



JANUARY 2023

SCHOOL MINISTRY **Mailing**



THE
LUTHERAN CHURCH
MISSOURI SYNOD
School Ministry



JANUARY 2023

SCHOOL MINISTRY MAILING

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Alight

FOR LUTHERAN SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS AND EDUCATORS



We Love Lutheran Education

God our Savior ... desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. (1 TIM. 2:3-4)

DEAR FRIENDS IN CHRIST,

I've been invited to write the *Alight* column for the next several months. Allow me to introduce myself.

I am the husband of a Lutheran school teacher, Myrna (Hall). We are 1983 graduates of Concordia University, St. Paul, (CSP), St. Paul, Minn. While serving as a pastor in North Dakota, Myrna and I helped start Martin Luther School in Bismarck. Myrna taught first grade. I served on the school board.

Our four children, graduates of Martin Luther School, are all married and raising our six grandchildren. Myrna's parents are graduates of Concordia University Chicago (CUC), River Forest, Ill. Two of my children are graduates of Concordia University Wisconsin (CUW), Mequon, Wis. For the last six years, I've been serving as the LCMS Executive Director of Pastoral Education in St. Louis, which includes the *Set Apart to Serve* church work recruitment initiative. Myrna is teaching pre-school at Our Savior Lutheran School in Fenton, Mo.

Our family loves Lutheran education! The fact that you're reading this, no doubt, means you love Lutheran education too. Our love for Lutheran education goes deeper than being a first- or second-generation educator, doesn't it? It goes deeper than pride in our alma mater, doesn't it? Our love for Lutheran education goes

deeper than teaching at a private school or in a family-like setting, doesn't it?

In our morning prayers, Myrna and I pray for the same thing every day. We pray that our grown children, their spouses and our grandchildren know Jesus Christ, believe in Him and have eternal salvation. We pray that on the Last Day we will all be together in heaven with Christ and all believers.

Lutheran teachers have a significant role through whom God answers our prayer. In this sacred vocation, Lutheran teachers teach our children about Jesus from preschool through high school. Day after day, they teach our children that Jesus loves them, died for them, rose again and will raise them to everlasting life. ***That's why we love Lutheran education!***

Thank you for your significant role in forming the faith in our children and grandchildren — passing on saving faith in Jesus Christ from one generation to the next.

Rev. Dr. James Baneck
*Executive Director of
LCMS Pastoral Education*





Community & Enrollment



ARTICLE 5: Samples of Innovative Community Building



It's January. Let's get practical! You've read about community; you value community, but how do you actually build community at your school? This month we are going to look at Immanuel Lutheran School's (ILS) efforts to build community, along with insights from the principal on the process. Hopefully you will pick up something you can do at your school to strengthen community, but as you read, look deeper than events you can copy. Community is not about the right programs, but is a mindset and a culture that is created among the people at your school.

Looking at ILS's website, it is immediately apparent that community and relationships are valued by the school. ILS claims to be a "home away from home" where students "feel loved and cared for" and "parents and families are partners" in education. The homepage declares, "ILS builds community" and "students and their families will not be an anonymous face in the crowd." These are bold claims and could cause families to walk away from the school disappointed by "false advertising" if it is unable to deliver.

So how does the school *make good* on their claim toward community? According to the principal, the commitment to building community is intentional, but is not something they put on a checklist. Instead, being in relationships with families and getting to know people is just part of their culture. From the beginning of the admissions process, the goal is for the families at the school to *feel known*. The goal of relationships is authentic! The principal says school staff welcomes people with no "obligation or expectation" that the family will adopt the ethos of their school. They truly just want to get to know the people at the school by living amongst and around each other.

To live "amongst and around" each other requires time and opportunity to be together. This is where Community Nights and Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) events come in. Community Nights are simple: yard games, food and a devotion. PTO events look similar to events many schools have, like movie nights, campfires, bingo and ice cream socials. But there are subtle characteristics of these nights that help make them effective. First, the event or production is not what matters. As a matter of fact, the principal argues



it doesn't need to be polished at all, as those kinds of events can come off as "sterile." Instead, the events at ILS feel like "something you would do in your backyard" and simply serve as a platform to get together. Having an activity to be engaged in draws the people together and keeps them there long enough for conversations to come naturally. Having activity nights monthly helps them to become routine, and a core group of "regulars" starts to develop. The consistency and homey feel helps people let down their guard and be open to relationships.

Events aren't the only way to build community. Interacting with humans is what really matters, and this happens everyday! The pastor at ILS knows everyone by name because he is present at the school. He is at drop off and pick up everyday, chapel every week and up to two dozen school or classroom happenings each week. The size of the staff at ILS is also intentional to allow for the time it takes to pay attention to families and make sure everyone is known. ILS is a growing school. Staffing has had to grow to keep up. The principal asserts saving dollars by limiting staff is not as important as making sure they have enough people to make connections.

The culture of community is spreading beyond the staff. Classroom ambassadors (similar to "room moms") are now in place to put together their own class events. These are not just classroom Christmas and Valentine's parties, but are opportunities for the grade level families to get together outside of school.

Facebook groups are being put into place for each class as well. Hopefully these things create "a family within the class." When people feel they belong to a family, they are less likely to walk away from the school.

Also worth noting is how school and church are distinguished. Generally speaking, no reference to "school families" and "church families" is given in communications. Community Nights are for "Immanuel families." These nights are not a school event that church members are welcome to attend; nor are they a church event that school families can attend. They are simply a night for Immanuel people to be together. Events that take place during the school day, such as a firefighter presentation, are advertised to all Immanuel families. All are welcome to attend. Stay-at-home moms or grandparents with no children enrolled at the school come and get to be a part of the community.

