



DECEMBER 2021

# SCHOOL MINISTRY

# Mailing





DECEMBER 2021

# SCHOOL MINISTRY MAILING

# Contents

## *Alight*

“Merry Christmas!”  
LCMS School Ministry Staff

## *Community and Enrollment*

“Developing Connections to Strengthen Community”  
Dr. Kristen Newell

## *Computer File*

“Creating Audio and Video”  
Mr. Corey Nelson

## *Early Childhood Devotions*

“The Promised Savior”  
Dr. Judith Christian

## *Family Matters*

“Of All Things ... a Baby!”  
Dr. Steven Christopher

## *Fearfully and Wonderfully Made*

“The Power of Yet”  
Dr. Kara Bratton

## *Parent Pages*

“Learning from Our COVID Memories”  
Dr. Kim Marxhausen

## *Professionally Speaking*

“Gifts in All Things”  
Mr. Jim Scriven

## *Rattles & Prattles*

“God Keeps His Promise to Send the Savior for ALL”  
Mrs. Judy Williams

## *School Shepherd*

“All Things Peacefully Considered”  
Rev. Robert Riggert

## *Time Out for Directors*

“Learning In All Things:  
Christmas Today and Every Day”  
Dr. Drew Gerdes



# Alight

FOR LUTHERAN SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS AND EDUCATORS



Merry  
Christmas

FROM YOUR  
LCMS SCHOOL  
MINISTRY STAFF



ALIGHT // VOL. 18, NO. 4 // DECEMBER 2021

A RESOURCE OF LCMS SCHOOL MINISTRY

Author: Dr. Rebecca Schmidt, Director of LCMS School Ministry Designer: Frank Kohn

Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved. TO REPRINT: Permission is granted to reprint articles from this newsletter with the credit line "Reprinted with permission of LCMS School Ministry."

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

© 2021 LCMS

PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES



# Community & Enrollment



This is the **fourth** of a **nine-article series** developed from the work of Dr. Kristen Newell in “How is parental sense of community at LCMS elementary schools different between schools of growing, stable, or declining enrollment?”

## Developing Connections to Strengthen Community



**“Sometimes you want to go where everybody knows your name,”** goes the theme song from the 1980s television sitcom *Cheers* (Charles/Burrows Productions). A sense of belonging and connection is an innate need of all people, even showing up on Maslow’s hierarchy of needs. A school can be a place where this need is met — not just for students, but for parents, teachers and staff as well. Researchers Beal and Beal found when parents had a sense of belonging toward a school and the school acted like “a big family,” retention and recruitment of students was strengthened.<sup>1</sup>

This article, within the series of *Community and Enrollment*, will focus on practical applications schools can put into place to strengthen community with the end goal of growing enrollment. To do this, the next four articles will focus on the four elements used by McMillan and Chavis to define *sense of community*: 1) membership, 2) influence, 3) integration and fulfillment of needs and 4) shared emotional connection.<sup>2</sup> This month’s article will focus on *membership*. How can your school use the idea of membership to create a sense of belonging and *community* among the parents of your students? Let’s break it down into four main ideas.

First, McMillan and Chavis said “personal investment is an important contributor to a person’s feeling of group membership” (p. 10). We all hope parents will invest in our schools, but do we create methods of investment varying in type, commitment level and financial size, that are attainable by all people in our schools? Thinking about *investment* as giving of time, treasures and talents can broaden the opportunities you present to parents to give of themselves to benefit the community. Here are some ways you can provide investment opportunities for parents at your school:

- 1) TIME:** help at lunch, cut out lamination, chaperone field trips, participate in class parties
- 2) TREASURES:** monetary donations, paper goods, classroom prizes, teacher wish list



**3) TALENTS:** coach, reading volunteer, photography, graphic design, event planning

Remember, it is better to approach people in person to ask them if they can offer up their time, treasures or talent, rather than sending out blanket requests or a Sign-up Genius (which have their own special time, place and purpose). Getting to know the people in your community will allow you to match requests with the gifts, passion and abilities people have. Rarely is a request too big if people understand and value its purpose and it is in line with the things they care about.

Second, common symbols that represent a community help to strengthen membership. School logos, colors and mascots are all important. These things not only *brand* your school, making it recognizable in your community, but they also create a sense of pride and identification between members of your school. When a parent at a store sees another parent with school spirit wear on, the two have an instant connection. Feeling connected with others strengthens the community at the school. In order to gain recognition and pride, logo, color and mascot use needs to be frequent and consistent. If you don't already have a logo or mascot (both a name and an image), allow your community to invest their time, treasures and talents in helping to design those pieces. You may still want a professional to do the final creation, but letting everyone share in the process can be powerful.

Third, rituals, traditions and rites of passage help define communities and the members who belong to them. Lutherans aren't the only ones who love traditions. These things don't need to be big and flashy. Dependability, anticipation and experiencing joy are just as good, maybe better. One idea is to create milestone moments at different grade levels: particular field trips, Bible gifting, parent/student activities. Mother's Day programs, sex ed retreats and the chance to *finally* be in the nativity re-enactment (maybe only fifth- and sixth-graders get to do this) come to mind. In other words, reserve something special to look forward to in each grade. Traditions may include end-of-the-year picnics, post-Christmas program ice cream and making snowmen after a big snow.

The fourth big idea comes directly from a school in the dissertation study.<sup>3</sup> This school has growing enrollment and a strong *sense of community* among staff and



parents. The principal shared the importance of people *feeling known* at the school. He said this is done by having personal interactions between staff and parents. When writing newsletters, this principal said it is more important to be personal than to be overly polished. He also stressed that staffing structures must grow to match growing enrollment so that staff still have the time and space to be in relationship with the parents at the school.

Ultimately, members of the school community must feel they belong, are accepted by others and are willing to sacrifice for the school community.<sup>2</sup> Largely, this means building relationships among people at the school. Lutheran schools are uniquely positioned to build relationships on the forgiveness and love of Christ. Jesus modeled relationship building by spending time with His disciples, living life with them, eating together and talking about big and small things. As you work to strengthen relationships and to create a sense of belonging and community among parents at your school, follow in Christ's example. These ideas are not quick solutions, but the investment in community can have beautiful results.

### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> Heather K. Olson Beal and Brent D. Beal, "Assessing the Impact of School-Based Marketing Efforts: A Case Study of a Foreign Language Immersion Program in a School-Choice Environment," *Peabody Journal of Education* 91, no. 1 (January 2016): 81–99, accessed September 15, 2021, [dx.doi.org/10.1080/0161956X.2016.1119591](https://doi.org/10.1080/0161956X.2016.1119591).

<sup>2</sup> David W. McMillan and David M. Chavis, "Sense of community: A definition and theory," *Journal of Community Psychology* 14, no. 1 (January 1986): 6–23.

<sup>3</sup> Kristen Newell, "How is parental sense of community at LCMS elementary schools different between schools of growing, stable, or declining enrollment?" (Ed.D. diss., Concordia University Wisconsin, 2021). ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 28492466.

