

Connect and Equip ePortfolio submission cover sheet

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School name	Encounter Lutheran College		
School suburb	Hayborough		
Course completed <i>[please tick]</i>	Connect	x	Facilitator (s) name Stuart Traeger
OR	Equip		Facilitator (s) name
Are you an Australian Lutheran College (ALC) graduate?	No		If so, what year did you graduate?
Is your ePortfolio being submitted via an online link (URL)?	No		If yes, have you ensured the link is accessible? -
Date	5/3/24		

Please note that you must have Accreditation as a Teacher (eg have completed Connect) prior to being Accredited as a Christian Studies Teacher. Accreditation requirements can be found [here](#).

Successful completion of ePortfolio provides: Accreditation and Recognition of Prior Learning towards a Graduate Certificate.

Declaration of originality:

[Criteria being determined in conjunction with ALC]

By submitting this ePortfolio for assessment, I acknowledge and agree that:

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Connect Induction



1. Your beliefs and purpose

- What is important to you? What are you passionate about?

Honesty, and openness are important to me, as is an environment open to questions without judgement. I am passionate about understanding more about the world, and how different people think and navigate life.

- What has brought you to this Lutheran school or ECS?

One of the main features that brought me to this school is how supportive the school is towards the staff. There is a real recognition that if we want the best environment for the students, we need to ensure the staff feel safe, supported, and cared for.

- What questions do you have about Lutheran education and your role?

It isn't really a question, but I struggle to navigate times when people use the Bible or their faith to justify bigotry and exclusion and times when people's experiences are minimised or manipulated to fit someone else's idea of faith to protect their own beliefs rather than showing compassion. Sorry if that's a bit much.

2. What do we believe?

- What is important in Lutheran education?

Modelling the values of love, kindness, and grace to our students and colleagues, and recognising that we do not exist in isolation. We are part of a team, and community.

- What questions emerge for you after viewing the sites and videos?

How do we show grace while at the same time maintain strong and healthy boundaries as teachers, and as a school?

3. How do we live out our beliefs?

- After exploring the areas that involve you, record your thinking and what you would like to know more about.

Do we, or can we accommodate those who prefer different styles of worship? I grew up High Anglican where worship was quite old-school, but more meditative and private.

4. The Lutheran church and Lutheran education

- What questions do you have about the Lutheran church?

How can we get the students invested in devotions and let them participate in a way that resonates with them or they can connect with?

Not all our students are religious or have faith. How can we best incorporate and share our values in ways that are accessible and don't feel heavy-handed?

Do we, or how much should we, incorporate learning about other religions, their differences, and their shared values? When I was at school, we did a lot of comparative work in Christian Studies which really helped us understand the evolution of Christianity as well as understanding and appreciating why people may hold different beliefs.

How can we best facilitate or try to encourage building relationships when it feels like a one-way street?

How can we better model service learning?

How can we get students more invested in helping the community?

I think I am still getting lost in the technical differences between the Lutheran and Anglican Churches.



Connect session 1: Grace

Essential understanding: God's grace as revealed in Jesus is central to a Lutheran understanding of spirituality.

Guiding Questions for Session One:

- What are important aspects of spirituality from a Lutheran perspective?
- In what ways might the concept of grace shape Lutheran education communities?
- In what ways might the concept of grace inform the understanding of my role and my contribution?
- What questions or issues does the concept raise for me and how can I explore my questions?

My Evidence of Learning:

One resource that really helped me make sense of the concept of grace was the Nadia Bolz-Weber video "Lutheran Theology in 90 Seconds". She speaks in such a clear and engaging way and is able to articulate ideas in a relatable and accessible way. I find a great deal of comfort in the idea that God comes to us with an unconditional grace regardless of whether we think of ourselves as deserving or not. I liked and appreciated the acknowledgement that we are simultaneously sinners and saints, and that God's grace always gives us a chance to learn from our pasts and push forward to try and bring a more creative and constructive force to our worlds. I also really love

The Kintsugi video from the Padlet really helped me make sense of grace. It is a beautiful visual analogy which I find especially applicable as a person who has felt broken for so much of my life and worked hard to try and put myself back together. I love the idea that people can mend, and with the help of God's grace, become something new and more beautiful and valuable for having been broken.

I also think it is beautiful as a concept as it teaches that things should not be discarded purely because they have been damaged and are not beyond repair. Even though I have done a lot of healing, I still feel very broken. Kintsugi is a beautiful, and gentle way to visualise my own healing journey and have hope for the future.

