

Building connections with Hope Vale – Service and cultural learning opportunities for Lutheran schools

Hope Vale is an Aboriginal community 50km north of Cooktown, Cape York Peninsula. As a former Lutheran mission it has a rich and fascinating history, and the Lutheran church maintains a position central to the life and wellbeing of its community. The people of Hope Vale identify strongly with their Lutheran heritage and are most keen to maintain and strengthen links with Lutheran church groups, such as schools.

Hope Vale provides a unique service and cultural learning destination for Lutheran school groups because of its connection with the Lutheran church, the range of community organisations where student groups could be involved and the many cultural experiences students could participate in. There are many opportunities to connect with the faith life of the community, enriching both Hope Vale people and visitors.

It is important to emphasise that any service learning trip to Hope Vale must be viewed in terms of 'doing with', 'connecting' and 'encouraging' rather than 'doing for' the people of Hope Vale. The people of Hope Vale have many capacities and resources and would likely be disempowered by a group doing things for them (such as cleaning up community spaces etc).



Possible service and community activities:

- Contributing to church worship in terms of music and children's address / drama
- Involvement with Hope Vale school, kindy or child care centre
- PCYC – plan and conduct / help out with activities
- Aged Care – connecting with residents
- Write and record devotional pieces for Hope Vale radio
- Help and learn at the Indigenous Knowledge Centre

Possible cultural learning activities:

- Orientation to the community, and its history
- Spend time at the Cultural Centre
- Homelands visit (possibly cave paintings, sand dunes) and talk by Indigenous custodians
- Time in historic Cooktown

- Visit to beach and coloured sands
- It may be possible for students to spend time with Pastor George Rosendale, a true treasure of our church



Possible curriculum connections

Many opportunities exist to connect a trip with learning in Christian Studies, particularly in the areas of worship, service and church culture and history. There may also be opportunities to connect with History (eg the Year 9 study of Indigenous / European contact in the 1880s) and Civics and Citizenship.



Organising a service trip to Hope Vale

Given the time and distance required in getting to Hope Vale, and the wealth of different activities available, a minimum of 3 days in the community is recommended and a week is ideal. Being in the community for Sunday worship is highly desirable. Church members long for closer links to the wider Lutheran church.



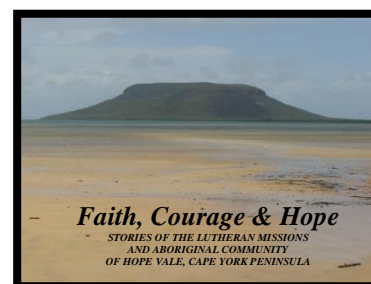
David Spanagel, the Pastoral Carer at Hope Vale, has a long-standing relationship with the Hope Vale community. David is the critical connection point at the local level in Hope Vale and is invaluable in making arrangements with other individuals and groups within the community.

Small (maximum 10), single-gender groups can be accommodated in Hope Vale. Bedding down in the church hall is safe and free! Groups need to be prepared to self-cater. Groups would be best to drive to Hope Vale from Cairns (4-5 hours).

When planning a visit, **consider a visit to Peace Lutheran College in Cairns. Principal Elizabeth Fenske has issued the invitation: "It would be great if we got visitors on their way through Cairns!" Or have a trip to coincide with Muni Day in September** (commemorating the arrival of long-term missionary Georg Schwartz [known at the mission as *Muni*] at the Cape Bedford / Hope Vale Lutheran Mission).

Preparation: The LEQ DVD (and associated resources) *Faith, Courage & Hope* is a valuable resource to assist in preparation of staff and students, particularly in terms of:

- Becoming aware of the history of the community as a Lutheran mission, and of Cooktown's historical significance
- Listening to / viewing some of the stories of key Hope Vale people
- Viewing video of Hope Vale church services (including singing and praying in Language) and reading/viewing material about local church celebrations and activities
- Reading and viewing material concerning Aboriginal Christian spirituality and considering how culture (and history) shapes the Christian community at Hope Vale



Hope Vale is a unique and complex community; community life today is shaped by its dual heritage as an Aboriginal Lutheran mission. A visit from a Lutheran school group would provide the community with encouragement and connections with their spiritual brothers and sisters. For students, there are many opportunities for learning about and connecting first-hand with another culture and sharing stories of faith and life.

For further information on opportunities in Hope Vale and logistics of trips, contact Vicki Schilling – 3511 4059 or Vicki.schilling@leq.lutheran.edu.au. Don't forget to also consider connecting with Peace Cairns.



Vicki Schilling shares her reflections on a recent visit to Hope Vale in LEQ Coffee Catchup Episode 17 of LEQTV. Vicki's segment starts at the 11:42 mark of this episode.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BsdOUYnWkiw&feature=youtu.be>