

H I G H L I G H T I N G f a i t h p r a c t i c e s
t h r o u g h o u t t h e y e a r

September

S T U D Y



Make daily Bible reading a priority in your life

- Identify a Bible Verse of the Week for all members of the congregation to memorize.
- Invite your nearest Lutheran campus pastor to visit and share his/her ministry. Ask members to adopt a student, to pray for him/her, send cards, cookies, etc.
- 2001 is the year of Luke in the lectionary. In Advent, we begin the year of Matthew. Read/study both Gospels during the 2001-2002 Sunday school year. Ask members to sign a poster when they are finished. Hang the poster in a prominent place.
- Be in touch with the college students of your congregation and invite them to study with you via E-mail or instant messaging.
- Invite members to set aside a place in their homes to read the Bible. It can be as simple as a table with a candle, the Bible, a notebook and pen for writing thoughts, a good light and a favorite chair. Encourage them to develop a consistent time to read together.
- Ask congregational youth to meet for lunch after worship to discuss the Gospel lesson and sermon.
- Emphasize the importance of life-long learning through temple talks, newsletter articles, or a feature on your Web page.
- Sponsor a Bible Quiz night. Form teams of Sunday school classes, women's or men's groups, and committees to compete against each other.
- Ask a member of your congregation to form a weekly or monthly Bible crossword puzzle for your newsletter or Web page.
- If your congregation has a school or early childhood learning center, ask the students to draw pictures of their favorite Bible stories. Hang them in the narthex or in the halls or use them as bulletin covers.

October

ENCOURAGE



Highlighting mission in the United States

- Encourage members to pray for a specific mission congregation each week. Go to the web site at www.elca.org/do for more information on ELCA missions.
- Ask the youth of the congregation to prepare a Reformation Festival. Give any money raised to the support of a mission congregation.
- Research the costs of starting a new congregation in your area. Consider how you might sponsor or partner with others in starting a new congregation.
- Invite members of a local mission congregation to visit and share their joys and frustrations.
- Look at your congregational and Sunday school statistics. Are you growing, stagnating or declining? What is God calling you to do in this time and place?

November



Giving freely through faithful stewardship

- Ask your stewardship committee to produce a litany which could be used in your Sunday school each week.
- Ask members to write a paragraph on what stewardship means in their lives. Make them into a booklet to be distributed to each family.
- Ask the youth to write a script about stewardship in daily life and present it to the congregation.
- Make a graph depicting the number of volunteer hours that are spent in each area of the congregation's ministry. Include it in your newsletter and your Web site.
- Ask the youth to sponsor the *Real Meal Deal* and implement programs like the *Giving Market* or the new Sunday school program, *Open a World of Possibility* (ELCA Hunger Appeal materials).
- Ask the congregation to fast one meal a week and give the cost of the meal to the ELCA World Hunger Appeal.
- Make a collage or display depicting how the ELCA Disaster Response effort has helped people here and abroad.
- Ask someone from the Women of the ELCA to share the concept of their Thankoffering with Sunday school students.
- Invite confirmands to make a graph representing the amount of money given by numbers of families each week, i.e. four families give \$1.00 per week, 20 families give \$20.00 per week, etc. No names or identification, only numbers.
- Sponsor a short-term study on stewardship for adults and youth.
- Make a "Blessings List," a place where people can write down the things for which they are thankful. Post it on a wall for everyone to see.

December



Honoring Christ through worship and praise

- Challenge all in the congregation to attend worship every Sunday in Advent and on Christmas Eve.
- Ask your Worship and Music Team to include children as ushers, greeters, and readers.
- Sponsor a live nativity for Christmas.
- Explore the different parts of the liturgy and what they mean in your Sunday school openings or closings.
- Ask the youth to tape (video or audio) the worship service, take it to a shut-in and worship with him/her.

to next page

Highlighting faith practices *continued*

December

continued

- Provide and distribute the “Home Altar” devotional resource to each family in the congregation to encourage Advent prayer.
- Give each child an Advent Calendar which encourages and makes suggestions for family devotions.
- Teach pupils liturgical dance. Help them worship with their bodies.
- Before each practice for the Christmas program, take time to pray. Conclude with a circle prayer and invite the children to pray.
- Have confirmands make a graph of worship attendance for the past five years. Identify reasons for the trends.
- Explore ways your worship service(s) can reach more people. Radio? TV? A different format?

