

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



BAND

D

PLANNING GUIDE



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God helps people by the work of the Holy Spirit is one of twelve concepts covered by LIFE curriculum. This BAND D planning guide contains model units for two secondary school levels.

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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 (p 33); Apology IX (p 178)

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 pp 249–268) Formula of Concord VII (pp 481–484).

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 D STUDENTS

DEVELOPMENTAL CHARACTERISTICS	IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING
<p>Students are confused by the conflicting messages about their worth that they receive from the many influences in their lives.</p>	<p>Help students identify the different messages they receive. Students need help to understand what contributes to their identity.</p> <p>Be affirming and sensitive. Avoid condemning the different messages students express.</p> <p>Point out to students the clear message of God's love which comes to us through the Bible and the sacraments. Assure students that God's love is constant. His message will not change even though their circumstances will change.</p>
<p>It is unlikely that all students have been baptised, confirmed and participate in holy communion. Students come from a range of Christian traditions or from families with no Christian connections.</p>	<p>Find out which students have been baptised, and confirmed (or are about to be) and which take holy communion.</p> <p>Provide many opportunities for students to share their different experiences. Invite different members of the community to share various Christian experiences.</p> <p>Explore the different rites of passage which are common in our society to provide a base of commonality. Encourage students to explore contemporary symbols and images of new beginnings and continued care for life.</p> <p>Encourage discussion of the Christian belief that baptism and holy communion are gifts that God wants all people to experience.</p>
<p>Students can have high expectations of themselves and can be very harsh on themselves when they fail. Their sense of identity and self-esteem fluctuates from being clear to muddy.</p>	<p>Point out that God's love and forgiveness, the gift of the Holy Spirit and gift of faith are not conditional on their abilities, correct choices, or feelings.</p> <p>Remind students that baptism and holy communion are ways in which God assures his people that they are precious to him.</p>
<p>Scepticism and concrete thinking means that some students will doubt the relevance and efficacy of the sacraments. These may be seen as magical rites with little substance.</p>	<p>Draw students' attention to the importance of the word of God in baptism and holy communion. Point to the need for the sacraments as Jesus and the epistle writers explain it. Luther's explanations of the sacraments in the catechism are useful discussions starters.</p> <p>Invite members of church communities to share the meaning of the sacraments in their lives.</p>

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