

Who Will Teach Me Chapel?



A Chapel Resource
for Early Childhood
Education Centers

Who Will Teach Me Chapel?

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Who Will Teach Me Chapel?

Dedicated to The Rev. Delbert Schulz

1913 - 1998

Del Schulz, one of the most persistent champions and advocates for Lutheran Schools. His ministry and service have touched every school and early childhood center in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. His commitment and partnership with his local, regional and national peers maintained a framework and foundation on which Lutheran schools continue to benefit and from which new schools find life as they spring forth. The spiritual growth and foundation of children was extremely important in Del's life and ministry. It is appropriate Who Will Team Me Chapel is dedicated to his living memory throughout Lutheran Schools.

Who will teach me Chapel? You will. I am deeply grateful for your ministry and efforts on behalf of God's children.

John J. Scibilia, ELCA Director for Schools



Memorial gifts and tributes may be made to the Lutheran Teachers Endowment Fund. This fund was established in the former American Lutheran Church by the School Leadership Team: Del Schulz, Mel Kieschnick, Don Vetter and Glenn Bracht. "Any gift to this endowment will continue to serve young people as only the earnings of the endowment will be used."

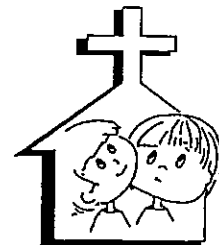
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The Rev. Carla Meier, Author
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PREFACE

Not long ago a mother of one of our preschool students came up to me with a dilemma. She told me that she had gone up to the local grade school to register her daughter for kindergarten. But when they came out from orientation, her daughter said to her, "Mommy, which one will be my teacher?"

"The woman with the blond hair, I think, honey."

"But mommy, who will teach me chapel? What about Pastor?"



Mom went on to describe how much her daughter likes chapel time and she told me that she now plans to enroll her daughter in a Christian school. "She really loves being with you in Chapel, Pastor!" Mom concluded.

Our chapel time began a year ago when our school became a Lutheran Early Childhood Education Center. That decision was the result of our congregation's involvement in an Area Mission Strategy Process conducted by our synod.¹ Through this process we talked one-to-one with the Early Childhood families of our school as well as with our neighbors who had small children. In our conversations we discovered, much to our surprise, that they were quite open to coming to a Lutheran School and they were very interested in learning more about chapel time.

¹Stephen P. Bouman, Lisa Stoen-Hazelwood, H. Gaylon Barker and Carla Meier, *Re-Rooting In Our Communities: The Area Mission Strategy Process*, (New York: Metropolitan New York Mission Institute, 1998). This material is available in consultation with Pastor Carla Meier and Pastor Gaylon Barker, Assistants to the Bishop for the Metropolitan New York Synod (212-532-5369, ext. 416).

In the midst of our listening process I remember our bishop, Stephen Bouman, Bishop of The Metropolitan New York Synod, asking me, “What are you known for at Trinity? When members of the community think of Trinity, what do they think of? Kentucky Fried Chicken is known for chicken, what are you known for?”

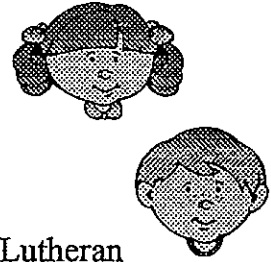
His questions hit home. We weren’t known for anything in particular; in fact, we weren’t even known in our neighborhood. As we talked to more and more members of our community, we discovered that not only was our worshiping community unknown, our then non-Lutheran Nursery School of 29 years was not known either. We had a lot of work to do.

We began by listening to the members of our congregation. We talked with them about what they love about their church and community and about what they wished could be different. Then we did the same thing in our community. What we discovered was amazing and wonderful. We discovered that we live in a mission field, as do so many congregations today. Our surrounding community is very diverse both in ethnicity and in religious practice, with many families unchurched or inactive. It is truly mission territory. While we were not sure that our Jewish or Hindu families would want their children to learn about Jesus in class and in worship in our Lutheran School, at the same time, we knew that our own membership could not sustain an Early Childhood Education Center.

Everything
we do is
Evangelism!

As we continued to talk with our members and our neighbors, we discovered that we did not need to fear transforming our congregation into one that reached out to the

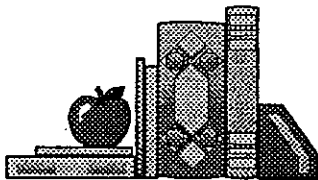
community. We did not need to fear transforming our school into a Lutheran School. Quite the opposite. We learned that our community, internal and external, welcomed the sharing of our faith.



Our neighborhood families were not hesitant to send their children to a Lutheran School. What we learned was that we were more hesitant to share the good news than our community was to receive it! We realized in a new way what it meant to be called to “go and tell the good news.” As a congregation we wanted to stop merely surviving and learn new ways to reach out to the community around us. Our school was to become a very powerful way to witness to our faith Monday through Sunday.

We learned fast. Now everything we do is evangelism. Evangelism is no longer just a committee; it is a way of life. We are called, without apology and with joy, to proclaim the gospel to our community. We are here to be in mission, to reach out to our neighbors with the love of Jesus our Lord. What better way to do that than with a Lutheran School, where faith is taught and God’s love is shared? What better way to invite our community in, than through our school?

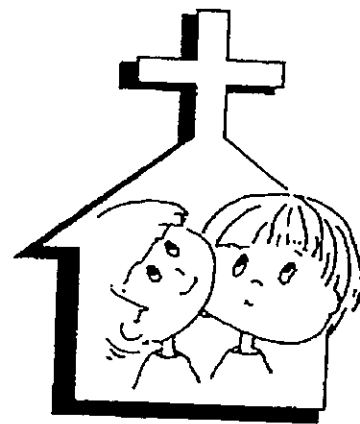
As a new Lutheran School it wasn’t long before chapel time was born. Contrary to our fears, we discovered that we would not lose students if we began to have worship each week. We would not offend our neighbors if we talked openly in our school about our love of Jesus, or if we sang



"Hallelujah" from *With One Voice*² during chapel time. The parents in our school embraced our new curriculum and chapel time with real enthusiasm. Now, each Wednesday and Thursday morning we welcome parents who come to chapel time to be with their children for worship, songs and prayer. Our school enrollment has almost doubled to 50 students since we became a Lutheran school and we rejoice that we are witnessing to our community through our school and chapel time.

