



MAY 2020

# SCHOOL MINISTRY

# Mailing





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# SCHOOL MINISTRY MAILING

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# Alight

FOR LUTHERAN SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS AND EDUCATORS



## We Miss You!

**“Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it” (Prov. 22:6).**

**F**or 173 years, LCMS schools have enjoyed a rich history. Each day has started with teachers greeting students and welcoming them into the school building. Families freely walked in to drop off supplies and visit with other families. Students made their way to classrooms, connecting with friends while gathering books and supplies for the day ahead. Teachers settled students in with a devotion together, and the day officially began with the Word of God.

In March, the daily routines of schools changed overnight when the coronavirus spread to pandemic proportions. In a matter of days, schools shifted from conducting in-person classes to remote learning, with shelter-in-place and social-distancing directives creating one of the most trying and challenging times in modern history. Through it all, the continuity of student learning and the health and safety of the school community remained a priority. Across the country, faculty members with varying levels of experience with remote learning worked together to determine how to best meet the needs of the students entrusted to their care.

Many Lutheran high schools had

experience with digital learning and were able to provide specialized online classes for students that blended learning experiences with a mixture of online and on-site teaching. E-learning days, implemented during inclement weather and professional development days, provided a foundation for the transition to full-time remote learning.

Some elementary schools were also exploring e-learning experiences and using online learning management systems as digital hubs to keep content and assignments organized and easily accessible for students. In addition, early childhood educators maximized the use of online platforms to create and share videos of themselves teaching short lessons and reading books aloud. With attentiveness to providing “hands on” activities for children in early childhood centers and schools, they prepared weekly packets of crafts, manipulatives and age-appropriate learning activities that were delivered to homes or made available to pick up at school.

Educating the “whole child” remains critically important when educators reflect on how well remote learning is serving students and families. Meeting the needs of students spiritually,

**“This is not a break from school, it’s a heart break.”**





cognitively, creatively, socially, emotionally and physically in a remote setting requires collaboration, creativity, innovation and perseverance. The spiritual care of families continued in creative ways as well, as pastors and teachers worked together to livestream praise time with preschoolers and chapel services to reach out to children and their families.

As the pandemic stretches on and school closures extend through the end of the year, the school community struggles. Teachers and families lament, “This is not a break from school, it’s a heart break.” Over and over, students and families consistently express how much they miss their teachers. Although schools use video-conferencing platforms to conduct class meetings with the entire class or hold individual meetings with students, it does not replace the face-to-face interactions that are so deeply missed. Teachers grieve not being able to be with the students they know and love. The separation brought about by the current restrictions only reinforces the importance of the relationships formed in the school setting.

Throughout this extraordinary time, teachers are continuing to develop new mindsets and skills in terms of flexibility, adaptiveness and resilience. These skills are

**“For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart”** (Jer. 29: 11–13).

critical as educators reflect on student learning during the pandemic and beyond. Summer is coming, and as the focus of education shifts to the beginning of a new school year, many questions are raised about what that will look like. Once again, teachers will be using the knowledge they have gained this past year to refine their work and improve their teaching methodology — in the classroom or from afar — to continue educating students.

Whether classes meet in person or online this fall, teachers will continue to train up children in the way they should go. Their work extends God’s kingdom one child at a time by sharing the precious Gospel message of God’s promise of eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ. This mission is timeless, and it is the aspect that remains steadfast and enduring for Lutheran educators. It makes an eternal difference in the lives of children and families, and this promise of hope is the cure for hearts broken by separation.



# Computer File



## What is Next in Technology: The ‘Learning Model’ and Technology

**W**hen I planned this year’s *Computer File* articles, I never imagined that this month’s topic would take on the meaning that it has in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Seemingly overnight, schools were forced to reevaluate the “how” of their educational model in order to continue to educate students without the use of a physical school building. Decades of tradition, school facility innovation and ingrained teacher mentalities were suddenly irrelevant. Schools that may have avoided questions about a changing “learning model” in the past could not avoid these discussions any longer. In an instant, the ideas of “school” and “learning” would never be the same.

So, what does this mean for the concept of a learning model moving forward? To be clear, this is in no way meant to suggest that there is a single effective model for learning. That’s exactly the point: there is no single model of learning that will work best for every student, teacher, school or classroom. The learning model is driven by a few key factors, which are both internal and external to the learning community (school). Internally, there are factors that impact the direction and methodology of the learning model, such as the availability of resources, training and staffing, and the physical location. Externally, the community in which a school is located has an impact as well, especially related to how education is viewed, its importance and the manner



in which it is integrated with the rest of society. Determining which model for learning works “best” takes into account each of these — and a multitude of other considerations — to develop the “how” that a community of learners will pursue.

Keeping in mind that the most essential piece of the learning model is determining what is most effective for your situation, and knowing that this *is the Computer File* article, there are some general trends that are beginning to surface when it comes to the impact of technology on the learning model. Although the pandemic forced many schools to quickly move to “remote learning” using technological means, and this

helped encourage the growth of related resources and technologies, there are a few other major changes coming that need to be explored as well.