What *doesn't* ILS do to grow enrollment? They spend zero dollars on advertising, such as billboards, sponsorships or anything designed to "snag the passerby." Instead, all of their dollars, resources and energy is poured into connecting current families. Those current families talk with other families, and the school grows. The school has consistently been growing in enrollment over the past decade. More importantly, over 110 students have been baptized at the school in the last eight years. With community as a foundational value, ILS is answering the call to *make disciples for life*, one relationship at a time.

Community & Enrollment

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A RESOURCE OF LCMS SCHOOL MINISTRY

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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 John

MATT. 3:13–17; MARK 1:9–11; LUKE 3:1–23

Before You Teach

God calls and sends John to baptize, preparing people to meet Jesus. His mission is to change hearts and behaviors to make room in people's lives for Jesus to do His saving work within them. All of us, children as well as adults, are called and equipped by our Baptism to do the same.

Announcing the love of God in Jesus is our duty and delight, at any time and at any age.

Greeting

Greet each child upon entry: "Good morning/afternoon, child of God." Doing so establishes the child's positive outlook for the day.

Gathering

Gather in your worship area. Sing: "Happy Now We Gather," LOSP, p. 9, or other gathering song. Introduce the narrative of John the Baptist.

Do: Gather around the church baptismal font to tell the story. Note: Be sure water is in the font. Dip hand in water each time the word "baptize" or "baptized" is spoken.

God chose John, the son of Zechariah and Elizabeth, to tell others about the coming of Jesus. He preached in the wilderness, preparing people to meet Jesus, God's promised Savior. John wore clothes made of camel's hair tied with a belt. He ate honey and locusts, which are like grasshoppers. Many people came to the Jordan



River to be *baptized* by John. John spoke to them saying, "I *baptize* you with water, but God's Son, who is coming after me, is mightier than I. I'm not even good enough to carry his dirty sandals. He will *baptize* you with the Holy Spirit.

Then, one day, Jesus came to the Jordan River and met John. He wanted to be *baptized* by John. John said to Jesus, "I need to be *baptized* by You! You should not be coming to me." But Jesus said to him, "We have to do this now to fulfill God's plan." So John *baptized* Jesus in the river Jordan. When Jesus came out of the water, heaven immediately opened! The Spirit of God, coming down like a dove, rested on Jesus, and a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, who pleases Me."

Most often we are *baptized* in our church, at a font like this. We are *baptized* in the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

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)

Praying Together

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

PRAY: Dear Jesus,
You called me by my name; I'll never be the same.
You washed my sins away; with me you'll always stay.
Your love has set me free; your child I'll always be.
Thank you, Savior Jesus! Amen.

Remember the Story

BIBLE WORDS TO REMEMBER

Pre-K & K: "Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins." Acts 22:16b

Grades 1 & 2: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine." Isaiah 43:1b

Activities

CREATE: Baptism shells. A symbol of Baptism is a shell.

YOU WILL NEED: waterproof paint smocks, watercolor paint. Search the internet for "Baptism shell clipart" (fan shell, illustrated with three water drops shown along the bottom edge, symbolizing God the Father, Son (Jesus) and Holy Spirit). Guide children to paint shells, using watercolors.



DO: Invite a pastor to show and tell the children about Baptism. Gather around the baptismal font. Guide children to respectfully touch and feel the font and the water it contains. **NOTE:** Be mindful of children who have not yet been baptized. Invite parents to learn about Baptism, providing print information and/or inviting them to meet with you or the pastor (individually, as a family or as a group).

SING: "Child of God," LOSP, p. 98;
"God Chose Me," LOSP, p. 107.

FUNDAY FRIDAY: Water or Snow Play.

COMMUNICATE: Advise parents to dress children appropriately for this activity. **DO:** Fill pans and/or buckets with water or snow. Add cups and water toys. If indoors, cover surfaces with waterproof coverings. Provide clean-up materials. **EVERYBODY** helps!

CAMP SERVE: "Child of God" celebrations. Order identical, meaningful gifts (go to cph.org) to present to each child on his or her "Child of God" celebration day (Baptism date for baptized children; selected date for children not yet baptized).



Sending

YOU WILL NEED: A shell.

Gather in your sending circle. Review the day. Pass the shell, inviting children to pray as it is received or to silently pass it along. Dismiss, saying to each, "**Child of God, Jesus is with you.**"

Live the Story

Celebrate your Baptism, and the Baptism birthdays of family members, annually. For Baptism candles, go to cph.org and enter "Baptism candle." **NOTE:** These candles should be available from any Christian supply/bookstore.



Family Matters

A CHRIST-CENTERED RESOURCE FOR FAMILIES AND TEACHERS



Lifelong Disciples ... Practice Forgiveness

It's hard to forgive, even when someone asks for our forgiveness. It's even harder to forgive when someone doesn't request it — especially if they are unaware of the hurt they have caused.

To forgive another takes effort. Forgiveness requires emotional strength, and can be physically demanding and spiritually draining. The forgiveness process might occur quickly or become drawn out over time before it concludes. Whatever the length, it is worth it! Forgiveness frees us and allows us to become unburdened; it enables us to move forward in the journey of life with our family and in our walk of faith.

As parents we can perhaps find it easy to forgive ...

- › Little children, who just don't know better.
- › Kids who are in a hurry and do something clumsy.
- › Teenagers who say or do something awkward.
- › Genuine forgetfulness on the part of our spouse or other adult.

