

MAY 2021

SCHOOL MINISTRY

Mailing



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SCHOOL MINISTRY MAILING

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Alight

FOR LUTHERAN SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS AND EDUCATORS



A Remarkable Year

“The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (MATT. 20:28).

It’s May! With the new month comes reflection and celebration of another year of Christian education completed for students across the country, recognizing that many schools will continue through the summer with child care, camps and summer programs. It’s been a remarkable year! Despite the pandemic, more than 145,000 students continued their Christ-centered education, growing in the love, grace and mercy of their Heavenly Father. More than 16,000 educators served faithfully to meet the needs of children entrusted to their care by providing classes in person, through remote learning or a combination of both. *We give thanks for our school leaders who worked tirelessly to develop innovative methods to provide Christian education for every student.*

Last fall, schools opened their doors to new families seeking in-person classes for their children. New students and their families were welcomed, many who were experiencing Christian education for the first time. Churches and schools worked closely together to connect with every new family. *We give thanks for our pastors and teachers and for their partnership in sharing the Gospel.*

Schools continued to strive for excellence. This year, 670 schools participated in National Lutheran School

Accreditation (NLSA) by preparing Self-Study Reports, hosting Validation Team Visits and developing School Action Plans. *We give thanks for dedicated commissioners, educators and volunteers who are leading schools on the path of continuous improvement to better serve students in their care.*

Synod leaders and district education executives worked without ceasing to help churches and schools navigate the application process for Soldiers of the Cross, the CARES Act and the many federal and state programs designed to assist workers and schools financially during shelter in-place orders and when schools temporarily closed in quarantine. *We give thanks for leaders in our Synod and for the education executives serving in districts who support the ministry of churches and schools.*

Lutheran schools serve because Jesus came not to be served but to serve. In reflection, we give glory, honor and praise to our Lord and Savior where His ultimate act of service was seen in the ransom on the cross. *We give thanks to God for the gift of His Son and for the power and presence of the Holy Spirit to transform the hearts of students and their families with the Gospel message of hope through faith in Jesus Christ during a remarkable year!*

“Oh give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever!” (PS. 107:1).



Computer File



What Do We Do Next?

RIGHT NOW, many teachers and administrators are asking the question “what’s next?” After the last twelve months of constant uncertainty and change, there is so much that we need to reflect on in order to answer that simple question. It is important that both administrators and educators alike make the time to think through what to do next. Certainly, there are unique practices and skills that, while you developed them in a time of need, you hope to never use in the classroom or school setting again. However, there are also practices and skills which may or should have a place moving forward. Making the time at the end of the school year to reflect on what works going forward and what does not will allow you to sharpen your educational practice and strengthen your professional skills even more. Without this thoughtful reflection there is a risk of simply going back to the way it was and not growing from all that we learned this year.

Speaking specifically to “what’s next” when it comes to technology, the last twelve months forced a number of changes that will have an impact for years to come. As such, there are five major educational issues and trends that administrators and educators need to reflect on in order to best prepare for the coming years.

Remote Learning Is Here to Stay

A recent NPR/IPSOS poll indicated that fully 29% of parents said that they would likely “stick with remote learning indefinitely.”¹ This number is shockingly high, and there are a number of reasons parents are looking

for online learning options going forward. Some students are thriving in remote learning when they have not done so in the classroom. Other students are in locations where it would be more financially advantageous for their families if they were able to learn online. Yet others are looking for online options to access better educational opportunities than what are offered locally. A final consideration is for those students who need to travel for sports or who are absent on an extended medical absence. All of this together paints an interesting picture for the future of remote learning. Whatever you decide in moving forward with remote learning, remember that this trend is likely to continue, but that the decision needs to fit your specific ministry and educational goals.

Learning from Anywhere

In the past, we knew that students were learning on their own devices at home and elsewhere, whether it was for school purposes or not. The last twelve months have brought this idea into even clearer focus, and it is important to keep this in mind when planning for the future. Students and parents alike now know that it is possible to learn from anywhere, so schools will need to plan for this in everything that they do. Systems that students and parents access for learning and information need to work on every device without limitation. Student educational content needs to be easily accessible in an online space. Administrators and teachers need to remember that not everyone has a good device at home, or great internet, or a specific space to learn

¹ Anya Kamenetz and Eda Uzunlar, “NPR/Ipsos Poll: Nearly One-Third Of Parents May Stick With Remote Learning,” *NPR*, March 5, 2021, accessed April 23, 2021, [npr.org/2021/03/05/973373489/npr-ipsos-poll-nearly-one-third-of-parents-may-stick-with-remote-learning](https://www.npr.org/2021/03/05/973373489/npr-ipsos-poll-nearly-one-third-of-parents-may-stick-with-remote-learning).

in, and they must plan accordingly for assignments and other activities that are done outside of the classroom using technology. All of this together shows the reality of the need for appropriate and conscious planning when it comes to learning outside of the classroom.