### Remote Learning

Let’s get the big one out of the way first. If you had to pick one buzzword in education today, it would most likely be “remote learning.” In its most general definition, remote learning could be explained as a simple 1:1 attempt to replicate the previous classroom experience. Forced to change overnight, teachers and administrators latched onto this idea of replication since it required the least amount of change and kept some semblance of the previous learning





model (classroom, etc.). Through technologies such as Google Classroom, SeeSaw, Canvas and others, schools are able to replicate the learning model in an online space and provide an experience that's as close as possible to previous learning without actually being in the classroom. Moving forward, these technologies will continue to allow for this movement of "learning" online, but it's important to note the distinction between "teaching" and "learning." In many cases, remote learning is not remote teaching; it is only a substitute for in-person traditional teaching. Only through the integration with and acceptance of other technologies can this model of learning include actual "teaching" as well.

### 'Conference Call' Learning (Synchronous Learning)

If you had to pick a second major buzzword, it probably would be "Zoom." The technology of video conferencing is not new by any means, but it had rarely been utilized in the classroom setting. Now, the need of industries and corporations for connecting with others in faraway places has enabled teachers to connect with their students as well. Moving forward, schools and teachers will become more equipped to host synchronous learning where all students are "on" at the same time. The technology to do this is quite robust, but schools have lagged in purchasing or implementing it — and that will be a quick shift in the near future.

### On-Demand Learning (Asynchronous Learning)

The flip side is asynchronous learning. This is learning on your own time and at your own pace from wherever you are. Society is already accustomed to doing this through the use of

tutorials and cooking walkthroughs on streaming video sites, but traditional teaching previously utilized live lessons and did not adopt recorded teaching. With students and families needing to juggle work schedules, internet issues and shared family devices, asynchronous learning will allow for students to keep learning within their specific contexts. On the teacher side, recording lessons and creating these resources for students takes time and training, so be prepared for additional time and resources to be allocated for this type of learning model.

### Device Agnosticism

Knowing that the learning model is what will determine the technological needs of the learner, there is one caveat. Regardless of the model or methodology, all decisions made about online solutions, apps, programs, textbooks and so on need to work on *anything*. Students today are managing their entire learning experience on a phone, a Chromebook, an iPad or even an Xbox. Keeping this fact in mind as a teacher or administrator is key to removing the technical challenges that students may face so that they can simply focus on learning. Something may be cute and a great resource, but if it does not work on every device, then you have automatically alienated a portion of your students or put an additional hurdle in place for them to navigate.

### The Future

As we look at what is next in technology in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, here are a few things to look for that are on the cutting edge of remote learning:

- 1. Virtual Reality Classrooms:** Companies are developing classroom experiences that only exist in a virtual reality setting. Requiring a VR headset, these instances give students the true feeling of sitting in a room alongside their fellow classmates and teachers.
- 2. Personalized Student Avatars:** Along with the VR classroom, student avatars are under development to represent the student online without using their actual likeness. Think of a classroom full of animated and interactive Facebook avatars.
- 3. "Remote" Classrooms:** If students are unable to meet in person all at the same time, some districts are looking to do "remote classrooms" where the teacher teaches multiple locations via telepresence. This keeps everyone on the same learning track even when they can not be in the same room.
- 4. Paperless Everything:** This isn't a new technology, but the move to paperless is gaining traction in more and more schools. Keep an eye out for innovative ways to get rid of cumulative folders, check in/out sheets and hall passes.

# Early Childhood Devotions

FOR CHILDREN AGES 3 TO 7



JOYFULLY LUTHERAN 1 THESS. 5:16–24

FOCUS: Jesus. Others. You.

## Ascension (Joyfully Sharing the Good News)

(MATT. 28:16–20; MARK 16:14–19; LUKE 24:50–53)



### Before You Teach

Although Jesus removes Himself physically from the presence of His disciples, He leaves them with a mission that, as it is fulfilled, spreads His presence throughout the world. That Great Commission is passed on through His disciples to the whole church in every generation. Passing on the faith of the church to the children in our care not only fulfills *our* role in that mission, but also prepares *them* to also take up the mission, both now and as they grow to take our places.

### Greeting

Welcome each child upon arrival, even on the busiest of days. **Good Morning, child of God! Today we are going to learn about the most important job Jesus has for us to do.**

### Gathering

Signal children to gather in your worship area.

Teach and sing “Jesus! What a Name” (LOSP, p. 47).  
Introduce the biblical narrative.

### Tell the Story

**YOU WILL NEED:** A tongue depressor or similar stick; a cut-out of a cloud; an image of Jesus.

**DIRECTIONS:** Affix the image of Jesus to the tongue depressor. Cut a slit in the cloud to allow the image of Jesus to pass through it.

**Do:** Use the image of Jesus and the cloud where appropriate as the narrative is told.

The disciples went to a mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw Him, they worshiped Him. Jesus said to them (point to children), “You are witnesses to all that has happened, and all that I have said and done. Go 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 do all that I have commanded. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved. And, I am with you always.”

After Jesus had spoken to them, He lifted up His hands and blessed the disciples. While He was blessing them, Jesus rose into heaven where He sat at the right hand of God. The disciples worshiped and then returned to the city of Jerusalem. Going to the temple church every day, the disciples praised God, joyfully sharing the Good News of Jesus' love even when a man told them to be quiet. Then the disciples did as Jesus told them to do. They went out and preached everywhere. And, our Lord God was with them all the time.

We also follow and worship Jesus. We are also disciples, followers of Jesus. Jesus wants us to tell others the Good News of His saving love. And, Jesus promises to be with us at all times ... wherever we are, and wherever we go.

**Pray:** *Have children repeat each phrase.*

Dear Jesus, You came for all from heav'n above. Help me to tell of Your great love. You promised to be always near, so that I need not ever fear. Wherever I go, You are there. Forgiving, caring everywhere. Thank You, Jesus! Amen.