As a parish pastor, chapel time consists of some of the most rewarding, energizing and fun minutes of my week. No matter how busy the week or how many phone calls waiting to be returned, chapel time is precious time for me, for our school staff, for the students, for their parents, and for our entire congregation.

Special thanks to Mr. John Scibilia, National Director of Lutheran Schools for the ELCA, without whom we would not have a Lutheran school, or a Chapel time, and without whom this resource would not have been written.

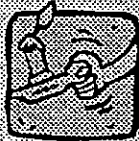


²*With One Voice: A Lutheran Resource for Worship* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1995), #609.

"Let It Shine!"

We weren't very far into the school year. We were in chapel and I was watching twenty little fingers reaching into the air and waving happily as our three and four year old nursery children sang, "This is my little gospel light, I'm going to let it shine ... let it shine all the time, all the time." Those little fingers may have been pretending to be gospel lights, but there was no pretending about their witness. In their smiling enthusiasm and open joy, these children are our best evangelists, singing about the light of Christ and the love of our savior Jesus. Their little gospel lights really do shine, all the time, all the time.

As the year progressed our gospel lights got more sophisticated, and at the end of the year, in front of all the parents, we held up bright blue-painted tubes of gospel lights with shimmering yellow tissue paper illuminating the top. We sang more quietly than we had rehearsed because we were in front of a crowd and we were nervous. But we held high our gospel lights and again we witnessed to the love of Christ.



This was the first time that our preschool children sang songs about Jesus at our year-end closing celebration. This was the first time songs of faith replaced "Peanut Butter" and "The Wheels On The Bus." That is because Trinity Lutheran Nursery School is now a Lutheran Early Childhood Education Center. Our school is committed to sharing the faith and teaching the children of our neighborhood that Jesus loves them and that they are welcome in our family of faith.

INTRODUCTION

Our chapel time lasts approximately 10 to 15 minutes.

It occurs in our schedule at the end of a two hour and 45 minute school period which allows parents to come to chapel and then pick up their child to head home.

Our chapel time follows a very simple outline of :

- ☞ Theme and Bible story
- ☞ Three to six songs
- ☞ The Lord's Prayer or another prayer
- ☞ An emphasis on the season of the church year, its colors and its symbols - what we see up at the altar, how it changes, what the colors and banners, candles, creche, advent wreath, crosses, etc., tell us.
- ☞ A story or an object lesson. (I read approximately one story a month.)

While the children are coming into the sanctuary they are singing. After they are seated, I ask them what they see up front in terms of the colors and the symbols. What is new, different, the same? Easter, for example, is fifty days, not one day, and so the paraments continue to be white and the Easter banner with the beautiful butterfly on it remains in the sanctuary for the fifty days.

We are blessed that we have enough room up by the altar so that the children can sit on the floor with me and the teaching staff. The parents sit in an adjoining room off to the side which helps, especially at the beginning of the year, to keep the 3 year old children from seeing them and running to them or crying for them. The parents can hear and see everything but the children's backs are to their parents.



We sing a song or two, depending upon their length, hear a Bible lesson, read a story or watch an object lesson, sing another song or two, say the Lord's Prayer (which we learn slowly, sentence-by-sentence, in the beginning of the year), and end with a favorite song. We do the same songs for a whole season and some we do all year long. We do not have a special time for an offering as yet.

A good friend taught me that children of all ages can learn the liturgy and we include songs and liturgy from the *Lutheran Book of Worship* and *With One Voice* as well as some of the more fun and simple, age appropriate songs, such as many used in Vacation Bible School curriculums. Clapping, finger plays, hand motions, sign language and body motion as well as rhythm instruments all work wonderfully with this age as well.



We follow the liturgical calendar and thus our year begins with Pentecost and ends with Pentecost. It is hard to describe the joy upon hearing a three or four year old child say that Christmas is about Jesus' birthday instead of Santa or that Easter is about Jesus' being alive instead of bunnies. These amazing discoveries upon the part of our young students make us realize how much of a difference those few minutes of chapel time each week can make.

This resource offers a monthly outline, but incorporates the season of the church year appropriate for that month. Therefore, for example, in the month of January, both the seasons of

Christmas and Epiphany are lifted up.



I believe that when it comes to planning for chapel time, simplicity and repetition are best. I have found that trying to follow a printed outline, read different prayers, or introduce more than a couple of lines of new music results in the children quickly losing interest.

Stories with lots of words and small pictures can bring out cries of “I can’t see!” and object lessons that are anything beyond nursery development and interest levels fall flat very fast. We do the same songs for weeks and the Lord’s Prayer all year. The songs may seem repetitious to the adults, but three or four year olds take weeks to learn a liturgical piece or a song with a number of verses. Unless there is a musician available, the leader has to be able to sing the songs a capella and needs to know them well.

