



Alight

FOR LUTHERAN SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS AND EDUCATORS



Sent to Serve!

I love a great celebration for National Lutheran Schools Week! The celebration last month was a wonderful way to start a new year. With special chapel services, spirit days, crazy dress days, service projects and special guests, schools across the nation gathered together to celebrate in-person and virtually what it means to be a cherished part of a Lutheran school community in creative and innovative ways. Pastors and teachers are the heart of National Lutheran Schools Week!

Our teachers are “Sent to Serve!” God calls us into specific ministry roles in our churches and schools and has

chosen each of us to serve in this this time and place. We make ourselves known to be followers of Jesus by following His example and sharing the Gospel message of Christ’s death and resurrection. It’s the message that has been shared by pastors and teachers with children and families for generations. It’s the message that is taught and lived daily in classrooms in Lutheran schools across the nation and abroad.

This month, it’s back to school as usual, and we still have an important job to do! From Prov. 22:6, “Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.” Think back about your experience in becoming a teacher. Who inspired and encouraged you? It was likely your family and, as importantly, a pastor or beloved teacher.

Growing up, I attended a school serving K – 12 students. I clearly remember the day in high school when I helped a struggling second grader in an elective class

that provided aides to assist the Specialized Learning teacher who served in the elementary school. My supervisor, a beloved teacher, said to me, “You should become a teacher. You are good at this.” My family did not encourage the pursuit of a vocation in education, but I often thought about my teacher’s words. At the conclusion of my senior year in college and three majors later, I graduated with a degree in education.

Although I did not choose to become a teacher right away, I never forgot my teacher’s impactful words. I am so thankful for her encouragement and that she had taken the time to express her appreciation. She planted the seed for my future and for the children I would someday serve in a classroom. From Titus 1:5, “This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you.”

We must prepare for the future of churches and schools by planning for the church workers that will serve the next generation of children and families. Who can you encourage to become a Lutheran teacher? We are “Sent to Serve” and here’s where our work continues.



Computer File



Surviving the “Doldrums”

“Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength. Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted; but they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint” (IS. 40:28–31).

Throughout history, explorers who sailed the seven seas were keenly aware of an area around the equator where there were little to no winds. This area became known as the Doldrums, “a belt of calms and light baffling winds north of the equator between the northern and southern trade winds in the Atlantic and Pacific oceans.”¹ Since the prevailing winds found throughout the rest of the world’s oceans disappear in this area, ships would simply stop, and sailors would have no way of continuing their journey. Without the winds, the ships would be stuck, wallowing on the seas with no direction and no ability to move forward.^{2,3}

In educational circles, the late spring months are often referred to as the doldrums as well. Cold temperatures, blankets of snow, shorter daylight hours and the long days between breaks can make teachers, students and administrators alike feel as if they are in “a state of inactivity or stagnation.”¹ Everyone is tired, and it is easy to feel like there is no wind in your sails to carry you forward.

So why are we talking about the doldrums in the *Computer File* article when this is a general feeling throughout education? The reason is simple: technology provides one way to help survive and even thrive through the doldrums of the school year. Consider the following ideas how to utilize technology to put the wind back in your sails for the rest of the year.

Connect with Others

Modern technologies, such as social media, email, video calls and other communication tools, allow educators to connect with friends and like-minded others during long stretches and difficult times. These short and simple touch points can serve as bright spots in your day and also help you to focus on the support that



¹ “Doldrums,” Dictionary.com, accessed February 19, 2021, [dictionary.com/browse/doldrums](https://www.dictionary.com/browse/doldrums).

² “What are the Doldrums?,” National Ocean Service, last modified February 7, 2021, accessed February 19, 2021, oceanservice.noaa.gov/facts/doldrums.html.

³ Jonno Turner, “Seven Things You Need to Know about the Doldrums,” *The Ocean Race*, November 11, 2017, accessed February 19, 2021, archive.theoceanrace.com/en/news/10308_Seven-things-you-need-to-know-about-the-Doldrums.html.

you have. Within Lutheran education this is especially true through groups such as Bible studies and other church groups. Set a plan in place and keep connecting through the technological means you have!

Set Reminders

Our mobile devices and computers “ping” at us all day long with reminders and notifications — some important but most not. You can use this to your advantage if you set a reminder to “take a breath” or “lift up a colleague in prayer” to help both your forward motion and keep others in focus. This could be a scheduled email that arrives in your inbox every morning or a mobile notification after lunch to help remind you to focus. Whatever the case, leverage the reminder technology at your fingertips.

Challenge Yourself to Learn Something New

Often, teachers feel stuck in the spring if they are not challenging themselves to learn something new. Most educator and professional development conferences take place in the fall, so there is often a long time between uplifting and educational events. Set a goal to learn a new skill or new content or to attend a virtual conference. There are innumerable learning platforms online that allow you to immerse yourself and learn without having to travel or take time out of your busy day. Start simple with an investigation on something like YouTube and expand your learning challenge from there!

Join an Activity Challenge

Physically getting up and moving is a surefire way to beat the doldrums! There are many options for joining an activity challenge to motivate you to get up and move (health insurance companies, fitness wearables, church groups, etc.), and most of them leverage some sort of technology to keep you on track and also allow

“Set a goal to learn a new skill or new content or to attend a virtual conference.”



you to challenge others. A little competitive motivation through your watch or activity tracker will get you moving, keep you focused and make you smile all at the same time!