## Remember the Story

### BIBLE WORDS TO REMEMBER

**Pre-K & K:** "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations" (MATT. 28:19A).

**Grades 1 & 2:** "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (MATT. 28:19).



### ACTIVITIES

**Create:** Make a "Good News" chain.

**YOU WILL NEED:** a glue stick and precut strips of colorful paper to make a paper chain.

**Ask: What can you tell about Jesus?** Print responses on paper strips and place in a basket in your worship area. Each day have a child (or two) select a strip. Read the wording aloud. Then, with the printed words facing outward, create a chain, using the glue stick to adhere edges. Display in your worship center. Plan so each child has a turn to select at least one link.

**Do:** Invite the pastor to talk about Baptism, as children surround the baptismal font. Invite parent/family participation. Be mindful of those children (and parents) who may not yet have been baptized.

**Sing:** "This Little Gospel Light of Mine" (LOSP, p. 103).

## Sending

Gather the children in the "Sending Circle." Remind children: **Jesus promised to be with the disciples all the time. Jesus promises to be with you and me all the time.** Pass a cross, inviting children to pray as it is received and then to quietly pass it along. As children exit say, **Jesus loves you and is with you always!**

## Live the Story

Be the Gospel light for the children and families you teach and serve. Bless them with your words and actions. Speak your faith. Freely forgive. Embraced in the loving arms of our Savior, set aside personal time for study, prayer, reflection and renewal. Celebrate life lived in His grace!



# Early Childhood Devotions

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Writer: Dr. Judith Christian Designer: Lisa Moeller

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

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# Family Matters

A CHRIST-CENTERED RESOURCE FOR FAMILIES AND TEACHERS



JOY:FULLY LUTHERAN

## Joy as We Celebrate Summer



### *What do you like best about summer? Is it the ...*

- › smell of freshly cut grass?
- › sound of the ice cream truck?
- › feel of sand under your bare feet?
- › sight of more hours of daylight?

These are but a few of the signs of summer that many of us enjoy. Summer is a special season that seems too short to some, and too long for others. It is a period of time that allows for travel, for relaxation, for adventure and for growth assessment. It seems like we have all the time in the world to get things done, yet we are so busy that we can't seem to get anything done!

Time is a special gift from God. It is a gift that we can't replenish if lost, nor save for another day. Time is in the moment. Time is precious. Time seems to be growing in value as we seem to have less and less of it in our everyday lives.

God, while He is the One who created time, is not bound by time. He knows how important it is for our use, yet He guides the timing of our lives as He wills. We have freedom to do things with the time that God gives us, yet we know all things are done in His time.

In your family, how do you go about making use of the gift of time? How would you describe your family?

**Planners** = like to have things all laid out with a specific timeline for what will happen next

**Pointers** = focus on one specific thing at a time, singular goals/accomplishments

**Pluggers** = go along at a comfortable steady speed: not too fast or too slow, just about right

**Partners** = cooperate solidly, equally shown by all family members for a variety of activities

There is nothing right or wrong about the designations listed above. Each family needs to find and discover their own approach to how they enjoy their down time.

Having time to do what it is you want to do as families or individuals is a gift from God. He has created us for a variety of purposes and given us free will. God wants to bless us and give us joy in every season of life, be it spring, summer, fall or winter — or any of the other seasons of life, such as childhood, teen years, young adulthood, parenting, being middle aged or enjoying the designation of being a senior citizen.

In His infinite wisdom, God gives us the gift of summer, and it's up to us to embrace this gift, finding joy and giving all praise to God in Jesus Christ for all He has given us.

## JOYFULLY UPLIFTING FAMILY ACTIVITY //

Gather the family together in the yard or on a patio, where there are no electronic distractions, to enjoy the family activity outlined below.

### ACTIVITY TITLE: FAMILY GARDEN

#### PURPOSE

To engage family members in a fun activity that allows them to enjoy each other's company and to think about how God gives the gift of growth in our lives every day.

Items Needed: designated area for growing a garden — yard space or gardening pots, hand shovels and hand tillers.

#### PROCESS

Take a family field trip to a local garden supply center and make choices for the things you will want to plant as a family.

- 1 Start with a walk around your home. Decide where you want new plants and what you might want to purchase. Make a list so that you won't forget your ideas.
- 2 If you don't have a yard, think about pots or even a shallow kid pool (which works well to grow vegetables when you fill it with potting soil).
- 3 Go to a local garden center and walk around to view all the possibilities.
- 4 Purchase plants or seedlings of your choice, be it flowering plants or vegetables.
- 5 Return home and commence with the planting process. Take pictures of everything to track growth throughout the summer.

- 6 Develop a watering schedule that includes everyone in the family.
- 7 Take pictures at least once a week to note the progress of growth.
- 8 Enjoy and celebrate the moments when an item blooms or produces an edible product, giving thanks to God for His provision in your family.

#### CLOSING PRAYER

Have family members all sit or stand around an area where the family has planted new items. Then have an adult or older sibling read the following prayer, segment by segment, with the rest of the family repeating the words.

