

DECEMBER 2019

SCHOOL MINISTRY

Mailing



THE
LUTHERAN CHURCH
Missouri Synod

School Ministry



DECEMBER 2019

SCHOOL MINISTRY MAILING

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Alight

FOR LUTHERAN SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS AND EDUCATORS



“FOR UNTO YOU IS BORN THIS DAY IN THE CITY OF DAVID A SAVIOR, WHO IS CHRIST THE LORD”

(LUKE 2:11).

MERRY CHRISTMAS FROM YOUR LCMS SCHOOL MINISTRY STAFF!



A RESOURCE OF LCMS SCHOOL MINISTRY

ALIGHT // VOL. 50, NO. 4 // DECEMBER 2019

Author: Dr. Rebecca Schmidt, Director of LCMS School Ministry Designer: Erica Schwan

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Computer File



What is Next in Technology: Student Devices, Pt. 1

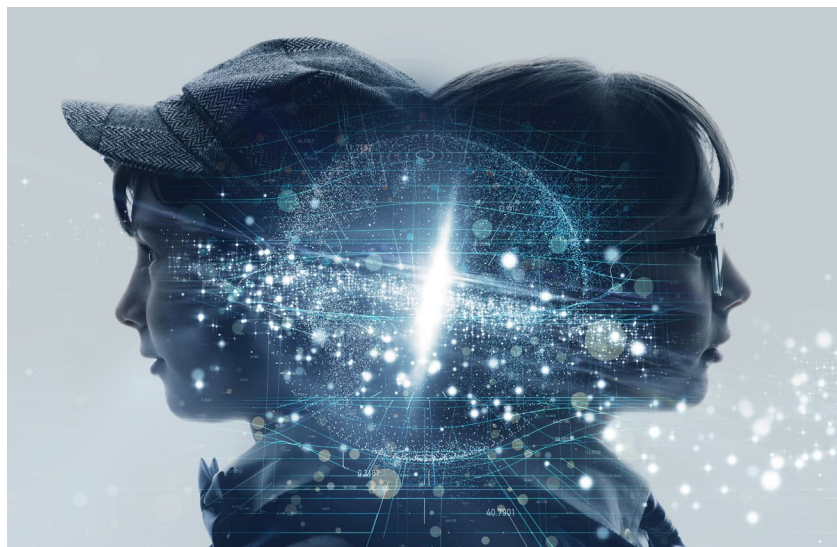
(STRATEGY AND IMPLEMENTATION)

Reflect on these two questions before you read the article to start thinking about how the topic has and continues to impact you, your classroom or your school.

Question #1: What led to electronic devices' relevance in education? Why were they assigned value in the classroom or implemented in the way they were?

Question #2: How are you using or implementing electronic devices in your classroom or school at present? If you are not directly implementing them, how is the topic impacting you in other ways?

If you have students in your school (and I hope that you do!), there is an extremely high chance that you have computers and other electronic devices that they use in the course of their school day. At the very least, I would assume that at least once in recent history there was a conversation at your school about what devices should be purchased for students to use and how to best implement them. While picking a device is important (and something we will talk about in January), this month's focus is specifically on the strategy and implementation process, which needs to be addressed prior to choosing which student devices to purchase. Looking at strategy and implementation is something that few schools take the time to work through prior to purchasing devices. So often the new technology is what is focused on first without regard to how or why to put devices in a school or classroom, and in many cases this proves problematic once the devices are in the hands of students.



Strategy

(n.) “A plan of action designed to achieve a long-term or overall aim” (Oxford).

So what should be your plan of action when you want to bring student devices into your school or classroom? First things first, you need a plan. A *written-down* plan. If a plan just lives in someone's head, it is very difficult to share that plan and gather feedback on what strategy is being developed. Once you realize that the plan needs to be written down and structured so it can be shared, the real content of the strategy can be explored.

Before any other decisions are made about putting devices in a school or classroom, the question of “why” or “for what purpose” needs to be discussed and answered. The purpose of student devices needs to be investigated *in your specific context*. Simply making the decision to move forward because “everyone else is doing it” or “we should” with no specific rationale will hamper the integration of devices into classrooms and curricula. Thus, it is important to have conversations with parents, teachers, administrators, students and anyone else involved in the functioning of the school to hear their



thoughts on why it would be beneficial to move forward with such a plan. You do not need to have everything figured out at this point, but the conversations should lead to a definitive answer to the question of “why.”

Once you have the “why” defined, write it out. It can be something as simple as a purpose statement of “we will integrate individual student devices into the classroom in order to enhance our students’ personal learning, give them access to additional resources, and prepare them for the world of today.” What you come up with should be simple, but at the same time specific enough to serve as the core roadmap to guide you when it comes to implementation.

Once you have the rationale and purpose statement defined, now comes the “what questions do we need to ask” part of the plan. In order to develop the rest of the strategy for moving forward, it is essential to develop a plan based on the current and future needs of all involved parties. Asking questions is an often-overlooked part of the planning process, and by involving as many individuals and groups as possible you will get a much better buy-in when the plan is actually implemented. You may be wondering what types of questions need to be asked, and there are innumerable based on your situation, but some of the following may be helpful in getting started:

- › What grade levels are we looking to bring devices into?
- › How many devices will we need?
- › Will students travel with the devices from room to room or will they be assigned to a specific classroom?

- › Are students allowed to take the devices home or off campus?
- › What training will we be looking to implement with teachers, students, parents, staff and others?
- › What curriculum changes will be needed and who will oversee that process?
- › Do we need additional infrastructure (power, network, internet, access points, etc.)?
- › Who will be involved in the selection and purchasing of devices?

Remember, these questions should not be device-specific, as the upcoming device conversation should be driven by the strategy, not the other way around. However, the answers to these and other questions, paired with your purpose statement for the project, are the setup for both the implementation of the plan and an introduction to the “device discussion.”

Implementation

(n.) “The process of putting a decision or plan into effect; execution” (Oxford).

