



JANUARY 2021

SCHOOL MINISTRY

Mailing



THE
LUTHERAN CHURCH
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School Ministry



JANUARY 2021

SCHOOL MINISTRY MAILING

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Alight

FOR LUTHERAN SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS AND EDUCATORS



Light in the Darkness

“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change” (JAMES 1:17).

January brings a time of renewal. It’s the time we look back on the celebration of the birth of Christ and the many ways we honored Him with festive worship services, Christmas trees, gifts of love and the lights in our homes and neighborhoods. Often, we look ahead with joy and excitement to the new year and all that is ahead, and yet, this time of reflection can bring out a list of heartaches and challenges brought forward by a difficult year. Then the challenge becomes not to worry about the future when we are wondering what more might happen.

We are not alone in experiencing heartache, suffering and unprecedented years. There were many times when God’s people also worried about the future. Think of the Israelites in their flight from Egypt as Moses led them through the desert. In Exodus 14, the Israelites fearfully expressed concern to Moses: “Is it because there are no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? What have you done to us by bringing us out of Egypt?” (v. 11). Moses replied, “Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will work for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again. The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to be silent” (vv. 13-14). When Moses raised his staff, the Israelites crossed over the Red Sea on dry land. The



waters returned and the enemy was destroyed. God was present with His people every step of the way.

We, too, will face obstacles and hardships in the new year. The pandemic, racial issues, unemployment, disease and natural disasters bring forth uncertainty and doubt. The answer today, as it was in the past, is found in God’s Word. “I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world” (JOHN 16:33).

In more than 1,900 schools, educators answer the call to serve children and families with the confidence of God’s everlasting love and presence. Teachers daily share the Gospel message with students and families, and churches and schools bring light to their communities with a message of hope to all they serve. We serve in the darkness of uncertainty, but with the comfort of knowing that God sent Jesus, His beloved Son, to light our way.



Computer File



Individualized Instruction

“Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone”
(1 COR. 12:4-6).

If you have ever worked in a classroom or other educational setting, you know that each and every learner is unique and learns in a different way. This is true for all learners, from the smallest child to the eldest adult. As such, in order to more effectively address the different learning styles and needs of individual learners within a classroom or group, a number of different models have been developed. One of these models is something known as “Individualized Instruction.” To make sure that everyone is on the same page, it is best to start with a definition.

Definition: “Individualized instruction is a method of instruction in which there is one-to-one teaching and self-paced learning based on an outline of progressive goals leading to the course/curriculum objectives.”¹

There is a lot to unpack in that definition. First things first, it is essential to focus on the idea that individualized instruction is focused on the educational needs of one student. This is not small group instruction or affinity learning groups; it is a specific learning path and plan for each learner. Secondly, individualized instruction is meant to be self-paced, in that the learner is able to guide his own path to learning and mastery of concepts. This type of self-paced or self-directed



learning model is well established in the adult and professional education space, but it is certainly a shift for many classroom-based educational models. Finally, perhaps the most essential and concrete pieces of individualized instruction are the learning goals and course or curriculum objectives that guide what learning needs to take place. Without explicit, well-defined and organized goals and overall objectives, individualized instruction has nothing to guide the process for a learner.

So why is an investigation of individualized instruction important, especially in the *Computer File* article? Two major reasons come to mind. One, amidst the changes presented to education as a result of COVID-19, many educators are finding that they are addressing the educational needs of their students on a more individual basis using virtual collaboration tools. Two, there is an increasing number of

¹ “Individualized Instruction.” *Adult Career and Continuing Ed Services* | NYS Education Department (March 2001), accessed January 10, 2021, access.nysed.gov/bpss/schools/individualized-instruction.

technological tools that assist educators in delivering individualized instruction for learners.

Now that we have an understanding of what individualized instruction is and why it is important in today's educational landscape, let's explore a few ways in which technology can assist with the implementation of this learning model. Remember, individualized instruction can be implemented in certain areas of instruction where it best fits in your educational setting and the process can certainly be modified as needed based on learners as well.

Goals and Objectives

The ability to share goals and objectives across grade levels, classrooms and schools has become easier through the use of services such as Google Drive, AtlasNext and Chalk, just to name a few. These online platforms allow for everyone (students included) to be on the same page when it comes to the goals that are set and the curricular objectives that are to be met. Having this level of specificity when it comes to planning for individualized instruction serves as the base for student learning, and leveraging an online system for compiling this information is the path forward.

Self-Paced Learning Structures

As students will be learning at their own pace, they must have access to a learning system that structures the content as well as the path to mastery that they are expected to take. Online systems such as Google Classroom, Moodle, Office365, Edmodo, Khan Academy and others provide the place or environment where actual instruction will take place. Whether through video, text or other mediums, these educational resources must be organized and presented in a logical manner for each individual learner to access whenever and wherever.

Progress Charts

The need to display charts on the progress of individual learners to the mastery of goals and overall objectives is tied into the need for a self-paced learning structure or online system. Depending on the manner in which individualized instruction is being implemented, this

could be as simple as a chart on the wall of a classroom or as technical as a virtual dashboard linked to individual student work and assessment. Most online platforms have this capability built in, but it is important to emphasize the need for a teacher's ability to view the progress of their learners in order to intervene with direct instruction or guidance where needed.

