

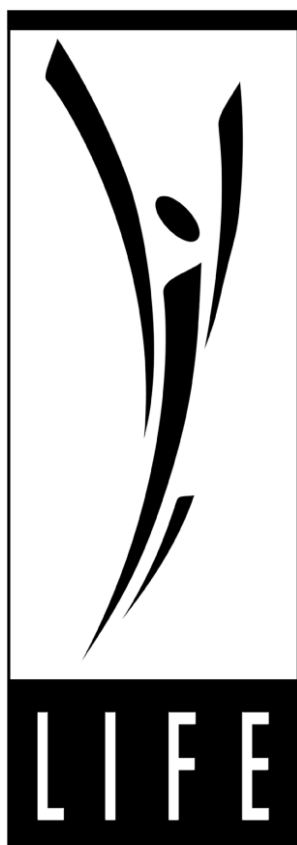
**GOD HELPS  
PEOPLE BY THE  
WORK OF THE  
HOLY SPIRIT**



**BAND**

**A**

**PLANNING GUIDE**



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LIFE is a joint project of the Board for Lutheran Schools of the Lutheran Church of Australia and Openbook Publishers.

*God helps people by the work of the Holy Spirit* is one of twelve concepts covered by LIFE curriculum.

This BAND A planning guide contains model units for the first three years of school.

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# **GOD HELPS PEOPLE BY THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**

## **AIMS**

The ultimate aim of LIFE curriculum is that

- students will come to know God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit
- students will have faith in God as their Father, Saviour, and Helper.

We understand that faith is entirely a gift of the Holy Spirit.

We teach in obedience to Jesus' command to go and teach.

*How can people have faith in the Lord  
and ask him to save them,  
if they have never heard about him?  
And how can they hear,  
unless someone tells them?  
Romans 10:14 (CEV)*

## ***GOD HELPS PEOPLE BY THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT***

As Christians we believe this and are compelled to tell others.

Our aim in teaching this concept is that students

- hear
- explore, and
- reflect on

these faith statements:

1. The Holy Spirit gives people power to believe and to live as God's people
2. The Holy Spirit gives new life in baptism
3. The Holy Spirit uses God's word and holy communion to help God's people grow

# BACKGROUND NOTES FOR TEACHERS

## GOD HELPS PEOPLE BY THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

In the Nicene Creed we call the Holy Spirit ‘the Lord and giver of life’.

In this unit we focus on the Spirit’s life-giving and life-transforming work, which he does by means of God’s word and the sacraments of baptism and holy communion.

**A PERSON OF THE TRINITY** The Holy Spirit is not just a divine force or power; he is a divine ‘person’ who has his own identity in the Triune God together with the Father and the Son. We can’t see the Holy Spirit, but we certainly can see the effects of his work.

**POWER** The word ‘power’ is often used in the Bible in connection with the Holy Spirit. When the Spirit is at work, great things happen. In the Old Testament we are told that the Spirit was at work in the creation of the world. We also read how people were changed radically when they were anointed by the Spirit to be God’s special servants, as judges or kings or prophets. They spoke and acted by the power of the Spirit.

In the New Testament we read that Jesus was conceived in Mary’s womb by the power of the Holy Spirit. At his baptism Jesus was anointed ‘with the Holy Spirit and power’ for his ministry as the Messiah. Jesus promised his followers that after he left them the Holy Spirit would come to them to be their ‘comforter’, helper and guide, who would lead them into all truth and remind them of everything Jesus had taught them and make it all clear to them.

**PENTECOST** The story of Pentecost — the coming of the Holy Spirit — is the story of people being changed by the power of the Spirit. The sound of the mighty wind and the tongues of fire were signs of the Spirit’s powerful presence and operation. He transformed Jesus’ disciples from ignorant, doubting, fearful followers into people of strong faith who boldly witnessed to the truth about Jesus as the promised Messiah. Through the preaching of the disciples, the Spirit changed the hearts and lives of thousands of people as they confessed their sins and were baptised in the name of Jesus, whom they acknowledged as their only Saviour.