**Heavenly Father, we thank You for life. We thank You that things grow, that food grows and that we grow. Thank You for new life in Jesus. Thank You for the gift of eternal life in Jesus. Bless and keep us every day in Your care. In the name of Jesus. Amen.**





# Fearfully and Wonderfully Made

SPECIAL EDUCATION IN LUTHERAN SCHOOLS



## Special Education Throughout the School Year: May



**Congratulations! You've made it to May,** and to the end of a school year unlike any other! That alone is a feat worthy of mention for all educators, parents and students this year! One of the big topics that often comes up at this time of the year, and may come up even more this year in particular, is summer learning and providing extra support for students who struggled during the school year. There have already been numerous discussions about this in light of the recent disruptions to school calendars and learning. This stems from the concern that students will start next school year academically behind, and students who already have learning challenges may experience even more summer regression. It's a good time to talk about what recommendations may or may not be appropriate for your students during the summer months.

The first, and most important, suggestion may seem counterintuitive from a special education perspective, but it is one that is easily overlooked. Encourage parents

to give their child a break! It is easy to look at how far behind struggling students are and think that summer should be a time to try to catch up on those skills, but it is equally important to make sure there is enough of a break from school and formal instruction. Everyone who has been teaching the last couple of months knows that formal instruction has changed significantly, but it is still happening! Students will need a break this summer, maybe even more than ever. Many struggling learners experience extreme frustration, stress and anxiety, and they may lose confidence during the course of the school year because of their challenges. It is likely that this time of distance and remote learning will exacerbate these difficulties for some. It is also likely that students who typically do not struggle in school will experience these emotions and need a break as well. During this time, encourage parents to view the summer months not as a time to catch up academically but rather as a time for students to rest and enjoy summer as usual, so they will hopefully be ready to start a more typical school year in the fall.

This summer is also a perfect time to remember that each child is *fearfully and wonderfully made* by our Creator. Encourage parents to find an activity that their child is interested in or has an aptitude for and give her time to explore that area. There are often summer clubs or camps specific to these interest areas, and even if students are not spending their time with phonics worksheets or math facts, their brains are engaged! If formal clubs or camps like this are not an option this summer due to continued restrictions or other reasons, encourage parents to find other ways to help students explore these areas of interest with hands-on activities





and projects or related videos. Activities like these are often the things that get cut from a child's schedule during the school year with the extra time and effort required for homework and other things going on in the family. Summer is a great time to make sure parents focus equal energy on a child's strengths and develop those as well.

If there is a need or a request for additional summer academic activities for students, E.A.R. is a helpful acronym to keep in mind. "E.A.R." stands for easy, appealing and relevant. Any activities you may choose to send home or that parents may incorporate for their child should follow these guidelines for the summer.

**Easy** does not mean mindless work, or work that is way below a child's instructional level. It simply means that work chosen should be at a level where the student can succeed and also be challenged enough, yet avoid undue frustration. If the student is working with an adult during a certain timeframe, the work should be at the child's instructional level. For reading, this is about 70–90% of the reading comprehension level and 95% or above of the decoding and fluency level. Independent

work should be above 90% of reading comprehension and 99% of decoding and fluency. For math, a problem set where the student is achieving between 85% and 95% of the problems correct is a good instructional level that avoids frustration.

**Appealing** is also very important for summer work, especially if the parent is the one working with the child. It will be an uphill battle trying to get the student to work on something that does not stimulate the child's interest or make him willing to try. Make sure there are choices for the students about what activities to do first, or what book to read, and also make sure there is plenty of positive feedback for effort! If needed, encourage parents to work in a fun activity or outing as a reward for completing academic work during the week.

Finally, make sure any recommendations are **relevant** to the child's learning and needs. Help parents choose materials or programs that not only are relevant to the needs of their child but also the child will view as relevant to her life.

As much as we want our students to succeed, we know that all students in all schools are in similar situations and will return in the fall in a different place academically compared to other years. Let's help encourage parents to use summer as a time for a break for their children and a time to explore their God-given abilities, not just their disabilities. The same applies to you as teachers! This year has been a challenge, and a huge accomplishment for all schools and educators. Remember to give yourself time to rejuvenate, and allow God to take away some of your worries about students being behind as they begin next school year.



Please reach out to us at [lsem@luthsped.org](mailto:lsem@luthsped.org) or visit our website at [luthsped.org](http://luthsped.org) and let us know how we can support you in your ministry during this time or over the summer!

## Fearfully and Wonderfully Made VOL. 3, NO. 9 // MAY 2020

Writer: Kara Bratton Designer: Lisa Moeller

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# Parent Pages

RESOURCES FOR CHRISTIAN PARENTS IN THE 21ST CENTURY



## Use the Summer to Prepare for School – Not What You Might Think



**No** kid wants homework for summer break! Yet the activities of summer can either promote or detract from a better school year in the fall. For instance, children who spend the better part of the summer inside the house — playing video games — alone are not doing their learning brains any favors. Some time spent with a favorite game is suitable for relaxing, but overall, a healthy mix of activities exercises the brain in ways that support good learning.

God designed our brains to learn while doing a variety of actions, and He designed the brain to apply new learning to other situations. This is how good, healthy activities can promote future learning. Healthy play strengthens neural pathways that are used to learn during the school year. Summer is a great time to

develop focus, social skills, vocabulary, problem-solving skills, planning skills and emotional regulation.

### Consider the following suggestions for your child's summer schedule:

**Encourage a learning obsession:** Summer is a time for your children to dig into a topic that interests them. With a few well-placed questions and suggestions, you can encourage a child to learn more about a bug caught in the backyard, a favorite sports icon, an author or a period in history. Then extend this learning with a family field trip or a mealtime discussion. (Improves vocabulary and focus.)

