

EveryWhere and EveryWay

Calling One Another to Prayer



2008–2009 Christian Education
Planning Guide

An ongoing expression of the
Call to Discipleship

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

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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 2008-2009 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

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

This program planner 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 support materials, visit www.elca.org/christianeducation/programplanners/2008CEProgramPlanner/

Copies of this resource may be ordered by calling 800-328-4648.

Use order code 978-6-0002-2196-6. The item is free except for the cost of shipping. (Limit five per congregation).

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Welcome Disciples!

Welcome to *EveryWhere and EveryWay!*

Prayer is at the very heart of our relationship with God. As the early disciples yearned for Jesus to teach them to pray, we too long for that connectedness and assurance as we are called into a living relationship with Christ. This program planner is intended to assist Christian education leaders as they engage people of all ages and especially children in a life of discipleship grounded in prayer. As adults we have the privilege and responsibility to nurture an awareness of God's presence in their lives and the confidence that every day and every way is an opportunity for prayer!

Three unique features mark this year's planner:

- As we continue with our "EveryDay Disciples" series, the spotlight shines on the life and ministry of Ruth Youngdahl Nelson. Ruth modeled twentieth century discipleship for her family, her church, and those impacted by her faithfulness across the globe. Ruth Youngdahl Nelson plays a significant part in this year's Cross-generational Rally Day Festival. (see page 13)
- A children's sermon to help worship leaders integrate prayer and the *EveryWhere and EveryWay* theme into worship. (see page 10)
- A Take-home connection helping parents and grandparents create time, space, and opportunity for regular prayer at home. (see page 23)

An Ongoing Expression of Discipleship

This resource is the latest addition to the constellation of resources carrying out the *Call to Discipleship* and the first emphasis of the ELCA Evangelism Strategy.

Each annual program planner focuses on one specific aspect of discipleship and the seven faith practices. Find a quick overview of the previous themes, information on Bible studies related to the seven faith practices, and the list of Intergenerational Rally Day modules at

www.elca.org/christianeducation/intergeneration/index/

www.elca.org/christianeducation/discipleship/ is your one-stop entry point for accessing all the materials mentioned above.



Call to me and I will answer you, and will tell you great and hidden things that you have not known. Jeremiah 33:3

EveryWhere and EveryWay!

CALLING ONE ANOTHER TO PRAYER!

Bible Study Introduction

This Bible study depends on one thing being true—your congregation cannot be a “past tense congregation” and make this Bible study work. Now I know what you are saying—you’ve never heard of a “past tense congregation” have you? And maybe you are one of the fortunate people who have never been a part of a past tense congregation. But many of our congregations are dying. And one reason is they have become past tense congregations—places where they remember that “Once upon a time God DID something...”

All across North America, people attending “past tense congregations” are discovering an amazing truth—the God they worship and often think of as working in the past tense is alive and working IN THE PRESENT! It is in these congregations that we are seeing vitality and life and amazing ministry. Lives are changed. People are sent out energized. The world they live in is different. All of this because their faith has taken on a new present tense—GOD IS ALIVE!

The current ELCA Evangelism Strategy begins with a call to prayer. Everyone seemed to agree—starting anywhere but with God was a waste of time. But starting with God is not just a stale intellectual exercise. It is starting with a living God who has come to us in Jesus and promises to “be with you always to the end of the age.” Isn’t that amazing? The last words from Jesus in Matthew’s Gospel are a promise from Jesus that we will never be alone—a living God is always at our side.

This changes everything. Prayer is not a special skill to get access to God. Prayer is first about believing that where you live GOD IS PRESENT. One reason many have trouble praying is that we have spent too much time in past tense congregations. Why talk to someone who used to be here? Prayer requires a present tense understanding of God. Then, if God is with you always, you can “pray without ceasing.”

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

- Reclaim that God is present in their lives and in their world and always available to us in prayer
- Be shaped by God to care for the same things God cares about. As they look at their world, if God is smiling about something does it make them smile too? If God is weeping about something, does it break their heart too?
- Discover ways to bring prayer into their daily lives seven days a week in caring and invitational ways

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.
1 Thessalonians 5:16–18

Leader Bible Study

Pray without ceasing!

1 Thessalonians 5:17

Theme:

Jesus and the early church believed that God was working all the time. This Bible study explores prayer in the early church by looking at how Jesus prayed, how he taught his disciples to pray, and how the early church prayed. Here we will find a living God who is present, listening, and involved here and now. And we'll focus on how prayer connects and focuses people today as they act as God's agents in the world.

Purpose:

The goal of this Bible study is to expand the imagination of the people who lead Christian education in congregations. Leaders will be encouraged to do more than teach about praying. This study will also encourage the participants to pray—together—out loud! People will discover that prayer is easier than they thought as long as they remember that God is with them all the time, not just “in church” but out there in the world!

Main Ideas:

- Key players in the New Testament include Jesus, his first disciples, and the early church. We will see how Jesus prayed and how he shaped the lives of his followers.
- Prayer can happen any time and any place. A vibrant faith is a praying faith, seeing God present and working all the time.
- Prayer isn't only about my needs. It is a way we love our neighbors. Faithful prayer will enter into conversation with God on behalf of others.

Three Main Components:

- For Jesus, prayer was a way to stay focused on his purpose as he went to the cross. It is a way for us to stay centered on how we can be useful to God.
- Although prayer is “easy,” it helps to teach and practice it. We'll explore how Jesus taught his disciples to pray when they asked for instruction.
- Prayer is directed at an active and living God but is also a chance to express our love for our neighbor(s). Prayer is one way that we express care and encouragement for others.

All three components can be part of one extended leaders' event or retreat. But more likely you'll want to do each one on its own as a part of a series on prayer. Anyone can lead. The sessions need no professionals to get started. So dig in and see what happens!

Each component contains:

- A discussion starter
- A Bible reading
- A place for reflection
- Questions for you to ponder. Talk these over together!
- A time to pray (out loud) together.

Jesus Under Pressure

Component #1

Discussion Starter:

Where do you find that pressure builds up most in your life's work? What do you do with that stress?

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Bible Reading:

Matthew 26:36–46. Jesus is getting ready to do the most difficult thing he would ever do. As you read from this portion of the last night of Jesus' life, what is your first response to the reading? Talk and listen to each other.

Reflection:

- What is God up to in this story?
- What can you hear God saying *to you* personally as you listen to this story?
- What do you hear God saying *to us* (small group, congregation, etc.) in this story?