So you have a plan — congratulations! Now the real work begins. Figuring out how best to implement the strategy you developed is the key piece in moving forward. First things first, everyone needs to be on board with the strategy. Making the strategy known to all will create enthusiasm for implementation and help develop new ideas of how to best make it work. Implementation cannot and should not follow a plan developed by others; it needs to be specific to your school.

Ultimately, having a detailed and well-developed plan in place driving your implementation is where the “what is coming next” question comes in. Technology is changing at such a rapid rate that by the time you have your strategy and implementation plan in place, there may be a completely new technology available for use in your school. That is why it is so important to focus on having a written plan, strategy and goals in place so you are ready for changes in technology. “What comes next” then is the actual discussion about the hardware you are looking to invest in, but that is a topic for next month’s article!

Definition Source: *Lexico Dictionaries | English*, Lexico Dictionaries, lexico.com/en.



Early Childhood Devotions

FOR CHILDREN AGES 3 TO 7



JOYFULLY LUTHERAN 1 THESS. 5:16-24
FOCUS: Jesus. Others. You.

Angels and Shepherds

(LUKE 2:8-20)



Before You Teach

Reviewing this year's theme verses, 1 Thess. 5:16-24, is a good place to start as we approach the Advent season and the retelling of the story of Jesus' birth. Focus on St. Paul's words: "Rejoice ... pray ... give thanks ... do not quench the Spirit ... hold fast what is good." Find, in your teaching, opportunities to do those things that St. Paul calls for. The incarnation narrative is critical to passing on the faith. It calls for us to approach it not with cuteness or nostalgia, but with serious intention to put children and their families in touch with the grace of God in Jesus.

Greeting

Greet each child immediately upon entry. Your warm welcome is much needed during this often stressful time for children and families. The first five seconds upon arrival are critical for establishing a positive tone for the day.

Gathering

YOU WILL NEED: an Advent wreath with battery-operated candles (Google "battery-operated Advent candles"); child-friendly nativity set. a

Do: Place three dark blue candles and one pink candle around the wreath and a white candle in the center.

Note: The wreath reminds us of God's never-ending love. The candles remind us of the light of Jesus. Week 1: **Hope**; Week 2: **Peace**; Week 3: **Love**; Week 4: **Joy**. As each candle is lit, the light of Jesus grows ever brighter.

Sing: Sing corresponding verses of "Light One Candle" (LOSP, p. 78) as candles are lit.



Tell the Story

YOU WILL NEED: figures from a child-friendly manger set to tell this narrative. Show the figures as indicated in the bold print. Then place where children can freely play with the set.



Mary and Joseph had traveled from their home in Nazareth to the little town of Bethlehem to be counted as ordered by the country's ruler. While they were there, **Baby Jesus** was born in a **stable** because there was nowhere else for them to stay. His mother, **Mary**, wrapped the **Baby** in cloths and laid Him in a **manger**. On that same night, **shepherds** were in a nearby field watching their **sheep**. Suddenly, an **angel** of the Lord appeared to them, and they were very afraid! The **angel** said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring good news of great joy that will be for all people. For today a child is born in the city of David, a Savior who is Christ the Lord. You will find the baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." Then, suddenly, there was with the one **angel** many, many more angels praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!" (LUKE 2:14). When the angels returned to heaven, the **shepherds** said to one another, "Let us go to Bethlehem and see what has just happened, which the Lord has just told us about." Going quickly, they found **Mary and Joseph**, and the **Baby lying in the manger**. Upon seeing **Baby Jesus**, God's promised Savior, the **shepherds** left to tell others what they had heard and what they had seen. When they returned to their fields, the **shepherds** praised God for all they had heard and seen.

PRAY TOGETHER

Children repeat each phrase of the prayer after first spoken by the leader.

Baby Jesus born to be, Savior King to set me free.
Glory, glory be to Thee! Thank You for Your love for me!
Amen.

Remember the Story

BIBLE WORDS TO REMEMBER

Pre-K & K and 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: Jesus in a manger. You will need: Precut construction paper shapes: large and small rectangles (manger), ovals (body) and circles (head). Use the shapes to create Baby Jesus in the manger. Display with the words from the prayer, "Baby Jesus born to be."

Do: See "Create." Make and send greeting cards to shut-ins and others.

Sing: "In a Little Stable" (LOSP, p. 81).



Sending

YOU WILL NEED: Angel figure.

Gather children in the "sending circle." Review highlights of the day. Pray together, inviting children to offer a prayer as the angel is received and then passed. As children exit, say, "**Jesus brings hope**" (wk. 1); ... **peace** (wk. 2); ... **love** (wk. 3); ... **joy** (wk. 4). **Tell about Jesus!**"

Live the Story

Our focus throughout this season must be on the fulfillment of God's promise to send a Savior. We must also focus on the children in our care and their need for normalcy. Provide a place of calm and predictability. Be realistic about what can be accomplished. Strive to maintain your daily schedule! Be the harbor, in the midst of the storm of activity that abounds at this time of year!

May you be richly blessed throughout this season of Advent and Christmas!





Family Matters

A CHRIST-CENTERED RESOURCE FOR FAMILIES AND TEACHERS



JOY:FULLY LUTHERAN Christmas Joy

“Bah! Humbug!”

Many of us know that phrase was uttered by the character Ebenezer Scrooge in the classic story *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens (London: Chapman & Hall, 1843).

Ever feel like saying that as Christmas comes your way?

Sure we do! We might not want to admit it, but — to be completely honest — we may have felt that way in the past, and we might even have “flashes of humbug” as Christmas approaches now. What causes this? How do these negative feelings toward one of the most exciting seasons of the year get stirred up within us? Might it be a negative experience during a past Christmas, the loss of a loved one during this season of the year? Perhaps you feel you don’t have the energy and resources of time and money to do all the things you want to do this coming Christmas?

