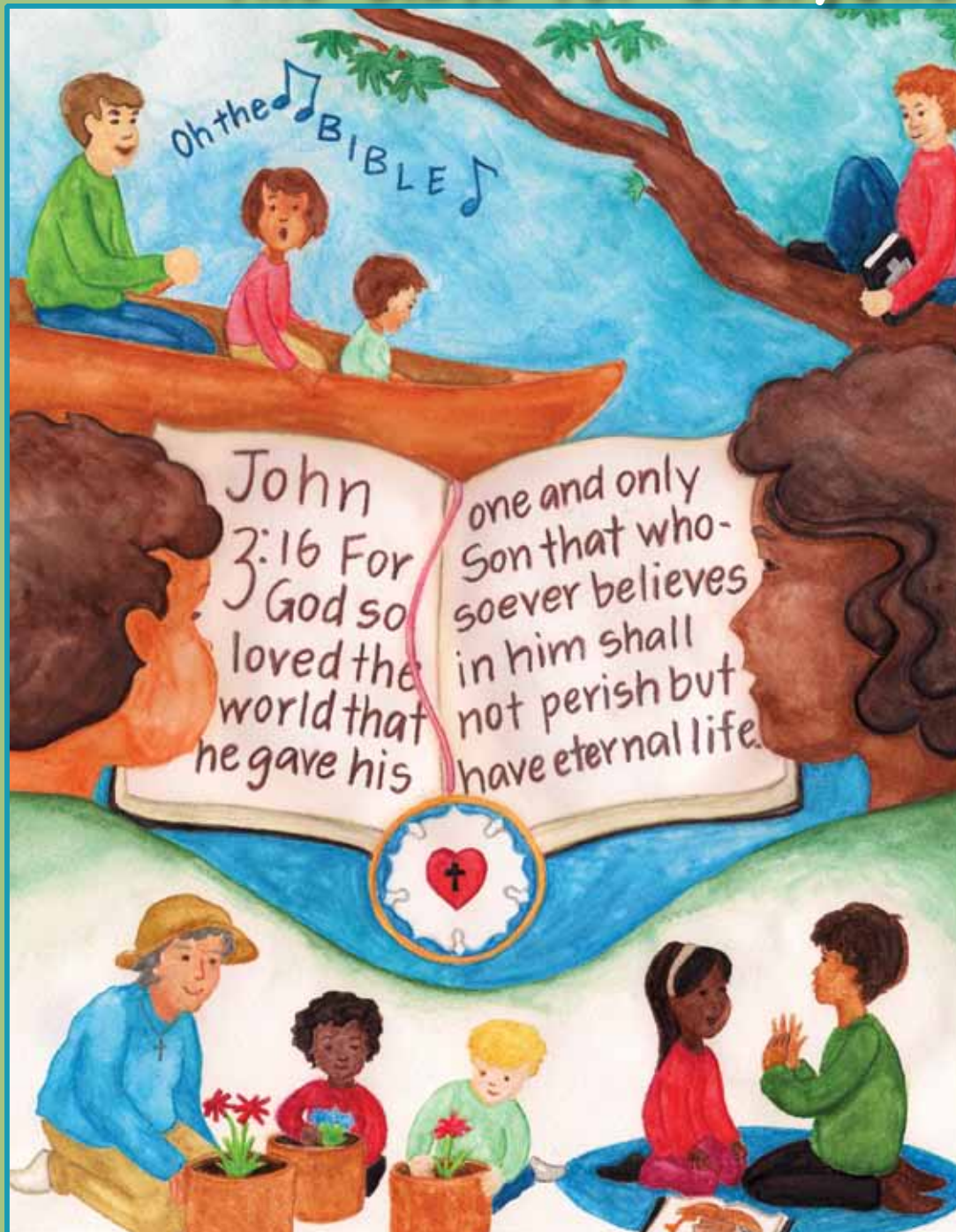


My Word!

The Bible for Everyone



2009-2010 CHRISTIAN EDUCATION PLANNING GUIDE
AN ONGOING EXPRESSION OF THE CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP

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How to Use This Resource

Adapt this material to fit your setting. Consider using it...

- as you plan and prepare to launch the 2009-2010 education year
- as you pick and choose elements and incorporate them in your educational programs throughout the year
- in conjunction with materials from previous planners to carry out your own on-going response to the Call to Discipleship in mid-week activities, after-school programs, special-event days, or summer programming
- as an additional element in your congregation's Book of Faith activities. For more information about the ELCA Book of Faith Initiative, visit www.bookoffaith.org

Be sure to maximize your use of Web page references found throughout this resource.

This program planning guide is designed to be both a print and an electronic resource. For all material related to this resource, including the full contents of the print resource, clipart, and other supplemental materials, visit www.elca.org/ce/programplanner_2009

Copies of this resource may be ordered by calling 800-328-4648. Use order code ITEM001428. The item is free except for the cost of shipping. (Limit 8 per congregation.)

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Project Manager and Editor, Diane Monroe

Writers, David Daubert, Emily Demuth Ishida, Diane Monroe

Music Composer, David Morstad

Designer, Sharon Martin

Illustrator, Virginia Campbell

Welcome Disciples!

We are born to hear God's word. The texts we hear, discuss, repeat, and wrestle with are truly the Spirit of God reaching out to us at every moment in our lives. This planning guide is intended to assist Christian education leaders as they engage people of all ages and especially children in a life of discipleship grounded in scripture. As adults who work or live with children, we have the privilege and responsibility to nurture an awareness of God's presence in their lives and the confidence that they are called to reflect God's word in their day-to-day activities!

This year's guide is marked by several helpful features:

- It is designed as a resource related to the ELCA Book of Faith Initiative.
- As we continue with our "EveryDay Disciples" series, it is fitting that the spotlight shines on the life and ministry of Martin Luther. We are told in one of Luther's "table talks" that he read the Bible so thoroughly and so often that he knew what was on every page. He wanted the Bible to be accessible for **everyone** and so he translated it from Latin to German. (page 12)
- Martin Luther plays a significant part in this year's Cross-generational Rally Day Festival. (page 14)
- A children's message to help worship leaders integrate the Bible and the My Word! theme into worship. (page 10)
- *Holy Wisdom, Holy Word*. Music and lyrics suitable for all ages and intended to be used in worship, children's ministry programs, and as a theme song accompanying Book of Faith activities. (page 23)
- A Take-home connection helps parents and grandparents create time, space and opportunity for regular scripture engagement at home. (pages 27-29)

An Ongoing Expression of Discipleship

This resource is the latest addition to the constellation of resources carrying out the Call to Discipleship initiative www.elca.org/ceplanners is your one-stop entry point for accessing all the previous program planning guides in this series.

Each annual planning guide focuses on one specific aspect of discipleship. Visit www.elca.org/Intergenerational for a quick overview of:

- the previous themes
- information on Bible studies related to the seven faith practices
- and a complete list of Intergenerational Rally Day modules

Hear Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson reflect on Colossians 3 at www.bookoffaith.org/bof_new/colossians3.htm

My Word! The Bible for EveryOne

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. Colossians 3:16

Introduction to This Year's Theme

Welcome to the Christian Education Planning Guide for 2009-2010! This year will be an exciting year for people of all ages. It will be a chance for everyone to dig deeper into scripture and to encounter God there.