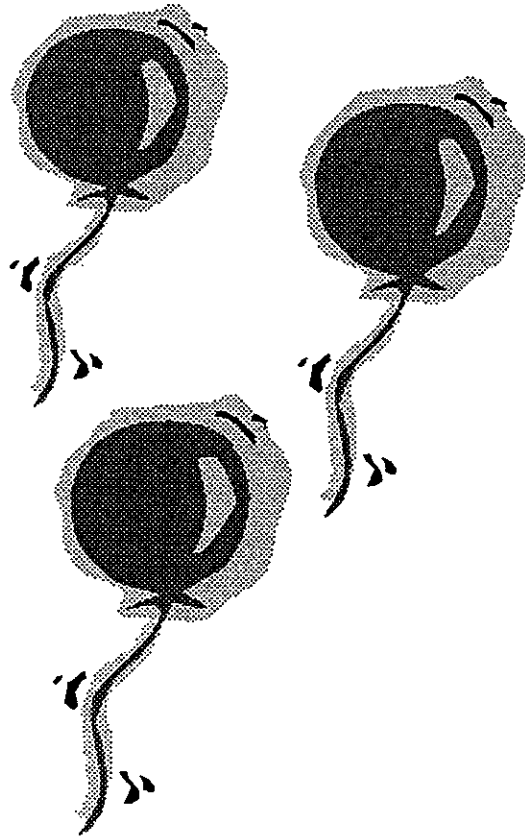
All that we do in chapel time is reinforced in the classroom teaching. What we share and learn in chapel time should not just be one small, independent part of the day, but a focus for the day, for the week, for the church season. The staff and pastor need to work together to make this happen. If the pastor(s) cannot be present for chapel time due to a funeral or schedule conflict, the teaching staff needs to be prepared to lead worship. The Director of our center and the teaching staff have copies of our chapel resource and know at the beginning of the year what we will be doing in chapel time. The songs we learn, the Bible lessons and themes are repeated in the classroom and crafts or objects that we use in chapel time are made in the classroom.



Chapel time is a wonderful time for witness and so we have included “Mission Moments,” a listing of ideas for outreach and opportunities to link school and congregation. All of chapel time is evangelism as the children, and any parents present, hear the good news and sing of Jesus’ love. The object lessons are a good way to teach evangelism as well and we

consistently talk about sharing what we have learned and different ways we can tell others about Jesus' love for us and for all the world.

It is important to have a good understanding of age appropriate songs, object lessons and stories. I was surprised how slowly ten minutes of chapel time can go if the children are not interested in what we are doing! Flexibility is essential. We have a lot of fun in our chapel time and take time to answer the children's many questions. When a favorite song is asked for, I forget about the next song I had planned and go with what the children ask to sing. Enjoy this precious time with the children and their parents!



CHAPEL TIME

THE SEASON OF PENTECOST SEPTEMBER

Theme: Jesus loves me.

Bible Verse: Mark 10:14

Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me."



Color of the church year:

Green, green is for growth, the spread of the gospel, new life. Where do you see green in the sanctuary?

Symbols to incorporate:

Plants, things that grow, the church, you, me! Look around the church, what do you see? Stained glass windows, altar, font, pulpit, crosses, paraments, banners, etc.

Object ideas for object lessons:

A picture album, pictures of us, of them, family pictures, pictures of Jesus, pictures of the children at school as you can get them. Talk about: Who are the people in the pictures? What does it mean to be in a family? Who is Jesus? Talk about the fact that Jesus loves all people, he loves everyone. Our church family is made up of lots of very different people. We are different ages, different heights, different colors, we speak different languages at home; we are a very diverse family but Jesus loves us all. We have a family at our school and church, and Jesus loves us all.

Another object lesson can center upon the colors on the altar, the church season, the objects we find in the sanctuary, explained on a nursery level.

Story ideas:

Families of God, written by Susan Swanson Swartz, illustrated by Deborah A. Kirkeeide (Minneapolis MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1994).

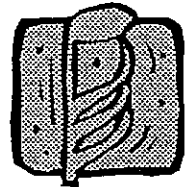
Ann Elizabeth Signs with Love, by Annetta E. Dellinger, art by Michael Hackett (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1991). This book teaches sign-language to the song "Jesus Loves Me," as it tells the story of a little deaf girl.

The Story of Moses, A Bible Pop-Up, (Ashland, Ohio: Landoll Inc., 1995). See also the many Arch Religious books (Concordia Publishing House) or Golden Books (Western Publishing Company, Racine Wisconsin) about Bible characters and stories, such as *The Story Of Noah's Ark*, *The Story of Jonah*, *The Little Boat that Almost Sank*, *The Walls Came Tumbling Down*, *The House on the Rock*, *The Rich Fool*, *Mary's Story*, *The Secret of the Star*, and *Kiri and the first Easter*. See also the catalogues from Augsburg Fortress and Concordia Publishing House for many more pre-school books ideas.

Song ideas:



All songs are from *Little Ones Sing Praise: Christian Songs for Young Children* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1989), unless otherwise noted.



"Jesus Loves Me, This I Know" (for sign language see "Ann Elizabeth Signs with Love," above in Story ideas).

"Good Morning, Good Morning, Good Morning to You"

"If You Feel Happy"

"Hallelujah," #609 *With One Voice*

"Kyrie," Holy Communion Setting I, II, or III in the *Lutheran Book of Worship* (Minneapolis MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1978), or Holy Communion Setting IV, V, or VI in *With One Voice* (Minneapolis MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1995).

Prayer: "Dear Jesus, thank you for loving me. Amen."
Begin to teach the Lord's Prayer.

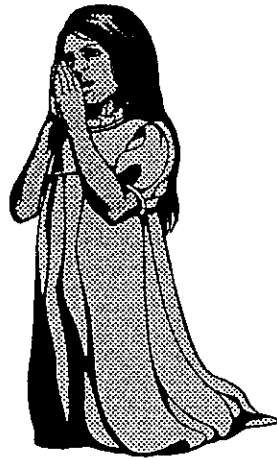
Mission Moment:

These are ideas for linking school and congregation, for taking what we teach in chapel time into the homes of our Early Childhood Education Center families and creating links between church and school.