**Loose parts play and maker spaces:** Check with your local library to see if it has set up a maker space. There your child can dream big to design something and build it using a 3-D printer and other tools. If you do not have a maker space in your area, consider collecting “junk” in your backyard that can be used to build or play. In this kind of play, the product is not as important as the process of thinking, doing and fixing. Brains learn best through trial and error. When children play outdoors with loose parts, they benefit from using their senses, lifting and climbing. These activities support good brain health. (Improves social skills, problem-solving, focus and emotional regulation.)

**Big Projects:** Children love to build temporary structures such as forts. They are also capable, with some adult help, to dive into more permanent projects such as a treehouse or landscaping a waterfall and pond. Big projects exercise a child's abilities to think abstractly and to design. In addition, the



trial-and-error nature of a big project nurtures resilience. (Improves problem-solving, planning skills and focus.)

**Reading/writing (for fun and not reward):**

Reading books together as a family provides a great deal of good brain exercise. Pick a book and read a chapter a night at family dinner time. Talk about the story, rewrite the ending, note the resilient features seen in the characters or write a letter to the author. Try to stay away from requirements and rewards and to look for ways to enjoy reading and writing. (Improves social skills, emotional regulation, focus and vocabulary.)

**Family time:** For many families, summer means moving children from school to childcare, and the busyness of parent work does not slow down. Family time may take some planning on your part. Take advantage of evenings free from homework and see how you can slip in time spent together doing what your family loves. Ask your children to plan a one-day trip to a local attraction. Move your family game night outdoors and start a basketball or croquet tournament or even a neighborhood game of tag. (Improves focus, social skills, planning skills and emotional regulation.)

One thing you might have noticed is that each of these activities promotes focus. That is because the brain is practicing attention, rather than performing attention as it is required to do in a classroom. The difference between practice and performance is the engagement in an activity of personal choice. The more your children practice focus on things they choose to do, the better their brains will be able to direct that focus in a structured classroom setting. Children who play video games do tend to focus, but video games are designed to draw children in which means the game is doing much of the focusing for them.

Another reason why these activities are healthy for the brain is that they involve more than just thinking. They expose children to more human interaction, more sensory information and more thinking about things in new ways. When the brain learns something new, it likes to encode that learning with emotions and sensory information, so it has several ways to retrieve it later.

God designed our brains to learn best when we interact with people face to face, and when we interact with the world He created for us. Take advantage of this, and help the brains of your children learn good things this summer.



## Parent Pages

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Writer: Dr. Kim Marxhausen Designer: Frank Kohn

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# Professionally Speaking



SCRIPTURE: 1 Thess. 5:16–24

## Joy:fully Lutheran

*“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies, but test everything; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil. Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.”*

**T**his year, *Professionally Speaking* has used the theme verses from the Synod as its basis for monthly writings. As the year draws to a close, reflection is appropriate and valuable in recounting the year. It’s assessment time.

› **Rejoice:** Did you review your mission statement this year to see how it encourages joyful learning? Did you do a walkthrough of the building and audit your website for reminders of joyful living? Did your board consider the time available for your school’s administrative needs?

› **Pray:** What is your assessment of the prayer life of your school? Your teachers? Each classroom? Yourself? Did you teach with a dependence on Jesus or dependence on self? What was your go-to for help, for wisdom, for strength? Was your parent group a prayerful group?

› **Give thanks:** No, giving thanks for the end of the school year is probably not appropriate here,



especially if it includes an attitude of “Good rid-dance.” Instead, what is your litany of thanks to God as the year comes to a close? For baptisms? For the renewed health of a student, parent or staff member? Is it thanks for financial resources to meet the operational needs of the school?

➤ **Encourage:** How did you encourage the next generation of Lutheran school teachers, Lutheran pastors, DCEs and deaconesses? Did you take a child aside and say, “You should consider being a pastor.” “You should be a teacher. You love learning, you love leading and you are a people person.” Or did your disposition cause more harm than good this year?

➤ **Discipline** (verb): What healthy habit(s) did you add this year? How did a confession of being God’s masterpiece (EPH. 2:10) drive a discipline of better spiritual, physical and mental activities?

➤ **Review and Study:** What policies came up for review this year? What was the criteria for assessment? What curriculum areas were addressed? Are you prepared to talk dress code enforcement at the end-of-the-year faculty meetings? How do any of these topics relate to the school’s purpose?

➤ **Meditate:** What were the spiritual disciplines that you personally addressed? How about your school’s practices? What did you encourage through school communications that helped families decide to dedicate time for worship, prayer, service and devotions?

➤ **Faithfulness:** Consistency should be so easy to do, but were you the model of consistency this year? Reports on time? Deadlines met? NLSA report on May 15?

Whatever your report card, the results probably come up short. It’s probably a report card that shares results that do not pass by *any* means — standards based, subjectively or objectively. The evaluation has determined you didn’t hit the target and makes for a disappointing assessment of the school year. And we administrators don’t handle criticism very well.

“Joy:fully Lutheran”? Eh, the joy is short-lived and weak.

Fully = fully sure that more could have been done.

Lutheran? Not even sure the community even knows or cares we’re here.

Schools do a lot of assessing. From report cards to surveying, from accreditation to board evaluations, schools are in the process of evaluating, determining the present status and planning for the future. Maybe as we complete the year and send off our NLSA reports, we should apply our own teaching of the faith. Maybe it starts with knowing our own faith.

