



DECEMBER 2022

SCHOOL MINISTRY **Mailing**





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Community & Enrollment



ARTICLE 4: Welcoming People of Different Values



“How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?” (ROM. 10:14).

Lutheran schools are uniquely positioned to share the Gospel with people whose values may keep them distanced from our church body. Some of these values may provoke strong feelings in us such as positions on abortion or gender identity. It is easy to think of reasons why people whose values differ from ours should be kept out of our schools and away from our children. But as we are challenged to *make disciples for life* we must contemplate, if we don't welcome people with different values

into our school communities, how will they ever know the Gospel? If we do not include them in our relationships, how will they be shaped by new values? If they do not have access to a discipling culture, how will they ever learn to walk as a disciple of Christ?

How did Jesus welcome people with lifestyles in conflict with the way God calls us to live? Jesus ate at both Matthew's and Zacchaeus' houses, both tax collectors and outcasts of Jewish society (MATT. 9:10; LUKE 19:5). Jesus rescued a woman caught in adultery from the punishment due to her, telling her to “go and sin no more” (JOHN 8:11 NKJV). Jesus allowed a woman “who lived a sinful life” to bath His feet in perfume (LUKE 7:37-38 NIV). Jesus ate “with tax collectors and sinners”

(MATT. 9:11). Jesus said of these experiences, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick.” (MARK 2:17 NIV). Jesus’ interaction with these “sinners” was not in temporary roadside conversion moments. He did not keep His distance and quickly retreat back to the “good” society of people whom He *should* be spending His time with. Instead, He was in *community* with sinners, eating and drinking and spending time in their homes. Jesus did not approach these people with fear or disgust but with grace, love and welcome.

In observing Jesus’ patterns, we learn that the best way to disciple people, particularly people with values that differ from ours, is to be *in community* with them. In order to change a worldview, adapt new values or learn a new lifestyle, people need to have access to the culture affirming these new ways.¹ In order to be challenged to change, people must first be invited into relationships built on love and trust. Lutheran schools provide a wonderful opportunity for people to be in Christian relationships and be welcomed into a community where others live as disciples of Jesus. In this way, schools become *on-ramps* to living a life following Jesus.

It can be awkward and difficult to welcome people into relationships and communities when their beliefs and values are in contrast to ours. Therefore, it is good to have a plan and training for how staff interact with these students and families. Remember, authentic relationships and a place in the community should be the primary goals. While we hope God will work faith in the hearts of those enrolled at our schools, faith creation is not something we can do. Instead, by valuing each person, showing love and care and welcoming them into our community, we till the soil for seeds of faith to grow.

We can do all of this without compromising our own values.² We do not need to apologize for our beliefs, water them down or feel pressure to change them to make other people feel comfortable. Nor do we need to constantly remind people they do not measure up to God’s standards. We do not measure up to God’s standards, yet He has saved us by grace through faith. (EPH. 2:8) Instead, with words tempered by grace and love, we can share our faith with open hands. We can also listen and receive from others their words of what



they believe without attacking or ostracizing them. In this way, we maintain positive relationships that allow continued interaction and time for faith to develop.

As students and families come to our doors seeking enrollment at our schools, they do so for a variety of reasons. They may be looking for a physically safe place for their child. They may want access to higher quality academic programs. They may even just want their child to play on the basketball team without getting cut. Whatever their reason, we know they will experience the forgiveness and love of Jesus while inside our classrooms. Therefore, as we learn to open our doors to people with different values, welcoming them in, we answer the call to spread the Gospel to those who haven’t yet heard. So that by hearing they may believe in our great God who has won salvation for all people.

Footnotes

¹ Mike Breen, *Building a Discipling Culture: How to Release a Missional Movement by Discipling People Like Jesus Did* (Greenville, SC: 3DM Publishing, 2016), 25.

² Debbie Teike, *The Art of Invitation: Building Enduring Relationships; Connecting Community* (Independently published, 2021).

Community & Enrollment

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Writer: Dr. Kristen Newell Designer: Lisa Moeller

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Early Childhood Devotions

FOR CHILDREN AGES 3 TO 7

MAKING DISCIPLES FOR LIFE **MATT. 28:19–20**

FOCUS: God Chooses Children.



God Chooses Mary and Joseph

(THE BIRTH OF JESUS) LUKE 1:26–38; 2:1–7

Before You Teach

As we recall and teach the Christmas narrative, let us remember that Jesus' destiny was the cross. God had a plan, choosing Mary to be Jesus' mother and Joseph to care for Mary. God sent the angel Gabriel to advise Joseph of God's plan, and his and Mary's part in it. God's Christmas gift to His world was an extraordinary child, a loving sacrifice for sin, the Victor over death and the Savior of the world. The journey of Jesus was to be from cradle to cross, and to an empty tomb.

Greeting

Greet each child upon arrival. Doing so is especially important during this time of year, as children's once predictable schedules are often disrupted, causing them anxiety.

Gathering

You will need: An advent wreath and candles (3 royal blue or purple, one pink, one white) *Do:* Assemble the Advent wreath. Set it in your worship area, placing the white candle in its center.

Light a candle. Light an additional candle each week during Advent (the pink candle is lit on the third week), while singing the corresponding verses of "Light One Candle" (pp. 78–79 *LOSP*). Light the center white Christ candle on the day of your Christmas party.



