

Synod Reflection 2019 – Schools Project Worker – Sarah Lockwood

I am the Schools Project Worker for the Synod. In my role I have the great privilege of liaising with the Uniting Church associated schools; their Principals, Chaplains and student communities.

When I create spaces with young people from the schools, I am guided by the question: “Where do we allow space for young people to access and articulate their sense of power and purpose, their vulnerability and their courage?” One example of my work with students is the series of Social Justice Forums run in collaboration with the Social Justice Cluster. These forums are run throughout the year and attended by a number of schools. They are hopeful examples of the potential of the schools network working together to respond to justice issues. One forum each year is completely student-led and illustrates the potential for events that are put in the leadership hands of young people. The Year 9 and 10 students are interested in Social Justice issues, and come with a desire to make change in their world. These environments encourage mutual learning between adults and students, reciprocity and respect. We give students the space to reflect on their own privilege and identity:

Who in my community is shaping who I am? Who do I surround myself with? Who could I be listening to more often? Who’s voice is not being heard?

Another part of my work involves liaison with the network of School Chaplains. I run an annual retreat for these Chaplains, which is a key time for relational strengthening within the network. I have watched the deepening of relationship and the quality of conversations over my time in the role. This curated event is also a reflective journey for School Chaplains. The relationships between the network have grown and strengthened over many years, and the practical resource sharing is combined with time for deep listening of one another. Developing relationships with school Chaplains gives valuable insight into the diversity and depth of the work Chaplains are undertaking and I spend time throughout the year meeting with them individually. There are so many possibilities for connection that emerge when intentional time is given to “being with” Chaplains in their contexts.

Much of my work is responsive and emerges according to the needs of the schools. In collaboration with eLM colleagues we develop resources for events such as the recent tragedy in Christchurch. In collaboration with the Uniting through Faiths worker, we may run sessions or workshops in interfaith. These projects are developed in response to the needs of schools and in conversation with various areas of the Synod. I also work with Adrian Pyle to resource School leadership gatherings, as we continue to explore new ways of deepening relationships in the network.