### THE SPIRIT CREATES FAITH

The Holy Spirit brings people to faith in Jesus. No-one can ever come to faith without the Spirit’s powerful work (1 Cor 12:3). In our natural sinful condition we human beings do not have the power to accept Christ, come to God, or live a life that pleases God. By nature every human being is anti-God and spiritually dead (John 3:5,6; Ephesians 2:1; 1 Corinthians 2:14). The Spirit leads people to recognise their sinfulness and spiritual helplessness and to repent and believe in Christ as their Saviour. This change is so radical that the Bible describes it as ‘conversion’ and as ‘new birth’ — being born again (John 3:3–8; Titus 3:5,6).

When the Spirit brings people to faith in Jesus, he changes their lives. He makes people holy not only in their status before God (‘justification’) but also in their lifestyle

(‘sanctification’). The Spirit’s power produces ‘fruit’: ‘love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control’ (Gal 5:22,23). He also gives spiritual gifts (such as prophecy and teaching) which empower

God’s people to serve God and one another (Romans 12:6–8; 1 Cor 12:4–11).

Even if we are Christians, our life can never be perfectly holy; we are always sinners and saints at the same time. But by the Spirit’s power we can grow in holiness (Ephesians 4:22–24; Romans 12:1,2).

Luther sums up the powerful life-changing work of the Holy Spirit:

‘I believe that on my own I can never come to Jesus Christ my Lord, or believe in him, no matter how hard I try. But the Holy Spirit has called me to Jesus by the good news about him. The Spirit has led me to know and trust Jesus, made me holy, and kept me in the Christian faith.’ (Small Catechism: Explanation of the Third Part of the Apostles’ Creed. Openbook Publishers 1996)

**WORD AND SACRAMENT** Lutheran theology emphasises the biblical teaching that the Holy Spirit does his powerful work through God’s word and the sacraments (baptism and

*God has sent a Helper to call us back to him through the good news that Jesus is the Saviour from sin and death. The Helper is the Holy Spirit.*  
(Theological Foundations of LIFE)

holy communion). God's word and sacraments are 'means of grace' — ways the Spirit uses to bring us God's undeserved love and forgiveness. Whenever God's word — both law and gospel — is preached or taught or read, the Holy Spirit is at work. This is not always sudden and dramatic; more often the Spirit is at work quietly and unspectacularly.

**BAPTISM** The Holy Spirit does his powerful work in the sacrament of baptism. The word of God which is used with the ordinary water of baptism gives this sacrament the power to wash away all sins and to give people new life as children of God. Baptism is the Holy Spirit's special way of bringing God's grace even to infants and of creating saving faith in them.

Because the Holy Spirit is at work in baptism, this sacrament is not just a 'sign' or 'reminder' of God's grace; it really changes people. Baptism is the Spirit's way of linking us with Jesus' death and resurrection. In baptism the Spirit 'drowned' our old sinful nature and resurrected us as new people.

**HOLY COMMUNION** Holy communion is the sacrament the Holy Spirit uses to strengthen our faith in Jesus as our Saviour. Once again, the Spirit works through the word of God that is used in communion — the words of Jesus spoken as we receive the bread and wine: 'This is my body given for you. This is my blood shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.' As I commune, the Spirit helps me believe that Jesus died also for me, that he has truly paid the price to wipe out my sins and guilt.

In holy communion we remember Jesus. But this is a special kind of remembering. Jesus' death on the cross — his giving his body and shedding his blood for us — is brought into our time, into our lives. The sacrament also points us forward to Jesus' coming at the end of time; it is 'a foretaste of the feast to come'.

If we want the Holy Spirit to do his powerful work in us and in the children we teach, we must appreciate and faithfully use the means the Spirit has chosen: word and sacraments.