All of that being said, we know that our true strength lies in the saving grace of Jesus. In times of trial, struggle and strife, we are to “wait for the Lord” and our strength shall be renewed like that of eagles (1s. 40:31). In Him we are renewed, both now and always. So say a prayer and leverage the technology you have to sail out of the educational doldrums.

Remember, at the start of this year’s *Computer File* articles, I issued a challenge. When each month’s article is published, I want to you to read through it, find something pertinent to you and your specific situation, and then post about it on social media to start a constructive discussion with your peers. As educators we well know that learning only takes place after the internalization of topics and having our thoughts and ideas challenged (or being forced to defend them). Thus, it is essential that we ourselves reflect on, internalize and express our thoughts, and we have constructive discourse on how the topic will impact our ministry both today and in the future.



Early Childhood Devotions

FOR CHILDREN AGES 3 TO 7



SENT TO SERVE **MATTHEW 20:28**

FOCUS: Freed to Serve. Galatians 5:13

God Empowers People to Serve

(Ruth and Naomi, the Book of Ruth)

Before You Teach

“And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, ‘Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?’ Then I said, ‘Here I am! Send me’” (Is. 6:8). Our baptismal call to serve is not easy. Ruth willingly served others, regardless of the personal cost. When confronted by human need, we respond as she did, putting others before ourselves. Jesus Himself is our model. His service sent Him to the cross. It is our privilege to help children recognize their godly baptismal calling.

Welcome/Greeting

Plan time to joyfully greet each child upon arrival.

Good morning, child of God. I am so very happy you are here today! Statistically, the first five seconds after a child’s arrival establishes (or resets) a positive attitude toward the day.

Gathering

Signal children to gather in your worship area.
Sing. Pray.

Say: **Today we celebrate God’s love and care for us, as we love and care for others.**

Tell the Story

YOU WILL NEED: A red, octagonal sign with bold letters: “S.T.O.P.”



DO: Point to each letter, guiding children to say each corresponding word **Service To Other People**. Tell the story. Raise the **S.T.O.P.** sign where indicated, signaling children to repeat the phrase.

Naomi and her husband lived in Bethlehem with their two sons until there was a famine. They had no food, so they went to live in the country of Moab. There, Naomi’s husband died. Naomi’s two sons grew up and married women who lived in Moab, one named Orpah and the other named Ruth. Later, Naomi’s sons died and she was alone. Hearing that the Lord had provided food for her people, Naomi wanted to return to Bethlehem. She said to the young women, “Go back to your

mothers' homes. May the Lord show you the kindness you have shown to me and my sons." **S.T.O.P.** Kissing them both, she said goodbye. Crying, they said, "Naomi, we will go with you." **S.T.O.P.** Naomi said to them, "Return to your homes. Why would you come with me?" Orpah kissed Naomi goodbye. But Ruth clung to Naomi, saying, "Where you go, I will go and where you stay, I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God." **S.T.O.P.** Then the two women traveled to Bethlehem. There, Naomi had a relative named Boaz, who was very rich. He kindly allowed Ruth to work in his fields for food. **S.T.O.P.** Time passed. Boaz married Ruth, and cared for Naomi. **S.T.O.P.** Although bad things happened, God watched over Naomi and Ruth. God led Ruth to care for Naomi. **S.T.O.P.** God led them to Boaz who rescued them both. **S.T.O.P.** God watches over and cares for us, sending Jesus, our Servant Savior. **S.T.O.P.** We serve and care for others, just as Jesus loves and cares for us! **S.T.O.P.**

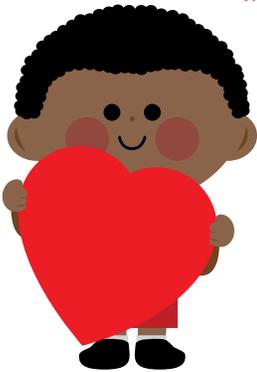
Pray

Children repeat each phrase after you.

**Jesus, Servant Savior,
Thank You for Your loving care,
You go with me ev'rywhere.
Help me show Your loving way,
serving others ev'ry day. Amen.**

Note: Include prayers in home communications, for use by families.

Remember the Story



BIBLE WORDS TO REMEMBER

PRE-K & K: "Here I am! Send me" (IS. 6:8).

GRADES 1 & 2: "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (ACTS 20:35).

Activities

CREATE: Make S.T.O.P. (Service To Other People) signs. *You will need: Tongue depressors and red construction paper on which octagon shapes are outlined and printed with large letters "S.T.O.P."* Children cut out the octagons (precut for younger children). Attach tongue depressors. Review the words that correspond to the letters. **We STOP to serve, caring for other people just as Jesus cares for us.**



DO: Jesus' love shines in us to others. Guide children to think of words and actions that show loving care for others. Provide scenarios to which children can respond. *Example:* When someone is standing alone on the playground: **Come, play with me.**

SING: "Jesus Wants Me for a Helper" (LOSP, P. 33); "Love in a Box" (LOSP, P. 35).