Jesus is getting ready to do the hardest part of his life's work. Judas has already left to get the troops who will arrest him. Jesus knows he will soon die as a sign of God's unstoppable love and commitment to bless and save a broken world. But rather than just jumping in, Jesus spends time in prayer, both to make sure he has all his signals right (even open to the possibility that there might still be a "plan B") and to be focused enough to get the job done. Oddly enough, this seems to point to the fact that when we have something important to do we should pray first and then act. Staying connected to God keeps us centered and more clear about what God is doing and gives energy and strength to answer God's call. Effective leaders pray first and then get to work!

To Ponder Together:

- When have you found strength and focus through prayer?
- Are you finding that you are often too busy to pray?
How could you change that so that by praying first you are better at what makes you busy?

Close out loud with prayer for whomever and whatever you each feel needs your prayers now. Go ahead—just do it!



Teach Us to Pray

Component #2

Discussion Starter:

Think back over your life. Who taught you to pray and how did they do it?

Bible Reading:

Luke 11:1–4. The need to learn from a master teacher leads naturally to a desire by followers to be taught. As you read this short passage, take time to reflect on your first thoughts and feelings and share them with each other as a first step into the text.



Reflection:

- What is God up to in this story?
- What can you hear God saying *to you* personally as you listen to this story?
- What do you hear God saying *to us* (small group, congregation, etc.) in this story?

It was common for rabbis in Jesus' time to teach their followers to pray. The disciples refer to John the Baptist's teaching on prayer to encourage Jesus to teach them to pray. And as the disciples watch Jesus, they often see him go off alone to pray. They want to know how Jesus, the most amazing person they have ever known, finds strength and talks to God in prayer. In this version from Luke we see a shorter Lord's Prayer than the one from Matthew that many of us know. Jesus gets right to the point: Give honor to God and start with the big picture. Pray for God's kingdom to come, for the world to be made whole. After all, if what you ask for isn't part of God's dream it isn't worth much anyway, right? Keep the rest simple. Ask for there to be enough (of the basics like food, shelter, etc.). Ask for people to forgive each other, live in love and be reconciled with each other. In the end if God's dream came true, if everyone had enough and everyone got along, wouldn't the rest pale in comparison?

To Ponder Together:

- What do you tend to pray for? When are you most likely to pray? When do you forget?
- If what God wants us to pray for most is God's dream (the kingdom), what do you think that looks like when it comes?
- How might people in your group help each other stay focused on praying for the "kingdom" that Jesus teaches us to pray for?

**Close out loud with prayer for whomever and whatever you each feel needs your prayers now.
Go ahead—just do it!**

Praying for Others

Component #3

Discussion Starter:

Whom do you pray for most often? Do they know it?

Bible Reading:

Colossians 1:1–12. Early in this letter prayer is lifted up as a source of strength and a sign of commitment to their common work in Christ's reign. What are your first reactions?

Reflection:

- What is God up to in this story?
- What can you hear God saying *to you* personally as you listen to this story?
- What do you hear God saying *to us* (small group, congregation, etc.) in this story?

The early church wrote letters to communicate between churches or to share a word from missionaries back to the churches they had helped start. In many of these letters, the opening or the closing words were about prayers. Missionaries would share that they continued to pray for people far away. They would ask for the prayers of their friends as a source of strength for their work as they moved about in the world that God loves. Often they would encourage people in the church to keep praying for each other. To pray for someone is to announce to God, to us, and to them that we care. Is your prayer life big enough to share your love for the world that God loves?

To Ponder Together:

- Who are the people you or your congregation support in their work in the world? Are you praying regularly for them?
- If it is everyone's job to be praying for each other, how does your congregation's current practice teach and model this responsibility in Christian education? In worship? At congregational events?

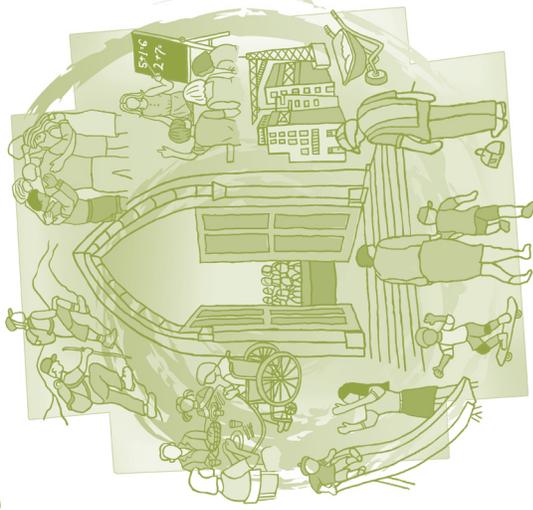
Close out loud with prayer for whomever and whatever you each feel needs your prayers now.



Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. 1 Thessalonians 5:16–18

EveryWhere and EveryWay

Calling One Another to Prayer



*EveryWhere and EveryWay:
Calling One Another to*

Prayer! Prayer is at the very heart of our relationship with God. It is absolutely central and indispensable to the spiritual life. As the early disciples yearned for Jesus to teach them to pray, we too long for that connectedness and assurance as we are called into a living relationship with Christ. This intimate relationship begins with a living God who has come to us in Jesus and promises to “be with you always to the end of the age.” These last words from Jesus in Matthew’s Gospel are a promise from Jesus that we will never be alone. A living God is always at our side. Prayer requires a present tense understanding of God. Then, if God is with us always, we can “pray without ceasing.”

There isn’t a time, occasion, or opportunity where we cannot turn to God in prayer. And there is certainly not just one form or expression of prayer! Our call to discipleship compels us to be diligent in our own regular personal and corporate prayer and to encourage one another in a vibrant faith marked by prayer. Calling one another to prayer means helping each other recognize, articulate, and respond to God’s ever-presence in the midst of all of life’s joy, grief, confusion, and surprise!

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:

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do you hear the Word of God and do you embrace the joy-filled privilege of nurturing Christian growth by praying for and with those you teach?

The teachers and leaders respond:

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

The pastor continues:

Will you look to the example of Christ as you follow a prayerful life and encourage others to grow in discipleship through prayer?

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, we come to you with thanksgiving for your son, Jesus Christ, sent among us to show us the way to open our hearts to God and to the world. Pour out your Holy Spirit upon all those who teach and learn that we may be filled with a desire to seek you in prayer, *EveryWhere and EveryWay*. In Jesus’ name we pray.

