

# *Pathways: theological focus*

Worship encounter





## Central understanding

- the primary action of worship is that God comes to us with the gifts of life; our calling is one of response to God and towards each other

## Key question

- why is Lutheran worship central to life in a Lutheran school?

## Biblical narrative

- Jesus meets his friends on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-34)

## Theological perspective

- worship

## Response

- issues specific to worship

### Facilitator theological notes

#### Focus questions

- Why is worship central to the life of a Lutheran school?
- What are the 'essentials' of worship in a Lutheran school?
- How is worship God's action and also a call for our response?

#### A real life scenario

##### Scenario 1

A new year had begun at the Lutheran Primary School and Jane had arrived for her first day. She was at once enthusiastic and looking forward to meeting her students but at the same time she was somewhat apprehensive as to how she would cope at her new school. There were so many things to remember: fire drill, lock-ins, behaviour management policies and procedures, lessons to prepare, staff and student names to remember, daily timetables, staff expectations, security codes, the list was endless and somewhat daunting.

In her orientation, her principal had also explained to her that she would be required to take class devotions and attend all chapel services. Although Jane had attended worship at her local congregation, her presence had been very spasmodic at best. And she did not really understand why worship should be so important in the life of staff and students at her new school.

The term began and after getting used to the everyday running of the school, she realised from the worship roster that she with her class was required to take chapel in a few week's time. The thought of this experience filled her with anxiety as she had developed only a basic understanding by this time of the worship life of Lutheran schools.

The very thought of leading worship in front of the whole school was enough to make her question whether she had made the right decision to work in a Lutheran school. She was confronted with questions such as, what is this thing called worship, and why do we have it? Why do I and the rest of the school have to attend? What do we stand to gain by being there? Why is it so important to the life of the Lutheran school?

[Note: this scenario could be adapted to the anxiety which is still present for many staff members in leading school worship in their second or subsequent years at Lutheran schools.]

##### Scenario 2

David and Helen were in their first term at their new Lutheran College. They were comparing notes about the lessons they were teaching in the year 8 science classes. The bell suddenly interrupted their discussions and staff began to move out of the staff room towards the chapel. David expressed some annoyance at having to suddenly move off for worship and Helen indicated that she had similar feelings. 'It's a waste of precious time having to head off to the chapel when we are so pressed for time to discuss things like our lessons', she said. 'I certainly agree,' said David, 'especially when we are expected to show some enthusiasm for something which is usually so boring! Why does the school expect us all to attend, and why is worship so important anyway when most of the students don't seem to be very involved.'

### Facilitator theological notes

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#### A biblical insight

##### **Preamble**

The Bible provides a number of insights into the essential nature of Christian worship. Worship begins with the action of God in Jesus Christ as God serves us. God's service of us motivates our response of prayer, praise and thanksgiving to God and service to our neighbours.

##### **Narrative: Jesus meets his friends on the road to Emmaus** [Luke 24:13-34]

Luke tells us in his gospel about a fascinating encounter of the risen Lord Jesus Christ with Simon and Cleopas on the evening of the first Easter day. As the two disciples walk along sadly on their seven mile journey from Jerusalem to Emmaus, they discuss the bewildering recent experiences of the crucifixion and now the reported resurrection of Jesus. Jesus joins them and participates in their conversation. However, they do not immediately recognise him.

But Jesus soon takes over the conversation, leading them through the Old Testament scriptures which they knew well but which they had not understood, particularly in the way in which those scriptures related to Jesus himself, who he was and what had happened during the past three days. And then, not wanting to allow this engaging conversation to end, and also following the custom of hospitality to strangers, they invite Jesus to stay with them for the evening.

But Jesus again takes the initiative. At the meal he blesses bread, breaks it, and gives it to them. And then Jesus vanishes!

Now Simon and Cleopas recognise who it was with whom they had been conversing and who it was who had blessed and broken the bread. And after they had raced back to Jerusalem, they reported to the other disciples, 'The Lord is risen indeed! And he has appeared to us!'

