GOD CALLS PEOPLE TO SERVE

LIFE

BAND A

PLANNING GUIDE

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God calls people to serve 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 CALLS PEOPLE TO SERVE

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 CALLS PEOPLE TO SERVE

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. God’s love inspires and equips Christians to love and serve others
2. God calls all people to work for peace and justice
3. God calls Christians to share the Good News by words and actions

BACKGROUND NOTES FOR TEACHERS

GOD CALLS PEOPLE TO SERVE

God calls us and all people to serve at various levels and in various ways: by helping individuals, families, and people in our various communities (school, church, regional, national, world). We are to serve unselfishly and without thought of reward. This goes against our natural self-centredness which asks 'What's in it for me?', and looks for recognition from God and/or other people.

It is true that we don't have to be Christians to be able to do good things for other people. If we wanted to, we could train students to perform acts of service without any reference to the gospel of Christ. We could condition them to serve simply by telling them this is what they ought to do, by rewarding acts of kindness and showing disapproval of selfishness. However, our teaching about serving would then be legalistic moralising, little different from the teaching students might get in non-Christian schools.

> God calls us to walk with him in the way of love and service . . . There are many people in the world whose lives have been wrecked by brokenness of many kinds. Disciples love them, stand beside them and bring the healing and help of Jesus into their lives and work for justice in society.
> (Theological Foundations of LIFE Curriculum)

Christian service flows from a person's relationship with Christ. For our sake Jesus 'made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant' (Philippians 2:7). He 'did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many'. In his kingdom the servant is greatest (Mark 10:35–45; John 13:1–17).

By giving himself for us in humble service, Christ has set us free from the slavery of selfishness so that we can serve God and other people in self-giving love (agape). By means of the gospel the Holy Spirit transforms us, giving us a new heart and a right spirit, so that we can truly love God and our neighbour. As Jesus said, 'a good tree produces good fruit' (Matthew 7:17); the branches are fruitful because they grow from the vine (John 15:1–5). We are not saved **by** good works, but we are saved **for** good works (Ephesians 2:9,10).

Christian service is an expression of the self-giving love which we have experienced from God and which God has 'poured' into our hearts (Romans 5:5). 'We love because God loved us first' (1 John 4:19).

SERVE IN OUR CALLING Christians serve by attempting to meet the needs of others (eg the poor, sick, disadvantaged and oppressed) in their local and wider communities. This includes sacrificial giving, personal involvement in charitable work, and working with others in the churches and community to change factors which contribute towards the misery of others.

God's love inspires Christians to serve others also in their daily calling, for example as parents, children, teachers, students. 'Christians view their calling, their job, their occupation as the chief way in which they can serve, help and benefit their fellows' (H Hamann, *On Being a Christian* p 61). It is not too early to teach students this view of their future occupations.

Even the smallest and 'lowliest' act of service that is done in faith is acknowledged by God. In the parable of the last judgment the king says: 'Whenever you did it (gave food, drink or clothing, welcomed strangers etc) for any of my people, no matter how unimportant they seemed, you did it for me' (Matthew 25:40; see also 10:42).

PEACE AND JUSTICE We can serve other people by striving to establish and maintain peace and justice for all. Peace (shalom) does not mean only the absence of war; it also means wholeness and well-being. Justice includes upholding the rights of every individual person. Christians' motivation in striving for peace and justice flows from the gospel, which proclaims Jesus as the one who has brought peace and righteousness into our broken world. He is the 'Prince of Peace' (Isaiah 9:6) through whom we are reconciled to God and to one another.

We don't have to be Christians to be concerned about peace and justice, and being concerned about these things certainly doesn't make us Christian. But the very fact that we are God's people in the world means that we can and should take the lead in serving the

world in this way. The Bible says: 'Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy' (Proverbs 31:8,9 NIV).

As Christians we are God's gifts to the world because we have been entrusted with the gospel. This is the power that can change human nature, so that peace, reconciliation and justice become realities.

GOD'S SPECIAL AGENTS The Bible encourages Christians to see themselves as God's servants who are sent to serve the world for God. They are to bring God's kingdom — God's loving rule — to people by their words and deeds.

