

## 8. Penrhos College

<i>Moderator, as visitor</i>	Rev Steve Francis
<i>Chairperson</i>	Paul Owen
<i>Deputy Chairperson</i>	Ian Parker
<i>Secretary</i>	Margaret Horne
<i>Treasurer</i>	Kelvin May
<i>Principal</i>	Meg Melville
<i>Foundation Representative</i>	Tony Connors
<i>Councillors</i>	Mr Geoff Fry
	Mr Ian Harris
	Mr Evan Hillard
	Ms Felicity Kermode
	Associate Professor Lina Pelliccione
	Prof Peta Sanderson

### I. ACTIVITIES

As a faith community within the Uniting Church in Australia, Penrhos College recognises, reveals and engages in the mission of God through various programs and activities: worship services, administering the sacraments, pastoral services, pastoral care, teaching and community service. These programs and activities bring together and involve past and current community members (students, staff and families) and the wider community. These programs and activities are co-ordinated and undertaken by the Chaplaincy Department, and the Community Service and Service Learning Department.

The College communicates these activities with its staff, student and parents through the fortnightly Community Newsletter, regular editions of the Penrhosian Magazine and the Annual Report. The Penrhosian Magazine and Annual Report can be accessed on the College website for any interested readers. Note: Community Newsletters are not available to external parties due to student privacy considerations.

### 2. SIGNIFICANT DECISIONS

While the activities and decisions of the College have been as numerous as in previous years, from a strategic perspective, 2018 has been a year of reflection and planning for the College, as;

- December 2017 saw the 'completion' of our last Strategic Plan;
- December 2017 saw the final release of the report from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse;
- December 2017 saw the introduction of the same-sex marriage laws in Australia and also around this, the conversations about gender and sexual diversity;

### 3. STRATEGIC PLANNING 2019-2023

Since late 2017, members of the College Leadership Group have been addressing the key skills and attributes we want our students to graduate with in the context of a fast-paced and fast-changing world and how to provide a curriculum and environment in which these goals may be realised.

Initial discussions confirmed our commitment to:

- Our Motto
- Our Purpose
- Our Core Shared Values
- The Whole Person paradigm
- Our Pillars of Inspiration
- Our Phases of Development
- The Uniting Church National Education Charter

Our key questions:

1. How does current educational and mental health research impact on the way we currently deliver curricular – both within and outside the classroom?
2. Mind, Heart, Body and Spirit. What do these concepts mean in 2018 - 10 years after their adoption? What is their relevance to our population?
3. Are we doing what we say we are doing? Where do we need to do to adapt or improve to remain relevant?
4. How should we evolve between 2019 and 2023? What evidence will we use to support our decisions?

<p><b>MIND (INTELLECT)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge and Skills (Thinking and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Design)</li> <li>• Growth and improvement of the individual</li> <li>• Challenge and support</li> <li>• Love of learning</li> </ul>	<p><b>HEART (EMOTION)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resilience</li> <li>• Courage and tenacity</li> <li>• High self esteem</li> <li>• Happiness and optimism</li> <li>• Self-awareness</li> <li>• Passion</li> </ul>
<p><b>BODY (WELLBEING)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participation and achievement of personal best</li> <li>• Engaging in new activities</li> <li>• Living healthy lifestyles</li> </ul>	<p><b>SPIRIT (MEANING)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge of Christianity, other religions, and other paradigms or approaches</li> <li>• Immersion in sacred spaces and practices</li> <li>• Critical questioning and investigation</li> <li>• Discovering beliefs, values and perspectives</li> <li>• Cultivating social conscience and environmentalism</li> </ul>

Changes need to be considered within a risk framework. We need to ensure that our actions do not compromise the expectations of our stakeholders, our standing in the community, our legislative compliance, and that they are desirable, feasible and viable.

The major re-assessments we have made to date have been:

- a shift in focus from achievement to growth;
- ensuring delivery of the new skills and knowledge for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century;
- an increased focus on emotional and spiritual wellbeing and;
- creating more opportunities to create a greater balance between all four aspects of the whole person paradigm.

As detailed in the Section Mission of God – Christian Education at Penrhos College, the College Leadership Group has spent time considering the Spirit quadrant. Chaplain Claire has prepared and presented reports on:

*Defining Spirituality and Religion*

- an audit in our development of Spirit and how we might improve on what we deliver
- results of the secondary school students' survey on 'Spirit'

- recommendations for spiritual growth in the curriculum.

Our process for planning has included workshopping with our middle managers (Kindergarten to Year 12), with our whole staff and, prior to presentation to the College Council, with student and parent feedback.