It becomes a bit harder to forgive when ...

- › A child willingly disobeys.
- › A young teen is mean to others in spiteful and conniving ways.
- › Someone lies to you about an important matter.



- › A loved one is intentionally hurt by someone else.

Think for a moment about the last time you forgave someone when they requested it, or you forgave someone in your heart — without them even knowing it. How did it make you feel?

Think now about Jesus, dying on the cross. Crucified for nothing He did — but for everything we did as sinful people. Hanging there in pain, Jesus says, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do” (LUKE 23:34). What an example of willing forgiveness. What an unselfish request. What an unbeknownst gift to people who were doing Him immediate harm — who weren't even asking for forgiveness. What an example and gift for all who would sin against Him in the centuries yet to come. What a word of grace!

As this new year unfolds, we are often motivated by goals we want to accomplish in the months ahead, and by resolutions that we plan to keep. Might one of our resolutions be to practice forgiveness? Can we willingly forgive when requested as well as when it is not requested, beginning in our family setting and then moving out to our neighbors and into our communities?

Lifelong disciples can practice forgiveness, for we know what it means to be forgiven.

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.

LEARNING TO PRACTICE FORGIVENESS

PURPOSE: To engage family members in a fun activity that allows them to discuss and explore ways to practice forgiving one another as family members and to learn how to forgive others in their daily lives.

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

- › When do you find it hard to forgive someone?
- › Can you share a time when you forgave someone?
- › Can you share a time when someone forgave you?

FORGIVING OTHERS: Read aloud the following situations and ask family members to think about and share how they would go about practicing forgiveness.

- › A good friend doesn't invite you to a party that most of your other friends are attending.
- › A family member ignores you when you show up for a visit to their home.
- › A classmate or coworker says something mean about the way you are dressed.
- › Your teacher or boss tells others about a mistake you made.

ASKING FOR FORGIVENESS: Read aloud the following scenarios and ask family members to think about how they would ask for forgiveness in each situation.

- › You say you are going to have lunch with a friend, but then you completely forget about meeting them.
- › Someone says something mean in front of a friend or family member that you know is not true, but you laugh at it anyway, and don't say a thing.
- › Someone asks for your help with something, you say you will help them, but decide to do something fun with someone else instead.

- › You tell a secret about a friend or family member, and it gets back to them that you were the one who shared this private information with others.

A MOMENT IN THE WORD: Have someone read the following verse and short explanation.

"Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do'" (LUKE 23:34A).

Here Jesus gives us an incredible example of forgiveness. As He is being unjustly put to death on the cross, He asks the Father in heaven to forgive these people, who don't even know they are doing wrong. Wow, what compassion! What care! What concern for others. May this inspire us to think about others more than we think about ourselves — even if we are the one who is hurting, and to practice forgiving others, no matter the situation.

As a family, close your time together by having an adult or older child read the prayer below, phrase by phrase, with family members repeating each phrase in "echo" fashion.

CLOSING ECHO PRAYER: Our loving Father in heaven, thank You for forgiving our sins, because of the death of Jesus on the cross. Thank You for loving us and for forgiving us every day. Help us, through the power of Your Spirit, to forgive others as we have been forgiven. In the name of Jesus our Savior. Amen.



Fearfully and Wonderfully Made

SPECIAL EDUCATION IN LUTHERAN SCHOOLS



The Problem-Solving Process



Throughout the *Fearfully and Wonderfully Made* series so far this year, behavioral ideas from Dr. Ross Greene have been shared regarding identifying skills that a child is lacking (the *why* behind behavior) and identifying unsolved problems (the *when* of specific behaviors). Putting these pieces together leads to the problem-solving model, which helps adults and students come together to find effective solutions for behavior in the classroom and honors each student as a child of God.

The problem-solving process is collaborative, so it may be a very different approach than what you've tried in the past. Collaborating with the student during this step does not make you any less in charge, however. You're very much in charge of taking action to understand the child's

behavior and taking action to find solutions. Dr. Greene's collaboration process involves three steps: the empathy step, the define adult concerns step and the invitation step. This process is meant to be proactive and not used in the middle of a child's behavior escalating. Remember, if it's predictable, it's preventable, so we can remind children of what was agreed upon ahead of any times when we predict there may be a problem.

The purpose of the empathy step is to talk with the student to try to understand what is making it difficult for him or her to meet the expectations you've previously identified as being challenging. Many times adults try to answer this for a child or assume we know the answer, but oftentimes, we're wrong! This step may be difficult for some students, especially at first, because they may not be used to being heard or a partner in the process. Approach this conversation with curiosity rather than judgment. You can introduce the topic by saying, "I've noticed that ..." and fill in the blank with the unsolved problem. For example, "I've noticed that you have difficulty when the class is lining up at the door. What's up?" You may have to use reflective listening to get clarification as the student responds and hopefully shares with you. If the student seems hesitant to share, provide encouragement and let him or her know you're not in a rush. Give the child time to think or even circle back to the conversation later after he or she has had time to think about your question.

The next step of defining adult concerns is not for you to suggest solutions, but for you to share why it's important that an expectation is met from your perspective. Don't assume that the child knows and understands this without you sharing it! You can share how the problem



is affecting the child's health, safety and learning, as well as how the problem is affecting others. You can start this part of the conversation by saying, "My concern is ..." after the student has shared and you've clarified points in the empathy step.

