

Report to Synod 2022 from the 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. I am endlessly interested in how we grow in understanding how to best hold, honour and celebrate complex relational dynamics.

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?" After two years of many cancelled events, we are excited to be running Social Justice forum in May this year, hosted for the first time by St Leonard's College. These forums are usually run throughout the year and attended by many UC associated schools. They are hopeful examples of the potential of the schools network working together to respond to justice issues. The Year 9 and 10 students 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? Whose voice is not being heard?

Another part of my work involves liaison with the network of School Chaplains. We 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. 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 with young people and I spend time throughout the year meeting with them individually. In August this year Craig Madden, Adrian Pyle and I will run our first in person retreat since 2019.

Much of my work is responsive and emerges according to the needs of the schools. I speak at School Assemblies and Chapel Services and liaise with Presbytery and eLM colleagues to support school communities. Projects are developed in response to the needs of schools and in conversation with various areas of the Synod. Adrian Pyle and I collaborate with senior Synod leadership to resource School leadership gatherings, as we continue to explore new ways of deepening relationships in the network. This year we will bring together Principals, Board representatives and Chaplains in a hybrid gathering, creating an opportunity to share learning and surprises as we all create new ways of being together again.