If you have been in the delivery room, shortly after the birth of a healthy baby, you know there is an array of feelings: relief, exhaustion, giddiness, just to name a few. There is however one feeling that seems to rise to the top, and that is the feeling of joy. Joy can be defined using numerous words

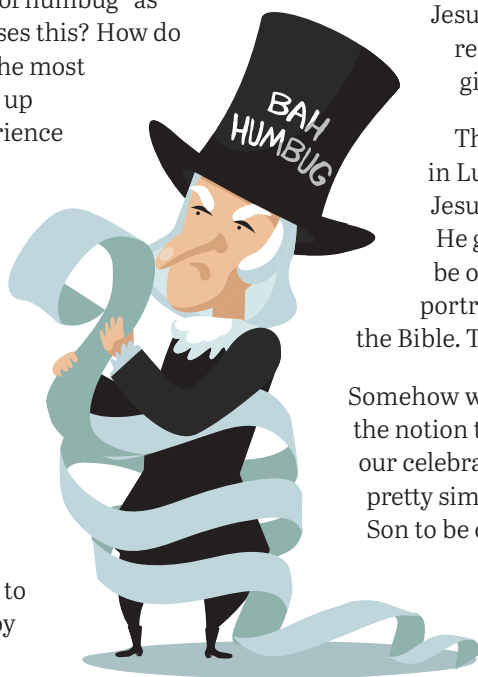
which describe extreme delight, such as exhilaration, ebullience, exuberance and elation. This sense of joy at the birth of a baby seems to encompass all the varied feelings in the room and can result in an overarching sense of peace.

When Christmas becomes about the busyness and not the Baby ... we can lose our joy. The joy of Christmas is not found in what we do, what we give to others, what we cook, eat and drink, but in the simple fact that we have been given the gift of a Savior. We have Jesus! The one who has been born will redeem us from our sins and gift us the gift of eternal life!

This is how we get to celebrate Christmas in Lutheran schools! We can speak about Jesus and how God so loved the world that He gave His only Son to come to us and be our Savior. Children can sing about it, portray it in pageantry and read about it in the Bible. This news brings us joy!

Somehow we can be distracted at Christmas by the notion that more is better, that more enhances our celebration. Christmas comes down to being pretty simple — our Heavenly Father gives us His Son to be our Savior, Redeemer and Lord.

May you find joy in Jesus this Christmas, and may that joy bring you peace.



JOYFULLY UPLIFTING FAMILY ACTIVITY //

Gather the family together in a comfortable space, with no electronic distractions, and enjoy the family activity outlined below.

PROJECT TITLE: NAME POSTERS

PURPOSE

To engage family members in an activity that allows them to discover how they were named and what their names mean.



PROCESS

- 1 Have someone obtain a baby name book with meanings of names or locate a website that would serve the same purpose.
- 2 Have available black markers, a yellow or other light highlighter and blank pieces of paper for everyone in the family to write on.
- 3 Begin with the parents (or other adults) sharing the process by which the names of the children in the room were chosen.

- 4 Then have the parents share the stories of how they were named.
- 5 Now, hand out the paper and markers to everyone and have them write their names in big, bold letters near the top. Look up the names of everyone in the family in the baby name book (or online site) and write down the meanings of their names. (If your family last name is also a first name, for fun, look that up as well.)
- 6 Have each person share the meaning of his name, and share how she feels about it. Do you like it? Does it describe you? Do you live up to your name?
- 7 Have an adult share the meanings of the name of Jesus and Christ as outlined below:
 - a) The name “Jesus” means Savior, the One who saves.
 - b) The name “Christ” means the Anointed One, the Chosen One.
- 8 Now, at the top of your name poster, write the words “Jesus Christ” to symbolize that Jesus Christ is the name that we all need to look to, because He is the name above all names.



PRAYER

As the family is holding the name posters in their hands, have an adult or older sibling read the following prayer, phrase by phrase, with the rest of the family repeating the words.

Heavenly Father, we thank You for the greatest gift of all: our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Help us to always praise His name. Give us strength to defend His name. Walk with us every day as we share His name with others. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.





Fearfully and Wonderfully Made

SPECIAL EDUCATION IN LUTHERAN SCHOOLS



Special Education Throughout the School Year: December

As Christians, we love the excitement and anticipation leading up to Christmas as

we prepare to celebrate the birth of our Savior. As teachers, sometimes December seems more chaotic with special rehearsals for Christmas programs, class events and fun activities and the excitement of the students for Christmas and a break from school (although teachers often share in that excitement too). For some students, the change in schedules and routines during this month and extra sensory input can lead to learning and behavior challenges.



Students with sensory processing difficulties have challenges with organizing and responding to information that comes through different senses. They may be over-sensitive/hypersensitive to sensory input, such as loud music, assemblies or lights, or undersensitive/hyposensitive to sensory input, such as having the need to chew on something or to make loud noise. The difficulties resulting from these sensory issues make it challenging for students to respond appropriately to their environments and challenging for teachers to figure out what the difficulty is and how to address it.

First, let's look at the different sensory systems to understand how different the needs may be from one student

with sensory processing difficulties to another. In addition to the five basic senses of sight, smell, taste, hearing and touch, there are three other sensory systems.

These are proprioception, vestibular and interoception. Proprioception is the way the body's muscles and joints send messages to the brain about the body's positioning and movement. This is the sense that allows us to know we should apply more effort to lift something heavy than we need to lift a pencil. Students with difficulty in this area might play rough or use too much or too little force in their movement. They may also have poor body awareness and bump into things in the hallway and classroom, or prefer to jump, gallop or skip rather than to walk. The vestibular sensory system has to do with balance and spatial orientation. Students who have challenges with this sensory system may either need to move constantly or be fearful of movement because they feel unbalanced. They may also have difficulty coordinating and planning motor tasks such as jumping, catching, skipping and crossing midlines of their bodies. Finally, interoception is about the physiological condition of the body, and it senses if you're hungry, thirsty or need to use the bathroom. Taking into account all eight of these systems and considering a student may be hyposensitive or hypersensitive in one or more of these areas, it can be a daunting task to figure out what the issue might be and some strategies for addressing these sensory challenges.