## Community & Enrollment

VOL. 1, NO. 4 // DECEMBER 2021

A RESOURCE OF LCMS SCHOOL MINISTRY

Writer: Dr. Kristen Newell Designer: Frank Kohn

Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved. TO REPRINT: Permission is granted to reprint articles from this newsletter with the credit line "Reprinted with permission of LCMS School Ministry."

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

© 2021 LCMS  
PHOTO: LCMS/ERIK M. LUNSFORD



# Computer File



## Creating Audio and Video

**“T**he statistics are clear: video is where it’s at! YouTube is the most visited site in the world, and second only to Netflix for use by teens.<sup>1</sup> On average, students in the tween and teen categories use digital media between four and eight hours a day *in addition to* the time needed for schoolwork!<sup>2</sup>

When it comes to audio, the statistics are possibly even more interesting! Of the many consumers of podcasts, young people ages 12–24 are the largest group. A full 48% of tweens/teens actively listen to podcasts.<sup>3</sup>

Clearly, video and audio are incredibly impactful in today’s society. With so much consumption occurring,

there will always be a natural interest in creating these content types! These media are a wonderful way to give our students a voice in the world around them. Additionally, consider the platforms available for spreading God’s love when students understand how to create their own messages and share them with the world!

Video and audio creation in the classroom has always been one of my favorites! There are so many options for creativity and innovation when creating content in these areas. Video and audio can easily be used in any content area, and can fundamentally change the ways in which students demonstrate knowledge, share information and reflect upon learning.

<sup>1</sup> Sarika Nerurkar, “84 YouTube Statistics You Can’t Ignore in 2021,” *InVideo*, updated October 7, 2021, accessed November 6, 2021, [invideo.io/blog/youtube-statistics/](https://invideo.io/blog/youtube-statistics/).

<sup>2</sup> Victoria Rideout and Michael B. Robb, *The Common Sense Census: Media use by tweens and teens* (San Francisco, CA: Common Sense Media, 2019).

<sup>3</sup> Georgi Todorov, “69 Podcast Statistics to Boost Your Podcast Strategy,” *Semrush Blog*, February 26, 2021, accessed November 6, 2021, [semrush.com/blog/podcast-stats](https://semrush.com/blog/podcast-stats).

This month, as we look at different ways to create video and audio, I'll include some content area ideas for creating!

**Animoto** ([animoto.com](http://animoto.com)) is a free tool that allows users to produce videos that blend photos, video clips, text and music. There are options for customizing transitions, text and music. This video gives an overview: [youtu.be/5GX9bGx2T2w](https://youtu.be/5GX9bGx2T2w).

**My View:** Animoto is where I start with video creation with my youngest students. They are able to add photos and text and even throw in some music! This would be a great tool for creating research-based videos! Our fourth-graders create videos for their study of a state. It's perfect for adding all of that detailed information!

**Concerns:** I'd have to be picky to say any concerns. There are limited choices for theme and music with a free account. The finished videos do have a watermark. Still, this is a *great, free* option!

---

**WeVideo** ([wevideo.com](http://wevideo.com)) is a full-functioning tool that allows users to produce videos that include images, video, transitions, music, graphics, special effects and voice-overs. There are almost unlimited options for customizing anything you make. You can also record a voice-over and export the project as an audio file, which allows you to edit the audio right in WeVideo. That is a feature not seen anywhere else. Here is an overview: [youtu.be/qeTE1kGnTas](https://youtu.be/qeTE1kGnTas).

**My View:** This is my favorite technology creation tool. This is easily the best video editor out there. With the paid version, your students get access to the seemingly endless media library built in! The students can do a voice-over and even green screen effects! WeVideo can be used with any subject area, but I've loved to see book trailers the students make for literature class! Due to the wide range of capabilities and the audio editing aspect, this is my No. 1 recommendation! It does everything!

**Concerns:** This would be a bit of a challenge for younger students. I don't use this tool with students until 5th grade. The price can be prohibitive, but it is absolutely worth every dollar! We subscribe each year, but only have enough accounts so that students need to collaborate.

---

**Screencastify** ([screencastify.com](http://screencastify.com)) is a digital video recording of your computer screen and usually includes audio narration. Students can create free videos of

whatever they can get to be displayed on their screens. This video will get you started using Screencastify: [youtu.be/lHrgr-Fk1s](https://youtu.be/lHrgr-Fk1s).

**My View:** (This tool was also featured in November's *Computer File*!) Screencasts are great for creating a video of whatever is shown on the screen! This is one way to change a Google Slides presentation into a video. Screencastify will even allow students to write or draw on the screen while recording. The free version is perfect for an easy way to record the screen or through the webcam! I love having the students use screencasting to record their explanation of art that has been created! If they can get pictures of their art on their screens, they can record video or audio of their thoughts about it!

**Concerns:** There is a learning curve for students at first. They will need time to try out the features to get it to work the way they want. All of the features are great, but require some initial teacher set-up. The free version does have a five-minute time limit.

---

**DoInk** ([doink.com](http://doink.com)) and **Green Screen Video** ([play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.android-filmfx.greenscreenvideo&hl=en\\_US](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.android-filmfx.greenscreenvideo&hl=en_US)) are apps that allow students to record videos in any location for which an image can be found! A green screen is needed, but even something like green bulletin board paper could be used. DoInk is available for iPads and Green Screen Video is available for Android tablets. This video shows more details: [youtu.be/wpGG7lXU3ks](https://youtu.be/wpGG7lXU3ks); [youtu.be/ycXMdPqZcJQ](https://youtu.be/ycXMdPqZcJQ).

**My View:** First of all, using a green screen app is perfect for studying anything Bible or history related! The main feature of using apps to create green screen videos is the benefit of being able to record the video, add the background and finalize the project all in one place! WeVideo also does green screen, but you would need to record with a separate device and get the video to WeVideo. Both DoInk and Green Screen Video work very well!

**Concerns:** You will need to have at least one tablet or phone to do green screen. Then, there is the potential cost of a green screen and a tripod. To keep costs down, a class could get by with one tablet or phone.

---

**PowToon** ([powtoon.com](http://powtoon.com)) was also featured in November. It does create videos, allowing students to create voice-overs and upload recorded videos. This app would allow PowToon artistic creations to be used along with student-created content. See this video for more: [youtu.be/lEQiZQi-aGY](https://youtu.be/lEQiZQi-aGY).



**My View:** There are so many options here! I like the storyboard layout. That would seem to allow students to easily plan what happens in a logical sequence. PowToon does a great job of allowing students to bring in video and audio along with their own content. Science presentations would be great for PowToons! Students could use the built-in animations with factual information and then explain more in-depth with a video!

**Concerns:** As with several apps like PowToons, my concern is the cost. Also, when using the free version, there are many limitations on what students can access from the PowToon library.