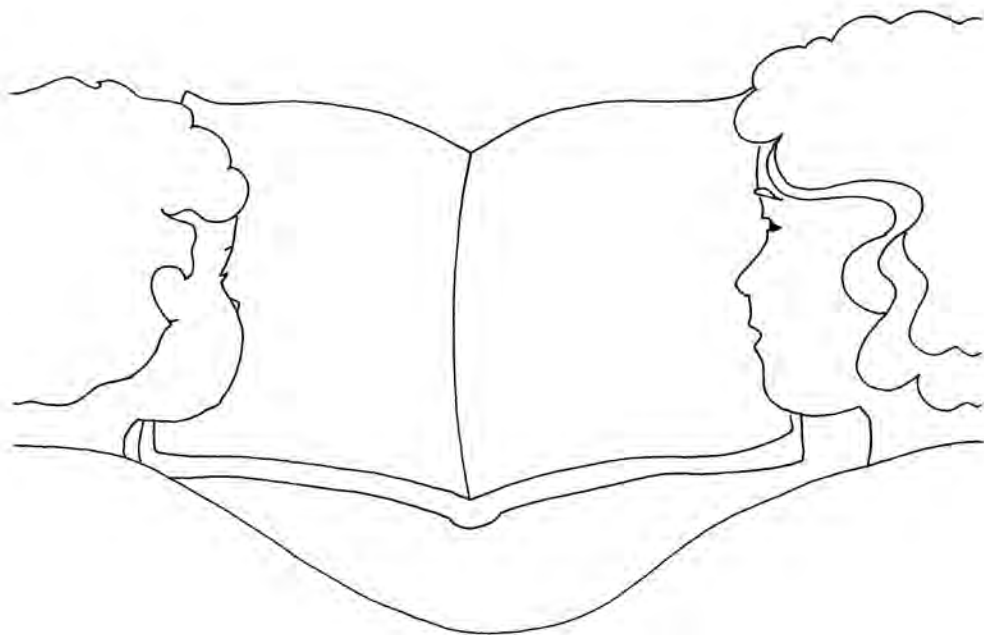
This year's "EveryDay Disciple" is Martin Luther. Did you know that Luther was a Bible teacher? He loved scripture and taught the Old Testament. Luther liked to say, "Scripture is the manger in which the (Christ) child is laid." What he meant is that the Bible is not so much about words on a page. It is a place where we meet Jesus! And we read the Bible, not primarily as a handbook for life, but rather as an encounter with the living Christ.

Our theme verse comes from Colossians 3:16. When we let the word of God dwell in us, what is it that we are allowing? It is about an encounter with a God who has come to us in Jesus to dwell among us. Now, the author of Colossians calls us to allow this event to happen in us! This is incarnational language. That means that what God has done in Christ is to be continued by his followers!

Lutherans have long believed that within the pages of scripture God has spoken and continues to speak to us. In these pages the community of faith has agreed that God is speaking to us. The Bible is an entrance to a life that looks for a God who is active and out in the world. By hearing God where we KNOW God is speaking (in scripture) we can train our ears to discern God's voice in the midst of all the noise in the world around us.

THE GOAL OF THIS CHRISTIAN EDUCATION PLANNER IS TO EQUIP YOU TO HELP PEOPLE IN YOUR CONGREGATION:

- Engage the Bible in new ways and with new energy.
- Find ways to move from words on a page to an encounter with a living God who speaks through the Bible but is also present and active in all of life.
- Implement ways to make scripture a regular part of daily life and a place where disciples are shaped by an active and working God.



Leader Bible Study

“Let the word of God dwell in you richly.” Colossians 3:16a

Theme

There is often a sense that Jesus is someone who lived a long time ago in a land far away. Yet when the text from Colossians was written, Jesus had already been crucified and raised from the dead for many years. Many of those who were alive when it happened had already died as well. But the author understood how God’s word works in the present and doesn’t just tell us about the past, it also DWELLS in us in the here and now!

Purpose

The goal of this Bible study is to help people who serve as leaders in Christian education in congregations. Those leaders will be encouraged to think about the word of God in many ways and to reflect on how their teaching can move from information about the Bible to a way of hearing God speak to us now. People will discover that God’s word is both bigger than we often think and closer than we often notice. And it is not just a “religious” thing to spend time in the Bible, it is a way of being a part of what God is up to in the world.

Main Ideas

The Bible is the “word of God” but it bears that word for us to meet a God who is alive. We’ll try to emphasize that the word of God is more than ink on a page. God’s word is on the move and doing many things. The three things we’ll explore in this study include:

It is creative – it brings life,

It is incarnational – it participates in life,

It is meaningful – it helps make sense of life.

Three Main Components

This Bible study is designed with three main components. These three parts can be used as the core of a leaders’ retreat over the course of a day or extended outing. Or leaders can use these as three parts in a series of three studies on the word of God. They are designed so that anyone can lead them—the instructions cover all that needs to be known and no experts are required. God’s word is a creative word. So use these studies to explore how living in that word calls you to be creative as well!

Each component contains:

- A discussion starter
- A Bible reading
- A place for reflection
- Questions for you to ponder and talk over together
- A time to pray (out loud) together

Participating in Creation

Bible Study #1

DISCUSSION STARTER:

There is an increased interest in creation and our role in caring for it. How is care of creation being expressed in your lives as disciples?

BIBLE READING: *Genesis 1:1-31*

Here we see that God's word is a creative one. And God both sees that it is good and calls on humankind to be stewards of the world God has made.

REFLECTION:

- What is God doing in this text?
- What is God saying *to you personally* as you read and/or listen to this passage?
- What is God sharing *with you collectively* (your small group, congregation, etc.) in this text? What lessons are you to hear together?
- How does the *creative* word of God influence us, as it should, in our lives as disciples of Jesus?

God speaks and good things happen! In some Christian traditions people have considered the world "disposable" since getting people to heaven is the goal. But much of the ministry of Jesus points to the reality that God is very concerned with what happens *here*. One apocryphal story tells of Luther planting a tree. He is asked, "If you knew Jesus was coming tomorrow, what would you do?" Luther reportedly answered, "I would still plant a tree." What if the whole point of Jesus coming into the world is to make sure we know how much the world matters to God?

TO PONDER TOGETHER:

- How does your congregation help people meet a God in scripture who cares about the world?
- What regular things does your congregation do to participate as good stewards of creation as it uses resources? What could it consider doing?

PRAYER:

Close together by praying out loud with prayer for the world that God has made and loves. Include prayers for people and situations needing prayer now.

The Word Became Flesh

Bible Study #2

DISCUSSION STARTER:

Where have you seen God at work recently? What makes you think it was God?

BIBLE READING: *John 1:1-8*

John is very excited about the word that made the world now coming to be involved as a part of it in Jesus. He begins God's creative work in Jesus by connecting it to God's creative work in creation.

REFLECTION:

- What is God doing in this text?
- What is God saying *to you personally* as you read and/or listen to this passage?
- What is God sharing *with you collectively* (your small group, congregation, etc.) in this text? What lessons are you to hear together?
- What ways can you help others "see" God in the flesh and encounter a living Christ?

One of the amazing claims of Christianity is that the God who made the world dared to come down in the middle of it. It was a huge risk and one that almost no one saw coming. In fact, John reminds us that even the people who should have been best prepared for this had trouble believing it and ultimately rejected Jesus. At the same time, John sees the amazing truth that in Jesus God is acting to invite anyone and everyone to connect with God. And this is a God whose love and commitment are deep enough to persist through even death and continue being a part of our lives. Believing this brings the life-changing gift that turns ordinary people into children of God!

TO PONDER TOGETHER:

- How does the ministry of your congregation help people not just to hear about Jesus who came long ago, but also to meet Jesus in the present?
- If believers are children of God and given new life in Christ, how does your congregation teach and train everyone for their role as a disciple called to carry on the work of Jesus, in the church and in the world?

PRAYER:

Close by praying out loud with prayers of thanksgiving for where you have seen God in the flesh lately. Include prayers for people and situations needing prayer now.

Interpreting Scripture

Bible Study #3

DISCUSSION STARTER:

Who are the people in your life who started interpreting scripture for you when you were a “young” Christian (as a child or adult—whenever Christianity was new to you)?

BIBLE READING: Acts 8:26-40

A man from Ethiopia is intrigued by what he is finding in scripture. But he needs help to fully understand the implications of what he is reading.

REFLECTION:

- What is God doing in this text?
- What is God saying *to you (individually and as a group)* as you read and/or listen to this passage?
- If having help interpreting scripture is important for new Christians, who are you personally helping better understand and listen for what God is saying?