Another important point for teachers regarding sensory issues is understanding the difference between a tantrum and a meltdown. Meltdowns often occur in response to sensory processing difficulties, and these are out of the child's control. The child is not choosing to engage in the behavior or trying to get a response, as may be the case with a tantrum. Meltdowns can occur in response to sensory overload or sudden changes in routines when the child is not able to process what is happening in the situation. During a meltdown, the student will likely not have the ability to problem solve and respond to attempts to talk to him. During these times, it is best to change the amount of sensory stimulation that may be causing the meltdown and give her time and space to calm down.

Putting this information together with the changes in routine and sensory-related activities that may occur during the month of December, you may see students with sensory difficulties having more challenges. Consider activities that happen during this month, such as more noise, movement, lights and people during Christmas service rehearsals; different schedules for classes and recess; and different types of food, songs, art activities and movement during class parties and special Christmas activities. You may not even realize that a student has a sensory difficulty in one of these areas until different activities and experiences are introduced. If a student

or parents share with you that certain stimuli create a challenge, try to be understanding and work with them to remove that stimulus or add more stimuli as appropriate. It will not be productive or helpful to keep the student in that environment with the problematic sensory stimulus in an attempt to "get him used to it." There may be ways to accomplish that over time in small steps, but in the meantime, be understanding of a student's sensory needs during this time of the year.

There are additional signs of sensory difficulties for the different senses and strategies for addressing hyposensitivity and hypersensitivity in each sensory system that will be unique to each child.



For more information and specific ideas on this topic, please reach out to us at lsem@luthsped.org or visit our website at luthsped.org and let us know how we can support you in your ministry!

Fearfully and Wonderfully Made VOL. 3, NO. 4 // DECEMBER 2019

A RESOURCE OF LCMS SCHOOL MINISTRY

Writer: Kara Bratton Designer: Lisa Moeller

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Parent Pages

RESOURCES FOR CHRISTIAN PARENTS IN THE 21ST CENTURY



Learning from **Mistaks Mistakes**

Most parents realize and accept the fact that their children lack perfection, even though some may not act this way. This realization is a good thing because we would be hard-pressed to find a perfect parent. The tricky issue is how to handle situations when your children make mistakes. Is it best to comfort them? Do we ignore the error? Or perhaps show them our tough side? One thing is for sure: it is not helpful to push the blame for the mistake onto a teacher, friend or coach. The way we handle the mistakes of our children has the potential to teach significant lessons.

As Christian parents, we remember that God shows us the perfect procedure for the mistakes we understand to be a sin. God forgives our sins and creates a path for growth. God does not turn a blind eye to our sin, allowing us to pass blame or ignore the problem. Neither does God turn a deaf ear to our pleas for mercy. The blessing of repentance and forgiveness is that while we are not encouraged to sin, we know God has a plan in place to deal with it.

It is beneficial to have a plan in place for how to help your children grow from mistakes. Children, young ones especially, do not see differences among making a mistake, having a weakness and committing a sin. For children, each is a source of shame. Their shame may leave them stuck in feelings of hopelessness or worthlessness. If shame leads to feelings of guilt, then the child is in a healthy mindset because guilt is part of



admitting to wrongdoing. Guilt is the first step toward growth. If I recognize my mistake, I can learn a better way; if I find a weakness, I can build it into a strength.

Look at this verse from the Book of Psalms and see the connections made between admitting to guilt and forgiveness/healing:

“As for me, I said, ‘O LORD, be gracious to me; heal me, for I have sinned against you!’” (PS. 41:4).

The connection between forgiveness and healing/growth is the same connection we want our children to realize when mistakes happen. A mistake is an opportunity for learning. Any learning, from the infant learning to walk to the teenager pouring over calculus, requires risk-taking. If our children only do what they are good at, they will miss the opportunity to learn something new. Infants must pull themselves up and launch into a walk. Each time they fall, their brain and body learn something new about balance and movement, and that knowledge will be used later to learn to run, jump and ride a bike. In much the same way, children who make mistakes on the field, in the practice room or on a test, are allowing their brains to learn something that will help them to grow in future learning. Mistakes aren't fun, but they are necessary for proper brain development.

The key to dealing with blunders and mishaps is to create a healthy mistake culture. The best of such cultures includes four critical aspects:

Acceptance: Teach your children to be willing to admit to a mistake. They should know that there might be

a negative consequence, but that there is also a potential for growth. Assure them that you love them and are proud of them, no matter what.

Value the struggle: It is easy to remember to praise our children when they do well, but do we appreciate work when they are in the middle of a struggle? When we compliment children for persisting, trying again or stepping back to look for another solution, we are telling them that it is OK to have to work at a skill to be good at it. No one gets to be an expert without hard work.

Look back: It is essential to stop and pay attention to progress made over time, especially when children are struggling with repeated mistakes. When children begin a skill, such as a new sport, they likely realize that mistakes are part of the process. It is also likely that work accomplished at the beginning of learning results in big gains. Later in the process more work is needed to achieve smaller increases in skill. This is the time to reflect on how far skill development had progressed in the previous months or years.

Talk about it: the most crucial aspect of creating a healthy culture for dealing with mistakes is to help your children to realize that they can talk to you about mistakes. If they are afraid to do this, they will learn to hide problems from you. If they find acceptance, perspective and encouragement, they will be more likely to seek wisdom from you when life throws them tough situations.



As adults, we see a difference between mistakes on a math paper and sins against God. We are blessed to know our God has a plan for both. When our children realize the beauty of God's forgiveness, they can take that same attitude and apply it to learning from mistakes. God loves us through our sin, and because of this, we can love our children through their mistakes as we work with them to grow in learning about the world and in learning about God's love for them.



Professionally Speaking



SCRIPTURE: 1 Thess. 5:16–24

When the Time was Fully Come

“Do not quench the Spirit” (1 THESS. 5:19).

Time catches our attention. Time is fleeting. Time’s a-wastin’. Time is marching on. Time is at a premium. We busy ourselves with home preparations, school presentations and a variety of mission projects, and with these commitments comes worries about time.

