

Sunday School Program

Grace Lutheran Church, ELS

Version 1.2
February 4, 2004

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1

Lessons and Scheduling

1.1 Topics and Lessons

1.1.1 Introduction

The purpose of Sunday School is to bring young people into the Church of our Lord Jesus. To accomplish this, we introduce the basic teachings of the Christian faith to new students, while discipling more experienced students in Bible history and in the Catechism. **The theme is always the message of the Gospel:** Jesus Christ, God's Son, died *for you* and rose again, so that you are forgiven today and will live forever in heaven.

Substance

The theme of Sunday School requires that we carefully apply Law or Gospel exactly as it is needed, to the best of our abilities. We dare not let children think they are innocent as angels, nor that God will love them because of how well they obey Him. That would close and bar the door of heaven to them, as long as they continue looking to themselves for salvation. Instead, we must direct them always to Jesus, and Jesus only. *He* has saved us by dying on the cross. *He* gave us Baptism to wash us clean. *He* serves us

every Sunday. Whenever we do something wrong, it is *He* that forgives us again, the moment we repent.

To have Jesus as their Savior, children must know that they are sinners. That is the task of God's Law. In our day, people generally do not have a sense of moral obligation to God. Teachers will have to teach and apply God's Law. This serves our theme (teaching Jesus Christ) in two ways:

1. The Law *always* kills, preparing sinners for the life-giving Spirit of the Gospel. (2 Cor. 3:6; Gal. 3:2, 14)
2. The Law teaches us God's will, so that those who have been made alive by the Spirit through the Gospel may know how to please Him. (Rom. 12:2, 2 Ti. 3:16)

The Gospel of forgiveness in the blood of Jesus Christ must *always* follow the Law and predominate, for two reasons. First, the natural inclination of a human heart is to believe that we can obtain God's favor through our obedience. Second, it is possible that a heart burdened and put to death by the Law may sink into faithless despair. Therefore, it is always appropriate to point out two things about the specific Law that we teach: First, Jesus obeyed it perfectly to give us His spotless record. Second, Jesus gave His holy life on the cross to remove our guilt.

Integration

To integrate children into the holy Christian Church effectively, we should do what is necessary to make them a part of our worship — not just children by themselves, but children *with* their parents, friends, and the whole church. God's message and gifts apply to them as much as any other, and their voices of praise, prayer, and worship please Him greatly.

To accomplish this, the topical series of Sunday School lessons should follow the topical series of the Church in general. This integrates children into the congregation not only during our worship services, but even at home. Furthermore, the significance of the Sunday School lessons is increased, because they teach the same things that are heard and preached in the sanctuary.

Sunday School Meetings

There will be a monthly meeting for Sunday School teachers to plan and review the lessons, as well as coordinate our work in the coming months. Parents are also encouraged to attend, to stay up-to-date on what their children will be learning. Twice each year, parents are *asked* to attend to review the Sunday School curriculum and coordinate our efforts at home, in Church, and in the classroom.

Storage of Supplies and Materials

We are planning to put a file cabinet in the Sunday School closet. At least two drawers will be available for Sunday School use, and one drawer will contain choir music. Items that don't fit in the file cabinet can be kept on the shelves in the same closet. The files should be organized according to the Sundays of our topic schedule, which should not change much from year to year.

1.1.2 A Tour Through the Church Year

The Christian Church follows a calendar somewhat different from the secular calendar. The Church Year begins four Sundays before Christmas, and ends 365 (or 366) days later. Instead of four seasons, the Church observes about seven,¹ of varying lengths.

Sometimes we summarize the year by dividing it into two halves: the festival half from the beginning to Trinity Sunday, and the non-festival half. We can also think of it in unequal thirds. The first part prepares for Christmas and celebrates it thereafter. The second prepares for Easter and celebrates it thereafter, leading into the third part. The third and longest part celebrates Pentecost. The description on p. 217 of the ELS Catechism includes the Pentecost/Trinity season in the Easter section of the Church Year. However the year is divided, the topical arrangement is clear.

When the Church prepares for Christmas, we observe the season of Advent. In different ways, we prepare for the coming of Christ. There are three ways He comes: as a real baby in the past, born of the Virgin Mary;

¹Some are not always considered full seasons, because they are so short.

as King and Judge in the future, returning on the Last Day; and as our gentle shepherd in the present, entering our lives through His Word and Sacrament. The season of Advent is a season of repentance and reflection upon our own need for Jesus.

At Christmas, we celebrate the humble birth of God's eternal Son. God became man to rescue us, because sinful man can not approach God. His disciples now study the incarnation and the person of Jesus Christ. We see Him begin to live a perfect life in our place. January 6 is the Christmas of the Gentiles, called Epiphany. It completes the season of Christmas and segues into the Epiphany season. During the Epiphany season, we see Jesus continuing to live a perfect life, sanctifying both our childhood and our adulthood. He is manifest to the world in various ways, culminating in the sneak-peek of His heavenly glory that He granted Peter, James, and John on the mount of Transfiguration.

After the Epiphany season, and before Lent, is a "mini-season" that properly belongs to neither. Newer lectionaries (after 1970) omit this season. It is commonly called "Pre-Lent," when we prepare to commemorate the passion of our Lord. In that time, we are strongly reminded to rely upon God's grace, that salvation is a matter of faith while we live here on earth, and that God works all of this in us through the power of His Word.

Lent begins on Ash Wednesday. It consists of forty days leading up to Easter. Since there are 46 days on the calendar between Ash Wednesday and Easter, it is apparent that Sundays remain apart from the Lenten season. A good reason for this is that Sunday is the Lord's Day, when the Church has chosen to worship our Lord because of His Sunday resurrection. In a way, every Sunday is a little celebration of Easter, so that even during Lent there is a brief respite every week. Midweek services observe a series of Lenten themes until Holy Week, when the Church observes in detail the atoning sacrifice for our sins.

Easter is the chief festival of the Church Year, echoed on every Lord's Day (Sunday). The Sundays after Easter bring out the implications of having a risen Savior. Ascension Day is always on a Thursday, forty days after Easter. Christ's ascension shows us that His saving work was completed, and now He is preparing for our coming life in heaven.