Individualized Learning Plans and Technology

While many schools have explored the idea of individualized learning plans for their students in the past, knowing where students are at in their knowledge and skills and what they need will be even more important moving forward. Historically, tracking student knowledge and potential learning gaps was done via hard-copy documents, such as paper or electronic text files, or through the use of spreadsheets or shared editable documents. However, this is extremely time consuming and does not effectively serve the teachers or the students in a timely manner. Today's knowledge- and skills-tracking programs allow for real-time tracking of student knowledge while also exposing learning gaps to be addressed by teachers at, above or below the current grade level. Such systems do require an investment of time and funding to set up, but the value to students and teachers is immeasurable as they are now able to know and track exactly where students are and what is needed for them to succeed.

“Learning Gaps” Technology

Continuing the previous topic of technology-based student learning plans, there is a growing concern among administrators, teachers and parents that students did not learn the content and skills when they were learning remotely throughout the course of the last year. While we need to be cognizant of the “learning loss” trap and how testing only specific subjects leads to unproductive policies,² there is something to be said about ensuring that students have a path forward to learn anything that they did not master fully, pandemic-related or not. Self-directed and self-paced online learning platforms, programs and videos are increasingly being used to address the needs of students when it comes to learning gaps. Whether it be hard or soft

skills and subjects, finding a way to give students the digital tools they need that address their learning gaps is something to watch in the coming years.

What Do We Do with All of This Technology?

In the last year, almost every school across the country invested in at least one new technology or hardware. Whether it was student devices, teacher devices, display technology, video recording devices and software subscriptions or any number of other pieces of the technology puzzle, it is important to have a plan for all of it going forward. Simply expecting classroom teachers to use everything that was purchased without specific planning, additional processing time and dedicated training is a setup for what was purchased to simply sit on a shelf or in a cart. Be sure to think through and develop a written plan for how best to continue using what was purchased or else it will simply fall into disuse in the future.

What a year. There have been changes and challenges, new technologies and new skills and constant uncertainty. The future is certain to hold much of the same. Through it all, however, one thing has not changed: God's love for us remains the same, both now and forever.

Remember, at the start of this year's *Computer File* articles, I issued a challenge. When each month's article is published, I wanted 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, express our thoughts and have constructive discourse on how the topic will impact our ministry both today and in the future.

² Yong Zhao, “Build back better: Avoid the learning loss trap,” *Prospects*, March 4, 2021, accessed April 23, 2021, doi.org/10.1007/s11125-021-09544-y.



Early Childhood Devotions

FOR CHILDREN AGES 3 TO 7



SENT TO SERVE **MATTHEW 20:28**

FOCUS: Freed to Serve. Galatians 5:13

God Chooses Us to Serve

Ascension and Great Commission (Matt. 28:16–20; Luke 24:50–53; Acts 1:6–12)

Before You Teach

With His final words on earth, Jesus sends His disciples to the whole world. He does not send them on that monumental task unequipped. His command — the Great Commission — also comes with great promise: Jesus will be with them always. Each generation of believers takes its place in line to implement Jesus' directive, commissioned to witness and serve until He returns in glory. This is our time — adults and children together — to fulfill our baptismal calling. We are equipped with the same promise: the “always” presence of Jesus in Scripture, Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Welcome/Greeting

Greet each child upon arrival. Doing so is critical for establishing the child's positive outlook for the day. **Good morning/afternoon child of God! Today we are going to learn about being God's messenger.**

Gathering

Signal children to gather in your worship area. Pray. Sing. Introduce the biblical narrative.

Tell the Story

Guide children to count bold numbers aloud with you, as printed in the text.

1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. **When they saw Jesus, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11** disciples worshiped Him. Then Jesus came to them and said, “Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always to the very end of the age.”

Jesus then lifted up His hands and blessed **1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11** disciples. While He was blessing them, Jesus left them and was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid Him from their sight. The **1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11** disciples were staring up into the sky as Jesus was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. “Men of Galilee,”



they said, “Why do all 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 of you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen Him go into heaven.”

1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 disciples worshiped Jesus. Then they joyfully returned to the city of Jerusalem, telling others all about Jesus and what they had witnessed (seen). Jesus promises that He is with us always. Tell others about His great love for us and all people.

Pray

Children repeat each phrase after you.

**Dear Jesus,
You are with me every day,
when I work and when I play.
Help me to share your great love,
sent to all from heav’n above. Amen.**

Remember the Story

BIBLE WORDS TO REMEMBER

PRE-K & K: “I am with you always, to the end of the age” (MATT. 28:20).

GRADES 1 & 2: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit ... And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (MATT. 28:19-20).

Activities

CREATE: Kites. *You will need: Colored construction paper, ribbon, crepe paper streamers.* Precut diamond shapes for kites. Have children draw a cross bar on the back of each. Add streamers to side diamond points. Secure a single long ribbon with a staple and a knot to the bottom point for children to hold. As children work, review the narrative, referencing the cross on the back of each kite. Remind them that Jesus is always with them wherever they are and wherever they go.