CAMP SERVE: Make and send thank-you cards to people who serve (e.g., custodians, volunteers, secretaries, crossing guards, cafeteria workers, rescue personnel).

Sending

YOU WILL NEED: A heart.

Gather in your "Sending Circle." Pray. Invite children to add prayer thoughts as the heart is passed and received or to quietly pass it along.

Encourage children to watch for stop signs and say "Service To Other People" when they spot one. Dismiss, saying to each, **YOU are Jesus' helper!**

Live the Story

Baptism is our call to serve. In prayer and meditation we stay connected with God's will for us. Pause and reflect on what God is calling you to be and to do at this moment in time.

Early Childhood Devotions

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A RESOURCE OF LCMS SCHOOL MINISTRY

Writer: Dr. Judith Christian Designer: Chrissy Thomas

NOTE: You will need the songbook: *Little Ones Sing Praise (LOSP)*, copyright © 1989 Concordia Publishing House (CPH), St. Louis, Mo.

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Family Matters

A CHRIST-CENTERED RESOURCE FOR FAMILIES AND TEACHERS



SENT TO SERVE Sent to Love One Another

What kind of tasks do you enjoy doing?

While many of us would prefer leisure over work, there are those who might like to take on a special challenge or two. Some may prefer a short-term task, others a long-term project — each resulting in a feeling of accomplishment! Some of these tasks may be routine activities like mowing the lawn, walking the dog or cleaning our home. Long-term projects may include redecorating a room, planting a vegetable garden, completing a woodworking project or creating an art object.

Our days as parents are filled with identifying and completing tasks. Parenting is filled with helping children develop skills to accomplish tasks. We start with simple things like teaching toddlers to pick up their toys, and then years later it seems we are still reminding our teens to pick up their toys! For some children, completing tasks comes easily, but for others, it is a day-to-day grind requiring constant reminders from parents and other influential adults. Hopefully as our children grow up, they also grow in their ability to accomplish age-appropriate tasks that improve their own lives and the lives of those around them.

As the people of God, we all share the same task. Actually it's a command — to love the Lord our God with all our heart and with all our soul and with all our mind. There is a second command as well — to love our neighbor as we love ourselves (MATT. 22:37-38).



As we are charged with the daily tasks of leading an adult life, it is easy to feel overwhelmed with the demands placed upon us in our parenting role. We are constantly juggling our home life with our job and trying to find balance with our church and community commitments, all while we attempt to keep peace within our immediate and extended family. Time management and efficiency experts will tell us that task accomplishment begins with task prioritizing — putting first things first.

The words of Jesus in Matthew 22 give us as parents the needed first and second steps of a good day, a plan for workplace balance, a way toward a fulfilling home life and a pathway to spiritual contentment. This can all unfold naturally when we love God first, and then love others as we love ourselves. While it seems like a simple plan, it gets complicated as we get distracted from focusing on these two commands as our top priorities. Thanks be to God who, in His perfect love, has given us Jesus, who kept the command to love God and love others, and went all the way to the cross to show His love for us. We are grateful that our Savior, Jesus, forgives us even when we fall short in loving Him and loving others.

As forgiven, loved people we can go forward in love every day, loving God and loving others in the name of Jesus.

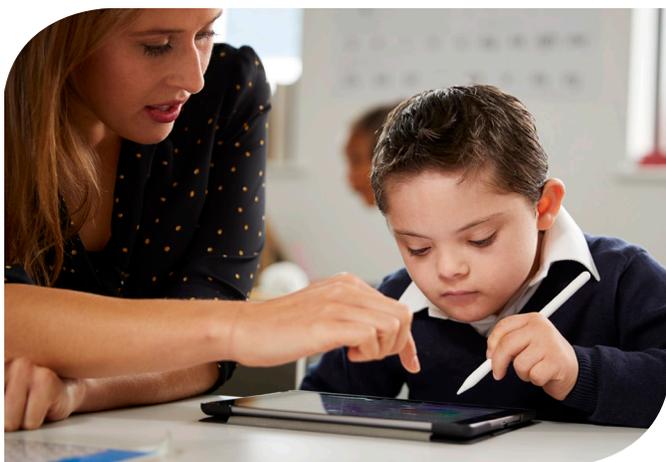


Fearfully and Wonderfully Made

SPECIAL EDUCATION IN LUTHERAN SCHOOLS



Inclusion Strategies: Presuming Competence



Setting individual student goals often can be a daunting process, particularly when those goals are meant to reach across classroom settings and teachers. In inclusive classroom environments, the goals for a student with a disability are not meant to be worked on only by the intervention or special education teacher nor only by the general education teacher. The desired outcomes for each student and the responsibility to make progress are shared by everyone in inclusive settings. That is also why it is important that general education teachers are involved in creating student goals, along with the student's parents, specialists and the student himself, as appropriate.

There is another important point to keep in mind in this process. We should always presume student competence.

Some educators respond to that point by thinking “Obviously!” and others respond by thinking “Yes, but” Assumptions made about students affect their education and their performance. Research shows time and time again that outcomes for students with disabilities are better when high expectations are set for them. Yet it is a common practice to start with the assumption that students with disabilities will not be able to do a certain task or master a certain standard. We then set goals and expectations accordingly, rather than with the expectation that they will be successful with a higher goal. It is true that we need to be realistic about goals and outcomes for all students, but, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, we need to begin with the least dangerous assumption that students with disabilities will master more than we may have initially assumed.