Make sure that all the Early Childhood families are put on the newsletter and congregational mailing list so that they receive all the church mailings and invitations to church events. Write a letter of welcome to each family and especially invite them to worship, to Sunday School and to weekly church activities. Create a Early Childhood Education Center calendar that links school and congregational activities. At orientation, make sure that the pastor(s) is present to bring greetings, welcome the parents and children and let them know that the pastor is there for them, to talk, to listen, to share information about the Lutheran church, to counsel, to refer. Invite them to worship and Sunday School, share brochures and any pertinent congregational

information. The Pastor needs to be present at the start and close of school each day as the schedule permits, so that she or he may greet the parents and children, answer questions, and begin to build relationships with the children and their families or babysitters. It is these relationships that grow into stronger connections between church and school. Regular presence by the pastoral staff is essential in linking the two.

We invite the parents to chapel time beginning in the month of October; this gives the children time to adjust to all the changes Early Childhood Education brings and to understand our daily schedule. We do not have chapel the first week or two of classes, as many children are just learning to separate themselves from their moms and dads and need to get used to the classroom routine.



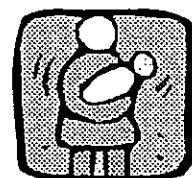
THE SEASON OF PENTECOST OCTOBER

Theme: In baptism we become precious children of God.

Bible Verse: Isaiah 43:1

“But now thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: ‘Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.’”

Color of the church year:
Green



Symbols to incorporate:

Baptismal symbols, signs of new life and growth like plants, flowers, etc.

Object ideas for object lessons:

Look at the baptismal font, the water pitcher, the baptismal candle, shell, water, napkin. What do these symbols stand for? What do they mean? Bring in a book of names, what do our names mean? What does your name mean? Our parents picked special names for us. In baptism, God adopted us, which makes us God’s own child. When we are baptized, we are called by name, we are washed clean and we are marked with the sign of the cross. In baptism we are named forever God’s precious child. In baptism we are given a new life, promised God’s love and forgiveness forever. We are very special to God. God knows us by name!



Story ideas:

Come Right In–You’re Home: God Says When We are Baptized by Marie Sundet, illustrated by Sunday School Children of First Lutheran Church, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, (Cedar Rapids, IA: Marie Sundet, 1996).

Song ideas:

Each month new songs will be suggested, but there will always be too many to be learned in such a short period of time. We keep repeating songs for at least six months until they learn them and only add a few new ones during that time.

“This is the Feast,” Holy Communion, Setting I, II or III, *Lutheran Book of Worship* or Holy Communion Setting IV, V or VI in *With One Voice*.

“God Loves you”

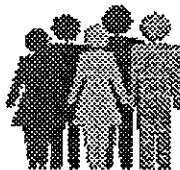
“Jesus! What a name”

Prayer: “Dear Jesus, thank you for loving me. Amen.”
The Lord’s Prayer

Mission Moment:

We ask the parents and family of the center’s children to wait until October to come to chapel time, so that the children can get used to moving from the classroom to the sanctuary and sitting for stories, songs, etc., without spotting mom or dad and being distracted. In October, once the children have gotten used to coming up for “Chapel Time,” invite the parents to attend. We moved our chapel time to just before dismissal time, so that the parents or grandparents who come to pick up their child come a few minutes early for chapel and then are there for dismissal. This schedule has worked well for us.

Invite the Early Childhood parents to a “Bring a Friend to Church Sunday” (for resources on this program see “Friendship Sunday Planning Guide,” 67-3343 from Augsburg Fortress Publishers and “Raise the Roof Sunday: A Guide for Planning a Theme-Based Friendship Sunday,” #69-3606 from Augsburg Fortress Publishers House.)³ Have the Sunday School children make special invitations inviting the Early Childhood Education Center’s children and parents. Make special phone calls inviting the center’s families. Use name tags to help everyone learn each other’s names and utilize welcome packets that include brochures, information about the church, about Lutheranism, etc. Have members trained to welcome any guests, assist with finding their way through worship and available to answer any questions about the church. We have Sunday “ambassadors,” in addition to greeters, and they make a special point of welcoming guests after worship, giving them a welcome packet and getting their names and addresses. A note thanking them for coming to worship is sent the following day. Have a potluck or picnic and be sure to include games for the young children. Face painting is especially fun for this age.



³A wonderful Evangelism guide with many evangelism resources, such as those listed above, is *Making Christ Known: A Guide to Evangelism For Congregations* #23-2334 Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 1996.

THE SEASON OF PENTECOST NOVEMBER

Theme: Jesus is with me, at school, at home, everywhere I go.

Bible Verse: Matthew 28:20b

"I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Color of the church year:

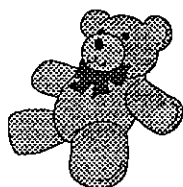
Green



Symbols to incorporate:

Bible and cross.

Object ideas for object lessons:



Bring in pictures of Jesus, objects from home, objects from school, and a suitcase. Talk about coming to school for the first time. Was it hard? Scary? Fun? Talk about taking trips, where do you go? Who do you go with? Do you ever like to bring something from home with you when you go places? Do you like to bring a special "Show and Tell" for school, a stuffed animal to hold when you go to sleep at grandma or grandpa's or in a hotel? Do you like having Mom and Dad with you when you go away? Or a sister, or a brother? It is nice to have people and special things that we know and love with us when we go to new places or try new things. Jesus promises to be with everywhere we go. Jesus is always with us, no matter what. Jesus is with us at home. Jesus is with us at school. Jesus is always with us. Show them a picture of Jesus. We can keep a picture of Jesus or the Bible (which is God's Word and tells us all about Jesus) or a cross with us wherever we go. Where are pictures of Jesus in the church? In your classroom? Where do you see crosses? (Usually some of the children will talk about crosses in their home or even be wearing crosses). These are all reminders to us that Jesus is always with us. He is with us to love us, comfort us, and protect us.

Talk about Thanksgiving. What does it mean to give thanks? What are we thankful for? If your congregation uses a cornucopia on the altar, you can talk about what it stands for and why we give thanks to God on Thanksgiving and worship on Thanksgiving Eve or Day.

Story ideas: *Sometimes I get Scared: Psalm 23 for Children*, by Elspeth Campbell Murphy, illustrated by Jane E. Nelson (Elgin, IL: David C. Cook Publishing

Co., 1980).