DO: What goes Up? Jesus went up (ascended) into heaven. Guide children to name things that can go up



(e.g., balls, birds, kites, balloons, bubbles, airplanes, elevators).

SING: “Go Tell” (LOSP, P. 104) and “I’m with You” (LOSP, P. 32).

CAMP SERVE: Provide a list of service opportunities for families to engage in during the summer months (e.g., greeting cards to shut-ins; food to foodbanks; a neighborhood cleanup; bake and sell “Cookies for a Cause”).

Sending

YOU WILL NEED: A heart to pass. Gather in the “Sending Circle.” Pray. Remind children that Jesus is always with them wherever they are and wherever they go.

Live the Story

We “meet” Jesus in Scripture, in prayer and in the Sacraments. We celebrate the way God works in and through us to adapt, to listen, to comfort, to forgive and to teach as we share and live the message of the Gospel. For some, the school year comes to a close, but we are not done. We gratefully claim, proclaim and live the amazing gift of grace we have in Jesus, and His ongoing presence in our lives.

Early Childhood Devotions

VOL. 25, NO. 9 // MAY 2021

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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IMAGE: GETTY IMAGES



Family Matters

A CHRIST-CENTERED RESOURCE FOR FAMILIES AND TEACHERS



SENT TO SERVE

Sent into Summer



Summer can mean freedom.

When the warm days of summer come upon us we can experience relief from cold and inclement weather. For our children and for us as parents, summer can be freedom from the schedule of school and other required activities. We can even be free from jackets and shoes as warmer weather arrives in our part of the country.

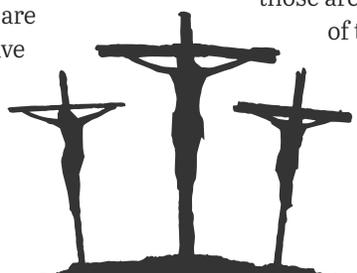
While not measured by actual calendar days, summer seems to begin with a holiday weekend — Memorial Day — and end with another holiday weekend — Labor Day. Smack dab in the middle is Independence Day. We love the Fourth of July, as it is truly a pinnacle of our summer celebrations and for the event it celebrates — our freedom.

In this country, we prize our freedoms, and we recognize that these come with a price. We are grateful for the pioneering founders of our country who boldly fought for freedom and gained independence. We are thankful for those men and women who have served valiantly, and especially for those who have sacrificed their own lives for our ongoing freedom. What a blessing it is to live in a land that supports freedom as we do — attested to by the grand scale of national celebrations all the way down to local observances.

As Christian citizens, we have the liberties that this country offers — in where we want to raise our families, the job opportunities we choose, the mobility that we can experience in our daily lives. As Christian parents, we have the duty to teach our children about Jesus, and raise them to live out the Christian faith. This responsibility to bring up our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord was granted to us on the cross of Calvary. There, Jesus died for us, taking away our sins and securing the victory over sin, death and the devil through His glorious resurrection from the dead on the very first Easter. We are free — because we have been bought with a price, paid by Christ on the cross.

Now we move toward another summer — one which might be different from past summers, and where we may encounter some limited freedoms. We might be restricted in how we gather, where we can go and what we can do — but those are only physical and social restrictions. In spite of these human restrictions, we still have the God-given, Jesus-won freedom as parents to teach and pray with our children as we see them grow in serving others and staying connected to Christ.

Have a great summer!



Gather the family together in a comfortable setting, with no electronic distractions, preferably around a table (or other hard surface) to enjoy the family activity outlined below.

ACTIVITY TITLE: SPLASHING INTO SUMMER

PURPOSE: To engage family members in an activity that outlines a plan for family activity and service during the upcoming summer months.

OPENER:

Ask the following questions in your family setting to get a conversation going.

- › What do you like best about summer? What do you like least?
- › What is one of your favorite summer memories from the past?

FUN FAMILY ACTIVITY: SPLASH INTO SUMMER!

DIRECTIONS:

1. In the place where the family members are gathered, please provide the following supplies.

- Several pieces of plain white paper, that are at least 11 × 17 inches in size, or a large poster board. If you don't have paper that large, tape several 8 ½ × 11-inch pieces of paper together to create a bigger piece of paper.
- A number of markers and colored pencils of various colors and sizes.

2. Ask a family member, who has good handwriting, to write the following words on the paper or poster board (in portrait position), leaving several inches of space between the words.

S P L A S H into Summer – _____ Family

S u p p o r t

P e o p l e

L o v i n g l y

A n d

S h a r e

H a p p i l y

3. Talk about each one of these words (except, perhaps, the “And”). How you might **support** others? How might you safely connect with **people**? What **loving acts** might you show to them? What special blessings might you **share** with them? What will you do to **bring happiness** to others?