My Critical Reflection:

- **Connect: How are the ideas and information presented connected to what you already knew?**

I already knew God's love is infinite and unconditional, but I really loved the acknowledgement that we are not entirely good or evil and all have the capacity for both, and that God's grace is always coming to us, waiting for when we are ready for it.

- **Extend: What new ideas did you get that extended or broadened your thinking in new directions?**

I often find that the way certain ideas are presented, although lovely, is vastly oversimplified for someone with a significant trauma background, and I often find it difficult to engage with some ideas without getting angry or ruminating on my past and ending up in a very bad place. I wonder how we could work in a more trauma-informed, and sensitive way so that ideas are accessible without triggering trauma.

• **Challenge: What challenges or puzzles have come up in your mind from the ideas and information presented?**

Where is the line, or where should we draw the line between grace and accountability?

Can we still show grace to others while maintaining our own wellbeing and boundaries?

Can we still show grace to others while not allowing them back into our lives?

How much of ourselves should we be expected to sacrifice to show grace to others or is showing grace to ourselves and maintaining our own wellbeing more important?

Is there a Lutheran standpoint on these ideas, or is it individual discretion based on the context and circumstances?

Making Connections:

- What are important aspects of spirituality from a Lutheran perspective?
 - We are simultaneously sinners and saints, and God's grace comes to us whichever side is predominant, and whether we seek it or not.
 - We each have and define our own personal relationship with God, but we also act and live as a community.
 - We value service and kindness to others.
- In what ways might the concept of grace shape Lutheran education communities?
 - Grace shapes how we interact with our students and approach our work as a community. We show our students grace, understanding that they are still learning, and growing into who they will become, and will make mistakes along the way.
- In what ways might the concept of grace inform the understanding of my role and my contribution?
 - I feel my role is to show as much grace as I can to my students, my colleagues, and myself, although I feel this also needs to include appropriate boundaries and acknowledgements of when I have done all I can. I feel that showing grace to myself is most important to nurture my mental health, so I can show grace to others.
- What questions or issues does the concept raise for me and how can I explore my questions?
 - I still struggle with where I sit with grace. If I do not show grace, I feel like a horrible person, but if I do, I feel I will be taken advantage of as this has most often been my experience.



Connect session 2: Creation

Essential understanding: Lutheran education is centred in the belief that God invites all people to join God in ongoing creation and care for the universe.

Guiding Questions for Session Two:

- How does creation theology inform the why and how of Lutheran education?
- How does creation theology shape an aspect of your work with students?
- What questions or issues does the concept raise for me and how can I explore my questions?

My Evidence of Learning:

I liked the "Creation in Scripture" document on the Padlet. It began with the story and psalm I was taught at school, but I particularly connected with the part at the end about the difficulties in translation with the creation story. Since looking more into the Christian faith combined with my love of history, I have begun wondering how much original meaning, context, and nuance have been lost from the Bible stories and what that means for how we approach religion in the modern world.

The Earth Care Charter on the Padlet was a wonderful resource. It was particularly significant to me as I strongly believe that all life is valuable, and we should take much more care of the Earth than we actually do. I found the principle 'Planet Earth is a book of nature in the library called creation, a rare volume filled with science, stories and stunning images' particularly significant as, in my opinion, it places value on education about the world and our place in it while also valuing the beauty of nature.

My Critical Reflection:

- Connect: How are the ideas and information presented connected to what you already knew?

The ideas presented in this unit largely aligned with what had already learned growing up.

- Extend: What new ideas did you get the extended or broadened your thinking in new directions?

I really liked the acknowledgement that Earth was given to us to take care of, rather than use for our own ends. If we use nature purely as a commodity given to us, we will continue to destroy it. Alternatively, if we view ourselves and nature as part of the same creation, we are much more likely to nurture it and work with it, rather than consume it.

- Challenge: What challenges or puzzles have come up in your mind from the ideas and information presented?

I had always been taught that the creation story was symbolic or allegorical rather than literal. As a Science teacher, I struggle with the view that the creation story is to be taken literally and that scientific endeavour and observation should be ignored because it doesn't appear in the Bible. The world has changed a lot since that time, and our understanding of the world has grown. I really struggle when religion blinds people to objective fact. I don't believe that the theories of the Big Bang or evolution preclude the existence of God.

Making Connections:

- How does creation theology inform the why and how of Lutheran education?

Education helps us understand God's creation and our place in it. The more we understand it and how to work with it, the more we can value and nurture it.

- How does creation theology shape an aspect of your work with students?

By modelling Christian values, we are perpetuating creation by helping our students grow into knowledgeable, good, kind people.

- What questions or issues does the concept raise for me and how can I explore my questions?

As I wrote before, I struggle when people are blinded by their faith rather than seeing the world as it really is; the good and bad. I think that understanding is the key to living a peaceful life and I often struggle to interact with these people as they shut down discussion rather than attempting to understand. I am more than comfortable for people to hold their own beliefs, but the issue comes when people feel the need to make me believe the same as they do, especially without trying to understand where I'm coming from.



Connect session 3: Community

Essential understanding: God has created us for relationships and Christian spirituality finds expression in love, service and our vocations.

Guiding Questions for Session Three:

- Why does Lutheran education value community?
- In what ways has the learning about community relationships informed your understanding of your role and contribution?
- What questions or issues does the concept raise for me and how can I explore my questions?

My Evidence of Learning:

A discussion we had as a group in our Connect 3 session really helped instill the value of community as a teacher. We discussed the table I've attached below and whether we would allow or use each item in our classroom. I found the discussion very valuable as I was initially very nervous about the possibility of differing opinions but found that we agreed on the majority of items and had similar ideas about our reasoning. There were two items that we disagreed on, but in discussing our reasons, we got to know each other better and strengthen our professional bonds.

Session two - Workshop resource 1

Connect

Drama script that has expletives	Harry Potter books in the library	Excursions to a synagogue, mosque or Buddhist temple	Inclusion of the Koran in the library
Teaching about evolution in the science curriculum	Teaching about dinosaurs	Teaching about contraception	Conducting a yoga session with students
Sex education	Aboriginal artwork depicting dreaming stories	The story of the crucifixion at Easter	Graphic violence in film or text
Films that are M15+	Using the Bible to prove the age of the planet	Celebrating Halloween	Teaching about the genres of the Bible
English texts with sex scenes	Inclusion of nudes in the art curriculum	Using a constructivist approach to learning	Expecting all students to pray

I found the 1 Corinthians 12 entry on the Scripture Quotes PDF on the Padlet; "The human body has many parts, but the many parts make up one whole body." I think this applies perfectly to the necessity of community as a teacher. Everyone of staff has different strengths and roles, but we all come together to do the same work and model the same values.

My Critical Reflection:

- Connect: How are the ideas and information presented connected to what you already knew?

I already knew the strength and value of community, but this was the first time I looked at the concept from a theological perspective or in a faith-based context.

- Extend: What new ideas did you get the extended or broadened your thinking in new directions?

The reading in this unit made me think more about how we can form a more supportive community structure for our more vulnerable students. It is an idea I will continue to explore and discuss with my colleagues.

- Challenge: What challenges or puzzles have come up in your mind from the ideas and information presented?

How can we make a faith-based community inclusive and welcoming when some groups view exclusion as a part of their faith?

Making Connections:

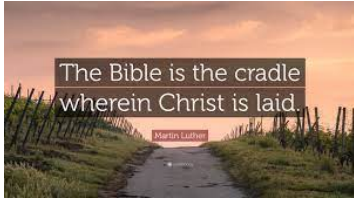
- Why does Lutheran education value community?

Just as God does not exist as a singular or isolated entity, neither do we. We all have our different views and strengths, and our faith and community are stronger for it.

- In what ways has the learning about community relationships informed your understanding of your role and contribution?

In addition to contributing my own strengths to my community, part of my role is to recognise and value the strengths other people bring to the community so we can collaborate to make it better and stronger.

- What questions or issues does the concept raise for me and how can I explore my questions?
There are a lot of questions and issues I have that I have covered in the previous sections. I believe that healthy and respectful discussion is the best way to explore and clarify information.



Connect session 4: The Bible

Essential understanding: God's word inspires and guides Lutheran education communities.

Guiding Questions for Session Four:

- How can we know about God?
- How does God's word form and inform Lutheran education communities and my role?
- What are the most significant aspects of Lutheran theology for Lutheran education?
- What questions or issues does the concept raise for me and how can I explore my questions?

My Evidence of Learning and Making Connections:

- How can we know about God?

God gives the capacity for goodness and kindness, but also the capacity for people to ignore it and treat people poorly.

God create a world of opposites. There is extreme beauty and extreme ugliness. There is kindness, and love, and there is evil; but there is some kind of growth and continual creation of the self to be found in everything when you are ready and want to find it.

People experience creation and God in different ways. What might be just a beautiful morning for one person is a miraculous gift from God to another.

We know about God through Jesus and the stories about him.

God's Supreme Revelation

1 God, who [a]at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, 2 has in these last days spoken to us by *His* Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the [b]worlds;

Our filter for the Bible should be "Where is God's gift for us in this?"

The purpose of the Bible: To pass on the main ideas and themes of God's word.

- What are the most significant aspects of Lutheran theology for Lutheran education?

Jonah and the Whale

- WHAT do we learn about GOD through this story?

God wants people to learn from their experiences. That he has mercy and shows grace when people seek it.

I think it also demonstrates that God thinks everyone is worthy of love.

- What did ...(Bible character)... learn?

Even though we don't hear what Jonah's response was to God, I think he would at least have learned to think more deeply about situations where he feels strongly and to trust what God is asking him to do.

Patience, and grace.

- What is it saying to me?

I really appreciated Robert Bell's video "Why you're probably reading the Bible wrong" as it acknowledges the dangers of taking the Bible literally without considering the context, nuance, and deeper meanings of the stories as this is something I also believe is a serious issue.

I think that the message about everyone deserving forgiveness is an important message of Jonah's story, as I believe that everyone does deserve forgiveness from God even if we struggle to forgive them ourselves.

- What might it be saying to our community?

Law: What we have to do

Gospel: What is the gift for us?

To aim for forgiveness of ourselves and others.

That no matter what we've done, trying to be better is never a waste.

- How does God's Word form and inform Lutheran education communities and my role?

The importance of the Bible for Lutheran Education

Devotion and Worship – spending time with God.

Grace is central – Our school's behaviour management policy is about restorative justice, reflection, and learning how to handle situations better. Our role is to lead our students through that process.

- What questions do you have?

What do we do when we are not in a place where we are ready to forgive?

How do we learn to forgive ourselves?

My Final Commentary / Reflection

Outcome 1:

In session 1 I learned that God's Grace is central to the Lutheran Faith and Lutheran Education. There were two main resources that stood out to me. The first was Nadia



Bolz-Weber's video "Lutheran Theology in 90 Seconds", where she highlighted that we are simultaneously sinners and saints, and that God and God's Grace were always coming to us, rather than us having to seek them out. I found those ideas particularly interesting as my previous experiences with faith has always dichotomised goodness and put emphasis on what we should be doing to connect with God, which mostly left me feeling like a bad person who was not doing enough to be worth being forgiven. It is a comfort to know that I have God's forgiveness and Grace, I just have to learn to forgive myself. The second resource which stood out to me was the video on Kintsugi. Due to a lot of things in my past, I have always felt broken and less valuable for it. I found that the ideas in this video could be paralleled with how God works on our hearts; helping them mend and making them all the more beautiful.

What this means for me in my role is helping my students and those around me know that grace and forgiveness are always there for them, and that they are always loved and valued, even if they don't always do the right things, if they aren't perfect, can be better, if they feel broken, and if they don't feel good enough.

Outcome 2:

In session 2 we learned about God's creation and the different ways they can view the story and its repercussions in the modern world. What this means for our school and classrooms is that we are taking a meaningful role in both learning, and teaching our students to appreciate God's creation, and perpetuating the cycle of creating in our own learning, and nurturing knowledge and kindness in our students.

Outcome 3:

The unresolved issues I have are with how my life experience with a lot of trauma informs my connection with God and faith. It is a ridiculously complex issue and deeply personal. My learning plan is to continue reading about theology from the Connect Padlets and trying to understand what I can. I also have some wonderful people in my life now that I can discuss my struggles with. As a result, I will (hopefully) be able to form a stronger connection to my faith. Either way, my faith journey will continue and a stronger understanding of myself and my faith will enable me to help my students with their own struggles (within the limits of my abilities) and make them feel supported which will, in turn, make their academic and faith-based learning more effective.

Submission

- Please click [here](#) to find submission information and instructions.
- Before submitting, please feel free to delete instructions (everything in blue) and other items that aren't necessary content for your submitted ePortfolio (e.g. the first page and this page).