

**NATIONAL
LUTHERAN
SCHOOLS
WEEK**

**REAL.
PRESENT.
GOD. | PSALM 46**

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Welcome Letter

DEAR FRIENDS IN CHRIST,

National Lutheran Schools Week affords us the opportunity to join with more than 2,000 schools in giving thanks and praise to the great God we serve. This annual event offers our congregations and schools the opportunity to rejoice together in the partnership we have in sharing God's grace and mercy, as we provide another year of spiritual training and educational preparation to the next generation of faithful Christian servants.

This year, our schools will rally together around the theme "Real. Present. God." God is present in all our schools and, through the Holy Spirit, works in powerful ways each day. This theme will be used throughout the year. It is the theme of the 2019 Youth Gathering and was also used to prepare and direct our 2018–19 Chapel Talks.

In our schools, our "Real. Present. God." shares His presence with us in the person and atoning work of Jesus, who is our very foundation. We encourage your school to use the National Lutheran Schools Week materials; they provide suggested templates for special worship and devotional activities that can be used by schools and congregations to celebrate God's real presence in our schools. Each day, a psalm guides the daily devotion of staff and students and offers further exploration into God's Word.

We are pleased to be able to share these materials with you to assist in your celebration of the blessings that are associated with Lutheran schools. Through it all, we thank God for the opportunity to serve the tens of thousands of families who enroll hundreds of thousands of children in our schools.

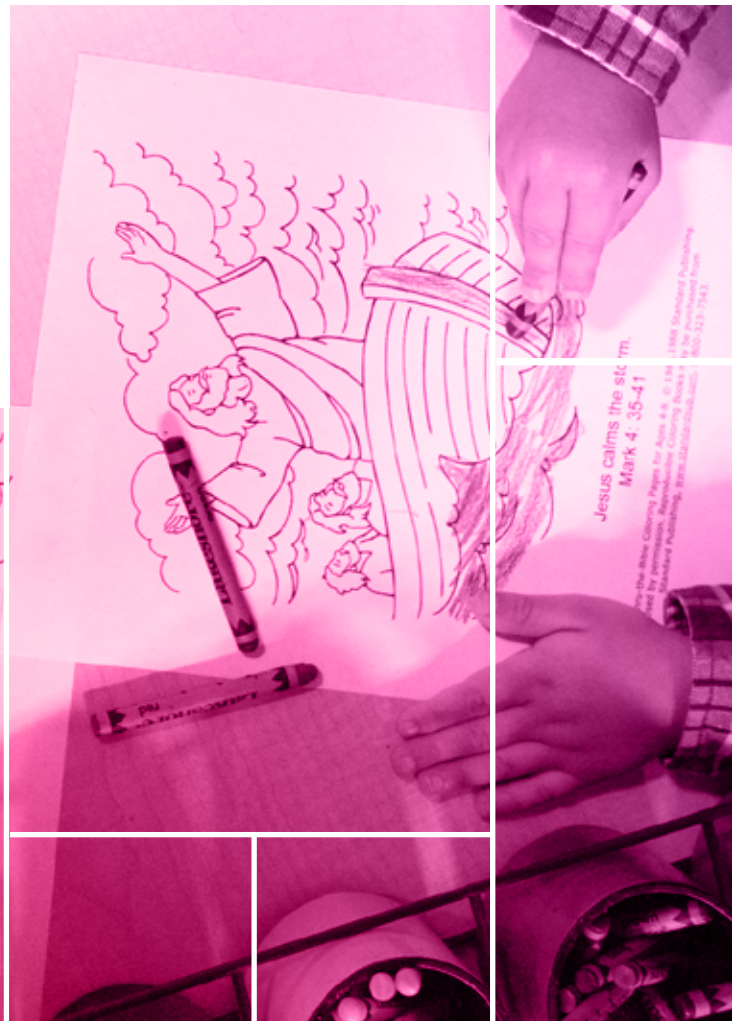
Enjoy your celebration. But as you celebrate, remember what is most important: Our schools worship, teach and share the "Real. Present. God."