4. As ideas come to mind, have a family member (with good handwriting) write them down next to the appropriate words that spelled out **SPLASH**.

5. As a family, plan out how you will make a **SPLASH** each week this summer by supporting people in a loving way and by sharing blessings with them in a joyful and happy manner.

6. Post the finished “**SPLASH CHART**” in a prominent place in your home, and pray about those people you want to connect with this coming summer and those activities you want to do this summer. Send up prayers often — daily, weekly, all summer long!

CLOSING PRAYER

At the close of the family session, have an adult or older sibling say the following echo prayer, phrase by phrase, with everyone repeating the words.

Loving Heavenly Father,
we know that it has been a hard
year, in school and in everyday
life. So many things challenged
us and those around us. Thank
You for being with us, and for
giving us strength, to make it to
the summer. Comfort those who
are hurting. Give to all of us, a
great summer ahead. Bless us,
and let us be a blessing to others.
In the name of Jesus. Amen.



Fearfully and Wonderfully Made

SPECIAL EDUCATION IN LUTHERAN SCHOOLS



Concluding Thoughts ON INCLUSION

At the beginning of the *Fearfully and Wonderfully Made* series this year, you were challenged to think about what the word inclusion means to you as it relates to students with disabilities. If you have read some of the tips on building an inclusive classroom this year, think again about what this word means to you in your classroom and school. Have any of your thoughts changed? Do you see the connection between a truly inclusive setting and God's Word?

We know that each of us is fearfully and wonderfully made by our God, and that He gives us unique strengths and challenges. In His eyes, we are all equally His children, created with a purpose. Likewise, in our classrooms, as we demonstrate God's love, we model that each student is an equally valuable and contributing member of our class. There likely would not be much debate about that concept. However, many times students with disabilities do not feel that full sense of inclusion. They may be physically present, but they may not experience true friendships and the sense of belonging that comes with inclusion. We discussed intentional strategies this year to help work toward this idea of true inclusion. These strategies also promote the idea of students with disabilities being more than physically present in our schools and classrooms.

In the book *Welcoming Children with Special Needs* (WestBowPress, 2014), authors Julie Lane and Quentin Kinnison discuss what is referred to as "The Cult of Normalcy." This is the idea that society tends to place



more value on individuals who possess outward beauty, athleticism and intelligence. People who possess these qualities are often viewed as being able to contribute more to society and, therefore, seen as more valuable than individuals who fall outside of these norms. Lane and Kinnison go on to express the irony of the Cult of Normalcy because these standards exclude so many individuals, yet many people strive toward those ideals in an attempt to belong and show that they have value. People with disabilities continue to be excluded and isolated because they may not know how to attempt to fit into these norms or their efforts are in vain.

However, the reality is that the real *norm* for humans is *difference*. As Christians, we know that God intentionally made each of us to be different. Yet some differences are considered positive, and other differences are considered to be disabilities. That disparity comes

Our differences come from God but do not make any of us less valuable to Him.

from how humans interpret differences. God has made known that none of us is more or less worthy, even if society tells us differently. “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (GAL. 3:28). Our differences come from God but do not make any of us less valuable to Him. We should intentionally reflect this in our classrooms and schools. Students who are different or have disabilities are no less valuable to God, and they are no less valuable in our schools. Lane and Kinnison state, “The faith community that reflects God’s image welcomes and honors all by valuing the ‘least’ as the ‘greatest’” (28–29). We have the opportunity as Christians to build communities that make the connection between our faith and inclusion, where all students feel they belong, differences and all. We all belong to our Lord and Savior,



but we also want all students to have that sense of belonging in our schools and classrooms.

Over the last year, I have had the opportunity to talk with a number of Christian school principals about special education. Many principals brought up the connection they see between inclusion and their school community. One principal told me, “the smartest kid, the kid that you can’t figure out, the kid who is raging ... they’re all image bearers of Jesus Christ, and they have just this incredible value to our Lord and Savior. Well, if they are that valued by Him, that pretty much directs me in my role.” Another principal shared, “A Christian school that says, ‘we’re following in the footsteps of Jesus,’ and Jesus said, ‘Let the little children come to me.’ But He never said, ‘Let the children come to me, but only those children, and maybe those.’”¹ Principals realize there may be limitations to the students who can come to their schools to receive what they need to be successful, but when students with disabilities are in our communities, we should work toward true inclusion. This inclusion models the value that God places on each of us and the idea of truly belonging, not just being physically present.



We should celebrate being **fearfully and wonderfully made**, and help our students see this as well! Please reach out to Lutheran Special Education Ministries at lsem@luthsped.org or visit our website at luthsped.org and let us know how we can support your school ministry in their efforts toward inclusion!

¹ K.S. Bratton, “Getting it right”: A grounded theory construction of principals’ decision making about special education services in Christian schools in the United States (Publication No. 28030509) [Doctoral dissertation, Concordia University Chicago, 2020]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global.