Pentecost normally occurs after Sunday School is finished, but its focus is also appropriate for Sunday School. Just as Ascension shows us that

Jesus has resumed His work as our Lord in heaven, Pentecost shows us how the Holy Spirit's work in His Church on earth began. That work continues in various powerful ways until the End. The Holy Spirit is the divine witness to our Savior, Jesus Christ. It is only through the Spirit's work that anyone comes to faith and receives the forgiveness of sins on earth.

The rest of the Church Year is the Trinity (or Pentecost) season. The topics arranged for this time are less firmly set than in the "festival half" of the year. It is a good time for a special series, like a review of Christian doctrine, or Bible history. Sunday School begins three or four Sundays before the Feast of St. Michael and All Angels, also called Michaelmas. This feast, on September 29, marks a turning point in the Trinity Season. After Michaelmas, the tone of regular service themes begins a crescendo toward the Second Coming of Christ, the End, and our new lives in heaven.

You can identify the Sunday of the Church year for a particular date by watching the labels in Sunday bulletins and on the church calendar. To get an accurate picture of the theme of any given Sunday, you should look at the propers in several places of the *Hymnary*. First, read the Gospel lesson for that Sunday listed on pages 202–203. Then, read the Collects for that Sunday, listed between pages 147–166. Finally, browse through the hymns listed in the category for that Sunday. You can find the Sundays named at the bottom-left corner of each hymn page. Lutheran hymns are unique among Protestants in that they have a strong tendency to summarize and teach doctrines to the Church. This helps quite a bit to understand the particular Sundays and Seasons when a hymn is intended to be used.

1.1.3 Using a Topic Series

Each topic series is a sequence of Bible texts that fit into the topical progression of the Church Year. Every text supports the central focus of a day's Sunday School lesson. There are five of these series, so they may be used in a 5-year rotation. The first and second series are drawn from the historic Gospel lessons, while the rest are mostly drawn from the Epistle and Old Testament lessons.

Some texts will need to be augmented with an explanation of their context in the Bible. Teachers may also want to expand the text to cover more material, or limit the lesson's focus to one part of the text. Teachers

should feel free to make any adjustments necessary for the comprehension and edification of their students. Solid explanations can be found for the texts in our Church library. Franzmann's *Bible History Commentary* and Kretzmann's *Popular Commentary* are particularly useful. You may also find Egermeier's *Bible Story Book* and *One Hundred Bible Stories* helpful.

The themes listed for each Sunday come from the collects and organization of the *Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary*. They are meant to assist teachers and parents to understand the emphasis in each Sunday of the Church Year. They will resonate well with most of the texts listed under them, and will often be useful as themes for the Sunday School lesson.

Lesson texts marked with an asterisk are part of a topical series that deviates from the regular Church Year. Most of this is in the Trinity season, but there is also a series during Lent on the passion, and after Easter on parts of Acts. These series are taken sequentially through portions of the Bible, so that some of the material there may be inappropriate for Sunday School at certain ages. Also, there will not be enough Sundays to cover every lesson listed, so the teachers should coordinate on which lessons will be dropped in a given year. Having the cooperation of parents at home will help to fill in the gaps.

1.1.4 Activities

We have purchased a number of activity books that relate to many things in our Sunday School lessons, and cover all ages. Some books have indexes to help identify activities that go well with certain Bible lessons. There are many more such activity books available. (See the Concordia Publishing House web site or catalog, for example.) If there are others you are interested in, we can purchase them for Sunday School use. To make it easier to share these resources, please photocopy the needed pages from the books ahead of time. This is how the books are intended to be used.

Some of the books we have are more like exercises and teaching aids. For example, there are two that teach about worship and the Church Year. These books may be used any time, but may prove especially useful when we're in a topical series that differs from the regular Church Year. Another book incorporates simple chalkboard drawings into the lesson itself, which is also appropriate any time.

Many of the activities require supplies. There is sufficient room in the budget for Sunday School to purchase any supplies we will need. (Nothing in these books is very expensive anyway.) If you purchase supplies, please use Grace's tax exempt number, ES-0809, and give your receipts to our treasurer for reimbursement. For larger orders, the pastor or treasurer can pay directly. We will keep Sunday School supplies for future use in the closet next to the kitchen, just as we've been doing.

With your particular students, you may find yourself wishing for more full-color images. It's not hard to find a source for drawings of the quality provided in publishing house Sunday School materials. In print, picture Bibles and the like are available, which we can reuse every year. *One Hundred Bible Stories* and Egermeier's *Bible Story Book* both provide many full-color pictures along with summaries of the Bible stories. The quality of this artwork is quite good. In the last few years, CPH has published several other books with excellent art work. A set of books by Paul Maier covers Christmas, Easter, and the early Church (Acts). There is also a beautiful volume based upon the Small Catechism, containing many examples of serious art that touch upon the topics of the Catechism. This book is called "To All Eternity." We will likely find more such resources as time passes, and should acquire a copy of each for the Church library.

For more variety, or if you want to give printed color images to students, you should look at some internet resources. At www.google.com, there is a facility to search the web for images, as well as the Google Directory, which is often helpful. There are web sites like www.eBibleTeacher.com² where you can search for images and other helps. We have master copies for a number of activities from there printed in black and white. With a color inkjet printer, you can print any color image you find useful. Since our class sizes are quite small, the amount of printing should be minimal. Grace does not have its own color inkjet printer, but we can reimburse our teachers the cost of any printing they do.

²Any time you find Bible teaching helps, remember to review them cautiously before using them. While the images and activities at this web site are generally good, many of the teaching aids fail to apply Law and Gospel properly, or fail to make important connections between the lesson and Jesus. Your pastor can also help in reviewing any teaching helps you find.

1.1.5 Topic Schedule

The days listed below are organized by months, but since the Church Year varies from year to year, the month may vary when a particular day will fall. As a rule, more days are listed here than will fit in any given year, so some will have to be omitted. We'll discuss planning and coordinating lessons at our monthly meeting. You can also find some helps on Grace's web site calendar, or in some printed calendars that include liturgical information, like the Thrivent calendar.³

September

When we reach the last Sunday in September, we often skip ahead and observe it as Michaelmas.