Time is a key element in the great narrative of the first Christmas. The time in which Jesus was born was Rome’s Golden Era. It was a time of peace, a time of creativity and a time of a flourishing Roman economy. It was time for citizens of the empire to go to their hometowns for the census. For Joseph, time was pressing not only to fulfill his civic duty but also to find an inn for his pregnant wife.

But most important was that it — time — was fully come (GAL. 4:4). Christmas is the time when we share in the angels’ joy that the promised Immanuel had come. No more promises and remembering of promises. Those promises that pointed to the Messiah had fully come ... all in God’s time. His perfect timing. His grand design.

However, it doesn’t take much to consider the joy-killers of the season. Report cards or some type of reporting. Calendar year budgets and church voters’ meetings. Family struggles seeming to ignite into all-out rage in December.



The Christmas narrative also includes joy-killers. No room in the inn made a barn and manger the accommodations and birthing room. Friends and family celebrating the new arrival were replaced with lowly shepherds. To top it off, soon after the surprise visit from the “wise men from the east” (MATT. 2:1) (time flies as babies grow), the peaceful Roman leadership turned with horrific turmoil, bloodying the countryside with the lives of infant boys.

A word of caution: be sure you are not counted among the joy-killers this December. Don’t be the one who is missing the anticipation of the celebration of Christmas and is bemoaning everything that quenches the excitement.

“Do not quench the Spirit” (1 THESS. 5:19). The words of Paul, Silvanus and Timothy in this year’s theme verses are good reminders for a time such as this. It’s quite easy to let the joy of the season be quenched by the busyness of the season. What preventative measures can avoid this? Prayer? Planning? Embracing the reality of the stressors placed upon ministry at this time of year?



Encourage
the students
in your school
(and in your
home) to be
church workers!

Soon the calendar will turn and it will be time for a new year. As an administrator, it then becomes time to start thinking about the next school year and specifically teaching staff. We have been told for years that there are fewer and fewer young people considering the teaching ministry. Those numbers are real. But there is also the reality of fewer and fewer teachers ... period. Early retirement or leaving the field of teaching for other endeavors seems to be prevalent. Even with all kinds of incentives from state government subsidies or from Concordia system granting, the pool of teachers is dwindling, and the challenge of filling out a teaching staff becomes a time-consuming burden.

Can it be that school leaders (and recent retirees) are quenching the spirit of future Lutheran educators? There is no doubt about it. With the rationale given of poor pay, loss of authority and overall lack of support, many a Lutheran educator has quenched the spirit of a budding church professional. So sad are the stories of present and recently retired teachers who encouraged even their own children to find a different way of life instead of serving in a Lutheran school.

Consider a summertime post from *Focus on the Family*. The writer, a self-described millennial, shares, “I don’t remember Y2K, and I don’t remember much of life prior to 9/11. As I’ve grown up, I’ve had countless older people in my life apologize to me for growing up in this time period. ‘Life won’t be easy for you,’ they say — and, ‘You won’t get any social security.’ As if I had any control on the time period I was born into. But that’s just it — God did not make a mistake on the timing of my birth. I believe God intentionally placed me here, on this earth, for such a time as this” (jimdaily.focusonthefamily.com/?s=an+exciting+time+to+be+alive).

Here’s a plea to encourage the students in your school (and in your home) to be church workers. “Don’t quench the Spirit” with a bias wrought with the wounds of a campaign or two of hurtful parents or the self-inflicted wounds caused by laziness or quenching one’s own purpose and vocation. You’re here, just as future church workers, for a time such as this, according to God’s good purpose.

Professionally Speaking // DECEMBER 2019

A RESOURCE OF LCMS SCHOOL MINISTRY

Writer: Mark Muehl Designer: Chrissy Thomas

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Rattles & Prattles

A RESOURCE FOR CAREGIVERS OF INFANTS AND TODDLERS



“Rejoice always ...” (1 THESS. 5:16–24)

Bible Story: The Christmas Story (LUKE 2:1-21)

Focus: God kept His promise to send His Son, Jesus, to be our Savior.

What it teaches us: We can be happy. Jesus was born the first Christmas.

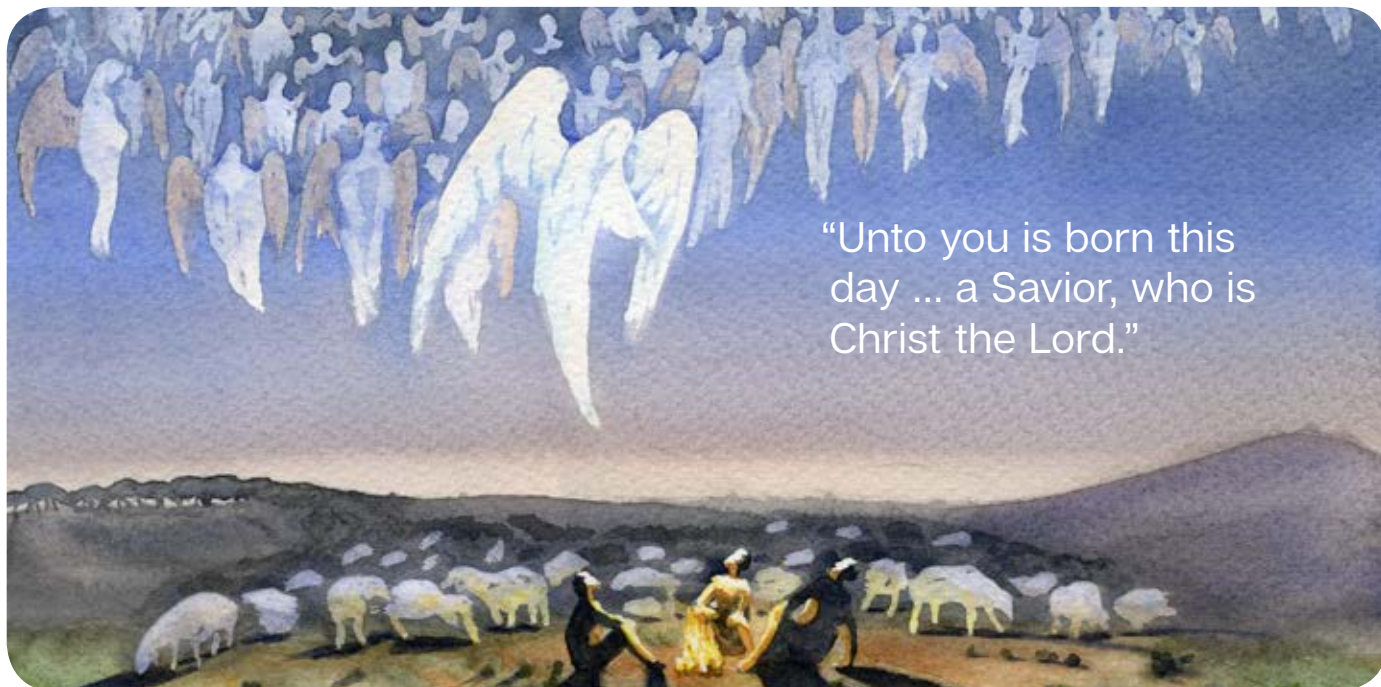
Prepare to teach:

- › **Read** the story from Luke and, if possible, a study Bible.
- › **Think:** It’s December — time to share the happy story of Jesus’ birth. Jesus is the Savior God promised. And it’s important to remember Jesus the Savior IS God who created the universe and all that is in it. Jesus set aside His Godhead and became a human

being for the sole purpose of living the perfect life God the Father demanded. Jesus suffered and died on a cross to take the punishment we deserve, and He rose again victorious on Easter. By believing in what Jesus did, we become God’s children — part of God’s family.

As we celebrate Christmas, we rejoice in the words of the angel, “I bring you good news of great joy ... For unto you is born this day ... a Savior, who is Christ the Lord” (LUKE 2:10-11).

- › **Pray:** Dear Jesus, Thank You for loving me so much You came from heaven to be the Savior. As I share this story, please fill me with thankful joy that overflows to the children. In Your name we pray. Amen.



“Unto you is born this day ... a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”

WORSHIP TIME AND BIBLE STORY PRESENTATION

You will also need

- › *Little Ones Sing Praise (LOSP)*, copyright © 1989 Concordia Publishing House
- › *A Child's Garden of Bible Stories*, copyright © 2001 Concordia Publishing House, pp. 80–84
- › Picture of Jesus (find one doing an internet search)
- › A manger set with figures the children can safely use

Gather for Worship

Invite the children to the worship area. Sing (tune: “Are You Sleeping?”) **Come and sit down** (repeat) **on the floor** (repeat). **We will learn of Jesus** (repeat) **sing and pray** (repeat).

Invocation: Use the same melody and sing: **We begin now** (repeat) **in God’s name** (repeat) — **Father, Son and Spirit** (repeat). **Amen** (repeat).

Opening Song

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

Bible Story

Read the story from *A Child's Garden of Bible Stories*, pp. 80–84, or use figures from a manger set as you tell the story:

**Here’s Jesus story — Good News for all.
Jesus was born, the Savior of all.**

**Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem did go.
Mary rode a donkey, walking so slow.**

**Joseph found a stable where they could stay.
They ate some supper and slept on the hay.**

**That very night in a stable stall,
Jesus was born, the Savior of all.**

**God sent angels to shepherds to say,
“Be happy! Jesus, the Savior, is born today.”**

**They left their sheep running, happy to see —
Jesus, the Savior, born for you and me.**

What the Story Teaches: Christmas was a happy day for Mary and Joseph. Jesus was born. Christmas was a happy day for the shepherds. Jesus was born.

And Christmas is a happy day for you and me. Jesus was born.

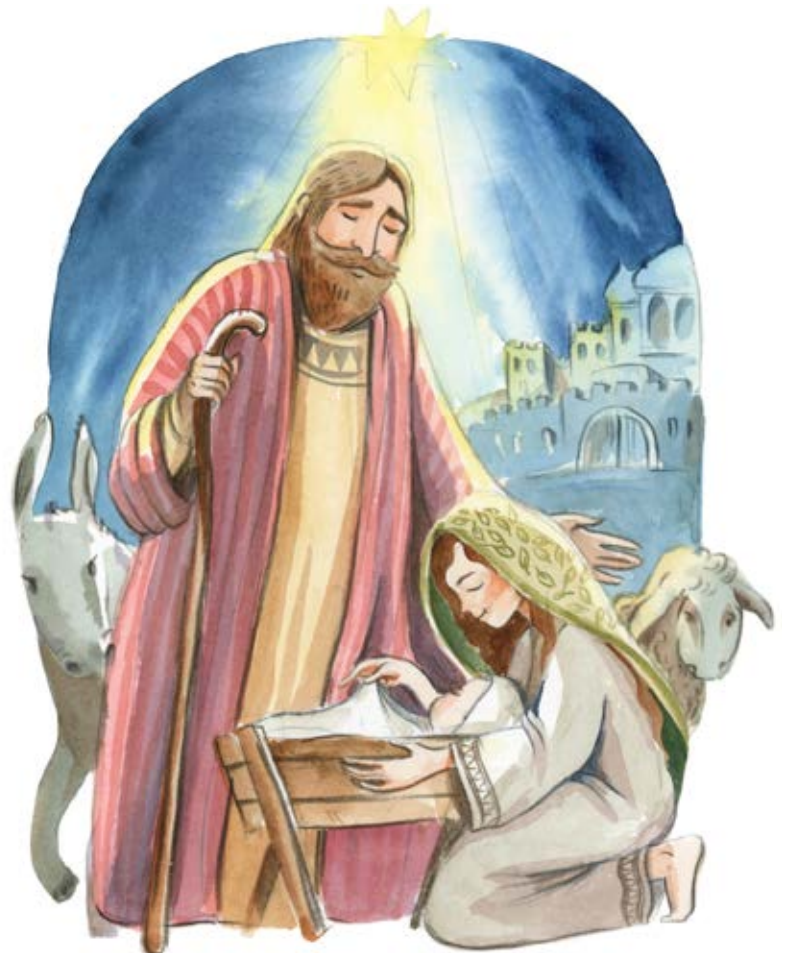
Time to Pray

Let’s thank God for sending Jesus to be our Savior.

