Fertile Question: How can religious diversity advance Australia fair?

Core Content Area 2: Australia’s Religious Diversity

Topic 2.2: How did it all begin?

Extending Knowledge: Early Christian Pioneers

Focus: The influence of early Christian Pioneers. In this lesson students will develop an understanding of the contribution of Christian values to Australia between 1788 and 1850.

Teachers: Before you start!
- Familiarise yourself with the websites referred to in the lesson.

For students to extend knowledge regarding the influence of Christianity in colonial Australia select from the following activities.

Students:
- read the letter from Rev Richard Johnson to his friend in England after eight months as colony Pastor in 1788.
  - Answer the following questions:
    - How does Rev Johnson describe the moral state of the convicts?
    - What does he believe to be the reason that he can’t get a church built?
    - Does he recommend Australia as a place to live and why does he say he won’t go back to England?
- read about the Sunday School Movement and answer the following questions:
  - When was the first Sunday School established in the Colony?
  - What do you think was its primary purpose?
  - When was ‘State’ compulsory education established?
- read the following quote regarding Australia’s first charity and identify the significance of Christian groups to the welfare of the colony.
  
  Australia’s oldest official charity was founded in 1813. The New South Wales Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge and Benevolence was formed by seven evangelical Christians. The Society was later to be renamed the Benevolent Society of New South Wales. In 1813 when the organisation was founded, there were approximately 12,000 people in New South Wales. Around one third of these were supported through Government rations. Many of the people assisted by the Society were free settlers or ex-convicts for whom the government was no longer directly responsible. Since the early 1800s religious organisations have provided a diverse range of services for the underprivileged — children’s homes, women’s shelters, hospitals, soup kitchens, hostels for the homeless, food depots and financial assistance.
- view this short clip from the film “Mary” on page nine of the linked document called “Education in Penola”. Discuss the inspirational vision and passion of Fr Julian Tennyson-Woods towards education for the poor.
- Choose a early Christian pioneer of Australia. Create a postcard to a relative/friend in their home country depicting an image and message about their contribution to and concern for, the welfare of the Australian people.