Testing and Assessment

Individualized instruction is best served by consistent and focused assessment. To that end, pre-assessments, progress assessments and post-assessment follow-ups will allow for continued observation and guidance of the learning process. Online assessment systems such as NWEA MAP testing allow for the tracking of student data and integration with other systems to provide a wholistic view of the learners' mastery of skills as they progress toward meeting objectives.

It is important to point out that not every student will excel with individualized instruction. As such, it is imperative that the educational leader continue to evaluate the effectiveness of an individualized instruction learning model. Subsequently, if learners are not progressing effectively, it would be most beneficial to them to be instructed using a different educational model. As stated at the beginning of this article, every student is different and learns in her own unique way. What works for one student may not work for another, and that is perfectly acceptable. In fact, that is what exploring individualized instruction is all about.

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, express our thoughts and 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

The Baptism of Jesus

(Matt. 3:13–17; Mark 1:9–11; Luke 3:21–22)

Before You Teach

God sent Jesus the Servant Savior. At Jesus' Baptism, God the Father authorized Jesus' ministry, beginning the three-year journey that would lead to His death and resurrection. Jesus filled His days with healing and with service. Baptized, each of us is also sent out by God to make a difference in our world. When the call to serve comes our way, we answer, "Here I am! Send me" (Is. 6:8).

Welcome/Greeting

Set time aside to welcome and bless each child upon entry into the classroom. **Child of God, the love of Jesus is with you today and always** or **You are God's chosen and much loved dear child.** Doing so serves to establish, or re-establish, a positive perspective toward the day. NOTE: If you are taking temperatures prior to children entering the school, speak a blessing to each as you do so.

Gathering

Gather children in your worship area. Sing. Teach children to make the sign of the cross (head to chest and left to right). Say: **The pastor makes the sign of the cross at every Baptism, reminding us of the forgiving love of Jesus. Today we are going to learn about Jesus' Baptism.**

Tell the Story

YOU WILL NEED: A basin/bowl of water and a towel.

Jesus went to the Jordan River to be baptized by John the Baptist. John would have stopped Jesus, saying, "You come to me to be baptized when it is I who need to be baptized by You?!" Jesus said, "This is part of God the Father's plan." John the Baptist agreed to do as Jesus asked. When all the people were baptized, and when Jesus had also been baptized, He went out of the water. Jesus immediately saw the heavens open as He prayed. The Spirit of God came down as a dove, and the voice of God the Father said, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased." Jesus is God's Son, sent to be our Savior.



God the Father spoke (*scoop a handful of water from the bowl*), Jesus was baptized with water (*scoop water*) and the Holy Spirit came down as a dove (*scoop water*). We baptize in the name of the Father (*scoop water*), the Son, Jesus, (*scoop water*) and the Holy Spirit (*scoop water*).

Pray

Children repeat each phrase after you.

**Dear Father in Heaven,
Thank You for Jesus, who shows us
the way.
Loved and forgiven, to You we do pray.
Help us to follow wherever You lead,
Showing Your love to all people in need. Amen.**

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

Remember the Story

BIBLE WORDS TO REMEMBER

PRE-K THROUGH GRADE 2: “Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name” (ACTS 22:16).

Activities

CREATE: Baptism Shells. *You will need: Containers of water, watercolor paints, watercolor paper or white construction paper.* Download and reproduce an internet image of the “Baptism Shell” on white paper. Demonstrate painting with water colors. Display paintings with the “Bible Words to Remember.”

DO: Invite a pastor to talk about Baptism. Gather around the church baptismal font. Conclude, saying:
In the Bible and in our Baptisms, we are called to action. We serve God and care for others in the name of Jesus, our Savior.



SING: “Child of God” (LOSP, P. 98).

CAMP SERVE: “Child of God” Celebration Kits. Request Baptism dates from families. Assign children yet to be baptized a “Child of God” celebration date. Seek donors to gift *every* child with a “Child of God” gift or kit. Include in kits:

› A Baptism book for young children [e.g., *God Chose You* (Dietrich, 2000) or *The Story of Jesus’ Baptism and Temptation* for older children (Davis, 1997)]

› A Baptismal birthday candle

› A cross bookmark. Note: Candles are appropriate for baptized and yet-to-be-baptized children.

All items are available from Concordia Publishing House (cph.org).

Sending

YOU WILL NEED: A shell.

Gather in your “Sending Circle.” Children pray as shell is passed and received by each, or quietly pass the shell along. Dismiss and say to each as exiting, **Tell about Jesus’ love.**

Live the Story

Be aware of families’ faith practices and of children who have yet to be baptized. Provide Baptism information to *all* families. Provide name(s) and contact information of unbaptized children to appropriate church staff. Encourage annual Baptism birthday or “Child of God” celebrations (for unbaptized children) in the home. Annually celebrate your Baptism birthday and Baptism dates of family members.



Family Matters

A CHRIST-CENTERED RESOURCE FOR FAMILIES AND TEACHERS



SENT TO SERVE Sent into a New Year

Most of us are ready for a new year!

Last year is unlikely to go down as a favorite for many people. There may have been some bright spots — the birth of a healthy baby, a promotion or even a family move that was beneficial. There were also many down moments, which can make us eager for a new and fresh start.

How will you make the new year better? There are some things we know that we cannot control as we enter a new year. Just because we turn the calendar page over, some things will not change with the change of a number. But, there are some things we can control, and we still have new choices we can make in 2021, even though we experienced many limitations in 2020.