Amen

Children's Sermon

God's People Pray

A new feature in this year's planning guide is a children's sermon inviting children to a life in prayer. Consider using this as the children's message...

- in worship
- as an introductory activity to cross-generational activities on prayer
- as an additional "story telling" activity in the midst of the rally day materials
- in chapel for your congregation's school or early childhood center
- or printed out for a family take-home activity

Advance preparation for leaders:

1. Read through the sermon script a few times to be able to deliver the message without relying on the printed page.
2. Mark your Bible so you can show the children where the stories are found.
3. Gather your Bible, a bowl, quick-setting cement, a paint stick for stirring, and perhaps a towel or cloth to catch "misses and drips."

Option: Use a small glass of water if water from the font is not available.

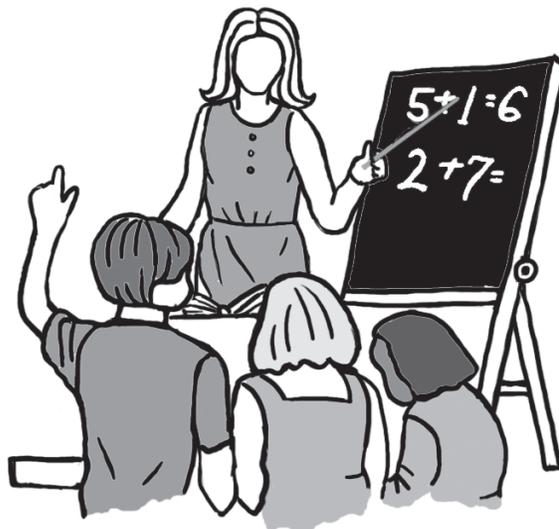
4. Read the directions for the cement and do a small practice block.

The complete Children's Sermon script can be found on page 11.

Closing Prayer

Let's use this prayer to pray (children can touch the block)

Dear God, we go with Jesus to rocky places and a cool river. We hold on to you as you make prayer in us.
Amen



CHILDREN'S SERMON SCRIPT

Welcome to all of you, God's people.

Part of being God's people is saying prayers.

We tell God things and listen for what God is telling us—that's called prayer.

This morning I thought you might like to make a prayer.

There are lots of kinds of prayers, but this is one of my favorites.

We basically need three things to make this particular kind of prayer so I brought some of them.

We need special stories about Jesus, so I brought a Bible.

We need some dirt and rocks, so I brought some pieces of the earth.

We need some water, so we'll have to figure that out in a little while.

And here's a bowl and a stick for mixing.

The first thing we need to do to make prayer is to find a story of Jesus. Jesus teaches us how to pray. Here's a story of Jesus from the Gospel of John. It's a story of Jesus in the desert. I never really thought about how rocky it was where Jesus lived and walked. His feet got really dirty and sore. And life was pretty rocky in this desert story of Jesus. He felt very alone in the desert and he asked God for help with the things that were bothering him. Let's put some rock and earth in the bowl to remind us of this story of Jesus in the dry desert asking God for help.

Now we're going to find another story about Jesus. I have a feeling you remember this one. You can find it in your Bible too, in the Gospel of Matthew. In this story Jesus gets baptized. He goes down into the water and comes up again. And God makes some happy noises. God says, "Jesus belongs to me!" Now we need to put some water in this bowl to remember the story of Jesus' baptism and make prayer. But I didn't bring any water. I wonder where we could get some water. (Scoop some water from the baptismal font.)

Great! Now we have everything we need to make prayer—Jesus stories, rocks from the earth, and water. Let's mix it all up. Look at that. It's changing. It's mixing up into something *new*.

Kind of looks like a block, doesn't it? It's a prayer block, all right. Now it's ready to use.

God can use this kind of prayer to build a road to us. We can use this kind of prayer to remind us of how close God is to us. It's a very handy prayer—and you helped make it!

Ruth Youngdahl Nelson: An EveryDay Disciple!

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As we learn new ways to pray and as we recognize that God's presence in all aspects of our lives is an opportunity for prayer, a witness from recent church history is our mentor. The Christian message of Ruth Youngdahl Nelson, a faithful and courageous Lutheran woman born in 1904, spans Lutheran generations. She cared deeply for her children and grandchildren and the Church's children and grandchildren. She talked to God about the ones she loved—her family, the Lutheran family, the human family.

Ruth's devotion to God and love for others was learned at an early age at home, where Ruth said, "**And God was always there.**" Her father, a hard-working grocer, was a deacon who saw that the family always was in church on Sundays. He also led the family in prayer sessions and hymn singing at home. She often recalled that through her formative years she and her nine brothers and sisters were all taught to "be responsible to God" and that "life is stewardship."



Ruth Youngdahl Nelson was the picture of the grandmother everyone could love. And yet behind those bright eyes and broad smile was a Christian woman whose life changed the world. Nationally known as a speaker, author, peace activist, and Christian leader, Nelson put her faith into practice through her writings and her life. In 1973 she was named Mother of the Year. To honor the occasion, the American Bible Society presented her with the symbolic 40 millionth copy of *Good News for Modern Man, the New Testament in Today's English Version*. "It's my favorite book," she said.

Ruth credits her mother for teaching her and her siblings that the Lord wants Christians to be concerned with all people and that there were no preferential people in God's world. Remembering her childhood home, Ruth said, "As far back as I can remember this matter of hating war and wanting peace was central; it was mostly a concern for people—the hungry, the dispossessed, and those who suffer injustice. I was brought up in it. My home was the kind of home, an immigrant home, where there was such a tender heart for the downtrodden and a desire for peace."

Her life is marked with countless examples of compassion and action for the sake of social justice on behalf of those whose voices are not heard. She held Bible classes at the women's prison and later took released inmates into her home when they had no other place to stay. In Washington, the Nelsons welcomed people of all races and nationalities into their congregation despite objections to desegregation. She started and sustained many projects for the poor, senior citizens, and youth of the community. To illustrate Ruth's relentless quest for justice, a story is told about the time when she had just returned home from a vacation. The very first thing she did was to sit down and write a letter to President Nixon protesting the federal fund cuts for child care centers and summer youth programs.

At 79, in a wheelchair still weak from cancer surgery she had had three days earlier, Ruth Youngdahl Nelson, was one of the 1,500 persons who turned out to demonstrate at the corporate headquarters where parts for nuclear weapons were made.