Take a moment and think about how you might approach setting an academic goal for the student in the following scenarios:

- 1 Student is a 12-year-old boy with a profound intellectual disability, functioning at the developmental age of 5. He reads at a pre-primer level and can write his name and most of his ABCs with assistance.
- 2 Student is a 12-year-old boy who participates in whole-class and small-group reading discussions regularly, and he is enthusiastic about learning. He is well-liked by his peers, and he works well in cooperative learning groups.

We want each student to know that God will use her for His purposes, and He created each student accordingly.

Without having much information to work from, your ideas will vary, but now compare the goals you thought of for each scenario. Would your expectations for the student in scenario #1 be different from the student in scenario #2? What if I told you that these scenarios describe the same student? The difference comes through the way in which each scenario describes the student and also presumes competence (or lack thereof). The first scenario focuses on the student's disability label and academic challenges while the second scenario begins with a discussion of strengths. The change in how we think and talk about students makes a big impact on how we approach setting goals.

In fully inclusive environments where all students are valued as equals and have a sense of belonging, the disability should be less important than who they are as baptized and forgiven children of God. We want each student to know that God will use her for His purposes, and He created each student accordingly. He does not make mistakes! We do this by starting with the student's strengths. What are the gifts God has given to this child? What can this child do in different academic settings? When we start the discussion with strengths rather

than the disability itself and subsequent challenges, it helps to presume competence and set appropriate high expectations. Before the team sits down to establish goals for a specific student, it may be helpful for the participants to write down the strengths they see from their perspectives: home, school, even the student's perspective, if he or she is old enough to participate. Discuss these strengths first so that everyone has ideas about what the student CAN do and what the student does well. Goals should reflect areas in which student growth is needed, but should also allow the student to use individual strengths as part of the process.

Discussing strengths and presuming competence are important strategies to incorporate as part of the process of establishing individual student goals. This is easier to do in some cases. At times, it is more difficult to see the strengths first and keep in mind that God created even those whom you view as more challenging with gifts to be used for His purpose. Just as we presume competence with students, we can presume competence with ourselves that we can shift our thinking as needed to build more inclusive classrooms with high expectations for all students.



Next month, we'll discuss some additional ideas for setting goals and tracking them across settings as we continue on with inclusion strategies. Feel free to contact Lutheran Special Education Ministries at lsem@luthsped.org or visit our website at luthsped.org and let us know how we can help you support students with disabilities in your ministry!

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A RESOURCE OF LCMS SCHOOL MINISTRY

Writer: Dr. Kara Bratton Designer: Lisa Moeller

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Parent Pages

RESOURCES FOR CHRISTIAN PARENTS IN THE 21ST CENTURY



Using Challenge to Nurture Persistence



Our world seems to be all about the easy answer.

Just look at social media posts that beg you to click. Each one offers promises to change your life with “5 Easy Steps” or “10 Things to Avoid.” Schools can be focused on correct test answers, and video games promote the quest for high scores. Even at home, we tell our children to hurry up and finish their homework to go out and play! We are fast-moving, competitive people who wrongly think that if a task is hard, it must mean we are not good enough and if we are not up to the task, we should probably just give up.

We seem to have lost the joy of problem-solving. We want quick and easy answers and stunning results. I suspect years of watching advertising have had an impact on our thinking. However, our children are

not bottles of laundry detergent with bigger-than-life promises of results. Our children are the stain makers and the dirt finders, and we know they face challenges. We can make the best of these challenges by nurturing the skill of persistence. This is especially true given the year we have experienced.

Teaching persistence is all about mindset. We want to steer our children away from the idea that learning should always be easy. Instead, we want to prepare in them a willingness to do hard work and to show them how God has intended for them to learn through difficulties. Here are some persistence-building mindsets:

Some problems are hard. This statement seems a bit obvious. However, children who learn fairly

quickly are not used to difficult problems. My son has a learning disability, and the best lesson he learned in school was to persist. He assumed nearly everything was going to be a challenge, and when he found something that was easy, he made a career out of it. Today he puts his persistence to work solving technology issues. Let your child know that it is OK when problems are complicated. A demanding problem does not indicate your child lacks the ability to do the work. Easy problems don't teach; hard ones do.