Some of the biggest areas where we can make choices are in our attitude and in the way we react to others and various situations. We can't always control the things that go on around us, but we can control our reaction to them and how we respond.

Our model for this is Christ Jesus Himself! Philippians 2:5–11 tells of the attitude of Christ. We read how Jesus experienced a new reality when He came from heaven to earth, how He took on a different role and how He made adjustments to His new situation. Sound familiar? Sound a bit like 2020?

Jesus was able to have a perfect reaction and make a perfect adjustment because He was perfect. Because of the



perfect life He lived, and through His death and resurrection, we are given the gift of eternal life! We will live in perfection for all eternity when we depart this world. But, until that time comes, we have work to do. We have to manage a household, parent children, go to work, serve within our church, live at peace in our community and so much more! We found out last year how hard that is to do.

The good news is that we don't go it alone. We have this same Jesus — who made all kinds of adjustments Himself — by our side. Our Lord will never leave us nor forsake us — even in trying times. He walks with us, He understands our struggles and He gives us strength to take the next steps in life. To experience His support, we only have to take it to our Lord in prayer.

Can we make the year 2021 a year of prayer? While we can't control the situations that arise, we can pray our way through them. We can let go of trying to control everything and give that control to Jesus. Can we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in the name of Jesus to answer our prayers? We can! When we do, it can make a difference in our lives, in our world and in our attitudes.

FUN FAMILY ACTIVITY //

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.

PROJECT TITLE: PRAYING THROUGH THE NEW YEAR

PURPOSE:

To engage family members in an activity that outlines a plan for prayer in the new year, asking for God's direction and guidance in the days, weeks and year ahead.

OPENER:

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

- › What is your favorite day of the week? Why?
- › As a family, what do we usually do on Sundays?
- › What do you pray for the most?

FUN FAMILY ACTIVITY: Weekly Prayer Chart

DIRECTIONS:

1. In the place where the family members are gathered, please provide the following supplies:
 - several pieces of plain 8 ½-by-11 white paper for each member of the family,
 - one or two pieces of paper that are at least 11-by-17, and
 - markers and colored pencils of various colors and sizes.
2. Ask each family member to write the days of the week on their sheet of paper in a column down the left side, beginning with Sunday and ending with Saturday.
3. Next, ask them to write prayer requests next to the days of the week, using the same first letter as that day of the week. Example: next to Monday = Moms, Friday = Family, etc. [Hint: use Thursday's first two letters for the article **"the"** so that you can create a number of prayer requests (e.g., *the town in which we live, the leaders of our nation, the church we attend*)].
4. Encourage everyone to come up with as many words/prayer requests as possible.



5. Then, on one of the 11-by-17 pieces of paper, write the days of the week in the same color down the left column. Next, write the prayer request words for each of the days of the week that family members came up with in various other colors, so that they now all appear on one piece of paper in bright and cheery colors.
6. Once the final words have been written, have someone (who has good handwriting) write the words, "As a family, we will pray for these!" at the bottom of the page. Then, have everyone in the family sign their names at the bottom of the Prayer Chart.
7. Post the finished Prayer Chart in a prominent place in your home, and pray those prayers often — daily/weekly throughout the year!

CLOSING PRAYER

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

Dear Jesus, we know that 2020 was a hard year. Comfort those who experienced pain last year. Grant us all a better year ahead. Bless us, and use us to be a blessing to others. Help us to pray to You, in all times and situations, in the coming year. In Your name.

Amen.



Fearfully and Wonderfully Made

SPECIAL EDUCATION IN LUTHERAN SCHOOLS



Inclusion Strategies: Setting Individual Student Goals

The last two months, our series highlighted creating a circle of friends and helping other students include students with disabilities in our efforts to promote inclusion. These strategies benefit all students socially and help students with disabilities feel that they belong and have valuable friendships. Another concern of teachers and administrators when it comes to including students with disabilities is within the area of academics. Students with more significant disabilities are often behind their peers in some of these skills, and teachers wonder how they can best support their academic growth as well.

First things first. While inclusion means that students with disabilities are educated with their peers without disabilities as much as possible, it does not mean that they cannot still receive specialized support inside or outside of the regular classroom. If your school has a special educator, it should be discussed what services might be needed and which setting would be best for that individual student. Inclusion does promote the idea that the ideal setting for a student is in the general education classroom. This should be the first option discussed before moving to more seclusionary settings. The conversation should revolve around what the student would need to be successful in the general education setting and if those things are possible to provide. Keep in mind that this does not mean the student with a disability will achieve the exact same thing at the exact same time as his peers in the classroom. If this setting will not meet the student's



needs, the conversation can then lead to determining when the student may need to be outside of the classroom for a short period of time to receive specialized support.

