

This Is My Lutheran Church Leader Leaflet



This course is recommended for
Age 3–Prekindergarten/Kindergarten.

LETTER TO FAMILIES

Photocopy the letter on page 8 of this leaflet, fill in the variable information, and send it home with the children or mail it at least two weeks prior to the start date for your course.

can gain from taking part in worship. If possible, invite the pastor to take part in the tour.

Music is an extremely important part of the Lutheran faith tradition. A recording of the choir and some organ and/or piano music, including simple familiar melodies, would be useful in the classroom.

SESSION 1

LET'S GO TO CHURCH

LEARNING FOCUS

Learn about the building we call the church and what happens during the time of worship.

BACKGROUND

Many of the children in the class may be regular worshippers, but some may be Sunday school students only. This session should include a walk around the sanctuary, if that is at all possible. Even children who attend with their families may not have had a chance to talk about the things they have seen or experienced. If the class is primarily composed of young three-year-olds, their experience may be more of the nursery provided each Sunday and an occasional appearance at a special service such as Christmas or Easter.

It will be helpful to have some parental assistance for the tour and may be useful to have parents as listeners for small groups of children as they relate their prior experiences in the sanctuary. Ideally, a parent of each child could be included in the tour since each family may have different expectations of children in church and what they

HEART OF THE LEARNING

Call to Worship

Preparation: Gather a tape recorder and tape of familiar hymns; unit blocks and/or floor blocks; puzzles; markers or crayons and drawing paper.

- Have the music mentioned in “Background” above playing softly as the children enter. Greet them and suggest they begin by using the table blocks or floor blocks, if available, to build a church. Puzzles or drawing paper, and markers or crayons can also be available.

We Are in God's Family

- When everyone has arrived, call the children together to listen as you tell the following story:

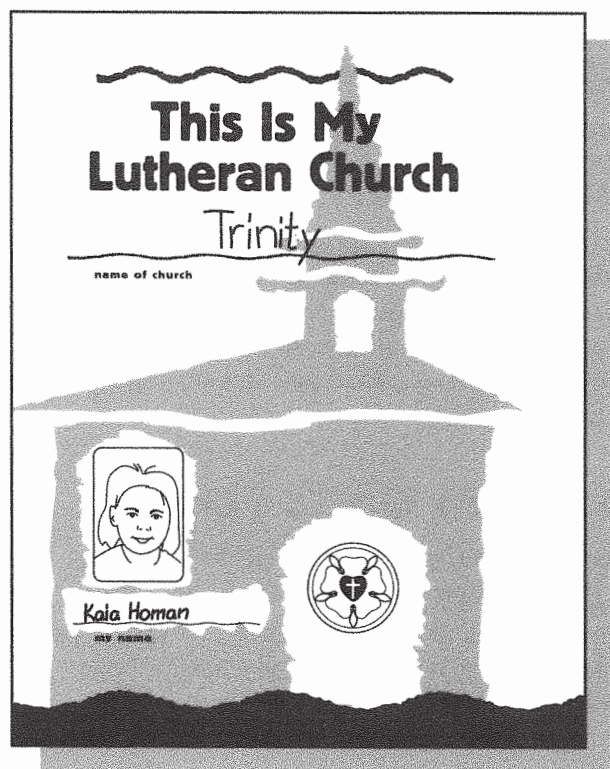
Jane, David, and their mother and father have just moved to a new town. They have a new house and a new school where Jane goes to kindergarten.

It is time for them to go to a new church. They have visited with the pastor of Trinity

Lutheran and are now ready to come to worship. Jane wonders if she will find a new friend and where she will go to Sunday school class. At the front door of the church, the family is greeted by a mother and her daughter who seems to be just about Jane's age. Three-year-old David hears the organ playing and takes his father's hand and smiles up at him. This is going to be a good place to be, a new family of God for this new family in town.

Sanctuary Tour

Preparation: Obtain a picture of each child before this session. Affix each child's picture to the back cover of his or her *This Is My Lutheran Church* Learner Book (LB) so that the picture shows through the cut-out window. (Alternatively, obtain an instant-developing camera to take a picture of each child.) Write the child's name and the name of your Lutheran church on the front cover. Make plans to visit the sanctuary.



Front page of learner book

- Talk to the children in the class about what they see in the church building. Take the children and parents on a tour of the sanctuary. Be aware of the pictures on pages 4-5 in the learner book to be sure that they are mentioned while on the tour so that they can be recalled in discussion later.