---

**Flipgrid** ([info.flipgrid.com](http://info.flipgrid.com)) is a simple, free and accessible video discussion experience for learners and families. Flipgrid allows students to record video, record their screen, use an online whiteboard, use filters and record with audio only. These are all shared within a secure group! Here is a short tutorial: [youtu.be/C1BMiiUgTBQ](https://youtu.be/C1BMiiUgTBQ).

**My View:** Flipgrid does everything very well, no matter what type of device your students are using! I love the many options available for sharing, especially the whiteboard option! This would be great for math. Students could demonstrate how they approach solving a problem! The ability to pause a video when recording is also helpful. My students have been creative with costume changes when the camera is paused! They've also used the feature to make things appear and disappear like magic!

**Concerns:** There is limited editing ability for the recordings. Depending on the purpose of the video/audio, students may feel limited by not being able to add titles and music.

---

**My Simple Show** ([videomaker.simpleshow.com](http://videomaker.simpleshow.com)) is a video maker that makes explainer videos. Students can use built-in graphics or animations or import images and text. Audio voice-overs can also be recorded. Here is a rundown of the features: [youtu.be/5DehyJ\\_L238](https://youtu.be/5DehyJ_L238).

**My View:** My Simple Show is just what it says it is: simple. Everything is very easy to use, and I appreciate that you are able to upload images and record your voice. Still, while it makes video, there is no video component for creating a video of the students. Again, this could be used well for presenting information from a report in a new and interesting way!

**Concerns:** As I stated above, it's a nice way to make scripted videos, but without recording any actual video. If I was thinking about making a video like this, I'd probably make it in Google Slides and record with Screencastify.

---

**Google Slides (with Screencastify)** is a great way to introduce video creation to even younger students. Google Slides allows students to insert a variety of media, including audio and video. Recording with Screencastify while presenting a Google Slides presentation creates a nice looking video that can feature a student's voice or webcam video. This video shows one teacher's approach: [youtu.be/WQVgHclMexc](https://youtu.be/WQVgHclMexc).

**My View:** Using this combination is wonderful if you are looking for digital storytelling in language arts or having students create a presentation of any area of study. The combination of these two apps can



*Video and audio can easily be used in any content area, and can fundamentally change the ways in which students demonstrate knowledge, share information and reflect upon learning.*



even be used to do animations. Check out this video for how to animate: [youtu.be/K14TzB5MNQI](https://youtu.be/K14TzB5MNQI).

**Concerns:** As I stated earlier, the free version of Screencastify has a five-minute limit for the videos. Additionally, the limitation depends on the application. If you want to have students talk about their presentations, this is perfect. If you're looking for video to be the main focus of the Google Slides, it can work, but it's not as useful as something like WeVideo.

---

**Online Voice Recorder** ([online-voice-recorder.com](https://online-voice-recorder.com)) is an online voice recorder. Really. That's what it does! Very simple. Click the red button, and then talk! Students can edit the audio, pause/restart the recording and instantly save the recording. You should just go try it! But, here's a video anyway: [youtu.be/LpG-NEPJHoo](https://youtu.be/LpG-NEPJHoo).

**My View:** I use this exclusively when I need to record audio. It records audio well. I like that the students can edit the recording and pause/restart.

**Concerns:** No concerns here, but you'll need to figure out where it saves the recordings.

---

**BandLab** ([edu.bandlab.com](https://edu.bandlab.com)) is an online application for creating music. Students can record audio or use a built-in drum machine or instruments. There are additional features allowing guitar and bass to be recorded through plug-ins. The editing capabilities for the audio are more advanced. Audio loops are available for use, and other audio recordings can be imported. Watch this fairly detailed video: [youtu.be/vPlBrPU4gOo](https://youtu.be/vPlBrPU4gOo).

**My View:** This is simply a lot of fun to play with! If you're looking to do a little more with an audio recording, this is perfect! For a student looking to create a podcast with some background music, BandLab is wonderful. Of course, any music creation could be done here as well.

**Consider the platforms available for spreading God's love when students understand how to create their own messages and share them with the world!**

**Concerns:** There are many features, and the learning curve can be steep for some users. If you're looking for an easy way to record audio, this isn't the place to come. However, there are more features for manipulating sound than other places.

---

Hopefully, you can try one or more of these ideas for creating video and audio! Just have fun with it! If you show an adventurous spirit, your students will follow! Here is this month's **video overview**: [drive.google.com/file/d/178-hibK3zlnEk4dojt8jxZAFNTN1pTRa/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/178-hibK3zlnEk4dojt8jxZAFNTN1pTRa/view).

Here is this month's **Edge Tech**! These are some of the newest approaches in educational technology, and may require an adventurous spirit! This month's **Edge Tech** is [mult.dev](https://mult.dev). This connects very well to any geography and/or history projects! It will take a bunch of destinations around the world and create a travel video of sorts! Try it out!

Finally, if you would like to explore educational technology on a more personal level with other Lutheran school educators, I encourage you to consider TEC21. I'm in my fourth year of being a TEC21 facilitator. We have stations across the country, including online opportunities and even STEM workshops!

Get more information here: [tec21connect.com](https://tec21connect.com).



## Computer File

VOL. 21, NO. 4 // DECEMBER 2021

Writer: Mr. Corey Nelson Designer: Erica Schwan

Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved. TO REPRINT: Permission is granted to reprint articles from this newsletter with the credit line "Reprinted with permission of LCMS School Ministry."

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

© 2021 LCMS

PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES

A RESOURCE OF LCMS SCHOOL MINISTRY

# Early Childhood Devotions

FOR CHILDREN AGES 3 TO 7



IN ALL THINGS **JOHN 1:3**

**FOCUS:** Jesus in All (Col. 1:15–20)

## The Promised Savior

(Matt. 1:18–25; Luke 2:1–20)



### Before You Teach

“Oh that you would rend the heavens and come down,” prayed the prophet Isaiah (ISAIAH 64:1). For children and adults alike, Christmas is full of distractions. Our task is to help children, and their adults, know and remember the truth: to keep His promise, God stepped out of heaven in the person of Jesus. This “only Son from heaven” (LSB 402) still steps into our lives in Word and Sacrament, bringing grace, peace and salvation for all.

### Greeting

Greet each child upon arrival, establishing a positive tone for the day. The value of adherence to your daily routine, especially at this time of year, cannot be overestimated!

### Gathering

*You will need:* Advent wreath with candles (three blue and one pink). Place a white Christ candle in the center. (Note: Battery-operated Advent candles are available from [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com).)

Each week, light an additional candle as you sing a corresponding verse of “Light One Candle” (LOSP, P. 78–79). On the day of your Christmas party, light the center Christ candle.

### Tell the Story

*You will need:* Pictures of Luke 2 characters (e.g., search Google Images for “Biblical Christmas Characters”).