We thank You, God, for Jesus. We thank You for His love. We know He is the Savior You sent from heaven above. Amen.

Closing/Benediction

Sing (same melody): **Time to go now** (repeat) **Time to play** (or whatever activity you do next) (repeat). **God is always with you** (repeat). **Loves you too** (repeat).



CURRICULAR MATERIALS //

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

S Science and Nutrition

> **Sense of smell:** Christmas trees, hay; put manger figures in sensory tub with hay or pieces of pine boughs

> **Serve cookies** in shapes of manger set figures

T Technology

> **Use interactive “sound book,”** like *Christmas Songs* by Holly Berry-Byrd (Cottage Door Press, 2018)

R Reading and Language Arts



> **Board Book:** *Christmas in the Manger* by Nola Buck (HarperCollins Publisher, 1998)

> **Finger Play:** Hold up index finger. **Here is Baby Jesus. Let’s rock Him to sleep.** Place finger on palm; wrap fingers and “rock.” **Shh! He’s sleeping.**

E Engineering

> **Manipulate the manger set figures;** toddlers might build a stable

A Arts (art, music and physical education)

> **Use scented green paint;** paint with evergreen branches; dry; glue on cutouts of Mary, Joseph and Baby Jesus (do an internet search)

> **Sing** “In A Little Stable” (*LOSP*, p. 81); “Christmas Is a Time of Joys” (*LOSP*, p. 107)

> **Walk to Bethlehem** like Mary and Joseph; run like shepherds to see Jesus

CONNECT WITH PARENTS in your newsletter

Invite families to attend special Christmas church services, especially those designed to share the story of Jesus’ birth with young children. If possible, include a book for each family.

M Mathematics

> **Count how many people are in families** (e.g. Jesus’ family = 3); use family pictures from September to count number of people in children’s families

S Social Studies

> **Invite the children** to pretend to be Mary and Joseph taking care of baby Jesus in Dramatic Play area.



Rattles & Prattles

VOL. 23, NO. 4 // DECEMBER 2019

A RESOURCE OF LCMS SCHOOL MINISTRY

Writer: Judy Williams Designer: Chrissy Thomas

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Published by The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod // 1333 S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122-7295 // 314-965-9000 // lcms.org

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School Shepherd

TIPS AND SUPPORT FOR PASTORS OF CONGREGATIONS WITH SCHOOLS



THEME | JOY:FULLY LUTHERAN

Peace:fully

The December school calendar is always FULL: Advent services, Christmas program practices and presentations, concerts, classroom parties and more. Likewise, the school shepherd's calendar is full: planning and leading the services of the season, extra school and church activities and family opportunities and commitments. On the surface, the season is anything but peaceful. The angels' announcement to the shepherds is heard again by the school shepherd and proclaimed in all the contexts of the church and school ministry.

PEACE:FULLY

The Peace FULL Good Shepherd

Isaiah had promised that the "Prince of Peace" (IS. 9:6) would be sent to Israel and the world. While the Messiah's arrival momentarily disturbed a peaceful night for shepherds on the plains of Bethlehem, the angels' announcement offered more than a peaceful night. Jesus taught that He had come to give a greater and more permanent peace than the world could give (JOHN 14:27). The chaos of Good Friday and the despair when Hope seemed buried forever was addressed by the resurrected Lord's appearances and greetings to the disciples, "Peace be with you" (JOHN 20:19, 26).

Peace is always disrupted by our sinful nature, the sins of others and the peace-robbing temptations of the devil. Lutheran school ministry takes place in contexts that are often not peaceful. The peace of a school child, family or staff member is disrupted by stress, disease, accidents and even death. Conflicts between child and child, parents and teachers, pastor

and staff, church and school and many other "sides" disrupt a peaceful ministry.

The Good News is: "For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility ... so making peace" (EPH. 2:14-15). Peace FULL Lutheran schools do everything in the name of Jesus!

Gathered in worship, we are taken to Jesus who by His suffering, death, and resurrection is "peace." The school shepherd is privileged to share "The peace of the Lord be with you" (e.g., LSB 197). The worshiper leaves the Lord's Table forgiven and at peace with God to live peacefully in His name. Peace comes through the calming water and word of Baptism's promises. Peace is read and spoken from the Word.



Peace FULL School Shepherds

The peace of Jesus is not only shared by the shepherd — it is for the shepherd. While the peace of Jesus is always true and full, living in His peace in the contexts of personal life and ministry can be challenging.

Recognizing those issues or factors that disrupt personal peace may be helpful. Would a healthier lifestyle be helpful? How can conflict (internal and external) be more readily managed?

The school shepherd may be blessed with professional services (generously offered and encouraged by Concordia Plans). It is challenging to be a messenger and model of peace when one is not at peace within himself. Jesus' promise is personal: "my peace I give to you" (JOHN 14:27).

Shepherding Peace FULL School Ministry

Praise God if your school and church ministries take place in an atmosphere of peace! The Spirit of peace is present and blessing the ministry.

Unfortunately, some family, school and church systems have long histories of conflict. The conflicts may cause families to leave the school ministries and members to withdraw support of the ministry. Ignoring conflict will not make it go away. If conflict compromises the ministry of the church and school, it must be addressed. District staff can assist in conflict resolution or suggest resources to assist the school shepherd, principal and board. Peace is God's plan for His church.

Suggestion for gaining and maintaining a peace FULL school ministry include:

- Pray personally and collectively for a peaceful ministry.
- Encourage and provide communication which supports open discussion early and often in areas of concern.
- Develop policies for expressing dissent in a godly manner.

“Grant us Thy peace throughout our earthly life,

Our balm in sorrow and our stay in strife;

Then, when Thy voice shall bid our conflict cease,

Call us, O Lord, to Thine eternal peace.”