- When the tour is completed, return to the classroom. (Take some time now to take instant pictures of the children and prepare their learner books, if necessary.)

RESPONSE ACTIVITIES

This Is My Lutheran Church

Preparation: Gather the learner books that have been prepared for the children. Have markers or crayons ready.

- Distribute the learner books and invite the children to explore them. Be sure to read the book's title to the children. Look together at page 3. Read the text and look at the pictures. Show where they can draw their own picture of their home families later. Talk about who people are in their "home families" and "church families." Have fun listening to what they share.
- Look at page 4 of the learner book. Ask the children if they saw any of the things pictured on this page on the tour, or if they have ever seen these things at other times. Allow time for the children to talk about these items, and their tour, or prior experiences in worship.
- Invite the children to use markers or crayons to draw a picture of their home family at worship on page 5 of the learner book. The picture of each child's family at worship will vary with the ages of the children and the amount of time available for the process. The teacher's knowledge of the makeup of each family can be helpful in encouraging the children to remember everyone and also in providing names for the people in the picture if the child so desires.

Getting Ready for Worship

Preparation: Create a worship center in the room with a small table, cross or picture of Jesus, and a Bible. There should be room for children to sit on the floor. Have a cassette player and music tape ready. The *Songs for Sunday School* music resources in the Good News Explorers Sunday school series (Augsburg Fortress, 1995) include lots of possibilities.

- Replay the tape used at the beginning of the session. Encourage the children to gather by the worship center.
- Sing one of their favorite songs. Then use the responsive, saying, "The Lord be with you." Have

the children respond, "And also with you."

- Mention some of the things everyone saw as they toured the sanctuary. Have the children add to the listing.
- Close with a prayer thanking God for all those in the church family, mentioning the children in the class by name.
- Gather the learner books so they can be used again next time.

SESSION 2

I BELONG IN CHURCH

LEARNING FOCUS

We are welcomed into God's family in Holy Baptism and blessed in worship and Holy Communion.

BACKGROUND

God's love extends to everyone through Baptism. In Baptism, God promises to be with each one of us. Read the service for Holy Baptism on pages 121-125 of *Lutheran Book of Worship* for a review. If there is a child who has not been baptized, that child is no less important to God. Tell your pastor if there is someone who has not been baptized. This is an opportunity for outreach to that family.

Many children celebrate the date of their baptisms. The class could enjoy a snack as they think about God's promises and what they can remember or what they have been told about their baptism day. (Be sure to check for any food allergies when choosing snack food. Generally, it is best to keep snacks very simple.) Consider lighting a baptismal candle during this time.

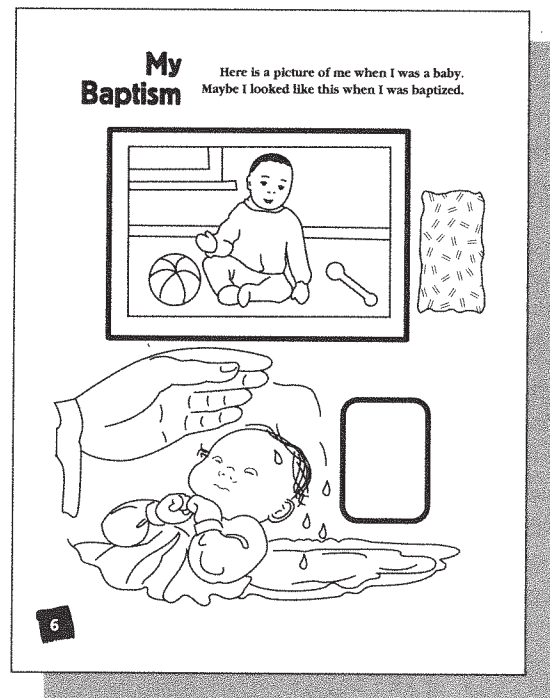
Participation in Holy Communion services vary from congregation to congregation. Prepare to talk about what happens in your church. Read through a service of Holy Communion found on page 57, 78, or 99 in *Lutheran Book of Worship*, if you would like a review for yourself.

HEART OF THE LEARNING

Coming Together

Preparation: Have the learner books ready to distribute. Have small squares of soft cloth or colored paper available to use as "blankets" for the baby picture on learner book page 6. Transfer baptismal information from parents and caregivers, if available, to page 7 of each child's book.

- Greet each child using her or his name and saying thanks for coming to be a part of God's family on this day. Invite the children to sit around the table. Talk with them about all the things that parents do to take care of babies and children out of love for them (including food, homes, clothing, and so forth). The children are part of their home families by birth or adoption or invitation, and are made part of God's family through Baptism.
- The space on page 6 in the learner book is for a picture of the child as a baby. If there are pictures available for this session, invite children to show them and tell about them, if they wish. Small squares of soft cloth or colored paper can be glued onto page 6 near the picture. (Help children so that these "blankets" are not glued directly onto the pictures.)
- Say, "This is a warm blanket for the baby!"



Page 6 of learner book

- Tell the children that page 7 in the learner book is for them to complete with their parents, unless you wrote the information in before the session.

Welcomed by God

Preparation: Gather pictures of a variety of family members. Glue felt or flannel on the back of each picture to use on a flannelboard in the worship center.

- Invite the children to sit in the worship center. Talk about the promises made by the parents and sponsors at a baptism to bring the child to worship and to Sunday school. Show this with pictures on the flannelboard, allowing the children to make up a family that looks like theirs and share what they do when they come to church and Sunday school. Ask children if they have seen a baptism, or if they know about their own baptisms.
- Talk about Holy Communion in your congregation. Tell the children that this sacrament brings the promise that Jesus Christ is always with each person, whether adult or child. The blessing received from the pastor is very important for each young child. Invite the children to tell what they know about the Lord's Supper. Use the pictures on the flannelboard in this conversation as well.

RESPONSE ACTIVITIES

Celebrating God's Promises

Preparation: Have a snack such as cupcakes (be aware of any food allergies and make food choices accordingly) and juice, napkins, and a candle in a candle holder ready.

- Invite the children to sit around a table. Place a candle in a candle holder in the center. Light the candle and talk about the candles used in baptisms. Tell the children that sometimes families celebrate baptism birthdays. Say that this is a celebration of God's promises.
- Say grace and share the snacks together!

Worship Time

Preparation: Gather a music cassette and cassette player, and a Bible.

- Play music and invite the children to sit at the worship center. Relight the candle used in the

previous activity and remind the children that they share the light wherever they go.

- Read aloud Mark 10:13-16 (NRSV), about Jesus blessing the children: "People were bringing little children to him in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them. But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, 'Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.' And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them."
- Sing a favorite song and close with a prayer that names each child as a member of God's family.
- Say, "The Lord be with you." Children respond, "And also with you!"



SESSION 3

AROUND MY CHURCH

LEARNING FOCUS

Young children can do important work in church communities—on Sundays or any day!

BACKGROUND

This session introduces the roles of many people within the congregation, including pastors and musicians, as well as many behind-the-scenes supportive people, such as the secretary, maintenance staff, Sunday school teachers, and children. It takes many kinds of people doing all kinds of jobs to carry on the work of the congregation.

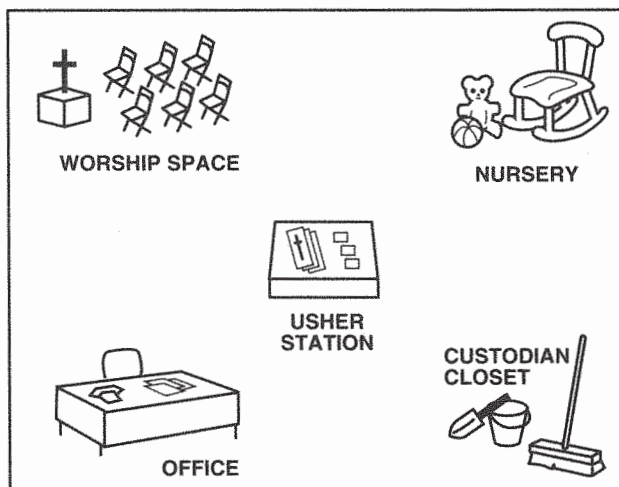
It is easy for adults to overlook the important places children have in the church family, and sometimes in home families, too. Mark 10:13-16 was used as a reading in the last session. Jesus blessed children and, by so doing, lifted up their importance for the disciples who were with him. This session offers many ways to explore and appreciate people around us.

HEART OF THE LEARNING

We All Have a Place

Preparation: Have the learner books ready to distribute. Gather an assortment of props used by helpers in various roles around the church, such as the following: paper supplies and a toy telephone or two for the office; bulletins and offering envelopes for ushers; songbooks or hymnals for worshipers; small cleaning tools and perhaps some gardening tools for custodial staff; scarves and large white shirts for pastoral vestments; children's choir robes (if possible) and cassette player with music tape. Consider putting certain props in different places in the room—setting up chairs to simulate worship, and so forth.

- Give each child his or her learner book. Pages 8-9 picture a variety of people in many different roles within the congregation. Hold up your copy of the learner book opened to page 8 and ask the children to find that page in their own books. Help them as needs dictate.
- Talk about what the people are doing on each page. Start by reading page 8 aloud and asking the children to think about themselves as a member of this Sunday school. Then ask them to think about people who do various jobs in the church. Look at the pictures on pages 8 and 9 for ideas.
- Invite the children to play church using the props that have been gathered. Let the children choose who they would like to be and give them the opportunity to trade roles. A portion of the room may be set aside for the nursery where the babies are cared for and the chairs may be arranged to simulate the worship space, office, acolytes in worship, and so forth.



Room setup

RESPONSE ACTIVITIES

I Can Help

Preparation: Choose a service activity such as one of those described below. Gather the appropriate supplies for the chosen activity.

- Everyone can take part in important work in the family of God! Depending on the season, a walk outside could lead to helping to make the church building and grounds neat and tidy. A small garden area could be prepared for planting. Taking responsibility for a portion of the church property can be the beginning of other service to the congregation and can be recognized and appreciated by parents and other adult members as a valuable service to the community of faith.
- If outside activity is not feasible, the children can help make and serve a snack to another class at the Sunday school. Plan ahead for this and find out if there are any food allergies to respect.
- Each child could choose one of the helpers discussed in "We All Have a Place" above and pretend to be that person. Also ask the children how they can share their thanks for the people they chose. A thank-you picture may be drawn and/or a note dictated to the teacher or helper. Deliver it in person if possible.

Worship Time

Preparation: Have a Bible ready. If you wish, a cassette player and music tape could be used as well.

- If there were children who played at being the choir earlier in the session, invite them to choose a song to call the children to the worship center.
- Use Mark 3:35 (NRSV) as the Bible reading for the session: "Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother."
- Say, "We are each important members in God's family!"
- Pray a prayer of thanks naming the different people in your church. End by thanking God for each child by name. After the prayer say, "Lord in your mercy," and have the children respond, "Hear our prayer."



SESSION 4

MY CHURCH AND OTHERS

LEARNING FOCUS

We are part of the larger family of God, beyond day-to-day lives in our own congregations.

BACKGROUND

The media show very young children in a wide variety of life situations around the world. Participation in simple service opportunities that are close to home may be for young children the beginning of an understanding that they can, with God's help, make a difference wherever they find themselves.

This session will be most effective if parents are available to help. Some of the activities involve cutting and small motor skills that may require help.

This is the last session of this course, so the learner books can be sent home at the end of the session. Including as many parents as possible for this session will give you the opportunity to share information about what this course accomplished and how *This Is My Lutheran Church* can be used at home. Show parents the places where they can fill in additional information and add pictures, if this information has not been added already. This book can be a wonderful keepsake.

HEART OF THE LEARNING

It Takes Many to Share God's Story

Preparation: Have the learner books ready.

- Meet in the worship center and give each child his or her copy of the learner book. Open your copy to pages 12 and 13 and show it to the children. Help them to find the pages in their books and look at them together. There are many people who need to know the story of God's love. They live in places near where we live, and they live in places far away. The pictures in the learner book show some ways that people help others. The pictures show us something about what it means to be part of the worldwide family of God.

- Encourage the children to remember others in their prayers. A very young child usually feels comfortable saying prayers of praise and thanksgiving. Encourage them to include requests for others and for themselves. They may spontaneously remember a fellow classmate who is absent as they pray.
- Gather the learner books.

Being in God's Family Means We Care

Preparation: Ask the pastor for a list of church members who are homebound or who live in care facilities. Gather construction paper, scissors, markers, crayons, glue, and small pictures of favorite Bible stories from old Sunday school curriculum if available. Have a variety of materials available which will appeal to different children, such as stickers, sequins, ribbon, glitter, and so forth. Have parents available to help with this project, if possible.

- At tables, make cards or pictures that can be delivered at some time during the week. This project might be the beginning of continuing relationships between the children and people who are homebound or who live in care facilities. If a child already knows someone like this, it would make sense for that child to make a card for him or her.
- Have the children find Bible story pictures from old curriculum and glue one or more of the pictures in their cards. Help with the cutting, if needed. As the children make the cards, ask them to tell about the Bible stories that are pictured. (Remember, some stories might be new to the children. Be prepared to tell about what happened in the stories, if this is the case.) If old curriculum is not available for this activity, choose a favorite Bible story to tell the children and have them draw pictures of it on their cards.

RESPONSE ACTIVITIES

Remember the Sharing

Preparation: Have the learner books, additional small-sized Bible story pictures, or small-sized paper to color sample cards.

- Give each child her or his copy of the learner book. Help the children find pages 10 and 11. Invite them to draw a picture or paste a small Bible story picture or a small card that they colored in the space on page 11 so they can

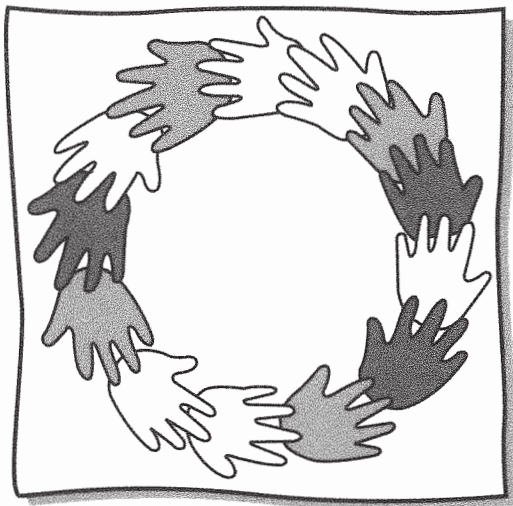
remember how they shared God's love with others today. Ask each child to tell the name of a special friend from Sunday school. Write that name and your own name in the blanks on page 10. Encourage them to show their home families this page and what they did.

- Read together pages 14 and 15 in the learner book.

Prayer Circle

Preparation: Gather construction paper, large chart paper or other paper, pencils, and scissors. Also have available blocks and play props used in other sessions. Since this project involves cutting, extra parental help would be good to have, if possible.

- Help the children to trace around one of their hands on a piece of construction paper. The hand shape can then be cut out and all the hands put together to form a circle. Glue the circle of hands together on a larger piece of paper and hang it in the worship center. Talk with the children about how the circle of hands can remind them to come together to worship and pray.



Prayer circle

- Continue to make available to children the blocks and play props used in other sessions. Encourage the children to use them and continue to talk about being an important part of the congregation.
- Listen to what they say and note how their awareness expands as they play and learn together.

Worship Time

Preparation: Have a cassette player and music tape ready, if possible.

- Sit in the worship center and begin worship time with the liturgical exchange of, "The Lord be with you" and the children's response, "And also with you."
- Call attention to the names of the people for whom the cards and pictures were made, as well as to the circle of praying hands of the children in the class.
- Say the Lord's Prayer for the children. Some children may know this, so encourage them to speak the prayer along with you. (See page 71 in *Lutheran Book of Worship*, if you would like to read it.) Tell the children that the Lord's Prayer is used in worship each Sunday and in churches all around the world.
- Close the worship time with a song.



This Is My Lutheran Church Leader Leaflet

This Leader Leaflet has a corresponding Learner Book.

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Dear family,

"Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness; come into his presence with singing." (Psalm 100:1-2 NRSV)

These words are directed to all people, including the youngest children in your family! I am excited to tell you about a fun learning opportunity for your child that will help him or her to grow in awareness that "this is my Lutheran church." Young children are developing their concept of self, and identification with the church is an important part of this development.

In this course each child will receive her or his own copy of a special book entitled *This Is My Lutheran Church*. We will use this book in class and later your child will have the book to keep for his or her own. The books have places for pictures of your child so that he or she becomes part of the story.

On or before this date: _____ please send the following items so that we can prepare a book especially for your child: 1) a recent photo (wallet-size or smaller) of your child; 2) a baby picture of your child.

Send these items to me at this address: _____

Also, if your child has been baptized, please provide as much of the following information as possible for the book. (If your child has not been baptized, be assured that this course will not make him or her feel uncomfortable. If you want more information about Holy Baptism, consider visiting with your pastor.)

Your child's baptismal date: _____

Name of church where your child was baptized:

Name of pastor who baptized your child: _____

Your child's baptismal sponsors: _____

Special baptismal gifts or remembrances your child received:

Guests at your child's baptism:

When the course is finished, we hope that your child will enjoy reading this book together with you.

Sincerely,