January

INVITE



Passing on the faith through global mission

- Hold an Epiphany Celebration, beginning with a pot luck supper and a program on global mission.
- Invite a missionary to visit and share mission experiences.
- Identify your synod’s companion synod and learn what needs exist there.
- Collect offerings during Sunday school for a special need in your synod’s companion synod.
- Do a study of the country in which your companion synod is located.
- Select a mission in your companion synod and urge members to pray daily for the missionaries and leaders.
- Urge your council to give at least 20% of any interest or dividends from investments or endowments to be sent to Lutheran World Relief or the ELCA World Hunger Appeal.
- Place a large world map in a prominent place in your building. Ask different congregational groups to identify and do research on mission efforts throughout the world. Display your findings.
- Develop a list of addresses or E-mail addresses of missionaries and ask people in your congregation to become pen pals.

February

PRAY



Calling all to pray frequently

- Sponsor a short-term study on prayer.
- Provide simple prayer journals to students and invite them to record their prayers for the month.
- Publish the names of your shut-ins. Ask every member to choose one shut-in to pray for each day.
- Develop or expand your prayer chain.
- Develop a list of special prayers to send home with Sunday school students. Memorize one or two over the month. Encourage families to use these prayers regularly.
- Invite Sunday school students to write and offer petitions during the prayers at worship.
- Ask members to pray the Small Catechism, either alone at home, as a family or at a separate time at church.
- Develop an adult class to study the Lord's Prayer.
- Form a weekly Prayer Breakfast at a local restaurant.

March

SERVE



Caring for women and children across the world

- Sponsor an evening when women can gather in small groups and share their joys and frustrations.
- Develop a support group for single mothers.
- Ask youth to provide free babysitting for mothers who may need a night out.
- Develop a support group for widows.
- Hold a seminar on money management.
- Distribute copies of the ELCA statement on economic life, "Sustainable Livelihood for All." Ask members to respond via E-mail and letters. Post them on a bulletin board.
- Research ways your congregation can help victims of abuse.
- Become aware of legislation which affects women and children at both the state and federal levels. The Lutheran Office of Governmental Affairs can help at www.loga.org.

Highlighting faith practices *continued*

April

INVITE



Welcoming through hospitality and evangelism

- Ask people to be visitor spotters. Set a goal to have at least three people talk to every visitor to your services.
- Develop a visitor packet and offer a temple talk explaining how the members might invite others to worship.
- Give a gift to every visitor to your Sunday school or worship services; e.g., a video about your congregation, a mug, a candle, a storybook, etc.
- Designate April as Friendship Month and host a specific Friendship Sunday Celebration. Ask members to invite at least one person to worship.
- Invite people to an evening of faith sharing in small groups. Make it intergenerational so that older Sunday school students can hear their parents talk about their beliefs.
- When you invite people to dinner—at home or in a restaurant—pray before you eat.
- Set up a coffee pot near the entrance where most parents drop off their children for Sunday school. Invite them to stay for a cup of coffee (or come back for one.) Post a list of adult classes nearby.
- Designate children and youth as Sunday school greeters for each entrance.
- Invite a celebrity or community leader to an evening forum. Ask them to speak about how God has been part of their life.

May

SERVE



Helping others through social ministry


- Ask each Sunday school pupil to make several drawings of their hands to remind others that God wants us to serve. Give a drawing to every family.
- Take older classes to work in a food pantry or soup kitchen.
- Adopt a nursing home. Arrange for groups of people to go several times a month to visit with the residents.
- Gather clothing, health kits, layettes, etc. for Lutheran World Relief.
- Visit the social ministry organizations which relate to your synod.
- Give food or fruit baskets to people at times other than Thanksgiving, Christmas or Easter.
- Enlist families in the congregation to serve as part of a servant event: e.g. building a Habitat house, a community clean-up project, etc.

June

ENCOURAGE



Supporting others on their journey

- Invite Sunday school students to create thank you notes for your pastor(s) and pray daily for all church leaders.
- Identify the seminary to which your synod relates. Has your church donated any money in the past year? Discover why or why not.
- Celebrate a "Vocation Sunday." Ask everyone to wear an item of clothing which represents their ministry in daily life. Host a special vocation fair for Sunday school students inviting members to share about their work.
- Dedicate a Sunday during which Sunday school classes pray for those whose ministries are in specialized settings; e.g., chaplains in the Armed Forces, in nursing homes, etc.
- Get to know the youth in your congregation or community. Eat together after a service. Pair youth with adults and provide suggested topics for discussion.
- Visit the church camp to which your synod relates. What happens there? How can you or your congregation be of help?
- What environmental issues are prevalent in your community? How can your congregation enhance your stewardship of creation?
- If your congregation does not have a Men in Mission group, explore ways this might benefit your men.
- Develop a relationship with a congregation in a setting different from yours (rural, urban, suburban, or in another part of the world.) Get to know each other and how your cultures differ. 

FANNING THE FLAMES
OF DISCIPLESHIP