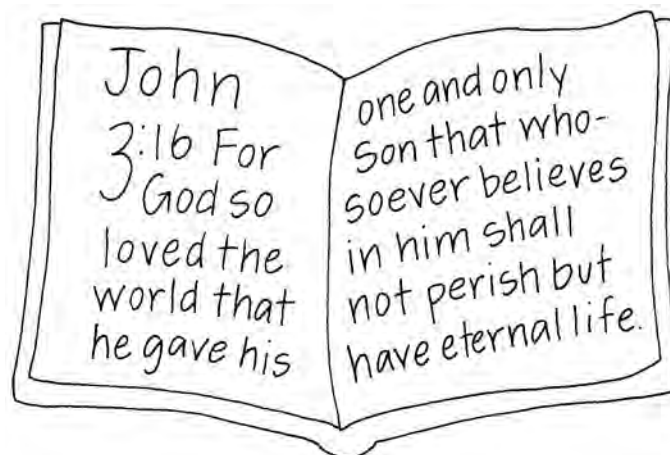
For Christians, it can be all too easy to assume that if we know what a message means that others must know as well. We can even assume enough about what we think we know to miss new insights for ourselves. A key to really hearing and meeting a living God comes from being willing to live in community with others, ask questions, and share answers. Just as the Ethiopian eunuch was blessed by conversation with Philip, all of us will be blessed to ask good questions and share our answers with others along the way.

TO PONDER TOGETHER:

- When you personally have a question about faith from scripture, where do you go to find help or support?
- How do leaders in the congregation or ministry in which you are participating encourage people to ask questions and work to discern answers in community? What ways could this be expanded?

PRAYER:

Close out loud with prayers for wisdom, discernment, and curiosity to seek out insights from scripture. Include prayers for people and situations needing prayer now.



COMMITMENT AND AFFIRMATION OF FAITH FORMATION LEADERS

The pastor may welcome children, youth, and adults to come forward to bless their teachers, guides, and facilitators for the coming year. At the appropriate time, teachers and leaders of all the congregation's faith formation ministries are invited to come forward.

A lay assisting minister begins:

The following leaders have been called to teach and disciple in our midst this year: (Names are read as individuals come forward.)

The pastor continues:

Today we give thanks and seek God's blessing on those who have lovingly presented themselves for the teaching ministry of our congregation.

The pastor addresses the teachers and leaders:

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual song to God. Colossians 3:16

Do you hear the word of God and do you embrace the joy-filled privilege of nurturing Christian growth by engaging those you teach in discovering the Bible?

The teachers and leaders respond:

I embrace this privilege and ask God to help and guide me.

The pastor continues:

Will you endeavor to make study of scripture a priority in your own life, share stories of faith with others, and bear witness to God's creative and redeeming word to all the world?

The teachers and leaders respond:

I will and ask God to help and guide me.

The pastor addresses the congregation:

It is our privilege to affirm and send forth those who are called to the teaching ministry of our congregation and God's kingdom in this place. Will you commit to support them in their spiritual well-being through prayer, encouragement, and service?

The congregation responds:

We will and we ask God to help and guide us.

The pastor continues:

Let us pray.

Gracious God, pour out your Holy Spirit upon all those who teach and learn. Draw us into your holy word and compel us to boldly share your ongoing story of love and salvation, rejoicing always in your powerful presence, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen



Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. Colossians 3:16

My Word! The Bible for EveryOne

We are born to hear God's word. The texts we hear, discuss, repeat, sing, and wrestle with are truly the Spirit of God reaching out to us at every moment in our lives. Lutherans have long believed that within the pages of scripture God has spoken and continues to speak to us. The Bible is an entrance to a life that looks for a God who is active in the world. When we let the word of God dwell in us, we encounter God who has come to us in Jesus to dwell among us **and...** what God has done in Christ is to be continued by his followers!

The 2009-2010 annual Christian education planning guide is a resource related to the Book of Faith Initiative. It reminds us that people of all ages must have direct access to the Bible and to expect that the Bible has the power to change lives. Our call to discipleship compels us to be diligent in our own regular personal and corporate encounter with scripture and to encourage one another in a vibrant faith marked by our first language of faith—the Bible!

Children's Message

Consider using this...

- in worship as a children's sermon
- as a part of your congregation's celebration when Bibles are distributed
- as an introductory activity to cross-generational Book of Faith activities
- as a large group 'opening' element
- as an additional "story telling" activity in the midst of the Rally Day celebrations
- in chapel for your congregation's school or early childhood center
- for a family take-home activity

Advance preparation for leaders:

Read through the script and gather necessary materials. The script is not meant to be spoken word for word, preached as is, but rather used as a guide for you to adapt as necessary to your particular situation.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

The book *Goodnight Moon* by Margaret Wise Brown (a children's classic, available from a public library or a member of the congregation)

Two Bibles, one in pristine condition; the other underlined, well-marked and well worn, with bookmarks, etc.

Children's Message Script

Some of you, when you were younger, probably liked to hear stories over and over again. Did your mom or dad ever read the same book every night? Do any of you remember some of your favorite books?

I know someone who read *Goodnight Moon* to her children every night. She read it so many times that she didn't even need to turn the pages or look at the words. She had memorized the book, and would sit in the dark, while her children were in bed, and recite the words.

Have you read *Goodnight Moon*? I have a copy of it here, and thought we could read some of it together. (Read a few sentences or as much as time allows. Be sure to adjust to the reactions from the children.)

Let's talk about what happens in the story. The little bunny says "good night" to all the things in his room, doesn't he? These are all the things familiar and comforting to him: his bowl of mush, his red balloon, his picture of the cow jumping over the moon—and the quiet old lady who was whispering "hush." These are many of the things that make him feel safe and loved, aren't they?

Do you have special things in your room that make you feel safe and loved? What are they?

I think the words of *Goodnight Moon* made a lot of other children feel safe and comfortable when the book was read to them. Do you have a special book that made you feel that way?

I have a couple of books here that I'd like to show you. (Pull out two Bibles—one well used, with markings, underlinings, cover falling off, etc.—the other in pristine condition.) Actually these are two copies of the same book. What book is this? Which of these Bibles do you think was cared for very well? Which do you think was the most treasured?

Let's think about that while we listen to a Bible verse Colossians 3:16. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to the Lord."

What does it mean to have the word of Christ dwell in us? "To dwell in us" means that it needs to live

in us, and become a part of us. Just like all the things in the great green room were familiar to the little bunny, we need God's word to become familiar and comfortable to us, so that we know the stories of God's people—how Moses led the people out of the wilderness, or King David fought Goliath, or Joseph's brothers sold him, or Jesus was born, or Jesus visited Mary and Martha.

When we look at the two Bibles, which do you think helped the word of Christ dwell in me?

That's right—the Bible that I read, and reread, and marked my favorite passages in, so that I could remember them, and even memorize them.

If you present Bibles to certain grade levels at Rally Day, the presentation could be made at this point. Pencils could be handed out and children could be encouraged to mark Col. 3:16. It's important to get the first marks put in a Bible, so that it becomes a workbook, something to study and pour over, not just a book to sit on a shelf.

I could read a passage that some of you have probably heard before. (Read a portion of Luke 2, or another familiar verse.) It may be a long time before any of you read all the way through the Bible, but we can become familiar with it slowly, by reading a bit at a time. Your mom or dad could read a verse or two each night before bed, or a story from a Bible story book, so that you could learn about the people of God.

We want the word of Christ to be as comforting and familiar to us as the great green room was to Little Bunny. Then the word will be dwelling in us richly, and we will be able to sing praises and teach others from it.



Turn the page to meet our EveryDay Disciple.

Other fun activities to add to your spotlight on Martin Luther come from two intergenerational events focused on the Reformation. See Luther's Drive-Through at www.elca.org/ce/programplanners/luthersinfo and Church House Rock at www.elca.org/ce/programplanners/churchhouse

Martin Luther, EveryDay Disciple!

Frightened Child

Martin Luther, for whom the Lutheran church is named, did important things in the history of the church. We know this because five hundred years later we still read his words and talk about him. His childhood, however, was very much like that of other boys in his time, who are long forgotten to us.

When Martin was a child in Germany in the late 15th century, his parents raised him in the Christian faith, as was the practice. They attended church regularly and had devotions at home.

Martin was also raised with the superstitions of the time. When he gathered firewood with his mother, she told him tales of witches and demons and other evil things that lived in the dark forest. Even the stories of God filled him with fear, because he was taught about the horrible punishment that awaited those who disobeyed God.