Trinity 11 The Pharisee and the Tax Collector (Repentance)

1. Luke 18:9–14
2. Matthew 21:28–31
3. * Genesis 1
4. * Genesis 28–29
5. * Exodus 19–20

Trinity 12 Jesus Heals the Sick (Healing)

1. Mark 7:31–37
2. John 9
3. * Genesis 2
4. * Genesis 30
5. * Exodus 32–34

Trinity 13 The Good Samaritan (Charity, Grace)

³Some of these, like the Thrivent calendar, may differ somewhat from the calendar we will use, because for some reason they omit the Historic Lectionary.

1. Luke 10:23–37
2. Matthew 5:43–48
3. * Genesis 3
4. * Genesis 31
5. * 1 Samuel 1–3

Trinity 14 The Ten Lepers (Thanksgiving)

1. Luke 17:11–19
2. John 5:1–14
3. * Genesis 4
4. * Genesis 32
5. * 1 Samuel 8–10

Trinity 15 Lilies of the Field (Contentment)

1. Matthew 6:24–34
2. Luke 10:38–42
3. * Genesis 5–6
4. * Genesis 33
5. * 1 Samuel 16–17

Trinity 16 Young Man of Nain (Death and Burial)

1. Luke 7:11–17
2. John 11:1–53
3. * Genesis 7–8
4. * Genesis 34–35:20
5. * 2 Samuel 11–12

Trinity 17 Healing on the Sabbath (Christian Freedom)

1. Luke 14:1–11
2. Mark 2:18–28
3. * Genesis 9
4. * Genesis 35:21–36
5. * 1 Kings 3–4

Trinity 18 The Great Commandment (Law and Gospel)

1. Matthew 22:34–46
2. Mark 10:17–27
3. * Genesis 10–11
4. * Genesis 37
5. * Esther 1–2

Michaelmas Angels (September 29)

1. Matthew 18:1–11 (esp. v. 10)
2. Hebrews 1:1–2:5 (angels compared to others)
3. * Genesis 12
4. * Genesis 38–39
5. * Esther 3–4

October

The Sundays in October usually begin with the first Sunday after Michaelmas, which is Trinity 19. In Church, we substitute a celebration of the Reformation for the last Sunday in October.

Trinity 19 Jesus Forgives the Paralytic (Absolution)

1. Matthew 9:1–8
2. Luke 13:10–17
3. * Genesis 13

4. * Genesis 40–41
5. * Esther 5–6

Trinity 20 Perseverence in Faith (Confirmation)

1. Matthew 22:1-14
2. Matthew 13:44–50
3. * Genesis 14
4. * Genesis 42–43
5. * Esther 7–10

Trinity 21 Spiritual Armor

1. John 4:46–54
2. Luke 18:1–8
3. * Genesis 15–16
4. * Genesis 44–45
5. * Daniel 1–2

Trinity 22 The Unmerciful Servant (Forgive as Forgiven)

1. Matthew 18:23–35
2. Matthew 18:15–22
3. * Genesis 17–18:15
4. * Genesis 46–47
5. * Daniel 3

Trinity 23 Render to Caesar and to God (Citizenship)

1. Matthew 22:15–22
2. Mark 12:41–44
3. * Genesis 18:16–19

4. * Genesis 48
5. * Daniel 4

Reformation The Purity of the Gospel (October 31)

1. Matthew 11:12–15
2. 2 Chronicles 29:12–19
3. * Genesis 20–21
4. * Genesis 49–50
5. * Daniel 5

Trinity 24 Jairus' Daughter (Death, a Sleep)

1. Matthew 9:18–26
2. John 6:37–40
3. * Genesis 24–25
4. * Exodus 2–4
5. * Jonah

November

Every year we try to include the last three designated Sundays of the Church Year (Trinity 25, 26, and 27) as its big finish. They fall on the fifth, sixth, and seventh Sundays before Christmas. The first Sunday of November is when All Saint's Day is celebrated. If November 28–30 is a Sunday, then it will be the first Sunday in Advent.

All Saints Saints and Martyrs (November 1)

1. Matthew 5:1–12
2. Matthew 5:13–16
3. * Genesis 22–23
4. * Exodus 1

5. * Daniel 6

Trinity 25 Signs of the End Times (Third-Last Sunday)

1. Matthew 24:15–28
2. Matthew 25:1–13
3. * Genesis 26
4. * Exodus 2–3
5. * Judges 13–16

Trinity 26 Last Judgment (Second-Last Sunday)

1. Matthew 25:31–46
2. Matthew 11:25–30
3. * Genesis 27
4. * Exodus 5–10:29
5. * Judges 6–8

Trinity 27 The Bride of Christ (Heaven's Eternal Joy)

1. Matthew 25:1–13
2. Isaiah 65:17–19
3. * Genesis 28
4. * Exodus 11–14
5. * Ruth

December

Sunday School doesn't usually meet between Advent 4 and Epiphany, so the season of Christmas is difficult to include. Because of this, some of the teaching about Christmas may be appropriately inserted into the Advent season, and some into the Epiphany season in January. To include Christmas lessons in Sunday School for a given year, consider using the *italicized* themes listed below for the Sundays of Advent.

Advent 1 Jesus, our Coming King (Jesus Enters as our King) *Jesus Comes*

1. Matthew 21:1–9
2. John 18:33–37
3. Jeremiah 33:14–18
4. Revelation 3:20–22
5. Psalm 24:1–10

Advent 2 Watchfulness (Jesus will Come at the End) *John Prepared The Way*

1. Luke 21:25–36
2. Luke 12:35–40
3. Micah 4:1–7
4. Isaiah 11:1–5
5. Romans 15:4–13

Advent 3 Forerunners of Christ (The Way is Prepared for Jesus' Coming) *Jesus Is Born*

1. Matthew 11:2–10
2. Luke 3:1–6
3. Malachi 3:1–6
4. 2 Peter 1:19–21
5. 1 Corinthians 4:1–5

Advent 4 Rejoice! (The Coming Christ Stands Among Us) *The Magi Visit and God Preserves Jesus from Herod*

1. John 1:19–28
2. John 3:22–36
3. John 5:31–39

4. 1 Peter 1:10–13
5. Isaiah 40:1–8

Christmas The Nativity of our Lord (Incarnation)

1. Luke 2:1–20
2. John 1:1–14
3. Micah 5:2–4
4. Isaiah 9:2–7
5. Isaiah 7:10–14

Christmas 1 Fleeing to Egypt (God's Protection)

1. Luke 2:25–40
2. Matthew 2:13–23
3. Isaiah 11:1–5
4. Galatians 4:1–7
5. 1 Peter 2:4–10

Circumcision and Name of Jesus Jesus Fulfills the Law

1. Luke 2:21
2. John 1:16–18
3. Isaiah 55:1–13
4. Acts 4:8–12
5. Galatians 3:23–29

January

The Christmas season is finished on Epiphany (January 6). The Epiphany season ends with the fourth Sunday before Ash Wednesday, always observed as Transfiguration Sunday. Sometimes this occurs in January, and it usually means that we skip over the last few Sundays in the Epiphany season to reach Transfiguration.