**DO:** Tell the Luke 2 narrative, using pictures you have gathered or downloaded.

People had waited a very long time for God’s promised Savior to be born. Then one day, an angel appeared to Mary and said, “Do not be afraid. God has chosen you to be the mother of God’s promised Savior.” At that time, the ruler of the country ordered everyone to be counted. Joseph and Mary had to travel to the town of Bethlehem, where Joseph’s family once lived. Bethlehem was crowded with visitors. Without a place to stay, they were guided to a stable, to sleep with the animals. That night,





Baby Jesus was born. Mary, His mother, wrapped Baby Jesus in cloths, and laid Him in a manger. Nearby, shepherds guarded their sheep. Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared to them and said, “Fear not, I bring good news of great joy! Today a Savior, who is Christ the Lord, has been born. You will find the baby in a stable, lying in a manger.” Then, many angels appeared, singing, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace for His people!” When the angels went away, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go to Bethlehem.” They hurried on their way to see and worship Jesus, our Savior.

**PRAY:** Dear Father in heaven, our praises we bring,  
For sending us Jesus, our Savior and King.  
Amen.

## Remember the Story

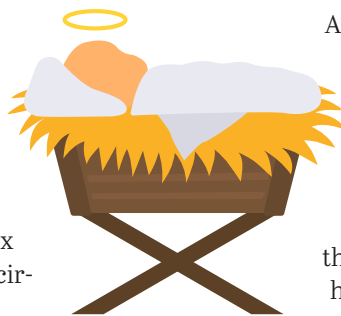
### BIBLE WORDS TO REMEMBER

Pre-K & K; 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: SHAPE ART –“JESUS IN A MANGER.”

*You will need:* Tan and white construction paper, wallpaper and/or heavy-weight wrapping paper. Precut wallpaper/wrapping paper into shapes: rectangles, big and small (manger box and legs); triangles (hay); tan construction paper circles (Jesus’ head), white construction paper ovals



(Jesus’ body). Children assemble shapes to create Baby Jesus in a manger.

**DO: “IN A MANGER.”** Children repeat each phrase after the leader. In a manger can it be, a baby sleeping peacefully? Angels singing gloriously; shepherds watching sleepily? Yes! Jesus came for you and me! Celebrate, happily!

**SING:** “In a Little Stable” (LOSP, P. 81); “Away in a Manger” (LOSP, P. 82).

**FUNDAY FRIDAY:** You will need: Stable and creche figures (minus Baby Jesus), adult volunteers, two identical number cards for each figure of your creche set. Do: Place a number card with each figure as you set them around the building. Divide the class into search teams, each led by an adult volunteer. Distribute reserved number cards among teams. When creche figures with matching numbers are found, children return to the classroom placing the figures in or around the stable. Add Baby Jesus on the day of your Christmas party.

**CAMP SERVE:** “Singing Telecommunications.” Record children singing Christmas songs and carols. Electronically send (or hand deliver) recordings to hospitalized children and adults, or to shut-ins.

## Sending

*You will need:* An angel figure.

Gather in your “Sending Circle.” Review the day. Invite children to offer a prayer as the angel is passed and received or to silently pass the angel along. As children exit say to each, **(Name of Child), Jesus was born for YOU!**

## Live the Story

As we reflect on the hymn “Silent Night,” and specifically on the phrase “all is calm,” it might seem Jesus’ birth was anything but calm. Yet, calm could be found in the fulfillment of God’s promise made long ago. Jesus, our Savior, was born! Let us celebrate the calm of knowing we are in good hands: God’s hands!

# Early Childhood Devotions

VOL. 26, NO. 4 // DECEMBER 2021

A RESOURCE OF LCMS SCHOOL MINISTRY

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.

Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved. TO REPRINT: Permission is granted to reprint articles from this newsletter with the credit line “Reprinted with permission of LCMS School Ministry.”

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

© 2021 LCMS

IMAGES: GETTY IMAGES



# Family Matters



A CHRIST-CENTERED RESOURCE FOR FAMILIES AND TEACHERS



## Of All Things ... a Baby!



### **“We’re going to have a baby!”**

Those words usually elicit joy when they are spoken. They are exciting words for a couple to share with family and friends, especially if this news has been a long time coming. Those who hear these words offer joyful support and hearty congratulations!

“We’re going to have a baby?”

When these same words are asked in the form of a question, it can change the tone and meaning of the moment. The question might signal uncertainty or even be a sign of an unwanted surprise. The element of excitement vanishes, and the mood of the moment becomes subdued.

“How will this be, since I am a virgin?” (LUKE 1:34).

These were the words spoken by Mary when she found out

that she was going to be the mother of Jesus. A young, unmarried girl at the time, she was by herself when this news came to her from an angel. There was no “we,” as she and Joseph were betrothed, the first stage in marriage according to Jewish custom, but had never been intimate. There had to be uncertain feelings on the part of Mary — yet, as she hears the entire message from the angel, she speaks words of faith and acceptance, when she says, “I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word” (LUKE 1:38).

For us parents who have heard the message of a forthcoming child, an overarching feeling is one of hope! Hope that all goes well in the pregnancy. Hope that the baby arrives safely and healthy. Hope that this young one grows into a mature adult who will make positive contributions to society. Hope that someday he, too, will have the chance to become a parent. Hope that faith in Christ as Lord and Savior is present in her life and guides her in a life of Christian service to others.

One might wonder how Mary, the mother of Jesus, felt when she heard the angel describing the child she would give birth to. Mary was told, “He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end ... therefore the child to be born will be called holy — the Son of God” (LUKE 1:32–35).

We all have grand thoughts and ideas about our children ... but this? Yes, this! Every word the angel spoke to Mary about Jesus came true! This child was indeed the Son of God, this child became our Savior, this child is the Lord of our life and this child is our friend forever.

This child is also our gift again this Christmas. The greatest gift!

## FUN FAMILY ACTIVITY //

Gather the family together in a comfortable setting, with no electronic distractions, preferably around a table (or other hard surface) to enjoy the family activity outlined below.

### ACTIVITY TITLE: UNEXPECTED GIFTS

#### PURPOSE

To engage family members in an activity that challenges them to plan and celebrate the birth of Jesus this Christmas and to share a special gift with special people in their lives.

#### OPENER

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

- What has been one of the best Christmas gifts you've ever received?
  - ▶ Was it a surprise or was it sort of expected?
- Have you ever received a great gift that was totally unexpected?
  - ▶ If so, what were the circumstances?
- What do you like better ... surprise gifts or gifts you know are coming? Why?



#### CHILDREN AS GIFTS

Parents will share the story about how they became aware that they were going to have this baby. Was this special gift of a child ...

- 1 totally unexpected?
- 2 hoped for, but a surprise at the time?
- 3 prayed for over and over? (And now God answered this prayer!).
- 4 a welcomed gift that seemed to be right on time?

#### MARY IS TOLD SHE WILL HAVE A BABY

Read Luke 1:26–38, then have an adult or older sibling read the following summary points and paragraph about the announcement to Mary.

- Mary was surprised at first by the appearance of the angel who spoke to her.
- Mary was also surprised by the announcement that she would have a baby.
- Mary was accepting of this plan from God.