Martin knew about punishment. His parents expected obedience from all their children. His mother once beat him until he bled for stealing a nut. Just as parents punished their children, Martin believed that God punished people for their sins. In his early years, no one ever taught Martin about a loving God, who forgives sins.



Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

Diligent Student

When Martin began school, he soon found it to be another place that punished wrong-doing. A student could be whipped for not knowing his lesson, or for speaking German instead of Latin, the academic language used at that time. Martin, either by studying hard or to escape whippings, was a successful student. As a young teen, he was sent to school in Magdeburg, where he saw a Latin Bible for the first time.

Such was the world of the time—Bibles were handwritten, and scarce. Only universities, monasteries, and churches had Bibles. The Bibles were in Greek or Hebrew, the original languages of the Bible, or Latin; so only those who were well-educated could even read them. The people could not learn about God directly from the Bible, but only by what others told them that the Bible said.

Martin's parents sent him to the university, thrilled that their son would study law, and bring money and good standing to the family. But Martin had other worries. Through all his studies, he never believed that he was doing enough for God to love him. At that time, people were taught to do good works and give their money to the church to get to heaven.

One day, walking back to the university town after visiting his parents, Martin was caught in a violent thunderstorm, and lightning struck close to him. Filled with fear, he fell to the ground, and promised to become a monk. He believed that by devoting his life to the service of God, God would forgive him for all his sins.

Enlightened Monk

Even as a monk, Martin continued to study, but now he began to study the Bible more. By the time he was 28, he was a professor at the new University of Wittenberg, lecturing about the Bible to other students much older than he. When Martin lectured on Paul's letter to the Romans, he was caught up with the idea that "the just shall live by faith" (Romans 1:17). Martin began to realize that Christians did not have to try to live perfect lives, because God had sent Jesus to die for people's sins, and make them "right" with God.

The church was not teaching this gospel message. Instead, the church was selling indulgences, pieces of paper that served like a ticket to heaven. Martin, through reading the Bible, now realized that indulgences were not necessary, and didn't want the people to buy them when they needed their

money for food and clothing.

So Martin challenged the church, by posting 95 theses, or points of debate, that he wished to discuss. He wanted others to know that God was a loving and forgiving God, and that people didn't need to buy their way into heaven.

Because Luther disagreed with what the church was teaching, he was called to trial. He was asked to take back what he had said, and agree with the teachings of the church. After a night of prayer, he came back to the trial. He explained that unless someone could show him from the Bible where he was wrong, he would not take back what he had said. He believed that God's word should form the way we behave and believe, not other people's teachings.

The church and the government worked together at the time, and Martin Luther was considered an outlaw for disagreeing with the church. As an outlaw, anyone could capture or kill him. On his way back to Wittenberg, he was kidnapped. But the kidnappers turned out to be friends, who hid him away in Wartburg Castle. He grew a beard and dressed as a knight, so no one would recognize him as Martin Luther, the monk who disagreed with the church.

Bible Translator

Some people would have wasted their time spent in hiding—but not Martin. He translated the New Testament into German. Martin wanted everybody to be able to read the Bible for themselves and learn what he had learned about God. So he translated it into the German language that people spoke, so everyone could understand it. Some argue that this was Martin's greatest accomplishment—not only did he put God's word into the hands of the people, but he also created a standard German language.

Martin returned to Wittenberg, though it was still dangerous for him, to settle disputes among his followers. It was now clear that Martin would never be able to reform, or change, the church of Rome, so he and his followers formed a church based on what the Bible teaches about God—that God loves us, and we are saved by God's grace.

Loving Father

Martin got married, and in between preaching, teaching, and writing papers and hymns, he raised a family in the Christian faith. They went to church regularly, sang their father's hymns, and were taught at home from the catechism that he wrote. The children were not taught about a God who would judge and punish them, but a God who loved them and forgave their sins.

The Luther Rose



As a professor at Wittenberg University, Martin Luther oversaw the creation of his own personal seal. The "Luther Rose," as it is often called, or Luther's Seal, expressed Luther's beliefs and teachings.

"First there is a black cross set in a heart of natural color to remind me that faith in the Crucified One saves us..."

This heart is mounted in the center of a white rose to show that faith brings joy, comfort, and peace...

The rose should be white...for white is the color of spirits and angels.

The rose is set in a sky-colored field to show that such joy of the spirit and faith is the beginning of the heavenly joy to come, present already in our joy now and embraced by hope, but not yet made manifest...

Around this field is a golden ring, symbolizing that such blessedness in Heaven lasts forever and has no end. Such blessedness is exquisite, beyond all joy and goods, just as gold is the most valuable, most precious and best metal.

This is the summary of my theology."

For a Martin Luther coloring sheet go www.elca.org/ce/programplanners/lutherscoloringpage

Cross-generational Rally Day Festival

Introduction and Overview

THEME:

My Word: the Bible for EveryOne encourages participants to embrace God's word as our book of faith and the primary tool through which God speaks to us.

KEY VERSE:

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. Colossians 3:16

OPENING ACTIVITY:

Participants will make a group Bible chain with favorite verses and stories on it. The chain serves to remind the people that we are linked with others from every time and place who share the love and respect for God's word.

LARGE GATHERING:

A skit, "There's a Bible On Your Eyelid?" introduces Martin Luther in a modern setting, as he encourages people to embrace the availability of God's word and read and study it.

ROTATIONS:

Three rotations focus on Luther and his regard for the Word, the key verse—letting the word of Christ "dwell" in us, and our call to teach about and praise God. At each rotation, participants will make part of a project that will be assembled during the closing activity to form a "Luther Rose *mezuzah*."

ROTATION A: MARTIN LUTHER, EVERYDAY DISCIPLE

In this rotation, Martin Luther is introduced as a person whose life was changed by reading the word of God. Participants will make a Luther Rose out of felt as they hear about and discuss Martin Luther.

ROTATION B: DWELL-IN-YOU RELAY

Our verse for today, Colossians 3:16, instructs us to "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly." Participants will run a relay race that "gets them comfortable" with the word of Christ. They will also get an illustration and key verse to decorate and discuss.

ROTATION C: TAKE THE LID OFF—TEACH AND SING

Participants will use the Bible verse chain created during the Opening Activity to practice teaching a Bible verse or story to someone else. They will be reminded to take the lid off—and not just keep the word inside them. Participants will write their plan for sharing the word of Christ on a small container lid.

CLOSING:

Participants will glue their Luther Roses onto lids and place the Bible verse into them, in order to make a Luther Rose *mezuzah*.

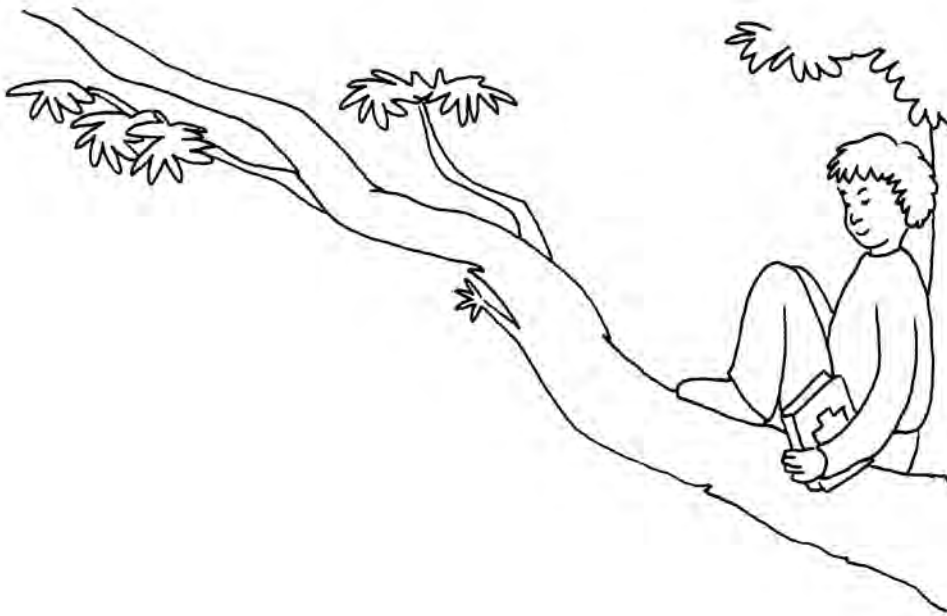
The festival ends with the *Holy Wisdom, Holy Word* song and a closing litany.