Already in the Old Testament God's people were supposed to see themselves as his agents or representatives in the world. By what they said and what they did as God's chosen people they were to present God to the world (eg: 'I will . . . make you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth'. Isaiah 49:6). Prophets had a special role as God's spokespersons to tell their own and other nations God's warnings and promises.

In the New Testament Jesus sent his disciples out as his 'special agents', giving them 'power and authority' to preach the gospel, heal the sick, and drive out demons in his name (Luke 9:1–6; 10:1–16). Later he told them to go to 'all nations' (Luke 24:47; Matthew 28:19,20). They were to be his 'witnesses' (Acts 1:8), who would tell the world what they had seen and heard. They were 'apostles' — people who were sent out, commissioned to speak and act for God (eg Mark 3:14). They were 'evangelists' — people who had good news to tell. Paul spoke of himself and other Christians as 'Christ's ambassadors' (2 Corinthians 5:20) to whom God had given 'the ministry of reconciliation'. They were people on a mission, sent to carry on Jesus' peace mission (John 20:21).

All Christians are witnesses who are called to testify of God's love (1 Peter 2:9). They do this individually and corporately (eg as a congregation or school) when they tell other people the good news about Jesus. But the loving and serving lives of Christians — their response to the gospel of Jesus Christ, are also a powerful witness (Matthew 5:13–16).

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. Students sometimes say: Why should we help people who are poor? It usually is their own fault; either they are lazy or they have not used their resources and opportunities wisely.
How would you respond to this?

4. 'The church should concentrate on preaching the gospel and leave issues such as reconciliation to secular bodies.' Comment. Discuss to what extent, if any, the church should be involved in social justice issues.

5. Explore the concept of your school as an 'embassy' for Christ in your community.

FOR FURTHER READING

Explanations of the Ten Commandments in Luther's Small and Large Catechisms

Formula of Concord, Article lV: Good works (*Book of Concord* pp 551–558). See also Friedemann Hebart's commentary on this in *One in the Gospel* (chapter 6: *Fruits on a Good Tree*).

On Being a Christian, H Hamann, Lutheran Publishing House, pp 58–63: *Freed to love others; Freed in our view of work.*

Good Question, ed Brian Schwarz, Openbook Publishers: *Poverty, Social Justice.*

Statement on Poverty LCA Commission on Social Questions (includes discussion questions)

Human Rights Doctrinal Statements of LCA (Vol 2)

The Servant Congregation by Ian Rentsch (available through National Schools Office)

BAND A STUDENTS

Students can easily view Christian service as doing ‘good’ things which make people acceptable to God. When teaching the concept ***God calls people to serve*** to students at this Band level, the focus must always be on serving as a response to the love Jesus has for all people. Jesus’ love does not depend on what people do.

Student attitudes to service may have been shaped by family models. Some students may not have experienced positive models of love and service. They may find it very difficult to relate to the whole concept of loving and serving.

The concept ***God calls people to serve*** provides an ideal opportunity for teachers to witness personally to the students by words and actions. Help students to understand that the things they do and say are a witness to others.

DEVELOPMENTAL CHARACTERISTICS	***IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING***
The ideas inherent in the faith statements for this unit are complex for students who do not yet think abstractly.	Use concrete examples wherever possible and involve students in real-life experiences.
Students in this Band are egocentric and will be concerned with their own rights rather than the rights of others.	Apparent selfishness is normal. Provide opportunities for students to interact with others. Students need to be able to identify their own feelings before they can be sensitive to the feelings of others.
Students are exploring ways of developing friendships.	As a class, discuss and establish guidelines for appropriate ways to act towards others.
Students do not always accept others into their groups.	Be aware of the hurt that some students may be feeling and work towards creating a classroom atmosphere that is supportive and accepting of all.
Students may have already developed attitudes of prejudice towards others.	Do not put students down if they express negative ideas. Rather, be alert to opportunities in all areas of schooling in which you can present a positive message.
Students are strongly influenced by the messages they see on television.	Use scenarios from television programs as a basis for discussion. Challenge students to consider questions such as: ‘How might this character be feeling?’ ‘Is this an appropriate way to act?’ ‘What else could the character have done?’ etc.
The relationship with significant adults, and the model they provide, will have a strong influence on students.	As you deal with sensitive issues, remember that your attitudes and actions are a powerful model for students.

NOTES