Both you and the child have now shared your perspectives and concerns in a non-judgmental conversation, so it's time for the invitation step. This is the step in which you and the student come up with a solution together. It's an invitation for the child to help you come up with mutually agreeable solutions rather than you stating what the solution is without the child's input. This lets the child know that you're doing this with them collaboratively, not unilaterally. Invite the child to help you think about how to work out the problem that addresses both of your concerns shared in the previous steps. For example, you could say, "I wonder if there's a way for you to know where your place in line is and have other students give you space" (stating the child's concern here) "and also keeping your hands to yourself and not hurting anyone else when you're lining up" (stating your concern). Ask the student if he or she has any ideas to help address both concerns. This doesn't mean the student's idea has to be the one used, but it's also not just a delay in you imposing what you've already determined to be the solution. The discussion between you and the child should result in a solution that is realistic and mutually satisfactory. If these criteria are not met, the collaboration needs to continue or be revisited. If the plan seems to meet

these criteria, but does not work well in implementation, come back to these steps with the student and find another possible solution. Sometimes what each party thinks is realistic ends up not being possible. Let the child know that you can talk about more solutions if either person thinks it's not working well.

This is a brief description of the process, but I would encourage you to read more from Dr. Ross Greene for details about this entire approach to behavior. This process can help resolve persistent challenging behavior while honoring the individual God has created him or her to be. Going forward, we will cover the escalation cycle, identifying behaviors that may escalate, and addressing behavior that has escalated.



For more information and for behavioral resources, contact us at LSEM at lsem@luthsped.org or visit our website at luthsped.org.

Fearfully and Wonderfully Made

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A RESOURCE OF LCMS SCHOOL MINISTRY

Writer: Dr. Kara Bratton Designer: Lisa Moeller

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Professionally Speaking



Self-Care Is Actually Ministry Too

One of the things I love about serving in Lutheran schools is that there is always something more to do. People who find themselves at a loss for what to do with their time aren't paying attention. This job never ends, always has another challenge or opportunity, a way to go further, higher, better.

One of the difficult things about serving in Lutheran schools is this same reality. You're never done. Complete one task, five others clamor for attention. Create a plan for your time, you can count on interruptions — a parent with a concern, a colleague to help, a student to guide. Want the type of job where you clock in and clock out? THIS is not the calling you are looking for.

I've known a few individuals over the years who *thought* they were meant for school ministry, but discovered they weren't. They simply weren't able or willing to put in the time to truly deliver on amazing Lutheran education. The people who make an impact don't have jobs at Lutheran schools. They ARE Lutheran schools. They put in the hours it takes to exceed expectations. They think little of using their own materials and resources to enrich their classrooms. They

attend dance recitals, soccer games, tae kwon do testings. These are all natural outcomes of investing in relationships, building into people's lives, becoming more than just a teacher, director or principal.

Find yourself running out of juice, wondering if you are burning out, I suggest one of two things might be happening. First, you might not be cut out for this profession. I'm not being dismissive. What people expect serving in Lutheran schools and the reality of what it takes to thrive in such ministry is not always in alignment. If you can adjust your expectations to the reality you're experiencing, then there's hope! But if you want to turn this position into an 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. punch in/punch out role, that's not realistic.

But there might be something else happening. You may be struggling with life/work balance, something critical to professional sustainability. Let's touch on this significant aspect for serving in Lutheran schools.



Our profession will take everything we give it, and will still be eager for more. Again, there is no "done" to our service. We may have finishing points — end of a school year, completion of a Christmas program — but there's always something else up next, and plenty more waiting for attention, the tasks that *need* our time and

Say
YES to:



FAMILY AND FRIENDS



GET MOVING



TAKE BREAKS



DEVOTIONAL TIME



GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP

the tasks we *want* to give time to. While this is the wrong profession for someone who just wants a routine nine to five, it is also a profession that requires boundaries so you can give time to essential items above and beyond the work.

Personal example: When my wife and I were young teachers, we threw ourselves into our first ministry with gusto. I taught fifth grade and did a bunch of coaching. I began a school drama program. I *wrote* and directed the school Christmas program *and* the congregation's Sunday school Christmas program. I ushered for worship. I accepted a position as an elder. I played on the church softball team, the Lutheran basketball league and the church bowling league. I even served on a district committee.

Then we had our first child, and *SCREECH*, everything needed to change. We loved our service to the church and school, but now we needed more time for family. It was SO HARD to pull back. In fact, this impacted a decision to accept new calls as our daughter turned one; we needed a fresh start to get the balance right.

The key to sustainability is being intentional, knowing that you must preserve time for some things while maintaining flexibility. For example, I would discourage you from trying "I don't work on Saturdays — that's family time." That paints you into a corner. There's nothing wrong with reserving Saturdays for family, but be open to occasional ministry need. Then when you use Saturday time for ministry work, make it up with something special on a weeknight.

Here's my list of things to make time for; schedule these into your week. Say "no" to some church and school things you *could* do (optional stuff) because you've prioritized time for these things: family activities, exercise, preparing and eating healthy meals, devotions, recreational activities (reading, watching a movie, gardening — whatever you enjoy). By preserving time for such tasks, you recharge your batteries, avoid burnout, and sustain your ability to serve. You are a valuable resource for your school — don't waste yourself! Such practice also helps you model the joy of living a life of Christian service, helping you be the type of person who attracts others to the faith, helping with our mission of making disciples.

Professionally Speaking // JANUARY 2023

A RESOURCE OF LCMS SCHOOL MINISTRY

Writer: Mr. Jim Scriven Designer: Chrissy Thomas

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Parent Pages

RESOURCES FOR CHRISTIAN PARENTS IN THE 21ST CENTURY



MY CHILD'S BRAIN Works Differently



“It takes all kinds to make a world” is an idiom with more than a bit of truth. Looking at the bigger picture, we easily accept that the world needs people of different skills and viewpoints. God did not create us to all be alike. Instead, He made us each with a purpose.