Supplies needed

Read through the Rally Day Festival beginning on page 16. Supplies and equipment needed for each activity are listed at the introduction to each section.

Suggestions for Leaders

- Invite everyone in your congregation, not just parents of school-age children, to attend your Rally Day event. Cross-generational interaction can be a fun and mutually enriching experience for participants of all ages including youth, young adults, and older adults.
- Begin collecting margarine (or cottage cheese, sour cream) lids early to get enough for all participants. The project will be easier if the lids are all close enough in size that one size Luther Rose will fit all.
- Recruit rotation leaders for each rotation, and have them gather the supplies and enlist the additional help they may need to do the rotation. This event is divided into segments so that the labor can be divided among many as well. Giving others a chance to be leaders helps them grow in faith, too.
- Martin Luther was a remarkable man, though even children in Lutheran congregations confuse him with Martin Luther King Jr., whom most learn about in school each year. Try to set the record straight, by introducing the one who used God's word, rather than human teachings, to shape and form the church. (Wait a minute—they both did that.) Consider scheduling a congregational viewing of the movie "Luther," (2003) to further enhance understanding.
- God's word is our book of faith. Use Rally Day to launch adult Book of Faith small groups, as well as Sunday school classes. Remind all generations that they are never too old to stop learning, and that the word of Christ speaks to us in new ways every time we open the book and our hearts to receive it.



For additional ideas and materials to help you discover the Bible with people of all ages see Claim the Story, 2004/05 Christian Education planning guide at www.elca.org/ce/programplanner_2004

My Word: The Bible for Everyone

Cross-generational Rally Day Festival Details

Opening Activity

ADVANCE PREPARATION FOR OPENING ACTIVITY:

Cut various colors of construction paper into 1" x 9" strips.

Decide whether you will use tape, glue, staples, or a combination to make paper chains.

Be familiar with how use a concordance, looking up key words from a Bible verse.

GATHER MATERIALS:

- Many versions of the Bible including different translations, children's Bibles, Bible story books, or Bibles in other languages
- Bible concordances or charts that tell where to find certain verses or stories
- Construction paper cut in 1" x 9" strips
- Tape, glue, or staplers/staples
- Pens or thin markers

INSTRUCTIONS:

As participants arrive, invite them to write their favorite Bible verses or stories on strips of paper, and add them to a group chain. The links should be made with the words facing out, so that they can be seen by others. Younger children could write the names of favorite characters, or stories from the Bible, rather than a full verse. Encourage participants to use the Bibles and the concordances to find additional verses to write down.

Strips might read, "In the beginning...God created the heavens and earth. Genesis 1:1" or "Noah and the Flood" or "Joseph and his brothers," or "I bring you good tidings of great joy. Luke 2:10" Adventuresome participants may want to use a Bible written in a different language to locate their favorite verse to be included in the chain!

This activity is one in which all ages can work together, with older helping the younger, or older participants writing while younger ones tape, glue, or staple. Participants may make as many links as they wish, using the reference materials for new ideas.

When everyone has gathered, and while they are still working on the chain, explain that we, and all Christians around the world, are linked by our book of faith—the Bible—the word of Christ.

If you will not be doing the skit, you may also wish to talk about "chained" books in ancient monasteries. The books were chained by the spine so that they could be pulled out and read, but were kept in place in the library, for reference only. Prior to the invention of the printing press around Martin Luther's time, many Bibles would have been chained up in monastery libraries.

The Bible verse chain will be used again in Rotation C. After the event the chain can be draped around a doorway or used to decorate the sanctuary, a hallway, or another gathering place. Let this be an on-going project by inviting others to contribute to the chain. Gather the supplies in a basket and leave it in close proximity to the chain. From time to time, use the church newsletter, announcements in worship, and other communication efforts to make this an easy activity for all generations to participate in. Make it a special "ritual" on special occasions in the life of the congregation or to honor visitors and special guests.

Large Gathering

ADVANCE PREPARATION FOR LARGE GATHERING:

Recruit a child and two older teens or adults to perform/read the skit. Have the actors rehearse with microphones prior to the event.

Pre-arrange for the availability of the sanctuary or large common area.

Enlist a musician to learn the *Holy Wisdom, Holy Word* song and be prepared to teach it.

GATHER MATERIALS:

- Copies of "There's a Bible On Your Eyelid?" skit
- Skit props
- Microphones
- Song handouts or overhead projection for *Holy Wisdom, Holy Word*

INSTRUCTIONS:

Opening prayer

Dear Lord, as we gather today, fill our hearts with a yearning for your Word, that it may dwell in us. Enable us to teach others about your love and grace, and lift our voices in praise to you. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Song

Learn and sing *Holy Wisdom, Holy Word* song found on page 23.

Skit

See page 24 for the "There's a Bible On Your Eyelid?" skit script. Perform the skit.

Rotations

Divide the group into three sections to begin rotations. Having a mixture of ages within each group will enhance intergenerational interaction and allow for older members to help younger children. Have leaders ready to guide each section to their first rotation.

ROTATION A: MARTIN LUTHER, EVERYDAY DISCIPLE

ADVANCE PREPARATION FOR ROTATION A:

Use a small margarine or sour cream container lid to trace circles on sky blue felt.

Trace roses onto white felt. Download a simple version of Luther's rose found at www.elca.org/ce/programplanners/thelutherrose

The graphic may need to be resized on your computer or copier to fit your container lids or...create a simple line drawing of your own using this version as a model.

Cut red felt into 2" squares.

To save time, consider pre-cutting the components for the 'Make a Luther Rose' activity. (see below)

GATHER MATERIALS:

- Sky blue, white, and red felt prepared as stated above
- Gold or yellow yarn or braid
- Black felt or braid, or black permanent markers
- Glue and Scissors
- Locate the Luther Rose explanation on page 13 or photocopy The Luther Rose for Children found online at www.elca.org/ce/programplanners/luthersroseforchildren

BACKGROUND FOR LEADERS:

Martin Luther is commemorated in Lutheran churches on February 18, his death day. *Sundays and Seasons* writes on his day: Martin Luther, renewer of the church, died 1546.

“Though he began his adult church life as a simple Augustinian monk, Luther challenged the abuses he saw in the church, and his work eventually led to the Protestant Reformation. Luther’s accomplishments included liturgical reform, translation of the Bible, and creation of the Small and Large Catechisms.” -Sundays and Seasons online edition

Additional information can be found in the *New Book of Festivals and Commemorations*, pages 87-89 or *Festivals and Commemorations*, pages 79-83 (Your pastor may have a copy).

Luther is probably more often commemorated on Reformation Day, when we remember his posting of the 95 theses on the church door in Wittenberg, which set the wheels in motion to reshape the church.

Numerous books about Martin Luther exist. Check out your church library, curriculum cupboard, or even the public library.

INSTRUCTIONS:

Martin Luther used the word of Christ as the basis for his faith. As he read the Bible, he realized that some of the church’s teachings were wrong, and worked to change them. While participants work to make a Luther rose out of felt, distribute, read, and discuss the page about our everyday disciple, Martin Luther.

Make a Luther Rose

Directions for participants:

- Cut out a blue circle
- Cut out a white rose
- Fold red square in half and cut out heart (younger children may need help)
- Glue red heart on white rose, and white rose onto blue circle
- Glue gold yarn or braid around edge of circle
- Cut felt or braid into short pieces to form cross, glue in place; or draw black cross with marker.