“When we are blessed by God and born anew, do we seek to feel the pulse of our own faith? Doing this is a dangerous displacement that leads us away from the Reformation understanding of faith. The moment we turn aside and look aside and look back at ourselves and our own doings instead of at God and God’s promise, at that moment we are left alone with ourselves and with our own judgment about ourselves. We will fall back into all the uncertainty of the defiant and despairing heart and look only to self and not to the promises of God” (Oswald Bayer, *Living by Faith: Justification and Sanctification* (Fortress Press, 2017), 44).

It’s OK to assess for school improvement and for skill improvement. It’s not OK if it weakens faith and life.

So as the year ends, heed the apostle’s pleas: rejoice ... pray ... give thanks ... share the Spirit ... teach the faith ... hold on to the faith ... choose godly habits.

May the summer months of doing the above have you restored for another year of service.

And “may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it” (1 THESS. 5:23–24).

Faithful. We know He is. He is already working (or, should I say, is still working!).

## Professionally Speaking // MAY 2020

Writer: Mark Muehl Designer: Chrissy Thomas

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A RESOURCE OF LCMS SCHOOL MINISTRY



# Rattles & Prattles

A RESOURCE FOR CAREGIVERS OF INFANTS AND TODDLERS



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

**Bible Story:** Jesus returns to heaven (MATT. 28:16–20; ACTS 1:1–11).

**Focus:** Jesus finished His saving work (perfect life, suffering, death and resurrection) and it was time for Him to return to heaven.

**What it teaches us:** Just before Jesus returned to heaven, He promised to be with us and help us as we share the message of His saving work.

### Prepare to teach

› **Read** the story from various translations and, if possible, a study Bible.

› **Think:** We have the privilege and responsibility to share the story of Jesus’ saving work for all people. Not only our words but also our actions “tell” others what it means to be part of His family.

› **Pray:** We thank You, Jesus, for Your love. We’re thankful You came from heaven high above. We’re happy that You came to be the Savior promised. Help us share the story with everyone we see — so they can become part of Your big family. Amen.





### WORSHIP TIME AND BIBLE STORY PRESENTATION

#### You will also need

- › *Little Ones Sing Praise (LOSP)*, copyright © 1989 Concordia Publishing House
- › Picture of Jesus (find one doing an internet search)
- › Pictures of Jesus: 1) with disciples; 2) ascending to heaven

#### 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

Show picture of Jesus and His friends, the disciples.

**Jesus and His friends walked up a hill, then sat down and listened — all still.**

**Jesus told His friends, “It’s time for Me to go — back up to heaven, but I want you to know:**

**I’ll always be with you, though you won’t see Me. And, I’ll come back; just wait and see.**

**While I’m away there’s something you can do — Tell everyone “I love all of you.**

**I died and came alive again, so you can be — Part of God’s big family.”**

**Jesus blessed them all, smiled and started to rise — Then disappeared in clouds that floated by** (show picture of Jesus ascending to heaven).

**Jesus’ friends were sad to see Him go, but knew Jesus loved them, so-o-o much, and, that He would always be with them.**

**Song:** “I Can Tell” (*LOSP*, p. 99).

**What the Story Teaches:** Even though Jesus was no longer with His friends physically, He promised to be with them and help as they shared His love.

#### Time to Pray

Dear Jesus, please help us remember You are always with us. Please help us tell our family and friends that You love them and came to be their Savior. **Amen.** Then blow kisses and say/sign “Jesus loves you.”

#### 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).



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

### **S** Science and Nutrition

➤ **Clouds:** clouds float in the sky, hide the sun, bring rain, etc. Make a cloud to eat: gelatin or pudding topped with whipped cream or whipped topping.

### **T** Technology

➤ **Going up:** Jesus could make Himself go up into the sky. How can we go up in the sky? (e.g., swings, climb slide, ladders, airplanes)

### **R** Reading and Language Arts

➤ **Read:** *Little Cloud* by Eric Carle (World of Eric Carle, 1998) and *It Looked Like Spilt Milk* by Charles Shaw (Harper Collins, 1988).

➤ **Languages:** Teach sign for “Jesus loves you.” If you don’t know it, check online.

➤ **Finger Play:** Blow kisses; share “Jesus loves you” sign; little ones love “clicking” tongues: click, click! **Jesus loves me** click, click! **Jesus loves you.**

### **E** Engineering

➤ **Blow up large balloons** as children watch. Invite them to think of ways to make the balloons go up (e.g., toss, kick).

### CONNECT WITH PARENTS in your newsletter

We are all familiar with separation anxiety with our children. When leaving your children, remind them of your love and that you will return. Remind them, too, of Jesus’ promise to always be with them.

### **A** Arts (art, music and physical education)

➤ **Make cloud shapes:** put a spoonful of white tempera in the middle of a sheet of construction paper. Fold. Press. Open and look at the clouds.

➤ **Song:** “I’m with You” (*LOSP*, p. 32).

➤ **Pretend to be clouds** in the sky and blow to make a wind sound while moving about the large motor space or outside.