Fearfully and Wonderfully Made VOL. 4, NO. 9 // MAY 2021

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Writer: Dr. Kara Bratton Designer: Lisa Moeller

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Parent Pages

RESOURCES FOR CHRISTIAN PARENTS IN THE 21ST CENTURY



Teach Them to Your Children



“You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise”
(DEUT. 6:5-7)

Parents are blessed to have a church that helps them teach the faith to their children. Those who benefit from a Lutheran childcare center or school know the value of this kind of education. Pastors, teachers, DCEs and many others work to find the best ways to share faith with children while also helping them grow and learn in areas of academics, social skills and emotional

skills. These verses from Deuteronomy remind us that the first place for faith teaching is the family. Others who work with children do so to support parents because teaching the faith is a team effort.

First of all, faith grows through the work of the Word and Sacraments. The Holy Spirit uses Baptism, the study of God's Word and, when a child is ready, Communion to grow faith and forgive sins. A parent's role in Baptism and Communion is to bring their child to church. However, the teaching of God's Word can happen anywhere. Luther reminds us of this at the beginning of the Small Catechism when he writes that the volume is designed for the head of the family to teach his household. Let's look at these verses in Deuteronomy and explore God's plan for children to learn the faith.



“And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart”

God’s plan for teaching the faith to the next generation goes beyond the creation of church, Sunday school, youth group and day school. God designed the brains of children to learn essential things from family. From the very beginning, children and parents build a trust relationship that is necessary for learning. Children learn best from people they know and trust, and that starts with family. Part of God’s design for the passing of faith teaching is to designate the family as the first and best classroom. God commands us to teach our children, and He blesses us with the passion to do so by putting it on our hearts.

“You shall teach them diligently to your children”

When we think of teaching, it is easy to imagine a lesson. We see pastors giving a lesson to children in a

children’s message, and we recognize good teaching in sermons and Bible studies. However, God designed brains to learn in the repetition of routine in addition to individual lessons. The brain strengthens neural pathways when it detects important information, and it recognizes that repetition is a signal of this importance. One way we teach that faith learning is essential is to be diligent in our teaching. We look for ways to share faith often and do it over and over again. This repetition tells the brain to pay attention to faith teaching and to make the most of it. God uses our diligence to create solid faith learning. He will handle the lesson planning as you establish a worship routine and look for ways to bring faith into family discussions.

“And shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise”

When the brain seeks to identify meaningful learning, it also looks at things taught and used in multiple settings. When children hear the same faith teachings in the home, at school, in childcare, at church and with family in other locations during the week, the brain realizes that this skill is useful. Again, the brain strengthens neural pathways, and faith teaching becomes connected to almost everything the child learns. This is how we give our children a faith-centered world view — we show them how God is a part of every aspect of their lives. Later, when life brings challenge and struggle, their brains will have strong connections to faith.

When thinking about your children’s faith learning, know that faith grows through the work of the Spirit, that others in your church and school seek to support you and that what you teach your children is crucial to the process. Spend time in prayer and ask God to show you how to create worship and prayer routines for morning, bedtime or mealtime. Look for ways you can include your faith and God’s Word in everyday situations and conversations. Fill your home with God’s Word, especially books at your child’s reading level. There is nothing more rewarding than watching your children grow in their faith.

A RESOURCE OF LCMS SCHOOL MINISTRY

Parent Pages VOL. 20, NO. 9 // MAY 2021

Writer: Dr. Kim Marxhausen Designer: Lisa Moeller

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Professionally Speaking



Sent to Serve ... Side by Side



In her blog (scarletthinking.com), Paula Gardner communicates the ideas in psychology regarding the impact and influence of proximity. In her article “The Power of Proximity and Propinquity” (April 2017), Gardner speaks to research that supports what we consider common sense in relationship building. She says, “It [the Proximity Principle] basically asserts that you are more likely to form relationships with people who are close to you. We can see this in action over and over again when it comes to relationships and friendships that are founded at work. It’s that time working side by side — that proximity — that pulls us together.”¹

The research supports what we all know: we need time together to grow together. This is needed in families and is needed in business — and our business is the

¹ scarletthinking.com/2017/04/the-power-of-proximity-and-propinquity, accessed April 19, 2021.

ministry of our schools. Time together, doing the work and talking about the activities of school all bind us together. Sometimes all this togetherness may seem a bit challenging, but time apart can be quite damaging.

Take for instance the effects of COVID-19. The Journal of Gerontology, for example, shared, “Older adults reported higher depression and greater loneliness following the onset of the pandemic. Loneliness positively predicted depression.”² As the school year has gone on, we have noticed in the adverse effects of the stay-at-home orders in kids, parents and staff. Social awkwardness, irritableness and signs of depression have been seen. God did not make us to be separated from one another. “It is not good that the man should be alone” (GEN. 2:18).