Martin’s Luther Story

As participants work on their roses, invite older participants to take turns reading Martin Luther’s story aloud and then involve participants in discussion using questions such as:

- How did reading the Bible change Martin Luther’s life?
- How was Luther’s childhood different from that of children today?
- Name some times when Martin might have been frightened. What gave him courage? What can give us courage?
- Martin Luther said, “People are not to believe me, the church, the fathers, the apostles, or even an angel from heaven if we teach anything contrary to the word of God. But the word of the Lord should stand forever.” -What Luther Says, page 1479
Tell about a time you made a decision based on following the word of Christ, rather than the people around you. (Children may not think they have. Remind them that anytime they have spoken out for someone who was being teased or bullied, or when they have chosen to do the right thing in tempting times, they have followed the word of Christ.)

In the time of Martin Luther, families and cities had coats of arms that said something about who they were. The Luther Rose was designed by Martin Luther as his coat of arms. It is still used today as a symbol of the Lutheran church.

When participants are finished making their Luther Roses, read his explanation on page 13 or distribute copies of The Luther Rose for Children found online at www.elca.org/ce/programplanners/luthersroseforchildren

Close Rotation with Prayer

Dear Lord, thank you for sending Martin Luther, who rediscovered the power of your word and taught it to the people. Help us, also, to stand firm in our faith in you. Amen.

ROTATION B: DWELL-IN-YOU RELAY

ADVANCE PREPARATION FOR ROTATION B:

Choose a large room or outdoor space in which to hold the relay. Have alternative site in case of rain. Set chairs about ten feet apart on one end of the room or space. Set a TV tray next to each chair.

On the opposite end of the room, or where the lines will begin, set a rug, newspaper, afghan, cup, sandwich plate, Bible, and dog.

Make copies of the "Dwell-in-You" handout found online at www.elca.org/ce/programplanners/dwellinyou

GATHER MATERIALS:

Relay materials:

- Two 'comfy' chairs (can be as simple as two lawn chairs, rocking chairs, armchairs from your church building)
- Two TV trays or small end tables
- Two small rugs
- Two newspapers
- Two afghans or small quilts
- Two plastic cups
- Two plastic/melamine plates with sandwich (or plain pieces of bread)
- Two Bibles
- Two stuffed dogs

If you expect large numbers, have additional sets of items so that you can divide your teams into groups of seven or less. Remember that only one-third of your entire group will be doing the relay at a time.

OTHER MATERIALS:

- Copies of the "Dwell-in-You" handout
- Pens or thin markers
- Crayons

INSTRUCTIONS:

Dwell-in-You Relay

The object of the race is to "get comfortable" with the word of Christ.

Divide participants into two teams. Each group needs to move all their items to their "dwelling." Explain "dwell" means *to live* and "dwelling" just means *where you live*. Participants can carry only one item at a time. The last item to be taken should be the Bible.

Line up participants. When the race begins, the first person should take the rug, lay it down in front of the chair, sit down in the chair, then get up and run back to tag their next team member. The next team member grabs another item, and takes it to the "dwelling." (The dog can sit on the rug, the newspaper, plate, and cup can set on the tray, the afghan or quilt can be draped over the chair.) Each participant needs to sit down in the chair before returning to the team. When all the items have been brought to the "dwelling," the last person should take the Bible, sit down in the chair, open it up and start reading. The first team to have someone start reading is the winner.

After everyone has had a chance to race, gather together and pass out the “Dwell-in-You” handout. Read together the key verse as printed on the handout.

Now look at the illustration. How can each item serve as a reminder that the word of Christ should surround us in our everyday lives? A list of ideas is given below. Choose one to share, and invite the group to be creative with their answers. Have them write their ideas in their picture. There are no right or wrong answers. Encourage participants to share some of their ideas. Younger children may wish to color the picture as well.

Rug—The word of Christ is our foundation, always underfoot

Newspaper—Share the good news with others; stay informed

Afghan—God’s love is comforting; wrap yourself in the word of Christ

Dog—Care for all of God’s creation; God is “man’s best friend”

Cup—Water of baptism

Sandwich on plate—Not live on bread alone, but the word of Christ

Cup and plate—Communion

Food—God’s word nourishes us

Fire—Light of Christ burning in us; Holy Spirit

Bible—Our Book of Faith, the word of Christ which tells us how God would have us live.

Close Rotation with Prayer

Lord, may the word of Christ dwell in us, even as we dwell in your love. Surround us with reminders of your presence in our lives, and help us lead lives that are pleasing to you. Amen.

ROTATION C: TAKE THE LID OFF—TEACH AND SING

ADVANCE PREPARATION FOR ROTATION C:

Gather margarine, cottage cheese, sour cream or other food container lids (as close in size as possible so that the felt Luther Roses from Rotation A will fit on them).

Drill a small hole near the edge of each lid for hanging up (stack several together for drilling) or poke a hole in them using a hammer and nail.

GATHER MATERIALS:

- Food container lids with holes
- Permanent fine line markers
- Newsprint or white board with the key verse (Col. 3:16) written on it
- White board, chalk board, or newsprint and markers
- Chain of verses from Opening Activity
- Hymnals and or Christian song books

INSTRUCTIONS:

Sharing Bible Stories and Songs

Invite participants to read the key verse aloud together.

Lay the Bible chain in front of participants. Pair them off, and ask them each to find a verse or story on the chain that they can share with their partner. Participants could read the verse and explain why they like it; they could share what a favorite Bible story means to them. Pair off younger children with someone older who can ask them questions, if necessary, such as “What is your favorite Bible story?” “Why do you like that story?”

When participants have had a few minutes to share Bible verses and stories, ask them to switch partners. Now ask them to share a favorite hymn or Christian song with their partner. Younger children can share a song they have learned in Sunday school. Favorite hymns do not need to come from a hymnbook—encourage participants to talk about other contemporary Christian songs that they know. Have hymnals or Christian songbooks available for participants to use.

As a group, sing a verse from one or several of the hymns that the group mentions.

Pass out food container lids and markers to participants. Explain that everyone has just practiced what the key verse asks us to do: teach one another, and sing hymns and songs to praise God. Talk about the activity.

What was easy about sharing a Bible verse or story?

What made it difficult? Can any of these things be done in other places?

Suggest to participants that we often want to “keep a lid on” our faith. We think of it as a private thing, between ourselves and God. Perhaps we are embarrassed or afraid to talk about God with others.

If we want the word of Christ to dwell in us, what can we do to learn about God’s word, and share it with others? Write participants’ ideas on the white board.

SUGGESTIONS COULD INCLUDE:

- Read from the Bible each day
- Share a graphic novel or manga (comicbook-style illustrations originating in Japan) version of the Bible with friends
- Write a Bible verse on a napkin to pack in a lunch
- Listen to Christian music, from a personal collection or a Christian radio station
- Sing a hymn as a family at bedtime
- Take 5 minutes at lunchtime for a daily devotion
- Ask a friend what his or her favorite Bible story is
- Praise God for the things you see in your backyard, or on the way to school or work

Now ask participants to write on the inside of their lid one thing that we can add or do in our lives to help the word of Christ dwell in them, and to teach or tell others about Christ. They may use a suggestion from the board, or come up with one of their own.

Close Rotation with Prayer

Dear Lord, help us to share your story with others, through song and word and the way we behave. Help us grow in our understanding of you. Amen.

Closing

ADVANCE PREPARATION FOR CLOSING:

Gather a number of glue guns and recruit several adults or older teens to be gluers for the closing event

Enlist someone to help at the cutting and rolling table

Make copies of the Shema found online at www.elca.org/ce/programplanners/shema

Two tables set up, one for gluing and one for cutting

Recruit the musician from the opening to lead the *Holy Wisdom, Holy Word* song again

GATHER MATERIALS:

- Glue guns with glue sticks
- Extension cords as needed for glue guns
- Copies of the *Shema*
- Scissors
- Bible

- Yarn, ribbon, or string
- Participants will bring these items from their rotations to the closing:
 - Felt Luther Rose
 - Food container lid
 - “Dwell-in-You” handout

INSTRUCTIONS:

Making Mezuzahs

Ask participants to recall the Bible verse that was read at the end of the skit. Read again Deuteronomy 6:4-9: “Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead, and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”

Explain that these verses are known in the Jewish tradition as the *Shema* which means “hear” in Hebrew. One Jewish tradition is to place a scroll with this verse on the doorpost of the home. The scroll is put in a container, called a *mezuzah*, which means “doorpost.” As one enters and exits a doorway with a *Shema*, it is customary to kiss one’s fingers and touch the *mezuzah*, as a sign of respect and love for God and God’s commandments.