Christmas 2 Fleeing to Egypt (God's Protection)

1. Matthew 2:13–23
2. Luke 2:25–40
3. Isaiah 42:1–9
4. 1 Peter 4:12–19
5. Romans 8:25–31

Epiphany The Wise Men (Jesus, Savior of the Gentiles)

1. Matthew 2:1–12
2. Matthew 4:13–17
3. 1 Timothy 3:14–16
4. Matthew 12:15–21
5. Isaiah 60:1–6

Epiphany 1 The Boy Jesus in the Temple (Christian Youth)

1. Luke 2:41–52
2. John 7:14–18
3. Ephesians 6:1–4
4. Mark 10:13–16
5. Isaiah 61:1–3

Epiphany 2 Wedding in Cana (Christian Marriage and Family)

1. John 2:1–11
2. Luke 19:1–10
3. Genesis 3:15–25
4. Deuteronomy 18:15–19
5. 1 Corinthians 1:26–31

Epiphany 3 Jesus Heals a Leper and a Servant (Missions)

1. Matthew 8:1–13
2. John 4:27–42
3. Jeremiah 33:6–9
4. Mark 1:21–35
5. Hebrews 11:1–10

Epiphany 4 Jesus Calms the Storm (Trust)

1. Matthew 8:23–27
2. Matthew 21:18–22
3. Isaiah 43:1–3
4. Matthew 14:22–33
5. Hebrews 12:1–3

February

The Sunday before Ash Wednesday may be observed as the Baptism of our Lord instead of Quinquagesima.

Epiphany 5 Tares Among the Wheat (Church Militant)

1. Matthew 13:24–30
2. Matthew 13:31–35
3. Ephesians 4:11–16
4. Jeremiah 17:5–10
5. Mark 4:26–29

Transfiguration The Revelation of Jesus' Glory

1. Matthew 17:1–9
2. Isaiah 61:10–11

3. Matthew 17:1–9
4. 2 Peter 1:16–21
5. Matthew 17:1–9

Septuagesima Laborers in the Vineyard (By Grace Alone)

1. Matthew 20:1–16
2. Matthew 19:27–30
3. Phillipians 3:7–16
4. Matthew 25:14–30
5. 1 Corinthians 9:24–10:5

Sexagesima Sower and the Seed (Word of God)

1. Luke 8:4–15
2. Matthew 9:37–10:7
3. 2 Timothy 3:14–4:5
4. Isaiah 55:10–13
5. 2 Corinthians 11:19–12:9

Quinquagesima Up to Jerusalem (Faith)

1. Luke 18:31–43
2. John 12:23–36
3. 1 Peter 3:18–22
4. Isaiah 35:3–7
5. 1 Corinthians 13:1–13

Baptism of Jesus Baptism

1. Matthew 3:13–17
2. John 1:29–34
3. 1 Peter 3:18–22
4. Romans 6:1–8
5. Galatians 3:26–28

March

The Annunciation is timed to be celebrated nine months before Christmas, to be in accord with the time of Mary's pregnancy. It may be observed in place of Lent 5.

Lent 1 Jesus Tempted by Satan (Temptation)

1. Matthew 4:1–11
2. Matthew 16:21–23
3. 1 Peter 4:1–6
4. Genesis 3
5. * Mark 14:3–11

Lent 2 The Woman of Canaan (Persistent Faith)

1. Matthew 15:21–28
2. Luke 7:36–50
3. Mark 9:17–29
4. Revelation 3:7–13
5. * Matthew 25:31–46

Lent 3 Jesus Casts Out a Demon (Triumph over Satan)

1. Luke 11:14–28
2. Luke 4:31–37
3. Luke 8:31–37
4. Revelation 2:8–11
5. * Luke 22:1–23

Lent 4 Jesus Feeds Five Thousand (Bread of Life)

1. John 6:1–15
2. John 6:24–36

3. Exodus 16:11–18
4. John 6:52–65
5. * Luke 22:31–46

Lent 5 Our High Priest (Jesus, Son of Abraham)

1. John 8:46–59
2. Matthew 10:32–42
3. Genesis 12:1–3
4. Hebrews 9:11–15
5. * John 18

Annunciation The Virgin Shall Conceive (March 25)

1. Luke 1:26–38
2. Luke 1:39–45
3. Luke 1:46–55
4. Isaiah 7:10–15
5. * John 19

April

As with Christmas, Sunday School does not meet on Easter. However, the topic of Easter may easily carry into the following Sunday, and may replace it entirely for Sunday School purposes. The topic of the Lord's Supper (Maundy Thursday) may replace one of the Sundays in Lent. Children should always be present when we celebrate the Lord's Supper in Church, because watching our communion teaches them much about our faith and worship.

Palm Sunday Jesus, our King, Enters Jerusalem

1. John 12:1–16
2. Matthew 21:1–11

3. Isaiah 53:10–12
4. John 12:20–33
5. Zechariah 9:9–10

Maundy Thursday The Lord's Supper

1. Luke 22:14–20
2. Matthew 26:17–29
3. John 13:1–15
4. 1 Corinthians 11:23–32
5. Acts 2:44–47

Good Friday The Atoning Death of God's Son

1. John 18–19
2. Isaiah 52:13–53:12
3. John 18–19
4. Hebrews 10:1–25
5. John 18–19

Easter Jesus' Resurrection

1. Mark 16:1–8
2. Luke 24:1–9
3. Matthew 28:1–8
4. 1 Corinthians 15:12–21
5. Ephesians 1:15–23

Easter 2 Thomas Doubts, Then Believes (Faith)

1. John 20:19–31
2. John 21:1–14

3. Job 19:25–27
4. Luke 24:36–43
5. Acts 3:11–21

Easter 3 Jesus, our Good Shepherd

1. John 10:11–16
2. John 21:15–25
3. Ezekiel 34:11–16
4. John 10:1–10
5. * Acts 6–7

Easter 4 A Little While (The New Creation)

1. John 16:16–23
2. John 17:1–8
3. John 14:1–12
4. 1 Peter 1:3–9
5. * Acts 8

May

Ascension always falls on a Thursday, but occasionally we will celebrate it on a Sunday, replacing what would have been observed. Pentecost will almost certainly fall after Sunday School ends, but its content may sometimes be used in earlier lessons.