Remember that all students in an inclusive setting are thought of as equals, with none being seen as any more or less valuable than another. Students who may be educated outside of the classroom for short, specific times of the day are still “Mrs. Smith’s” students, just like the other students in that class or grade. When administrators, teachers and other students start to think of a student who leaves the room as anything other than that, it is working against the concept of inclusion. With this idea,

it also becomes important that the classroom teacher is helping to set and work toward a student's individual goals. Goals are not just what the special education teacher or Title I tutor work on with a student in an inclusive setting. Everyone takes ownership of helping that individual child succeed.



resources or support and decide what is possible. Think of the outcomes and objectives you have for the majority of your class, and adapt them to the student with a disability. Focus on some key points that everyone agrees will be the most important things for the student to master over the course of a year and on how those

While every teacher wants each student to master the grade level standards before moving onto the next grade, this needs to be thought of in a different way. Think about milestones as students grow up. They learn to walk, maybe around the age of 1; they get their driver's license, maybe around 16- or 17-years-old; some may go on to take the bar exam and become lawyers after law school in their 20s. While parents may eagerly await the day their child takes those first few tentative steps, does it ultimately matter if that happens at 12 months or 18 months? Or does it matter more that they walk on their own? Does it make a difference if teenagers get their licenses the day they turn 16, or is it more important that they develop their driving skills and only get their licenses when they are competent? I know what my thoughts are after seeing young adults drive to the high school right by my house daily! We want students to be successful; however, is it more important that they master academic skills within a certain timeframe or that they continue to learn and accomplish these goals for the long term? As an educator, think about this as you work with parents and other staff members to set goals for students that can be accomplished in your classroom as well as some goals that may be accomplished by other specialized staff.

goals can be accomplished in a variety of classes. This may be much different than it is for other students in the classroom, but remember that this is okay! In many cases, the student is gaining so much just by being in the classroom with his peers and interacting socially, along with the academics.

It is important to sit down and establish goals alongside parents and others involved in the education of the student. When possible, it is helpful to have an administrator in these conversations, too, so she can provide needed



The discussion of setting goals for students in inclusive settings will continue in next month's *Fearfully and Wonderfully Made*, and look for some additional strategies for making adaptations for students in inclusive environments coming up too. In the meantime, 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 help you include students with disabilities in your classroom and school!



Parent Pages

RESOURCES FOR CHRISTIAN PARENTS IN THE 21ST CENTURY



Finding Rest While Parenting in a Pandemic



Nearly a year ago, our world turned upside-down with the discovery of COVID-19. The pandemic means that everyone has been burdened in one way or another. Many have lost jobs, and others have found they have extra work as their child's education moved from school buildings to home. Tasks such as grocery shopping or caring for the elderly became more complicated, losing the familiarity of routine. When we add the drain of uncertainty and the likelihood of previously enjoyed family activities being discouraged, we have a recipe for turning life into a struggle. And struggle brings about weariness.

The pandemic did not invent weariness; it only made the condition worse. Furthermore, when we have put this current struggle behind us, there will be

something new to bring about this kind of deep tiredness.

Weariness would be livable if it could be remedied by a good night's sleep, but this is an exhaustion that affects more than our brains and bodies. This kind of weariness invades our emotions and colors how we see our world. This weariness affects what we feel is expected of us, urging us to take on bigger burdens. No matter how much we do, it seems our efforts are not enough. What we need, more than anything, is rest. We need the kind of rest found only in the arms of our Savior.

It is hard to learn to rest when the prescription is to do more. Are you busy? Let's add recommendations

that take more time from your day! It doesn't seem to make sense. Shouldn't rest involve doing less? But as the old saying goes, we need to work smarter. Or rather, we need to work within the grace found in the faith given to us.

In our lives, we do things that take energy and things that restore energy. If we find our family is tired, we need to re-evaluate how we spend our day — not just in our activities but also in our attitude. This verse from Romans gives good advice on how to find rest in a frenzied time.

“Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer” (ROM. 12:12).

Rejoicing in hope is an advantage for Christians because we know our hope is assured in our Savior's death and resurrection. We do not need to cross our fingers to feel hope. Instead, we can focus on the good God brings to our lives as a way of reminding us of the hope we have in Christ. Setting aside time for family and self are ways to rejoice in hope. These activities do not simply take up time on our schedule; rather, they also give back in terms of emotional energy. They represent respite from the worries of the day as we spend time enjoying family fellowship. What better way to restore your heart than to enjoy a good laugh with loved ones?

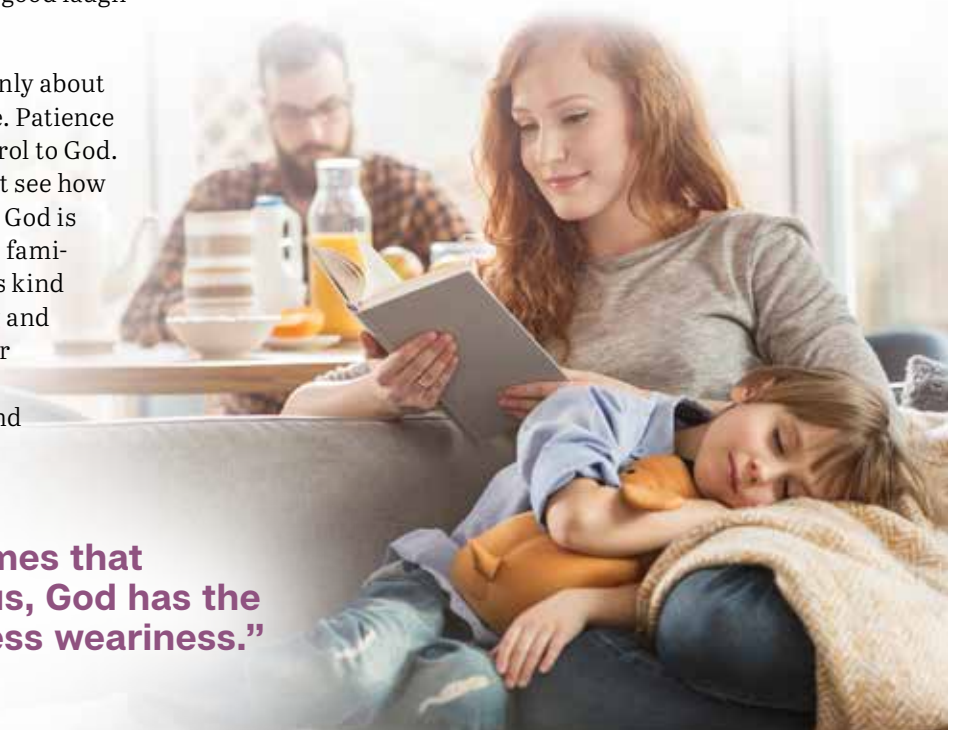
Being patient in tribulation is not only about staying on course and holding on to hope. Patience works best when we are able to give control to God. We may not like the situation, we may not see how it will end, but we find rest knowing that God is in charge and that His love for us, for our family, extends to the details of our lives. This kind of trust promotes better problem solving and better sleep. It is a trust that lets go of our need to be in control. In patience, we no longer carry the burden of leading; we find comfort in following God's direction.