Participants will be making Luther Rose *mezuzahs* with the items from the rotations. Instruct them to go to the cutting and gluing tables, in either order.

At the gluing table, assistants will put a rim of glue $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way around the circle on the outside top of the food lids. The unglued portion should have the hole for mounting at its center. Carefully place the Luther Rose so that its top lines up with the hole for mounting. Press edges in place along warm glue. (Do all the gluing for children—glue guns are hot.)

At the cutting table, participants will cut the Key Verse off their illustration page and roll it into a scroll. Additionally, they will cut a *Shema* from the sheets and roll one up.

When the glue has hardened, the two scrolls can be inserted into the pocket formed by the lid and the felt.

Encourage participants to mount their *mezuzah* on a doorpost at home. Cut pieces of yarn and string through the mounting hole, so the *mezuzah* can be hung on a doorknob or existing wall nail at home.

Closing Prayer Litany

Leader: Lord, through the week at school and work

Participants: **Let the word of Christ dwell in us**

Lord, as we come in and as we go out

Let the word of Christ dwell in us

Lord, as we eat and as we sleep

Let the word of Christ dwell in us

Lord, with our friends and with our family

Let the word of Christ dwell in us

Lord, as we praise and glorify you

Let the word of Christ dwell in us

Lord, in all we say and do

Let the word of Christ dwell in us

In your name we pray, Amen.

(Optional) Sing the **Holy Wisdom, Holy Word** song

Holy Wisdom, Holy Word

Holy Wisdom Holy Word

David Morstad

♩ = 110

Ho - ly Wis - dom, Ho - ly Word. Ho - ly is this mo - ment. O - pen pag - es,

o - pen hearts. O - pen up Your Word in my life.

Light in learn - ing, light in song, light for liv - ing our thanks - giv - ing,
Joy in learn - ing, joy in song, joy for liv - ing our thanks - giv - ing.

rit. **D.C.** **fine**

See www.elca.org/ce/programplanner_2009 for guitar chords

“There’s a Bible On Your Eyelid?” Skit

Setting: A library

Props: table, two chairs, a bookshelf with books, a computer or laptop with cords hanging down, a pile of schoolbooks and notebooks, Harry Potter book, an iPod® Touch

Sound effect: Rumbling thunder (played on tape or CD; made by rubbing stick around inside of metal garbage can, etc.)

Costume: Black academic or choir robe for Martin Luther

Roles: Sam, Martin Luther, Librarian (Sam and Librarian could be either male or female roles)

Staging: Place the table just off the center of the stage, at an angle. Set one chair on each side of table. Computer should be set at back end of table. A bookshelf stands on the other side of center stage from table, merely a prop to give sense of being in library.

As scene opens, Sam is seated at table, studying. Computer is opposite end from where he sits. Schoolbooks and Harry Potter book are near Sam.

At a sound of rumbling thunder, Martin Luther (wearing black robe) stumbles on stage, looking about in a daze, bumps table.

Sam looks up.

Sam: Hi

Luther: Good day to you.

Sam: *(looking him over)* Are you going to a Harry Potter party?

Luther: Am I what?

Sam: Your robe. You’re dressed up like Harry Potter.

Luther: Who’s Harry Potter?

Sam: *(picking up book on table)* Harry Potter, the kid with the lightning bolt scar—

Luther: *(pulls up chair and sits down)* Lightning. That is a subject to which I can relate. It was a thunderous night, filled with lightning crackling about me, when I fell to my knees and begged St. Anne to protect me, and promised to become a monk.

Sam: Who’s St. Anne?

Luther: The patron saint of miners, to whom I prayed, before I became enlightened.

Sam: The lightning enlightened you?

Luther: *(shakes head and rubs chin)* No, I would say that the word enlightened me.

Sam: Which word?

Luther: The word of God.

Sam: The word “God” enlightened you?

Luther: God’s word.

Sam: Which word?

Luther: God’s word! The Bible. The Holy Scriptures. Do you not know what a Bible is?

Sam: It’s a book.

Luther: Let’s find one. Where are the chained books?

Sam: The what?

Luther: The chained books. This seems to be a place where the holy word of God is not among the

people, so I imagine it is still chained somewhere. (Looks at computer and pulls on cords) Like this thing. It's attached, so that no one walks off with it, because it is valuable and must be available to all.

Sam: It's attached so it gets power.

Luther: The Bible gets its power from God, not chains.

(Sam shakes his head, confused)

Librarian: *(walking in)* Excuse me, your conversation is beginning to disturb others.

Luther: Good woman [or gentleman], do you work in this establishment?

Librarian: Yes.

Luther: Then could you show us the chained books?

Librarian: *(looks puzzled, then notes robe)* Oh, you're one of those medieval re-enactors, aren't you? We don't have any chained books, but—

Sam: What's a chained book? Is it like a chain letter?

Librarian: Back in the Middle Ages, books were handwritten, so there were very few of them, and they were quite valuable. Libraries often attached chains to the spine of the book, so that they could be pulled out and read, but not taken from the library.

Luther: When I was your age, most Bibles were chained books.

Sam: You can get a Bible anywhere now. I've got an app on my iPod.

Luther: You have what on your eyelid? *(leaning forward to look at Sam's eye)*

Sam: Bible application. I've got the Bible on my iPod.

Luther: How did you get a Bible on your eyelid? It's true that God tells us in Deuteronomy 6 to bind the word on our hands and write it on our forehead, but eyelids?

Sam: iPod, not eyelid... let me show you. *(Pulls iPod Touch out of pocket)* What's your favorite Bible verse?

Luther: There are so many that I could never choose, but how about Colossians 3:16?

Sam: *(finds verse on iPod, reads)* "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God."

Luther: How astonishing! You don't mean that all God's holy words are in that little box?

Sam: That and a bajillion other things—my music, classic books, the weather station, my e-mail, countries of the world, periodic table of the elements—

Luther: *(reaches out to the iPod)* What is this miracle, that an entire library can be held in your hand?

Sam: *(hands him the iPod)* It's just an iPod.

Librarian: They are remarkable tools, but there's much more in a modern library than can be contained in an iPod. *(Walks off)*

Luther: Tell me, young man [lady]... why, I don't even know your name.

Sam: My name is Sam.

Luther: And I am Martin Luther, Doctor of Theology at Wittenberg University.

Sam: Martin Luther? What are you doing here?

Luther: I was talking with St. Peter, as I recall. I said that I would like to see how the world would be different when the word of Christ was available to all. When anyone could pick up the Bible and read it in his own language...and St. Peter said, "Fine, take a look;" and here I am. I get to witness the miracle of a young person who carries the God's word around on an...an...uh...

Sam: iPod.

Luther: Yes, iPod. So, how much do you read each day? What chapter are you on? (*Hands iPod back to Sam*) Let's hear it.

Sam: Well, it's not like I actually read it or anything...

Luther: Why not?

Sam: What if someone saw me?

Luther: (*Puts hands on table, sits forward*) Do you mean to say it is against the law of the land to read the Bible!?

Sam: No, you can do it; it's fine.

Luther: You just don't want to?

Sam: I don't want anyone to think I'm a geek or a Jesus freak or something.

Luther: I don't know those words—but they are bad things?

Sam: Pretty much.

Luther: (*sighs*) And the church? Does the church not want you to read the Bible, either?

Sam: Oh, no. The church would like us to read the Bible more.

Luther: Now, that's a refreshing thought.

Sam: But most people don't. I mean, we go to church on Sunday, and hear it then. Isn't that enough?

Luther: Only on Sunday? That's like living in the Dark Ages. To think that all my life I worked to get the word of Christ into the hands and hearts of the people, and now that it is available, even on iPods, the people do not value it.

Sam: I never thought about it like that.

Luther: Maybe you should. (*sound of thunder, rumbling*) St. Peter is calling me back. (*leaves stage*)
(*Librarian walks onstage*)

Librarian: What is all this racket? (*looks around*) Where's your friend in the robe?