Sincerely in Christ,

Terry Schmidt

Director, LCMS School Ministry

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod



Presidential Proclamation

2019 NATIONAL LUTHERAN SCHOOLS WEEK

Whereas, God promises in Psalm 46 to be truly present in our lives through His great and precious promises; and

Whereas, Jesus' incarnation, perfect life, death, resurrection, ascension and second coming fulfill this promise; and

Whereas, Lutheran schools provide opportunities for teachers and students to teach and hear this Good News of God's love; and

Whereas, Lutheran schools teach the children entrusted to them about all the wonders of God's creation; and

Whereas, The students in Lutheran schools are unique and wonderful creatures of God, who grow up in the grace and knowledge of His Son and His whole creation; and

Whereas, Teachers in Lutheran schools serve with the love of Christ in any and every subject matter they teach; and

Whereas, The "Real. Present. God." is the strength of Lutheran schools; and

Whereas, Lutheran schools make a difference in people's lives every day with the Good News of Jesus' death and resurrection for sinners; and

Whereas, National Lutheran Schools Week is an occasion for joyful recognition and celebration; therefore, be it

Resolved, That Jan. 27–Feb. 2, 2019, be officially proclaimed as National Lutheran Schools Week in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, in the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison

President, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

Introduction

NATIONAL LUTHERAN SCHOOLS WEEK (NLSW) is an occasion for joyful recognition and celebration. As The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, we celebrate the history and significance of Lutheran schools. Lutheran schools make an impact across the country and around the world. Tens of thousands of families enroll hundreds of thousands of children in Lutheran schools. However, what is most significant about Lutheran schools is that they worship, teach and share the Real. Present. God.



Real. Present. God. is a familiar theme to many, as it is the theme chosen for the 2019 LCMS Youth Gathering and is also the theme for the 2018–19 Chapel Talks series. Real. Present. God. brings the psalms to Lutheran schools.

The Real. Present. God. influences and empowers every day and every week in Lutheran schools. The Real. Present. God., who shares His presence with us in the person and atoning work of Jesus, is the very foundation of a Lutheran school. The theme brings the psalms to the special worship activities of National Lutheran Schools Week and subdivides into five daily emphases: Real Grace, Real Places, Real People, Real Time and Real Praise. While a daily designation is offered, the order of the emphases is flexible to each setting. Each day, a psalm guides the daily devotion of staff and students and offers further exploration into God's Word and further celebration in the school.

God is *real*; God is *present*; God is *God*. He is the *real* reason for Lutheran schools and the *real* celebration of National Lutheran Schools Week.



“Our God Is Real and Present Here”

By Dr. Jeffrey E. Burkart

A hymn written for the
2019 National Lutheran
Schools Week and
based on Psalm 46
and the NLSW theme:
“Real. Present. God.”

In praise of the real, present God, the Father

Our God is real and present here. When troubles come we need not fear.
Though mountains tremble, waters foam, Our God will not leave us alone.
The LORD of Hosts with us always; the God of Jacob is our stay.
Our God is real and still remains; the great I AM forever reigns!

Ps. 46:1-3

In praise of the real, present God, the Son

Our God is present, and when fear or trouble comes be of good cheer;
For God's own Son has washed away the sins that on our hearts now weigh.
LORD Jesus Christ with us today; He is the Truth, the Life, the Way.
He came to us, His life to give, that we might in His presence live.

John 1:7
John 14:6
Ps. 46:1-3

In praise of the real, present God, the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit has been sent, to bring us into covenant
With God the Father and the Son, and Comforter, to help us run
The race of faithfulness to God upon this earth where Jesus trod,
So that in faith we shall remain in Him who for the world was slain.

John 14:26
Heb. 12:1-2

In praise of the real, present promises of God

The LORD is God and says, “Be still! I am your fortress, and I will
Be lauded and exalted now! My Word is true and this I vow:
I AM your God and I will make all wars to cease, all bows to break;
The nations of the world I claim and all the earth will praise My name!”

Ps. 46:7-11

In praise of the real, present Holy Trinity

Δ To God the Father we now raise our songs of thanks and endless praise;
To God the Son, our risen Lord, all honor, glory, we accord;
To God the Spirit we bring laud, who brought us to our faith in God;
So let us all, with hearts aflame, the real and present God proclaim!

Deut. 32:3

“Our God Is Real and Present Here”

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Meter: 88 88 88 88 (L M D)
“REAL. PRESENT. GOD.”

The hymn can also be sung to the tune of O GROSSER GOTT (“Praise Be to Christ” [LSB 538] or “O God of God, O Light of Light” [LSB 810]) or another appropriate L M D metered hymn.
Public domain.

Sunday or Celebration Service

Message:

REAL JOY IN JESUS' PRESENCE

Message Text: Psalm 16:11

National Lutheran Schools Week is a joyful celebration. As The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, we celebrate the joyful heritage that has been integral to the mission and ministry of our church body since its beginning. Our church body has the joy of impacting children and families in our country and around the world. Nearly 2,000 Lutheran early childhood centers, elementary schools and high schools educate more than 200,000 children. What a joy!

In each Lutheran school setting, there are unique and special joys. Joys are measured in years of history, numbers of students and faithful service by ministry professionals and volunteers. Joys are measured in the accomplishments of students in academics, arts and athletics. (Joys of the local contexts might be added). What a joy!