² Anne C. Krendl and Brea L. Perry, “The Impact of Sheltering in Place During the COVID-19 Pandemic on Older Adults’ Social and Mental Well-Being” *The Journals of Gerontology: Series B* (August 2020), accessed April 19, 2021, doi: 10.1093/geronb/gbaa110.

Jesus' life is all about proximity. Instead of being a god out of touch, just throwing blessings down from on high, our God sent His Son to be as close as one can be — born of Mary, living in our world, changing the world with His words and actions, dying and rising. Right there ... right by us ... Immanuel. That is proximity.

This notion of the “power of proximity” is integral in thinking about life as a Christian and the impact of Lutheran schools. In today's world where there seems to be a greater disconnect with reality and more and more demonstrations of an inability to communicate with one another, the ministry of proximity bears even greater influence. Consider this list of examples of proximity in ministry ... and then feel free to share your additions:

***Parents' presence.** Kids need their parents — both parents — in their lives, participating in their lives, engaged in their lives. It's God's idea. Research also supports that it is holistically healthy for kids to have both parents in their lives. Are we diligent in teaching this standard? We know it's a desired norm and outcome, but what effort is being placed on this topic within school ministry?

***Presence of Christ in Communion.** We believe in His REAL presence, right there, for us. The God who is Immanuel and lived with us continues to be here, in bread and wine, with us and in us. Is an expectation for worship and Holy Communion an essential element of being strong during this pandemic? Are our churches fulfilling the need for gathering for Communion?



***Pastors' presence in our schools.** By being in the school, pastors show care and provide opportunities to connect with kids. Pastors' presence builds relationships with staff too. One pastor recently shared he moved his office from the church to the school so he would be more readily available for kids, teachers and parents. Love it!

***Proximity in the classroom.** Teachers next to kids, not walled behind their desks. Teachers at eye level with kids, getting their attention, showing their care for the kids. Teachers who show up for events and are seen in church. Teachers can do SO much by just consistently being there for their students.

***Proximity in the community.** Rural or city, small town or major urban, residential or near businesses, Lutheran schools are nearby, affecting their communities. Does the nearby community know the school (and church) is there? If not, it might be time to make the school (and church) actively part of the neighborhood.

***Attentiveness.** Recall times you've seen folks at a restaurant and the center of attention is each person's phone rather than the other people at the table. Proximity is not just a physical thing, but there's a mental aspect to it as well. Call it attentiveness of focus, proximity assumes interest and exchange of words.

***Showing mercy.** It might be “churchy” language but it's a call from God to us (LUKE 6:36). Perspective is affected by proximity, and that perspective will have bearing on a response. Mercy is compassion and patience, and those happen when we are living as a community, living with one another.



Professionally Speaking // MAY 2021

Writer: Mark Muehl Designer: Erica Schwan

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A RESOURCE OF LCMS SCHOOL MINISTRY



Rattles & Prattles

A RESOURCE FOR CAREGIVERS OF INFANTS AND TODDLERS



Freed and Chosen to Serve

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



MAY THEME

Bible Story: Jesus returns to heaven (MATT. 28:18–20; ACTS 1:1–11).

Focus: We are chosen not only to serve, but also to share the Good News of the freedom from sin, eternal death and eternal separation from God — the freedom which Jesus earned for us through His life, suffering, death and resurrection.

What it teaches us: When it was time for Jesus to return to heaven, He instructed His followers to share the Good News of what He did and to teach all He commanded (i.e., love and serve).

Prepare to teach

- › **Read** the story in each of the references and, if possible, a study Bible.
- › **Think:** As you prepare to teach this Bible story, ask yourself, “How can I encourage the little children to share the Gospel message?”
- › **Pray:** Dear Jesus, You call us to love and serve each other and to share the Good News that You save us from sin, death and eternal separation from God. Help me be an example every day. In Your name. 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.
- > **Fingers Tell the Story** (*FTS*), copyright © 1989 Concordia Publishing House (CPH), St. Louis, Mo.
- > **Picture of Jesus** (find one doing an internet search)
- > **Pictures:** (find on internet) Jesus and His disciples; standing Jesus; heart; cross shape; cloud. 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 glove puppet to tell the story:

Show Jesus and His disciples. **Out in the country, up on a hill — Jesus-and-His friends were sitting so still.**

Show figure of Jesus. **Jesus said, “It’s time for-Me-to go — Back home to-heaven; and just so you know — I’ll come back and take you there. While I’m gone, please take care —**

Show both the crucifixion and resurrection. **to tell everyone what I have done. I died-and-came alive for e-v’ry-one.”**

Show Jesus and cloud: **As they watched, He started to rise. Then, a cloud hid-Him-from their eyes. They-remembered-Him say, “I’ll be with you. (shake head back and forth) You won’t see Me; but, I’ll be with you.”**

What the Story Teaches: We are Jesus’ helpers today. He chooses us to tell others He’s our Savior. He promises to be with and help us.