When we look at remarkable people, we tend to accept their differences because we are in awe of their abilities. Albert Einstein is a famous example. Here is a genius who barely finished college and wrote groundbreaking scientific papers while working as a clerk. Some sources say Einstein did not start talking in complete sentences until he was nearly 5 years old, yet he was self-taught in Algebra and Geometry before he was an adolescent. Einstein's brain worked differently, and he stuck out from his classmates in both concerning and impressive ways.

We don't know if Einstein had a diagnosis that explains his difference, but one thing we can determine is that he was neurodiverse. Neurodiversity is not a diagnosis, it is a way to define a brain that works in unconventional ways. For example, we expect children to learn to talk by a certain age and, with good instruction, later learn to read. However, some children might learn to read without

ever speaking. Other children might have a difference in their brain that makes learning a challenge, but creativity more likely. Children with dyslexia, ADHD or autism are neurodiverse, but many other children also have significant brain differences. They might process information differently or

have a substantial gift for one skill accompanied by a deficit in another.

The differences in neurodiverse brains would not pose much of a problem were it not for the fact that the world expects all children to learn the same things in the same order. For example, in a school, a child who reads but doesn't speak, or doesn't accomplish reading until a later age, presents extra challenges.

Realizing that a child is neurodiverse helps families, friends and schools see the child in a new way. Instead of difference indicating brokenness, we can see the dissimilarity in terms of its potential good. Often, the same difference in the brain that causes a learning or social struggle is the very thing that allows the child to excel in another area. For example, children with brains not interested in learning social skills might have a unique capacity to focus on learning

facts or patterns. God designed our world to benefit from neurodiverse brains as much as neurotypical brains.

Your child might be neurodiverse because their learning is uneven, social skills are lacking or they experience unusual sensitivities. Take heart; your child has the potential to fit into God's world, too. As you work to help your child to find their way in school and church, here are some things to consider:

Diagnosis: If your child's brain differences create learning and behavior challenges, do not hesitate to seek a diagnosis. Of course, no one wants to have their child labeled, but this process gives teachers and others crucial insights regarding your child's needs and how to help.

Teamwork: Once you discover what works well with your neurodiverse child, it can be easy to assume that teachers and caregivers will figure out the same. However, each situation your child experiences requires different skills, and while your child may have found their way at home, a classroom will likely pose unique challenges. Teach those who work with your child what works at home, and recognize that in a classroom, there are other children with needs. Teamwork will help everyone involved to problem solve instead of blame.

Accommodations: Many children who are neurodiverse require what is called accommodations in a school setting. An accommodation is anything that helps a child to focus and learn. An accommodation might represent extra work for a teacher or specialized treatment for a child, but the return is fewer emotional meltdowns and more effective learning. Finding accommodations is usually done through trial and error and requires much patience and persistence. Teamwork between the family and the school will aid this process.

Adapting: Once your child's school or childcare center has found the appropriate accommodations, you should see a more relaxed child ready to learn new things. Now is the time to expect your child to adapt to learning some less-than-comfortable skills. For instance, not every child needs to be a social butterfly, but every child needs to work and play with classmates in some form. Encourage your child to trust the teacher when asked to step out of their comfort zone.

"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).

*Every child is a part of God's plan and has a way to participate in the church and the world.
So keep your child and teachers in your prayers and watch and see how God answers.*



Parent Pages

VOL. 22, NO. 5 // JANUARY 2023

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A RESOURCE OF LCMS SCHOOL MINISTRY

Rattles & Prattles

A RESOURCE FOR CAREGIVERS OF INFANTS AND TODDLERS



God chooses John.

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



JANUARY THEME

God chooses and empowers John to serve Him.

BIBLE NARRATIVE

Elizabeth and Zechariah are expecting; John's ministry and baptizing Jesus.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

Luke 1:5-17; 39-45; Matt. 3:1-2; Matt. 13-17; Mark 1:1-11; Luke 3:21-23; 1 Peter 2:9

CENTRAL FOCUS

God chose John to share the Good News: “Get ready; Jesus is coming.” He preached a message of repentance and Baptism.

Prepare to Teach

- › **Read** the narrative in several versions of the Bible, and, if possible, a study Bible.
- › **Think:** We often hear children are born ready to learn. For example, research and Scripture tell us we are learning before we are born. Preborn children can hear and respond to sounds at 20 weeks after conception¹.
- › **Pray:** Dear Heavenly Father, we thank You, for choosing John and empowering him to serve You as he rejoiced at the coming of Your Son, even before he was born. We thank You for choosing him to announce the coming of Jesus, who was born, lived, suffered, died and came alive again for all. Empower us as we share Your story with the children and their families and encourage them to share and serve You. Amen.



¹ Hearing in the womb. Charlotte Lozier Institute. (2022, August 29). Accessed Jan. 11, 2023, lozierinstitute.org/dive-deeper/hearing-in-the-womb/

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 Wed.); Children's Bible (see Thurs.); figures (search online) of baby John, Elizabeth, and Mary for sharing the Bible story (see Mon.).

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

Introduction: Show visuals that will be used to share 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 our God: what will we learn today?"**

Monday Presentation: Show the "baby" puppet of John; his mother, Elizabeth; and Mary.

The Bible has a story of a little kid like YOU; He grew in his mommy's tummy, just like YOU.

Add Elizabeth (Zechariah couldn't speak): John heard his mommy say "God will send His Son to save us all one day."