### **M** Mathematics

➤ **Make 5 clouds** (print numerals 1–5; laminate; add adhesive-hook half of Velcro and use with felt board). **1 little cloud high in the sky — looks so pretty as it floats by.** Add a second and continue: **2 little clouds high in the sky — look so pretty as they float by ...**

### **S** Social Studies

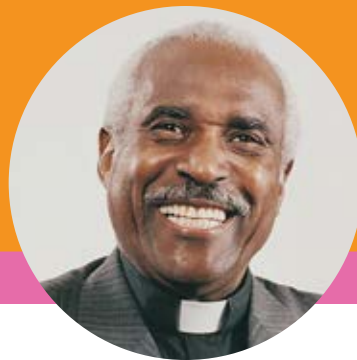
➤ **Friends:** Jesus had friends. We have friends too (e.g., friends in the classroom, in our neighborhood). We can tell our friends about Jesus, our best Friend and Savior.





# School Shepherd

TIPS AND SUPPORT FOR PASTORS OF CONGREGATIONS WITH SCHOOLS



THEME | JOY:FULLY LUTHERAN

## Art:fully

**T**he term “art” is used broadly. Art classes and experiences are part of the school curriculum. “Art” may be used in reference to a painting or sculpture — a piece of art. “Art” may also express a skill in a certain area — the art of teaching or the art of preaching. As churches and schools gather in the Pentecost season of the church year, they celebrate that the Spirit’s presence and gifts fill every aspect of the life of the Christian and every area of Lutheran school ministry. Lutheran school shepherds and their partners serve ART:FULLY.

### The Art FULL Good Shepherd

As I write this edition of *School Shepherd*, I am blessed to be traveling in eastern Canada and northeast United States. God’s creation is amazing! Daily we see God’s works of art in nature. John’s Gospel begins by

celebrating Jesus’ (the Word’s) participation in creation: “He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made” (JOHN 1:2-3).

The Word who made and sustains all creation is also the God of re-creation. Jesus speaks of new life to Nicodemus (JOHN 4). In John, Chapter 10, Jesus announces that He is the Good Shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep. Artists attempt to portray the passion of Jesus. No work of art (painting, sculpture or movie) can adequately portray the suffering of Jesus. Jesus’ crucifixion is His salvation masterpiece. He covers the darkness of our sin with His red blood, and covers all who come to the cross in the whiteness of His perfect righteousness.





While each of us is God's "fearfully and wonderfully made" (PS. 139:14) creation, His greater work is to make what was tarnished in sin new again (2 COR. 5:17). How blessed we are in Christ to be God's works of art!

## The Art FULL School Shepherds

The school shepherd shares an art:FULL Trinitarian message: the Father as the Creator of all; the Son who by His suffering and death brings about the new creation and an abundant life; the Spirit who creates faith and the gifts that share the reality of new life.

The school shepherd is an artist in residence. Most often the medium of the school shepherd's art is words — God's Word. The school shepherd "paints" a picture of who God is and what God in Christ has done.

## Art FULL Lutheran Schools

Many Lutheran churches and schools are filled with art: stained glass windows, amazing architecture, symbols. Lutheran school students, staff and families should appreciate the art in their church and school settings.

One of the strengths of many Lutheran schools is the arts. Many Lutheran schools have choirs which beautifully praise God and demonstrate the gifts of children. Lutheran school students share beautiful children's programs with parents, grandparents and the community. Lutheran schools may be unique in the community in offering a broad range of artistic programs and activities. Those programs and experiences might become an invitation to children and families of the community.

The artistic gifts of children might regularly bless the chapel and Sunday services: choirs, soloists, instrumental performances. Children's art work might decorate the school hallway or the church narthex.

Lutheran schools celebrate the Spirit's work through God's people. What each of us do as God's re-creation is an expression of God's grace. Lutheran schools celebrate the vocation of every child of God. The various gifts of all school staff members are celebrated: the art of making a school lunch, the art of maintaining a clean facility, the art of teaching a preschool class, the art of coaching a team and so on.

“Lord of all good, our gifts we bring You now;

Use them Your holy purpose to fulfill.

Tokens of love and pledges they shall be

That our whole life is offered to Your will.”

(LSB 786:1)

The various vocations represented in the church, families and community may be celebrated. Presentations might be shared in classrooms or a vocation fair might be organized. Helpful community servants (police, fire fighters, etc.) might be welcomed and honored.

Lutheran schools have the opportunity and responsibility to encourage students in ministry vocations. What does a pastor do? What are the joys of teaching in a Lutheran school? What's a deaconess or DCE? Concordia universities or seminaries could bring representatives to the church and school. Middle school or high school students might take a field trip to one of the university settings. Lutheran schools are often the training ground for full-time ministry careers.

## Dialoguing Art FULLY

- What works of art can be noted in your church and setting?
- How is creativity encouraged in your church and school ministries?
- Does your church and school intentionally encourage church work vocations? How could your setting be more proactive in that effort?



# Time Out for Directors

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT TIPS FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER ADMINISTRATORS



## Really, There Is a Reason to Celebrate!

**C**oronavirus. COVID-19. The virus. Pandemic. Global situation. Quarantine. No matter which description you use, the past few months have likely been some of the most challenging times you have had as a professional educator and leader. The situations you have found yourself in are ones that have likely never been officially planned for, or even thought about. Lutheran schools around the world have been forced to be even more creative in their mission, ministry and educational delivery.

While there have been significant upheaval and change in recent months, there are some things that have remained constant: God loves you, God cares about you and God is with you. These three phrases sound simple, but they are the backbone of what you do in Lutheran school ministry. Because you know these three phrases are true, you share them with your students and families. While the lives of many children and families have been altered, the message of hope, grace, love and salvation that you share them is a reminder that some things never change.