The news that a baby is on the way can be very different at times for each family. It can be a big surprise that was totally unexpected or a timely answer to prayer. Either way, a baby is a gift from God! Jesus was the greatest gift that God gave us, and He gave it to us in the form of a baby! The Baby Jesus would grow up to be our Savior, who would die on the cross for our sins and give us the gift of eternal life by rising from the grave on that first Easter morning. This is why Jesus is the greatest gift!

#### GIVING SURPRISE GIFTS

It is indeed a delight to be surprised with special gifts at Christmas! As a family project, you are encouraged to come up with list of people in your family, your church or your neighborhood whom you would like to give special surprise gifts to this Christmas season.

Use the chart below to plan your family gift-giving project by deciding whom you will give a surprise gift to, what it will be, when you will give it to them and where you will give it to them. Have fun, be creative and think about what kind of surprises will be a blessing to them.

Who	_____	_____	_____
What	_____	_____	_____
When	_____	_____	_____
Where	_____	_____	_____

#### CLOSING PRAYER

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

**Dear Father in Heaven, we thank You for Jesus, the greatest gift You have given. Allow us to celebrate this gift joyfully, this coming Christmas season. Help us to share the Good News, of the Baby Jesus with others, through our gift giving. Bless us in the coming new year. In the name of the greatest gift, Jesus. Amen.**

# Fearfully and Wonderfully Made

SPECIAL EDUCATION IN LUTHERAN SCHOOLS



## The Power of Yet

**As educators, it is sometimes challenging to stay focused on the positive** rather than looking at the things we want to improve and outcomes we want to change for our students. We sometimes lose sight of the wonderful things God is doing in the lives of our students and in our ministry when we only see the things that still must be accomplished. This is another reason to avoid using the phrase *learning loss* this year.

**This phrase has the potential to put students and teachers in a deficit-based mindset** rather than highlighting strengths. It can make students feel that their learning and progress is broken rather than simply unfinished and that coming to school is focused on being fixed. When this is the case, motivation for learning is lost and students will not be engaged. Teachers may also lose heart if they don't see students catching up as quickly as they would like or expect. We need to be careful not to destroy confidence by putting students in categories according to what assessments are telling us they have not yet mastered. Confidence is much harder to get back once it is destroyed, and growth mindset has a role in facilitating this confidence.

**There is a clear connection between mindset and academic success.** Students who have a growth mindset and who have teachers who teach and model these practices in their classrooms have been shown to improve their grades and academic achievement. This is also true of students who started off with lower achievement levels than their peers. Thinking of learning



as being unfinished rather than lost also complements growth mindset. Growth mindset emphasizes that there are skills students don't have *yet*. It teaches that these skills and abilities will come — it just hasn't happened yet. Unfinished learning emphasizes the same. The learning hasn't been reversed or lost — it just hasn't happened yet. Focusing on growth mindset and the power of *yet* is important for students to hear and understand.

**Think for a minute about how students learn and progress in their skills in non-academic settings.** Soccer coaches and piano teachers don't typically give students grades or send home test results to demonstrate to parents how their children are doing. Instead, they give students a lot of feedback as they see them perform the applicable skills. They stop to talk about what the student is doing well and model opportunities for improvement. The child leaves the session or practice with the knowledge of how to improve and what needs to be



practiced. Students in these non-academic settings are motivated to improve because they likely have a game or performance coming up, and they want to demonstrate their skills as best they can.

**Applying this concept to academics, the idea of learning portfolios and having student present their portfolios to parents and others in the school as a demonstration of their learning is helpful.** Maybe you already use portfolios to showcase learning at parent-teacher conferences, but also make sure that students have a large role in choosing and reflecting on items to be included. Some traditional measurement tools might be important to include but should not be the driving force behind the portfolio. Students also play an important role in this process as they work on presenting their portfolios to their parents and others in the school. They should be able to describe how the items included reflect their strengths and show



progress toward goals. Additionally, students should be able to tell others what their learning goals are and why they are important. Character traits and social emotional skills should also be included. This strategy helps students stay motivated and focused on the purpose of the activities being done in the classroom. It helps them see progress toward standards and content they haven't mastered *yet*.

Practices such as using learning portfolios also refocus educators to see students' abilities first and provide opportunities for them to have meaningful practice in the areas they have identified as goals. This allows students the opportunity to use their creativity in how they present and describe their learning. Items included in their portfolios are not predefined, and how they present these is also not set in stone. This helps us see some of the other skills students may have learned during the last year rather than just thinking about what they haven't learned.

***We need to be careful not to destroy confidence by putting students in categories according to what assessments are telling us they have not yet mastered.***



***It is easy to look at and focus on the learning we still want to see with our students rather than the progress they have made and the skills they may have that we never realized.***

We can help children highlight and celebrate the gifts that God has given them and how He has developed them even more over the last 18 months by understanding the power of *yet*. For more ideas on reaching individual students and meeting their needs, reach out to LSEM at [lsem@luthsped.org](mailto:lsem@luthsped.org) or visit our website at [luthsped.org](http://luthsped.org).



## **Fearfully and Wonderfully Made** VOL. 5, NO. 4 // DECEMBER 2021

A RESOURCE OF LCMS SCHOOL MINISTRY

Writer: Dr. Kara Bratton Designer: Erica Schwan

Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved. TO REPRINT: Permission is granted to reprint articles from this newsletter with the credit line "Reprinted with permission of LCMS School Ministry."

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

© 2021 LCMS

PHOTOS: GETTY IMAGES



# Parent Pages

RESOURCES FOR CHRISTIAN PARENTS IN THE 21ST CENTURY



## Learning from Our COVID Memories

**D**ecember marks nearly two years since our world turned upside down due to COVID-19. We have weathered so many changes that change has become the new normal. It's time to take stock of the experiences of the last two years and help our children to process this monumental event in their lives.

As adults, we have the benefit of a lifetime of experiences to compare the most recent events. When we hear stories from grandparents, we can compare our challenges to those they experienced in their lifetimes. For children, processing memories is a new skill their brains are starting to learn. Now is an excellent time to help your children process the past two years and to create healthy memories that will serve them well in the future.

When we process our memories with a range of emotions, they become more useful in dealing with future events. If we record our memories with only negative emotions, then negativity will resurface the next time we have a challenge. When we register memories with positive emotions, in addition to the negative, our brains will be able to use those memories to be resilient in times of stress or change. Emotions impact our memories just as they influence our perceptions of current events. The trick is not to bury the negative but to pair it with positive insights.

Processing memories involves three main steps: review, connect and share.

### Review

Now is a great time to record stories about what has happened since March of 2020. Interview your children, and let them ask you questions. Record these discussions on your phone and consider printing them in

a book along with pictures from this time. Any little detail has the potential to be significant. The brain enjoys this process because it helps to make sense of a jumble of memories.