Add Mary: One day, he heard his mommy greet Mary and say, 'Hel-lo! Come in; I'm glad you're here today. I'm happy to see you, dear mother of God's Son, Whom God will send to save us all, everyone.'

The Holy Spirit filled Baby John with faith and joy; he kicked and kicked with joy. The Savior God promised would be born — a little boy.

Tuesday Presentation: Show the puppet for grown-up John. John grew bigger; he grew to be a man. He knew God loved him and gave him a special plan. John told people: "Get ready! The Savior is coming soon. Be sorry for all the wrong you've done; be baptized today." Then one day, John could not believe his eyes. He saw Jesus coming, and Jesus said, "I want to be baptized." John baptized Him. Then Jesus went on His way; He had a lot of work to do. Jesus came to make us God's happy children who know He is our best Friend, Helper and Savior.

Wednesday Presentation: Display the poster for the week. Find one on the internet; or use *Little Lambs Student Pages* (CPH, 2001) #18; or find a copy of a Bible story book (online, thrift store, etc.) such as, *My Good Shepherd Bible Story Book* (CPH, 1969), p. 88.

Thursday Presentation: Refer to the picture on the poster and read the story from a children's Bible: *The Beginner's Bible* (Questar Publishers, 1989 (pp. 310–15)); *Holy Bible (International Children's Bible, Tommy Nelson Pub., 2015)*; choose desired Scripture to read.

Friday Presentation: Review the story; sing-along of favorite Jesus songs; or, join pastor in the sanctuary where he shows the baptismal font and talks about Baptism, such as, becoming God's loved, forgiven, gifted and empowered children who share His story and serve others in unique ways.

What the Narrative Teaches: God chose John to announce the coming of Jesus, God's Son, the Savior who lived, was hurt, died and came alive again for everyone. God chooses us to share Jesus' story through what we say and do.

Songs to Sing: "Jesus Wants Me for a Helper" (*LOSP*, p. 33); "God Chose Me" (*LOSP*, p. 107); see music suggestions below.

Time to Pray

Sing a repeat song using the melody from "Are You Sleeping?" **"Thank You, God (repeat) We're happy (repeat) That Jesus loves us all (repeat). 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."**

CURRICULAR MATERIALS //

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

S Science, Nutrition & Large Motor:

- **Science:** Before he was born, John heard his mother's voice and by the Holy Spirit he believed in God's gift of Jesus as the Savior. That made him happy; and he wiggled (especially when he heard Mary, Jesus' mother, was visiting).
- **Nutrition:** Serve a popped rice cereal with milk (listen for the sound); with toddlers, pop popcorn in a microwave (listen for the sound).
- **Large Motor:** Take a walk; listen for different sounds (e.g., nature, people, vehicles, etc.).

T Technology

- Watch a video of animals making sounds. Or, read a book that has buttons to push (e.g., *Around the Farm* by Eric Carle).

R Reading and Language Arts

- **Books:** *The Very Quiet Cricket* by Eric Carle; *Sounds All Around* by Wendy Pfeffer; *Alive Before You Were Born* by Kim Bestian
- **Rhyme/Poem:** "I Have Little Ears" (FTTS, p. 17); I Have Little Feet (FTTS, p. 16).

E Engineering

Invite the children to use the sand table to make a place for John to talk to people and to baptize Jesus; another day add animals and make their sounds; another day feel the sand and talk about how it feels.

A Arts (art, music)

- **Art:** Mix sand with tempera and finger/brush paint to create a happy picture. We're happy to hear the story of Jesus' love. Sing a happy song while painting (see music below).

- **Music:** Sing: "Old MacDonald Had a Farm;" use pictures/stuffed animals. Sing praise songs from October, such as, "I Have Hands" (LOSP, p. 29); focus on verses 1 and 9; change to "hands that can help..."; lips that say, "Jesus loves you." Sing: "If You're Happy and You Know It" (traditional); "Happy All the Time" (LOSP, p. 59).

M Mathematics

- While taking the walk, focus on sounds children hear and count the number of cars, people, birds and so on that are seen.

S Social Studies

God chose John to share the Good News of Jesus' coming. Who can we share it with? Teach preverbal children to sign "Jesus loves you."



INVOLVING THE HOME

via personal contact/newsletter (electronic or paper)

In this biblical narrative Jesus is baptized as our Savior from sins. Children are now baptized to receive forgiveness in Jesus. Note this in your letter to the families; ask the pastor to share a letter to parents — what Baptism is and does and an invitation for them to have their child baptized.

Rattles & Prattles

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Writer: Mrs. Judy Williams Designer: Lisa Moeller

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A RESOURCE OF LCMS SCHOOL MINISTRY



School Shepherd

TIPS AND SUPPORT FOR PASTORS OF CONGREGATIONS WITH SCHOOLS



Making Disciples for Life

Teaching Children

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations ... teaching them” (MATT. 28:19).

“Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven” (MATT. 19:14).

Jesus interacted with children. The Gospels (Matt. 19, Mark 10 and Luke 18) emphasize that while adults (including the disciples) thought Jesus’ time would be better spent with more influential learners, Jesus gathered with and blessed the children. An artist’s illustration of that significant event in Jesus’ ministry is displayed in many Lutheran schools.

Lutheran schools are blessed to be the heart, arms, voice and lap of Jesus in teaching His children. The “all nations” of the Great Commission includes all ages. Jesus commissions the church to make disciples of little children.