Thank You, God, for Me, by Marybeth Hageman, illustrated by Patricia Mattozzi, (St. Louis MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1997).

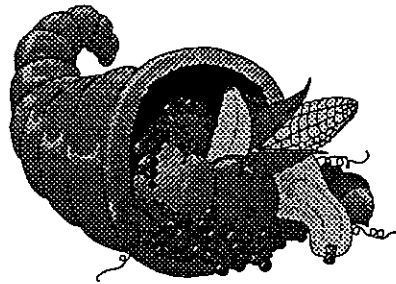
Song ideas: "Where is Jesus?"
"Thank You for the World So Sweet"

Prayer: The Lord's Prayer

Mission Moment:

Have an inter-generational Thanksgiving Feast inviting the Early Childhood Education Center families and all members of the congregation. Thanksgiving is a day we give thanks to God for all that we have: food, family (church and birth family), love and life.

Invite the Early Childhood families to participate in a Food Drive for the local food pantry or to give a special gift to World Hunger at the same time as the congregational members do. We give weekly to the food pantry and our center's families are most generous in bringing staple food items for the pantry.



THE SEASONS OF ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS DECEMBER



Theme: The birth of Jesus. Advent prepares us for Christmas.

Bible Verse: Luke 2:1-20 (Read the Christmas story in sections from the Bible.)

Color of the church year:

Blue for Advent hope and white for Christmas joy, purity and holiness. Where do you see these colors in the sanctuary?

Symbols to incorporate:

Symbols of Advent and Christmas include an Advent Wreath, Christmas tree, creche, banners.

Object ideas for object lessons:

Bring in an Advent calendar. Talk about why we count the days. These days are so important, they are days to get ready for Jesus' birth. How do we get ready? We pray, we come to church, we sing, we celebrate, we buy gifts to share. The calendar helps us to mark the days until Jesus' birth.



Use the symbols of Christmas and add gifts for giving. Talk about what the different symbols mean. Christmas is Christ's birthday. We receive gifts because it is Jesus' birthday. We give gifts to those we love. What gifts can we bring to Jesus?

Story ideas: *The Herald Angels* by Linda Parry, illustrations by Alan Parry (Dallas, Texas: WordKids! Word Publishing, 1996).

The Very Special Baby: A Christmas Story for the Very Young by Carol Woodard (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1968).

What is Christmas? A Lift-The-Flap Story by Lille James (San Francisco: HarperCollins, Harper Festival, 1994).

The Shoemaker's Dream illustrations by Masahiro Kasuya, English text by Mildred Schell, Based on "Where Love Is" by Leo Tolstoy (Valley Forge: Judson Press 1982).

A Christmas Promise by Lark Carrier (Natick, MA: Picture Book Studio Ltd., 1986).

Jesus' Christmas Party by Nicholas Allan (NY: Random House Inc., 1991).

My Christmas Angel: A Hide-and-Seek Story by Sarah Reid Chisholm,

illustrated by Michelle Neavill (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1993). [It is difficult to find some of the hidden angels, especially with a large group. Find them all well ahead and help point them out. The children love hidden picture books.]

Modestita's Gift: A Christmas Story by Inez Torres Davis, illustrated by Kate Brennan Hall Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1991).

The Christmas Donkey by Gillian McClure (Great Britain: Gillian McClure, A Sunburst Book, Farrar Straus Giroux, Scholastic Publications, 1993).

A Dozen Silk Diapers: A Christmas Story by Melissa Kajpust, illustrated by Veselina Tomova (New York: Hyperion Paperbacks for Children, 1995).

Song ideas: "Light One Candle."

"Away in a Manger," #67 *Lutheran Book of Worship*

"Go Tell It On the Mountain," #70 *Lutheran Book of Worship*. (You can use only the refrain, repeated, with clapping.)

Songs from the Christmas Pageant you are working on.



Prayer: The Lord's Prayer

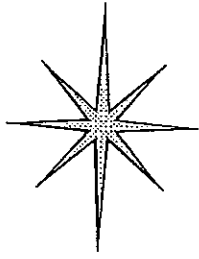
Mission Moment:

Try incorporating a Christmas pageant into your schedule to present to the parents. One example is: "A Christmas Eve Service Focusing on Preschoolers" by Judy Gattis Smith, (See the October, 1992 edition of *Church Educator*, published by Education Ministries Incorporation, Prescott, Arizona, 1-800-221-0910).

Be sure to especially invite the Early Childhood Education Center families to Advent, Christmas Eve and Christmas Day worship services, pageants, caroling, and any other special events, using a special letter, flyer, or invitations the children make.

At our 5 p.m. Christmas Eve worship I include a Christmas story for young children. This service is designed for families and a special Christmas story, chosen for nursery and elementary age, has been a very positive addition to this service.

Including the Early Childhood children as a young choir to sing in worship is also a way to include the children and their families, especially at this time of the church year.



THE SEASONS OF CHRISTMAS AND EPIPHANY JANUARY

Theme: Epiphany - it means "showing." God shows himself to all the world in the birth of Jesus. The wise men followed the light of the star which showed them the way to the baby Jesus.

Bible Verse: Matthew 2: 10-11

"When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. Upon entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage."

Color of the church year:

White for Christmas joy and Green for Epiphany growth of the Good News of Jesus' birth - where do you see these colors in the sanctuary?

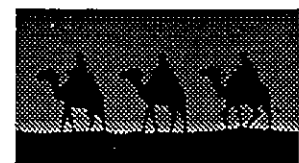
Symbols to incorporate:

Symbols of Christmas and add Epiphany stars, the wise men, new banners.

