reading

Brian Harris, *The Big Picture: Building Blocks of a Christian World View. Biblical Foundations for a Confident Faith* (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2015).³⁹

Alister E. McGrath, *Theology: The Basics*, 4th ed. (Oxford, UK: John Wiley & Sons, 2018).⁴⁰

Roger E. Olson, *The Mosaic of Christian Belief: Twenty Centuries of Unity & Diversity* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2002).⁴¹

John Stackhouse, *Need to Know: Vocation as the Heart of Christian Epistemology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).⁴²

Kevin J. Vanhoozer, "What is Everyday Theology? How and Why Christians Should Read Culture" in *Everyday Theology: How to Read Cultural Texts and Interpret Trends* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 15-60.

Tom Wright, *Surprised by Hope* (London, UK: SPCK, 2011).⁴³

³⁶ For example, those beliefs outlined in the Apostles Creed.

³⁷ Christians differ on many points e.g. how we worship, how we practice baptism, what we believe about the gifts of the Holy Spirit, how God created the heavens and earth, and God's sovereignty. Yet we are united by those core beliefs we hold in common, by Christ who has redeemed us, and by the Holy Spirit who dwells in each of us.

³⁸ 2 Cor. 10:5.

³⁹ This book encourages us to focus on the things that matter to Christian faith, while connecting us to the questions and issues of today. You may not agree with everything that is said, particularly by some of the people interviewed by Harris. Nonetheless, this is a valuable resource that can help the reader construct a healthy Christian world view.

⁴⁰ This is a short introduction to orthodox Christian belief based on the Apostles' Creed.

⁴¹ For those wishing to delve more deeply, this book traces Christian belief through the ages. It identifies those core beliefs essential to Christian identity and why, discusses secondary beliefs where Christians differ, and notes those beliefs which fall outside of Christian orthodoxy.

⁴² This book explores what it means to think Christianly and vocationally in a pluralistic and postmodern age. It covers such topics as epistemology, vocation, culture, and biblical interpretation, and offers a new epistemological model to help Christians navigate their way through today's cultural challenges.

⁴³ This book discusses what the Bible teaches about the resurrection, Jesus' return, God's plans for creation and how we can participate in this. Along the way, Wright corrects some common misunderstandings about life after death.

6. Delivering a Christ-centred Curriculum

Heartened by faith in Jesus Christ,⁴⁴ our teachers deliver a Christ-centred curriculum that is informed by Scripture, inspires curiosity, wonder, and respect for God's world, and enables students to see how Christ is connected to all their learning.

So what do we mean by this? After Jesus Christ was raised from the dead and ascended into heaven, he took his place at the right hand of the Father. Thus Jesus Christ is now Lord/Te Ariki over all things.⁴⁵ He is the one through whom and for whom all things were made, and he is the one in whom all things hold together.⁴⁶ So there is no area of life or learning, and no facet of the school curriculum, that is separate from Christ.⁴⁷ Therefore, our teachers endeavour to teach their subjects from this Christ-centred perspective. They consider how the overarching narrative of Scripture and the gospel of Jesus Christ, can shape the curriculum and be the lens through which curriculum and pedagogy is viewed, developed, evaluated, and critiqued.

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Faith, Hope, and Love

There are many ways we can integrate faith with curriculum. Here are some ideas based around the lenses of faith, hope, and love.

Faith: Key to our faith is the biblical story, which can be summed up in the Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Renewal framework. When planning a unit/topic/lesson we can adopt this framework as a guide, asking such questions as:

- *Creation*: What can this teach us about God's creation? What experiences might enable students to explore and discover God's creation, and experience joy, wonder, and awe in God's creation? Where do we see people involved in creative activity? What opportunities are there to develop the hidden potential in creation and create new things?
- *Fall*: Are there examples of brokenness/problems/disharmony to consider? What might be the cause/s of this? What is the impact of this? How does this make us feel? What challenges does this present? How are others defining/assessing this problem? How well do their definitions/assessments align with Scripture and the gospel? Are there other ways to interpret the situation? Where might God be in this?
- *Redemption*: What opportunities does this brokenness/problem/disharmony present? How are other people responding to this brokenness? What do others say is the solution? How well does this align with Scripture and the gospel? Do we see examples of people trying to put things right? Where can we see wisdom, truth, compassion,

⁴⁴ And the faith/faithfulness of Jesus Christ.

⁴⁵ Matt. 28:18; Acts 7:56; 1 Cor. 15:24-26; Eph. 1:9-10, 20-23; 2:21-22; Phil. 2:9-11; Col. 2:9-10; 3:1; Heb. 1:3-4; 10:12-13; Rev. 5:11-12. See also Dan. 7:13-14.

⁴⁶ John 1:1-4, 14; Col. 1:16-17; Heb. 1:1-3.

⁴⁷ Burggraaf, ed. *Transformational Education*, 74.

comfort, healing, justice, mercy, or reconciliation that we can support or take part in? What might the Spirit of God be calling us to do in this situation?

- *Renewal*: How can we join with Christ in bringing about restoration, renewal, and *shalom*? What opportunities are there for new discovery, invention, development, innovation, imagination, and new creation?

Similarly, when working with resources (whether a textbook, film, story, or work of art), there are some questions that can guide our thinking:

- *Creation*: What does this say the world is like? What does this say about what it means to be human? How does this line up with the biblical story and the person of Christ?
- *Fall*: What does this reveal about brokenness, problems, or disharmony in the world? What might be the cause/s of this? What are the effects of this? How do you feel about this? What message do you think the author/artist wants to convey? Is there another way to think about this?
- *Redemption*: What kinds of solutions are being offered, if any? How are people responding to this situation? What kind of wisdom is being promoted? Where is Christ in this? What could you do in this situation?
- *Renewal*: What vision of the good life is being presented? How does this line up with Scripture and the vision of *shalom* and human flourishing depicted in the new creation?

Hope: Hope is the vision we have of the future and what is possible. As such, it is closely related to the renewal questions listed above. It is based on what Christ has accomplished and where the story of Scripture is going. It's about living now as people of the new covenant and new creation, participating with Christ in God's mission of reconciliation, restoration, renewal, and *shalom*.

A curriculum inspired by hope will encourage curiosity, wonder, and imagination. It will make room for exploration, new discoveries, and new ways of seeing things. It will encourage innovation and invention in service of human flourishing. It will be open to new possibilities, imagining how the world can be a better place and responding to the leading of the Holy Spirit when opportunities arise. A curriculum inspired by hope will envisage ways that problems can be resolved, reconciliation can emerge out of conflict, understanding can follow confusion, healing can restore brokenness, gardens can spring up in barren place, habitats can be restored, and resurrection can follow death.

Love: We are called to love and live in relationship. Therefore, when preparing lessons or units of work, we can consider how this will help students understand God's love for them and the world, and encourage them to love God, love others, and care for God's creation. Three sets of questions can guide teachers here:

- *Love for God*: In what ways can this unit/lesson help students understand God's love for them and the world, and provide them with opportunities to express their gratitude to God and encourage love for God?

- *Love for others:* In what ways can this unit/lesson celebrate relationship/community and encourage students to love, bless, and serve others?
- *Care for creation:* In what ways can this unit/lesson express joy in God's creation, inspire a desire to learn more about God's creation, or encourage respect and care for God's creation?

When working with resources, consider what messages are being conveyed and how they line up with love for God, love for others, and care for creation. For instance, let's consider for a moment a Maths lesson in relation to love of others. A typical Maths textbook/worksheet on money will use examples that align with current cultural aspirations to consume or accumulate money e.g. what does x cost? How much can you buy with x amount? Or how much interest could you earn on x amount of savings? While a Christian educator may use such examples to encourage individual responsibility, they will also want to use examples that encourage generosity, hospitality, and problem solving that benefits whole communities.

Here are some questions to get you thinking about how resources (whether textbook, film, story, or work of art) line up with love for God, love for others, and care for creation.

- *Love for God:* Does relationship with God play a part in this? If not, what difference does this make? If so, what image of God is presented? What does this reveal about how some people view God? Is this how God is revealed in Jesus Christ?
- *Love for others:* What ways of relating with others are evident here? How does this make you feel? What might this suggest? What might be some reasons for these ways of relating? What are the consequences of these ways of relating? What sorts of solutions are given? Are there characters who are not given a voice? What would you do in this situation? Do you have any ideas about how relationships could be improved in this situation? What do you think Jesus would do if he was 'in your shoes'?
- *Care for creation:* How is the environment portrayed here? What is the impact of this on people? Does this work have anything to say about respect/care for the environment? If so, are there clues as to whether this is motivated by love or by fear, and what difference does this make? Or does this work depict acts of disregard, exploitation and/or harm of the environment, and if so, what does this reveal and what can be done about it? Given what Jesus has accomplished and where the biblical story is going, how might we respond in this situation?

These various schemes and questions are designed to get you thinking about ways you can integrate faith with learning. Feel free to expand on these.

Christ-centred Curriculum and the Theological Framework

This practice most closely aligns with Curriculum/Pedagogy. However, it is informed by Trinity, Cross, Scripture, Faith, Hope, and Love, and our understanding of Human Formation and Knowing and Learning. This practice is an outworking of our Participation in Christ and it will reflect who we are as a Community/People. It can also be expressed through Community Engagement and it will equip students for future Work/Vocation.

Classroom Practice

Our teachers implement programmes and lessons that reflect this Christ-centred approach to curriculum and provide students with opportunities to:

- experience joy in their learning;
- see how their learning connects with the real world;
- grow in understanding of God's world;
- appreciate the many good gifts God has given us;
- develop skills that will enable them to participate in God's world and to care for God's creation;
- explore the wonder of creation and see how it reflects God the creator;
- experience how subjects are connected or can be integrated as part of a broader study of creation;
- lead, design, build, compose, paint, write, and create in the service of human flourishing and *shalom*;
- learn that knowledge comes with responsibility;
- explore ethical questions that may arise in connection with specific subjects;
- recognise where there is truth, beauty, elegance, and wisdom in the world, and potential for good that they can support and become involved in;
- discern where there is brokenness in the world and imagine how things can be different given the hope they have and where the biblical story is going;
- consider how their learning can be used in the service of human flourishing and *shalom*, as an expression of gospel hope in the world.

Recommended Reading

Geoff Beech, *Christians as Teachers: What Might it Look Like?* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2015).⁴⁸

Harry Burggraaf, ed. *Transformational Education: A Framework for Christian Teaching* (Mount Evelyn Christian School, 2014).⁴⁹

Ken Dickens et al., *Transformation by Design: The Big Picture. A Curriculum Development Resource for Christian Schools* (Penrith, NSW: National Institute for Christian Education, 2017).⁵⁰

Mark Roques, *Curriculum Unmasked: Towards a Christian Understanding of Education* (Christians in Education, 1989).⁵¹

⁴⁸ This book focuses on what it means to teach Christianly. It discusses such things as God's purposes for students, the biblical story, underlying assumptions, knowledge, beliefs and values, the classroom context, classroom practice, curriculum, pedagogy, and learning.

⁴⁹ This is a lovely introduction to Christian education. It covers numerous topics, arranging them according to the acrostic, "transformational," grounding them in Scripture, and drawing out their implications for discipleship, formation, curriculum, and pedagogy.

⁵⁰ This is a practical resource for teachers to help them integrate faith with curriculum when planning programmes, lessons, topics, etc. The extent to which this book achieves its purpose will depend in part on the depth of the teacher's understanding of the grand narrative of Scripture and its Creation, Fall, Redemption, Renewal framework.

⁵¹ This work is somewhat dated and is written for a British context, but it is a valuable resource. We do not agree with all of Roques conclusions, particularly some of his assumptions around evolution. Nonetheless, this book can inspire teachers with ideas on how to integrate curriculum with Christian faith.

Motivated by Hope/Tūmanako

7. Mission, Vocation, and Service

Motivated by gospel hope, our teachers cultivate an intentional outward focus expressed through mission, vocation and service.

