

**GOD GATHERS  
PEOPLE  
INTO THE  
CHRISTIAN CHURCH**



**BAND  
D  
PLANNING GUIDE**



## CONTENTS

Aims .....	3
Background notes for teachers .....	4
BAND D students .....	6
Goals .....	8
Menus	
Bible references .....	10
Introductory activities .....	12
Development activities .....	15
Response activities .....	22
Recommended resources.....	24
Planning pro-forma .....	27
Sample unit for Level 1 .....	31
(with teacher resource sheets)	
Model unit for Level 2.....	43
(with teacher resource sheets)	
Students and families.....	51

This planning guide is a part of LIFE, a Christian Studies curriculum developed for Lutheran schools.

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

*God gathers people into the Christian church* is one of twelve concepts covered by LIFE curriculum. This Band D planning guide contains model units for two middle years of secondary school.

Writer: Dominique Jaaniste

Sample unit for Level 1 based on materials prepared at Immanuel College, Maroochydore, Queensland

Theological adviser: David Strelan

Editorial adviser: Mary Jo Zwar

Published July 1999

© Board for Lutheran Schools, Lutheran Church of Australia, 197 Archer Street, North Adelaide, SA 5006

Printed and published by Openbook Publishers, 205 Halifax Street, Adelaide, South Australia 5000

# **GOD GATHERS PEOPLE INTO THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH**

## **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 GATHERS PEOPLE INTO THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH***

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 Christian church is the community of believers created by the Holy Spirit
2. God has gathered his people together throughout history
3. Lutherans in Australia work together in ministry and mission\*

\* Here we use the Lutheran Church of Australia as an example of a denominational church body.

# BACKGROUND NOTES FOR TEACHERS

## GOD GATHERS PEOPLE INTO THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

**WHAT IS THE CHURCH?** When the Bible talks about church, it does not mean a building or a worship service or an organisation created by human beings. The church is people — the people of God. The Greek word for 'church' in the New Testament is 'ecclesia', which means 'an assembly' and has the basic idea of a group of people who are 'called out' to form God's special community. In the Old Testament the people of Israel were God's special people called out from all the nations, set apart ('holy') to receive God's gracious blessing and to be a blessing to all nations. In the New Testament this privilege is given to Christians (1 Peter 2:9,10).

In the Apostles' Creed we say we believe in *the holy Christian (catholic) church*. This church is made up of people whom the Holy Spirit has brought to faith in Jesus as their Saviour.

The New Testament uses several pictures to teach us about the church.

- The church is the 'body of Christ', in which Jesus is the head and each believer in Jesus is a member (Romans 12:4,5; 1 Corinthians 12:12–27).
- The church is a family (Ephesians 2:19; 1 Timothy 3:15).
- The church is a living temple in which Jesus is the cornerstone and Christians are the bricks which have been laid on the firm foundation and support each other (Ephesians 2:20–22; 1 Peter 2:5).

The vine (Jesus) and the branches (people joined to Jesus by faith John 15: 1–7) and the shepherd and his sheep (John 10) are other pictures of the Christian church.

**THE OUTWARD CHURCH** We can talk about the church in a wider and a narrower sense. In the wider sense, the Christian church is the outward organisation that is made up of all people who call themselves Christians. This includes people from every Christian denomination and congregation. But not all people who call themselves Christians are genuine believers in Christ. The parable of the

weeds among the wheat (Matthew 13: 24–43) reminds us that in every denomination and every congregation there are hypocrites as well as true believers. We can't tell who are believers and who are hypocrites, so we are not to try to do the sorting out that God will do in the judgment.

### THE HOLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH

In the narrower sense the Christian church is only those people who genuinely are Christians, believers in Christ as their Saviour. They are 'holy' people ('saints') because by faith they have the forgiveness of sins. At the same time, they are sinners. This means that there will never ever be a perfect church; it will always be an assembly of people who live only

by God's gracious forgiveness. The Lutheran Confessions say: *'The church . . . is mainly an association of faith and of the Holy Spirit in (people's) hearts . . . The following phrase, "the communion of saints", seems to have been*

When the word of God is taught or proclaimed and when God's special gifts of baptism and the Lord's Supper are celebrated, the Holy Spirit is present and active to build up the family of God. This family is called the church. (Theological Foundations of LIFE curriculum)

*added to explain what "church" means, namely, the assembly of saints who share the association of the same gospel or teaching and of the same Holy Spirit, who renews, consecrates and governs their hearts' (Book of Concord p169).*

When we describe this church as 'catholic' (universal), we mean that it exists all over the world — wherever the gospel of Jesus Christ is proclaimed and the sacraments of baptism and holy communion are used according to Christ's command. A Christian congregation — Christians gathered around the word and sacraments — is the church of Jesus Christ in a particular locality. There are members of the holy Christian church in every Christian denomination and congregation. Through the gospel and sacraments the Holy Spirit *calls people to Jesus, brings them together into the church, leads them to know and trust Jesus, makes them holy, and keeps them with Jesus in the Christian faith (Third Part of the Apostles' Creed, Small Catechism, Martin Luther).*

**THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH** There is only **one** holy Christian church. Jesus' prayer that his followers 'may be one' (John 17:21) has been answered: there is only one 'communion of saints'.