Object ideas for object lessons:

The Christmas tree - why is it still up? Christmas is a season, not a day. Christmas is 12 days. The wise men brought the baby Jesus precious gifts. What gifts did you get for Christmas? What gifts did you give? Talk again about what gifts we can bring to Jesus. What if you have a banner with a star on it, as we do? Talk about the star, how it led the wise men to the baby Jesus. How does light guide our way? A flashlight can be used to illustrate the light and you can talk about how God helped the wise men to find Jesus and then helped them to escape from Herod so that they could tell others about Jesus, our savior who was born in a manger in Bethlehem.

How do we "show" things, "see" things? We look with our eyes, we touch with our hands. God wanted us to see him, to see how much he loves us. So he sent us his son, Jesus, who was just like us. The wise men could see him, could touch him. And as he grew up Jesus taught us to "see" how to love each other, to "see" how to forgive each other. He showed us how to live together.



Story ideas: Tell the story of the wise men, Matthew 2:1-23.

The Christmas Star by Marcus Pfister, translated by J. Alison James, (New York: North-South Books, 1993).

This is the Star by Joyce Dunbar and Gary Blythe, (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1996).

My Christmas Star: A Hide-and-Seek Story by Sarah Reid Chisholm, illustrated by Michelle Neavill (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1993).

[It is difficult to find some of the hidden stars; therefore it is helpful to find them ahead of time, then help point them out to the children.]

Song ideas: Add on to the Christmas songs:

“We Three Kings,” #646 *With One Voice*

“The King of Glory Comes”

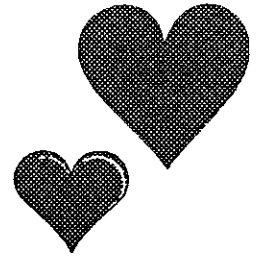
Prayer: The Lord's Prayer

Mission Moment:

Host a special night for the Early Childhood Education Center parents and congregational parents with a speaker on parenting, or any issues for young families. Have refreshments. Ask them if they would like to have these meetings on a regular basis. What would they like to talk about? What subjects interest them or are of concern to them? Who could come and help lead/teach/speak at these meetings?



THE SEASONS OF EPIPHANY AND LENT FEBRUARY



Theme: God gives us a clean heart.

Bible Verse: Psalm 51:10

“Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me.”

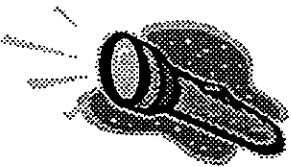
Color of the church year:

Green for Epiphany growth and purple for the seriousness, somberness of Lent.

Symbols to incorporate:

Prayer hands, crosses, hearts.

Object ideas for object lessons:



Bring in a pocket flashlight. Show them how the light shines, lights up, shows us the way. Talk again about the Epiphany star, how it shows us the way to Bethlehem and reminds us of Jesus' birth and that he is our savior. The children in our school love to pass the flashlight around and sing “This Little Light of Mine,” while they watch the light dance off the walls and ceilings of the sanctuary.

Talk about the season of Lent. Lent lasts for 40 days. Talk about the symbols of Lent and why we have special worship services during this season. Lent is a time that we get ready for Easter. It is a special time of prayer and repentance.

Bring in ashes for Ash Wednesday. Explain to the children that they may see people with ashes marked in the sign of the cross on their foreheads. Talk to them about why we use ashes (originally they were used for cleansing, now they remind us of repentance and forgiveness). Talk about why we make the sign of the cross on our foreheads (to remember Jesus).

Have the children create “Prayer Hands” (See *Parish Teacher*, November 1995 Volume 19, No 3, Augsburg Fortress, page 9) in the classroom and then bring them up to chapel time. Talk about prayer—it is the time that we talk to God. We can talk to God at anytime and in any place. We can tell God anything. God always listens to us and answers us. Not always in ways that we can hear, but through other people and actions and activities. God loves it when we pray. The Bible tells us to pray all the time and we can do that, just by

talking to God. Using the prayer hands held between the children's hands, we pray the Lord's Prayer. The children continue to bring their prayer hands to chapel and we use them when we pray.

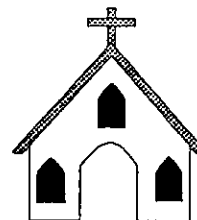
Make or buy the pretzels (for brief history and a good recipe see *Community-Building Activities and Games* in the Creative Confirmation Series, Augsburg Fortress, #15-5350). Share with the children the history of the "Prayer Pretzels," dating back to the fifth to seventh centuries, created by monks out of left over bread dough, shaped into crossed arms and sold on the streets as a reminder of the need for confession and forgiveness. The monks then used the "prayer pretzels" to teach children about prayer and called the pretzels "little arms."

Create "Light-catcher" hearts in the classroom (See *Parish Teacher*, September 1995 Volume 19, No 1, Augsburg Fortress, page 8) and bring them up to chapel. Talk about hearts—what do they mean? Where do we find them? Hearts give us life, love gives us life. The greatest lover of all time is our God; he loves us more than anything.

Story ideas: *A Father for Jason: The Story of God's love for a Child without a Father* by VaDonna Jean Leaf, illustrated by Liz Brenner Dodson (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1994.)

Song ideas: "This Little Light of Mine"
"We Pray for Each Other"
"Jesus Listens When I Pray"
"Love, Love, Love"

"Return to the Lord Your God," Holy Communion
Setting I, II, or III in *The Lutheran Book of Worship* or Holy Communion
Setting IV, V, or VI in *With One Voice*.



Prayer: The Lord's Prayer and, in addition, consider adding simple sentence prayers such as: "Thank you, Lord, for listening to me whenever I pray to you. Amen." Ask the children what they would like to say to God, what would they like to pray for?

Mission Moment:

Invite the center's families to weekday as well as Sunday Lenten worship. Send special flyers and invitations to Lenten meals, soup suppers, etc. Ask if any school families would like to host one of the suppers or participate in any fellowship meals you have during this holy season.

THE SEASONS OF LENT AND EASTER MARCH

Theme: Forgiveness

Bible Verse: Mark 2:1-12 Tell the story of Jesus forgiving the paralyzed man.