Tell the Story

Guide children to walk in place, where indicated in bold print. Add the angel and baby Jesus to your creche set as the narrative is told.

Sent by God, the angel Gabriel said to Mary, "Do not be afraid! God has chosen you to have a baby boy. You will call his name 'Jesus.' He will be great and called the 'Son of the God.'" Mary replied, "I am the servant of the Lord, let it be to me as you have said." The angel then left. Mary praised God. Around that time the ruler, Caesar Augustus, ordered everyone to go to the town where they were born to be counted. Mary and Joseph **walked, walked, walked** to Bethlehem. Their journey was long and dangerous. Trusting in God's care, they **walked, walked, walked** and **walked** some more. God kept them safe, every step of the way. Tired from their

SCRIPTURE: 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, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age. (MATT. 28:19–20)

journey, they **walked, walked, walked** into the town of Bethlehem. Finding nowhere to sleep for the night, they heard about a stable where they could rest. They **walked, walked, walked**. Finding a stable where animals lived and slept, they stayed for the night. It was there that God's Son, our Savior, Jesus, was born. Angels sang, "Glory to God in the highest and peace to God's people on earth." Let us also celebrate the coming of Jesus, speaking the words the angels sang: **"GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST AND PEACE TO GOD'S PEOPLE ON EARTH!"** *Repeat.*

Praying Together

Guide children to fold their hands, bow their heads and repeat each phrase after you.

PRAY: Dear Jesus,
With great love You came; we now praise Your name!
With angels we sing; great joy You do bring!
Thank You, Savior Jesus. Amen.

Remember the Story

BIBLE WORDS TO REMEMBER

Pre-K & K: For to you is born this day ... a Savior, who is Christ the Lord (LUKE 2:11).

Grades 1 & 2: For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord (LUKE 2:11).

Activities

CREATE: Christmas wreaths. *You will need:* Green construction paper cut into circle wreaths; 1-inch squares cut from red and green construction paper; red bows.

DO: Children glue red and green squares to cover wreaths. Add a bow to each. Display.

CHANT: Kids Can," verse 2.

Leader: I love kids, so let them come. It doesn't matter where they're from.

Kids can thank and praise God's name. Jesus, God sent; we're not the same!

All: **We love Jesus you will hear; Let's clap our hands and give a cheer!**

Stamp, clap; stamp, clap; stamp, clap, clap (repeat). **Y-a-a-a-y, JESUS!** (shout)

PLAY: "I Spy." Take a color walk (in or outdoors). Look for the colors red and green. When sighted, children point and say: "I spy red" or "I spy green."

SING: "Little Children, Can You Tell" (p. 86 LOSP); "Mary Had a Baby" (p. 90 LOSP).

FUNDAY FRIDAY: Fun with red and green. These traditional Christmas colors are derived from holly plants, which grow in cold temperatures. **ACTIVITIES:** Children wear red and/or green. Paint, draw, write with colors red and green. Eat red and/or green snacks.

CAMP SERVE: Gift baby items to families in need, adding child-created Christmas cards. Camp Serve team identifies and connects with a local service organization, communicating details to school families, congregation and the greater community.

Sending

YOU WILL NEED: A small, gift-wrapped box.

Gather in your sending circle. Invite children to pray as the gift-wrapped box is passed and received. Dismiss, saying to each, **"Jesus is God's gift to you."**

Live the Story

Thoughtfully edit plans and activities. Prioritize the needs of children. Let's keep our focus, and theirs, on the coming of our Savior.



A RESOURCE OF LCMS SCHOOL MINISTRY

Early Childhood Devotions

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Writer: Dr. Judith Christian Designer: Erica Schwan

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

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Family Matters



A CHRIST-CENTERED RESOURCE FOR FAMILIES AND TEACHERS



Lifelong Disciples ... Persevere

ADMIT IT ... most of us would rather take the easy road than the hard road. As parents, we like it when:

- › the kids go down for a nap or to bed at night without a fuss
- › our spouse takes care of a task that we've been ignoring for weeks
- › the playground is not overcrowded with children when we go to the park with our kids
- › our children would rather watch a video or play on their own so we can get something done
- › the kids want cold cereal and milk for breakfast rather than a hot, cooked meal

There are enough situations in life that are hard, so when the easy option shows up, most of the time it's a no-brainer, and we take the easy road.

But, when those tough times really do arrive, do we get tougher? Do we step back? Do we simply ignore the situation? Or, do we step forward, meet the challenge and persevere until we complete the task?

As Christmas approaches, we are reminded that Mary and Joseph had several challenges facing them as they were preparing to become a family.

1. Mary finds out before she gets married that she is pregnant — through the Holy Spirit.



2. Joseph knows he is not the father, but wants to do the “honorable” thing. He is troubled.
3. Mary leaves town.
4. Joseph is told by God in a dream that it’s ok to wed Mary.
5. They then discover they have to go on a long journey in the final month of the pregnancy.
6. When they reach their destination there is no place for them to stay.
7. They wind up in an animal stable for the night, where Mary gives birth.
8. Shepherds from the nearby hills come by that very night to visit the newborn child.
9. When Mary and Joseph take their Son to the temple, a stranger takes Him in his arms and breaks out in song.
10. They need to flee the country because the king puts out an order to kill all young boys.