Song: (tune: If You’re Happy and You Know It) **I can tell Jesus loves you, I can tell (repeat). Jesus loves you and me and our whole family. I can tell Jesus loves you, I can tell.**

Time to Pray

Dear Jesus, Please, help me tell my family and friends how much You love them. 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.**

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

S Science and Nutrition

- > **Science:** A cloud hid Jesus. Look at clouds (e.g., big clouds, little clouds, puffy clouds, wispy clouds, clouds that bring rain or snow).
- > **Snacks:** Serve pudding/fruit with a “cloud” (spoon of whipped topping).

T Technology

- > Use technology to share the story of Jesus’ love with others. Find “Jesus Loves Me” song on YouTube and share with the kids.

R Reading and Language Arts

- > **Books:** *Little Cloud* by Eric Carle (The World of Eric Carle, 1998); make a book; take pictures of clouds.
- > **Poems and Rhymes:** “I Have Little Feet” (*FTS*, P. 16), Change Nursery Rhyme: “Here am I, little jumping Joan, Since Jesus is with me, I’m never alone.” Teach children to sign “Jesus loves you” (check online)

E Engineering

- > Older toddlers — create a cloud in a jar (search on internet).

A Arts (art, music and physical education)

- > **Art:** Crayon Resist: Use white crayons to scribble clouds on a piece of paper. Brush on light blue watercolor to reveal clouds.
- > **Music:** “I’m with You” (*LOSP*, P. 32).
- > **Action Poem:** **Jump, jump, jump for joy. Jesus loves each girl and boy. Walk, walk, walk sadly; Jesus died for you and me. Run, run, happily. Jesus lives for you and me. Toss balls up, up so high; Jesus rose up in the sky ...**

M Mathematics

- > Make paper chain of five figures with smiling faces. Show the first, saying **One, one, one; Jesus is God’s only Son.** Second: **Two, two, two. He loves me and He loves you.** Third: **Three, Three, three; He was hurt and died for me.** Fourth: **Four, four, four; there is something more.** Fifth: **Five, five, five; Jesus came alive. Tell a friend and do a jive.**

S Social Studies

- > Jesus helps us to tell others of His love. Encourage kids to use songs and action poem with family at home, other relatives, etc.

CONNECT WITH PARENTS in your newsletter

Jesus calls us to share the Good News He’s the Savior. Remind your children often of all Jesus has done; tell relatives/friends/co-workers; children learn best through modeling.

A RESOURCE OF LCMS SCHOOL MINISTRY



School Shepherd

TIPS AND SUPPORT FOR PASTORS OF CONGREGATIONS WITH SCHOOLS



THEME | SENT TO SERVE

Sent to Serve Missionally



“I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me ... I lay down my life for the sheep. And I have other sheep that are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd”

(JOHN 10:14-16).

The Mission of The Good Shepherd

Jesus announced that He is the fulfillment of His Father’s promise to save His flock. From the family of the shepherd David would come the Shepherd to save Israel and the world. The Shepherd is “the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (JOHN 1:29). Every lamb could belong to Him because He is the perfect sacrificial Lamb. We are members of His flock because of His redeeming action.

Jesus makes clear His desire that every lamb belong to His fold. The Shepherd’s persistence in seeking and saving each lamb is shared by Jesus in the Parable of the Lost Sheep (LUKE 15:3-7). Every wandering and wayward lamb is sought by Jesus. We rejoice that the Shepherd has found us and claimed us as His own.

While few schools are actually named “Good Shepherd Lutheran School,” every Lutheran school is in fact a Good Shepherd school as they represent the Good Shepherd and bring lambs to Him.

The School Shepherd in Mission

The title of this monthly publication is significant, “School Shepherd.” It is the desire of Lutheran school ministry to encourage and equip those who work on behalf of the Good Shepherd. Jesus calls the pastor to be both His lamb and His shepherd.

While the school shepherd cares for and nourishes his flock in the name of the Good Shepherd, the school shepherd is also called to seek lost sheep. Lost and wandering sheep come onto the parking lot, walk down the hallways and enter the classrooms of the Lutheran school. These sheep may come from families who have never heard of the Good Shepherd. The sheep may come wounded by hurtful words and experiences in their homes. The sheep may have already heard the enticing voices of “thieves and robbers” (JOHN 10:8). They may already have a “wolf” (JOHN 10:12) who is frightening them.

The school shepherd has the privilege of leading the lambs to the present and eternal safety of the Good Shepherd.

Mission-Driven Lutheran Schools

Mission-driven Lutheran schools are intentional about bringing lambs to Jesus. In the context of a voters’ assembly or other gathering, the pastor, principal or other voices have defended the Lutheran school ministry with statements similar to “We are a mission of our church” and “We are on mission to our community.” While the Spirit is always at work where the Gospel is taught, those statements may be more aspirational than factual.