Being constant in prayer is as Luther tells us, about the “raising of the soul or heart to God” (Plass, 1085). We find rest in our interaction with God. Worship, Scripture, prayer and sacraments are activities that give us rest because they rekindle the blessings of our faith. Sunday worship is both rest from work and rest found in God's strength and care. We see this best when we note how rest is connected to God's promise in the Psalm below.

“Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!” (PS. 46:10).

Set aside time away from work, time for worship and prayer, time for family and ample time for sleep. These are actions that give back as much as they take. When we live in times that demand much from us, God has the best method to address weariness. He understands our need for rest and our need for peace. Be still, and know that God rules over the day and the night. His love is constant and specific. His concern is both for your future with Him and for your current life. You can, with confidence, set aside time to renew and refresh your spirit. These activities are one way that God cares for you and your family.

“When we live in times that demand much from us, God has the best method to address weariness.”



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 – Through the Call



Called. It's a term that has various meanings in the Church. We now enter the season of issuing Divine Calls to teachers within our schools. Consider the following calls as schools seek the servants needed to minister to the kids in their care.

BE STRONG IN THE LORD, AND IN THE STRENGTH OF HIS MIGHT.



***Called to Faith:** The call to faith comes from God through the Spirit's work through Word and Sacrament. Jesus says, "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide" (JOHN 15:16). St. Peter says that you are a chosen race called by Christ "out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 PETER 2:9). It is all God's doing as St. Paul affirms, "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast" (EPH. 2:8-9). Martin Luther also reflected on this call in the Small Catechism in his explanation of the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed, reminding that faith is all God's work: "I believe that I cannot by my own reason

or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith."

***Called to Act:** Those called to faith are called to act. St. Peter says more in the verse quoted above. He says, "You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 PETER 2:9). Christians are called to a holy priesthood, living lives of sacrifice, offering up our "bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God" (ROM. 12:1) and our lips in "a sacrifice

of praise to God” (HEB. 13:15). Christian service reflects the diverse gifts of the members of the body of Christ and the diverse situations we find ourselves in. St. Paul teaches, “Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good” (1 COR. 12:4-7).

***Called to the Office of the Public**

Ministry: The office of the public ministry is unique within the Church and was established by God so that the Holy Spirit “calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith” (Small Catechism, Explanation of the Third Article). Those who are in the office of the public ministry have been given the additional calling as servants who publicly preach and teach the Gospel and administer the Sacraments through which the Holy Spirit “works faith, when and where it pleases God (JOHN 3:8), in those who hear the good news” (Augsburg Confession, Article V, paragraph 2).

There is one such divinely instituted office within the church: “the ministry of the Word.” “Every other public office in the church is part of the ministry of the Word or an auxiliary office that supports the ministry ... Therefore, the offices of Christian day school teachers ...” are “to be regarded as ecclesiastical and sacred, for they take over a part of the one ministry of the Word and support the pastoral office” (C. F. W. Walther, *Church and Ministry: Concerning the Holy Ministry*, Thesis VIII, section 1).

In Lutheran circles, calls are issued to pastors for the office of the public ministry. Teachers, Directors of Christian Education, music ministers, deaconesses and other synodically-trained people are called in support of the office of the public ministry. Lutheran teachers and administrators historically have been called positions. The primary reason our churches have established schools has been to teach Christ and Him crucified, so having called men and women for these positions has been essential.

Unfortunately in recent years, for some Lutheran schools, calls to these auxiliary positions of the office of the public ministry have morphed into no more than issuing a tenured contract that misses the close tie to the Church and to the teaching of pure Christian doctrine. Our schools would do well to not follow the course of many institutions of higher education that have abandoned their Christian foundations of being outposts of the ministry of the church.

The call has divine qualifications (see 1 TIM. 3:8-12); it’s quite a responsibility. Our schools’ administrators and teachers are well aware of the tasks at hand. **Pray for our calling bodies and those who are issued calls that they find peace in decisions that God leads.**



Professionally Speaking // JANUARY 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).