Ruth's vocation was a shared partnership as she ministered with her husband, the Rev. Clarence T. Nelson, at parishes in Minneapolis; St. Paul; Duluth; Chicago; Washington, D.C.; and Geneva, Switzerland, often giving dialogue sermons with him. In 1960, Religious Heritage of America, Inc. named Ruth Youngdahl Nelson Church Woman of the Year.

Unassuming in her impact, she said of herself, "I am no theologian. I can only speak and write about what Christ can do in my everyday life." This understatement belies the life she lived as mother of seven children (three of them foster children), minister, author, speaker, and finally as activist. Upon publication of her last book, **A Grandma's Letters to God**, she commented, "It's a messy situation my generation handed down to them. We're constantly hearing about economic disaster and, more awfully and realistically, the threat of nuclear annihilation. Some of them are very discouraged. What can I say to them? How can I be helpful?" Even as she wrote the questions she lived the answers. (Information adapted from sources found in the ELCA archives.)

For a Ruth Youngdahl Nelson coloring sheet go to www.elca.org/christianeducation/coloringsheets

Cross-generational Rally Day Festival

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

Note: The complete rally day format and instructions begin on p. 15.

Setting and Audience

Rally Day typically includes a mood of reunion and excitement. There is lots of anticipation in the air. Rested up from the summer, children are excited and perhaps a little nervous about meeting their new Sunday school teachers.

Interestingly, these qualities of anticipation and mystery are the same qualities we often bring to prayer. Whether we are pouring out our desires or reveling in God's abundance, we experience a sense of connectedness, but we also wonder about how God will answer us.

Adults typically worry more than children about whether they know how to pray. For children, prayer means "prayers." They pray the prayers they've learned for church, meals, and bedtimes. For adults, prayer broadens to include an understanding of "being" as well as "doing." Adults may long for prayer, yet feel intimidated or ashamed about learning how to pray. "How do I talk to God?" many adults wonder. "Especially if I've been silent for awhile." Adults may come into this cross-generational event like children—excited to learn and reunite with God and one another, but a little afraid of the unknown. They may wonder: "Isn't prayer too sacred for a festival? Will I be asked to pray aloud?" Consider a wide range of your community's needs and feelings as you prepare for this Rally Day prayer event.

Varieties of ability levels and generational interests are always factors to remember when planning an cross-generational event. Preparations should encompass non-readers as well readers and people with a range of mobility skills. What does this look like? Crayons and stickers should be available for the littlest ones; body prayers should be adapted for all physical levels; learning examples should be drawn from various age levels.

Theology

Prayer spans a range of forms from jubilant to contemplative. During this event we will focus on prayer as an energetic expression of seeking God and discovering that God is seeking us. Jeremiah 33:3 sets the theme for this event: "Call upon me and I will answer you."

We don't just seek God; God seeks us. Even the inclination to pray is a gift from God. When the disciples met after Jesus' death and resurrection, Jesus moved through closed doors to reach them. This image also exemplifies the way Christ can move into our hearts—open or closed—and abide in us. As we share in cross-generational learning about prayer, we continually highlight God's action of looking for us, mirrored in our action of seeking God.

God uses prayer to change us and change the world. We teach our children that prayer involves the mystery of another language, God's language. We also assure them that the tangible results of prayer can be seen all around us. As we plan activities and welcome generations of people, we share this grounding. Prayer connects to God's revelation of grace.

Goals

During this cross-generational event, participants of all ages will learn

- To pray with their body
- To pray with their church family
- To pray actively for the world

Festival Overview

This Rally Day cross-generational festival brings together learners of every age to focus on a spiritual discipline, prayer. We will celebrate prayer by practicing prayer with our bodies, our Sunday school family, and our world.

The **Event Opening** includes a “seeking and finding” activity that challenges children, youth, and adults to seek out one another in order to “find God.”

During **Rotation One** participants use their bodies to pray.

Rotation Two gathers together specific Sunday school classes for fellowship, prayer, a prayerful snack, and an activity of making a prayer placemat or poster. The emphasis on prayer allows classes to get the year started on a faithful foot. Parents and other congregational members join the classes as part of this rotation; they add their prayers of support for children entering a new Sunday school year.

Rotation Three is built around the witness of Ruth Youngdahl Nelson. Rally Day participants have a chance to sing about her (*When we sing, we pray twice.*) and learn about her life of active prayer.

We **Wrap Up** the event with a closing that reviews the day’s activities: body prayer, Sunday school class building, and the witness of Ruth Youngdahl Nelson.

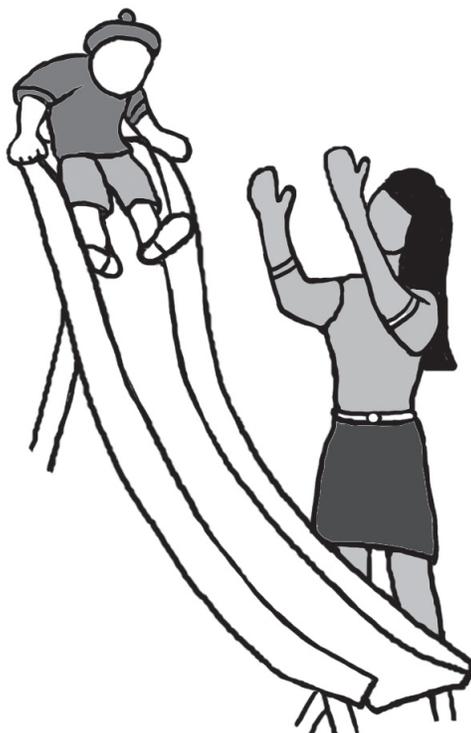
Facilities and Set up

Utilize a large space. Allow room for an opening and closing gathering, as well as plenty of space for three rotations.

Rotation One requires floor space for movement;

Rotation Two calls for tables and chairs (one set per class with extra chairs);

Rotation Three utilizes a gathering space where music and learning can take place.



Cross-generational Rally Day Festival

EVERYWHERE AND EVERYWAY: CALLING ONE ANOTHER TO PRAYER

Event Opening

Includes a “seeking and finding” activity that challenges children, youth, and adults to seek out one another in order to “find God.”