Missional Lutheran schools take the Great Commission (MATT. 28:19-20) seriously and develop actions and strategies to live the mission. In desiring to be more missional, Lutheran schools:

- › Gather around the Good Shepherd in worship and Bible study. He gathers and nourishes His flock through the Means of Grace.
- › Celebrate the blessings of Holy Baptism. God welcomes us into His flock through water and the Word. The power and blessings of Baptism are emphasized in worship and in classroom discussions. When children are brought into God’s kingdom, there is great joy and celebration. A chapel service or Sunday worship Baptism of a school pupil and family is a church and school highlight. Baptisms as a result of the ministry of the Lutheran school are a sign of the Spirit at work.



“O ever be our guide, Our shepherd, and our pride, Our staff and song. Jesus, O Christ of God, By Your enduring Word Lead us where You have trod; Make our faith strong.”

(LSB 864:4)

- › Train the school staff to be missionaries in the mission field of the school and community. *Go and Make Disciples: The Goal of the Christian Teacher* by Jane Fryar (Concordia Publishing House, 1992; Lutheran Education Association produced a Second Edition in 2004) is an excellent training manual.
- › Partner with the congregation’s outreach or evangelism boards to invite and encourage school families to worship and fellowship with the church family.
- › Develop a true mission statement that focuses and energizes the school to bring lambs into the Shepherd’s flock. Display (and live) the mission statement prominently.



Sharing our Mission Thoughts

- ◆ Is your school a Good Shepherd Lutheran school where the Shepherd’s voice is heard and His flock gathers around Him?
- ◆ Is your Lutheran school mission driven? Are the staff, board and others intentional about finding lost lambs and bringing them to their Shepherd? How are you training your missionaries?
- ◆ How has God brought His lambs to His flock through your school and church?



Time Out for Directors

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT TIPS FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER ADMINISTRATORS



And the Winner Is ... !!!



How many times have you heard the phrase “And the winner is ...” and waited with great anticipation for the result? Whether it be a school spelling bee, a fundraising raffle or perhaps a national beauty contest, there is always a nervous, but excited, feel about finding out who the winner really is. Is it you? Is it your best friend? Who is it?

Remember that you already a winner in the eyes of God. He gave His only Son to be born, die and rise again for your salvation. You have received the gift of the Holy Spirit to keep you strong in your faith. Daily you receive blessings from God — some that you might not even notice. As a teacher, you win in so many ways!

Why are you a teacher? Are you a teacher because of two months off over the summer? Or did you become a teacher because you enjoy making a difference in the life of a child? Remember to keep an eye on the blessings you have received during this past school year. You

have been called — you are sent to serve in your school, community and classroom!

Why did you become a teacher? Do you remember your first day in the classroom and how excited you were? How about your first lesson or your first group of students? Throughout this year — this very odd and unique school year — you have built relationships with students and parents, have taught lessons and activities with passion and energy and have tried your very best to keep everyone safe, happy and healthy. The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted so many people. You may sometimes have felt down, depressed and sad during the year. However, know that you accomplished something great — you accomplished the mission and ministry of serving children in Lutheran education. You, dear teacher, are the winner!

During the end of the school year, especially this school year, it’s important to remember positive moments

that happened. Yes, there have been moments when you were frustrated about cleaning requirements or less-than-perfect student and parent engagement. Perhaps you were way too often worried whether school would be held face-to-face or online. What does a good online learning program for early childhood students really look like anyway?

It's safe to say that your patience has been tested. And, there is still time left in the school year. Yikes! Well, you do have choices — you have two choices. You can choose to give up on the school year, show meaningless videos to your students and let them do as they please. You can imagine the time of summer and time away from the classroom as you begin your countdown. Or, you can choose to be different. As a Lutheran, Christian teacher, you are a different breed. Instead of wishing away the last few weeks, God says “that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world” (PHIL. 2:15). As a Christian teacher who is sent to serve, you can utilize every second of every day to make a difference. Impart wisdom to your students before summer arrives. Continue to motivate, inspire and encourage. As a Christian teacher, hopefully you are sad on the last day of school as you know time with your students has been completed. With God's help, you have made a difference!

What will you do with the time you have left? How will your students remember you? Will you be the teacher checking your Facebook page and placing online orders for items you need for the summer? Or, will you be the teacher that plans the last few days down to the wire, utilizing every minute to fill students with all you have left? Many teachers exhaust themselves out of servant-mindedness, emptying their energy into the young faces looking up at them. Will all of them get it? No. But the ones who do will remember forever.



Do you remember the first day you taught as a teacher in your very own classroom? Do you remember your first lesson and how excited you were to be with the students? Take a second to remember why you became a teacher today, and let that thought spill into whatever lesson or activity you have planned. With God's help, look for the difference it makes! Watch the kids savor your passion!

Remember, you are the winner! Your students are winners! Because of what God has done for you, you have much to be thankful for! Look back on the school year, give a cheer and know that you have accomplished something very special!

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A RESOURCE OF LCMS SCHOOL MINISTRY

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