In the Great Commission, the “teaching” of the nations/children is preceded with “baptizing them.” Our Lutheran heritage celebrates the Means of Grace for children, beginning with Baptism. The school shepherd should emphasize the significance of Baptism for children (and all) often. Luther’s Small Catechism with Explanation affirms the Baptism of children as “they are included in the words, ‘all nations’; Jesus especially invites little children to come to Him; as sinners, babies need what Baptism offers; babies also are able to have faith” (CPH, 2005; question 246).

Teaching the blessings of Baptism, the school shepherd leads the Lutheran school and other Christian education agencies in teaching children.



The school shepherd teaches Jesus’ children:

The school shepherd teaches children in a variety of contexts. The Divine Service is a “classroom” each Sunday. The Spirit brings a variety of “learners” into the pews. Through the liturgy, the lessons, the sermon and all elements of the service, the pastor is blessed to teach and preach to all ages, including the children, the truth of God’s Word. The weekly school chapel service is an opportunity to especially teach children in a worship setting. The pastor may be privileged to teach a confirmation class in the school setting.

In addition to the more formal “teaching” contexts, the school shepherd can explore more informal settings and instruction times: a “question and answer” time in a classroom; a Bible story reading to a preschool class; an elementary classroom “field trip” into the sanctuary for a close-up view of the baptismal font and altar; a comparative religions class for a high school group. A variety of teaching opportunities offer the school shepherd not only the opportunity to share God’s Word and the truth

of Scripture, but also the opportunity to build relationships for personal faith questions and ministry to individuals in various life stages and perhaps even crises.

Few school shepherds come with professional teaching credentials or experience in relating to children of various ages and life stages. Teachers, parents and children do not expect the school shepherd to be a “perfect” teacher (only Jesus is that). However, a sincere desire to minister to (and teach) children is important in a Lutheran school (and parish) ministry. Suggestions for the shepherd’s effective “teaching” of children include:

- ▶ **Let children be children.** Children are not miniature adults. Knowledge of and appreciation for various age characteristics are helpful. School shepherds who are blessed with children in the home have first-hand experiences of child development.
- ▶ **Love the children.** Children are born sinners and under the Law. Lutheran schools see the sinful behavior of children. Lutheran schools share the forgiveness and love of Jesus. School shepherds get the privilege to see the fruits of the Spirit in the lives of children.
- ▶ **Learn about children.** The school administration and classroom teachers are often the local “experts” on the children. The school shepherd might ask the first-grade teacher, “Tell me about the children in your class. What are the characteristics of a six-year-old?” The middle school teacher might be engaged by asking, “What are the challenges and interests of teenagers today? How can I more effectively teach and minister to them?”

▶ **Listen to children.** In classrooms, playgrounds, hallways and school activities, individual conversations, personal interests, family connections and other information about children can be gained through informal and individual conversations.

The school shepherd as child and student:

No matter our age or life stage, we are all children in relationship to Jesus. The school shepherd is privileged to join children in singing, “God’s own child, I gladly say it: I am baptized into Christ,” (LSB 594). Blessed in baptismal grace, the school shepherd is secure in his identity in Christ and is privileged to continue to “make disciples of all nations” (especially children).

The school shepherd is also student of the Word. A good teacher knows the subject matter that is being taught. The shepherd, as teacher of children, knows the subject matter of the Word and teaches it truthfully, boldly and creatively.

FOR PERSONAL OR STAFF REFLECTION:

- ▶ How are the gifts of children celebrated in your school and church?
- ▶ Do you have children enrolled in the school who are not baptized or do not have a church home? How is the Great Commission to children emphasized in your school?

prayer

“Lord Jesus Christ,
the children’s friend,
To each of them Your
presence send;
Call them by name
and keep them true In
loving faith, dear Lord,
to You.”

(LSB 866:1)



School Shepherd

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A RESOURCE OF LCMS SCHOOL MINISTRY

Writer: Rev. Robert Riggert Designer: Frank Kohn

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Time Out for Directors

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT TIPS FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER ADMINISTRATORS



Educator Well-Being:

A Time to Focus

What prompted you to be a teacher? Were you encouraged as a child to be a teacher? Perhaps someone saw specialized skills you exhibited that would be excellent in a classroom setting. What do you remember about your college education courses? In college, you likely spent much time preparing lessons and activities and sharing with peers; do those experiences still exist for you in your current school and ministry setting?

Teacher preparation is a lot of work! Obtaining an education for any career is no easy task, and working for specialized credentials can be a challenge for some. Classroom teaching, especially for early childhood workers, is not always filled with glitter and unicorns — it can be challenging, tiring and stressful — especially when student behaviors, parent requests and collegial conflicts begin to emerge. How do you handle challenges in your work? How do you manage the time needed to do your work well? Who do you depend on for insight, support and encouragement?

There are also highlights and celebrations. Teaching early childhood students can be heart-warming and leave you with a sense of pride and accomplishment as you help a child learn to tie shoes, sing the alphabet song and read to you for the first time. There are supportive administrators, parents and colleagues, too, who “fill your bucket” and provide you with the affirmation that you are in the role that God has specially chosen just for you! Who makes you feel like a strong teacher? What do you do to encourage others in their work? How do those around you feel when you are happy and balancing your time between work and home well?



As an educator in a Lutheran school, you know the importance of sharing Christ's love with students and families. You know so many Bible stories and songs, you have a significant collection of children's picture books and you may be considered the “queen” of your school because you know where all the art supplies are

located — even the small googly eyes and pipe cleaners! You daily invest so much into your work and your students; however, are you intentional in investing in self-care? Yes! Self-care is all about YOU! How often do you care for yourself? Do you incorporate it into your daily routine?