Whew! What an ordeal. So much for enjoying the easy road that first Christmas.

The road for God’s people is not often easy, although we think it should be. It’s filled with challenges because we live in a world filled with sin and darkness. On that quiet night in Bethlehem, even though Mary and Joseph had a tough ordeal concerning the birth of Jesus, our road to eternal life was made clear and simple. It is to believe in this child — who would walk a rocky and challenging road to Calvary, die there on the cross, be put in a borrowed tomb, presumed dead and gone, and then rise from the dead to conquer the grave, so that we can receive the gift of eternal life. Jesus took the hard road and did the hard work for us!

We will have challenging days as God’s people. There will be family squabbles. Kids won’t behave as we would like. We might have tenuous job situations. We might go broke. We won’t always enjoy the easy road, but because Jesus took the hard road to the cross, we have been given the pathway to heaven.



FUN FAMILY ACTIVITY //

Gather the family together around a table or other hard surface, with no electronic distractions, to enjoy the family activity outlined below.

COMMUNITY CHRISTMAS DECORATION AWARDS

PURPOSE: To engage family members in a fun activity that allows them to express their thanks and appreciation for the effort that neighbors and community members put forth in decorating their homes for the Christmas season.

OPENER: Ask the following questions in your family setting to get a discussion going.

- › What is your favorite ornament on our Christmas tree? Why?
- › What is your favorite Christmas decoration in our home at Christmas? Why?
- › What are your favorite decorations in our neighborhood or home town?

CHRISTMAS DECORATION AWARDS: Everyone enjoys driving around town or walking around the neighborhood looking at Christmas lights and decorations. A lot of people work hard and spend a lot of time and money to make their house look festive. Maybe it's time for your family to say "thank you" to these people with a special award from your family to theirs.

Award Categories: As a family talk about the type of awards and how many you want to give out. Here are some suggestions:

- › Best Use of Lights
- › True Meaning of Christmas
- › Fun Award Best Blow-ups
- › Extravagant Award
- › Other: _____

Award Items: As a family, take an evening or afternoon to gather and create the following items that you will be presenting to your neighbors and community members.

- › Thank You Card – a handwritten note from your family expressing your appreciation for the hard work they put in to decorate their house and wishing them a Merry Christmas.
- › Certificate – a computer-generated or hand-created certificate with the title of the award and an explanation, signed by all the family members.
- › Treats – a goodie bag with a collection of commercially purchased snacks and wrapped candies and other Christmas goodies.

Award Night: As a family, plan an evening to drive or walk around your neighborhood or community to see all the lights and take nominations for your awards. After you have driven around or walked for a while and seen a number of houses, vote as a family as to which houses will receive your awards. Go back to those houses and have an adult and other family member walk to their porch with the Certificate, Thank You Note and Goodie Bag for delivery.

Echo Prayer for Award Winners: When everyone is back together, have an adult or older child read the following prayer section by section, with the rest of the family repeating the words. Repeat the delivery and prayer process until every award has been handed out.

Thank you God for nice neighbors. Thank you for their hard work decorating their house. We ask that Jesus would bless them and give them a Merry Christmas. Watch over them and keep them safe during this busy time of year, and give them many blessings in the New Year. In the Name of Jesus, our newborn Savior. Amen.

CLOSING ECHO PRAYER: Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for our home, and thank you for our family. Please bless all who enter our house. May our home be a place of joy, peace and love; centered around Jesus. Help us as a family to serve you and others, and to grow in our faith every day. In the name of Jesus, our Lord and Savior. Amen.



Fearfully and Wonderfully Made

SPECIAL EDUCATION IN LUTHERAN SCHOOLS



The Role of Diagnosing Behavioral Concerns



Before moving forward with a discussion of putting the pieces of the behavior puzzle together into a problem-solving model, it's important to address a few things that may have come to mind at this point. One of the first questions may be about diagnosing a child's behavioral challenges or referring the child for such an evaluation. A diagnosis may be helpful when it is needed to qualify a student for services through insurance or other providers, so that is one point to consider depending on the diagnosis in question. For example, if the diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder is needed for a child to receive Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) services covered by insurance, then the diagnosis is very helpful if the family desires those services. In other cases, a diagnosis may not be as useful. Consider whether the evaluation process and diagnosis would potentially

be useful information for the school and parents about the skills the child is lacking and specific expectations that the child is having difficulty meeting. If an evaluation would shed light on these questions that will help in the problem-solving process, then it may be very helpful. If the evaluation and diagnosis is only going to confirm the list of concerning behaviors that you can already check off, discuss with the family if it will really be helpful. Unfortunately, there is no easy right or wrong answer that covers all scenarios. Regardless of a diagnosis, following the steps of the problem-solving process in the same way will be helpful for addressing concerning behaviors.

We want to always focus on each child being fearfully and wonderfully made and the unique strengths that God has given each child. At times, focusing on a diagnosis to explain the behavior overlooks these strengths and only highlights the negative. This can also lead to subconsciously thinking that the child is the problem and needs to be "fixed." If a child is diagnosed with Oppositional Defiant Disorder, ADHD or another disability, it does not mean that the problem has been solved or that the concerning behaviors will magically stop. We still need to consider the factors of what skills the child is lacking (which may or may not be identified through an evaluation) and what expectations the child is having difficulty meeting.