Sam: He left.

Librarian: He was an odd sort of fellow. He had some strange ideas.

Sam: Maybe, but then, maybe he was right. (*Librarian shakes head and walks off.*) What was that other verse he mentioned? Deuteronomy 6? (*picks up iPod and scrolls through it, reads*) "Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead, and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates." (*Sets down iPod*) Maybe I could read just a little bit each day. (*Stands up and addresses audience*) Could you?

Photocopy pages 27–29. Distribute to Children’s Ministry leaders/teachers and as a “Take-home” for parents and grandparents.

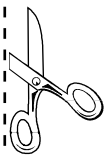
Bible in the Classroom and at Home

Children need direct access to the Bible right from the start! The Bible is foundational to who we are as people of God and is critical to faith formation. As adults we have the privilege of nurturing faith and helping children recognize God’s presence in their lives. Too often we try to explain the Bible to children in childlike ways but through adult lenses. Instead, let’s discover the Bible together and allow them to encounter God’s word and claim it in their own way.

We needn’t be worried that the child is not old enough to understand the Bible. Children bring all that they have learned and experienced in their short lives to any situation. They actively construct their own understanding and make sense of it at any given stage of development. Each time a child hears a Bible story, it’s a new adventure. Let’s hope they will have many, many encounters with that same story, made fresh and new each time—right through adulthood! To withhold the Bible from children until they understand it is to deny their spiritual nature as a full partner in the body of Christ and to ignore their active role in the on-going story of salvation.

Here are just 10 considerations and practical suggestions to help you create an environment where children will develop patterns of engaging the Bible. They will grow in confidence to freely respond and articulate, in their own way, the informing and shaping influence of the Bible in their day-to-day activities.

1. Let your children see you reading from your Bible. In Sunday school and at home, children will come to understand the personal and intimate nature of regular Bible engagement as they see your comfort in engaging the Bible.
2. Create a sacred space at home or in the classroom where “Bible talk” is a natural time in the rhythms of routine. That sacred space might even be in the car!
3. Take time to celebrate the presentation of new Bibles. Some congregations give the family the Bible before it is presented to the child. The family is responsible for passing the Bible to friends and family to add a personal note in the margin while highlighting a favorite passage. See www.elca.org/ce/programplanners/biblepresentation
4. Allow children to wonder. Build upon their natural inclination to embrace mystery. Let their imagination and awe shape the questions you ask. They don’t need to know the list of Old Testament kings. Let them create the story behind the story. “What would it be like...?” “I wonder if...” “What would you do...?”
5. Let scripture speak to your guests even before they enter your home or church. Ask children to paint, draw, and write their favorite scripture or Bible story...
 - on flower pots
 - on inexpensive bathroom tiles to be used as garden markers or flower bed borders
 - on strips of colorful (donated) fabric attached in clusters to various exterior areas of the buildings
6. Be creative and open to opportunities to let scripture be the gift
 - ask the confirmation class to make “witness rocks” for the college or career bound. The directions will tell you to how roll tiny pieces of paper with Scripture on it in a home-made rock recipe. See www.elca.org/ce/programplanners/witnessrocks
 - always include a scripture reference in birthday cards and other greetings
 - turn to scripture in tough and confusing times
 - let children pick as scripture passage or story to be posted on the refrigerator or the congregation’s Web site each week. Accompanying artwork is welcome!



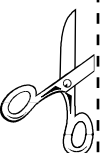
7. Unleash all sorts of artistic expression and media to capture the biblical imagination. Don't shy away from classical art and icons or even skateboard art.
8. Let children tell and retell the stories in the Bible to others in worship, family gatherings, in newsletters or video creations. Let different generations tell one another about their love of God's word and its influence in their lives.
9. Take field trips. Where do you see God's word in the sanctuary, in a cemetery, on a rollercoaster, at dusk in the forest?
10. Help children navigate the Bible by using this simple little song to the tune of **Three Blind Mice**.

Book, chapter, verse. Book, chapter, verse.
Fol-low the path. Fol-low the path.
The Bible i-is God's word for YOU.
So open it up...but here's a clue...
From large to small will lead you through...
Book, chapter, verse. Book, chapter, verse.

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Consider making a huge Bible with poster board, foam board, or lightweight lumber. Paint the interior to look like pages in a Bible or insert large sheets of newsprint (flipchart paper) upon which a scripture passage is written. Don't forget to include the book, chapter, verse. Let children teach the congregation the song as someone with a large pointer illustrates the sequence. Have fun with it by using people of varying heights/generations to lead the song.

Vary the idea for a retreat. Ask each person to write their favorite scripture passage (include book, chapter, verse.) using a yellow highlighter. Turn off the lights and as you sing "So open it up..." turn on a black light and the words will illuminate. Test the highlighters before hand. Some work better than others.



Additional Resources for Classroom and Home

A Family Discipleship Calendar, ELCA Christian Education. 978-6-0002-2040-2. Available online at www.elca.org/ce/programplanner_2007 or to purchase 25-count packs call 800-328-4648.

The Brick Testament. See www.thebricktestament.com/

The Jesus Storybook Bible, Sally Lloyd-Jones, Zonderkidz, 0-31070825-7.

The Little Lutheran designed for those under six and the adults that read with them. See www.thelittlelutheran.org/little/

Martin Luther: A Man who Changed the World by Paul Maier, Concordia Publishing. 0-7586-0626-5.

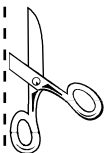
Offering the Gospel to Children by Gretchen Wolff Pritchard, Cowley Publications. 1-56101-065-0.

Teaching the Mystery of God to Children: A Book of Clues by Judy Gattis Smith, CSS Publishing. 0-78802355-1.

Check out the latest offerings for faith formation and discipleship from Augsburg Fortress Publishers. Visit the online store at www.augsburgfortress.org or call 800-328-4648. Be sure to visit www.activatefaith.org.

Spark Story (age 2-Grade 2) 978-0-8066-7049-2

Spark Bible (for Grades 3-6) 978-0-8066-7048-5



2009-2010 Planning calendar

Utilize these pages to plan and schedule your congregation's activities and offerings in Christian education and discipleship. The right side of the calendar is a place for thematic notes, reminders, and connections to other areas of congregational life. Complete the calendar before distributing it to teachers, staff, and other congregational leaders.

DATE	NOTES, REMINDERS, and CONNECTIONS
6 _____	_____
13 <u>September 14- Holy Cross Day</u>	_____
20 _____	_____
27 _____	_____
4 _____	_____
11 _____	_____
18 _____	_____
25 <u>Reformation Sunday October 31-Reformation Day</u>	_____
1 <u>All Saints Day</u>	_____
8 <u>November 10-Martin Luther's Birthday</u>	_____
15 _____	_____
22 <u>Christ the King; November 27-Day of Thanksgiving</u>	_____
29 <u>1st Sunday in Advent</u>	_____
6 _____	_____
13 _____	_____
20 <u>December 25- Nativity of Our Lord</u>	_____
27 <u>January 1-Name of Jesus</u>	_____
3 <u>January 6- Epiphany of Our Lord</u>	_____
10 <u>Baptism of Our Lord</u>	_____
17 _____	_____
24 _____	_____
31 <u>February 2- Presentation of Our Lord</u>	_____

7 _____

14 Transfiguration of Our Lord; February 17-Ash Wednesday

21 _____

28 _____

1 _____

7 _____

14 _____

21 March 25-Annunciation of Our Lord

28 Palm Sunday

4 Resurrection of Our Lord

11 _____

18 _____

25 _____

2 _____

9 May 13-Ascension of Our Lord

16 _____

23 Day of Pentecost

30 The Holy Trinity

6 _____

13 _____

20 _____

27 _____

4 _____

11 _____

18 _____

25 _____

1 _____

8 _____

16 _____

22 _____

30 _____

February 2010

March 2010

April 2010

May 2010

June 2010

July 2010

August 2010



My Word! The Bible for EveryOne

An ongoing expression of the ELCA Call to Discipleship

2009-2010 Christian Education Planning Guide



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

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Manufactured in USA

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