In Lutheran education, it is easy to serve others; servant-mindedness is at the core of what you do. As a teacher, you have specialized knowledge and competencies that are worthy of recognition. God has gifted you with talents and skills that, ultimately, serve and glorify Him. Along with the necessary knowledge base, competencies and personal capacities of being a teacher, having strong physical and mental health are required, too. You must be well in order to serve well.

As the new year of 2023 has begun, have you already set goals you want to achieve this year? Perhaps you have the common goals of healthier eating and losing weight, but have you considered goals that focus on self-care and mental health? Again, being an early childhood teacher and leader in a Lutheran school is a wonderful career, but it is not easy.

Even with research showing personal satisfaction and high levels of commitment, teaching young children is a challenging profession. High job expectations, lower-than-typical compensation (compared with other careers) and challenging behaviors of children (and, sometimes, parents) can lead to teacher burnout and mental stress. Well-being is multidimensional, but sadly is too often neglected in its entirety by many teachers.

Christ wants His workers to be well. Christ tells His workers of the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19–20, “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.” And know that because Christ is always with you, He will provide strength and endurance for you to do His work. Look to Him; seek Him in all you do!

This month (January) and next (February), *Time Out for Directors* will include topics of well-being. Bringing the topic to notice is important, and corresponding ideas for increasing and maintaining one’s well-being will be shared. It’s a delicate topic, but one that impacts us all. The following are reflective well-being questions for you to think about, accompanied by actions that could be incorporated into your daily or weekly routine to improve and maintain your well-being. Prayerfully

consider how these reflections might be included in your routine as you strive for positive overall well-being.

Reflection #1

Are you getting the right amount of sleep?



It’s not just about a number — a number of hours of sleep; it’s also about the quality.

Do you stay up late working on school tasks?

When you do go to bed, is your mind racing with worry and a list of what still needs to be done? Do you wake up exhausted and rely on caffeine to get you through the day? Do you wish you could have rest time with the students?

How can you modify your sleep routine? Be intentional about real rest and relaxation at the end of the day. Watch television with your family, read a book or, if it’s relaxing for you, do the dishes by yourself. Do something that creates distance from a computer or phone screen. Create something in the evening that “slows” your body and mind. Be intentional about “slowing down” and creating time for yourself.

Or, you might consider ways to start your day off well. Be intentional to enjoy coffee or tea each morning along with personal devotion time. Schedule some “wiggle room” into your morning routine so you are not feeling rushed and anxious. If you start the day rushed, you may feel rushed for the remainder of the day. Small steps can make a big difference. Starting or ending the day with peace and serenity is important.

“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (MATT. 11:28).

Reflection #2

Are you “in” and “with” God’s Word throughout the day?



As Matthew writes, God has promised to always be with you ... always (28:20)! Celebrate this comfort and consider “taking it to the next level.” Your work as an early childhood teacher is busy, but there are always moments in your day to reflect on His Word and the assurances God has provided to you through Scripture.

Is your Bible open daily? Are you using Scripture at least once a day to come into your heart and soothe you? Consider starting your day with Scripture reading, either directly from the Bible or from a devotional booklet. Even one Bible chapter or short devotion can be a start. Consider really listening to the words of a

Christian song on the car radio while you drive to work. Listen to what God is saying to you through the words of the song and reflect on them throughout the day.

Another idea is to consider using Bible verses around your classroom and home for decorative inspiration. Verses and pictures displayed around a classroom are for both children and adults; look for moments in your day to reflect on the verses you have in your classroom or work space. What is God saying to you in the verse you see? As you seize these moments through the day to capture God's Word, be sure to share them with colleagues and students too. Be intentional in weaving God's Word into all components of your day.

Reflection #3

How do you incorporate physical activity into your day?



Again, you probably have a busy schedule each day. When you look at the time needed to care for your students, other work responsibilities and family members, there may not be much time left ... you may think. Exercise is not a luxury, it's a basic need, just like food and water. Again, you must be well in order to serve well. Look for moments in your day, placed by God, where you may have the opportunity to give your body a small boost of exercise and energy.

As an early childhood teacher, you likely sing songs with your students; many of them may be action songs that encourage jumping, clapping and waving hands. Be sure you are doing these actions along with your students. It's great role modeling, your students will enjoy seeing your participation and your heart will pump a bit faster during this time too. You might be surprised at the benefit of activity completed during a two-minute action song!

Run, jump and get your steps in! Don't let the children be the only ones active during outdoor recess;

run with them, jump with them and maybe even try climbing with them! While you supervise, walk around the outdoor space, or, if you have to, walk in place. Again, the extra boost to your heartbeat is a great benefit. Even a small bit of exercise is shown to boost energy, improve memory and provide an "appetite" for more activity.

These three reflection strategies are fairly simple, yet they have a meaningful impact when done each day. The road to well-being is a journey; there will be victories and defeats, but know that Christ is alongside you during every moment.

In conclusion, always remember to pray; prayer is one of the most significant components of a Christian's well-being. God hears your prayers. Are you tired? Pray for energy. Are you worried? Pray for peace. Are you anxious? Pray for calmness. No matter what is on your heart and mind, take it to the Lord in prayer.

Be well so you can serve well — serve well so you can help make disciples!

Note: Next month, *Time Out for Directors* will continue the topic of educator well-being. Tips for managing workload through the day will be shared for your reflection and consideration.



Time Out for Directors

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A RESOURCE OF LCMS SCHOOL MINISTRY

Writer: Dr. Drew Gerdes Designer: Frank Kohn

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