Easter 5 The Spirit of Truth (The Singing Church)

1. John 16:5–15
2. John 17:9–17
3. 1 John 3:19–24
4. James 1:16–21

5. * Acts 9

Easter 6 Prayer

1. John 16:23–30
2. John 17:18–23
3. Matthew 6:5–13
4. James 5:16–20
5. * Acts 10–11

Ascension Exaltation of Christ

1. Mark 16:14–20
2. John 17:24–26
3. Luke 24:44–53
4. Acts 1:1–11
5. * Acts 16

Easter 7 The Promised Comforter

1. John 15:26–16:4
2. Luke 11:5–13
3. 1 Peter 3:15–17
4. Ezekiel 36:25–27
5. * Acts 27–28

Pentecost The Holy Spirit and the Church

1. Acts 2:1–11
2. John 14:23–31
3. John 4:5–26
4. John 15:1–11
5. Ephesians 2:17–22

2

Memory Work

Since the 1500s, Lutheran children have been expected to learn their faith by heart. This is done by learning to repeat Bible verses by heart, as well as the Small Catechism, and often a few hymn verses. It is a more difficult task in our day, because children in the United States are not generally trained to memorize things as they were in the past. This means that Lutheran catechists and teachers must help them learn to memorize while teaching them the Christian faith. The task is really too great for once-a-week Sunday School and Confirmation Class alone.

We must not give up this important work, because it is the only way to pass the Christian torch to following generations (Proverbs 22:6). At the same time, the task is impossible. So where do we begin?

The Church cannot do this without using *all* its parts. Not only Sunday School teachers and catechists must be involved, but especially parents too. Most of the time, the Church is found where its members live through their days at work and at home. If that environment does not help to teach children the Christian faith, then our task will fail before it begins.

Still, failure is a dangerous word. What is failure to us is success to God, because we can't know everything He has planned, or even everything He has done. Therefore, we should not impose our ideas of success and failure upon the task before us. Success is exposing our children to Law and Gospel, rightly divided, in such a way that it is applied to them personally.

They need to know Jesus, not having a righteousness of their own from the Law, but having the righteousness that comes by faith in Christ. God accomplishes this Himself through the application of Law and Gospel. The task of catechesis with its memory work and Bible history is meant to enforce the teaching of Law and Gospel, so that it remains with the children throughout their lives. God knows the challenges that will threaten their faith, and He will use the things they memorize now to suit His gracious purposes when that time comes.

2.1 Memorization and Understanding

The Christian faith is simple enough that the youngest child can believe and be saved. A deep understanding is not necessary, as we can see in the hymn, “Jesus Loves Me.” Yet God’s plan of salvation and His gracious love are such wonderful and profound mysteries that a Christian can spend his whole life time learning about these things from the Bible.

We may wonder how beneficial it is for young children to learn things by heart that they don’t fully understand yet. This should not be an issue. The memorization we do today is a seed that will continue growing for years to come. If we memorize something well now, we will possess it for life, and will come to understand it better and better. For the present, a simple grasp of the words is sufficient, so that the text we’re memorizing is more than a meaningless jumble of syllables. Even doctors of theology still have much to learn from John 3:16, and the First Commandment.

2.2 Memorizing the Catechism

What is the Catechism? That depends upon what you mean by the word. Martin Luther is sometimes called the author of our Small Catechism, yet he said that the Catechism is nothing but God’s Word. Both are true.

The Small Catechism may be separated into two parts. They may be called the “primary texts” of the Catechism, and the “secondary texts.” The secondary texts are the explanations to the main parts of the Catechism. Those are the parts that were written by Martin Luther. The primary texts

are taken directly from holy scripture, with the exception of the Apostle's Creed. That part is a concise summary of the central doctrines of the Christian faith, which are taken directly from holy scripture.

Young children can learn the primary texts of the Catechism rather quickly. In fact, the primary texts for the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer are the most important parts of the Catechism, and should be learned first. When children begin memorizing the Catechism at a very young age, the secondary texts can be put off completely until the entire body of primary texts is committed to memory.

The texts that are memorized should be learned *verbatim*. Every word should be repeated back exactly as it appears in the text. Furthermore, the same text should be used year after year, without variation. This is not because of some divine blessings upon a particular version or translation of the Catechism, but rather to avoid confusing our students in any way. We should not proceed to the next part of the Catechism until the students know the words they are working on by heart.

2.3 Which Catechism Text?

In ELS publications, the Catechism appears in two places: the *Hymnary*, and the 2001 Catechism textbook. There are a few minor differences between the two texts.¹ These differences don't really amount to different versions of the Catechism text.

Every Confirmation student owns his own copy of the ELS Catechism, and may learn from that. Before children reach that age, they should have a *Hymnary* available to them at home, if not a copy of the ELS Catechism. There is an edition of the ELS Catechism that is very short and inexpensive, without the questions, answers, and Bible passages that are in the regular text book. This is suitable for keeping at home, so that parents can help their children learn the Catechism by heart. However, owning a copy of the *Hymnary* has many other advantages: the hymns (some of which will

¹The substitution of the word "or" for "and" in the Fourth Commandment's explanation; the addition of the word "the" in The Nature of Baptism, and the word "a" in The Power of Baptism; the addition of the word "and" in The Nature of the Sacrament of the Altar.

be memorized), the propers for each service (with which parents can help their children understand and prepare for our services), and short orders of service appropriate for use in home devotions (Prime, Compline, and Individual Absolution).