Questions also come up about medications for students with behavioral concerns or mental health issues. Once again, there is no universal or easy answer to this question. It is something for the family to prayerfully consider with information from medical professionals and the individual needs of the child. However, whether medication is being



considered or not, it should not be regarded as the entire solution. We still need to approach the problem-solving process in the same way as professionals in education. The ultimate medical decisions are the decision of the family and doctors in that area. Information may be requested from the teacher or school that a doctor wants to consider, but refrain from offering medical opinions. If you know the child is starting or changing medication, you may want to have conversations with parents about any changes you're noticing or send information to the doctor through the parents or with appropriate communication permission. Share objective information in these cases, not your own theories of the behavior or interpretations of the child's actions. It is also helpful to have documented any behavioral interventions put into place up until that point and the results of those strategies. It is also critical in any conversations with parents to try not to diagnosis their child or verbalize the disability you suspect the child may have! It is likely done out of love and concern for the child and to help parents navigate the often confusing process, but it is not appropriate unless you have the specific credentials to do so. Let the appropriate professionals make the diagnosis, as tempting as it may be for you to share your thoughts.

The main point is this: do not wait on or rely on an evaluation or diagnosis to resolve behavioral concerns. That may be an appropriate part of the process, or it may not be. A diagnosis of a disability does not mean

that we can't work through the process of identifying skills that are lacking and what expectations a child is having difficulty meeting in the same way we would other students. A diagnosis does not mean that behavior can't and won't change. Even during the most difficult and challenging behaviors, remember that each child is fearfully and wonderfully made. Children have likely heard enough about all the things they do "wrong" and the inappropriate behaviors they demonstrate, but they need to continue hearing about the gifts God has given them and how much He loves them as we continue on with the problem-solving process.



Please reach out to LSEM at lsem@luthsped.org or visit our website at luthsped.org and let us know how we can help with your ministry to students and families!

Fearfully and Wonderfully Made

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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



NURTURING DISCIPLES WITH A “Because, Now” Mindset



“If, then,” is an effective way to set up an informal contract with your child. For example, “if you pick up your toys, then we can have a snack.” Or “If you mow the lawn, then I will drive you to the swimming pool.” Children understand these simple contracts because the expected action and the desired result are clear. Parents like them because it helps to avoid having to explain too much or endure whining. “If, then” contracts are a win-win.

At the same time, we cannot, and should not, shield our children from all technology. It is an essential part of our world. Unfortunately, however, our world is rarely concerned with the best interests of our children. Therefore, we must be discerning about technology use and teach discernment to our children.

“If, then” statements feel good to our brains, too. God wired our brains to look for cause and effect. Cause and effect explain much of the world’s workings and is a beneficial tool for learning social skills. For instance, through experience, children learn that if I hit my sister, she will get mad and tell Mom. Or, if I share with my friend, he will share with me. It is a simple system, but it works.

Furthermore, your children will experience “if, then” in nearly every aspect of life, from work to relationships.

One of the reasons “if, then” seems to feel right is how our sense of morality develops. For example, many children are at a

stage often referred to as “reciprocity.” Reciprocity is a stage where a child will do a kind thing for another person because they expect equally kind treatment. Then, as children grow, they move on to other reasons for behavior.

However, our faith is one area where “if, then” does not apply. We do not have an “if, then” God. Our God does not say, “If you do good things, then I will offer you salvation.” Instead, He tells us that **“the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (ROM. 6:23).** God says *because* Jesus died and rose again, now I will gift you with salvation.

The **“because, now”** promise turns “if, then” on its head. We do not earn salvation, love or any blessings God extends.



“If, now” is so easy to accept that many Christian faiths adhere to it, believing they need to do good works to earn God’s blessings. Because our brains look for cause and effect, we somehow want to believe that we merit God’s favor. It is hard to accept that salvation doesn’t have anything to do with us. The “if, then” faith is dangerous, not only because it is untrue, but because it causes us to focus on our efforts instead of the work of our Savior.

So, how do we raise “because, now” children in an “if, then” world? We do it with God’s help and by diligent use of the Gospel. Here are some things to consider:

Forgiveness

Your children need to know you forgive them. While it is good to expect your children to apologize, they must understand that forgiveness is not dependent on repentance. Instead, help them see that repentance and apology are a natural reaction to knowing you have forgiveness. Don’t wait to forgive your child until the punishment is complete. Forgive first, and let them know the consequence is to help them learn.

Mercy

God shows us mercy when He does not give us the punishment we deserve. When we show mercy to our children, we are tenderhearted and consider expanded circumstances. For example, we ignore some behaviors when we know our child is ill or tired and temporarily has less control over emotions. When you show mercy

to your child or encourage them to show mercy to others, point out what you are doing and why Jesus is the reason for compassion.

Grace

Grace is when God gives us a blessing we did not earn. We continually show grace to our children but may not identify it as such. For example, when you give your child an unexpected treat, let them know it’s because you love them and then make a simple connection to God’s love for us. When we help children recognize grace and give thanks for it, we steer them away from feeling entitled to everything they want.