Your students are likely not  
absent from your heart.

With many states closing school buildings for the remainder of the school year, the giggles, singing and playing that usually occur in your classroom or facility are absent. However, your students are likely not absent from your heart. Whether you are providing them with resources to pick up or be delivered, connecting via Zoom or other technology platforms or engaging in video and message sharing, you are continuing your educational ministry; it's what you do — you're a teacher!

During Jesus' time here on earth, He was always engaging in relationships; Jesus focused His ministry on making connections. You have done a ministry of





Pray for your students each day,  
because God hears your prayers!

relationships during this unique period of time too. Think for a moment of how many emails you have sent to students and families, videos you have made for Circle Time and storytelling or computer files and website resources you have shared with students, families and colleagues. You have worked hard to continue to tend the relationships you've made with students since the start of the year. These relationships are rooted in Christ; they will last and continue to grow, even in these challenging times.

As you think about your students, you may be wondering how they are doing, how they are managing with a new routine or how they are continuing their learning. Pray for your students each day, because God hears your prayers! While it may be easy to become downtrodden and anxious about being away from school, think of ways your students may be growing. How is this time a potential blessing for your students and their families? How can God use this time for His glory?

Throughout this past school year, many references in this publication, *Time Out for Directors*, have been shared in regard to the words the apostle Paul wrote in 1 Thessalonians: "Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances" (5:16-18). A positive mindset, focused on the gifts and blessings God has given, allows for opportunities of thankfulness and gratitude — two qualities that are especially important during this time. God does indeed equip you for the ministry work you do, even outside of the classroom walls. The psalmist shares, "Let the favor of our God be upon us, and establish the work of our hands" (PS. 90:17). Indeed! Your hands do the work of Christ Jesus in an educational setting, wherever that may be!

## Rejoice Always!

There are blessings all around you — look for them. It is May, and flowers are likely blooming, birds are singing and the fresh air brings good reason to be outdoors. Rejoice in what your students have accomplished in the past school year, both in class and at home. Hopefully they have transitioned from separation anxiety and tears to eager arrivals in the classroom each morning; hopefully they have stayed connected to you during the time of home-based learning. Rejoice that parents in your school have been prepared in good ways to support their children's learning and development at home, in coordination with educational practices from school. Rejoice that your faculty and staff have contributed to planting the seeds of faith in students and their families that may be watered and fed by the Holy Spirit and others who come into their lives. There are many reasons to rejoice! Look through your calendar and find dates where you can pinpoint evidence of God's hand in your life and work. It's likely there are many!

## Pray Continually!

Even Jesus prayed during His earthly ministry; this shows how important it is for you, and all Christians, to talk to God through prayer. Remember — prayer does not need to be any formal, lengthy printed material shared only at meals or bedtime; rather, prayer can be simple moments throughout the day when you talk to God, either in your mind, in your heart or by verbalizing your words. God hears your prayer! He always has, and He always will. Take advantage of the opportunity. Let your families and students know how prayer has been beneficial for you during this time; provide your families with opportunities and "starters" for them to engage in prayer, too, at home.

As you share words and thoughts of prayer with God, remember to give prayers of thanksgiving for the blessings He has bestowed upon you, your students, your colleagues and your school, even with the present challenges. Even in times of trouble, God does indeed send blessings — look for them! Satan wants you to look at the darkness, but Christ says that He is "the light of the world" (JOHN 8:12)!





Remember, too, that God knows the needs of others. Prayers need not be lengthy descriptions of someone's ailments; God knows the illnesses others suffer through, the loss of someone's family member and the needs of a family. Be strong in your faith and have confidence that God knows, listens and answers!

### Give Thanks in All Circumstances!

It is easy to give thanks and be joyful when things are going well in your life, but it's during times of challenge that God often grows your faith. Yes, it is important to give thanks for the gifts, blessings and answered prayers you receive. Be sure to also give thanks for opportunities: opportunities to share the faith with a hurting parent, opportunities to comfort a child who is grieving the loss of a favorite pet and opportunities to support a co-worker who is ill. With a positive mindset, life is full of opportunities to serve. And, when you serve, remember that you are given the honor of serving Christ Jesus not because of anything you have done, but, rather, because of what He has already done for you with His death and resurrection.

Congratulations on the completion of another school year; it is certainly one to be remembered.

As you conclude this one-of-a-kind school year, ask those around you what they want to give thanks for. Take time with your faculty and staff (in whatever way you can) to converse on this topic. Urge others to reflect upon the blessings received during the school year and the progress that has been made in learning, ministry and relationships. Share these as words of support and encouragement with others. During this time, many people have been forced to slow down. Hopefully this has led to lives that are more reflective, connected with family and faith filled. If a family shares how they have been blessed through your school ministry, share that message with your pastor or other church leaders. If a parent recognizes the work and extra effort of a fellow teacher, share that with her. Know that there are both big and small successes in your ministry each day — blessings that are placed by God Himself.

Again, congratulations on the completion of another school year; it is certainly one to be remembered. Now is your time to celebrate — celebrate the ministry that has been accomplished, the lives that have been touched, the learning that has taken place and the opportunities that now hopefully exist (at least in some fashion) for rest, relaxation and rejuvenation. No matter what your summer plans are, know that a brand new year of ministry opportunity is just around the corner. And, that's something to celebrate too! God has chosen you to be His disciple on earth today!

## Time Out for Directors

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A RESOURCE OF LCMS SCHOOL MINISTRY

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