

NATIONAL LUTHERAN SCHOOLS WEEK

A young boy with short dark hair is shown in profile, looking upwards with a joyful expression. His hands are clasped together in a prayerful gesture, resting on a wooden desk. He is wearing a grey zip-up hoodie. In the background, another child in a red and white striped shirt is blurred, suggesting a classroom setting. The bottom of the image features a blue and yellow splash graphic containing the text.

**JOY:FULLY
LUTHERAN**
1 THESS 5:16-24



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WELCOME LETTER

DEAR FRIENDS IN CHRIST,

It's here! National Lutheran Schools Week (NLSW) is the opportunity to celebrate with nearly 2,000 schools nationwide to give thanks for the gift of Lutheran schools to children, families and communities. Each year, congregations and schools rejoice in partnership with a shared vision for proclaiming God's grace and mercy to equip the next generation of faithful Christian servants. We give thanks to God for the opportunity to touch the lives of the thousands and thousands of children (and their families) who attend Lutheran schools.

The theme this year is "Joy:fully Lutheran"! The focus for celebration is taken from 1 Thess. 5:16–24, where the Word promises, "He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it." This beautiful Gospel message of forgiveness of sin through faith in Christ that all may have the promise of eternal life invigorates, excites and energizes our teaching. It's a celebration of what it means to be Lutheran.

Share the good news! We encourage schools to use the National Lutheran Schools Week materials to enrich the joyful celebration of this special week. Reflect on St. Paul's instruction to "rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." Through worship and devotional activities, explore what it means to be joy full, thank full, peace full, faith full and hope full!

Children look forward to this week every year. Amid pajama days, spirit days, special guests, open houses, service-learning experiences, community projects and the many creative ways schools celebrate this special week, we are reminded that God is a faithful God and that we can celebrate His presence not only this week, but today and always.

Sincerely in Christ,

Dr. Rebecca Schmidt

DIRECTOR, LCMS SCHOOL MINISTRY

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod



PRESIDENTIAL PROCLAMATION

2020 NATIONAL LUTHERAN SCHOOLS WEEK

Whereas, God loves us and sent His Son to be our Savior; and

Whereas, God alone works to save us from sin, death and the power of the devil; and

Whereas, God delivers that salvation to us by grace through faith because of Jesus; and

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

Whereas, God gives us joy through this Gospel; and

Whereas, 1 Thess. 5:16–18 tells us to “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you”; and

Whereas, The students in Lutheran schools are loved by God and given forgiveness freely through Jesus; and

Whereas, The teachers in Lutheran schools are also saved by grace through faith in Jesus; and

Whereas, Salvation by grace through faith because of Jesus is what it means to be fully Lutheran; and

Whereas, Lutheran schools bring joy into people's lives every day through the Good News of Jesus' death and resurrection for sinners; and

Whereas, National Lutheran Schools Week is an occasion to be “Joy:fully Lutheran”; therefore, be it

Resolved, That Jan. 26–Feb. 1, 2020, 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

Lutheran schools seek fullness: full classrooms, fully-funded budgets, fully- and professionally-staffed ministries, full pages of volunteers and more. Realistically, though, we are not always full.

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod focus, “Joy:fully Lutheran,” provides an opportunity for Lutheran schools to celebrate how fully God has blessed and continues to bless this important ministry of our church.

In Jesus, we are more than JOY FULL. We are also THANK FULL, PEACE FULL, FAITH FULL and HOPE FULL. Our God is not a God of partial grace and blessing. In Christ, He fills all in all.

This resource invites a festive approach to National Lutheran Schools Week. The theme of each day is based on a holiday. It’s Christmas, Thanksgiving, Independence Day, Pentecost and Easter all in one full week. The extent and details of the celebrations will depend on the context and creativity of each school. Staff, students and planning committees are invited to contribute their ideas to make the week meaningful and memorable.

In addition to daily devotions for staff and students, this resource includes ideas for FULLY engaging your school, church, community, staff, students and families. A resource for involving the full church in worship is included, as well as a worship resource for a full school chapel gathering.

First Thessalonians 5:16–24 provides textual focus for celebration of NLSW. In this passage, God’s Word promises, “He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.” Blessed by a faithful God, may we FAITHFULLY celebrate His presence this week and always, in Jesus’ name.



"FILLED WITH JOY, IN GRACE ABOUNDING"

BY DR. JEFFREY E. BURKART

*A theme hymn for the 2020 National Lutheran Schools Week
based on the 2020 NLSW theme: "JOY:FULLY LUTHERAN"*

Filled with joy, in grace abounding, hope-filled and awed,
We have come with praise redounding to You, O God!
For the love You shower on us
And the peace that rests upon us,
We, in ceaseless, praying chorus thank You, O LORD!

1 Thess. 5:16-18

2 Cor. 12:11

Ps. 91:1

When our lives are filled with gladness, let us give praise.
When our joys give way to sadness, help us to raise
Prayers that speak of hope-filled sureness
In Your love and perfect pureness,
LORD, lead us to full matureness in trying days.

Is. 30:29

Acts 2:25-26

Jude 1:24-25

Eph. 4:11-16

In Your Word alone is solace whene'er we stray,
Seeking sinful pathways, lawless, from Christ the Way.
Still, the Holy Spirit sends us
Faith in Christ, who always tends us,
As, in grace, He gently bends us towards Him each day.

John 1:1-14

2 Thess. 2:13

Where is peace, where grace, where mercy? Where shall we rest?
Where is water when we're thirsty, worn, or oppressed?
Borne in God's own Living Water,
By grace, through faith, Christ the Potter
Shapes each grace-filled son and daughter for ev'ry test.

John 4:1-26

Rev. 7:17

Eph. 2:8-9; Is. 64:8

△ Fully joyful, ever thankful, let praises swell
As we glorify the Father and ever tell
How God's only Son, LORD Jesus,
Came to die and, rising, frees us;
Now, the Holy Spirit leads us with God to dwell.

Psalms 150

Matt. 28:18

"Filled with Joy, in Grace Abounding,"

Text by Jeffrey E. Burkart. Copyright © 2019.

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Welsh tune: AR HYD Y NOS ("God, Who Made the Earth and Heaven," LSB 877). Meter: 84 84 88 84.

Music: Public domain.



SUNDAY OR CELEBRATION SERVICE

LESSONS

OLD TESTAMENT / Ps. 45:1–7

EPISTLE / 1 Thess. 5:16–24

GOSPEL / John 1:14–18

HYMN

LSB 744 / “Amazing Grace”

TEXT: JOHN 1:16

“And from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.”

MESSAGE TITLE:

Grace-Fully

We prefer a “full” reading on the gauges of our life. It’s a good feeling to drive away with a full tank of gas, and we are thankful for the full feeling after a delicious meal.

The desire for fullness follows us to church. We rejoice in a full sanctuary of worshippers; we celebrate full enrollment in educational programs; we are relieved when a project has a full list of volunteers.

Lutheran schools prefer full classrooms, fully-funded budgets, fully- and professionally- staffed classrooms.

The reality of our lives is that things are often less than full. Fuel tanks need to be refilled, shortly after one meal we start wondering about then next, and not every classroom is full or every budget fully funded.

More challenging than the discomforts or inconveniences of physical “tanks” left unfilled is the reality of emotional emptiness. “I feel so empty” is the lament of the one grieving the loss of a family member, the abandoned spouse and the child rejected by a friend.

Most devastating is our spiritual emptiness. Matthew’s Gospel tells of Jesus’ encounter with a rich young man (MATT. 19:16–22). The man is described as one with “great possessions.” In his own eyes, he was full of righteous deeds. In many respects, his life was full of possessions and power. When Jesus asked this young man to take what he had and give it to the poor, the

man could not walk away from his earthly fullness. In reality, his life was empty.

Our schedules may be full; our homes may be full of goods and conveniences; our garages may be full of vehicles and toys; we may be filling our retirement coffers; and yet our lives are empty.

Without Jesus, emptiness prevails. The Apostle Paul had authority in the church, significance in his heritage, and a well-rounded education, and yet his life was empty. By grace through faith, he received the “riches of his grace” (EPH. 2:7). Peter, Andrew, James and John may have had nets full of fish, but when Jesus came and called them, they were filled with His presence and grace.

“But, when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under that law, so that we might receive adoption as sons” (GAL. 4:4–5). God emptied Himself so that we might receive the fullness of His grace. Jesus came to fulfill all righteousness.

Jesus’ journey in the flesh is described briefly in the Gospel of John. The God who rightfully could have chosen to be full of anger and judgment is described as “full of grace and truth.” In the gift of His Son, the Father grants full forgiveness of all sins.

John, who introduces “the Word made flesh,” goes on to describe Jesus’ earthly ministry. The first sign of Jesus’ power and authority as the Son of God occurred at a wedding in Cana. Jesus took jars full of water and miraculously turned it into “good wine” for the wedding guests. He would go on to fill diseased bodies with health and vitality. He would fill hearts emptied by grief with the joy of seeing family members raised from the dead. He would fill panicked disciples with the peace of His presence and Word.

Every action of Jesus was part of His journey to the cross. His spirit was emptied in prayer in the garden, and His body was emptied of all life as He announced, “It is finished.” Every part of Jesus’ being was fully emptied to pay for the sins of the world. The sacrifice was full and complete.

Receiving by faith the fullness of Jesus’ sacrifice and the full assurance of His resurrection, we receive John’s Gospel promise: “And from his fullness we have all received grace upon grace.”

We have fully received God’s grace. The infant is held above the baptismal font. Physically small and mentally not yet developed, the child receives the fullness of God’s grace with sins fully forgiven. The communicant comes to the altar. The meal is small — a wafer and a sip of wine — but the feast is plentiful. In faith, the penitent receives the fullness of Christ’s body and blood.

Worshippers gather with guilty consciences, complicated lives, strained relationships, fearful hearts and every other malady imaginable. The Word is spoken: “As a called and ordained servant of Christ, and by His authority, I therefore forgive you all your sins.” There is

no sin that does not receive pardon. The forgiveness is full and free.

The “Joy:fully Lutheran” theme is a celebration of the fullness of God’s grace in Christ. Our Reformation heritage reminds us of God’s grace.

Lutheran schools may not always meet the quantitative measures we desire. However, as the Word is taught and the Sacraments are administered, these schools are always full of grace. The grace-filled Lutheran school teaches the truth of grace from the Scripture, celebrates grace in worship, and lives grace in relationships.

Lutheran schools celebrate a rich heritage; academic excellence (National Lutheran School Accreditation); professional, servant-hearted staff; etc. (Celebrations of the local school setting might be noted.)

By God’s grace, the greatest strength of our Lutheran school is that we are a “grace place.” The grace of God, which became ours through Christ, is shared in Word and Sacrament and received by every student, parent, and other person blessed by our ministry. We may not always be “graceful” as we go about our hectic daily routines, but we are always “grace-full” as we hear Christ proclaimed in our school.

Our Lutheran school is grace-full! We are full of God’s grace to be shared joyfully, thankfully, faithfully, peacefully and hopefully with all. Let’s enjoy this full week together, in Jesus’ name. Amen.



CHAPEL TALK

SCRIPTURE LESSON

1 THESS. 5:16–24

SONG

LSB 803 / “Joyful, Joyful We Adore You”

MESSAGE TEXT: 1 THESS. 5:16

“Rejoice always!”

OBJECT:

Three boxes labeled “always,” “sometimes” and “never”

INTRODUCTION:

Into which box would you put the following: cheer for the _____ (school team/mascot) (hopefully “always”); get my homework done (the preferred answer is “always” but occasionally the answer is “sometimes”); disobey my teacher or parents (the preferred answer is “never,” but the truthful answer is “sometimes”). Leader may come up with other choices. The final choice is “rejoice.”

Most of us would put this in the “sometimes” box. Today’s Bible reading puts “rejoice” in the “always” box.

MESSAGE:

Throughout his calling as an apostle, Paul was stoned, shipwrecked, and had an ailment that he called a “thorn in the flesh.” Paul was imprisoned in Philippi and at the end of his life in Rome. He was ridiculed and persecuted for preaching the death and resurrection of Jesus. From an earthly perspective Paul was not in a joyful place as the Spirit inspired him to write to the church at Thessalonica and other churches.

Despite those challenges, Paul writes, “Rejoice always.” His joy was not in where he was or what he had, but in Jesus. He knew that Jesus had died for him and risen from the dead, and he rejoiced in the knowledge that his sins were forgiven. Paul did not know all the details of God’s plan for him, but he trusted that God would

work everything out for his good and God’s glory. At the end of the day, Paul trusted God in the assurance of eternal joy with Jesus.

Do you rejoice always? Sometimes things in our lives take our joy away. It’s hard to be joyful when we are not feeling well. It’s hard to be joyful when there is sadness or arguing in our family. It’s hard to be joyful when people hurt us or gossip about us.

Sometimes our selfish attitudes keep us from being joyful. We wish we had more things. We wish we had less chores or homework. The devil takes our joy away. God’s Word continues to bring us the joy of Jesus. The devil or anything else can’t take that joy from us.

Our Lutheran school is a joyful place, filled with joyful children and teachers. We share our joy together in worship, in the classrooms, on the playground and in school activities. We want others to have the same joy we have. We share the joy of Jesus with our family, friends and others. Rejoice always! Amen.

PRAYER:

Jesus, You brought Your joy to Paul, the disciples, and others who faithfully followed and believed in You. You have brought Your joy to us in Holy Baptism. You continue to share the joy of Your Word. Give us a Spirit of joy that trusts You and shares You with others. Amen.



MONDAY: JOY FULLY

SCRIPTURE: LUKE 2:1-20

HYMN: LSB 387 / "JOY TO THE WORLD"

TEXT: LUKE 2:10-11

"And the angel said to them, 'Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior who is Christ the Lord.'"

STUDENT DEVOTION

OBJECT: CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS

Do you wish it could be Christmas every day? Because of the family activities and gifts, and maybe even because of the vacation from school, we wish some holidays would happen again and again. As part of our National Lutheran Schools Week celebration, we are going to celebrate some holidays again. We're going to start with a Christmas remembrance.

What do you remember about last Christmas? (Get responses from children: "I got ...," "We went to ...," etc.) For many reasons (like you mentioned) Christmas is for many of us our favorite holiday.

More important than remembering what we got for Christmas or what we did on Christmas vacation is to remember what God did for us on Christmas. The angel's announcement to the shepherds reminds us of this: "For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Savior who is Christ the Lord." God sent His Son, our Savior, into the world. Jesus came as a baby in Bethlehem. That baby grew to be a boy in Nazareth, and then the man on God's mission. Jesus came to fulfill all that God the Father had promised. He came to suffer and die for the sins of the world and rise again so that we might have the forgiveness of sins, life and salvation.

Luke's Christmas story shares that the angel's message was "good news of great joy." Today's NLSW celebration reminds us of the joy that we have in Jesus our Savior. We are joy full. Our Lutheran school is full of joy when we worship, learn, play and serve. Not only do we receive the joy of Jesus, but we also have the

privilege of sharing that joy with one another and with others. With whom can you share the joy of Jesus?

PRAYER: Jesus, thank You for the joyful message of angels to shepherds the first Christmas. Thank You for the joyful message that we hear at Christmas and every day in our Lutheran school. Bless us as we live and share the joy of Jesus. Amen.

STAFF DEVOTION

MESSENGERS OF JOY

Ed had served faithfully as a Lutheran school teacher and principal for 40 years. His congregation organized a special event to recognize his service. Given the opportunity to speak at the event, Ed said, "I will be forever humbled that God chose me to do what he could have sent angels to do."

In Scripture, God sends angels for many purposes. He sent angels to Zechariah, Mary, and Joseph to announce the coming of the Savior. Then, on Christmas night, He sent angels to share the Good News with the shepherds. The shepherds were blessed to see the infant Christ, the Son of God who was their Savior and the Savior of the world. The angels' announcement was the most joyous news ever heard. Luke's Christmas account shares the shepherds' response: "They made known the saying that had been told them concerning this child." The shepherds responded to the joy of Christ's coming by sharing it with others.

Lutheran school staff members are privileged to hear the Good News of Jesus' birth, death, and resurrection in their personal and staff devotional times and in worship together as a school and as a church. God's Word repeatedly comes to us, "I bring you good news of great joy."

Having received the joy of Jesus, do we respond joyfully? Is our witness more than the routine of a religion lesson? Is our audience greater than the students in any given classroom? Do fellow staff members, volunteers, parents and others hear and see the Good News of Jesus from us?

May we also serve humbly and joyfully, doing what angels did: sharing the Good News of Jesus.

REFLECTIONS: What distractions or challenges (personal or professional) rob us of joy? What brings you joy personally or professionally? What suggestions do you have for making the school or church a more joyful place?

PRAYER: Jesus, we are humbled that You have chosen us for the joy of sharing the Good News of Your birth, life, death, and resurrection. May Your Word continue to bring us joy as we become Your messengers of joy. Amen.

JOY FULLY ENGAGED

- › Hold a Christmas celebration with decorations, songs, etc.
- › Display a "joy" bulletin board with students' and staff members' messages of joy for the school.
- › Share "joy baskets" with others in need, filled with donations to a food pantry, homeless shelter, etc.
- › Study and share "joy" passages from Scripture.
- › Have a "joy" art fair with pictures, poems, etc.
- › Send or deliver "joy" notes to the homebound, the hospitalized, nursing home residents, etc.
- › Research how Christmas joy is celebrated around the world in different cultures.





TUESDAY: THANK FULLY

SCRIPTURE: LUKE 17:11–19

HYMN: LSB 895 / “NOW THANK WE ALL OUR GOD”

TEXT: LUKE 17:15–16A

“Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice, and he fell on his face at Jesus’ feet, giving him thanks.”

STUDENT DEVOTION

OBJECT: CORNUCOPIA OR OTHER THANKSGIVING DECORATIONS

What’s your favorite Thanksgiving activity? (Get responses from children: the turkey and other food, visiting family, etc.). We continue this week’s holiday celebrations with a celebration of Thanksgiving.

During the Thanksgiving celebration, a family member might ask you, “What are you thankful for?” That’s a great question for any day.

If that question had been posed to the leper who returned to Jesus (LUKE 17), his answer probably would have been, “My health.” After the pain of leprosy, which came from both the severe and contagious skin wounds and the separation from friends and family, Jesus, the almighty Son of God, heals the leper and his nine friends. All ten were healed, but only one came back to Jesus to give thanks.

Jesus has healed all of us from something more deadly than leprosy, cancer or any other disease. He has healed us from the sickness of sin. While we still face diseases and problems in this fallen world, we know that through Jesus’ suffering and death, the final punishment of sin is taken away and we will be perfectly healed to live with Jesus in a renewed, healed world.

Our Lutheran school is a place of Thanksgiving every day. We are thankful for friends, teachers and many other blessings. We are most thankful that we hear about Jesus every day. We are thankful for the teachers, pastors and staff who are Jesus’ representatives to us.

We are thankful for our church family that prays for us and provides for our school. We are thankful for ...

Like the thankful leper, we remember to come back to Jesus and say “Thanks!”

PRAYER: Jesus, You provide all that we have and need. Thank You especially for being our Savior from sin. Thank You for our church and school. Give us thankful hearts today, this week, and always. Amen.

STAFF DEVOTION

Martin Rinkart served as pastor in Ellenburg, Saxony (Germany) in the early 1600s. His ministry took place in the context of the Thirty Years War and a severe plague. In 1637, Rinkart was the only surviving pastor in the region. He often conducted 50 funerals a day. In that context, Rinkart penned the words to the familiar hymn “Now Thank We All Our God.” Rinkart gave thanks to the God of his salvation.

Fortunately, we aren’t serving in a context of war. While we may need to take the occasional sick day, and more serious illnesses may still strike us or our family members, modern medicine assures that we are beyond deadly plagues that once decimated whole communities.

Still, the world is plagued with sin. Our Savior came into that world with the divine touch that healed the lame and leprous. Jesus’ greater miracle was His

healing from the cross. The blood that flowed from His wounds healed the sins of the world.

We are blessed in faith to see our Healer. We return to Him daily with our prayers of thanks. Unlike the lone thankful leper, we are blessed to return together to give thanks for the many blessings we share in our ministry.

REFLECTIONS: What's on your "I'm thankful for ..." list? How has God intervened in your times of challenge or crisis? How could a Spirit of thanksgiving be more present and alive in our school?

PRAYER: Jesus, thank You for healing my leprosy of sin. Thank You for Your Word which heals my hurts. Give me a thankful heart in all circumstances and give me the Spirit of thanksgiving to share with others. Amen.

THANK FULLY ENGAGED

- › Display a "Thankful for ..." bulletin board with student and staff contributions.
- › Study and share "thanksgiving" texts from Scripture.
- › Have staff and supervised children volunteer to serve a meal at a homeless shelter (or perform another act of service to the community).
- › Organize a food drive for a local food bank.
- › Host a thank-you meal or reception for volunteers.
- › Send thank-you notes to volunteers and donors.
- › Conduct a service of thanksgiving for God's blessings on the church and school.
- › Contact elderly members or friends for their "thanks" stories.
- › Research the history of Thanksgiving hymns to deepen your understanding of their meaning.
- › Research the history of the first Thanksgiving or other historically significant thanksgiving events.





WEDNESDAY: PEACE FULLY

SCRIPTURE: JOHN 16:25–33

HYMN: LSB 966 / “BEFORE YOU, LORD, WE BOW”

TEXT: JOHN 16:33

“I have said these things to you that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart, I have overcome the world.”

STUDENT DEVOTION

OBJECT: AMERICAN FLAGS AND PATRIOTIC DECORATIONS

What’s your favorite patriotic holiday? (Fourth of July, Memorial Day, Presidents Day, etc.). What’s your favorite activity on that day? (Attend a parade, enjoy a family picnic, etc.). We may especially enjoy Memorial Day and the Fourth of July because school is not in session.

These holidays remind us that we are very blessed to live in our country. We thank God that we can live in peace in our country while there are areas around the world where people experience war and live under governments that do not treat all citizens fairly. We are blessed with peace in our country and community, through the work of peacemakers and peacekeepers.

Sometimes in the most peaceful times and places, our hearts and minds are not peaceful. We think of things that we have done or said that made others feel bad. Our conscience bothers us because we have disobeyed our parents, our teachers, and our God.

The Good News is that Jesus is our Peacemaker. Jesus makes peace with God the Father on our behalf. While we may battle our guilty consciences and the temptations of the devil, we know that Jesus’ victory is ours through His resurrection.

Because we have peace with God, we can live peacefully with one another. Through the power of the Spirit, we can bring Jesus’ peace to arguments on the playground or disagreements at home.

PRAYER: Jesus, You are our peace amid the temptations of Satan and the troubling thoughts in our hearts and minds. Help us to live peacefully and to share Your peace with others. Amen.

STAFF DEVOTION

Where’s your peaceful place and time? Perhaps it is a few minutes of quiet before the activities of the day begin. Perhaps it is your recliner at home after a long day. Perhaps it is that vacation at the lake or in the mountains. Perhaps you are still looking for that time and place.

Herman Gockel (*Give Your Life A Lift*, CPH, 1968, p. 78) describes an artist’s depiction of peace. The artist painted a roaring waterfall with a mighty oak overarching it. In the crotch of a limb bending low over the turbulent waters, almost within reach of the rising spray, the artist painted a tiny sparrow sitting calm and unperturbed in her little nest. In the chaos of the setting, the little bird was at peace.

Outside the walls of the school office, the classrooms, and even our own living rooms, the waterfalls of life are often roaring. Sometime the spray of the turbulence leaves us wet with sweat or tears. Yet we are peacefully and confidently safe in our Savior’s care.

As His Passion drew near, Jesus gathered with His disciples and promised them His peace through the Spirit. When the disciples had gathered in the immediate

turmoil after Jesus' arrest and crucifixion, the resurrected Jesus appeared to them and announced, "Peace be with you."

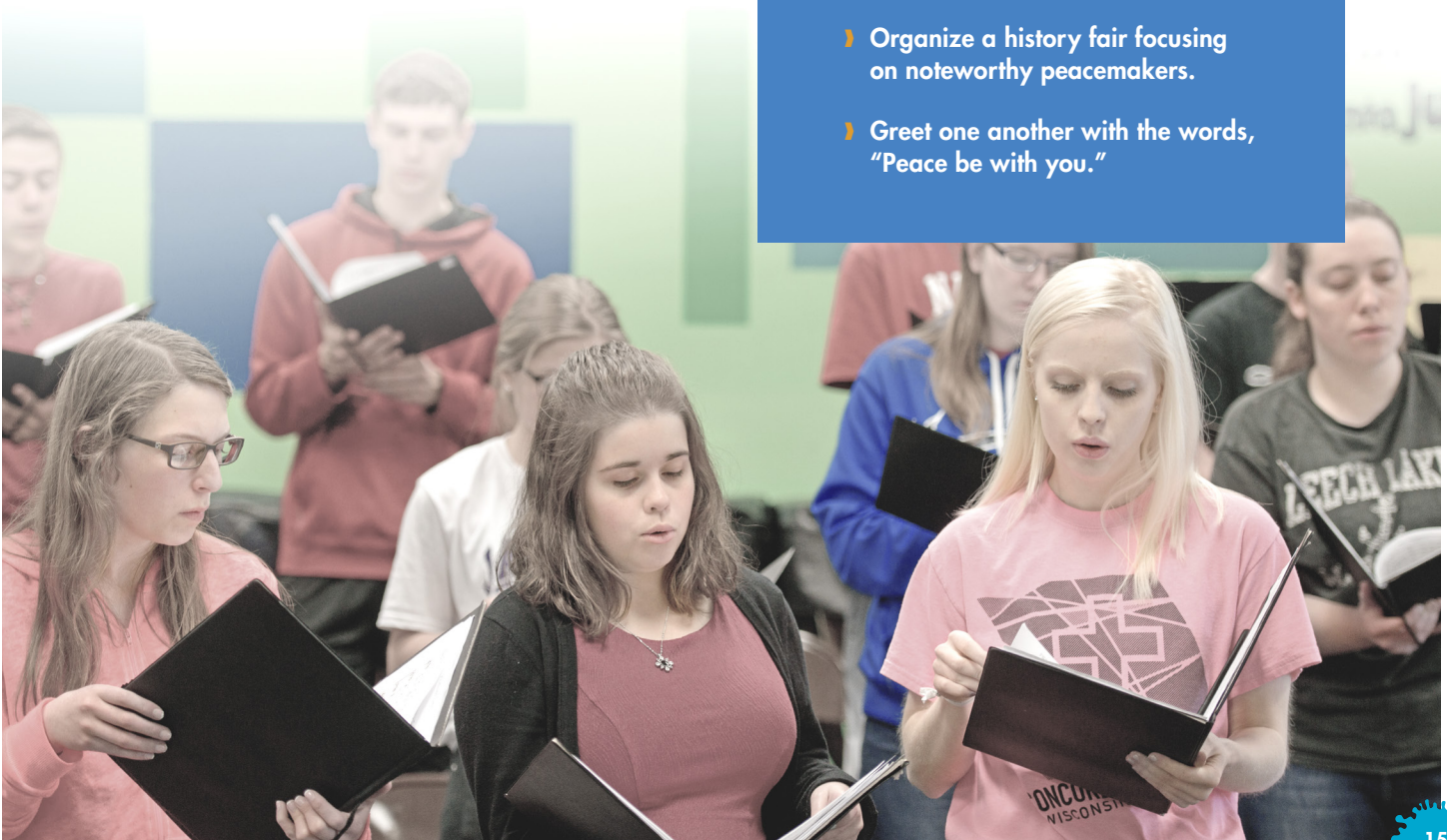
Jesus is among us with His peace. Gathered at the banquet table of the Lord's Supper, the communicants are dismissed with a word of peace. Tasting the body and blood of Jesus for the forgiveness of our sins, we are at peace. Having received His peace, we live in peace with God and with one another. Lutheran schools are places where the peace of Christ is received, lived and shared.

REFLECTIONS: Where is your peaceful place? When and how have you experienced peace through Christ? Does every student, staff member, parent and other person connected to our school experience a peaceful place? How do we show the peace of Christ in our lives?

PRAYER: Jesus, thank You for coming among Your disciples with the words, "Peace be with you." Thank You for sharing Your Word and feast of peace with us. Bless our peacemaking in Your name. Amen.

PEACE FULLY ENGAGED

- › Plan a school picnic (as if it were a holiday event).
- › Search for and share Bible passages on peace.
- › Host a program for military veterans.
- › Invite local policemen, firefighters and other community servants to the school to recognize and thank them for protecting us and keeping the peace.
- › Explore the resources of "Ambassadors of Reconciliation" for Christ-centered, peaceful relationships and then offer a Bible study or other event focusing on Christian peacekeeping.
- › Organize a patriotic parade down the school hallways or through the neighborhood.
- › Organize a history fair focusing on noteworthy peacemakers.
- › Greet one another with the words, "Peace be with you."





THURSDAY: FAITH FULLY

SCRIPTURE: ACTS 2:42–47

HYMN: LSB 500 / “CREATOR SPIRIT, BY WHOSE AID”

TEXT: ACTS 2:42

“And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship and to the breaking of bread and the prayers.”

STUDENT DEVOTION

OBJECT: RED DECORATIONS; WEAR RED CLOTHING, HAND OUT RED RIBBONS, ETC.

What’s your favorite color?

Our church is a colorful place. During the Advent season, we see blue on the altar; during Lent we see purple; during Christmas and Easter seasons, we see white; and for about half the year we see green. (As time allows, the significance of each color might be explained.) Today’s color is red. Red is the color for the observance of Pentecost, when God gave the disciples the Holy Spirit so that they could share the Good News with the whole world. When they received the Holy Spirit, tongues of fire (flames) appeared on their heads. Because of this, the color red is associated with the Holy Spirit.

Fifty days after Easter, the Spirit came to the disciples in Jerusalem. While the Spirit’s presence was experienced as tongues of fire and a rushing wind, He did more than create a dramatic scene. He brought the gift of faith to the crowd gathered in Jerusalem. Over 3,000 people repented of their sins and believed in Jesus as their Savior.

Those who received faith remained faithful. The closing verses of Acts 2 describe their worship life and their sharing of God’s gifts. They were faithful in worship, prayer and serving others.

In Holy Baptism, we were given the gift of faith. The Spirit who gives us faith also blesses us with faithfulness. Celebrating the blessings of Jesus’ forgiveness and the presence of the Spirit, we are faithful in our worship, prayer and service.

Our Lutheran school is a faithful place. It is a place where the Spirit has brought the gift of faith and we are blessed to share our faith together and with others.

PRAYER: Jesus, You were faithful in fulfilling the plan of salvation. Thank You for being faithful to the promise of sending the Spirit. Bless us with a Spirit of faithfulness. Amen.

STAFF DEVOTION

The 50 days after Jesus’ resurrection had been a time of uncertainty. The disciples were uncertain as to whether Jesus had indeed risen from the dead. Jesus had told them that He would be leaving them, but they were uncertain as to the time and place of His departure. They were uncertain as to what their lives and mission without Jesus’ physical presence with them every day.

Jesus responded to the disciples’ uncertainty with the appearance and power of the Holy Spirit. At Pentecost, He showed His faithfulness to His promises to them. The Spirit solidified their confidence in the risen Lord, reminding them that God would continue to be faithful to them.

We too face times of uncertainty. The uncertainty goes beyond “How will this lesson go today?” Sometimes we feel uncertain about our calling or the context of our calling. Sometimes we feel uncertain about our relationships, our finances and many other areas of our lives.

Through the Means of Grace, the Spirit continues to come to assure us of the sacrificial death of Jesus for the forgiveness of our sins and the resurrection of Jesus for the promise of our eternal life. The Spirit strengthens our faith so that we might be faithful in our vocations.

Even as we are blessed to respond faithfully, we continue to trust the Spirit to bless our students with faithfulness. Lutheran schools emphasize the need to be more than faithful students or community members. Through the Spirit, we pray that our students may be faithful disciples of Jesus for their whole lives.

REFLECTIONS: Share times of uncertainty in your life and ministry. How was God faithful to you? What does it mean to be a faithful servant in a Lutheran school? What does it mean to be a faithful spouse, parent, citizen, etc.?

PRAYER: Jesus, thank You for Your faithfulness. Thank You for the Spirit that brought us to faith and faithfully keeps us in that faith. Help us to serve and live faithfully. Amen.

FAITH FULLY ENGAGED

- › Celebrate and recognize those who faithfully have served and are serving the church and school ministry.
- › Study the history of the Reformation and its message of "Faith Alone."
- › Honor grandparents (and others) who have had long and faithful marriages.
- › Thank faithful stewards who financially support the ministry of the church and school.
- › Emphasize baptismal birthdays as faith-planting events.
- › Collect faith stories.
- › Sing hymns emphasizing faith and faithfulness.





FRIDAY: HOPE FULLY

SCRIPTURE: MATT. 28:1–10

HYMN: LSB 461 / “I KNOW THAT MY REDEEMER LIVES”

TEXT: MATT. 28:8

“So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy; and ran to tell his disciples.”

STUDENT DEVOTION

OBJECT: EASTER DECORATIONS

What’s your favorite Easter activity? Perhaps it’s an Easter egg hunt with your family, church, or community; perhaps it’s a family gathering; perhaps it’s the Easter sunrise service at church. Easter is an exciting and joyful time.

The first Easter did not begin with excitement. There were no bright decorations. There was no exciting gathering anticipated. The disciples felt hopeless as their friend Jesus had died. Their hopes for a Messiah had shattered with Jesus’ death on Good Friday.

At the empty tomb, an angel gave the women who had come to visit Jesus a message of hope: “He (Jesus) is not here, for he has risen as he said. Come, see the place where he lay.” The women, and later the disciples, saw the empty tomb. Jesus Himself greeted them. He was alive and there was hope for the present and for eternity.

Sometimes things in our lives seem hopeless. We hope that someone who is sick gets healthy again. We hope that people who are bitter and angry will be loving and joyful again. When we feel hopeless, we can look to Jesus. Because He is alive, He gives us hope in every time and place in our lives.

Because Jesus is alive, we have the hope of an eternity with Him. We know that in Baptism, we are children of the heavenly Father because of Jesus’ death and resurrection. We know that He will keep us in His grace. We know that He will take us and all who believe to be with Him forever.

Our Lutheran school is a hopeful place because the risen Jesus is here through His Word.

PRAYER: Jesus, help us when we feel hopeless. Remind us that Your Resurrection gives us the hope of being with You forever. You are with us in every time and place, giving us Your Word of hope. Amen.

STAFF DEVOTION

Have you ever had your hopes shattered? The spectrum of disappointment spans everything from a canceled vacation to learning that one’s cancer treatments are no longer working.

Disciples taking a reflective walk to Emmaus reflected on Jesus’ death and noted, “We had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel” (LUKE 24:21). The hopes of all those who had followed Jesus were shattered at His crucifixion. Jesus, who had risen from the dead on Easter morning and who now accompanied them as a stranger on the walk, revealed Himself as the risen Lord.

Earlier in the day, grieving woman had been greeted by an angel and discovered an empty tomb. Peter and John had also witnessed the reality of the Resurrection. Hope was alive!

Jesus, who is Hope, brings hope into our lives. Hope for the Christian is not wishful thinking or a list of “maybes”. Hope is confidence in Jesus’ resurrection and the reality of His presence in our lives. Through

Baptism (1 PETER 1:3), we receive the living hope of Christ in our lives.

We have the sure and certain hope of eternal life. We will be with our Savior forever. We will be gathered with the saints around the throne of glory.

Holidays may disappoint, celebrations cease, but God's people are hope-full in all times and circumstances. Our Lutheran school is a place of hope because the resurrection of Jesus is taught and celebrated. We are blessed to have visited the empty tomb by faith and to be Jesus' messengers of hope.

REFLECTIONS: Have you ever felt hopeless? How did God restore hope in you? What are your hopes for your church and school? What does it mean to be a messenger of hope to children, parents and others connected with this church and school ministry?

PRAYER: Jesus, Your resurrection is our hope. Help us to be hopeful followers who go back to Your empty tomb often and hear Your Word of hope. Bless us as we share that hope with others. Amen.

HOPE FULLY ENGAGED

- › Conduct an Easter parade (with a resurrection message) through the community or down the school hallways.
- › Share in Easter fun: Easter egg hunt, Easter bonnet contest, etc.
- › Contact or support a missionary who is sharing the Good News of hope in a foreign mission field or cross-cultural context.
- › Learn about local agencies that assist those whose lives seem hopeless.
- › Identify and share scriptural verses emphasizing hope.
- › Display a bulletin board sharing the hopes of students and staff.
- › Select and sing Easter hymns of hope.



POSTER SAMPLE



BULLETIN INSERT SAMPLE

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- 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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