Either Catechism text may be used. The important thing is that Catechism memory work undertaken in Sunday School be reinforced at home with the parents, using the same version of the Catechism (Ephesians 6:4). Again, the primary texts of the Catechism should be memorized before the secondary texts.

2.4 Which Bible and Hymn Verses?

Bible verses assigned for memory work are also very important. They are usually chosen to reinforce a particular Sunday School lesson or section of the Catechism. The particular verse chosen should be selected for its clarity and application to the subject at hand. The verse reference should be a part of the memorization, though it is often enough to know what chapter and book contains the passage.

Sunday School lesson texts often contain suitable memory passages within themselves. Our book *Memory Work for Christian Schools and Homes* is an excellent guide to choosing memory verses corresponding to specific topics or seasons of the year. Finally, the Christian doctrines that the class is learning may be found in the ELS Catechism, and Bible passages chosen from the question and answer section.

Memory Work for Christian Schools and Homes also contains many hymn verses that apply to the various topics and seasons contained in the book. In addition, the ELS Catechism includes a hymn verse at the end of every chapter. The most useful reference for hymn verses will be our document “Hymns For Use in Sunday School,” which will be an open-ended list for some time. Please see that document for a list of principles to use in evaluating hymns, and notes on how they might be used.²

²“Hymns for Use in Sunday School” will be posted on our bulletin board with a notebook for additions. It is also included as section 3 of this document.

2.5 Education and Catechesis at Home

Home schooling parents may wish to use our *Memory Work for Christian Schools and Homes* book as a major part of their Christian education and catechesis curriculum. It contains a memorization lesson for every day of the school year, increasing in difficulty through eight grade levels. The primary texts of the catechism are learned first, and there are substantial reviews built into the later grade levels. Interspersed through the years are Bible verses and hymn verses, many of which are cited from the *Hymnary*.

If you are not home schooling, then your children attend either a public school or a private school. If they do not attend a Lutheran church school where Bible history and Lutheran catechesis are part of the curriculum, then you should be sure to augment their education with Bible history and Lutheran catechesis at home. In fact, this is your responsibility to God (Ephesians 6:4). Because of this, you may also wish to use *Memory Work for Christian Schools and Homes*. It is certainly easier to let things slide, but remember that the salvation of your children and grandchildren may depend upon the time you share for this training now. Feeding their souls is even more important than feeding their bellies. Try to work this part of your children's education into every day as a natural part of their daily routine.

2.6 Suggestions For Aiding Memorization

Nothing helps the memory as well as music. Music is relatively easy to find for hymn verses that will be memorized. But what about Bible verses and Catechism texts? More than one family has found that these texts can be chanted quite easily. We are accustomed to a certain style of chanting in our worship services. If this style can be mastered enough to determine an appropriate pattern for memorizing a given passage, it will also serve to divide the passage into smaller chunks that are easier to handle than the whole thing at once. If you need help in finding a chanting pattern for a given text, please ask the pastor.

Another aid for memory is repetition in different settings. Reinforcement at home helps tremendously. Also, if children are given a chance to

practice their memory work by confessing the Apostles' Creed or praying the Lord's Prayer at church, they will learn it better and more quickly. Some children even speak the Words of Institution quietly during the Service of Holy Communion! As the children see their parents and elders taking such things very seriously, they can see how important it is that they learn them well. By learning their memory work, children can participate more and more in our corporate worship. Of course, when they know the entire Catechism and can examine themselves, they will be permitted to commune with their families, teachers, and other fellow Christians. This is a tremendous incentive for working hard to memorize and learn.

Classic aids for memorization are different forms of recognition (charts, prizes, etc.), and even some kinds of chastisement (no playing until you're done with this work). These methods can be effective motivators, but parents and teachers should be cautious not to sour the Word of God or catechesis in the minds and hearts of the children. The best goal and reward for learning and holding fast our faith is the crown of life we will receive from our gracious Lord (James 1:12, Rev. 2:10). Properly motivated, we will want to work for Jesus as a thankful and loving response to His gift of forgiveness and eternal life (Col. 3:15–16, Rom. 12:1–2).

2.7 Sunday School Learning Schedule

Below is a table showing a general schedule for learning the Catechism. Having this part of memory work on some kind of schedule is more important than following a schedule for hymns or scripture passages. Therefore, teachers are free to choose passages and hymns for memorization as the opportunities arise.

The schedule below should not be considered absolute. Sometimes it may take children longer to learn one section, and moving on too soon will not help them very much. In fact, teachers and parents may have to decide which column to use each year, depending upon the skills and experience of individual children. Consider this a guide for general purposes. It may be followed when children have the skills, motivation, and support at home that they should. By tradition, seventh and eighth grade confirmation students must memorize the entire Catechism in those two years. If they

cannot, then confirmation will also be delayed.

Note: **P** designates the primary texts of the Catechism, while **S** designates the secondary texts of the Catechism.

	Kindergarten	Lower	Middle	Upper
September	<i>P</i> Commandments 1-3	<i>P</i> Commandments 1-6	<i>P</i> & <i>S</i> Commandments 1-4	<i>P</i> & <i>S</i> Commandments 1-6
October	<i>P</i> Commandments 4-6	<i>P</i> Commandments 7-Conclusion	<i>P</i> & <i>S</i> Commandments 5-8	<i>P</i> & <i>S</i> Commandments 7-Conclusion
November	<i>P</i> Commandments 7-9	<i>P</i> Creed 1	<i>P</i> & <i>S</i> Commandments 9-10 and Conclusion	<i>P</i> & <i>S</i> Creed 1, plus <i>P</i> Creed 2
December	<i>P</i> Commandments 10 and Conclusion	<i>P</i> Creed 2	<i>P</i> & <i>S</i> Creed 1	<i>S</i> Creed 2 plus <i>P</i> & <i>S</i> Creed 3
January	<i>P</i> L.P. Intro, 1-4	<i>P</i> Creed 3	<i>P</i> & <i>S</i> Creed 2	<i>P</i> & <i>S</i> L.P. Intro, 1-4
February	<i>P</i> L.P. 5-Conclusion	<i>P</i> L.P., all	<i>P</i> & <i>S</i> Creed 3	<i>P</i> & <i>S</i> L.P. Intro, 5-Conclusion
March	<i>P</i> Creed 1	<i>P</i> & <i>S</i> Commandments 1-4	<i>P</i> & <i>S</i> L.P. Intro, 1-2	<i>P</i> & <i>S</i> Baptism
April	<i>P</i> Creed 2	<i>P</i> & <i>S</i> Commandments 5-8	<i>P</i> & <i>S</i> L.P. 3-5	<i>P</i> & <i>S</i> Keys and Confession
May	<i>P</i> Creed 3	<i>P</i> & <i>S</i> Commandments 9-10 and Conclusion	<i>P</i> & <i>S</i> L.P. 6-Conclusion	<i>P</i> & <i>S</i> Sacrament of the Altar

