

# *Pathways*

Session 5  
**Community of faith**



## **RESOURCES FOR THE PRESENTER**

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### Purposes of Session 5

For the participants to:

- explore the nature of the school as a 'community of faith'
- consider ways the school community gives expression to faith through worship
- consider the spiritual disciplines as a means of nurturing the community of faith

### Reflection stimulus

The discipline of community makes us persons; that is people who are sounding through to each other (the Latin word *personare* means 'sounding through') a truth, a beauty, and a love which is greater, fuller, and richer than we ourselves can grasp. In true community we are windows constantly offering each other new views on the mystery of God's presence in our lives ... The question is not simply, 'Where does God lead me as an individual person who tries to do his will?' More basic and more significant is the question, 'Where does God lead us as a people?' This question requires that we pay careful attention to God's guidance in our life together and that together we search for a creative response.

[Henri Nouwen, *Making All Things New*, p87, 88]

### Focus questions

- What are the ways the 'community of faith' within the school gives expression to its faith?
- What are the features of worship, prayer and Bible study in a school setting?
- How does the school community provide opportunity to practice any of the disciplines?
- Which disciplines have I experienced or wish to experience?

### Biblical focus

You are God's chosen people. You are holy and dearly loved. So put on tender mercy and kindness as if they were your clothes. Don't be proud. Be gentle and patient. Put up with each other. Forgive the things you are holding against one another. Forgive, just as the Lord forgave you. And over all of those good things put on love. Love holds them all together perfectly as if they were one. Let the peace that Christ gives rule in your hearts. As parts of one body, you were appointed to live in peace. And be thankful.

*Colossians 3:12-15 (NIRV)*

As a deer longs for a stream of cool water, so I long for you, O God. I thirst for you, the living God; when can I go and worship in your presence?

*Psalms 42:1,2 (GNB)*

Be still, and know that I am God.

*Psalms 46:10a (NIRV)*

## Theological focus

Within the Lutheran school there is a community of faith which is made up of believers from various Christian traditions who confess a personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and saviour. Through the working of the Holy Spirit, the members of the community of faith are nurtured in their faith as they participate in such activities as worship (including the sacrament), prayer, study of the word of God, fellowship, hospitality, care and various spiritual disciplines. Through word and sacrament, and through the witness of these members, the Holy Spirit may also bring others into this community of faith within the Lutheran school.

This community of faith provides the supportive formation environment for those who are new to the school community of faith and learning. It provides the opportunity for the new staff member to relate his/her personal story to the spiritual story of the school. The new member is also invited and encouraged to participate in those activities which develop and promote the spiritual life of the school such as worship, corporate and private prayer, Bible studies and other theological studies, fellowship, etc.

The Lutheran school also provides a 'haven of hospitality' in which staff can explore various spiritual disciplines. While some staff may have considerable experience in various spiritual disciplines (for example meditation, worship, study, solitude), others may have no real experience in this area at all. In fact, some people may be rather wary about participating in these experiences. This is where it is important to discuss with new staff members the centrality of worship in the life of the school, the place of Bible study and other theological studies, the practice of praying with and for one another, a regular devotional life and the place of word and sacrament ministry. Also important is reflection on the ministry of care, encouragement, fellowship and hospitality in further developing a sense of community.

## Concepts in focus

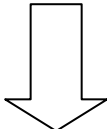
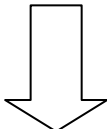
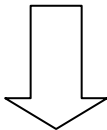
God has provided the school community

- worship is an integral part of the rhythm of Lutheran school life
  - an opportunity to be served by God and to respond in worship together with other members of the community
  - worship provides the resources to live a daily life of worship through serving others
- the Lutheran school is a community of prayer
  - developing my corporate and private prayer life
  - prayer partners, etc
- regular Bible study provides
  - a channel for the Holy Spirit to provide strength, insight, direction and refreshment
  - resources for preparing worship and teaching Christian Studies