This year's theme for Lutheran school ministry and National Lutheran Schools Week is "Real. Present. God." The theme takes students, staff and families in Lutheran schools to the Book of Psalms. With the psalmists, we celebrate the only true God who is real in the person and work of Christ and who, through the Means of Grace, is *present* with His people. Psalm 16, a psalm of David, celebrates that there is real joy when God is present.

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 16

TEXT: Psalm 16:11

"You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore."

HYMNS:

LSB 902 "Lord Jesus Christ, Be Present Now"

LSB 803 "Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee"

LSB 867 "Let Children Hear the Mighty Deeds"

The joy of God's presence was experienced by God's servants in the Old Testament. The joy of the encounter with the almighty present God outweighed the burden of the calling for Moses (Ex. 15), Isaiah (Is. 6), Jeremiah (Jer. 1) and others. David knew the agony of separation from God. In Psalm 51, David confesses his sins (Ps. 51:3–5) but then begs, "Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have broken rejoice" (Ps. 51:8). In the Messiah promised to and through the family of David, there is forgiveness and joy. David petitions, "Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit" (Ps. 51:12), and God does so in Jesus. In Psalm 16, David's praising joy is poetically shared: "Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices; my flesh also dwells secure" (Ps. 16:9).

Lutheran school students, staff, families and partners come from the real world. Real life is broken and messy. The paths of daily life include disease, death, broken hearts, broken homes and every other malady of sinful hearts and sinful society.

Lutheran school settings are not always joy-filled places. School ministry takes place in the real world. Pastors, principals, board members, staff and parents deal with dynamics that remind us that we are sinners in a sinful world. The challenges are real and humbling.

The good news is that “in your presence there is fullness of joy” (Ps. 16:11). In the presence of the real God who came in the person of Jesus, there is real joy. *There* is the joy of salvation. Jesus was present in the real world. Jesus brought joy to Mary, Joseph and shepherds at His birth. Jesus brought the joy of His miracles as He healed the sick, fed the hungry, calmed the storms and raised the dead. Jesus brought the joy of His message as He spoke the truth from His Father. Hebrews 12:2 summarizes this mission of joy: “who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.” Jesus’ joy was in our salvation. He was willing to endure the agony of death on the cross to bring us to the joy of His presence. The resurrection of Jesus brought joy to the visitors to His tomb and to all blessed to see His empty tomb through faith.

Lutheran schools are joyful places because Jesus is there. The promise of the psalm speaks to Lutheran school ministry: “in your presence there is fullness of joy” (Ps. 16:11). Lutheran schools offer much more than the joy of the presence of children, the joy of academic excellence or professional staff and the joy of modern facilities and technology. The joy begins and ends with the presence of Jesus.

Jesus is present as the baptismal promises are renewed and reviewed “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” — the invocation that begins the staff devotion, the classroom day or the chapel worship service. Jesus is present as the Word is taught in the psalm reading as the classroom convenes, as the Bible story is explored through the faith-nurturing religion curriculum and as the chapel message is preached. Jesus is present as school families gather for worship and as the Sacrament of the Altar is shared with those who confess and receive His real presence.

Because Jesus is present, there is the joy of His forgiveness as staff or students tell each other, “I forgive you in Jesus’ name.” There is the joy of God’s peace and presence when the daily prayers include petitions for a child who is ill or a family that is grieving. There is the joy of seeing all students’ abilities and gifts as gifts from God for which we are blessed and joyful stewards.

There is the joy of team victories and of those blessed to work together to give God glory. In Jesus’ presence in the Lutheran school, there is fullness of joy. There is the joy of forgiveness of sins, life and salvation.

Joys in Lutheran schools are not magical. Satan always seeks to rob us of the joy of Jesus. Joys are always tempered by the trials of the world. Joys are disrupted by those who do not know about or reject the joys of Jesus. Earthly joys in the context of the family, school or any other arenas are always temporal. Psalm 16 celebrates, “at your right hand are pleasures forevermore” (v. 11).

Lutheran schools proclaim that our ultimate joy is in the eternal presence of Jesus. King David is blessed to have His Lord at His right hand: “Because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken” (Ps. 16:8). The Lord, who in His grace and mercy stands beside David and holds his right hand like a loving, protective father, brings His servant to His own victorious right hand. The promises of eternity are real. David will be present at the throne of His Savior.

Lutheran schools educate for eternity. It is our mission to provide joyful educational and extracurricular experiences; to provide safe and joyful encounters with friends, staff and other families; and to send students from our schools with joyful memories and life skills. However, if that is our only mission, we have failed. Lutheran schools exist as an extension of the ministry of our congregations and as a spiritual support for Christian families so that every child knows and receives the “fullness of joy at your right hand,” where there are “pleasures forevermore” (Ps. 16:11). Seeking that joy for every child, we welcome them joyfully to our schools.