We want to teach our children to apologize, serve others and improve their behavior, but it is central to our faith to teach them why we do these things. We want our children to understand that these behaviors come from the joy of being saved children of God. We want them to know that we do these things because of what Jesus did for us.

This thinking is different from what the world teaches, where everything is earned or deserved. As Christians, we are not people of entitlement. We are people of grace. A “because, now” mindset is emotionally healthy because it steers us away from bitterness or shame. **Most importantly, the understanding that because Jesus died and rose again for me, now I am a forgiven and blessed child of God brings us joy in our faith.**



Professionally Speaking



Enjoy Every Moment

We have an initiative in the LCMS at this time, Set Apart to Serve, which is an effort to effectively encourage people to pursue careers in professional church work: ordained and commissioned ministers in the LCMS. I'm grateful for this, but I'm also concerned that it has become necessary. Why is there such a shortage of workers? What has changed? Why aren't people choosing church work? There are many factors behind all this. This article isn't to address this broadly, but rather to zero in on one aspect I suspect has contributed — a lack of joy realized and demonstrated by some serving now in professional church work.

Let's just talk about educators. Teaching is hard! So is administration. These are labor-intensive professions with great responsibility. Nothing new there! We have future adults of our communities being taught and nurtured in our classrooms, in the faith and in knowledge and skills they will need to positively contribute in society. We dare not mess up! But the work has grown more difficult in the past 15 years. Consider:

- › The rise of social media.
- › Mobile technology everywhere! Students are immersed, including constant access to social media.
- › The further deterioration of the nuclear family.
- › And more ...

Children have more general life issues than they used to. So do their parents, making prioritizing school lower than educators would prefer. Parents are more prone than ever to hope we can make things work with their children, with as little parental time and



involvement as possible. Except when there's a problem. Then we see parents swoop in as if trying to make up for their lack of time and attention, going overboard to force us to make things right (as they see it). The child is right, the teacher is wrong, and the stress is up.

The job is harder than it once was, and for more reasons than I've described above. Complicating matters is the compensation of Lutheran educators in most of our schools, nowhere close to keeping up with inflation. Most LCMS districts provide some guidance/recommendations regarding appropriate salaries and benefits for educators; few schools meet the recommendations. Many reasons and excuses are given, but it doesn't change that the difficulty of serving in school ministry has increased, while the relative compensation as compared to inflation has decreased.



The result: Many teachers have become overwhelmed and downtrodden in ministry. It's become easy to focus on the issues, the challenges and a lack of resources and support. Amid this, how do we inspire others, our students, to consider going into such ministry work?

I feel like I've written doom and gloom so far, but the point is to get you to where you can connect with a few key realities:

- › You serve in church work because God called you to it.
- › You do not control some factors impacting your current ministry service.
- › God doesn't want you to serve and suffer in silence.
- › You DO control your attitude and approach to life and ministry.

So where am I going with this? Stop focusing on what you don't control. Life is a gift from God, which you are free to enjoy. Making a lifelong difference for people through school ministry is a fantastic way to live. Find the joy! Here are specific recommendations; if employed, they can turn your service around, modeling something entirely new for the children watching you every day. Some may be inspired to follow you into the teaching ministry.

Enjoy the people around you. You serve with unique, quirky, flawed fellow servants. They all have things to appreciate, enjoy and maybe even laugh over. Enjoy their admirable and entertaining qualities. Stop trying to make them all like you.

Notice the praiseworthy. Every day there are little (and sometimes big) things happening that might fly under the radar and get no recognition. Become the praise police. Seek out every chance to celebrate the acts of kindness, the extra effort, the selfless service examples. Sing those praises!

Eradicate "we've always done it this way." Make it fresh. Seek out the new. Challenge the status quo. Explore and encourage original ideas. Have fun making things happen!

Don't "work." We take ourselves too seriously. Give yourself permission to be goofy. Entertain your students, your coworkers, even your school parents. Go ahead and wear that unique tie or unbelievable Christmas sweater. Bring in a surprise birthday cake for the teacher's lounge, even though it's no one's birthday. Spontaneously invite coworkers to happy hour after the school day. Relationships matter — it can't always be about the job.

What else can you think of, to enjoy your ministry? Have fun coming up with your own ideas. You might inspire the same in your coworkers. Let the joy of being a team in ministry shine!

Professionally Speaking // DECEMBER 2022

Writer: Mr. Jim Scriven Designer: Chrissy Thomas

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A RESOURCE OF LCMS SCHOOL MINISTRY



Rattles & Prattles

A RESOURCE FOR CAREGIVERS OF INFANTS AND TODDLERS



God chooses Mary and Joseph.

“GOD CHOOSES PEOPLE TO SERVE HIM” (MATT. 28:19-20).



BIBLE NARRATIVE

God chose Mary to be Jesus’ mother; Joseph to be His earthly father; Jesus’ birth.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

Luke 1:26–38; Matthew 1:18–24;
Luke 2:1–7

CENTRAL FOCUS

From creation to the first sin and the promise of a Savior, God chose people who served according to His plan, such as Miriam, Moses, and now Mary and Joseph. This story is a pivotal one in Scripture: God keeps His promise to send a Savior; the roles of Mary and Joseph, and how they served God.