3

Hymns and Music

This document is meant to list hymns (including all kinds of lyric music) that are suitable for use in Sunday School. The principles for evaluating each hymn are listed below. Rather than listing only negative qualities that would cause a hymn to be rejected, we will try to show positive things to look for. Naturally, most hymns will not include all of the positive things we list below. To evaluate a given hymn, read its lyrics carefully to see if they imply any contradiction to these principles. For example, a hymn that teaches “decision theology” would contradict the first principle. Care should also be taken that a melody does not somehow diminish the spiritual value of a hymn by association with other music or doctrines.

3.1 Principles for Evaluating Hymns

1. The hymn should divide the Word of Truth properly. It should not give the least impression that our obedience to God is the way of achieving His love, forgiveness, or eternal life. Rather, it should enforce the truth that there is salvation in no other but Jesus Christ, and Him crucified *for us*. For salvation and comfort, it should direct the singers and hearers to His Word and Sacraments, where He has promised to give and strengthen our faith. The saving gifts of God

must not be seen as conditional, but given entirely by His grace alone. They do not depend upon any action or disposition of the human being, whether mental, physical, emotional, or spiritual. Even our faith which receives these gifts is itself a gift from God.

2. It is more important that a hymn serve as a vehicle for the Spirit-filled Word of God than that it create a certain atmosphere or mood. Entertainment value is not a priority. This does not mean that strange-sounding hymns are preferable. Rather, the singers and hearers will be edified more by the hymn's proclamation of God's truth than by the way the hymn sounds or by past experiences and emotions evoked by the tune itself.
3. The hymn should be shaped by the "theology of the cross," as opposed to the "theology of glory." That means it should uphold the Bible teaching that our faith is invisible, resting upon a Savior Who remains hidden from our physical eyes. The Holy Spirit works invisibly in our hearts. We don't find our source of comfort in anything but our redemption through the blood of Christ. We look forward to seeing these things in person only when we leave this world. For now, God reveals His grace and love in things that humanly speaking appear weak and worthless, such as Christ in His humiliation, the Word of God, and the Sacraments. Thus, faith is necessary.
4. All hymns are interpretations of scripture, and therefore contain doctrine of some kind. Since all scripture is about Jesus Christ, the better hymns will interpret scripture in reference to Christ. They will not present interpretations that give precedence to human reason or sacred tradition over the testimony of God's Word.
5. A hymn that proclaims the gospel (forgiveness through Christ) is more highly valued than a hymn that does not, even if it is otherwise not objectionable.
6. Christian hymns are not bound to any particular earthly culture. Rather, they should fit into the culture of the catholic (that is, universal) Christian Church, the holy bride of Christ. Since the culture

of the Church is always opposed to the prevailing worldly culture, we can expect the same tension with high-quality Christian hymns.

3.2 The Use of Hymns in Sunday School

Hymns are often very memorable and concise expressions of Christian doctrine. They are useful for teaching the essential parts of our faith. Children usually have an aptitude and interests in learning that surpass the expectations of adults. They also learn things early that they understand better as time passes. Because of this, we should not hesitate to use hymn verses from hymns that are not traditionally “children’s hymns,” if the verses are particularly valuable. For example, the Easter hymn, “Like the Golden Sun Ascending” (ELH 354) contains such verses. Verse 6 summarizes the importance of Christ’s death in our place, and what it means for our future:

Thou hast died for my transgression,
 All my sins on Thee were laid;
 Thou hast won for me salvation,
 On the cross my debt was paid.
 From the grave I shall arise
 And shall meet Thee in the skies.
 Death itself is transitory;
 I shall lift my head in glory.

Verse 10 of “Salvation Unto Us Is Come” (ELH 227) explains the relationship between faith and good works:

Faith to the cross of Christ doth cling
 And rests in Him securely;
 And forth from it good works must spring
 As fruit and tokens surely;
 Still faith doth justify alone,
 Works serve thy neighbor and make known
 The faith that lives within thee.

Doubtless, there are many others. “Hark! The Voice of Jesus Crying” (ELH 191) teaches how even children help to fulfill the Great Commission.

In “Glory Be to Jesus” (ELH 283), verse 4 shows the powerful contrast between the shedding of Abel’s blood in Genesis 4 and the shedding of Jesus’ blood. “I Walk in Danger All the Way” (ELH 252) teaches that we can live in confidence despite danger because of the important work of angels (verse 4) and the protection of Jesus (verse 5). In many hymns, the essence of the Sacraments is clearly taught. For example, Baptism is found in ELH 245 verse 2:

We cannot see the Holy Three
 Concealed the font within,
 Mere water seems the mystery
 That cleanses us from sin;
 But everlasting gifts now dwell
 Through God’s Word in this flood;
 Faith speaks, though reason may rebel:
 “This flood is Jesus’ blood!”

Any hymn verse can be learned as memory work, usually more easily and pleasantly than Bible passages. Any one can also be used as a teaching aid. Some even lend themselves to singing during the Sunday School class. If the teachers would like, we can make a tape or CD to accompany any number of hymns, for playback in class through a portable player.

Using hymns from the ELH in Sunday School has another great advantage. Most of them will be used again in regular worship throughout the Church Year. Through this multiple exposure, the things children learn in Sunday School will take firmer root, and the children will more quickly become familiar and comfortable taking active roles in their worship life.

3.3 Listing our Hymns

Below is a published list of hymns that are appropriate for Sunday School at Grace. It is not a complete list. In fact, it is just begun. We need to enlarge it together. There is a pad of paper below the published list that I invite you to use for adding other appropriate hymns.