Faith, Hope, and Love

In 1 Corinthians 13:13, Paul wrote that faith, hope, and love will remain forever. Therefore, when we think about mission, vocation, and service, we will want to endorse those projects that “flow from and reflect faith, hope, and love.”⁵²

Genuine *faith* expresses itself in acts of love and service.⁵³ Love also compels us to action, and gospel *hope* motivates us to action. We know where the story is going. We look forward “to a creation restored to wholeness.”⁵⁴ Therefore, we are called now to orient our lives according to that future reality—to live now as people of the new covenant and new creation, empowered by the presence of the Holy Spirit. So we pray, “Your kingdom come” and we seek to be responsive to the leading of the Holy Spirit as we participate in Christ’s work of reconciliation, restoration, and renewal. Hope is a lens of expectancy that calls us forward.

Mission, Vocation, Service, and the Theological Framework

This practice most closely aligns with Community Engagement and Work/Vocation. It is informed by Scripture and is an expression of our participation in Christ and our growth in Christ-like character. This practice is also a natural outworking of a theologically informed understanding of Learning/Knowing and Curriculum/ Pedagogy.

Mission

The grand narrative of Scripture tells the story of God’s mission (*missio Dei*)—God’s work of redeeming humanity and restoring creation. “Mission is not just one of a list of things the Bible happens to talk about... Mission is... ‘what it’s all about.’”⁵⁵ God is at work in the world bringing about the redemption, reconciliation, and restoration of people, and the renewal of creation. As disciples of Jesus Christ, we are called to be a part of this. Our mission “means our committed participation as God’s people, at God’s invitation and command, in God’s own

Motivated by gospel hope, our teachers cultivate an intentional outward focus expressed through mission, vocation, and service.

Our mission “means our committed participation as God’s people, at God’s invitation and command, in God’s own mission within the history of God’s world for the redemption of God’s creation.”

Chris Wright

⁵² Brian Harris, *The Big Picture: Building Blocks of a Christian World View* (Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster, 2015), 18.

⁵³ Gal. 5:6b; Eph. 2:10; James 2:17. See also 1 Cor. 15:58; Heb. 11:8.

⁵⁴ Bartholomew and Goheen, *Drama of Scripture*, 233.

⁵⁵ Christopher J.H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible’s Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2006), 22.

mission within the history of God's world for the redemption of God's creation."⁵⁶

Jesus' final words to his apostles in Matthew's Gospel were, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations."⁵⁷ Some of us may be called for a short period of time to bring the gospel, in word and deed, to a particular group of people in a particular place.⁵⁸ Others may be called to make this their life's work/vocation, like the Apostle Paul who was called to take the good news to the Gentiles. All of us are called, as disciples of Jesus Christ, to participate with Christ in God's mission to the world, whether we are at home, at school, or at work.

Our teachers provide students with opportunities to:

- learn about the mission of God (*missio Dei*);
- be inspired by stories of those who have engaged in mission;
- to pray for, support, and/or participate in mission in Aotearoa/New Zealand or overseas.

Teachers can also invite missionaries to the school to speak to students. It is important for students to learn that long-term missionary work requires patience, hard work, and perseverance. While missionaries can experience times of breakthrough and see God work in miraculous ways, progress can also be slow and challenging.

For those schools that provide opportunities for students to engage in overseas mission, it is important to prepare them for cross-cultural engagement and help them distinguish the gospel from their own culture. Mission groups also need to be aware of the potential impact of their work on others, such as families, neighbouring churches, or other mission agencies in the region, and endeavour to maintain good communication with those working in the region.

Vocation

The word "vocation" comes from the Latin word *vocare*, "to call."⁵⁹ We can describe vocation as "that to which I am called as a human being, living my life before the face of God."⁶⁰ It includes our work, but also our relationships and responsibilities to friends, family, neighbours and the world. We are called to pay attention to what God is doing, to what he has called us to do, to what is going on around us, to the time in which we live, to the needs of those we encounter, to what we have to offer, and to the implications of our actions.

Our vocation includes God's mandate to all human beings to fill the earth, subdue it, rule over it, and take care of it.⁶¹ We are called to be royal stewards of the earth, its resources, and its

⁵⁶ C. Wright, *The Mission of God*, 22-23.

⁵⁷ Matt. 28:18-20.

⁵⁸ Newbigin, *Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, 121.

⁵⁹ Stackhouse, *Need to Know*, 67.

⁶⁰ Steven Garber, *Visions of Vocation: Common Grace for the Common Good* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2014), 11.