We aim to have a framework for implementation by the end of Term 3, 2018. A more detailed report of our Strategic Plan will be available in the 2019 Synod Report.

#### **4. ROYAL COMMISSION INTO INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSES TO CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE**

- In May 2018, the College Council received a presentation from the Uniting Church – Mr Robert Watson (Chair of the Royal Commission Synod Task Group), regarding redress schemes, insurance cover and Child Safe Policy.
- The College is required to directly address the requirements of the School Education Act via compliance with the Non-Government Schools Registration Standards, and so has implemented the required policy and training changes as described in Standard 12.
- In addition, the Principal will contact the Penrhos College Alumni inviting them to contact the College if they believe they were treated inappropriately during their time at the College in the context of the Royal Commission findings. This invitation is offered in the spirit of acknowledgement and healing and to support a culture of openness, transparency and mutual support.

#### **5. INTRODUCTION OF THE SAME-SEX MARRIAGE LAWS IN AUSTRALIA AND ALSO AROUND THIS, CONVERSATIONS AROUND GENDER AND SEXUAL DIVERSITY**

- In February 2018, the College Council began deliberations on the use of its Chapel for same-sex marriage, receiving a briefing from our Chaplain in May 2018. This briefing was based on the Uniting Church's Standing Committee Report on Marriage and Same-Gender Relationships. The Council has resolved that the College will permit same-sex marriages to take place within the College's Chapel.
- In July 2018, the College ratified a new policy 'Gender and Sexual Diversity', which recognises its legal obligations and the position of the Uniting Church;

"The Uniting Church in Australia celebrates diversity and seeks to be an inclusive church that lives out the Gospel of love, justice and reconciliation for all. The Uniting Church recognises the unique worth of every human being, and advocates for the welfare and flourishing of every person and the whole creation.

In accordance, the Uniting Church welcomes and embraces LGBTIQ people in all areas of its life and ministry, and as full members of the church community. The Uniting Church rejects all forms of vilification, bullying and harassment, and is committed to ending discrimination against anyone (children, young people and adults) on the grounds of their gender identity or sexual orientation. Penrhos College, as a Uniting Church school, acknowledges and endorses these resolutions."

- The College community, including staff, secondary school students and parents have been kept abreast of the developments of the same-sex marriage issues and the July 2018 National Assembly by our Chaplain.

#### **6. MISSION OF GOD – CHRISTIAN EDUCATION AT PENRHOS COLLEGE**

In John 20:21, Jesus declares to his disciples: "As the Father has sent me, so I send you." And in Matthew 28:19-20, Jesus commissions his disciples: "...make disciples of all nations ... baptising them ... and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." In these sentences, Jesus captures the *missio Dei* – the mission of God for the world.

God sent Jesus first and then, through Jesus and with the power of the Holy Spirit, God sends the church – the gathered disciples and followers of Jesus Christ. Our God is a sending, missioning God. The Uniting Church in Australia discerns and delineates in the Basis of Union that both Jesus and the church are sent by God to reveal the intent and purpose of God for the whole creation – its reconciliation and renewal.

“In Jesus Christ “God was reconciling the world to himself” (2 Corinthians 5:19 RSV). ... In raising him to live and reign, God confirmed and completed the witness which Jesus bore to God on earth, reasserted claim over the whole of creation, pardoned sinners, and made in Jesus a representative beginning of a new order of righteousness and love” (Basis of Union, para. 3).

“The Church’s call is to serve that end: to be a fellowship of reconciliation, a body within which the diverse gifts of its members are used for the building up of the whole, an instrument through which Christ may work and bear witness to himself” (Basis of Union, para. 3).

Christian education is an essential part of the mission of God. Within the Uniting Church in Australia, this may be understood and referred to as formation, faith development, spiritual growth, nurture or teaching, and may be intentionally undertaken individually or in community.

At Penrhos College, the Chaplain represents the life of faith within the College, particularly as it is conveyed and lived within the Uniting Church in Australia. The Chaplain proclaims the gospel in word and deed, promotes the Christian ethos, and provides opportunities for religious and spiritual development through diverse activities: worship services, administering the sacraments, pastoral services, pastoral conversations and care, teaching and community service. These activities bring together and involve past and current community members (students, staff and families) and the wider community.

## **7. WHOLE PERSON PARADIGM – SPIRIT COMPONENT**

Penrhos College is committed to an educational philosophy – the Whole Person Paradigm – which aims to provide a diverse education across Mind, Heart, Body and Spirit. At present, a review of the Strategic Directions and strategic planning for 2019-2023 is being undertaken. Part of the review has been to consider the continued efficacy of the educational philosophy – the Whole Person Paradigm.