While discussing past events, ask your children to describe their emotions. You may find that the emotions in their current rendition do not match what you remember. Children often remember themselves as being braver than they were. It is a positive coping mechanism. However, being honest about fears, worries and frustrations is healthy for emotional development. We all need to accept that we feel these things if we are going to learn from the experience of what caused them.

### Connect

Once you have recorded as many stories as you can remember and talked about the downsides to the events, it is time to connect memories with positive emotions. Each event in our



lives teaches us something. If memory is processed with positive emotions, when our brain brings back the memory in a similar situation, we are encouraged to view the new challenge positively. This connection promotes good problem-solving.

While it is great to talk about how your children were brave or how they adjusted, the best way to connect a negative experience with positive emotion is to look for the blessings. Considering our blessings inspires us to be grateful. Gratitude is a powerful emotion because not only does it make us feel good, but also it reminds us that we are not alone.

Think of it this way: when we face a new problem, our brains search for memories of similar situations. The primary goal of this search is to find an emotional response that will promote good problem-solving. If the memory search pulls up reasons to be grateful, it is a reminder that help is available. It is also a potent reminder that Jesus is our most substantial source of support.

## Share

In addition to the healthy processing of memories, looking for blessings will help with the development of the skill of empathy. When your children know they are loved, protected



and learning, their basic emotional needs are met, so they think less about themselves. When children realize how Jesus helped them through a difficult time, it frees up brain space to think about others.

As you review your memories from the past two years, talk about how other people might have experienced that time. Can you identify ways you helped other people? Can you look for ways to help others now? Imagining other people's needs and planning ways to meet those needs are great ways to share faith. This also makes for influential memory lessons as your child connects faith with gratitude and empathy.

"Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices; my flesh also dwells secure" (PSALM 16:9).

It is no coincidence that this verse from Psalm 16 connects security with gladness and rejoicing. God designed our memories and emotions to record our experiences and learn from them, and to grow a sense of resilience that springs from our faith. When we remember God's care and express that memory in gratitude and rejoicing, our memories develop a solid connection to our faith. In the future, when problems arise, we will remember that God is bigger than our problems, that He sent His Son to save us and that through the Word and Sacraments, His Spirit grows our faith. Now, that is a remarkable memory from these past two years!





# Professionally Speaking



## Gifts in All Things



**A**s we move into the Advent and Christmas season, our minds turn to gifts. First off, we celebrate the greatest gift people ever received: a Savior born to us, Christ the Lord. Next, modeling after God's loving gift, we think of how we also might share love through gifts to those around us, whether items, actions or time. Much energy goes into gift-giving at this time of year. If you are as poor at gift wrapping as I am, TOO much energy goes into this act!

Even in our Lutheran schools, we spend time preparing to give gifts. Children make special creations to take home to place under the tree for mom, dad, perhaps other family members. I remember making ornaments that then hung on the family tree for years. We set aside classroom time to prepare the gift of Christmas programs, from musicals to concerts, even live nativities.

These experiences grow our students, and they proclaim the good news of Jesus' birth, but these events are also gifts to our school families, our congregations and our communities.

This season can also be one of stress for Lutheran educators, scrambling to help students get those parent gifts done, pulling together volunteers to manage a classroom party, collecting donations for a charity (food drives, toy drives, even baby items for a crisis pregnancy center – all such are common at this time of year). We fit in time for Christmas program rehearsals while still trying to move our students forward in their studies, holding on to their focus while they want to think about presents, Christmas vacation and holiday travel to Grandma's house.

Wow. This sounds rather chaotic. That's how it often feels for teachers, directors and principals through December. So today, let me remind you of what an amazing gift we Lutheran educators experience at this time of year. We get to fill the season not just with Santa, with presents, with candy canes, snowmen and reindeer. We fill the season with Jesus in our schools. We rejoice as the angels announce the birth of the Savior to the shepherds. We take our students to the manger. We bring our gifts alongside the magi. We ensure that the true reason for the season is shouted from the mountaintops. Christmas lacks meaning otherwise — but never in Lutheran schools. Here, as educational professionals, we may rejoice in God's gift to the world.

Merry Christmas! Joy to the world, the Lord is come!

## Professionally Speaking // DECEMBER 2021

Writer: Mr. Jim Scriven Designer: Lisa Moeller

Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved. TO REPRINT: Permission is granted to reprint articles from this newsletter with the credit line "Reprinted with permission of LCMS School Ministry."

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

© 2021 LCMS

PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES

A RESOURCE OF LCMS SCHOOL MINISTRY



# Rattles & Prattles

A RESOURCE FOR CAREGIVERS OF INFANTS AND TODDLERS



## God Keeps His Promise to Send the Savior for ALL. “CHRIST IS ALL, AND IN ALL” (COL. 3:11).

**Bible Story:** Annunciation; Birth of Jesus; Visit of the Shepherds

**Scripture References:** Luke 1:26–38; Matt. 1:18–25; Luke 2:1–21

**What it teaches us:** Just as God promised, His Son, Jesus, came to earth to be our Savior. God sent an angel to tell Mary and Joseph they would be Jesus’ earthly parents, and angels to announce the news of Jesus’ birth. They were filled with joy as are we.

### Prepare to teach

➤ **Read** the Bible stories in several versions of the Bible and, if possible, a study Bible.

➤ **Think:** In the Old Testament we read God made many promises to send a Savior (e.g. Adam and Eve, Abraham). This month we share news God kept His promise. “God sent ... his Son, born of a woman ... to redeem” (GAL. 4:4–5).

➤ **Pray:** Dear Jesus, we are happy knowing YOU left Your home in heaven and came to earth to be our Savior — to live, suffer, die and come alive again for us. Thank You, Jesus. Amen.



## WORSHIP TIME AND BIBLE STORY PRESENTATION

### You will need

- ▶ Little Ones Sing Praise (*LOSP*), copyright © 1989 Concordia Publishing House (CPH), St. Louis, Mo.
- ▶ Picture of Jesus (do an internet search).
- ▶ Pictures: search online for free pictures of Jesus' birth and the shepherds' visit.

### Gather for Worship

Use tune of "Goodbye, Goodbye" (*LOSP*, P. 40).

**Hello, Hello, He-lo-o-o, Hello, my friends, to you.  
Please come here and sit with me; we'll learn of Jesus  
too. He-lo-o!**

### Invocation

Use melody from above.

**Hel-lo, Hell-o, Hel-lo; Hel-lo-o-o. Hello,  
dear God, to You. We know You are  
our Father, God's Son and Spirit  
too. He-lo-o!**

Opening Song: Show picture of Jesus. Sing "Jesus Loves the Little Children" (*LOSP*, P. 94).

Introduction: Sing, using tune of "Jesus Loves the Little Children" (*LOSP*, P. 94):

**Jesus came for all the children ...  
Let's hear the story of Jesus' birth.**

### Bible Story

(Use appropriate pages found in a free internet search.)  
Chant!

