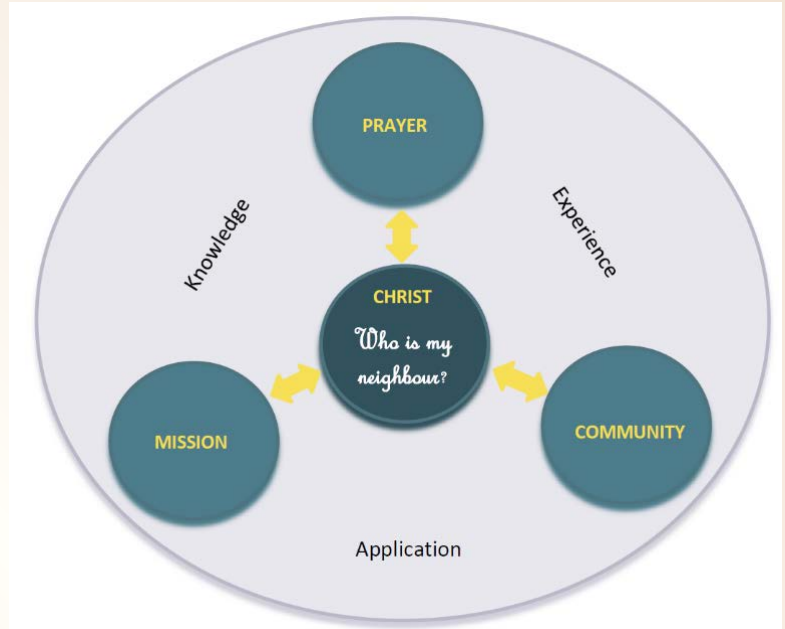




## Good Samaritan Education Staff Immersion Experiences

Good Samaritan Education is responsible for ten colleges, each with a distinctive spirit that connects them to the local Church in which they are situated.

The Good Samaritan Education formation framework rests on three pillars that are centred on Christ – Prayer, Community and Mission. It applies to all engaged in governance and teaching in Good Samaritan schools. There is a wide range of formation programs, one of which is staff immersion experiences. They are designed to link staff to the contemporary mission and ministry of the Good Samaritan Benedictine tradition in locations such as The Philippines, Kiribati, Timor Leste and Australian indigenous communities.



The structure and purpose of the immersion experiences are firmly grounded in Catholic identity, the Good Samaritan tradition, a theology of mission, education theory and the principles of adult learning. These design principles are represented in this diagram.

Immersion experiences are not about doing, they are about *being*.

A 'Listen, Learn, Live' methodology has been developed to guide participants through a reflective process which uses foundational elements of the tradition to engage them in a personal response.



## The Effectiveness of the Immersion Experiences

Among the findings from extensive evaluation and of doctoral research being undertaken on the impact of the GSE immersion experiences are the following:

- It provides participants with the opportunity to reflect on the place of the Church in their lives. The following snapshot of two teachers' comments are representative:

I feel unique in that I am not a deeply spiritual person. Raised a Catholic. I am probably a lapsed Catholic. I do not go to church every Sunday, and I had not, for a long time, but for me, it re-established that I am a Catholic... it just cemented it back for me (Chris, Timor-Leste 2011).

It is about the Universal Church, and that if you are a Catholic organisation, then that is your first line. That is your mission. From a personal perspective, it reaffirmed my faith, and it reaffirmed the practice of the local church, the role of the particular church in my life, and how it is important to be a member of that. I think the reality of Australia is that lots of people struggle with church, the particular, and the immersion reminds people of the relationship and of Jesus as model (Michelle, Philippines 2004).

- The formational preparation sessions, debriefing during and after the trip and the requirement for participants to initiate projects when they return to school are considered essential to the success of immersions.
- Participants report that they integrated their experience into their teaching or pastoral responsibilities and that they had a higher level of understanding and engagement with the mission life of the school and the wider Church, and with student retreats and social justice initiatives. They also reported that it changed them as teachers as they had developed more positive attitudes towards students.
- Data also revealed that those who moved into areas of increased responsibility or leadership were more likely to implement school improvement and mission initiatives.
- In the eleven years the GSE staff immersion program has been operational, over 130 individuals have participated in short term cross cultural immersion trips to one of five host communities in which the Sisters of the Good Samaritan are in active ministry. Over time, the cumulative effect is that some schools have had over 25 staff members who have participated in the program, providing a critical mass of staff formed and equipped for the mission of Catholic education.

