

# Edmund Rice Education Beyond Borders

TRANSFORMATIONAL EDUCATION FOR JUSTICE AND LIBERATION

5 May 2021

Dear EREBB Colleagues,

On behalf of the Edmund Rice Education Beyond Borders Leadership Forum, I write today to wish our global education community a very happy Blessed Edmund Rice Feast Day.

As the new chairperson of EREBB, it is my great pleasure and privilege to extend to you a big Céad Míle Fáilte – or a hundred thousand welcomes - from Ireland where I am living and working.

I was fortunate to be in Nairobi, Kenya, when EREBB was established in 2014 with the objective of working together towards transformational education for justice and liberation as a global network of very different and wonderful schools. Under the leadership of the team at Edmund Rice Education Australia (EREA) and, in particular Wayne Tinsey and Brian Garrone, amazing work has been done in promoting and developing the organisation. Collectively we are grateful that EREA will continue to host the EREBB Secretariat and coordinate initiatives and programmes that enhance our global community.

Edmund Rice Schools Trust (ERST) in Ireland is also honoured to have been given the opportunity to work with you to build on this wonderful vision. We look forward to the opportunity.

As Ireland takes on the role of Chair of EREBB, the entire globe continues to battle with the ravages of Covid-19. This virus has given us a glimpse into how small and connected our world is. We are completely interdependent. We realised this when we saw how quickly the virus could spread from region to region, country to country. We know that, as we begin to resume our lives, we have to do it together, in a spirit of solidarity, equality and fairness. The Covid virus is indiscriminate; it has not hit everybody and every country equally. There are different levels of hardships which have had to be endured with this virus, depending upon where you live and, shamefully, on how relatively wealthy your family, your community or your country might be. Today, our thoughts and prayers are with our colleagues in India and South America and their fellow citizens who are suffering the most devastating effects of the virus. It is critical that we have equality of distribution of medical supplies, expertise and vaccines. As an international EREBB network, we commit to fully supporting global groups advocating for this over the coming year.

It is this type of global connectedness, vision, and commitment to equality and solidarity that is at the heart of EREBB. It is my hope that EREBB will bring us even closer together, by forging even more connections between our school communities. I would also wish to see us continuing to strengthen our position as a social change organisation, as a network of diverse activists and leaders working together towards a more united, more tolerant and more equal world – as one voice for justice.

While EREBB was founded in 2014, the vision at its heart actually started a little bit further back in history. The first Edmund Rice School, Mount Sion in Waterford City, located in the Southeast of Ireland, was founded in 1802 and was driven by the values of Blessed Edmund Rice to provide education and learning for the city's poorest and most underprivileged children. Today, Mount Sion is an amazing, flourishing, diverse and hugely creative school with a celebrated choir that articulates EREBB's messages about equality, tolerance and oneness, best perhaps, through its song and its harmonious voices.

I would like to see us all foster more creativity over the coming years. We have already seen fantastic advocacy work and campaigns on contemporary issues like homelessness, migration or climate change, emanating and being driven by our schools here in Ireland and across the globe. But I think we can lift these advocacy campaigns to new heights by letting our creative streaks, our imaginations and our hearts spearhead our collective desire for change.

Most of all, we can learn from one another in new and creative ways. I hope we can get even more schools connecting, exchanging ideas, and zooming into one another's classrooms. That is one of the learnings that has come out of Covid. While I greatly look forward to the time when we can once more be together, we now know that we can be connected without having to take a flight or be there physically. We can use this technology – and again, we must help to ensure that all our schools can avail of it – to make friends, to learn new things and to strengthen our collective voice.

EREBB is inspired by the teachings of Jesus, Gospel values and the spirit of Edmund Rice to work in global solidarity to transform education for justice and liberation. This is a tall and noble ambition. But it is one that cannot be ignored if we want to build a better world where the Gospel is everyone's good news.

Go raibh míle maith agaibh,

Thank you.

*Gerry Bennett*

Gerry Bennett  
Chair EREBB