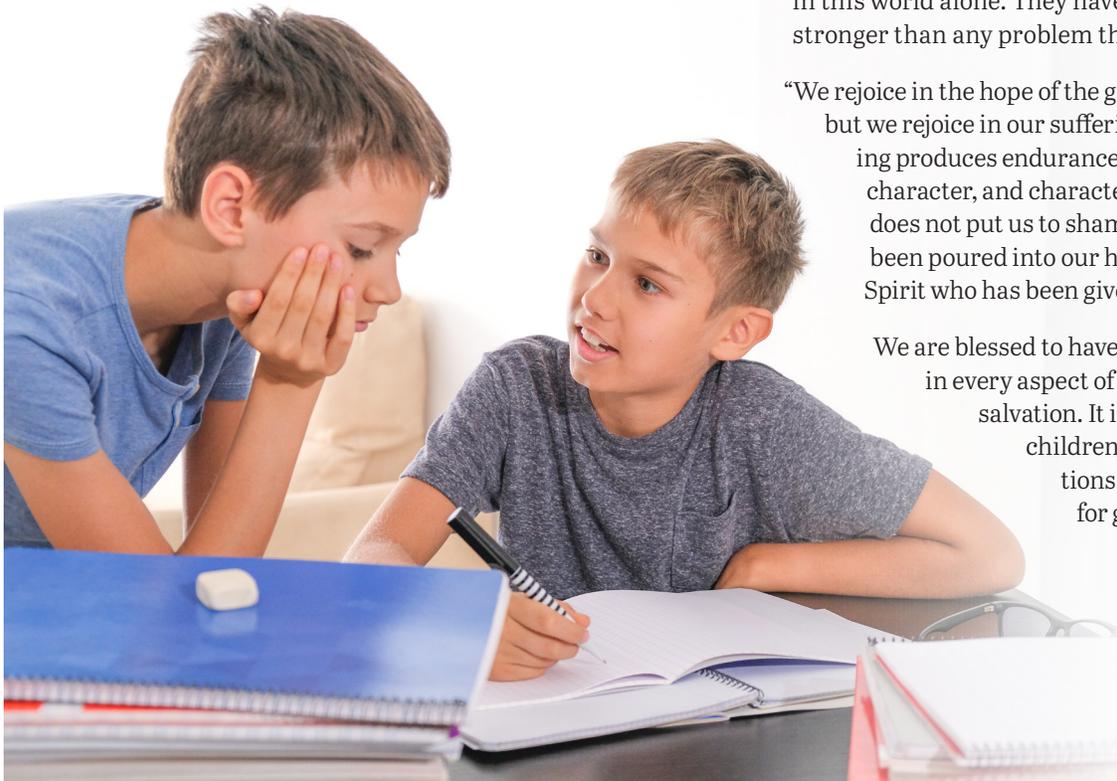
Everything has a solution. Most problems in childhood have an answer. It is advantageous for children to learn to pull back and examine the issue in a different light when the solution is not readily apparent. Sometimes the way we frame a challenge makes all the difference. Describing a problem as an opportunity to dig in, find help and try a different tactic is a way to use hope to frame the difficulty. Problems in the third-grade math book always have an answer, but problems in the daily life of adolescents might not have a clear resolution. Learning to seek wise counsel and to view the situation in terms of the potential to do good are worthy ways to tackle tough decisions.

Together we can do hard things. In our society, we vigorously promote individualism. There are many benefits to raising confident, independent children, but we don't want to ignore the opposite idea of teamwork. A significant factor in the development of persistence is the recognition that we are not alone; we have people who care about us and are willing to help. God designed us to be smarter together. Teach your child the difference between teamwork and cheating. A good team member will contribute. And each member will likely take a turn leading the team toward a solution. The important lesson is that asking for help is a strategy, not a weakness.

We don't know the full plan yet, but God does. We see only a small picture of what is happening in any situation, and that is a great lesson to learn. Realizing we don't have all the information promotes effective problem-solving strategies because it reminds us to search rather than to assume. As Christian parents, we have the added benefit of teaching the faith while we nurture the kind of persistence that overcomes obstacles. Think of how God has sustained your faith in difficult times. Keep these examples ready to share with your children as you remind them they are not in this world alone. They have a God who is bigger and stronger than any problem they will encounter.

“We rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us” (ROM. 5:2-5).

We are blessed to have a God who is involved in every aspect of our life, including our salvation. It is a comfort to teach our children that challenging situations are unique opportunities for growth. May you feel God's guidance as you persist in parenting your children through the trials, tribulations and joys.



A RESOURCE OF LCMS SCHOOL MINISTRY

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Writer: Dr. Kim Marxhausen Designer: Lisa Moeller

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Professionally Speaking



Sent to Serve – Enthusiastically



What reasons do you hear for lack of attending or other lack of support of Lutheran schools?

- › Too expensive?
- › Too risky?
- › Doesn't address my child's needs?
- › Hypocritical?
- › Not a priority?
- › Just too hard to justify the cost?

Parents who inquire of the school or leave the school have used one or more of these reasons. Unfortunately, some of these excuses have been mumbled by members of our churches, by pastors and even by teachers.

We are amazed by past financial support of Lutheran education as congregational members would take out a second mortgage just to assure the existence of their Lutheran school. In a sermon from 1870, C.F.W. Walther



reflected on the sacrifice and commitment of the Saxons, saying they were driven by a "living and powerful faith, our highest possession and treasure." He went on in the same sermon to speak to this commitment to the Lord by saying, "Our only real object was to save our souls, to live our faith here, to establish the true and correct public worship, and to maintain a truly Christian school for our children" (August C. Stellhorn, *Schools of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod*, © 1963 Concordia Publishing House, p. 49).

The Rev. Dr. Gregory Seltz has said, "Now more than ever the church and its schools need to be teaching about God's moral order of the world as well as God's saving of the world." Seltz is quick to share that when he first was commissioned to be the head of the Lutheran Center for Religious Liberty (lcrifreedom.org), he quickly realized the need for the Center's efforts to be supporting and encouraging our Synod's Lutheran schools and universities.

His enthusiasm is contagious!

It's almost pathetic that we, who are greatly blessed in this country to have Christian early childhood programs, K – 8 schools, high schools and universities where we can be bold in confession, are often timid and fearful to do so.

So let's debunk the excuses.

Too expensive? It's more affordable than often concluded when compared to money spent on a daily Starbucks or \$100 night out on the town.

Too risky? The risk is greater to have a child not nurtured by Christian teachers and within a community of forgiveness. The risk of exposure to public schools who are being directed by special interest groups is not in the best interest of family and the Church.

Not addressing a child's unique needs? It happens, and sometimes we hang our heads knowing a need was missed. But the communication needed between home and school can deal effectively with many student needs.

Hypocritical? It's a favorite term to be placed on a Christian. Perfect love and obedience are not found in our schools other than through knowing the perfect love and life of Jesus. However, honesty and repentance are hallmarks of principals and teachers, reflective of the God who has forgiven each of them.

Not a priority? Being in heaven is the ultimate goal for parenting, even as they grow to have their own kids. The support of a Lutheran school is a tremendous help toward this priority.

Frankly, it's time to enthusiastically raise up our schools as priorities, as caring communities, as bastions of moral strength and as places where Jesus is known.

We need to be a place where we do not promote a life of determining one's own truth. Rather, we need to point to Jesus because He is the truth, and that truth is written throughout the Bible for us to read, learn and live.



Think about it. Progressive thought and theory has become a reality of actions and life. Who would have ever thought that one would argue about being male and female, challenge the intrinsic value of life itself (in the unborn or aging) or even suggest that reality changes by how one feels from one minute to another? Consistency? Standards? Principles? Our moorings are more than challenged.

Some topics come under the guise of “political disagreements,” “personal choices” or “differences of opinion.” But are they? How do we involve ourselves in what some might call “civil discourse” without the topic being perceived as a personal attack or a bigoted mindset?

Lutheran schools should challenge themselves to uphold the words of the apostle Paul, striving to speak “the truth in love” (EPH. 4:15). Yes, when the truth is not accepted as the words and teachings that come from the mouth of God — written in the Bible — accusation and defensiveness can be a product. But we are called to be faithful and Jesus Himself has promised to be with us and give us the words to share.

Our Lutheran school community can be treasured as a gift from God where children are nurtured with a love and compassion that seek to share Jesus in word and action.

Let's pray for this work.

Let's encourage this work.

Let's be bold in the message that we need to share in our Lutheran schools.



Professionally Speaking // FEBRUARY 2021

A RESOURCE OF LCMS SCHOOL MINISTRY

Writer: Mark Muehl Designer: Erica Schwan

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Rattles & Prattles

A RESOURCE FOR CAREGIVERS OF INFANTS AND TODDLERS



Freed and Chosen to Serve

“THROUGH LOVE SERVE ONE ANOTHER” (GAL. 5:13).



FEBRUARY THEME

Bible Story: Early Christians and Dorcas (ACTS 2:42–47; 4:31–37; 9:36–39).

Focus: The early Christians enthusiastically shared Jesus’ message as they loved and served one another.

What it teaches us: God’s Spirit was actively involved in the lives of the early Christian Church. Through Baptism, we become part of the Christian Church and pray God’s Spirit will continue His work through us.

Prepare to teach

- › **Read** the story in each of the references, and, if possible, a study Bible.
- › **Think:** Jesus showed His love when He taught, helped, suffered, died and overcame death in His resurrection. When people become followers of Jesus through faith and Baptism, God’s Spirit moves them to gather together to grow in God’s Word, build relationships with one another, pray for each other and reach out to meet the spiritual and physical needs of others.
- › **Pray:** Dear God, send Your Holy Spirit to help us show our love and thanks for all Jesus did for us as we share and serve Jesus every day. Amen.

WORSHIP TIME AND BIBLE STORY PRESENTATION



You will also need:

- > **Little Ones Sing Praise** (LOSP), copyright © 1989 Concordia Publishing House (CPH), St. Louis, Mo.
- > **Picture of Jesus** (find one doing an internet search)
- > **Pictures:** find pictures of early Christians meeting/eating together and Dorcas on the internet or in a children's picture Bible. Reduce sizes to 2 inches; glue in circle shapes; color; cut out; laminate; cut out; make tree cookies or glove puppets. Use pieces of adhesive Velcro on the back.

Gather for Worship

Sing (use melody "Mulberry Bush"): **Boys and girls, come sit with me ... Boys and girls, come sit with me, right here on the floor.**



Invocation: Sing (using melody from above): **We gather here in God's name ... Father, Son and Spirit too.**

Opening Song

Show picture of Jesus. **Jesus loves each of us. We learn about Jesus' love in the Bible.** Sing "Jesus Loves Me, This I Know" (LOSP, p. 42).

Bible Story

Use tree cookies or a story glove with pictures suggested above.

Picture of Jesus: **Before Jesus went home to heaven, He told His friends He would send His Spirit. He would help them in all they said and did.**

Refrain: Please help us do it too.

Show picture of Christians meeting: **God's Spirit helped them learn, pray and sing to God. They shared their food and helped each other. Refrain.**

Show Dorcas: **God's Spirit helped a woman named Dorcas to share food with people who didn't have any. She made and gave clothes to people who needed them. Refrain.**

What the Story Teaches: God's Spirit helped God's people of long ago to love, serve and share the message Jesus lived, was hurt, died and came alive again. He helps us too.

Song to Sing: "God Chose Me" (LOSP, P. 107).

Time to Pray

Invite children to fold their hands for prayer. **Dear Jesus, Thank You for Your love and care. Please help us love and care for others. Amen.**

Closing/Benediction

(Use "Mulberry Bush" tune.) **Now it's time to say goodbye ... Now it's time to say goodbye. Remember God loves — and cares — for you.**

CURRICULAR MATERIALS //

IDEA STARTERS for integrating the Bible story and theme into STREAMS (curriculum)

S Science and Nutrition

- > **Science:** During the day, call attention to ways the children use their hands. Often comment **God gives us hands to**
- > **Snacks:** Assist children as they use plastic knives to cut canned fruit into pieces and put the pieces into a big bowl to share with their friends.

T Technology

- > Call attention to hand tools you and the children use to play, eat, help, build with blocks, crawl, eat, etc.

R Reading and Language Arts

- > **Books to Read:** *Hands, Hands, Fingers Thumb* by Theo LeSeig (Random House Books for Young Readers, 1969); *The Quilt* by Ann Jonas (Greenwillow Books, 1984).
- > **Finger Play:** “Open, Shut Them” Peek — look at ... people whom Jesus loves ... people we can help, etc.

E Engineering

- > Show a handcrafted quilt to the children. Use fabric crayons and 4-inch muslin squares. Tape squares to a table top. Assist children as they use crayons to color them. Ask a quilter to create a quilt/quilts. Give to a hospital neonatal unit or use with dolls in the housekeeping center.

A Arts (art, music and physical education)

- > **Art:** Paint hands and make prints. Post prints with caption: “God gives us hands to ...” (add words that describe what you see the children doing).
- > **Music:** “I Have Hands” (*LOSP*, P. 29); “Finger Family” (search internet).
- > **Large Motor:** Use hands and small balls, e.g., bounce, toss, pick up, roll.

M/S Mathematics/Social Studies

- > Use the following finger play to teach numeral recognition, number order and social interaction within the family.
Daddy made spaghetti; yum, yum, yum. He is helper number 1. Mommy made a salad; with-tomatoes too. She is helper number 2. Brother washed baby’s hands; carefully. He is helper number 3. Sister wiped-the table; swept-crumbs-from the floor. She is helper number 4. Granny set the table; plates, spoons & knives. She is helper number 5. Before they ate supper, they-folded-hands to pray: “Thank-You God-for-family and-the-food You give each day. Amen.”

CONNECT WITH PARENTS in your newsletter

Share the Bible story. God’s people used their hands to praise and worship and to help one another. Suggest ways families can do this in the same way in their homes.



Rattles & Prattles

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Writer: Judy Williams Designer: Lisa Moeller

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A RESOURCE OF LCMS SCHOOL MINISTRY



School Shepherd

TIPS AND SUPPORT FOR PASTORS OF CONGREGATIONS WITH SCHOOLS



THEME | SENT TO SERVE

Sent to Serve Resourcefully



“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich”
(2 COR. 8:9).

“And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work”
(2 COR. 9:8).

God provides the resources of His grace so that Lutheran schools provide children and families the greatest resource of all: His generous forgiveness.

The Good Shepherd is the Resource

God, who created and preserves all things, willingly sacrificed His only Son for our salvation. The price of God’s investment in us is summarized by Martin Luther, who wrote that Jesus Christ “has redeemed me, a lost and

condemned person, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil; not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death” (SC, Explanation to The Second Article).

All other resources and the sacrificial management of them are secondary to the sacrifice of Jesus. Lutheran schools are always mindful of and instructive of God’s response for us. Stewardship education always begins and ends at the cross.

The School Shepherd is Resourceful in Management of God’s Resources

Stewardship definitions typically include a reference to “manager.” God, the Owner of all creation, gives us the privilege of managing His resources. While wise management is important for all Christians, it is especially important for those who hold the pastoral office. The rite of ordination (*Lutheran Service Book: Agenda*, copyright © 2006 Concordia Publishing House, p. 164) includes the passage from 1 Tim. 3:1-7: “...not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well...”.

While the school shepherd’s first responsibility is to be steward of the Gospel, his leadership in other realms is important. This is especially true in the area of stewardship of various aspects of the school ministry. While the pastor is typically not the chief financial officer of the congregation or school, the pastor’s financial leadership is crucial to maintaining and growing the Lutheran school ministry.

The school shepherd is a stewardship teacher. An excellent resource for stewardship education is the “Consecrated Stewards” program. Many Districts offer the resource in partnership with Lutheran Church Extension Fund. Your District office will be able to provide information on this or other stewardship educational resources. One of the observations in the “Consecrated Stewards” material is that Jesus often talked about money. Jesus’ illustrations and lessons are instructive to us. Unfortunately many congregations and schools fail to offer stewardship education programs. Many members are ignorant both of the responsibility and of the joy of sharing generously.

Lutheran Schools are Resourceful

Lutheran schools are resourceful in the management of people. The school shepherd is the leader in emphasizing the following guidelines.