**God sent an angel to tell Mary — she'd be Mother of  
Jesus; Yippee!**

**Refrain: Jesus will come. Jesus will come. Jesus will  
come! Yippee!**

**Mary and Joseph traveled one day. It was almost time  
for Jesus to come.**

**Refrain: Jesus will come. Jesus will come. Jesus will  
come. Yippee!**

**Mary and Joseph found a place to sleep — Mmmm!  
Soft-sweet smelling hay.**

**Refrain: Jesus will come, Jesus will come. Jesus will  
come. Yippee!**

**On Christmas night, Jesus! Our Savior was born.**

**Refrain: Jesus was born. Jesus was born. Jesus was  
born. Yippee!**

**Angels told shepherds the REALLY good news!**

**Refrain: Jesus was born. Jesus was born. Jesus was  
born. Yippee!**

**Shepherds went running to see — Jesus sleeping  
so quietly!**

**Refrain: Jesus was born. Jesus was born.  
Jesus was born. Yippee!**

**Shepherds told people the wonder-  
ful news! Jesus was born!**

**Refrain: Jesus was born. Jesus  
was born. Jesus was born. Yippee!**

### What the Story Teaches:

Christmas is a happy day. We're happy Jesus loves us so much He came to be our Savior. He lived, suffered, died and came alive again.

**Song to Sing:** (tune: Farmer in the Dell) **We're  
happy Jesus came. We're happy Jesus came. He came  
to be our Savior. We're happy Jesus came.**

### Prayer

**Dear Jesus, we are so happy You came from heaven  
to be our Savior. Mary and Joseph were happy. The  
shepherds were happy too. Please help us to tell oth-  
ers, so they can be happy too. Amen.**

### Closing/Benediction

**Jesus' time is just about over; before we go it's time  
to sing "Good-bye, Good-bye" (*LOSP*, P. 40). Optional:  
Make the sign of the cross as pastors do at the end of  
the service.**





## CURRICULAR MATERIALS //

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

### S Science and Nutrition

› **Science:** God gives us eyes to see (ex. things in the room, things outside and our manger scene). See the figures near the manger. **Thank You, God, for eyes to see Jesus was born to be our Savior.**

› **Nutrition:** Serve an edible manger (half a graham cracker and shredded cheddar cheese).

› **Physical Education:** Create actions for the story refrain “Jesus was born ...” (March, squat, stretch, shout, walk, run, jump, wave arms, etc.)

### T Technology

› **Use an interactive sound book** like *Christmas Songs* by Holly Berry-Byrd (Cottage Door Press, 2016).

### R Reading and Language Arts

› **Books:** *Christmas in the Manger*, board book by Nola Buck (HarperFestival, 1998), *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?* board book by Bill Martin, Jr. (Henry Holt and Co., 1996).

› **Make a book/rhyme** using the cadence of *Brown Bear* (use pictures from the Bible Story).

Mary, Mary, what do you see?  
Baby Jesus smiling at me.  
Jesus, Jesus, what do You see?  
Joseph taking good care of Me.  
Joseph ... shepherds coming quietly...

**CONNECT  
WITH PARENTS  
in your newsletter**

We shared the happy story of our Savior’s birth.

We encourage you to celebrate Jesus’ birth this Christmas. If you don’t already have one, get an age-appropriate Nativity Set — for you and your child to play with. “Jesus was born. Jesus was born. Jesus was born! Yippee!”

### E Engineering

› **Have a small manger** and some straw. Invite the children to make a bed for Baby Jesus. How can they make a sleep sack? Blanket?

### A Arts (art, music)

› **Art:** Jesus’ bed was some straw in a manger. Wrap several pieces of straw together and use to paint a bed for Baby Jesus.

› **Music:** “In a Little Stable” (*LOSP*, P. 81). Change Verse 2: **Shepherds stood around Him, happy to be there. Angels sent from heaven said He would be there.**

### M Mathematics

› **Create a counting rhyme:** One, one! Oh, what fun! Baby Jesus! 1, 1, 1! Two, two! I see two! Mary, Joseph; that makes 2. Three, three; count with me. Three tall shepherds; that’s-what we see! Four, four; 1-2, 3, 4! Four-little sheep, maybe more! Five, five! Wow! Count with me. angels singing joyfully. 1,2,3,4,5.

### S Social Studies/Dramatic Play

› **Add a manger** to the dramatic play area with a doll (Baby Jesus). What does Baby Jesus need? Mary and Joseph took care of Baby Jesus. God gives us our mommies and daddies to take care of us.



# School Shepherd

TIPS AND SUPPORT FOR PASTORS OF CONGREGATIONS WITH SCHOOLS



THEME | The PEACE of Jesus in All Things

## All Things Peacefully Considered

“And through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross” (COL. 1:20).

**T**he goal was to have a peaceful presentation of the nativity by the school children. However, for the pastor and director, the process of getting to the presentation was anything but peaceful: several children (and parents) complained about their parts or the lack thereof, teachers complained about rehearsal times and the songs were anything but harmonious. However, the Spirit of peace was at work, and children, parents, grandparents and many friends were blessed again when the story of Jesus’ birth was humbly shared by the children of the Lutheran school.

Christmas Eve for the shepherds in the fields of Bethlehem was anything but peaceful: there was the lonely darkness of the night, wild animals in the hills and “they were filled with fear” (LUKE 2:9) when the calm was interrupted by a host of angels. However, the angels’ message of “good news of a great joy” (LUKE 2:10) would bring them peace that night and forever through a visit to Bethlehem.

Easter Eve was not peaceful for Jesus’ disciples. Some had seen the empty tomb but still questioned the reality of the resurrection. Many were still fearful that the enemies of their Master would not hesitate to crucify them even as they had crucified Jesus. Into this setting, the risen Christ appears and announces, “Peace be with you” (JOHN 20:26). Peace would come to Thomas as he saw the nail-scarred hands and feet.



No matter the season, Lutheran school ministry is not always peaceful. Peace is disrupted by:

- › The personal and family stresses of the pastor and staff which rob personal peace and distract from joyful and effective ministry.
- › Conflict in the school or congregation and between staff members, pastor and principal, teacher and parents.
- › Lack of financial or other resources and disagreements over use of resources.
- › Cultural wars which tempt the school ministry to waiver from the truth of God’s Word.

Jesus brings peace at all times and in all situations. Jesus promised, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you” (JOHN 14:27). Peace through Jesus would not come through

compromises, treaties or diplomacies. The peace of Jesus would come “by the blood of his cross” (COL. 1:20). The message to the world and the message through Lutheran schools is that Jesus has brought us peace with God through His sacrifice on the cross. With sins forgiven, there is peace!

The school shepherd has the privilege of sharing the peace of Jesus. Worship in the Lutheran school shares God’s peace in Christ. In waters of Holy Baptism, the child receives peace from the devil and all his works and all his ways. Having received the body and blood of Jesus, the school staff and school families “depart in peace” from the Lord’s Table (*Lutheran Service Book*, p. 164, 2006).