Prepare to Teach

- › **Read** the narrative in several versions of the Bible, and, if possible, a study Bible.
- › **Think:** God kept the promise He made to send a Savior after Adam and Eve disobeyed Him; and God promised to send His own Son, to be the Savior for them and for all people.
- › **Pray:** Thank You, God, for Your big love. You sent Your only Son, Jesus, to be our Savior — to live the perfect life You wanted, to take our punishment, suffer, die and come alive again. He shows the perfect example of how to show our love and thanks to You in loving and serving You as we serve others. In Your Son’s name we pray. Amen.



JESUS' TIME AND BIBLE NARRATIVE PRESENTATION

You will need

- Resources: *Little Ones Sing Praise (LOSP)* (CPH, 1989); *Fingers Tell the Story (FTTS)* (CPH, 1989)
- Worship Center: small table, laminated picture of Jesus [search the internet or use an 8" x 10" picture from CPH (\$6.99)] mounted on the wall; poster (see Tuesday below); Children's Bible (see Wednesday, sharing the Bible story); figures for sharing the Bible story, available here: <https://files.lcms.org/file/preview/reproducible-art-dec-2022?>

Gather for Jesus' Time

Invite staff and children to join you at the Worship Center. Sing (Melody: "Mary Had a Little Lamb"):

Won't you come and sit with me, sit with me, sit with me? Won't you come and sit with me — right here on the floor?"

Invocation

Sing (Melody: "Mary Had a Little Lamb")

"We begin in our God's name, our God's name, our God's name. We begin our God's name — Father, Jesus, & Spirit, too."



Sharing the Bible Narrative

Cut out and laminate the figures from the reproducible; use on a felt board, magnet board, stick puppets.

Introduction: Show items that will be used for sharing the Bible story. Sing (Melody: "Mary Had a Little Lamb"): **"We've come to learn about our God, about our God, about our God. We've come to learn about our God; what will we learn today?"** Show small pictures of the Bible story from the reproducible.

Monday Presentation: Use the laminated figures from reproducible; or a nativity set.



(Show Mary) God chose Mary a long time ago — to-be Jesus' mother; the Bible says so. (Add angel) An angel came to Mary, and said "You will have a son. He will be the Savior, sent for everyone."

Mary was so happy; we are happy, too. God, you see, sent Jesus — down to earth for YOU" (adapted from *FTTS*, p. 7).

Tuesday Presentation: Use figures from the reproducible, or a nativity set. (Show Joseph) God chose Joseph a long time ago — to be Jesus' earthly father; the Bible says so. An angel came to Joseph as he was sleeping in his bed. "Mary will have a baby," is what the angel said. He is Jesus, God's own Son. He will be the Savior — sent for everyone." When Joseph woke up, he knew what to do. Take care of Mary and baby Jesus, too.



Wednesday Presentation: (Show Mary and Joseph) Mary and Joseph traveled one day — to Bethlehem; it was a **l-o-n-g** way. They were hungry and tired, too. Joseph said, "Here's what we'll do." They found a place where animals stay; there they made a bed of hay. Then, very early on Christmas morn, Jesus, our Lord and Savior was born (adapted).

Thursday Presentation: Review the Bible story. Use storyline from M-W and show a poster. Find one on the internet: *Little Lambs Student Pages* (CPH, 2001) #15; or find a copy of a Bible story book (online, thrift store, etc.), such as, *My Good Shepherd Bible Story Book* (CPH, 1969) p. 77.

Friday Presentation: Review the story of Jesus' birth (Luke 2:1–7) from a Bible or Bible story book: *Holy Bible (International Children's Bible, 1969, p. 1018; or The Beginner's Bible Questar Inc., 1989, pp. 272–277).*

What We Learn: God kept His promise to send Jesus, who grew to serve His Father and us — lived a perfect life for us, was hurt for us, died for us and came alive again.

Song to Sing: "In a Little Stable" (*LOSP*, p. 81; change last phrase to "... born for you and me."). Do not use verse 3, which includes the visit of the shepherds.

Time to Pray

Use a responsive prayer, invite caregivers (and older toddlers) to repeat each phrase: **"Thank You, God (repeat) for sending Jesus (repeat) to be our Savior (repeat). And all God's children said, Amen! (say "Amen")."**

Closing/Benediction

Sing (Melody: "Mary Had a Little Lamb"): **"Now it's time to sing goodbye, sing goodbye, sing goodbye. Now it's time to sing goodbye — for another day."**

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

S Science, Nutrition & Large Motor:

- **Science:** Nativity sets include animals (donkeys, cows, sheep). Show replicas; talk about what they eat, sounds they make, how many legs and how they serve. For example, donkeys are pack animals; cows give us milk; sheep's wool is cut off to make yarn/cloth. Show samples.
- **Nutrition (snack):** Eat an edible manger, graham cracker, topped with grated cheddar cheese; children can help stir batter for a birthday cake for Jesus. Sing "Happy Birthday."
- **Large Motor:** A donkey served by carrying; pretend to be the donkey, such as walking on a road, up a hill, running fast to get Mary to Bethlehem — make braying sounds.



T Technology

- Show a video of the song, "The Friendly Beasts," with the theme of serving.