Advance Preparation

Prepare nametags according to instructions below

Create your prayer mail box

Recruit a photographer and other volunteers

Prepare the prayer petitions on newsprint

Gather Materials

Necklace-type nametags (or make your own from cardstock and elastic cord)

Stickers coded beforehand (see the following instructions)

Digital camera

Photo printer

Markers for writing names

Folders for sorting photos into classes

Mailbox

Paper

Envelopes

Pens, Crayons, Markers

A handbell or other noisy instrument to be used later in the festival activities

Instructions

As participants arrive, they receive a nametag at a welcome table. They write their name on the card (little ones will obviously need help), slip it into the plastic holder, and hang it around their neck.

Prior to the event, leaders put a sticker on the back of each nametag with the letter *G*, *O*, or *D* on it. Sets of these letters are coded in triads with specific artwork so that participants can match them up. Depending on the size of your group, you can use simple or intricate artwork to delineate the sets of *G*, *O*, and *D*. Be sure to shuffle the nametags before beginning, but take care that all three letters in each set are distributed.

A photographer takes digital photos of children and youth as they arrive and get their nametags. A volunteer sorts out photos into specific classes for use in Rotation Two.

Set up a table with a large mailbox fashioned out of a box with a slit on the top. A real mailbox would also work. Suspend a sign above the table that says **Prayers are Letters to God**. As participants arrive they can write and draw prayers, seal them in envelopes and put them in the mailbox.

Note: Office supply stores sell boxes of extra small envelopes, the type you use for keys. These are very fun for children to use in this activity.

Gather and welcome the group. Introduce the theme, theology, and goals for the event listed in the introduction. Tell the group that they will be part of the opening prayers. When we pray, we look for God and find out that God is looking for us.

Invite learners to notice the *G*, *O*, or *D* on the back of their nametag. Give them time to find the other two people whose encoded letters exactly match their own (you can encode the letters to be only slightly dissimilar if you want this to take more time and be more challenging). Give the group time to find one another. When triads have united, give each of them a prayer petition to read in turn from a sheet on the wall. After each petition, the large group responds, "Call to me and I will answer you."

Prayer Petitions

Christ, come to us and live in us.

(response) "Call to me and I will answer you."

Christ, abide in us and make us one.

(response) "Call to me and I will answer you."

Christ, living bread, feed our souls.

(response) "Call to me and I will answer you."

You died for us, we live for you.

(response) "Call to me and I will answer you."

Christ, sent by God, we are sent by you.

(response) "Call to me and I will answer you."

In Christ's name we pray, Amen

Note: If time permits ask each group to make up their own petition.

Option: Take the mailbox and extra envelopes/slips of paper to the sanctuary. Before worship begins, ask the congregation to also contribute a prayer and place it in the mailbox!

Transition to Rotations

- Share a brief overview and instructions about each rotation, reminding participants they will have fifteen minutes at each rotation.
- Be sure to have a handbell or other loud-enough instrument to announce rotation end times. Ask an older youth to be timekeeper/bell ringer!
- Depending on your congregation's Sunday school set-up, clarify which classes will meet at Rotation Two during each 15-minute time period. For example, Pre-K through Lower Elementary could meet for the first time slot, Upper Elementary could meet for the second time slot, and Middle and High School could meet for the third time slot while the rest of the group goes to Rotation One or Rotation Three. Delineate how older youth and adults can be involved in Rotation Two.

Rotation 1: Prayer in Motion

Shibashi consists of 18 simple movements similar to Tai Chi. People of all ages and abilities enjoy the meditative and physical benefits of this body-centered prayer.

Advance Preparation

Well in advance, visit the Christian education Web site to view a *Shibashi* DVD, download the movement directions, and find out how to order or borrow a *Shibashi* DVD. www.elca.org/christianeducation/Shibashi

Invite a young person or someone with dance or movement experience to be the leader. Encourage them to view the video and practice before hand.

Gather Materials

Shibashi DVD

Projection equipment

Movement directions take-home sheet

Instructions

Participants find a spot with a view of the screen and/or the volunteer leader.

They follow along as they learn about expressing Christian prayer with their bodies.

Make sure everyone has space and permission to participate according to their own physical ability.



Rotation 2: Calling One Another to Prayer

Advance Preparation

Determine how you will handle the pretzel-making activity. See instructions below.

18

Gather Materials

Placemat-sized cardstock (one per child)

Poster-sized cardstock (one per Middle School and High School class)

Photos of children in each class

Glue sticks

Pens

Stickers

Rounded pretzels or dough to make pretzels (refrigerated bread stick dough also works) Be aware of food allergies as you do any snacks.

Plenty of volunteer helpers

Access to a kitchen and oven

Instructions

Each class gathers at a table (a couple of classes for each time slot). Be sure to include parents and older adults at the tables. Sunday school students, teachers, and supporters introduce themselves and share hopes for the year ahead. Each child has a placemat in front of them that they will decorate by first gluing on their photo and then decorating the placemat.

Children and adults can trade placemats and write prayers for one another and for the Sunday school year on the placemats. Middle School and High School students would probably prefer to make a poster for their classroom door or wall with all of their photos rather than individual placemats. Be sure they still write prayers for one another and their class.

Find a space to spread out and dry the completed placemats and posters. Teachers can make sure that these get to the appropriate classrooms for use during the year.

Store-bought pretzels will work just fine but if you are adventuresome baking pretzels on-site will add another sensory dimension to this rotation. Enlist your best bakers to advise and help out! Carefully calculate preparation and baking time. Be sure to have some pretzels pre-baked to save some time; volunteers can bake pretzels throughout the event so there is plenty to share with everyone. A wonderful smell permeates the Rally Day event when the pretzels are baking.

For the youngest children, distribute store-bought or pre-baked pretzels for a snack. Explain to them that round-shaped pretzels represented a prayer posture of arms crossed across one's chest. They can practice this shape as you share a table prayer.

At a second table, first or second graders or older children could also make their own pretzels. They love to roll out dough into ropes, shape the pretzels into the prayer design, brush on melted butter, and sprinkle the pretzel with coarse salt.

Gather lots of volunteers and utilize the assistance of all generations to help things go smoothly. Hand washing needs to be part of the choreography of this rotation as well.

Children should finish their pretzel snack before moving to the next rotation.

Rotation Three: An EveryDay Disciple Teaches Us About Prayer!

Advance Preparation

Re-read the Ruth Youngdahl Nelson story on page 12

Make photocopies of the 'Ruth song' and the Litany/Readings.

