



Religious Education Reference Group: Update

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To Know and to Love

Update on the work of the Religious Education Curriculum

Meeting #16 of the Religious Education Reference Group

Friday 27 March 2026

The sixteenth meeting of the Religious Education Reference Group was held in late March, 2026. **Very Rev Mark Reynolds EV** opened the meeting with an Acknowledgement of Country and led the group in the Pope's Prayer for Peace.

Lord of Life, you shaped every human being in your image and likeness. We believe you created us for communion, not for war, for fraternity, not for destruction. You who greeted your disciples saying, "Peace be with you," grant us the gift of your peace and the strength to make it a reality in history. Today we lift up our prayer for peace in the world, asking that nations renounce weapons and choose the path of dialogue and diplomacy.

- Pope Leo XIV

Dr Nigel Zimmermann reflected on the significant progress achieved during Term 1, acknowledging the substantial curriculum writing, consultation, and trialling work undertaken across the system. Positive feedback from recent principal meetings indicated growing confidence in both the curriculum and implementation process. Appreciation was expressed for the work of curriculum writers, advisory groups, RELs, and trial schools. Early feedback suggests increasing coherence, engagement, and confidence across participating schools.

The main points of the meetings are described below.

Theory of Religious Education

Prof Kath Engebretson presented revisions to the Theory of Religious Education paper, responding to feedback from previous meetings. The document continues to evolve as a foundational resource for curriculum implementation and teacher formation.

Recent revisions strengthened references to the sacramental life of the school, explicitly acknowledged the Jewish roots of Christianity through references to *Nostra Aetate* and refined language concerning First Nations students and spirituality. Recognition of Eastern Catholic traditions was also expanded, with further consultation planned to ensure accuracy and respectful representation. Further refinements and consultation will continue throughout the year.

Year 2 – Preparing for Easter with Jesus

Marsha Van Cuylenburg presented a unit called Preparing for Easter with Jesus, which helps students deepen their understanding of Lent as a time of preparation, prayer, and transformation. The unit builds on earlier learning and guides students through Holy Week and Easter as one continuous saving mystery.

The unit received strong affirmation for its theological integrity, developmental appropriateness, and sensitive treatment of challenging concepts such as temptation, suffering, death, and resurrection. Particular praise was given to the emphasis on prayer, reflection, and living Jesus' way of love. Feedback focused on strengthening connections between Lent and Easter, refining the treatment of the Good Samaritan, and providing additional guidance for teachers when discussing complex themes with young learners.

Year 9 – Personhood as a Call to Reverence

James O'Brien presented a unit called Personhood as a Call to Reverence, which explores human dignity, relationships, friendship, and emerging sexuality through the concept of reverence. Grounded in creation and the Christian call to holiness, the unit invites students to consider the meaning of authentic human flourishing and respectful relationships.

Members strongly affirmed the theological depth of the unit and its pastoral relevance for contemporary students. The framing of sexuality within a broader discussion of dignity, desire, and friendship was particularly welcomed. Recommendations included clarifying the distinction between reverence and respect, carefully selecting theological sources, and supporting teachers in navigating connections with respectful relationships education.

Year 9 – The Sacramental Journey

Prof Kath Engebretson presented a unit called The Sacramental Journey, which introduces students to the sacraments as embodied encounters with God's grace and prepares the foundation for later study of individual sacraments. The unit integrates theology with students' lived experience and explores the relationship between physical signs and spiritual realities.

Feedback highlighted the clarity of the unit's treatment of sacramental theology, particularly its explanation of the unity of body and soul and the understanding of sacraments as signs that make present God's action. Members suggested refining distinctions between sacraments, rituals, and symbolic actions, while also broadening learning outcomes to ensure accessibility for students from a variety of religious backgrounds. Overall, the unit was strongly endorsed as an engaging and thoughtful introduction to sacramental life.