(LSB 917:4)

- Explore the resources of “Ambassadors of Reconciliation” (Recognized Service Organization of LCMS).
- Offer a Bible study using *Responding to Conflict Confessionally: A Peacemaker Bible Study for Lutherans* by Ken Sande and Ted Kober (Peacemaker Ministries, 1998).

Dialoguing Peace FULLY

- Do you see yourself and do others see you as a “shepherd of peace”?
- What robs or disrupts personal peace?
- What robs or disrupts peace in the school and church ministry?
- Who are the peacemakers in your school and church staff?
- What actions might be taken to bring a more peaceful setting to your school ministry?

“The fruit of the Spirit is ... peace” (GAL. 5:22). God's gift to the Lutheran school is a Spirit of peace so that all serve and learn PEACE FULLY!



Time Out for Directors

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT TIPS FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER ADMINISTRATORS



Rejoice! Say It Again – Rejoice!

Yeah! The excitement of Christmas is likely present in your school. While students are busy pondering what they will receive as Christmas gifts, teachers and school leaders are preparing for Christmas programs and services, but also JOY:fully looking forward hopefully to some time off during Christmas vacation.

This truly is a special time of year. The glitz and glamour of the Christmas season are delightful. The lights and colors, the sounds and smells and the gatherings with friends and family are exciting for many. Undoubtedly, stores have been busy preparing for Christmas for many months. Nowadays, it is not uncommon for stores to offer a “Christmas in July” sale. Even some popular cable television networks promote a series of Christmas movies and specials in the summer months to “prep” people to enter the Christmas spirit.

As Lutheran Christians, you know the real value and importance of Christmas. The birth of Jesus Christ is something to JOY:fully celebrate with great rejoicing! As Paul shares in 1 Thessalonians, there is always a great reason to rejoice! Because of the gift of Jesus at Christmas, and His adult death and resurrection, the gift of eternal salvation is available to all! Philippians 4:4 also shares to “Rejoice in the Lord always”!

Sadly, many people pack up the sights, sounds and smells of the Christmas season almost as quickly as it arrived. However, do not let the spirit of Christmas leave from you, your home or your work. As a worker in Lutheran education, recognizing the spirit (and ultimate meaning) of Christmas is something to be done every day. Many Christian educators in Lutheran



schools are familiar with the phrase “Jesus isn’t just for Jesus Time — He is for all of the time!” How true this is! No matter what time of day, no matter what game is being played, and no matter what story is being shared, Jesus is present! Think of the many ways you integrate faith and JOY-filled Christian conversation into your daily activities with students, parents and colleagues.

As you model a faith-filled, JOY-filled understanding of Christ’s birth at Christmas, consider how you may bring such knowledge into other parts of the school year as well. Young children are excellent at remembering concepts and ideas that have concrete components to them. When children have the opportunity to utilize prior knowledge in their current play, a higher level of cognitive learning is achieved.

To rejoice and celebrate Christ’s birth throughout the year, consider implementing some of the following

ideas into your early childhood program or individual classroom:

A YEAR-ROUND CHRISTMAS TREE

While it may not be feasible to have a large Christmas tree in your classroom all year, children may enjoy a smaller option. Small, decorative trees are often available at discount prices right after the Christmas season. Think of how you can celebrate other Christian holidays throughout the year and use a tree as a visual cue to remind children of their faith. Easter eggs, crosses and butterflies can adorn the tree at Easter, Trinity shamrocks at St. Patrick's Day and Bible verses and pumpkins at Reformation time are just a few ideas that could be utilized.

MANY PICTURES OF JESUS

Throughout the year, display a variety of pictures of Jesus at varying ages. For very young children, it can sometimes be difficult to understand how it is possible to celebrate Jesus' birth at Christmas, and celebrate His death and resurrection just a few months later. They may wonder how He grew up so quickly! Display pictures of Jesus at different ages in your classroom. Consider adding in pictures of yourself or other staff members at different ages too. It is important for children to know that the Bible tells us about Jesus' birth, about His visit to the temple at age 12 and much about His adult life.

LEAVE THE NATIVITY OUT ALL YEAR

While you pack away a significant amount of Christmas décor, think about leaving out a special nativity set. Or think about rotating several in your classroom during other months of the school year. Children love dramatic play, so interacting with toy characters from the Christmas story allows children to internalize what happened during that special night in Bethlehem a very long time ago.

SING CHRISTMAS SONGS OFTEN

Many people find themselves listening to Christmas songs often during the month of December, but also perhaps part of November and January. However, don't

let a switch of the calendar page make you file away your favorite Christmas songs. Students have likely spent much time practicing meaningful songs to share in programs and worship services, so allow (and encourage) them to sing them loudly and often!

Young children are JOYful and can easily share contagious JOY with others in their lives. Along with songs, children love stories. The following song is really a story — a song that tells the story of Jesus' birth.

Jesus' Birthday – Celebrate! *Sung to the tune of "Frère Jacques"*

Jesus' birthday! Jesus' birthday!
Celebrate! Celebrate!

Rejoice, He is our Savior! Rejoice, He is our Savior!
Tell the news! Tell the news!

Jesus' birthday! Jesus' birthday!
Celebrate! Celebrate!

He was born at Christmas! He was born at Christmas!
Tiny babe. Tiny babe.

Jesus' birthday! Jesus' birthday!
Celebrate! Celebrate!

Angels sang to share the news. Angels sang to
share the news.
Gloria! Gloria!

Jesus' birthday! Jesus' birthday!
Celebrate! Celebrate!

Shepherds went to see Him. Shepherds went to
see Him.
Let's go now! Let's go now!

Jesus' birthday! Jesus' birthday!
Celebrate! Celebrate!

Wise Men came to give Him gifts. Wise Men came to
give Him gifts.
Led by a star. Led by a star.

Jesus' birthday! Jesus' birthday!
Celebrate! Celebrate!

I will celebrate His birth! I will celebrate His birth!
Every day! Every day!