

BOOK LAUNCH

Revealing Jesus in the Learning Environment: Experiences of Christian Educators

Peter W. Kilgour & Beverly J. Christian (Eds.). (2019). Avondale Academic Press, pp. 254
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Brenton Stacey

Avondale University College, Cooranbong, NSW
brenton.stacey@avondale.edu.au

A book compiled by two Avondale academics launched on Thursday 27, 2020 will encourage Christian educators in any learning environment to more naturally and creatively reveal Jesus to their students.

Revealing Jesus in the Learning Environment: Experiences of Christian Educators (Avondale Academic Press) is the first published by the Christian Education Research Centre at Avondale University College and the first editorial collaboration of Director, Associate Professor Peter Kilgour, and School of Education Head Beverly Christian.

When the two began their teaching careers in the 1970s, “there was an expectation that Christian educators had tacit knowledge of what it meant to be a Christian teacher,” they write in the foreword. But after working at all levels of Christian education, “we still encounter colleagues, educators and teacher education students who are not sure how to apply the integration of faith to the learning environment.”

The phrase, “integration of faith and learning,” is one Kilgour finds grating, though. “How is bringing Christianity into, say, maths—five loaves and two fishes, that sort of thing—helping any student come to know Jesus?” he asked during the launch in Avondale Libraries on the Lake Macquarie campus this past Thursday (February 20). “My job as a Christian teacher is to *reveal* Jesus.” The difference between “inserting Jesus into something and revealing Jesus in something is big,” added Christian. “And that’s what we wanted to explore in this book.” Kilgour used the words “dynamic,” “creative,” and “eclectic” to describe how teachers in learning environments ranging from the playing field to the science lab are meeting this common goal. “Every Christian teacher reveals Jesus in a different way,” he said.

Kilgour and Christian sought to reflect this diversity by calling for papers sharing research about and the personal experiences of teachers who foster in their students a “redeeming relationship with Jesus.” The result: a “bricolage” of chapters by authors from three higher education providers: Avondale, its Michigan, USA-based Seventh-day Adventist Church sister institution Andrews University, and the Australian Christian Churches’ Alphacrucis College.

The chapters are grouped in four sections: challenges, relationships, school climate and teaching practice. They cover a range of primary, secondary and tertiary learning environments, including mainstream and special needs. Topics include “mission drift,” trauma-informed educational practice, the relationship between school climate and faith engagement, and teaching Revelation with a Christo-centric approach.

Faculty of Education, Business and Science Dean Associate Professor Kevin Petrie is lead author of two chapters. Publishing “is as core to our mission as any other activity,” he writes. “This leaves us with a responsibility to not only ensure research aligns with our purpose and mission but to disseminate its findings effectively. The written word is a powerful means for accomplishing this.”

Dr David McClintock emphasises the potential practical impact of the book. As Director of Education for the South Pacific Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, he encourages teachers in his schools to “read, learn and be enriched.” He also encourages Avondale to connect with the schools’ teaching and learning directors, who can share *Revealing Jesus in the Learning Environment* with those in their teams. Most teachers must complete at least 20 hours of professional development, he notes. “Reading this book would qualify for some of those hours.”

Addressing their readers, Kilgour and Christian hope the chapters “light a lamp in your hearts and inspire you to experiment with new ways of using your skills and imagination to reveal Jesus in the learning environment.” **TEACH**

Author information:

Brenton Stacey is the Public Relations Officer of Avondale University College. His interests also include gender, religion, and curating creative arts—he is co-convenor of Manifest, a movement exploring, encouraging and celebrating #faithfulcreativity.

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