Ask someone to serve as leader

Gather musicians if possible

Gather materials

Ruth Youngdahl Nelson's story (see page 12)

Copies of songs and readings for each participant

Optional: An EveryDay Disciple Coloring Sheet found at www.elca.org/christianeducation/coloringsheets

Instructions

The leader should become familiar with the story of Ruth Youngdahl Nelson found on page 12. Spend a few minutes retelling the highlights of Ruth's amazing faithfulness and bold witness.

Divide the group in half for the readings or subdivide further if your group is very large.

Option: Perhaps older youth would take on the Reader roles.

Note: The litany and song make a wonderful addition to your worship service. Invite the Sunday school children to lead the litany and the song for the congregation.

Group Litany

Group 1:

There are all kinds of prayers. Some prayers are made with your own words, like regular talking, Some prayers use other people's words that you can remember and say.

Group 2:

Prayers can be said out loud or quietly inside. God can feel and know all kinds of prayers, no matter how they are prayed.

Reader 1:

What is a person called who sees God as the center of her life, prays in every situation, and knows God wants her to take care of her family, her neighbors, and people across the globe? That's an **EveryDay Disciple!** Ruth Youngdahl Nelson was an EveryDay Disciple who changed the world. She showed so many people what it means to put faith into action by loving God and serving others. And today, generations later, she is teaching us how to pray, to trust in God, and to always seek God's peace.

Sing verse one and chorus of Ruth Youngdahl Nelson song, lyrics found on page 20.

Group 1:

Jesus said, "When you pray, you can let God know that you love and honor God." What could we say to God right now that lets God know how much we love and honor God? (allow time for responses)

Group 2:

Jesus said, "When you pray, you can ask God for the things you need." What could we ask God for right now? (allow time for responses)

Group 1:

Jesus said, "When you pray, you can thank God for God's good gifts to us." What would we like to thank God for right now? (allow time for responses)

Group 2:

Jesus loved his disciple friends and prayed for them. Jesus also said we should pray for our enemies. Who is a particular person who needs our prayers today? (allow time for responses)

Reader 2:

And God was always there! That was one of Ruth Youngdahl Nelson's favorite phrases to remind herself and others that no matter what situation she found herself in, she was assured of Christ's presence. Ruth was not afraid to speak up in opposition of things she regarded as wrong like war, hunger, or people being mistreated. She wanted to be a reflection of Christ in her words and in her actions and she taught others by saying, "If you want to grow close to God you must take time for prayer and to read the Bible every day. Then take a little piece of God's word with you to repeat throughout the day and to pass on to others that you meet along the way."

Sing verse two and chorus of Ruth Youngdahl Nelson song

Group 1:

EveryWhere and EveryWay, God calls us to pray.

Group 2:

We can pray alone and together. Remember to pray, everyone! Prayer is the glue that holds us in community.

Reader 3:

Let us pray.

God, we give you thanks for the life and witness of Ruth Youngdahl Nelson. Help us to remember to pray EveryWhere in EveryWay, like Ruth did. Help us to believe, as Ruth did, that when we call, you will answer. Thank you for the courage, strength, and sense of purpose you give us when we join our lives with your love. In Jesus' name, we can always pray. Amen

Sing verse three and chorus of Ruth Youngdahl Nelson song

Remind the group of what St. Augustine said: "When you sing once, you prayer twice."

So, if you still have time, you can sing some wonderful, simple songs from *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*: "Come and Fill Our Hearts" (528); "Jesus, We are Gathered" (529); "Hallelujah! We Sing Your Praises" (535); "Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying" (752).

Ruth Youngdahl Nelson Song

She's Got the Whole World in Her Prayers

(to the tune of *He's Got the Whole World in His Hands*)

Verse 1

Ruth Youngdahl Nelson was born in 1904,
She learned about Jesus and prayed more and more,
She wrote books about prayer and spoke against war,
God taught her what we're living for...

CHORUS:

She's got the whole world in her prayers,
She's got the whole world in her prayers,
She's got the whole world in her prayers,
Ruth's got the whole world in her prayers.

Verse 2

Ruth was Minnesota Mother of the Year,
She raised seven children and held them all dear,
She talked to God at home and God was always near,
God led her through each time of fear... CHORUS

Verse 3

Ruth lived in Saudi Arabia, and even Duluth,
She changed the world by acting out God's truth,
She found God in her neighbor; she was a prayer sleuth,
God showed us how to live through Ruth... CHORUS

Wrap Up

Gather Materials

- Shibashi instructions to take home
- Placemat and poster examples to bless
- Mailbox of prayers
- Chorus from the Ruth Youngdahl Nelson song posted on newsprint
- Closing prayer petitions printed on newsprint on the wall

Instructions

It's been a full morning! Take advantage of Closing Time to review the activities and goals.

- We learned to pray with our bodies. Review a couple of the Shibashi movements and show the take-home sheets.
- We met our Sunday school classes, started the year with a prayer snack, and called one another to prayer. (Show a placemat and poster.)
- We found out about a great woman of prayer, Ruth Youngdahl Nelson, and were inspired by her prayer action in the world.

Sing the chorus of the song one more time.

If there is time, reassemble in the *G-O-D* triads formed at Rally Day Opening. Triads take turns reading the petitions from the opening (printed on newsprint on the wall). The whole group responds after each petition: "Call to me and I will answer you." Bless the prayers stored in the mailbox and thank God for knowing each person's gratitude and desire.

Remind children and parents where to go for Sunday school next Sunday.

Close with a final blessing:

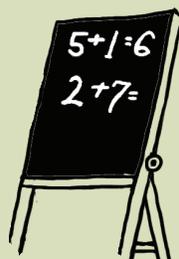
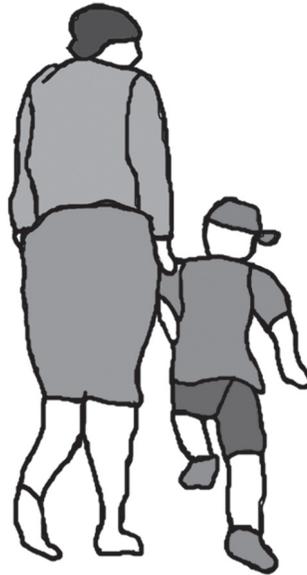
May the God who can get past closed doors open our hearts to Christ's love around and within us. Bless us as we learn this year and every year. Amen

Follow-Up and Evaluation

Collect the plastic necklace nametag holders for reuse. Be sure to enlist a clean-up crew to help put everything away. After the goodbyes and sorting out happen, try to take five minutes with a few teachers and volunteers to talk about this cross-generational event. Jot down their comments about what was strong and what could have gone even better. These notes prove invaluable for the next year.

Decide with the other leaders about how the prayer mailbox will be used. Could it be part of an ongoing prayer emphasis?

Laminating the placemats vastly extends their durability. Thanking the event volunteers and Sunday school teachers with a phone call or e-mail vastly extends **their** durability! While you're at it, thank God for the blessings of a life of faith and the endurance to make this event happen.



Photocopy pages 23–25. Distribute to Children's Ministry leaders/teachers and as a "Take-home" for parents and grandparents.

Prayer in the Classroom and Home

Do you know where the first mention of prayer is found in the Bible? Genesis 4:26!

*To Seth also a son was born; and he named him Enosh.
At that time people began to **invoke** the name of the LORD.*

Here's a great place to start in thinking about prayer. "Invoke" literally means "in voice" or "to call." Prayer also involves listening. *Be still and know that I am God!* Psalm 46:10

It is through our prayers, as we call upon God and listen for the Spirit's nudging that God uses us to be change agents in the world. Our faithfulness, our love for one another, our desire to seek justice and peace, our witness in the world and around the corner is shaped as we come to know God. Our prayers are indispensable to God's work in the world. For many of us, that world begins with the children and youth in our midst.

As adults we have the responsibility to:

- Be attentive to our own prayer life
- Create an environment where prayer will flourish
- Help children recognize God's presence in their day-to-day activities
- Help children and families grow into the rhythm and habit of daily prayer



You as Prayer Mirror

Parents, grandparents, and teachers must never forget their own actions and attitudes are imitated in the lives of the children and youth they spend time with. One of the most profound illustrations capturing this notion is Tim Ladwig's cover design for *When Daddy Prays* (see resource listing). A small boy, looking into the floor-length mirror sees his father's image. Here's a poignant reminder that children want to be just like the adults who love and care for them.

Most adults with vibrant prayer practices grew up watching significant adults in their life pray with and for them. Will you...

- be open to God's power in the mystery of prayer?
- be moved and transformed by the Holy Spirit so daily prayer is an essential and natural aspect of your day-to-day routine?
- pray daily for children? Teachers, put your class list in your Bible or with your devotional materials. Select one or more names each day.
- explain to the children the ways in which you are holding them in prayer?
- pray over your home each morning or the Sunday school classroom as you enter it?
- be transparent? Don't be afraid to admit to the children when anger, conflict, discouragement or busy lives became a roadblock to prayer.
- ask other adults (or your congregation's prayer team) to pray with and for you and the children in your class or home?
- invite children and youth to pray for and with you?

Creating a Spiritual Environment for Prayer

1. Consider creating a small “sacred space” in your home or classroom where you will gather regularly for prayer and devotions
 - use an interesting piece of fabric; ask children to decorate a piece of newsprint or cloth; paint on the surface of the table
 - add a candle, Bible, shells, smooth stones each with a person’s name on it (have a supply on hand for visitors and guests), a bowl of water for daily remembrance of Baptism
 - also add a small empty bowl as a reminder that God’s abundance is sufficient. Often we get caught up in thinking we must fill our lives to the brim with activities and stuff. In prayer we empty ourselves before God.
2. A sacred space need not be confined to inside the house or church
 - take advantage of a labyrinth or prayer path that your congregation, community, or a neighboring church may have
 - use parks, hiking trails, a wildlife refuge or even the corner of your own yard or church grounds to be a regular place for prayer

EveryWhere and EveryWay: Invitations and Occasions for Prayer

Make your prayer times out of the ordinary! Because Jesus used common, ordinary materials to teach, preach, and heal, and because he slipped away to pray in solitude before daylight, we are reminded of the sacredness of our day-to-day realities.

1. Children are never too young to learn to pray. Studies have shown that babies born to mothers who regularly repeated the Lord’s Prayer or frequently sang a particular prayer during pregnancy, became alert and animated when hearing the same prayers.
2. We know there is not just one stance for prayer. Long before they can understand prayer or put words to it, however, infants and toddlers who are taught to fold their hands, are given a “multi-sensory signal” that will stay with them throughout life.
3. Prayer is always associated with story, so allow time to tell one another stories of the community, the family, the world, the workplace, school, or church, and surround the stories with prayer.
4. Use the expected rhythms of your home or classroom and life’s unexpected surprises to involve children in prayer:
 - in new things and goodbyes
-as you welcome a new student or when a pet dies
 - in homecoming and leave taking
-at family reunions or before your vacation
 - in times of fear or joy
-when parents divorce or when the soccer team wins
 - in the car or on a bike path
-when you hear a siren or at the first sign of a new season
 - in celebration and concern
-when the braces come off or someone is deployed for military duty

Surely the LORD is in this place and I did not know it! –Genesis 28:16



Prayer Ideas for Class and Home:

In addition to the inspiration, motivation, and practical ideas you'll find in the resources listed below, a few additional suggestions include:

Prayer Cube—a simple and comfortable way to introduce prayer in the classroom and home. For explanation and one model see www.elca.org/christianeducation/prayercube

God's Cell Number—a fun way to teach about God's faithfulness. Tell kids, "God says 'Call me! My number is Jeremiah 33:3.'" *Call to me and I will answer you, and will tell you great and hidden things that you have not known.*

Awesome God Moments—take time at the end of the day, the class, the week, the family celebration, or as you conclude your vacation to let each person name the way God's love and grace have been revealed.

Prayer Billboard—provide a visual dimension to on-going prayer in your class or home by putting up a white board or newsprint sheet inviting each person to jot down a prayer concern or joy as it arises or to post a memento or reminder of a particular prayer need. Take time at the end of the week or the month to review and give thanks and praise.

Kid's Own Book of Prayers—involve your class or family in making a 40-day Lenten collective prayer book to share with friends, family, and others in the congregation. Invite each person to write (by hand or computer) a portion of the prayers. Add personalized artwork and then photocopy and assemble. It could also be a 31-day monthly prayer book that is read through daily each month of the year.

Kids as Prayer Leaders—emphasize that even the youngest child can pray and can also lead others in prayer. Teach a child say a series of simple prayer phrases that are repeated in response by the others. Might children be asked to be prayer leaders in your congregation's worship service?

Suggested Resources

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

Heart Ignite: 166 Engaging Prayer Experiences for All Ages, Griner & Monroe, Youth and Family Institute www.youthandfamilyinstitute.org or 877/239-2492.

50 Ways to Pray: Practices from Many Traditions and Times, Teresa Blythe, Abingdon Press. 0-6873-3104-8.

A World of Prayers, selected by Jeremy Brooks, Eerdmans Books. 978-0-8028-5285-4 (a picture book with beautiful illustrations and short prayers from children across the globe)

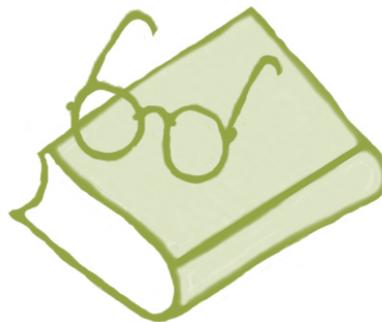
Children and Prayer: A Shared Pilgrimage, Betty Shannon Cloyd, Upper Room Books, 0-8358-0803-3.

Children Praying: Why and How to Pray with Your Children, Joan Bel Geddes, Soren Books, 1-8937-3204-5.

Peanut Butter and Jelly Prayers, Julie Sevig, Morehouse Publishing. 0-8192-2275-5.

Teaching Prayer in the Classroom: Experiences for Children and Youth, Delia Halvorson, Abingdon Press. 0-6870-6425-2.

When Daddy Prays, Nikki Grimes, Eerdmans Books. 0-8028-5266-1. (another beautifully illustrated book for children **and** the adults they are watching)



2008-2009 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

7 _____

3 _____

14 September 14- Holy Cross Day _____

21 _____

28 _____

5 _____

12 _____

19 _____

26 Reformation Sunday _____

2 All Saints Sunday _____

9 November 10-Martin Luther's Birthday _____

16 _____

23 Christ the King Sunday; November 27-Day of Thanksgiving _____

30 1st Sunday in Advent _____

7 _____

14 _____

21 _____

28 December 25- Nativity of Our Lord; January 1-Name of Jesus _____

4 January 6- Epiphany of Our Lord _____

11 Baptism of Our Lord _____

18 _____

25 _____

September 2008

October 2008

November 2008

December 2008

January 2009

1 February 2- Presentation of Our Lord
8
15
22 Transfiguration of Our Lord; February 25-Ash Wednesday

February 2009

1
8
15
22 March 25-Annunciation of Our Lord
29

March 2009

5 Palm Sunday
12 Resurrection of Our Lord
19
26

April 2009

3
10
17 May 21-Ascension of Our Lord
24
31 Day of Pentecost

May 2009

7 The Holy Trinity
14
21
28

June 2009

5
12
19
26

July 2009

2
9
16
23
30

August 2009

EveryWhere and EveryWay

Calling One Another to Prayer

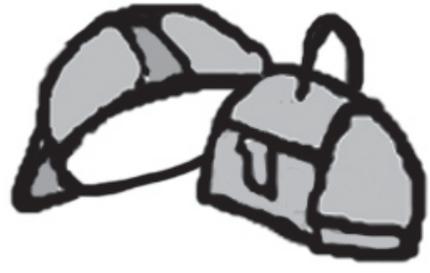
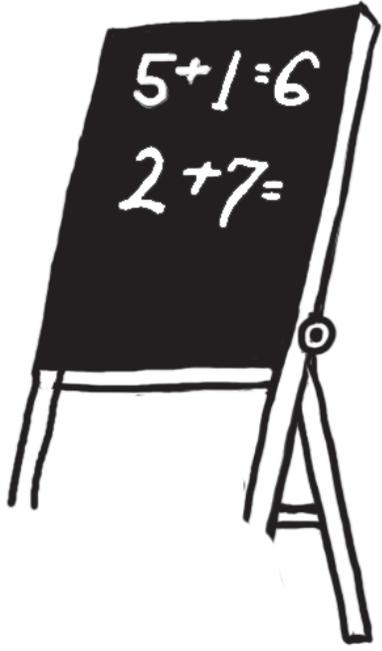
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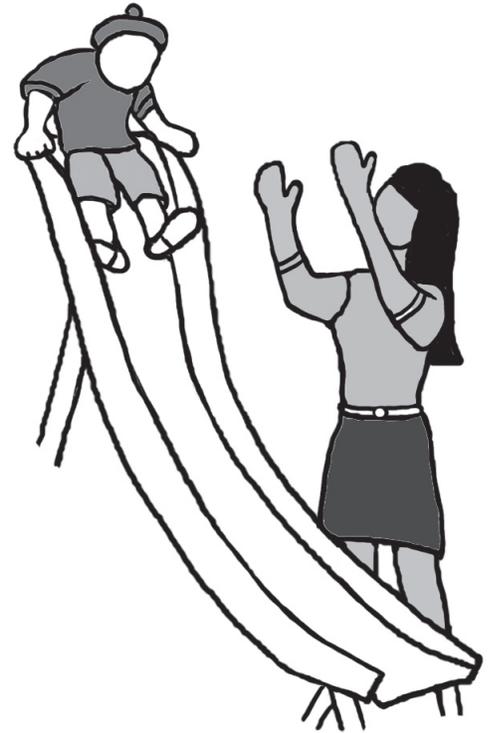
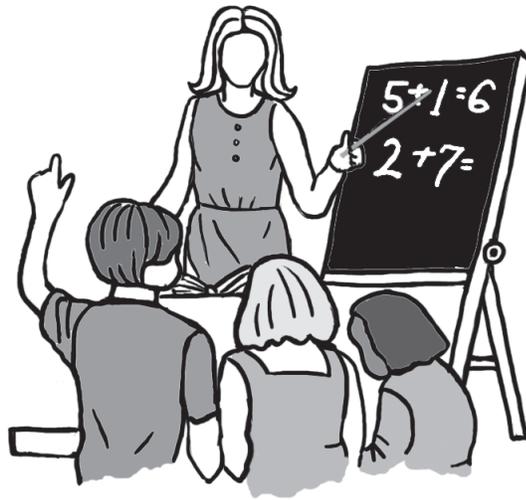


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EveryWhere and EveryWay: Calling One Another to Prayer

An ongoing expression of the *ELCA Call to Discipleship*

2008–2009 Christian Education Planning Guide

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