- › Lutheran schools seek servants with Gospel-centered hearts. All who work for and with the ministry must share in the desire to tell the Good News to children.
- › Lutheran schools recruit and hire those who share in the core values of the ministry.
- › Lutheran schools seek servants who love children.
- › Lutheran schools train staff to work effectively in their ministry areas and to work effectively as a team.
- › Lutheran schools consistently affirm those who do their tasks faithfully. No task from teaching a classroom to serving a school lunch is taken for granted.
- › Lutheran schools offer professional and fair compensation for services.

Lutheran schools are resourceful in management of money.

- › Realistic budgets are prepared and followed.
- › The supporting congregations are well informed about the school ministry needs and the management of all resources.



Grant us hearts, dear Lord, to give You Gladly, freely of Your own. With the sunshine of Your goodness Melt our thankless hearts of stone Till our cold and selfish natures, Warmed by You, at length believe That more happy and more blessed 'Tis to give than to receive.”

(LSB 851:2)

- › Parents are informed of the true cost of the Lutheran school education and are committed to supporting the ministry with tuition payments and tithes to supporting churches.
- › All fundraising is done ethically and is consistent with Christian stewardship principles.
- › Endowment funds and other avenues of long-term support are developed.
- › Donors are thanked personally and often.



Sharing our Courageous Thoughts

- ◆ How have you experienced God’s abundant provision for your Lutheran school ministry?
- ◆ What challenges do you face in funding the school ministry?
- ◆ How do you affirm and celebrate the people resources in your school?



Time Out for Directors

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT TIPS FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER ADMINISTRATORS



Love – That’s What It’s All About!

*Love, love, love! That’s what it’s all about!
'Cause God loves us, we love each other,
Mother, father, sister, brother,
Everybody sing and shout
'Cause that’s what it’s all about!
It’s about love, love, love!
It’s about love, love, love!*

(LOSP, P. 30)

Yes! The lyrics of the well-known children’s song share the message well. It is all about love! John 3:16 shares the Gospel message simply, yet meaningfully: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son”! What a great reason to celebrate! Yes! Everyone should sing and shout!

In a world where sin is always present, the need for God’s love is great. As a Christian, you have a special gift to share God’s love. And, as a Lutheran educator and leader, sharing God’s love and news of salvation through Jesus Christ is part of your daily responsibilities — part of the daily tasks you are privileged to do.

As you browse through social media, watch television or glance through a newspaper, you’ll be almost blasted with what seems to be sad news, disappointing news or perhaps even

news that makes you angry. Even conversations with a friend or colleague can easily be filled with downers that make you wonder if anyone is really ever happy anymore.

If it’s any consolation, it’s important to note the world is far from perfect; there have been difficult circumstances, personal drama and cringe-worthy happenings since Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden tree. However, what wonderful knowledge you have as a Christian that God provides! He provides grace, mercy and salvation because of His Son, Jesus Christ! As mentioned above, John shares “For God so loved the world, that he have his only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life” (3:16).

God has always loved people, and He always will. While the negative aspects of the world today too often overshadow the good that is happening, remember the joys of eternal life in Heaven; how wonderful it is to ponder such a perfect environment!

As a leader in Lutheran education, you often see the hurt that exists in the world. Indeed, the world needs Jesus — the world needs Lutheran schools — the world needs you. As you share God’s love with your community, you serve as a beacon of hope to those with whom you interact. You are sent to serve in your church, school, neighborhood and city. And, as a role model who reflects the light of Christ each day, it’s critical that you show others why your faith means so much to you. Through your acts of kindness, words of encouragement and everyday



living, you serve others, and God, in ways that you might not even realize.

As another popular children's song shares:

***“Oh, you can't keep Jesus' love in a box,
Love in a box, love in a box.***

***Oh, you can't keep Jesus' love in a box,
'Cause His love'll come bubblin' through!”***

(LOSP, P. 35)

Other verses of this children's song share that it's also impossible to keep Jesus' love in a bag or a jar! For a Christian, it should be impossible to keep Jesus' love hidden. Yes, Jesus' love is in your heart, but be sure to share it with others in meaningful ways.

The work of education and school administration can be frustrating and tiring at times. Gather your faculty and staff together regularly for devotions and words of encouragement. Remind them that they, too, are sent to serve, and reflect on ways they share God's love with their students and families. Consider using common agreements that everyone holds to as they reflect Christ's light in your school. Open doors for people who are behind you. Try to greet others before they greet

you. Smile at students even before they enter your classroom. Compliment parents often. What does it mean to work at a Lutheran school? Why is working at a Lutheran school different, special and unique?

Being sent to serve in ministry, showing kindness to others and loving your neighbor are indeed important, but they're not always easy. Sometimes relationships are bruised, and forgiveness is necessary. Do not let hurt feelings or egos get in the way of servant-mindedness. Be sure to take time with your faculty and staff to talk about what it means to be a loving, caring and kind servant of Christ. As you engage in such dialogue, reflect on the following Scripture verses from 1 Peter: “As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen” (4:10–11).

***Gather your faculty and staff
together regularly for devotions
and words of encouragement.***



A RESOURCE OF LCMS SCHOOL MINISTRY

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Writer: Dr. Drew Gerdes Designer: Lisa Moeller

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