R Reading and Language Arts

- **Books:** *Christmas in the Manger* by Nola Buck; *The Christmas Baby* (Board Book) by Marion Dane Bauer; *The First Christmas* by Holly Berry-Byrd.
- **Rhyme/Poem:** Finger Play: Hold up pointer finger. "Here is baby Jesus; He's sleepy you can see" (bend finger). "Let's put Him in a manger and sing so quietly" (lay finger on palm and cover with fingers). Sing a lullaby (see Music below).



E Engineering

When Mary and Joseph came to Bethlehem, they looked for a place to stay. Invite the children to find a for place for them in the classroom; and get it ready.

A Arts (art, music)

- **Art:** Joseph may have made a cradle, Mary, a blanket for Jesus. Provide 6-inch squares of white muslin and have children make favorite/happy colors on the cloth. Ask a member to make a blanket for the classroom; or to wrap a doll they pretend to be baby Jesus.
- **Music:** Mary, most likely, sang lullabies to baby Jesus. "Away in a Manger" (*LOSP*, p. 82) can be used as a lullaby. Talk with families and ask if they sing lullabies; include them.

M Mathematics

- Use the figures from the reproducible. (Show Mary) "Mary, Mary, number one." (Now add Jesus sleeping in a manger) "We'll add Jesus. That makes two." (Now add Joseph) "Here is Joseph, we see three. Happy family. 1, 2, 3. Mary, Joseph and baby."

S Social Studies

Joseph was a carpenter and Mary a stay-at-home mom. What are the occupations of parents? Find out; incorporate into play area.

Mary and Joseph may have used a donkey to travel to Bethlehem. How do the children travel? Incorporate this into the dramatic play center, engineering, books to read, and so forth.

INVOLVING THE HOME

via personal contact/newsletter (electronic or paper)

Send home a copy of the rhyme used for sharing the Bible story. Encourage the parents to use it at home. Encourage parents to purchase a child-friendly manger set for their child. And, invite them to attend Christmas worship services.

School Shepherd

TIPS AND SUPPORT FOR PASTORS OF CONGREGATIONS WITH SCHOOLS



Making Disciples for Life

Teaching Teachers

“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” (MATT. 28:19).

Matthew introduces the teaching ministry of Jesus, “He went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom” (MATT. 4:23). The inspired Gospel writers bring us to the classrooms of Rabbi/Teacher Jesus. In addition to the common synagogue “classrooms,” Jesus taught on mountains, from boats, on pathways and in vineyards and gardens. Jesus’ students were sometimes curious and attentive, and sometimes disruptive and even hostile.

Jesus began His ministry teaching and ended His ministry gathered with His disciples for final “lessons” (JOHN 14-17) before His journey to the cross. Even from the cross He taught compassion to His mother and disciple John. He taught forgiveness to those who crucified Him and taught the truth of salvation to a repentant thief. Jesus is always the Master Teacher and Savior.

The school shepherd sees and hears the Shepherd teaching the flock. The school shepherd listens to the Great Commission and obeys the command to teach. The school shepherd teaches about the life, death and resurrection of Teacher Jesus.

The December, January, February editions of the “School Shepherd” will explore three different “student” groups that the school shepherd is privileged to teach. The school shepherd is commissioned to teach teachers, children and families.



Teaching Teachers the Word

The school shepherd celebrates his partnership with “commissioned ministers” and others who join him in sharing God’s Word in the context of the Lutheran school. However, those who teach the Word also need to hear the Word. The school shepherd has the responsibility and privilege of leading them in confessing their sins and announcing the words of absolution to the school staff. The school shepherd gives the body and blood of Jesus to them, assuring them of His forgiveness, as they gather in the Divine Service. Teachers are regularly encouraged to be active in the worship life of the congregation.

As Paul recognized and celebrated his partners in ministry — Timothy, Barnabas, Silas, Luke — so the school shepherd affirms the Gospel proclamation partnership with the Lutheran school teachers. While the unique

Office of the Pastoral Ministry is to be honored, those who support that Office are affirmed as part of the ministry “team.”

While other pastoral responsibilities may prevent the shepherd from being present for all staff devotions and staff meetings, the school shepherd is encouraged to make attendance at those gatherings a priority. In those settings, God’s Word can be shared to specific situations and concerns.

Pastoral and personal contacts with the teaching staff is encouraged. While teaching has always been hard work, teaching in today’s contexts is even more challenging. Mental health of teachers is an important and frequent conversation. Challenges from parents and less respect from students is more common in today’s classrooms. Teachers need the pastoral care and support of a school shepherd. Teachers need to hear the promises of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit to direct them. They need to hear the comfort of God’s Word as they face personal and family crises. School shepherds find opportunities to greet teachers individually and assure them of God’s care and his pastoral care.

Many Lutheran schools are no longer able to call a teaching staff who are equipped with Lutheran teacher diploma credentials. In many settings it is necessary to employ teachers who do not have a Lutheran denominational background or do not belong to a Lutheran church. In these contexts the school shepherd has the additional responsibility of sharing the Lutheran

confessional foundation of the church and school. The shepherd may invite the teachers to an adult instruction class or provide other training in the truth of Scripture. The school shepherd is the primary doctrinal “supervisor” of the Lutheran school ministry. The shepherd may also direct teachers to colloquy opportunities through Lutheran universities.

“Lutheran school ministry is challenging. Lutheran school ministry is exciting. Christ is the message. Christ is the strength. To Christ be the glory.” (*Navigating Ministry Challenges*, p. 98, see the resource reference below). The school shepherd brings the focus of Christ to school teachers.

FOR PERSONAL OR STAFF REFLECTION:

- ▶ How is the faith of the teachers nurtured in your setting?
- ▶ What ministry gifts do the teachers bring to your Lutheran church school?
- ▶ How could the team ministry between the pastor and teachers be strengthened in your setting?
- ▶ *Navigating Ministry Challenges* (Concordia Publishing House, 2021) offers practical directions for pastors facing ministry challenges. Chapter 3 is entitled, “The Pastor and School Ministry.” Pastoral interactions and relationships with school staff are included in the discussions.

prayer

“Christ be my Teacher
in age as in youth,
Drifting or doubting for
He is the truth.

Grant me to trust Him;
though shifting as
sand, Doubt cannot
daunt me; in Jesus I
stand.”

(LSB 861:2)



School Shepherd

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A RESOURCE OF LCMS SCHOOL MINISTRY

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Time Out for Directors

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT TIPS FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER ADMINISTRATORS



A Special Privilege:

Making Disciples

Have you ever received a special gift at Christmastime, or any time of year, that you were so excited about because it was not only something you wanted, but because it provided you the opportunity to share with others? What was that item? How did you feel about receiving it? How did you feel when you used that gift to share with others? What was the reaction others had when they received something from you?

Perhaps the gift was a new kitchen mixer and you used that gift to bake cookies for your friends. Or, perhaps it was a new lawn mower and you used it each summer when you volunteered to mow at your church or school. Or, perhaps you received scrapbooking materials and used them to make special pictures for your students to remember the school year. Whatever gift you received, and however you used that gift to share with others, it likely gave you feelings of joy, generosity and fulfillment.

The same should be true about your faith, too. Your faith, given to you through your Baptism into God's family, has been a special gift from God. He has given you faith, and tools to strengthen your faith, so that you may serve others, serve Him and ... make disciples!

Lutheran leaders and educators cannot take the role and responsibility of making disciples lightly or for granted; it's an honor to be chosen to share and teach the faith! As the world around you changes



— as the world in which your students live becomes much more focused on self and stays away from what God intended — it is even more important to hold to and teach about life from a biblical, faith-filled perspective. God gives us the keys to living, and these include His commands and promises. These keys do not change. As Hebrews 13:8 shares, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.”

What great reassurance this is — not only as a remembrance that Christ is ever-present, but also that His Word remains the same. Stay firmly connected to what Christ shares in His Word.

Again, when you receive a special gift that enables you to share with others, take advantage of the opportunity to do so. Do not shy away from teaching the faith; in a Lutheran school, teaching the faith is of utmost top priority.

Lutheran leaders and educators cannot take the role and responsibility of making disciples lightly or for granted; it's an honor to be chosen to share and teach the faith!

As Matthew 28:19–20 shares, “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, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” What a statement of faith-filled charge! Go! Make! Baptize! Go and make disciples each and every day!

Encouragement

The faculty and staff you have at your school all have different and unique gifts and talents as they relate to sharing the faith. How do you encourage them to use these gifts and talents to make disciples?

Are they gifted with music or art? Are they gifted with technology? Are they gifted with a gentle and caring listening ear? One of the responsibilities of a leader is to identify and encourage others to use the gifts God has given them. Sometimes, others need to be stretched in ways they can use these gifts to make disciples, as not everyone is taught such strategies or feels comfortable doing so. Make it part of your collegial culture and climate that making disciples for Christ is not only about “Jesus Time” and reading Bible stories with students; it is modeling in word and life, and using everyday examples to highlight the power, love, grace, mercy and forgiveness Christ shares with all people.

Training

Perhaps you and your colleagues have had course trainings on ways to teach the faith, or perhaps not. Training and education for teaching the faith should be part of your regular and ongoing professional development growth. There are numerous printed materials available for reading and support through Concordia Publishing House, your LCMS district education office or from other colleagues in neighboring Lutheran schools. Use your networking connections to ask what others are doing for training in this area. Take advantage of online courses or webinars that may be of little or no cost. Check with your pastor or other church work professionals for



advice, more ideas and resources, or specific training. When professionals collaborate and work together, learning happens. And, when teachers learn new ideas and strategies that benefit students, it's a win-win situation! Investing in the work of making disciples for Christ should be part of every Lutheran school's professional development offerings.

Ongoing Support

Would you visit a dentist who had not learned any new techniques or stayed updated on the latest in dental technology? Probably not. Teachers in Lutheran schools are great at teaching the faith, but it's imperative they do not become stagnant; continual learning and support is necessary. A one-time workshop is not the way to go; rather, ongoing support, dialogue and collaboration is what grows a teacher — professionally and spiritually. Not only should teachers teach the faith, but they should also grow in their personal faith. Do not forget about the importance of collaborative learning and ongoing supports.

Making disciples is awesome work, and God has chosen you to be one of His disciples to foster growth of other disciples — again, what a great honor and responsibility this is! As you close out 2022 and begin thinking about 2023, consider making disciples in a new way, or in an enhanced way, as part of the new year.

Time Out for Directors

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Writer: Dr. Drew Gerdes Designer: Frank Kohn

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