How, then, do we explain the lack of unity in the outward church — the fact that Christendom is divided into a large number of different denominations? This is due to the failings of human beings. Various denominations arise as human beings do not agree in their interpretation and application of the word and will of God. Every denomination must constantly check its teachings and practice against what the Bible says. At the same time every denomination should acknowledge that the Good Shepherd has his sheep not only in one denomination but wherever the Shepherd's voice is heard (John 10:16). All denominations should be prepared to dialogue with each other on the basis of Scripture, with the prayer that the Holy Spirit will lead them to know and understand the truth of God more clearly (John 16:13) and so bring them into greater outward unity.

The Lutheran Confessions stress that different ways of doing things in the church do not destroy the unity created by the Spirit.

*The true unity of the church is not harmed by differences in rites instituted by [human beings] (Book of Concord p 174) . . . It is not necessary for the true unity of the Christian church that ceremonies instituted by [human beings] should be observed uniformly in all places (Book of Concord p 32).*

## THE SURVIVAL OF THE CHURCH

The history of the Christian church is full not only of examples of great faith but also of stories of human frailty and shortcomings. It is a miracle of God's grace that the church has survived in the face of countless threats from inside and outside. As we Christians today struggle to be God's faithful church and wonder about its future in an indifferent and hostile world, we can hold on to Jesus' promise: 'I'll build my church, and death itself won't have any power over it' (Matthew 16:18).

### 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. Jesus promised: ' . . . I'll build my church, and death itself won't have any power over it'. What church was Jesus talking about? all denominations together? one particular denomination? no denomination?

What evidence is there of Jesus' promise being fulfilled today when the church often seems to be ineffectual and struggling for survival?

4. How does the reality of the average Christian congregation in Australia today compare with the ideal of Bible pictures, such as the body of Christ (1 Cor 12), the holy temple (Eph 2: 19–22; 1 Pet 2:4–10), the shepherd and his flock (John 10:14–16, 27,28)?
5. How does/should Christian school and Christian congregation relate to each other? Can a Christian school be considered a Christian community in its own right?

### FOR FURTHER READING

There is a good summary of Lutheran teaching about the church in the Theses of Agreement V, *Doctrinal Statements and Theological Opinions* A 6–11.

*Book of Concord*: Augsburg Confession Articles VII and VIII; Apology Articles VII and VIII; Smalcald Articles XII; Large Catechism, Part 3 of the Apostles' Creed.

*Good Question* : Why don't church denominations work together? (p 29);  
Do I have to belong to a church to be a Christian? (p 31)

# BAND D STUDENTS

<b>DEVELOPMENTAL CHARACTERISTICS</b>	<b>IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING</b>
Students are developing a sense of personal history — where they have come from and where they are going.	<p>Present the rich and diverse history of the Christian church, exploring with students the factors and influences on the church's course of action at different periods of time.</p> <p>Point out to students the unchanging nature of the gospel message, which has been the church's foundation in the midst of the different contexts and the changes the church has experienced.</p>
Students seek approval from their peers and often have negative, suspicious feelings towards authority.	<p>In many ways a Christian school and the Christian Studies class can heighten a student's ambivalence towards the material being presented because the message of the Bible represents the authority structure for the student.</p> <p>The teacher needs to develop an atmosphere in the classroom that is open, honest and non-threatening. The teacher requires sensitivity and patience.</p>
Students are becoming aware of the conflicting standards and attitudes set by society. They will be quick to point out the shortcomings of Christians and the church.	<p>Teachers need to avoid being defensive and feeling personally threatened by students' comments. Be honest with students and expect students to assess the validity of their comments. Be prepared to be vulnerable and share your experience of church with the class.</p> <p>Students need to acknowledge the truth and the 'good' within Christian communities as well as the failings. Challenge students to suggest positive programs to replace what is unacceptable to them.</p> <p>Point out that shortcomings are not acceptable but they are inevitable; members of the church are both saints and sinners.</p> <p>Point out that the church continues to exist because of the grace which God extends to all people.</p>
Church is a remote and even alien concept for many students who may never have been inside a church and whose only experience of the church may be what the media portrays.	<p>Provide opportunities for students to visit churches, to interview members of Christian communities — to see the human face of the church.</p> <p>Examine with students stereotypes of church, the media portrayal of church and the concerns and objections people have about church.</p>

Students' powers of reasoning are developing. They are keen to learn new facts and they can begin to see patterns and significance behind events.



Give students opportunities to investigate aspects of church life not covered in previous curriculum material. Encourage students to go beyond the general material on church history found in encyclopedias. Each Christian tradition has a wealth of material. Contact local denominational offices for material that is published internally by Christian organisations. Help students to see the relationship between the context of the culture and times and the various developments of the Christian church.

Students are active and social, seeing school as a way of meeting their social needs.



Employ a range of methodologies in teaching concepts. Provide opportunities for students to work collaboratively in groups.