⁶¹ Genesis 1:28 and 2:15. The words "rule" and "subdue" are not a mandate to exploit or ravage the earth.

creatures.⁶² Students can learn about the wonders of God's creation and consider ways to develop it in the service of human flourishing. They can also explore ways to preserve and restore vital habitats, conserve resources, implement sustainable practices, and care for God's creatures. We know that Christ's work of redemption includes the restoration and renewal of all creation. This hope gives us an incentive for innovation and creativity as we seek to solve the problems of the world in a new way.

Our vocation also includes the great commandments to love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength and to love our neighbour as ourselves.⁶³ Love is the fulfilment of the law.⁶⁴ Jesus also taught his disciples to love one another.⁶⁵ Thus love for God and others is part of our vocation as disciples of Jesus Christ. So whether we end up working in business or politics, service industries or manufacturing, farming or the health sector, science or technology, education or media, caring for our environment or creating works of art, working in the church or working for peace, truth, reconciliation, and justice,⁶⁶ our vocation can become part of God's mission and an expression of love and hope for the world.

Our teachers provide students with opportunities to:

- grow in understanding of their interests, strengths, gifts, and abilities and the kinds of work that might be a good fit for them;
- consider what God may be calling them to, and how their studies, relationships, and future work can become part of their vocation in life;
- gain vocational experience;
- consider the connections between possible future work and the mission of God;
- consider whether there is an ethical fit between their faith and their future work;
- consider the importance of witnessing as much by what they do as by what they say;
- demonstrate respect for the environment and care for God's creation.

Our teachers can also inspire students with stories of those who have integrated their faith with their work, and they can welcome such people to speak to students about how they do this. Finally, our teachers prepare students for the likelihood that they will have many jobs in their lifetime and may need to make more than one career change.

Service

The founding members of the Kingsway Trust longed to see students equipped to become servant-hearted leaders who would function as salt and light in society. This vision was based on the example of Jesus who taught his disciples that if they wanted to be leaders, they must become servants, "for even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve."⁶⁷ Serving

⁶² Gen. 1:26-28; 2:15. See also Ex. 20:10; 23:4-5; Deut. 5:14; Matt. 6:26-30; Luke 13:15.

⁶³ Deut. 6:5; Lev. 19:18; Matt. 22:37-40; Mark 12:29-31. See also Micah 6:8 and Luke 6:27-28.

⁶⁴ Matt. 22:40; Rom. 13:8-10; Gal. 5:13-14; Col. 3:14.

⁶⁵ John 13:34-35; 15:12-13.

⁶⁶ These are just a sample of the things God may call us to do.

⁶⁷ Matt. 20:28; Mark 10:45. See John 13:13-15; and Phil. 2:5-11.

is part of our vocation as disciples of Jesus Christ. Not only this, but when we serve others as Christ served us, we are participating with Christ in God's mission to the world.

We can encourage students to grow as servant leaders by providing them with opportunities to engage in service learning and to learn the biblical basis for this. There are many ways students can serve. At school there are opportunities for older students to serve younger students. For example, they could read with younger students, play with them in the playground, or design and build toys or maths equipment for younger classes. Students can also be given opportunities to serve in the wider community. For example, they could visit a retirement home, help out at a food bank, clean up a local beach, sing Christmas carols in a park, or write to their local MP about an issue of concern.

Service learning is about seeing a need or an opportunity and recognising that we have something to offer. Our teachers endeavour to model servant leadership and to provide students with opportunities to:

- learn about servant leadership and the biblical basis for this;
- engage in service learning in school and in the wider community;
- develop skills in leading others with a servant-heart.

Given the time constraints and pressures on already busy timetables, schools may want to consider ways to integrate service learning with the curriculum. This could be done at every year level. Finally, our schools encourage students to connect with a local church, and to find opportunities to serve their church through prayer and participation.

Recommended Reading

*Steven Garber, *Visions of Vocation: Common Grace for the Common Good* (Downers Grove, 2014).⁶⁸

Lesslie Newbigin, "The Logic of Election," pages 80-88; and "Mission: Word, Deed, and New Being," pages 128-140 in *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998).⁶⁹

Cornelius Plantinga Jr., *Engaging God's World: A Christian Vision of Faith, Learning and Living* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002).⁷⁰

Christopher J.H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2006).⁷¹

⁶⁸ Highly recommended. This book is a wonderful collection of stories about real people who are working out their vocation in the places to which God has called them. This book can help inspire teachers and students as they think about their work and vocation in life.