Color of the church year:

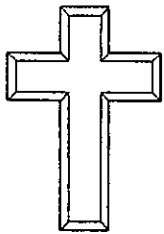
Purple for Lent and white for Easter. When do we see the colors, candles, banners change?

Symbols to incorporate:

Ashes for washing, cleanliness. Easter flowers, or whatever you have that is new and different for Easter in your sanctuary. During the week of Easter, tell the children that Easter, like Christmas, is not just one Sunday. Easter is a season that lasts for 50 days. It is wonderful to celebrate Easter for 50 days!

Object ideas for object lessons:

As the children come in and sit down, say "I'm sorry". Call them by name, the teachers too, and tell each of them, "I'm sorry." Do you ever say that? What does it mean? Who do we say it to? Do we say it to those we love? Yes! We say it to God, too! When? What do we do that might hurt God? God says, "I forgive you." God gave us Jesus so that we would know that we are always forgiven, no matter what.



Use a blackboard or marking board that is erasable. (One of those "etch-a-sketches" is great too.) Show them how you can mark it up and then wipe it clean. Forgiveness is God wiping our sins clean. God forgives us completely.

Talk about the Lord's Prayer and the words, "forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us" or "forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us." Talk about how important these words are and that is one reason why this is such an important prayer to pray often.

Give each child a small pocket cross to keep. (Make sure the crosses are not too small; the 3 year old children put them in their mouths!) Talk about the cross and how it reminds us of Jesus and his presence.

Bring in Easter eggs, real or plastic, and talk about them. Why do we dye them? Why do we hide them? Talk about why eggs symbolize new life. I try



to use some of the symbols that the children see at Easter time, like eggs and talk about how they are a Christian symbol. I stay away from the bunnies and emphasize that Easter is about Jesus. Jesus died, now Jesus lives again. God can do even that. Jesus lives and gives us all the promise of new life.

Story ideas: *The Easter Story* by Carol Heyer, illustrated by Carol Heyer (Nashville, TN: Ideals Children's Books, 1990).

Robinson Rabbit, What Do You Hear? By Rebecca Laird, illustrated by Joe Boddy (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1990).

Song ideas: "I'm Sorry"

"Alleluia" and "This is the Feast," Holy Communion Setting I, II, or III in *The Lutheran Book of Worship* and Holy Communion Setting IV, V, or VI in *With One Voice*.

The refrain to "Alleluia, Alleluia, Give Thanks," #671 *With One Voice*.

Prayer: "Thank you God for forgiving my sins."
The Lord's Prayer



Mission Moment:

Be sure to especially invite the Early Childhood Education Center's families to Holy Week and Easter services. On Easter Sunday I include an Easter story during worship for the young children. We have a youth pancake Easter breakfast and we make sure they are invited to this as well. An Easter egg hunt for young children is led by our youth. We print special flyers with all the service time information on them and we have also used neighborhood door hangers given out door-to-door to invite folks to these services and to our regular services and Sunday School.

Plan to have the center's children join the young Sunday School children to sing in church during the Easter season. Invite the parents to a special festival worship service following Easter Sunday, letting them know their child will be singing in church with their permission. Have a special meal or coffee hour following the service. Utilize the name tags, welcome packets and other ideas for welcoming guests used for "Bring a Friend To Church Sunday" (see the month of October).

THE SEASON OF EASTER

APRIL

Theme: "Alleluia," which means "Praise the Lord!"

Bible Verse: Psalm 149:1a

"Hallelujah! Praise the Lord! Sing to the Lord a new song...."



Color of the church year:
White for Easter.

Symbols to incorporate:

A butterfly to show new life, a picture of the empty tomb. Talk about how Jesus did not stay dead in the tomb, but was given new life and went up to God in heaven.

Object ideas for object lessons:

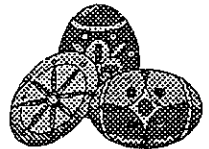
Bring in a seed and plant it in a cup. Help the children to watch it sprout and grow (you can use a potato in water too) over the next days and weeks. New life. Where else do we see new life? Easter is about new life. That is a gift from God.



Bring butterfly stickers for each child. They love stickers! Talk about why the butterfly is a symbol of new life. (Our teachers taught about caterpillars and butterflies in class prior to this chapel time, so the children understood that caterpillars emerge as butterflies.) Or create butterflies in the classroom as an art project and bring them to chapel as the children learn and sing, "If I were a butterfly."

Story ideas:

An Easter Hunt: A Hide-and-Seek Story by Sarah Reid Chisholm, illustrated by Michelle Neavill (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1994). [Once again, it is difficult to find some of the pictures, especially with a large group. Find them all well ahead and help point them out.]



Does God Know How To Tie Shoes? by Nancy White Carlstrom, illustrated by Lori McElrath-Eslick (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993).

Tell the story of Noah from the Bible.

Song ideas:

“Glory to God,” Holy Communion Setting I, II, or III in *The Lutheran Book of Worship* and Holy Communion Setting IV, V, or VI in *With One Voice*.

“If I Were A Butterfly”

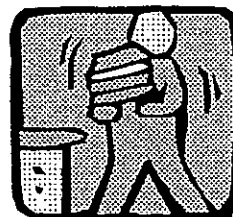
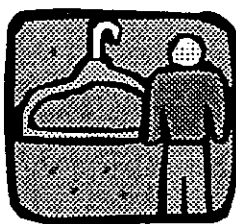
“Rise and Shine” (This song tells the story of Noah.)

Prayer: “Alleluia! Praise the Lord!”

The Lord’s Prayer

Mission Moment:

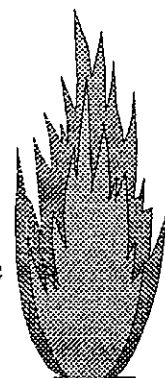
Have the church sponsor a clothing drive and invite the Early Childhood Education Center families to participate, not only by bringing in clothes, but by helping to sort, package and distribute. We coordinate our clothing drives with churches that have distribution locations and with a local Catholic food pantry that also supplies clothing to those in need.