JANUARY THEME

Bible Story: Jesus is baptized (MATT. 3:13–17; MARK 1:9–11; LUKE 3:21–22; JOHN 1:32–34).

Focus: God confirmed Jesus is the chosen Messiah who came to serve and save in His Baptism. Following this, Jesus showed what it means to “love one another” (JOHN 13:34) as He performed miracles of healing, giving sight, hearing, etc. He showed He was the Messiah as He taught and forgave sins. Then He suffered and died. God raised Him from the dead to bring life and forgiveness to all.

What it teaches us: Baptism is a gift from God. Through Baptism God makes us His own children, forgives our sins and gives us the gift of His Holy Spirit and the promise of eternal life.

Prepare to teach

- › **Read** the story in each of the references, and, if possible, a study Bible.
- › **Think:** Jesus was chosen to serve and save. Read Eph. 2:10. Just think! Before God created the world, He planned for you, chose you to be one of His children and had a plan for you to serve. That is also true of the baptized children in your care.
- › **Pray:** Dear God, You are awesome and beyond understanding. You chose ME and each of my students and have a plan for us to serve You and others. Help me as I live out Your plan for my life. In Jesus’ 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.
- > **Picture of Jesus** (find one doing an internet search)
- > **Pictures:** do an internet search to find pictures of Jesus' baptism (i.e. John, people coming to be baptized, Jesus and a dove). 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.



Hear them say, “I’m sorry;” ask John-to-baptize them. Down, down! Up, up! God forgave their sins. (Add Jesus; sing.) Down by the riverbank early in the morning. Jesus-came-and asked John “Please bap-ti--ze Me”. Down, down! Up, up! God in-heaven-smiled-and-said, (add dove) “This is My Son; He makes Me so hap-py.”

What the Story Teaches: Jesus' Baptism showed He was the Servant-Savior God promised to send. When we are baptized, God shows He chose us to be His children — chosen to serve. God is happy and we are happy too.

Song to Sing: “I Was Baptized” (LOSP, P. 97).

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

(Sing to the melody “Down by the Riverbank.” Show John & people.)

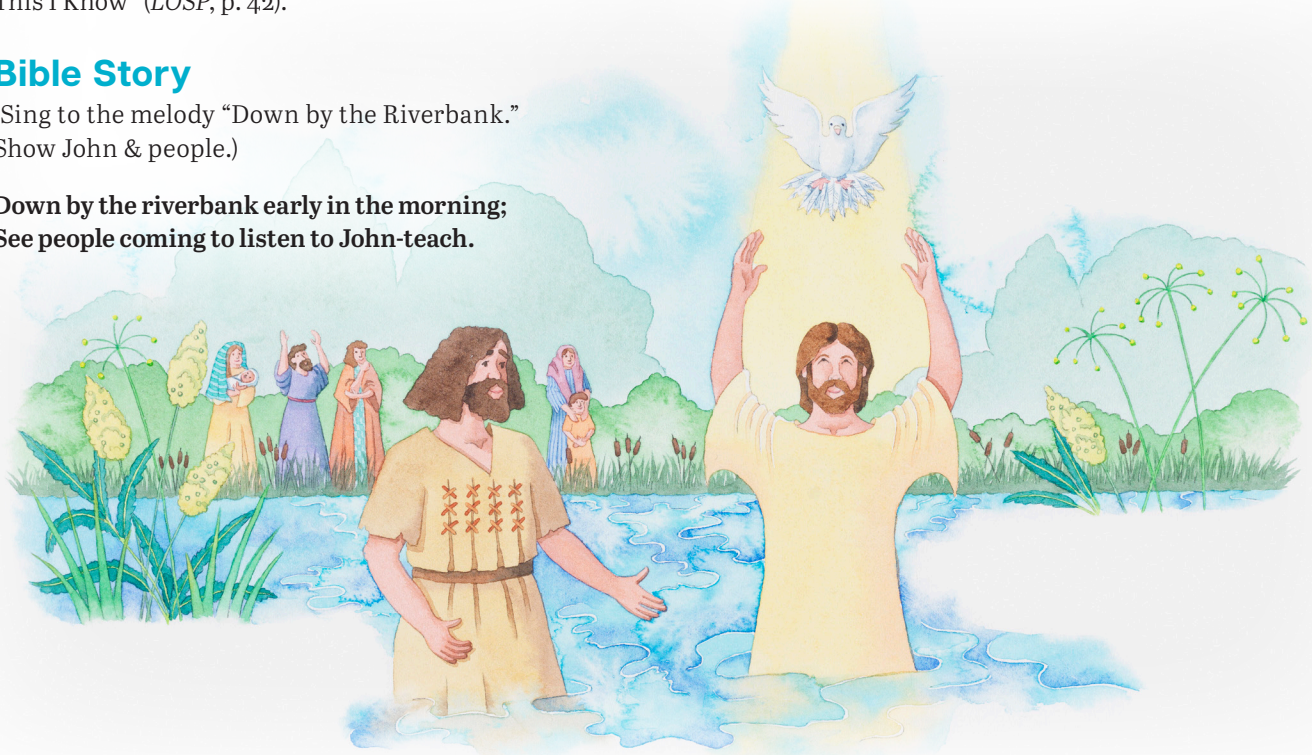
Down by the riverbank early in the morning; See people coming to listen to John-teach.