Hymns from the ELH are the most advantageous from the standpoint of reinforcing our teaching and incorporating children into worship. However,

there are many other sources too. We will have to specify the source along with the hymn number and title in our listing. This is all important to have, because our list may last a long time, and be used by parents at home and even other congregations. Please use the abbreviations below for the corresponding sources. (This list may also be expanded as needs dictate.) This list is not intended as an endorsement of the books listed. Every hymn should be evaluated on its own merits.

ELH Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary

TLH The Lutheran Hymnal (used at Grace until about 1997)

CW Christian Worship (the WELS hymnal)

LW Lutheran Worship (the current LCMS hymnal)

LBW Lutheran Book of Worship (an ELCA hymnal)

JS Joyful Sounds (an LCMS Children's Hymnal — we have several copies.)

SS Select Songs for School and Home (out of print)

MR Music Reader for Lutheran Schools (CPH, 1944, out of print)

MW Memory Work (Our publication with many hymn verses included, but no printed music. List the grade level [1–8] and lesson number, as 1:124.)

3.4 Hymn Listing

Other categories may be added. Some hymns may appear in more than one category for convenience in using this list. Please list additional hymns on the legal pad below, including the hymnal, hymn number, title, and possible categories for their use.

3.4.1 General Hymns Traditionally for Children

ELH	54	Beautiful Savior
ELH	119	Away in a Manger
ELH	123	From Heaven Above to Earth I Come
ELH	124	From Heaven Above to Earth I Come
ELH	174	Children of the Heavenly Father
ELH	175	God Loves Me Dearly
ELH	177	I Am Jesus' Little Lamb
ELH	178	I Pray Thee, Dear Lord Jesus
ELH	179	Jesus Loves Me

3.4.2 Other General Hymns Especially Suitable for Children

ELH	60	O Bless the Lord, My Soul
ELH	112	A Boy Is Born in Bethlehem
ELH	127	I Am So Glad When Christmas Comes
ELH	182	One Thing Needful
ELH	227	Salvation Unto Us Is Come
ELH	236	Let Us Ever Walk with Jesus
ELH	252	I Walk in Danger All the Way
ELH	354	Like the Golden Sun Ascending
ELH	371	The Lord's My Shepherd, I'll not Want
ELH	378	Dear Christians, One and All, Rejoice
ELH	379	Jesus, Jesus, Only Jesus
ELH	403	God Loved the World So that He Gave
ELH	408	Round the Lord in Glory Seated
ELH	593	On My Heart Imprint Thine Image
JS	38	There Is a Green Hill Far Away

3.4.3 Hymns in the Form of Prayers

ELH	80	O Blessed Holy Trinity
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ELH	184	My Faith Looks Up to Thee
ELH	206	I Am Trusting Thee, Lord Jesus
ELH	242	Baptized into Thy Name Most Holy
ELH	257	When in the Hour of Utmost Need
ELH	262	Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah
ELH	271	O Jesus, Lamb of God, Thou Art
ELH	333	Christ, the Life of All the Living
ELH	354	Like the Golden Sun Ascending
ELH	377	Why Should Cross and Trial Grieve Me?
ELH	406	Lord, Thee I Love with All My Heart
ELH	426	Jesus Sinners Doth Receive
ELH	463	For the Beauty of the Earth
ELH	589	Lord, Keep Us Steadfast in Thy Word
ELH	593	On My Heart Imprint Thine Image

3.4.4 Missions, Vocation, Stewardship

ELH	191	Hark! The Voice of Jesus Crying
ELH	236	Let Us Ever Walk with Jesus
ELH	249	Fight the Good Fight
ELH	445	We Give Thee But Thine Own

3.4.5 God's Grace

ELH	226	By Grace I'm Saved
ELH	227	Salvation Unto Us Is Come
ELH	239	I Lay My Sins on Jesus
ELH	297	Stricken, Smitten, and Afflicted
ELH	301	There Is a Fountain Filled with Blood
ELH	305	Not All the Blood of Beasts
ELH	306	What Wondrous Love Is This
ELH	319	Just as I Am
ELH	329	The Death of Jesus Christ, Our Lord
ELH	403	God Loved the World So that He Gave
ELH	426	Jesus Sinners Doth Receive

- ELH 429 Chief of Sinners Though I Be
 JS 38 There Is a Green Hill Far Away

3.4.6 Christian Faith

- ELH 229 By Faith We Are Divinely Sure
 ELH 251 A Mighty Fortress Is Our God
 ELH 250 A Mighty Fortress Is Our God
 ELH 252 I Walk in Danger All the Way
 ELH 263 Jesus, Priceless Treasure
 ELH 264 Jesus, Priceless Treasure
 ELH 319 Just as I Am
 ELH 361 Faith Is a Living Power from Heaven
 ELH 377 Why Should Cross and Trial Grieve Me?
 ELH 385 What a Friend We Have in Jesus
 ELH 406 Lord, Thee I Love with All My Heart

3.4.7 The Word of God and the Sacraments

- ELH 230 Speak, O Lord, Thy Servant Heareth
 ELH 233 The Gospel Shows the Father's Grace
 ELH 234 We Have a Sure Prophetic Word
 ELH 241 He That Believes and Is Baptized
 ELH 242 Baptized into Thy Name Most Holy
 ELH 243 The Power of Sin No Longer
 ELH 324 O Jesus, at Your Altar Now
 ELH 239 The Death of Jesus Christ, Our Lord
 ELH 583 God's Word Is Our Great Heritage

3.4.8 Catechism

- ELH 37 We All Believe in One True God
 ELH 38 We All Believe in One True God
 ELH 123 From Heaven Above to Earth I Come

ELH	227	Salvation Unto Us Is Come
ELH	233	The Gospel Shows the Father's Grace
ELH	241	He That Believes and Is Baptized
ELH	269	True God and Yet a Man
ELH	276	When O'er My Sins I Sorrow
ELH	297	Stricken, Smitten, and Afflicted
ELH	343	Christ Jesus Lay in Death's Strong Bands
ELH	350	He's Risen, He's Risen
ELH	383	Our Father, Thou in Heaven Above
ELH	384	Our Father, Throned in Heaven Above
ELH	393	The Head that Once Was Crowned
ELH	403	God Loved the World So that He Gave
ELH	489	The Law Commands and Makes Us Know
ELH	490	These Are the Holy Ten Commands
ELH	492	The Law of God Is Good and Wise