The Lutheran school community is a safe environment (a haven of hospitality) in which I

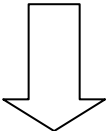
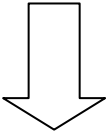
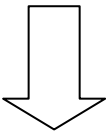
- can explore expressions of spirituality and develop those disciplines which support my own spirituality:
  - individual disciplines, eg, meditation, solitude, study
  - corporate disciplines, eg, confession, celebration
  - a context in which to express support, care, compassion, encouragement, hospitality for one another

## WORKSHOP Option 1

<p><b>Stimulus</b></p> 	<p>Share with the participants that this session will explore the concept that a community of faith exists within the school and that the school has a number of activities through which the faith of this community can be nurtured.</p> <p>Participants individually respond to the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What evidence is there that a community of faith is present within the school?</li> <li>• What opportunities exist for the nurture of the community of faith?</li> <li>• What questions do I have about the worship, prayer, study and fellowship provided in the school context?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Reflection</b></p> 	<p>Ask the participants to form groups and for each group to conduct an analysis of one of the activities of the community of faith within the school, eg, one group analyses school worship, one group analyses staff devotions and prayer time, etc. The following questions may be helpful in guiding their analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the features of this activity in the school context?</li> <li>• How does this activity nurture the community of faith?</li> <li>• What challenges arise from conducting this activity in the school context?</li> <li>• Are there any ways this activity could be enriched?</li> </ul> <p>They prepare a power point or poster to share the main points of their analysis and reflection.</p>
<p><b>Sharing</b></p> 	<p>Ask the participants to share their presentation and allow time for other groups to ask questions or to comment.</p> <p>Each pair or group can be asked to report on what they would do to nurture the 'community of faith' within the school.</p>
<p><b>Prayer</b></p>	<p>Sing or read a song from a contemporary songbook that emphasises the building up of the community.</p> <p>Possible options:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bind us together (ATA 174)</li> <li>• Love one another (ATA 177)</li> <li>• May we be one (ATA 172)</li> <li>• One body (ATOK 388)</li> <li>• One family (ATN 62)</li> <li>• They'll know we are Christians (ATN 91)</li> <li>• We are family (ATN 12)</li> <li>• We believe (ATA 155)</li> </ul> <p>Close with the lighting of a candle and prayer - led by a participant or the presenter</p>

*[Note: From the workshop options provided, please choose the option that best suits your staff needs]*

**WORKSHOP  
Option 2**

<p><b>Stimulus</b></p> 	<p>Share with the participants that spiritual disciplines are ways through which Christian spirituality can be nurtured. Provide Resource Handout, <i>Spiritual disciplines: for reflection</i>, that contains the reflection stimulus and a selection of the spiritual disciplines.</p> <p>Tell them that this session will provide them with the opportunity to study some of the disciplines more closely.</p>
<p><b>Reflection</b></p> 	<p>Ask the participants to read and reflect on the information and Bible passages related to each discipline. They use the questions to guide their reflection on how each discipline relates to the school context.</p>
<p><b>Sharing</b></p> 	<p>Ask the participants to share with a partner their thoughts and comments to the list of disciplines. They may also share any questions that arose as they read about the disciplines.</p> <p>Ask them to choose one of the disciplines that they would like to explore and practise between sessions.</p> <p>They join with others wanting to explore the same discipline and plan how they will support each other to explore this discipline, eg, meet for a breakfast prayer meeting, fast during lunch one day or meet for prayer and meditation.</p>
<p><b>Prayer</b></p>	<p>Share with participants that the session will close with a time of solitude and meditation. Provide Resource Handout, <i>Meditation</i>.</p> <p>Share with participants that meditation is one of the spiritual disciplines. Spiritual disciplines are ways in which Christians can nurture their spirituality. In his book, <i>Celebration of Discipline</i>, Richard Foster explores the spiritual disciplines and how they can deepen our understanding of God.</p>