Time to Pray

Thank You, God, for Jesus! Thank You, for His love. We’re thankful that You sent Him down from heaven above. We thankful that You chose us to be Your children too. Help us to show our love and thanks in all we say and do. 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:** John used water to baptize Jesus. How do we use water? Drink, when thirsty, baths, clean dishes, play in, etc.
- › **Nutrition:** Wash, cut soft fruit, veggies before eating; add water to make a dehydrated fruit juice to drink. Wash hands and pray before eating.

T Technology

- › Look at faucets and how they work, in the classroom, etc.

R Reading and Language Arts

- › **Books to Read:** board books: *Splish, Splash, Baby* by Karen Katz (Little Simon, 2015); *Baptism Day* by Maïte Roche (Ignatius Press, 2017).
- › **Nursery Rhyme:** “Jack and Jill.”

E Engineering

- › Take time to discuss items needed and procedure for completing a project (e.g. art, getting the water table ready).

A Arts (art, music and physical education)

- › **Art:** Use brushes to paint sidewalks; use food coloring in water.

- › **Music:** “Squeaky Clean” by Angela Naeve; “Six Little Ducks”; “I Have a Hello in Heart” (*LOSP*, P. 10) — teach kids to blow kisses for Verse 3.

- › **Large Motor:** Weather permitting, play in the water outdoors; take a walk in the rain; have a “summer in January” in the large motor area.

M Mathematics

- › When playing in a water table, use a smaller container to fill larger ones; count how many small ones it takes to fill the larger.

S Social Studies

- › In Baptism we become part of God’s family. If possible, look at baptismal font and discuss Baptism; ask a pastor to talk with children about the blessings we receive.

CONNECT WITH PARENTS in your newsletter

Provide information on Baptism to parents. Invite parents to contact you and your pastor for more information.



A RESOURCE OF LCMS SCHOOL MINISTRY

Rattles & Prattles

VOL. 24, NO. 5 // JANUARY 2021

Writer: Judy Williams Designer: Lisa Moeller

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School Shepherd

TIPS AND SUPPORT FOR PASTORS OF CONGREGATIONS WITH SCHOOLS



THEME | SENT TO SERVE

Sent to Serve Courageously



“For God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control. Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began”

(2 TIM. 1:7-9).

Courageous leaders are noted throughout Scripture. Joshua is himself “strong and courageous” (JOSHUA 1:9), even as he encourages the Israelites. Gideon courageously attacks the Midianites. Daniel courageously sits with lions in their den. Paul’s mission journeys as well as his final journey to Rome (ACTS 28:15) demonstrate Paul’s courage as he responds to God’s call. Lutheran school shepherds and leaders are also sent to serve courageously. The courage of biblical servants and leaders is not a result of personal attributes or character. Courage is based on faith in God who is always true to His promises.

The Courage of the Good Shepherd

Luther’s Small Catechism with Explanation (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2017, Question 37) lists 12 attributes of God. Obviously that list is not exhaustive. Jesus could also be described as “courageous.” In fulfillment of the Suffering Servant description of Isaiah, Jesus was oppressed and afflicted, “yet he opened not his mouth” (53:7). In His human nature Jesus experienced the intense agony of the passion; He experienced verbal abuse, physical blows and ultimately the abandonment by His Father, and He did so with no desire for escape. His journey to the cross is the epitome of courage. Jesus is strong and courageous to save.

The Courage of the School Shepherd

We are blessed to receive the blessings of Jesus’ courageous journey. Jesus’ sacrifice makes payment for our frequent cowardice. Rather than stand up for what is right or just, we are tempted to make decisions that compromise the truth of God’s Word. We submit to the

bullying attempts of Satan rather than immediately reclaiming the victory and promises of our baptism. We are often tentative in our response to what is not pleasing to God.

Lutheran school shepherds serve humbly and respectfully. School shepherds are professional and pastoral. They are also courageous! The hymn “Jesus! and Shall It Ever Be” (*The Lutheran Hymnal* 346:1) offers an appropriate prayer: “Jesus! and shall it ever be, A mortal man ashamed of Thee? Ashamed of Thee, whom angels praise, Whose glories shine through endless days?”

Like Paul we can “Take courage” (*ACTS 23:11*) in the grace that is ours through our Lord and Savior. We can then respond courageously to the challenges and opportunities in Lutheran school ministry.

Sent to Serve Courageously in Lutheran Schools

We are courageous for the sake of the Gospel. It is important to speak “the truth in love” (*EPH. 4:15*). However, it is important to speak the truth of the Law. Lutheran schools are guided by God’s Word in every aspect. That task is especially difficult in a culture which seeks to not only accept but also to affirm every human inclination. Lutheran schools have the opportunity to bring the Good News of Jesus to every sin and situation. It is important to be courageous in sharing and living our Lutheran confession which takes us to the cross of Jesus.

We are courageous in our advocacy for children. Jesus’ love for His children is summarized in His words, “Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him if a great millstone were hung around his neck and he be thrown into the sea” (*MARK 9:42*).

School shepherds provide leadership in all congregational and school ministries to ensure the safety of children is a high priority. While that advocacy is important for



Till then—nor is my boasting vain—Till then I boast a Savior slain; And oh, may this my glory be; That Christ is not ashamed of me!”

(*The Lutheran Hymnal* 346:6)

all children, it is especially important to those who may be more vulnerable because of the family, economic or social situations in their lives.