Real joy with the real God is really present in the Lutheran school. May God grant that for Jesus’ sake. Amen.

Chapel Talk

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 8

TEXT: Psalm 8:2a

“Out of the mouth of babies and infants, you have established strength because of your foes.”

HYMN: *LSB* 783 “Take My Life and Let It Be”

VISUAL: pictures of mouth (big, small, smiley, braces-filled, etc.)

Introduction — The Mouth:

Our mouth is a wonderful creation of God. What are some words that we might use to describe the mouths we see in these pictures? (Get responses from students — big, smiley, pretty, etc.) Our psalm for today speaks of the mouths of children. God created the mouth to speak and sing God’s praises. As God’s children in His Lutheran school, we especially share our praise this week.

The Mouth Speaks His Praise:

We use our mouth for a variety of tasks. We speak, sing, kiss, eat ... and confess that sometimes our mouths are not used for God-pleasing things. The apostle James warned that the tongue we use to bless God is also used to curse (James 3:9–10). The apostle Peter wrote that God’s people should keep the tongue from evil and from speaking untruths (1 Peter 3:10). We all have to confess that our tongues sometimes curse, lie, gossip and are used to hurt others.

We are also thankful for the tongues that speak the Good News of Jesus to us. God uses the tongues of pastors and teachers to share His Word with us. We hear about the tongue of Jesus, who taught His disciples, spoke words of healing and then announced “It is finished!” from the cross (John 19:30). The tongue of the risen Jesus spoke “Peace to you!” to His disciples and called them to go into all the world with the Good News (John 20:21).

Psalm 8, a psalm of King David, shares the wonderful creating and redeeming work of our God. We have a majestic God. The response of God’s children is to praise Him. Some versions of this psalm use the words “ordained praise.” Martin Luther stated, “Children should be constantly urged and moved to honor God’s name and to have it always on their lips for everything that may happen to them” (LC I 70).

Besides speaking praises and prayers in worship, our tongues can say “I forgive you” to our classmates. Our tongues can tell others about Jesus so that they might also hear of Him and speak of Him. It is a blessing to be in a Lutheran school where our tongues freely and joyfully praise our God.

The Mouth Speaks a Prayer:

Dear Jesus, thank You for speaking Your Word of forgiveness to me. Thank You for the mouths of teachers, pastors and others who continue to speak Your Word to my ears and into my heart. Open my mouth to joyfully speak of Your majesty. Amen.

MONDAY

Real Grace

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 100

TEXT: Psalm 100:5

“For the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations.”

STUDENT DEVOTION

Visual: *Different kinds of books (picture, fiction, fantasy, biography, history)*

Some of the questions we might ask regarding a story in one of these books is, “Is it real?” “Did the story really take place?” “Is the setting real?” “Are the characters in the book real?”

Many of you have been reading different kinds of books and stories. Some fantasy and fairy stories are obviously not real. Some fiction stories may have real-sounding settings and characters but have been invented by the author. A good biography will share the real facts of a person’s life. An accurate retelling of history will be based upon real incidents.

One of the key words in our celebration of National Lutheran Schools Week is “real.” We worship a real God who shares His story with us in a real book, the Bible, where every word is inspired and true. The real Word is God’s gift to us so that we might read about and believe in real grace. God’s Word tells us about the real Jesus who came to earth and really suffered and died for us. We know that God’s message to us is real because Jesus really rose from the dead.

STAFF DEVOTION

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The local florist delivery van drives to the front of the school, and a beautiful floral bouquet is brought to the office. Several staff have noticed the van and the delivery. The questions of many are, “Who are the flowers for?” “What’s the occasion?” “Is it for me?”

The story of God’s love was promised a long time ago. It was the message of the Book of Psalms. It was the message passed down from generation to generation. It is the message the Holy Spirit has brought to each of us. It is the reason for our Lutheran school. Every day, you hear that Jesus loves you and has forgiven all your sins.

Our Lord is not only a good God; He is a grace-sharing God. He loves you now and will love you forever. That’s *real*.

Prayer

Dear Jesus, my sins are real, and I ask for Your forgiveness. Thank You for the grace You demonstrated on the cross and brought to me in my Baptism. Help me to live in Your grace and share the real story of Your grace with others. Amen.

Reflections

What’s your favorite kind of book? What’s your favorite Bible story? How do we know that the Bible is real? What does it mean that God’s grace is real for us? When did God first share His grace with you?

“Is it for me?” is a question of anticipation and hope. It can also be a question of inquisition and desperation. Is God’s grace for me? We may see and sense that it has been delivered to others, but when will God deliver His grace to *me*?

Today’s theme is Real Grace. God’s grace is real. His grace is as real as the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. His grace is delivered through the Means of Grace.