⁶⁹ The first of these two chapters focuses on God's election of Israel and the church, not as an end in themselves, but as the means through which God fulfils his purposes for all people. The second talks about the importance of both word and deed—proclaiming the gospel and working for justice and peace, and he sets these within the context of God's mission (*missio Dei*) and the Kingdom of God.

⁷⁰ While this book is aimed at Tertiary education, much of it is relevant for Christian schooling. It discusses creation, the fall, redemption and future hope and their significance for learning, vocation, and engagement with the world.

⁷¹ This book explores how the mission of God is central to the whole biblical narrative and what that means for our call to mission.

Review of Teacher Practice

The Kingsway Trust (KWT) has endeavoured to provide clear guidelines for the delivery of Special Character without being overly prescriptive. Each school is encouraged to implement the seven core practices in ways that are appropriate to their specific context. These practices aim to provide an environment where students are encouraged to grow in faith, hope, and love. They also provide a framework for Special Character reviews.

In the Primary sector, teachers can provide evidence for how they are implementing these practices as part of their annual teacher appraisal. They can engage in professional development or undertake a Teaching Inquiry related to any one of the seven practices. They can do this individually or collaboratively, reporting on what they have learned, how this has influenced the way they implement this practice, and how effective this has been.

In Middle and Senior schools, where teachers tend to be specialists in one or two subject areas, management teams will need to take the lead in considering how these practices can become an integral part of the school programme so there are opportunities for students to engage in each practice on a regular basis. For example:

- Aspects of Practices 1, 2 and 3 could be included in form periods, school assemblies, school camps, and other group activities. Students could also plan and lead sessions related to Practice 1.
- Practices 4 and 5 would naturally fit within a Biblical Studies programme, although there will also be opportunities in form periods and other classes to discuss issues related to these practices.
- Teachers should consider the implications of Practice 6 for their areas of curriculum expertise.
- Teachers can include Practice 7 as part of their curriculum subjects or through extra-curricular activities. Practice 7 can also be included in programmes designed to help students think through future pathways and careers.

Management teams can demonstrate how these practices are being implemented across the school based on:

- reports from teachers as part of their annual appraisal;
- reports from those who have engaged in professional development during the year related to one or more practices. This could be done individually or collaboratively.

It is important that these practices are delivered as part of a carefully thought through programme that values Christian formation and discipleship as well as academic achievement.

Guidelines for School Management Teams

To fulfil the school's responsibility in the delivery of Special Character, our management teams:

- employ teaching and ancillary staff who:
 - exhibit genuine, living faith in Jesus Christ;
 - can affirm the Statement of Faith;
 - care for students and their development as whole persons;
 - are skilled and competent practitioners;
 - model the kinds of Christ-like character qualities the school seeks in its students;
 - desire to grow professionally in their understanding and application of the school's Special Character;
- build Special Character dimensions into job descriptions;
- take the lead in considering how the seven core practices can become an integral part of the school programme;
- include Special Character dimensions in appraisal processes of teaching staff;
- provide induction into Special Character for new teaching staff, and ensure they receive copies of the Special Character documents;⁷²
- promote quality professional development for teaching staff in Special Character, and find ways to resource teachers and provide teacher release (as far as this is possible) so they can engage in professional development in Special Character;
- provide opportunities for teachers in management positions, those who champion Special Character in the school, and those who teach Biblical Studies at Middle and Senior School levels to upskill through tertiary level biblical/theological study.⁷³

To encourage and foster the delivery of the seven core practices, our management teams:

- foster a culture and habit of prayer/karakia and sensitivity to the leading of the Holy Spirit, motivated by a desire to see God's kingdom come in every situation;
- set aside regular times to pray for teachers, ancillary staff, parents, and students, and seek God when making decisions;
- foster a culture of respect for all teachers, ancillary staff, parents, and students;
- ensure that the pastoral needs of staff are provided for in a way that is consistent with the Special Character of the school;
- encourage partnerships between parents and the school;
- practice discernment in the enrolment of students, seeking what is best for the child, the family, and the school;
- ensure that enrolments meet integration agreement guidelines in terms of preferential and non-preferential students;
- support the implementation of restorative practices and set the tone for behaviour management;
- model the kinds of Christ-like character qualities expected of teaching staff and students, including servant-hearted leadership;
- create opportunities to celebrate and encourage the values and character qualities reflected in Practice 3;
- ensure that teachers and their classrooms/home bases are adequately resourced for the task of teaching;

⁷² I.e. Our Faith, the Theological Framework, the Special Character Guidelines and its supplement for teachers.

⁷³ At the time of writing, the institutions in New Zealand best equipped for this are Laidlaw College, Carey Baptist College and Otago University School of Theology. These institutions are academically rigorous without being anti-confessional. Laidlaw College and Carey Baptist College are also evangelical.

- critique new programmes, activities, resources, and initiatives in the light of the school's Special Character, and endorse only those that are in harmony with this;
- provide students with opportunities to take leadership responsibility, and to receive training and recognition for this;
- promote student engagement in service learning and mission;
- provide opportunities for students to discover vocational pathways.

Guidelines for School Boards of Trustees

To fulfil the school's responsibility to deliver in the area of Special Character, our Boards of Trustees will:

- collaborate with the proprietor in the implementation of these Special Character Guidelines;
- model servant leadership as they take the lead from the proprietor in Special Character matters related to governance;
- document how the expectations set out in these guidelines will be implemented, in conjunction with school management;
- include Special Character dimensions in the school's annual and strategic plans, and note how these outcomes will be achieved;
- resource all dimensions necessary to express the school's Special Character, including resourcing and promoting quality professional development for teachers (and where possible teacher release);
- support school management in, and ensure accountability for, the delivery of Special Character according to these Special Character Guidelines, the Theological Framework, and the document "Our Faith";
- monitor the school's Special Character and engage with the proprietor if there are challenges to be addressed;
- set aside regular times to pray for management teams, teachers, ancillary staff, parents, and students, and to seek God when making decisions;
- foster a culture of respect for school management, teaching and ancillary staff, parents and students;
- ensure the fair distribution of funds and resources across the school;
- do all in their power to ensure that families living on limited budgets are not disadvantaged by such things as high priced uniforms or expensive extra-curricular activities.

Guidelines for Working with Parents

In fulfilment of the school's commitment to partner with parents in their responsibility for the education of their children, our schools:

- provide parents with information about the school's Special Character and the way this is implemented through the seven core practices;
- communicate regularly with parents through such means as blogs, social media, the school website, and/or weekly updates;
- take the concerns of parents seriously, while ensuring that decisions are consistent with the Special Character of the school;

- invite parents to attend events like assemblies, concerts, and celebrations to promote school community;
- create opportunities for parents to be involved in their child's learning;⁷⁴
- include comments on student's participation and progress in the seven core practices as part of their reporting to parents.

Graduate Profile

Our vision for students of Kingsway Trust schools is that they graduate with faith in God, love for others and hope for the future.

People of Faith/Whakapono

Our graduates will be people who are growing in their faith and knowledge of God, who know they are valued by God, know the story of Scripture and how they can participate in it, have had opportunities to become disciples of Jesus Christ, and are beginning to think theologically about all of life.

People of Love/Aroha

Our graduates will be people of love who are growing in their understanding of God's love for them and the world as demonstrated in the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and are learning to love God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength, to love their neighbour as themselves, and to respect and care for God's creation.

People of Hope/Tūmanako

Our graduates will be people of hope who are becoming captivated by a vision of the kingdom of God, are growing in awareness of what God may be calling them to, are developing a passion for a particular vocation or mission in Aotearoa/New Zealand or the world, and are inspired by the Holy Spirit to participate in Christ's work of reconciliation, restoration, renewal and *shalom* in the world.

⁷⁴ This can include such things as accompanying students on class trips and school camps, praying for the school, taking part in programmes like mother/daughter and father/son evenings, assisting with school sporting events and concerts, and where appropriate, helping with homework and assisting in the classroom.