At present, the Spirit component of the Whole Person Paradigm is delineated as follows: “As a Uniting Church school, Penrhos College is committed to enabling every girl to experience growth in her spiritual journey. Regular age-appropriate Christian worship services, as well as religious education, exploration of world religions and experiences of spiritual practices are an integral part of each girl’s education, so that she will develop into adulthood with an understanding of the Christian faith and other faiths and traditions” (Strategic Directions, 2013-2018).

At the end of Term 2, 2018, 423 Secondary School students at Penrhos College completed an anonymous Spirit Survey, compiled and initiated by the Chaplain. The survey comprised 14 questions, covering three areas: meaning and happiness in life, involvement in religion or church, and what you believe. The purpose of the survey was to better understand student perspectives (what they care about and consider important), and their connection to or engagement with the Spirit component of the Whole Person Paradigm.

Within the student population, eight world religions are represented (42 percent), with almost one third identifying as Christian (31 percent). Regarding attendance of a church service or place of worship, one fifth attend frequently (20 percent, weekly or monthly), and another one fifth attend occasionally (19 percent, yearly).

Within the student population, well over half identify belief in God (33 percent) or in a spirit, higher power or life force (27 percent), and one fifth don’t know (20 percent). Of the one third who specifically identify belief in God, almost all believe in an active and personal God (29 percent).

In addition, over half believe that Jesus existed, as God's Son and human (37 percent), as only human (15 percent) or as only God's Son (four percent), and one quarter don't know (25 percent).

Within the student population, for personal peace and happiness, spending time with friends and family (87 percent), listening to music (77 percent), exercising or participating in sport (58 percent), watching television or movies (51 percent), being close to nature – by the sea or in the bush (49 percent), being creative – drawing, painting, craft or writing (46 percent), and shopping (44 percent) are most important. In addition, the most important societal issues are world peace – ending war (66 percent), equality – ending discrimination (66 percent), the environment – climate change, endangered animals/ habitats (48 percent) and poverty and homelessness (43 percent).

Although signs of the Spirit are evident, in the perspectives, decisions and actions of the students – in their religious affiliation, beliefs, wellbeing and societal concerns – only one quarter identify as spiritual or interested in spirituality (26 percent). Accordingly, almost three quarters are not connecting with the Spirit component of the Whole Person Paradigm, either not identifying as spiritual (44 percent) or don't know (30 percent). Arguably, one reason for this relates to the amount and type of contact time.

Within Junior School and Secondary School, the predominant contact time is worship services. In Junior School, worship services are held seven to eight times per term (30 minutes, per service). In Secondary School, worship services are held three to four times per term (20 minutes, per service). Besides this, the only scheduled contact time occurs in Years 7-8 in a classroom setting, where students have four periods per year (3.5 hours, in total).

It is probable that students primarily associate the Spirit with worship services, as this is the prevailing experience. This leads to a confined understanding of spirituality.

To potentially improve an awareness and understanding of the Spirit, students in both Junior School and Secondary School must have adequate opportunities to experience (attend to moments and encounters), to inquire (ask questions about religion and spirituality and explore), to interpret (develop their understanding and explain) and to act (integrate and live out a personal spirituality).

Spirituality is a lived experience and a personal quest for meaning – a search for answers to ultimate questions about the world, about life and the afterlife and about relationship to the sacred or transcendent.

This personal quest or search requires the provision of more intentional spaces or contact time in classroom settings, where common questions and areas of interest (which have already been identified by students) can be addressed. For example: the existence and nature of God, the historical Jesus and the Jesus of faith, world religions, Christian churches, the Bible and prayer, contemporary hot topics (gender equality, euthanasia, war and suffering, life after death), and social justice, the environment and sustainability (this would entail collaboration between the Chaplaincy Department, and the Community Service and Service Learning Department).

This provision would better encompass and represent the Spirit component of the Whole Person Paradigm, as currently delineated, and would provide the students with multiple avenues of engagement, and undoubtedly extend their awareness and understanding of spirituality as it pertains to their lives.

The Principal acknowledges the contributions of our Chaplain, Rev Claire Pickering in the compilation of this report and for the insights and recommendations she is making to the development of the Strategic Plan 2019 – 2023.

The opportunity for the College to reflect on its Christian Education for this Synod Report has been welcomed by the College and its Leadership team.

The authors of this report to Synod include:

- College Chaplain, Rev Claire Pickering
- Director of Strategic Planning, Julie Shaw

- Principal, Meg Melville (Contact 0418 627 999)

**Paul Owen**  
[paul.owen@walgsp.com.au](mailto:paul.owen@walgsp.com.au)