### FOR REFLECTION AND/OR DISCUSSION

1. What questions do the *Background Notes* raise for you? What questions do you think your students will have on this topic?
2. Why is this an important topic to teach to your students? What implications might the topic have for the life of your school?
3. If the Holy Spirit wants all people to come to faith in Jesus, why don't all people believe? How do Matthew 22:1–14; Matthew 23:37–39 and Acts 7:51 relate to this question?
4. Indicate and explain your reactions to these statements:
  - *In the church today we have moved from not enough to too much emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit.*
  - *Every Christian is a born again Christian.*
  - *All Christians are charismatics.*
  - *We shouldn't put too much stress on baptism in our teaching, as unbaptised children may feel left out.*
  - *God will take to heaven babies and others who die before they have a chance to be baptised.*
  - *You should go to communion only when you feel that you are properly ready.*

### FOR FURTHER READING

*Who the Spirit is:* Augsburg Confession Article I (Book of Concord p 27,28)

*The Spirit's work:* Luther's Small Catechism and Large Catechism: the third part of the Apostles' Creed.

*Baptism:* Luther's Small Catechism and Large Catechism; Augsburg Confession Article IX (p33); Apology IX (p178)

*Holy Communion:* Luther's Small Catechism and Large Catechism; Augsburg Confession Article X (p 34), Article XXIV (the Mass, p 56); Apology X (p 179); XXIV p249–268) Formula of Concord VII (p481–484).

LCA Doctrinal Statements:  
*Mutual Recognition of Baptism (Roman Catholic and Lutheran Churches); Pastoral Practice in Reference to Holy Baptism; Concerning the Sacrament of the Altar; Infant Communion; Baptism of Children of De Facto Relationships*

# **BAND A STUDENTS**

I believe that on their own my students can never come to Jesus Christ our Lord or believe in him no matter how hard they, or I as teacher, try to make this happen. The Spirit calls people to Jesus by the good news about him, makes them holy, and keeps them with Jesus in the Christian faith.

*Paraphrase of Luther's Explanation of the third part of the Apostles' Creed*

The concept of the Holy Spirit is abstract and is only touched on in this band. Much of what you do at this level is an introduction to the work of the Holy Spirit and will be developed further in the following bands.

You may find that there is great diversity in your students' current knowledge of the Holy Spirit. Some will already be familiar with stories and teaching about the Holy Spirit, while others may not have even heard the name.

## **TEACHING ABOUT BAPTISM**

In your class there will be some students who have been baptised and others who have not.

Your school office should have records of your students' religious backgrounds and whether or not students have been baptised.

The fact that students come from different backgrounds does not mean that teaching about baptism is to be avoided. Rather, it needs to be approached openly but with sensitivity.

If you have students who have experienced different baptism traditions, talk about this, with an emphasis on what is the same rather than what is different. Most importantly, assure **all** students that God loves them and that they are special to him.

Baptism may be a sensitive issue for some families, so it is wise to inform parents what you are teaching. Avoid putting pressure on students to be baptised, but at the same time teach baptism as the exciting and wonderful gift that it is.

Do not hesitate to call on your pastor for advice, or to inform him of families that may be interested in having their children baptised.

When teaching *God helps people by the work of the Holy Spirit*, keep in mind the characteristics of BAND A students listed on the following page.

<b>DEVELOPMENTAL CHARACTERISTICS</b>	<b>IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING</b>
Students have not yet developed abstract thinking. They can relate to God as Father and creator and Jesus as their friend. The Holy Spirit is a much more difficult concept.	<p>Use simple language as you teach about the Holy Spirit, eg a helper. There is no need to teach about the Trinity at this level.</p> <p>Avoid using abstract metaphors, eg relating the 'fruit' of the Spirit to pears, apples etc.</p>
Students can identify with the concept of family, although not all students may experience love and care within their family.	Teach that baptism makes people part of God's family. God always loves and cares for the people in his family. Baptism is a special way in which God says 'I love you, you are my child'.
Students have a natural curiosity about things around them.	Explain the purpose of objects and rituals in the church, eg as used in baptism.
Students will ask 'why?' and 'how?'	<p>Answer as simply as you can. There may be times when you need to say: 'I don't know, but this is what I believe'.</p> <p>Encourage an atmosphere of questioning and open discussion within your classroom and allow time for students to talk through their ideas.</p>
Students have a limited attention span.	Keep your language simple and your explanations short.