His grace is delivered simply and powerfully in the waters of Baptism. His grace is delivered mysteriously and tastefully in the Sacrament of the Altar. His grace is spoken in the Word of Absolution. His grace is proclaimed from the lectern and pulpit of the sanctuary. His grace flows from the pages of God's Word.

God's grace to and through the psalmist spoke to the Old Testament people of hope (Ps. 100:5). God's grace speaks through the psalmist to the New Testament Church. God's grace speaks through the psalmist to you. His steadfast love is for you when you question your calling, when the challenges of the ministry humble and overwhelm you, when your guilt chains you. God's grace is real. God's grace is for you.

Those who have received His grace are blessed to share His grace. As a Lutheran school servant, you have the privilege of sharing His grace with this generation and for generations to come.

Prayer

Dear Lord, thanks for delivering Your grace to me. Grant that I may receive that grace again today humbly and thankfully. May I share Your grace freely and joyfully today. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Hymn Verse: "Amazing Grace" (LSB 744:4)

"Yes, when this flesh and heart shall fail
And mortal life shall cease,
Amazing grace shall then prevail
In heaven's joy and peace."

Reflections

How does God deliver His grace to you? What are the joys and challenges of being His delivery person to children and families in your school?

Really!

Grace extensions and activities in the Lutheran church and school:

PICK A MISSION PROJECT to share God's grace with another culture or country.

PLAN A GRACE TRIP to a nursing home or other facility where grace can be shared in song or activity.

REVIEW THE MEANS OF GRACE from the Small Catechism.

HEAR "GRACE" STORIES from senior members of the church.

ORGANIZE "GRACE" GATHERINGS in nursing homes, homes of church shut-ins, etc.

ORGANIZE A "GRACE" COLLECTION of food for a food pantry or clothing and other items for a homeless shelter.

SING A FAVORITE "GRACE" HYMN.



TUESDAY

Real Places

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 103

TEXT: Psalm 103:22

“Bless the Lord, all his works,
in all places of his dominion.
Bless the Lord, O my soul!”

STUDENT DEVOTION

Visual: Various addresses of historic places, the school or church, several students or staff, etc.

Can you identify any of these addresses? (“That’s the White House, that’s ...”)

Addresses become significant in that they identify where we live. They also help us reach other destinations — the house of a friend, a restaurant and so on.

Does God have an address? Our psalm verse for today praises God “in all places of his dominion.” As Spirit, God lives everywhere. As the Creator and Ruler of all things, God fills everything and lives everywhere.

God lives in His Word — not as a tiny speck on paper, but as the Life-Giver working through His Word. Not only does the Bible tell us that God lived on earth in the real life of Jesus, His Son, but it gives us the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Life. Father, Son and Holy Spirit remain the living voice of the Bible. God is where His Word is spoken! Jesus lived in particular time and place, and now we look to Him at the address of the Holy Bible! The Triune God has revealed where we will find Him: in His Word, the forgiveness of sins, Baptism and the Lord’s Supper. These happen in real places: at home,

in church and here at school as we gather around God and these gifts in our Lutheran school.

Our theme of National Lutheran Schools Week is Real. Present. God. God is real; He lived and He lives. God is present; God is present in us through our Baptism and is present in our Lutheran school. God lives here in us and with us. While God is living in our school, He is also living in every Lutheran school around the world — all at the same time.

Because Father, Son and Holy Spirit are present here in God’s Word, we worship and honor Him in everything we do. His presence affects how we treat others in our school. Because Jesus is present here, we want others to meet Him with us every day.

Prayer

Jesus, thank You for being present in Your Word. Thank You for choosing to live in me. Thank You for your presence in our school and church. May I always welcome You with praise. Amen.

Reflections

What’s your favorite place at school? What’s your favorite place when you are not at school? What places do we find God?

STAFF DEVOTION

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The teenager requests the parent’s permission to accompany friends to a party. The parent quizzes the

teenager about the situation and destination. The research includes the question, “Can you take Jesus there?”

“Can you take Jesus there?” is an appropriate question not only for teenage excursions but for all of us. “Can you take Jesus there?” should constantly affect where we go and with whom we go. What a blessing to be part of a Lutheran school ministry! The Lutheran school is not only a place where we take Jesus but the place where Jesus meets us. Jesus meets us in the Word of the opening devotion. Jesus meets us in the Word of the religion lesson. Jesus meets us in the chapel service. Jesus meets us in the quiet Bible reading time.

The psalmist celebrates, “Bless the Lord ... in all places of his dominion.” The Lord’s dominion includes every corner of creation. His dominion includes every classroom, cabinet, corner and court of the Lutheran school.

The stewardship of our ministry reminds us that it is not our classroom, our school, our team or anything else we think of as ours. It is Jesus’ place, for He has bought it with His precious blood. We are blessed to be part of His place.

Prayer:

Bless the Lord, O my soul; bless Him for His dominions over all places; bless Him for His presence in this school; bless Him for His presence in me through His baptismal gifts: bless Him in all places. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

Hymn Verse: “Lord Jesus Christ, Be Present Now” (LSB 902:1)

“Lord Jesus Christ, be present now;
Our hearts in true devotion bow.
Your Spirit send with light divine,
And let Your truth within us shine.”

Reflections:

Have you ever asked, “Can I take Jesus there?” What does it mean to take Jesus to your classroom, to the gym and into every lesson and school activity?



Really!

Place extensions and activities in the Lutheran church and school:

CLEAN UP A PLACE on the church or school property.

CLEAN UP A LOCAL PARK OR OTHER COMMUNITY PLACE.

DISCUSS SAFE PLACES in the school and community.

INVITE THE CHURCH FAMILY to the school place for an open house or other activity.

INVITE THE COMMUNITY to the school place.

How do the students, families and others see that **THE SCHOOL IS JESUS’ PLACE?**

ENVISION what the school or church place will look like in 10 years.

HAVE CHILDREN DESIGN PLACEMATS for a school or church fellowship.

WEDNESDAY

Real People

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 29

TEXT: Psalm 29:11

“May the Lord give strength to his people! May the Lord bless his people with peace!”

STUDENT DEVOTION

Visual: Collage of student pictures — perhaps an arrangement of school pictures of children in classroom

What a collection of beautiful people! What do we notice about these faces? (Different shapes, perhaps different colors of skin, different hair and eye colors, different ages, etc.) It's easy to note and celebrate our differences. It's most important to celebrate what brings us together.

Today's National Lutheran Schools Week devotion celebrates real people. I don't think any of you are imaginary. We give thanks for each and every child in this classroom and this school.

We are real people with real sins. Just like we note our different features, we all have our different sins — some of us try to lie, others try to cheat, some use God's name in unholy ways. We all disobey our parents and others in authority in different ways, but we all disobey. It's important that we are really sorry for our real sins.

The Good News is that we have a real Savior whose name is Jesus. Jesus was a real person. We are blessed

by God's Word, which tells us that Jesus really lived, really died and really rose again. Psalm 29, our psalm for today, celebrates this real God who deserves real praise.

While our God is all powerful and all glorious, He is not a God who is distant from His people. Our God came to be among His people and still “gives strength to His people” and “blesses his people with peace.”

Jesus looks at us and forgivingly and lovingly says, “Those are my people!”

Prayer

Jesus, Your love is really great. Thanks for the real people, Your people, in my classroom and school. Give us your strength and peace. Amen.

Reflections

What's special about being different people? How might we sometimes see other's differences as an excuse to criticize or ignore others? What does it mean to be Jesus' people?

STAFF DEVOTION

The family was gathered around the table and sharing the events of the school day. Each of the four children had much to share. The youngest, 5-year-old Julie, also had some things to share and repeatedly tried to interject. Feeling frustrated and rejected, she finally interjected loudly and clearly, “Hello, am I invisible?”

Have you ever felt invisible in the family dialogue, the staff meeting or some other setting? When the con-

versation and the “business” is carried on, but no one seems to notice you or hear you?

God's news for us is that none of us are invisible to Him. He has claimed us as His own in our Baptism and calls us by name. When we wish we were invisible and could hide from our sins, He comes compassionately and forgivingly and welcomes us into conversation with Him. Psalm 29 speaks to each of us. The Lord gives strength and peace to you.

Are there any “invisible” children in your classroom or school? Are there children who don’t seem to be noticed (or noticed for the wrong reasons)? They too are God’s people, real people, for whom Jesus has died and to whom God has called us.

Listen for the call to be noticed. Listen attentively in Jesus’ name.

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, I confess that while I often request that my students listen, I don’t listen well. Help me listen more faithfully and attentively to Your Word. In your name, help me to listen to others so that I might more compassionately share Your grace. Amen.

Hymn Verse: “Listen, God is Calling” (LSB 833, refrain only)

“Listen, listen, God is calling
Through the Word inviting,
Offering forgiveness,
Comfort, and joy.”

Reflections:

Have you ever felt invisible? Have you ever wished, in an awkward moment, that you could be invisible? Does God sometimes seem invisible? How does God make Himself visible to us? How do you affirm the “invisible” children in your classroom?



Really!

People extensions and activities in the Lutheran church and school:

ORGANIZE THE CLASSROOM or school for a “God’s people!” picture.

RECOGNIZE SCHOOL AND CHURCH VOLUNTEERS.

SHOW THE REAL PEOPLE OF SCHOOL/CHURCH HISTORY and share their contributions to the ministry.

CELEBRATE THE REAL PEOPLE OF THE COMMUNITY, especially those of diverse cultures or heritages.

RECOGNIZE AND HONOR THE PEOPLE WHO SERVE in the military or serve the community.

Who are **REAL PEOPLE WHO INFLUENCED YOU** and mentored you?

Have students **EXPLORE BIOGRAPHIES OF “REAL PEOPLE”** in history, science, etc.

EMPHASIZE THE “REAL PEOPLE” OF THE BIBLE; God’s Word is real and true.

THURSDAY

Real Time

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 121

TEXT: Psalm 121:8

“The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forevermore.”

STUDENT DEVOTION

Visual: Classroom clock

How often do you look at the clock during the school day? (The classroom may want to do a one-day experiment.) We always wonder about the time. Is it time for school to start? Is it time for recess? For lunch? For music or art? Is it time for school to be dismissed? And when we go home, our time concerns continue. What time is dinner? What time is practice?

Our God is beyond time. Our God is eternal. He's always been here, and He'll always be here. The God who never watches a clock entered our time. Jesus came from eternity to earth to be our Savior. Jesus had all the time in the world for us. He chose a time to die. We were blessed when three days later it was time for Jesus to rise again.

While we watch time and worry about time, God is in control of all our times. Psalm 121 reminds us that God is our Helper in times of trouble. While we are sleeping,

God is always awake. He doesn't need time to rest, for the psalmist reminds us, “Behold, he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep” (Ps. 121:4). We are blessed that Jesus is with us all the time. He is with us every minute of every day as we are at school, at home with family, enjoying our friends or whatever. He is God from this time and for forevermore.

Prayer

Jesus, help us to pray “My times are in Your hands” (Ps. 31:15). Thank You for the life You gave us and the time You give us. Help us to use Your time wisely. Bless us in the times that we praise You. Amen.

Reflections

What's your favorite time in the school day? What's your favorite time with your family? How could we use our time more wisely? If you had time to do anything you wanted, what would you do? How is time God's gift to us?

STAFF DEVOTION

What's your major personal or professional frustration? My guess is that for many in Lutheran school ministry (and other vocations), it's time. “I don't have enough time to get all the school tasks completed.” “I have trouble balancing time between work and family.” “I don't have any time for myself.”

Time concerns us and consumes us, but time is God's gift to us. God invites us to be stewards of His time. In our sinful nature and sinful world, we quickly lose perspective of what is His, and we seek to make it our own.

God, who created time, also redeemed time. Jesus, who was present from eternity, enters our world and gives His time for us. Jesus, who was beyond time, always took time for the lonely, needy, hurting, hungry and grieving. Ultimately, He took time to die for the sins of the world. When time seemed to stop from the cross to the grave, Jesus brought the time of rejoicing in His resurrection.

In Psalm 121, the Lord gives His benediction to our times now and forevermore.

Michel Quoist concludes his poem “Lord, I Have Time,” in which he comments that time is God’s gracious gift to us (and prayer is a part of that), with the petition,

“Lord, I have time,
I have plenty of time,
All the time that you give me,
The years of my life,
The days of my years,
The hours of my days,
They are all mine.
Mine to fill, quietly, calmly,
But to fill completely, up to the brim,
To offer them to you, that of their insipid water
You may make a rich wine such as you made once
in Cana of Galilee.
I am not asking you tonight, Lord, for time
to do this and then that,
But for your grace to do conscientiously, in the time
that you give me, what you want me to do.”¹
Amen.

¹ Michel Quoist, *Prayers* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1963), 98–99.

Hymn Verse: “O God, Our Help in Ages Past”
(LSB 733:5–6)

“Time, like an ever-rolling stream,
Soon bears us all away;
We fly forgotten as a dream
Dies at the opening day.

O God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Be Thou our guard while troubles last
And our eternal home!”

Reflections

What does it mean to be a steward of God’s time?
How do you like to use your time when you are not at school? “I had a great time when ...”

Really!

Time extensions and activities in the Lutheran church and school:

TIME TO PRAY: Organize a prayer vigil, prayer walk or another time to pray.

TIME TO PLAY: Sponsor a game day, family fun night or other activity.

TIME TO SERVE: Organize a school or community service event.

TIME TO READ: Set up a special book display or fair for children and families.

TIME TO EAT: Organize a special fellowship meal for school families or serve a meal at a local homeless shelter.

TIME TO SHINE: Have a student or family talent night.

Develop a timeline of **BIBLICAL HISTORY**.

Develop a timeline of **SCHOOL OR CHURCH HISTORY**.



Real Praise

SCRIPTURE: Psalm 150

TEXT: Psalm 150:1–2

“Praise the Lord! Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens! Praise Him for his mighty deeds; praise him according to his excellent greatness!”

STUDENT DEVOTION

Visual: Picture of school and/or various school activities

What kind of place is our school? (Develop a list — a play place for games and recess; a practice place for sports and music; an eating place for lunch, snacks and dinners; a reading place with a library and books; a safe place; a learning place ...)

Our school is a varied and busy place. It is a place where many children and adults gather every day. It is an exciting place.

It is a praise place. What makes for a praise place? It's a place where Jesus is present and welcomed. It is a place for chapel and worship. It is a place where we sing songs of praise.

While words of praise fill the whole book of Psalms, the final four psalms (Psalms 146–150) emphasize praise. (The class may want to count the number of “praises” in these psalms.) The psalms praise God as the Creator of everything. The psalms were written with the promise

that Jesus would come as the Savior of the world, and the people praised God for His promise. We praise God that He kept His promise and Jesus came as our Savior.

We are blessed to be students in our Lutheran schools. We enjoy the freedom and privilege of praising God every day in every school activity. After a week of National Lutheran Schools Week activities where we've learned about our school and celebrated and enjoyed many things about our school, the best way to end the week is to say, “Praise the Lord!”

Prayer

Read and pray Psalm 150 together.

Reflections

What's on your “praise the Lord” list? How do we take praises from the school to other places — home, playground, sports activities and elsewhere? What's your favorite psalm?

STAFF DEVOTION

A guest entered the worship service, unfamiliar with the style and culture of the worship setting. At several points during the service, the guest responded excitedly, “Praise the Lord!” After several of the uncomfortable outbursts, a concerned member of the church tapped the guest on the shoulder and advised him, “We don't praise the Lord here.”

The story is not a criticism of worship styles and responses. There are culturally different worship responses and individual “comfort zones.” In spite of our preference and response, we might reflect on this: Do we ever, by our comments or attitudes, imply that “We

don't praise the Lord here”? Our response might imply, “We don't have time to praise the Lord here,” “We are too isolated and conflicted to praise the Lord here” or “We are individually or corporately so distant from God and His work and will that we don't praise the Lord here.”

God's people, redeemed through Jesus Christ our Lord, praise the Lord for their salvation.

God's people, wonderfully created and uniquely gifted, praise the Lord.

God's people, mindful of the wonders of His creation, praise the Lord.

God's people, blessed to be called into His service in Lutheran school ministry, praise the Lord.

Psalms 146–150 shout the praises of the God of promise of the Old Testament. The psalms continue the praises to the God of fulfillment through whom we have the privilege of praising now and the assurance of praising eternally.

Praise the Lord!

Prayer

Read and pray Psalm 150 together.

Hymn Verse: “Praise to the Lord, the Almighty”
(LSB 790:5)

“Praise to the Lord!
O let all that is in me adore Him!
All that has life and breath,
come now with praises before Him!
Let the Amen
Sound from His people again;
Gladly forever adore Him!”

Reflections

How do we make our classroom a place of praise? How do we make our school a place of praise? How do we equip our school families to make the home a place of praise? What's your favorite psalm?



Really!

Praise extensions and activities in the Lutheran church and school:

Organize a **“PRAISE GOD!” ARTS EXHIBIT.**

Organize a **“PRAISE GOD!” BAND OR VOCAL CONCERT.**

HAVE EACH STUDENT WRITE AN “I PRAISE GOD FOR ...” NOTE and display on a “praise wall” or outside the sanctuary.

Invite another Lutheran school to a **JOINT PRAISE SERVICE.**

INVITE A CHRISTIAN VOCALIST to offer a special NLSW praise time for students, family and community.

PICK A FAVORITE PRAISE HYMN.


FINISH THE ACRONYM with definitions or expressions of praise: **P**____ **R**____ **A**____ **I**____ **S**____ **E**____

Poster Sample



Bulletin Insert Sample

Lutheran Schools

	87 High Schools	778 Elementary Schools
	1,127 Early Childhood Centers	
	Sharing the life-changing message of Jesus' love with more than 200,000 students, their families and the community	


PROVIDING EXCELLENT ACADEMIC PREPARATION

- DEVELOPING** love for and excitement about learning
- EXCELLING** at reading, writing and effective communication
- TRAINING** minds for success at the next academic level
- CREATING** a strong work ethic, critical thinking skills and the ability to relate well with others

RAISING UP THE NEXT GENERATION OF FAITHFUL CHRISTIAN DISCIPLES

EXPERIENCING AND CELEBRATING God's lavish gifts of love, grace and mercy	SHARING those gifts with others BEING TRANSFORMED by God's Word CLINGING to the cross of Jesus
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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES including images, daily posters,
a worship PowerPoint presentation and more are found at
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