THE SEASONS OF EASTER AND PENTECOST MAY

Theme: "Come Holy Spirit." God is always with us in the Holy Spirit.

Bible Verses: John 20:11-18: Tell the story of Mary meeting Jesus after the resurrection.
Acts 2:1-4, 41b: Share the story of Pentecost.



Color of the church year:

White for Easter, red for the Day of Pentecost, green for the season of Pentecost.

Symbols to incorporate:

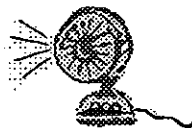
Symbols of Pentecost and the Holy Spirit including three circles, a triangle, a dove, tongues of fire. Talk about the changes in the colors of the paraments.

Object ideas for object lessons:



Bring in birthday objects and tell the children happy birthday! Pentecost is the birthday of the church! Do you like birthdays? What do you do on your birthday? How can we celebrate the birthday of the church?

Look at the changes in the sanctuary. The red paraments are so beautiful. What does the red remind you of? Fire! Do you see any symbols of fire? The fire reminds us of the story of Pentecost when tongues of fire came upon the heads of the disciples filling them with the Holy Spirit and enabling them to speak in all the languages of the many people gathered there. The Holy Spirit was God's presence with them, helping them to tell everyone, no matter where they were from, about Jesus.



The Holy Spirit is like the wind. It is with us, but we cannot see it. Use a fan—you can't see the air move but you can feel it. Attach ribbons to the fan for extra effect.

There are other ways we remember the Holy Spirit—show other symbols. God is with us in three different ways, as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, but still one God.

Talk about the word “holy.” To be holy is to be set apart, of God, special, sacred, heavenly. God is holy, the Bible is holy. We sing about our holy God and give thanks to God’s holy name.

What does the green remind us of? Growth, the spread of the Good News of Jesus Christ. This time of year we see green coming up everywhere. All the things that are growing around us remind us that our love for Jesus grows too. Jesus helps our faith to grow and he helps us to spread the word about him by telling others that he loves them too.

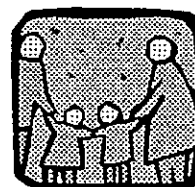
Pentecost is the longest season of all. It will be Pentecost when you finish school this year and Pentecost when you return in the fall for Early Childhood Education or Sunday School!

Story ideas: *3 in 1: (A Picture of God)* by Joanne Marxhausen, art by Benjamin Marxhausen (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1993, distributed through Lutheran Brotherhood). [This is a difficult book if you use the words, but the pictures are great.]
The Creation: A Pop-Up Book by Brain Wildsmith, (Brookfield, CT: The Millbrook Press, Inc., 1996).

Song ideas:

“Glory to God” and “Holy, Holy, Holy,” Holy Communion Setting I, II, or III in *The Lutheran Book of Worship* and Holy Communion Setting IV, V, or VI in *With One Voice*.

Prayer: “Thank you Lord for new life.”
The Lord’s Prayer



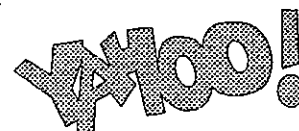
Mission Moment:

If your church or school do any fund raising, such as Penny Socials, bazaars, strawberry festivals, craft fairs, bake sales, etc., include the parents in the planning and in the event. Our Early Childhood Education families especially enjoy the social and fellowship events that we have and we get a good turnout from the school. They are especially thankful for the time they can talk and get to know the pastor and congregational members. Such events are often non-threatening ways to become involved in a church-sponsored activity.

THE SEASON OF PENTECOST

JUNE

Theme: Rejoice! Loving Jesus makes us feel great joy and happiness.



Bible Verses: Psalm 18:24

“This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.”

Color of the church year:

Green for the spread of the Good News.

Symbols to incorporate:

Continue to talk about the symbols of Pentecost. Talk about how musical instruments express joy. What instruments do we see in church? Have you ever seen or heard a church choir sing?

Object ideas for object lessons:

Pictures of people expressing joy. What does joy look like? When do you feel happy? When are you loved? Comforted? Fed? Hugged? Talk about the joy of loving God our creator and our savior. God made everything! God made us, the earth, the animals, the rain, the sunshine. We are thankful and joyful that God has given us all this and that God loves us so much!

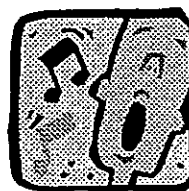


Create musical instruments in the classroom (oatmeal box drums, paper plate tambourines, etc.) or use real musical instruments and talk about how they help us express joy. Our voices shout and sing for joy, too. Let's try that now! We can clap our hands, stomp our feet, jump up and down, give lots of smiles—all of this shows joy and happiness. What is a joyful noise? Does God like joyful noise? Yes! Let's make some!

Story ideas: *A Surprise for Mrs. Dodds: A Little Boy's Friendship Changes a Lonely Woman's Life* by Kathy Long, illustrated by Kathy Rogers, (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1989).

1-2-3 Church text by Gail Ramshaw, art by Christine M. Winn, (Minneapolis MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1996).

Song ideas: “If You Feel Happy”—a favorite!
“Praise Him, Praise Him”



“Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow”

“Psalm 8”

“He’s Got the Whole World In His Hands”

Prayer: “Help us, Lord, to always make a joyful noise! Amen.”
The Lord’s Prayer

Mission Moment:

Have a closing celebration for the year. Share the Bible stories and songs you have learned. Have the children use their instruments, prayer hands, and other crafts as a part of the program. Have them participate in a skit like “Noah and the Arketts,” a rap play based on Noah and the Ark, for two adults and unlimited small children who act out the animal sounds (available from Contemporary Drama Service, Meriwether Publishing Ltd., 1-800-93PLAYS). Invite the entire congregation. Have refreshments, give small gifts, share what everyone has learned during the year and share your love of the Lord. Celebrate and enjoy!