The context of the local Lutheran school ministry determines other specifics of courageous leadership. Courage may be needed to address financial situations that may have been ignored for years. Courage may be needed to address staff or school board dynamics. Venturing into important school ministry areas that may have been ignored or minimized for years (or longer) takes prayerful preparation, wise counsel, detailed planning and courage.



Sharing our Courageous Thoughts

- ◆ When have you been tentative in responding with the truth of God’s Word?
- ◆ What opportunities have you taken for courageous action on behalf of Christ or His children?
- ◆ Are there school ministry tasks or areas where courageous action is needed?

“Be strong and courageous” (Joshua 1:9)



Time Out for Directors

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT TIPS FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER ADMINISTRATORS



Get Active!

Do not worry; this is not another article on the importance of resolutions for a new year to get active, exercise and stay healthy. This is not an article on the medical research on the benefits healthy eating. However, this is an article about the importance of active engagement with students in your role of early childhood teacher and leader. Consider how you might make this a unique goal for your professional learning in 2021. Many people desire to work with young children because of fond memories they have of childhood, the joy young children bring to a room or a personal enjoyment of being creative and artistic. While these are all qualities that have value and necessity with the passion to work with young children, one of the most important characteristics, and most often overlooked, is active engagement.

The field of early childhood education is one of movement — for both children and adults alike! Yes, there is dancing, running, moving to sit on the floor and other such movements that may make you feel like an acrobat. However, one of the most important aspects of working with children is active modeling with them throughout the day — being with them and participating with them as a peer might.

As you are “sent to serve,” reflect for a moment on how you interact with your students each day. Are you leading them from a chair, standing beside them or watching them from afar? Are you playing with them, working with them and letting them feel almost as if you are one of their peers? God provides opportunities in a Lutheran school for children learn holistically, with spiritual development of utmost importance. Jesus used active engagement throughout His ministry; He didn’t just stand on a stage



and preach. Rather, Jesus met with people; He ate with them, sat with them in their homes and traveled with them — all with the purpose of active engagement and relational ministry. Active engagement with children could easily be thought of as opportunities for relational ministry!

Again, the role of teacher is unique and special; the role of early childhood teacher is even more ... sophisticated! Being entrenched with students is a necessity when working with them, in their play, learning and daily interactions with one another. Teachers are not just adults who deliver, watch and direct. Active engagement with students is a key piece to deeper learning and higher-quality care and education.

A look through pedagogical textbooks or an Internet search on “types of play” can deliver great information on what happens when children play and why it is so important. However, only some explanations share the importance of adult/teacher engagement with students. This article will highlight three important areas of play interactions for children: child-initiated free choice play, guided play and instructional play.

Child-Initiated Free Choice Play

As Wood (2014) shares, free choice play, initiated by children, should be a foundational component of a child's day, at home and especially at school. In a safe environment, children need time to learn about materials and the world around them. Allowing children to choose appropriate materials, to make up games and play scenarios and to engage in interactions with peers produces age-appropriate learning and social-emotional skills necessary for life. Active engagement for adults in child-initiated free choice play could be asking or being invited to participate. In a way, adults are often viewed as peers by children when participating in play that is chosen and initiated by the children. Teachers certainly help create the environment and provide appropriate and necessary materials for children to use when engaging in such play. A safe classroom or outdoor play area with age-appropriate materials, especially organic, can be a valuable and necessary opportunity. Look for ways to appropriately engage in play with students when possible; ask questions about their work and activities.

Guided Play

The term "guided play" refers to learning experiences that combine the child-initiated and freely chosen nature of free play with a focus on learning outcomes and adult mentorship. (Hassinger-Dass, Hirsh-Pasek and Golinkoff, 2017). Most children thrive when engaged in meaningful interactions with peers and adults in this type of play. Active engagement for adults in guided play means that adults provide specific materials and activities for children to enjoy and utilize; this can happen independently, with peers or while interacting with an adult. Examples could be playing a game of memory match, putting together an alphabet puzzle or constructing a tower of 10 blocks. In guided play, there is often a specific learning goal that is desired; the teacher is directly aware of the purpose, while the child engages in meaningful and enjoyable play.

Instructional Play

Instructional play is, simply defined, a game or activity that results in learning. Instructional play is more intentional and somewhat more directed and purposeful than guided play. Examples could be learning nursery rhymes during Circle Time, science experiments and activities and playful handwriting experiences with sand or shaving cream. Instructional play is sometimes seen as a gray area in early childhood environments, meaning



there is a fine line between playful learning of concepts and driven academics. Active engagement for teachers and students during instructional play should always be enjoyable, purposeful ... and active! Instructional lessons can certainly be filled with enjoyment when developmentally appropriate practices are followed.

Again, all early learning environments should contain active engagement from the teacher with students. The types of play-based learning mentioned in this article should provide some ideas and direction for pedagogical practice.

No matter what type of active engagement is happening in your classroom, remember that Jesus is also present, too, so looking for opportunities to make faith-filled connections within your play is important. Relationships between teacher and students allow for conversations and opportunities to share Bible stories, prayer, morals and ethics. Make sure parents know and understand how you incorporate the faith into all you do. Be sure to highlight that Jesus is a big part of your classroom and school setting.

"I have set the LORD always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken" (PSALM 16:8).

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Time Out for Directors

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Writer: Dr. Drew Gerdes Designer: Frank Kohn

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