Speaking God’s Word, the school shepherd shares the Word of peace in many school contexts:

- › The reality of Jesus’ resurrection brings peace to a grieving school staff member or family.
- › Guided by God’s Word, conflicted parties gather together to confess and forgive.
- › The distraught student (bullied, abused, confused) is assured that the presence and peace of Jesus will never leave him.
- › School routine is peacefully restored after the storm warning or other disruption.

The shepherd who shares the peace is also blessed to receive Jesus’ peace. While the peace of Jesus comes only through the Means of Grace, the school shepherd acknowledges his own (and his family’s) emotional and physical needs, and is open to professional assistance to remain healthy and effective in serving others.

Lutheran schools and school shepherds join in the angels’ chorus, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!” (LUKE 2:14). Blessed and made pleasing through the blood of Jesus, Lutheran schools are peaceful in all things.

## prayer

### ALL THINGS IN JESUS’ NAME

Lord Jesus, may there be the peace of Jesus on earth, in our school building and ministry, in our congregation, in every home and in every heart in all things, in Jesus’ name. Amen.

### CONNECTIONS AND CONVERSATIONS IN ALL THINGS (with staff, board and ministry partners):

- › Reflect on times and situations when personal, professional or church and school ministry peace seemed absent. How were these situations peacefully resolved?
- › When has the Good News of Jesus brought peace to you and to your school ministry?
- › What would make your Lutheran school a more peaceful place?

### HYMN

“All you, beneath your heavenly load,  
By care and guilt bent low,  
Who toil along a dreary way  
With painful steps and slow:  
Look up, for golden is the hour,  
Come swiftly on the wing,  
The Prince was born to bring you peace;  
Of Him the angels sing.” (*LSB* 366:3)





# Time Out for Directors

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT TIPS FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD CENTER ADMINISTRATORS



## Learning In All Things: Christmas Today and Every Day



**Do you have a friend who decorates for Christmas already in October?** Perhaps you have a colleague who begins buying Valentine candy at the same time she purchases clearance Christmas items — in early January. Or, perhaps you like to save some Easter candy to devour during the hot summer months. Who said one can only celebrate a holiday in the same month it appears on the calendar?

You may have heard it said by early childhood educators and leaders in Lutheran schools that “Jesus isn’t just for Jesus Time — He is for all of the time!” This is so true! Jesus is for all — all of the time and in all things! Jesus doesn’t leave us; He is with us every moment of the day. Early childhood educators often talk to students about Christ’s ever-presence, but have you really thought of what it means for children? How can you support student learning in all things — all curricular areas — that specifically focus on Christ throughout the day?

This month, December, is a perfect way to introduce learning about Jesus in all curricular areas. Yes, December may be a short month on your school calendar because of Christmas vacation, but what rule exists that doesn’t allow Christmas topics to carry over into January? As a Lutheran school educator, January invites the opportunity for extra learning surrounding Christmas with the time of Epiphany too!

You are an instructional leader. If you are a teacher, then you are an instructional leader for the students in your classroom. If you are an administrator, then you have more instructional leadership responsibility to ensure consistency, appropriate practices and learning happen throughout your program. As a Lutheran school leader, it is necessary to ensure the Christian faith is woven throughout the environment, curriculum and engagements with students. As Colossians 3:17 shares, “whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.” God gives you and your staff the gifts to ensure He is included in all things — throughout your classroom and school!

The following ideas can be implemented into your early childhood classroom(s) to encourage learning throughout the curriculum. You’ll find that weaving Christmas and literacy into multiple areas of learning can be very easy to do. In all things you do, remember to naturally share the faith with your students, help them grow in their faith and live it out in the classroom each day!

### **Nativity Sets**

Do you provide a variety of nativity sets for your students to use? Try to position a variety of nativity sets

around the classroom so students have easy access to them. Consider placing a Christmas story book next to the nativity set. You might be amazed at how often children might be sparked to look through the pages, read the story and then place the nativity characters in position according to a picture of the book.

Another idea is to place a nativity set in a plastic tub and include index cards or sticky notes and pencils. Encourage students to label the characters of the nativity or draw extra components. Older students may be able to write down corresponding Bible verses from the Christmas story. Provide an example in the plastic tub so students have an idea of what they could do.

### **Dramatic Play**

It's not always easy to provide dress-up clothes that correspond to the nativity, but it is possible. If you don't have materials, or time to locate materials, provide name labels (with pictures) of nativity characters. Students can wear the name labels and act out the nativity story. Even better — have students create and write their own name labels for the nativity.

### **Writing and Drawing Prompts**

Students love to read, draw and color. Sometimes young students need a small bit of encouragement, or a prompt, to spark their interest or thought for writing. Provide prompts for students on writing paper, sentence strips or index cards that allow them to write about a part of the Christmas story. Some examples could include:

- “Some people who saw Baby Jesus were ...”
- “My favorite animal in the stable is a ...”
- “God sent Jesus to be born because He loves ...”
- “Christmas is ...”

Another idea is to feature a “Christmas Word Wall” in your classroom. This allows students to independently read and refer to words as needed for their writing adventures.

### **In The Block Area**

Encourage students to build a nativity stable with blocks. Provide a variety of building materials, as well as materials, such as small index cards, to label their creations. Consider adding laminated pictures of nativity characters so they can be included in the building of the stable. Laminated nativity characters could be placed on blocks with fabric fastener, put on craft sticks placed in clay bases or used in other creative ways.

### **Artistry**

Nothing is better than supplying a large blank piece of paper and allowing a child to create. See what students can create while playing favorite Christmas songs in the background. Place some nativity characters near the paper and see what children do. Another idea is to provide Christmas colors of paint (red, green and white) and black paper.

### **Science Learning**

Sometimes the Christmas star is not given adequate conversation in the whole of the Christmas story. Provide students with a variety of flashlights and small pieces of construction paper. Allow students to poke small holes in the construction paper using a pencil, scissors or other safe item. Place the paper over the light of the flashlight, shine the “star” on the wall or ceiling and see what the children do!

These are just a few small examples of how you can encourage Christmas learning across the curriculum — even outside the month of December. Engage in conversation with colleagues and gather a few more ideas! Search for additional ideas online or start a conversation via #luthed on Facebook or one of the Lutheran Education Association (LEA) Listservs. You will find that many like-minded, faith-focused early childhood educators love dialoguing about their classroom and activities.

In conclusion, remember to seriously carry out your role as an instructional leader — a faith-filled instructional leader. Many teachers know how to teach ABCs and 123s, but being able to share the faith when doing so is a special gift that is abundant in Lutheran schools!

**~ Merry Christmas! ~**

## **Time Out for Directors**

VOL. 26, NO. 4 // DECEMBER 2021

A RESOURCE OF LCMS SCHOOL MINISTRY

Writer: Dr. Drew Gerdes Designer: Lisa Moeller

Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved. TO REPRINT: Permission is granted to reprint articles from this newsletter with the credit line “Reprinted with permission of LCMS School Ministry.”

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

© 2021 LCMS

PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES

