

NATIONAL LUTHERAN SCHOOLS WEEK 2024



CONNECTED

JOHN 15:1-5

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This manual uses the following hymnal abbreviations:
Lutheran Service Book (LSB)
All God's People Sing! (AGPS)
One and All Rejoice (OAR)

WELCOME LETTER



DEAR FRIENDS IN CHRIST,

National Lutheran Schools Week is an annual celebration that promotes the important role of Lutheran schools in the United States and around the world. The theme for the 2023–2024 school year celebration is “Connected,” inspired by John 15:5: “I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.”

The theme “Connected” emphasizes the importance of staying connected to God and to one another when we face challenges and difficulties and when we share in joys and triumphs! It encourages Lutheran schools to continue to cultivate an environment of faith, love and fellowship, where students can learn, grow and thrive.

Throughout National Lutheran Schools Week, Lutheran schools organize various activities and events such as chapel services, prayer gatherings, community service projects and special programs that highlight the theme of being connected to God and to each other. These celebrations provide an opportunity for Lutheran schools to come together and celebrate our Lutheran mission and values, which guide our Lutheran schools as they serve students and families.

IN HIS SERVICE AND YOURS,

Dr. Alan Freeman

Director, LCMS School Ministry
The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod

PRESIDENTIAL PROCLAMATION



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

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

Whereas, Jesus told His church: "I am the vine; you are the branches" (JOHN 15:5); and

Whereas, Students in Lutheran schools are the branches, connected to the Vine by their Baptism and faith; and

Whereas, Teachers in Lutheran schools are also the branches, connected to the Vine by their Baptism and faith; and

Whereas, "The branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine" (JOHN 15:4); and

Whereas, All who believe and are baptized abide in Jesus and by Him "bear much fruit" (JOHN 15:5); and

Whereas, Lutheran schools bear much fruit by teaching the Good News of Christ's death and resurrection for sinners; and

Whereas, Christ commanded His church, "to love one another as I have loved you" (JOHN 15:12),

Whereas, Every Christian repents daily, knowing that apart from Jesus we can do nothing (JOHN 15:5); and

Whereas, Jesus told His church, "Abide in me, and I in you" (JOHN 15:4); and

Whereas, Salvation by grace through faith because of Jesus comes through God's Word; and

Whereas, Through hearing God's Word each and every day, students and teachers in Lutheran schools abide in His love; and

Whereas, Lutheran schools carry on a legacy of excellence in preparing students to explore the manifold gifts of creation in all academic fields and to serve their neighbors in varying vocations and diverse careers; and

Whereas, During National Lutheran Schools Week, we rejoice that by God's grace and through God's Word we are "Connected" to Christ, who is the Vine; therefore, be it

Resolved, That Jan. 21–27, 2024, 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 is a time for connections. Students and classes connect in creative activities. Teachers and administrators intentionally connect with families. Schools and congregations connect in celebrating ministry partnerships. The Lutheran school connects with the local and broader community. School alumni connect with the blessings of the past and support for the future.

The most important connection is with Christ. National Lutheran Schools Week celebrates that Christ is the focus of the Lutheran school not only for a special week, but every day in every activity. This week's textual focus (**JOHN 15:1-5**) declares that He is "the vine" and only by connecting to Him is there life and fruit.

Connections with Christ are always Trinitarian. The Father sends His only Son as the sacrifice for our sins. The Holy Spirit, promised by the Son, connects us to Him and blesses us with the fruits of faith. The connection between the three persons of the Trinity is emphasized during National Lutheran Schools Week. In the name of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, students, staff and

partners celebrate the connection to the church and the commission to grow the kingdom. The Trinitarian emphasis invites a remembrance of the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, where God first connects Himself to us in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

This resource includes a special message for a National Lutheran Schools Week Sunday or other celebration. A special chapel message is also included, as well as five daily emphases. While a Monday through Friday order is suggested, each school can choose the sequence that works best. In addition to daily devotional thoughts, a "More Connections" section is offered each day, and schools are encouraged to add their own creative "connections."

The "Connected" theme encourages Lutheran schools to strengthen connections. Jesus promises, "Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing" (**JOHN 15:5**). Blessings on a fruitful National Lutheran Schools Week.



HYMN

Jesus Is God's Living Vine

A NATIONAL LUTHERAN SCHOOLS WEEK HYMN FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN

Based on John 15:1-11 and the NLSW Theme: "Connected"

By Jeffrey E. Burkart

Sung to VIENNA ("Thine Forever, God of Love" – LSB 687)

- 1 Jesus is God's living vine;
I am His and He is mine,
For my sins were washed away
On my bless'd baptismal day.
John 15:1
- 2 We're connected to God's vine
Of Lord Jesus Christ divine!
In Him we're from sin set free
For He died for you and me.
John 15:3-4
- 3 We are branches on God's vine;
We are part of God's design.
We can share God's love with all
Whether they are great or small.
Matthew 28:18-20
- 4 As His branch we bear good fruit!
We're connected to the root
Who from all God's blessings run—
Jesus, God's most precious Son!
John 15:5
- 5 In God's love we all shall grow
And to others we shall show,
In the things we say and do,
How Lord Jesus loves them too.
John 15:8-9
- 6 Jesus said, "My joy is yours!
I'll be with you through the years!
Your joy will be full and free
As you live and trust in Me!"
John 15:11
- 7 Δ Praise to God the Father sing;
To Lord Jesus praises bring;
Praises to the Spirit be!
Praise the Holy Trinity!

JOHN 15:1-11

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.

Jesus Is God's Living Vine
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VIENNA
77 77
Music: Public domain

HYMN

In Christ, We Are Forever Grafted

Based on the 2024 National Lutheran Schools Week Theme, "Connected," and John 15:1–11.

By Jeffrey E. Burkart

(Sung to "Oh, That I Had a Thousand Voices – LSB 811)

Theme of Week — Day One: Connected to Christ

- 1 In Christ, we are forever grafted; *John 15:3*
We are the branches, He the vine.
All who abide in Him are crafted
Into a branch with fruit divine.
Apart from Jesus none will bear *John 15:5*
Fruit that is righteous, true, and fair.

Theme of Week — Day Two: Connected to the Creating Father

- 2 In Christ all faithful are connected *John 15:1–2*
To God the Father who takes care
Of His creation, though infected
By Satan's sinful, tempting snare.
Yet, we abide in Jesus' vine
To bear the fruits of God's design. *Galatians 5:22–2*

Theme of Week — Day Three: Connected to the Spirit and His Fruitful Gifts

- 3 Apart from Christ we can do nothing. *John 15:5*
Yet in Him, through the Spirit's show'r,
We are connected to the wellspring
Of all God's gifts, His grace, His pow'r!
Baptized in Christ, we died to sin, *Ephesians 2:8–9; 1 Corinthians 12:4–11*
And each day we new life begin. *Romans 6:3–4*

Theme of Week — Day Four: Connected to the Church

- 4 We are connected to each other *Ephesians 2:19–22*
And Christ who reigns o'er all the Church.
And with our Lord — as sisters, brothers —
United in baptismal birth.
As God's bless'd children we proclaim
Grace to each other in God's name.

Theme of Week — Day Five: Connected to His Commission

- 5 As Jesus loved His gracious Father, *Matthew 28:18–20*
May we so love all others too.
When we share Christ's love with our neighbor
Through ev'rything we say and do,
We shall reach people with God's grace
Till Christ's confessed by ev'ry race.

Doxology — All stand in honor of the Holy Trinity

- Δ 6 Praise to the Father, God Creator;
Thanks be to Jesus, God's own Son;
Hail to the Spirit, our Faith-Bringer;
We praise the Holy Three-in-One!
With saints and angels we employ
Our songs of thanks and endless joy! *John 15:11*

SUNDAY OR CELEBRATION SERVICE

SCRIPTURE

John 15:1-5

SONGS

“Fruitful Trees, the Spirit’s Sowing”
(*Lutheran Service Book [LSB] 691*)

MESSAGE:

“FRUITFUL LUTHERAN SCHOOL”

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

We enjoy the “fruits” from our favorite growing places. Perhaps it’s the juicy apple from the orchard in the fall, the tasty strawberry from the patch in spring, the fresh vegetables from the family garden or farmers’ market during the summer, or the colorful grapes from the vines in the vineyard. We celebrate the God who creates and provides.

We are blessed with the more significant “fruits” from God’s faith-growing places. We celebrate that our Lutheran school is one of God’s spiritual fruit-producing places.

In our theme text for **National Lutheran Schools Week (John 15:1-5)**, Jesus is gathered with His disciples in Jerusalem. Jesus has washed His disciples’ feet and then shares with them His final teachings (**JOHN 13-17**) before He leaves the room to be arrested in the garden and tried before Caiaphas, the high priest, and Pilate, the Roman governor. He carries His cross to Calvary’s hill and then submits to crucifixion for the sins of the world. Jesus has many important things to share with the disciples before He leaves them on His Passion journey.

A vineyard was a familiar growing place to Jesus’ listeners. Jesus had shared several illustrations about vineyards. Jesus told a parable (**MATT. 21:33-43**) about a vineyard where the managers selfishly keep the fruit and reject the owner’s messengers who visit the

vineyard on his behalf. Ultimately, the owner sends his son to the vineyard, and the managers kill the son.

God’s chosen people, Israel, were His “vineyard” (**ISAIAH 5:1-7**). The people did not listen to God’s prophets who warned them about their unfaithfulness. They had not produced the fruits of faith. When the Owner sent His Son, they killed Him. As Jesus met with His disciples, He was fulfilling the prophecies of the Old Testament and completing His parable illustration.

Jesus, the Son of God, gave His life on the cross for His disciples and for us. Jesus, who was crucified, died and buried, rose again on the third day. Because Jesus rose from the dead, the fruits of the forgiveness of sins, life and salvation are ours.

Only when we are connected by faith to Jesus do we receive the life He gives and then bear fruit for Him. Jesus teaches, “I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit.” When we were disconnected from Jesus, we were the lifeless and fruitless branches that had no use and were ready to be burned. Jesus chose to connect us to Himself. When we were baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, we became connected to the Vine. God continues to keep us connected as we hear and believe His Word.

The church is a place of special connections. When we come to church, we connect with friends and family and fellow worshipers. Most importantly, we, the branches, connect with Jesus, the Vine. As we hear God’s Word read and preached, as we gather at the Sacrament of the Altar, we celebrate the connection with Jesus and grow to produce fruit. As a ministry of the church, our Lutheran school connects children and families to Jesus, the Vine. In addition to the connections in the Divine Service and chapel gatherings, we hear of Jesus in our classroom devotions, Bible studies, hymns and other Vine-connecting times in the daily routine of our school day.

Jesus promised His disciples that as they continued to be connected to the Vine, they would be fruitful: “Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit” (JOHN 15:5). The disciples, who were also doubters and deniers, who slept while Jesus prayed in the garden, who went into hiding as Jesus hung on the cross, would be reconnected to their risen Lord and would be fruitful for Him.

The fruits come through the power of the Holy Spirit. In this last conversation with His disciples, Jesus promised that He would send the Spirit to them: “I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth The Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you” (JOHN 14:16–17, 26). The Spirit would bring connections to the Vine and keep the disciples connected.

The promised Spirit descended on the disciples on Pentecost (ACTS 2). Filled with the Spirit, the disciples boldly gave witness to the resurrected Jesus whom they had seen and believed. The Book of Acts shares the fruitful witness of the apostles in the vineyard of the Early Church.

That same Spirit comes to us in our Baptism, connecting us to Jesus’ death and resurrection (ROM. 6:3–4). The Spirit gives us the power to be witnesses for Jesus. Our witness of Jesus may be through the words of witness given through the Spirit. More often, our witness is through the lives that we live as the Spirit directs us.

In Galatians 5, the apostle Paul warned the church in Galatia of the consequences of sin and listed the signs that show when lives are not connected to the Vine. He described “works of the flesh”: idolatry, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, envy (GAL. 5:19–21). We confess our times of separation from Jesus and the sins of our thoughts, words and deeds. We certainly see and hear of the disconnection of the world as many choose to live life separate from Jesus and His Word.

Jesus promised, “Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit” (JOHN 15:5). Praise God for the connection to Jesus, the Vine, and the fruits that we grow as we are connected by the Spirit to Jesus. The apostle Paul describes the fruits of those connected to the Vine: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (GAL. 5:22–23).

Connected to the Vine and filled with the Spirit, our Lutheran church and school are fruitful places. The fruit of joy is shared in our worship together. Love is demonstrated by forgiving the wrong done by another. Peace is evident when differences are addressed in Jesus’ name. We are thankful for patient and kind volunteers. Faithful teachers engage with students every day. Gentle words are spoken when feelings and bodies hurt. Self-control is evident when things seem unfair on the athletic court or playground. (Additional specific and personal examples of the “fruits” in your setting may be shared.) We enjoy the fruits in this Vine-connected and Spirit-directed growing place.

The fruit that is grown in the church and school is then evident in other settings. We are commissioned to bring others to the Vine so that more fruit can grow. A student brings the fruit home in obedience to parents. Teachers and pastors bring the fruit to families in crisis. Children and teachers share the fruit of the Spirit through kind acts in the community. A school choir or other group brings the fruit of joy to nursing home residents. (Again, specific examples in your setting may be shared.)

Jesus told His disciples of the privilege of bearing fruit for Him: “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide” (JOHN 15:16). We, likewise, are humbled to be chosen by Jesus and connected to Him to bear His fruit. May we continue to be and see His fruits to His glory in this growing place. Amen.

**Fruitful trees, the Spirit’s sowing,
May we ripen and increase,
Fruit to life eternal growing,
Rich in love and joy and peace.**

**Fruitful trees, the Spirit’s tending,
May we grow till harvests cease;
Till we taste, in life unending,
Heaven’s love and joy and peace.**

(LSB 691:1, 4)

CHAPEL TALK

WE ARE THE BRANCHES!

SCRIPTURE

John 15:1-5

TEXT

"If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned" (John 15:6).

SONGS

"Loving Father, You Have Made Me"
(*One and All Rejoice* [OAR] 231:3)

"His Banner Over Me Is Love"
(*All God's People Sing* 118:3)

"Peach of a Savior" (internet resource)

MESSAGE:

Show and share illustrations of disconnected and connected vines or branches. Actual plants and branches are helpful.

Show disconnected branches that are wilted, leafless, dry and fruitless.

Show connected branches that are healthy and perhaps even bearing fruit.

How do we explain the difference between these plants? (Some have been in good soil, watered, and received sunlight and care. Others have been severed from the plant or otherwise neglected.)

Jesus often used nature to explain His relationship to us. In John 15, Jesus uses the connection between the vine and the branch to teach His disciples and us the importance of our connection to Him. A dried up, fruitless branch is worthless and burned in a fire (v. 6). The connected branch bears fruit.

Jesus connects us, the branches, to Himself, the Vine. We cannot connect ourselves to Him. Left to ourselves in our sin, we would be forever separated from Him. We would be spiritually useless and dead. However, Jesus first chooses to connect us to Himself in our Baptism. Jesus keeps us connected through the Word that we learn in our classrooms, in our chapel worship and in the Divine Service in our Lutheran school and church.

We are blessed to have many connections in our school. Each day, we connect with our friends and classmates. Caring teachers and other staff connect to our families and connect us to our school subjects and other activities. We connect with others on teams and group activities. Technology connects us to many resources. The most important connection in our school is our connection to Jesus.

Because we are connected to Jesus, we bear fruit for Him. This week, we will learn about some of the fruits that we grow and share in our school and beyond.

Because we are connected to Jesus, we have the privilege of connecting to Him in prayer (JOHN 15:7). We also have the promise that our connection to Him is not just for a special week in school or only for our time on earth. Jesus promises that He will stay connected to us so that we can enjoy the fruits of eternal life.

PRAYER:

*Holy Spirit, You have called me,
Brought me to my Savior's side;
Branch upon the Vine now growing,
By Your grace all needs supplied.*

(OAR 231:3)

MONDAY

CONNECTED TO CHRIST

CONNECTED TO THE WORD

“Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5).”

STUDENT DEVOTION:

We appreciate our connections. We need connections to the internet for our computer, iPad and phone. Many items in our school and home need to be plugged into an electrical outlet. There are the people connections with our family, friends and classmates.

Jesus taught His disciples about connections. John 13–17 details Jesus’ words of connection with His disciples before His arrest, trials, crucifixion and death on the cross. Jesus, who had connected with His disciples through His teaching for three years, now invites them to stay connected to Him. Through His Word and through the Sacrament of the Altar that Jesus shared with them in the Upper Room, Jesus provides the means to stay connected.

Without the connection to Jesus, the disciples could “do nothing” for their salvation or in witnessing and bearing fruit for Him.

We are blessed to be connected to Jesus in our Baptism. Each school day begins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. We gather around God’s Word and are reminded that He is connected to us and we are connected to Him.

We appreciate and celebrate our most important connection: the connection to Jesus!

STAFF DEVOTION:

“It’s all about connections!” Most of us have heard that statement and perhaps observed or experienced it. A professional connection may lead to a job opportunity. A connection with a friend or neighbor may lead to a recreational or social opportunity or the providing of a service.

Lutheran school ministry is all about connections: connecting with students, staff, families, congregation members and ministry supporters. The most important connection in a Lutheran school is the connection to Christ.

Jesus, who connects with His disciples for the final time before His Passion and ultimately His death on the cross, reminds them of the significance of being connected to Himself, the Vine. Jesus states, “Apart from me you can do nothing” (v. 5). Apart from Jesus, we are dry, lifeless and fruitless branches waiting to be burned. Connected to Jesus, we are alive and fruit-bearing.

Praise God that He has connected us to Himself in our Baptism. He strengthens that connection at His table and through His Word. Attached to Him, we are His fruit-bearing disciples in Lutheran school ministry.

It’s all about the connection to Jesus!

PRAYER:

*O Savior, precious Savior,
Whom yet unseen we love;
O name of might and favor,
All other names above,
We worship Thee, we bless Thee,
To Thee, O Christ, we sing;
We praise Thee and confess Thee,
Our holy Lord and King.
(LSB 527:1)*



CONNECTING CONVERSATIONS:

When have you felt helpless and fruitless?

How did the connection to the Vine lead you to fruitfulness again?

MORE CONNECTIONS TO CHRIST:

- What other “I am” statements does Jesus make in the Gospel of John?
- Review the life and ministry of Jesus. Perhaps have different classes/classrooms display or demonstrate a miracle, parable, station of the cross, word from the cross or other aspect of Jesus’ ministry.
- How is the connection to Christ shown through art (pictures, etc.) in the school and church?
- Explore the “Redeemer” hymns (*LSB* 523–554) and hymn sections that share the person and work of Jesus. Which hymns are school favorites? How do hymns connect us to Christ?
- We are connected to the Vine in Baptism. Identify Baptism “birthdays” of students and staff and observe this significant connection.
- Visit a local orchard, arboretum, botanical garden, garden center or other plant life setting. What aspects of healthy plant growth are applicable to healthy spiritual growth?
- Learn about vineyards in Jesus’ time. How did the disciples and others relate to and understand Jesus’ illustration?
- Have students explore and list all the “connections” in their personal life, family or school: technology, family, friends, teams, etc.
- Explore John 13–17. What other “connections” and lessons does Jesus share with His disciples? Note the foot-washing “connection.”
- Review the Explanation to the Second Article of the Apostles’ Creed. How does Martin Luther summarize Jesus’ connection to us?

TUESDAY

CONNECTED TO THE FATHER AND HIS CREATION

CONNECTED TO THE WORD

"I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth"
(Psalm 139:14–15).

STUDENT DEVOTION:

Your body is more than a collection of cells and systems. You are a miracle of God connecting together every cell and part of your body.

God inspired King David to describe and celebrate the Father's creation of you. Like an artistic weaver takes the threads and makes them into a beautiful piece of clothing, so God artistically created you in the womb of your mother. The psalm describes us as God's creation, "fearfully and wonderfully made."

Because of sin, our beautifully created bodies are sometimes diseased, bruised and broken. Jesus, who as true Man was formed in the womb of Mary, had a human body never affected by sin. His body went to the cross to suffer and die for all our sins. Jesus' body rose from the dead so that our earthly bodies might be perfectly new and whole again on the Last Day.

Sometimes, we may look at our bodies and wish they were different — taller or shorter, different color hair or other features. We celebrate that God made you to be YOU — His creation.

The psalmist shares our response to God's creating: "I praise you." As we consider God the Father's creation this week, we begin celebrating His creating of each of us.

STAFF DEVOTION:

Where do you go to experience God's creation? Some of us like to travel to the mountains, lake or other scenic destination. Perhaps more often we enjoy creation in a walk through a local park or down a nature trail. We thank God for His created places that also refresh us.

I invite you to see God's creation in front of you each school day as you look at the children in your classroom, walking down the school hallways or playing in the gym. Look at God's creation with King David (**PSALM 139**), who sees the beauty in God's creating of human life.

Every day, we see the fallen creation in the words and actions of the children we encounter. We watch their sinful behaviors. We hear their sinful and hurtful words. All creation and every created human being is affected by the fall. The Good News is that Jesus came as the Savior for each of us and for each child we teach. We have the privilege of sharing the new baptismal life and new creation with our students.

A teacher was sharing her struggles with a "difficult" student. A friend reminded the teacher, "He, too, is a child of God." Perhaps the phrase can be adapted to say, "He, too, is a creation of God." Enjoy God's creation in your classroom.

PRAYER:

*Father, we thank Thee who hast planted
Thy holy name within our hearts.
Knowledge and faith and life immortal
Jesus, Thy Son, to us imparts.
Thou, Lord, didst make all for Thy pleasure,
Didst give us food for all our days,
Giving in Christ the Bread eternal;
Thine is the pow'r, be Thine the praise.
(LSB 652:1)*

CONNECTING CONVERSATIONS:

When and where has God given you a glimpse of His creative power in your classroom or elsewhere?

What excites you about being and sharing His “new creation”?

MORE CONNECTIONS TO THE FATHER AND HIS CREATION:

- Review the Explanation of the First Article of the Apostles’ Creed. What does Martin Luther say about God’s creation? What is our response to His creation?
- Review the creation account of Genesis 1 and 2. What happened each of the seven days of creation? Why is the truth of the biblical creation important in the response to evolutionary propositions of today?
- Have a medical professional share some of the mysteries of the human body with the students.
- God’s creation of human life gives opportunity to share the life-affirming response of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Share age-appropriate “life” resources with the children and families.
- Plan a field trip (or just a neighborhood park walk) to enjoy God’s creation.
- Look for symbols and artistic expressions of God the Father in the church and school.
- Plan creating experiences for the students: sand or snow sculptures, artwork, music expressions.
- Read and sing “How Great Thou Art” (LSB 801) and find other hymns that celebrate the Father as Creator.
- Have students or staff share favorite “creation destinations” they have visited (national parks, etc.).



WEDNESDAY

CONNECTED TO THE SPIRIT AND HIS FRUITFUL GIFTS

CONNECTED TO THE WORD

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Gal. 5:22–23).

STUDENT DEVOTION:

Share a display of various fruits or a tray of different fruit pieces.

What’s your favorite fruit? Why do our parents (and school cooks) encourage us to eat fruit?

Jesus was familiar with the vineyards in the area where He lived and the fruit of grapes and the products that were made from them. In our theme text for the week (JOHN 15:1–5), Jesus talked about branches being connected to the vine so that the branches would produce fruit. “Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit” (v. 5). Jesus has connected us to Himself in our Baptism so that we can produce fruits for Him.

Obviously, Jesus is not talking about collecting apples, oranges or any other tasty fruit for Him. In Galatians 5, we learn about the fruits that we bear for Jesus. Through the work of the Holy Spirit whom Jesus sent 50 days after His resurrection, God’s people would be able to share the Good News of Jesus through the words they spoke and the deeds they shared. The Galatians passage shares nine fruits that demonstrate faith in Jesus.

In our Baptism, we received the blessings of forgiveness of sins, life and salvation. We were also blessed with the gift of the Holy Spirit. Through the Spirit’s work in us, we are fruitful for Jesus.

When others walk into our classrooms and other school settings, they see a “display” of fruit, given by the Holy Spirit. You are His fruit.

STAFF DEVOTION:

As we walk into the local grocery store (or the local market), we can appreciate the display of fresh fruit.

As parents, friends and guests walk into our church and school, do they see a “fresh fruit” display? (No, we are not going into the grocery business.) Do others see the display of the Spirit’s fruit?

Jesus directed the disciples (JOHN 15) to bear fruit: “I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide” (v. 16). Early in the chapter, Jesus emphasizes that only the branches connected to Him will bear fruit. In Galatians 5, the apostle Paul introduces the Holy Spirit as the source of the fruit. Blessed with the saving connection to Jesus and directed by the Spirit, followers of Jesus become fruit bearers.

Sometimes our connections to the Vine become tenuous; the cares of the world cause the fruit to fall or otherwise be “damaged.” We are anything but the “fresh fruit” God desires and our ministries deserve. We are refreshed by the Means of Grace so that we can bear fruit to God’s glory.

PRAYER:

*Holy Spirit, ever dwelling
In the holiest realms of light;
Holy Spirit, ever brooding
O’er a world of gloom and night;
Holy Spirit, ever raising
Those of earth to thrones on high;
Living, life-imparting Spirit,
You we praise and magnify
(LSB 650:1)*



CONNECTING CONVERSATIONS:

When have you felt like stale (or even rotting) fruit?

How does the Spirit continue to freshen you for joyful and fruitful service for Him?

MORE CONNECTIONS TO THE SPIRIT AND HIS FRUITFUL GIFTS:

- Review the Explanation to the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed. Why is the work of the Holy Spirit significant?
- Review Pentecost in Acts 2. Describe the scene and significance of the Pentecost event.
- Look for symbols of the Holy Spirit in the church and school.
- Explore the "Pentecost" hymns (LSB 496–503) or other hymns that teach and share the work of the Holy Spirit.
- Have a "fruit-filled" day. Have different classrooms (or groups) take a Galatians 5:22–23 "fruit" and share ways of demonstrating that fruit in the school, church, family or community.
- Develop a bulletin board or other display of the "fruits" at your Lutheran school.
- Visit an orchard or other fruit-growing place. Learn about the care of fruit-producing plants. What parallels are there to growing fruits of faith?

THURSDAY

CONNECTED TO THE CHURCH

CONNECTED TO THE WORD

"I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (John 17:20–21).

STUDENT DEVOTION:

The players on the team are in a pre-game huddle, listening to the final instructions from the coach. As the huddle breaks, the team chants, "One, two, three, TEAM!"

Jesus had His "team" of 12 disciples who had followed Him, watched His miracles and heard His teaching. Jesus "huddles" with His team right before He journeys through His Passion in John 13–17. Jesus huddles with them in prayer: "I am praying for them" (JOHN 17:9). Jesus prays that they would continue to be faithful to His Word. Jesus prays that they would be His messengers into the world.

As Jesus gathers with His disciples, He also prays for another team, His church. Jesus gave His life for His church. Jesus sends His Spirit to bring His blessings to His people in the church. Jesus prays that His church would believe in Him through His Word and be "one."

Students in a school may be part of a team — an athletic team, technology team, dance team, etc. Team experiences are great. Jesus has saved us and called us to be part of His team, the church. On that team, we praise Him, we work together to serve Him and we invite others to be part of His team. What a blessing it is to be part of Jesus' team, the church!

STAFF DEVOTION:

Staff members in a Lutheran church and school are part of a "team ministry." That description is often used to discuss and strengthen our teamwork in effective and joyful ministry. There are different roles on the team, and everyone learns to play and serve together.

Team ministry begins with recognizing and celebrating whose team we are on. While we are on the team of a specific ministry setting, the greater emphasis is that we are members of Jesus' "team," the church.

Jesus states, "You did not choose me, but I chose you" (JOHN 15:16). God chose us in our Baptism to be His children. God chose to share the riches of His grace with us. God then chose us to be members of His team, the church. The members of the local church, the families in the Lutheran school and other partners are part of His team. His prayer (JOHN 17) is that this team be "one" in glorifying Him and serving Him.

More specifically and personally, He chose to give us a ministry position on this team. He chose us to teach a specific grade level or subject area. He chose us to discover and enhance children's gifts academically, musically, artistically and athletically. Praise God for being chosen to be a member of His team in your school.

PRAYER:

*I love Your Church, O God,
Your saints in ev'ry land,
Dear as the apple of Your eye,
And graven on Your hand.
Sure as Your truth shall last,
To Zion shall be giv'n
The brightest glories earth can yield
And brighter bliss of heav'n.*

(LSB 651:3, 5)



CONNECTING CONVERSATIONS:

What distracts from team ministry at your church and school?

How is your team strengthened for fruitful ministry together?

MORE CONNECTIONS TO THE CHURCH:

- Have students explore the history of your local church and school.
- Invite the pastors or church leaders to share information about the local church and its ministry in the congregation, community and world.
- Learn about the “support team” of your LCMS district. Perhaps invite a district staff member to the school to share information about the district. How does the district assist Lutheran schools?
- Learn about the “support team” of the LCMS at the Synod level. What is a synod? Who leads the team? What is the team doing in various ministry areas? How does the Synod support the ministry of Lutheran schools?
- Have students wear team uniforms to school. Have a pep rally cheering professional and volunteer teams.
- Explore the “Church” hymns (LSB 644–680). What’s the difference between the Church Militant and the Church Triumphant?
- Invite pastors, principal, teachers and others to share the joys and blessings of their ministry “team.” Encourage students in exploring church ministry careers.
- Invite teams (sports, dance, technology, etc.) from other Lutheran or community schools to play and pray together.

FRIDAY

CONNECTED TO HIS COMMISSION

CONNECTED TO THE WORD

“You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you” (John 15:16).

STUDENT DEVOTION:

We appreciate being chosen. Whether it’s on the team for playground games, a position in the school play, on a community soccer team or in any other situation, we love to hear or see that someone has chosen us.

Yesterday, we celebrated that God chose us to be on His team, the church. We brought no skill or any other criteria to qualify as His choice. God chose us in our Baptism to be part of His family, the church. The disciples heard Jesus say, “Follow me.” They were privileged to see their Savior suffer and die and rise again for them. We, too, have been privileged to know and believe that Jesus has chosen us to be His followers.

Like the disciples, we are also chosen to be Jesus’ witnesses. God’s plan and desire is that everyone would be connected to Jesus, the Vine, and that they would bear fruit for Him. We have been chosen not only to live the fruits of the Spirit but to share the saving love of Jesus with others.

As we share the Good News of Jesus, He promises to be with us and to bless our witness: “Whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you” (JOHN 15:16). We pray that friends, family and neighbors would be chosen to be connected to the Vine and produce fruit on His team.

STAFF DEVOTION:

Why do you serve in a Lutheran school? Most Lutheran school educators and staff have been asked

that question (or asked it of themselves). The question may arise in the context of opportunities to serve in other more lucrative or otherwise more noteworthy occupations. There are a variety of responses: “I love the kids.” “I love what I do.” “I appreciate the support I receive.”

Jesus’ conversation with His disciples in our theme text (JOHN 15) provides another response. Jesus speaks to all His followers, including servants in a Lutheran school: “I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide” (v. 16).

Nothing in our personality, professional resume, education degrees or any other thing qualifies us for service in any “vineyard,” including that of a Lutheran school. Blessed to be attached to the Vine, we are Spirit-led and Spirit-empowered to bear fruit. To be God’s choice to bear fruit for Him in a Lutheran school is a humbling privilege.

Jesus assures us that serving Him, we bear “fruit [that] should abide.” Spirit-led service does make a difference. Lutheran schools are privileged to share the fruit that leads to eternal life.

Along with the local church (and the church at-large), students, families and the community, we give thanks for being God’s choice in this place at this time.

PRAYER:

*O let the people praise Thy worth,
In all good works increasing;
The land shall plenteous fruit bring forth,
Thy Word is rich in blessing.
May God the Father, God the Son,
And God the Spirit bless us!
Let all the world praise Him alone,
Let solemn awe possess us.
Now let our hearts say, “Amen.”
(LSB 824:3)*



CONNECTING CONVERSATIONS:

Why do you thank God for His choosing you to serve in Lutheran school ministry?

How can your church and school share the fruits of the Spirit in this community and beyond?

MORE CONNECTIONS TO HIS COMMISSION:

- Share stories with students and others regarding the privilege of “bearing fruit” in your church and school.
- Share information about professional ministry needs, and encourage students to consider a ministry career. Invite Concordia universities and seminaries to be part of the conversation. Visit a Concordia university or seminary setting.
- Emphasize how the school chapel offerings (or other student monetary gifts) support mission fields in the community and around the world.
- Invite a missionary (in person or via video conferencing) to visit the school or classrooms to share about their “fruit-bearing” mission.
- Learn about mission “fields” in your district or local community. How is God producing His fruit?
- Review the “Mission and Witness” hymns (LSB 823–835) or other worship resources.
- Have the pastor or “mission” volunteer share how your church and school are bringing the community to Jesus, the Vine.
- Welcome the community onto your “field.” Celebrate the Gospel message that the school and church are sharing.



POSTER SAMPLE

NATIONAL LUTHERAN SCHOOLS WEEK 2024



CONNECTED

JOHN 15:1-5



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BULLETIN INSERT SAMPLE

LUTHERAN SCHOOLS



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

EARLY CHILDHOOD > 1,677
ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS > 191
MIDDLE SCHOOLS > 625
HIGH SCHOOLS > 103
TOTAL > 2,594



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GRAPHIC SAMPLES

2024
CONNECTED
NATIONAL LUTHERAN SCHOOLS WEEK

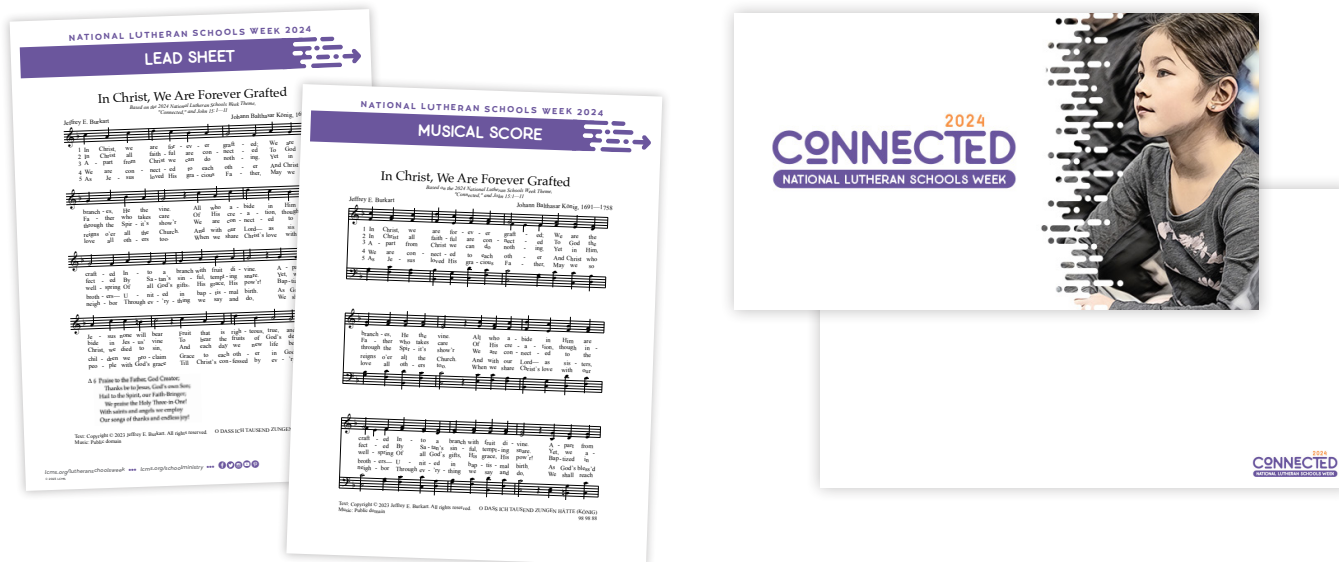


ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

HYMNS AND MUSICAL ACCOMPANIMENT

- “Jesus Is God’s Living Vine”
- “In Christ, We Are Forever Grafted”

PRESENTATION SLIDE TEMPLATES



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