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This narrative continues with Jesus appearing that evening in Jerusalem to all of the disciples. He wants all of them to be able to share in fellowship with him, knowing that he has risen from the dead, guaranteeing the forgiveness of sin and the restoration of the broken relationship between God and human beings. He wants them to share in his blessing of peace and in the joyful celebration of knowing that he is alive. And he wants them to share this important news as witnesses to others.

### Facilitator theological notes

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#### Aspects of the theology of worship

##### **Introduction**

The biblical narrative provides crucial insights into the nature of worship. It shows the way in which Jesus came to his people and met with them. Jesus took the initiative. He wanted to be involved with his people and communicate with them – even where there may have been misunderstanding and confusion.

And the means that Jesus used was God's word. Jesus took that word and helped his disciples to see how it spoke about him and what he had come to do for them. He wanted there to be no doubt that through his death and resurrection, they had been brought back into a right relationship with God. And through that word, as the Holy Spirit works, Jesus wanted to give them the gift of faith so that they could trust in that word.

But Jesus wanted to make all this even more certain for them by his actions. He did this initially for his disciples on the night he was betrayed when he linked that word with the breaking of bread, an action he repeated with the two disciples at Emmaus. Jesus incorporated his word into an action so that his disciples could fully participate in it.

And this action of Jesus created a response in his disciples. And today, too, when Jesus reveals himself to his people, they respond in thanks, praise and devotion. And having experienced the grace, mercy and forgiveness of God, they also respond in sharing this experience with others and in serving others as God in Jesus Christ has already served them.

##### **God acts first**

The first action of worship is God's gracious coming to his people, revealing himself by what he says [God's word] and by what he does [in the sacraments]. The focus of worship is on Jesus Christ because in Jesus we see most clearly how God loves us, accepts us, forgives us and cares for us. This means that in worship God's word, the Bible, is central as it is read, proclaimed, taught and celebrated in the sacraments [baptism and holy communion or the eucharist]. Where God's word is present, God is present through the Holy Spirit who gives us faith to trust that word and accept what God offers to us through his word. Because God is serving us, worship is sometimes referred to as 'divine service'.

##### **We respond in celebration**

Because of what God does for us, worship becomes for us a response of celebration. Its focus is on Jesus Christ and his gifts to us and our response to those gifts. The Holy Spirit leads us in that response. Worship also celebrates the mystery of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit who is beyond human understanding. Worship therefore has a strong sense of the sacred, the holy and divine. It links us with the holy God whom we approach with reverence, dignity and awe, but also joy and love because we also know God in Jesus Christ. God does not need our response in worship, in the sense that God lacks something without it. Rather, worship is to be seen as a gracious gift of God through which God nourishes us as God's people.

##### **Worship and the Holy Spirit**

The Holy Spirit who is the third 'person' of God plays an active part in our worship. Through our participation in worship, the Holy Spirit creates, and nurtures our faith. The Holy Spirit draws us closer to God and strengthens us for our life in the world.

### Facilitator theological notes

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#### **Worship is both communal and individual**

Worship is not just an individual, private experience showing our devotion to God, but is a communal experience which we share with all of God's people. When we come to faith in Jesus Christ we are joined together in the family of God and we share in the celebration of that community. Nor is worship restricted to any particular time and place, because when we worship we celebrate with all God's people, past, present and future [the 'communion of saints']. We join with all of creation and the saints and angels in heaven [Revelation 5: 13]. It is an anticipation of the heavenly banquet which Jesus often spoke about in his parables. Worship is the activity which we will continue to celebrate in heaven.

#### **Worship and life**

Worship celebration is not only for a particular time or a special day, although it is important to set aside special times for worship. Our whole life is a celebration as we offer ourselves in service to God through serving those around us [Romans 12:1]. We live out our worship in our vocations – those areas of responsibility into which God has placed us. Our worship leads us to serve God through serving God's creation.

#### **Liturgy: a form for worship**

Lutheran worship, in common with that of a number of other denominations, often uses a particular structure for worship which is called the 'liturgy'. The origins of this go back to the worship of God's people in the Old Testament and it makes use of biblical sentences and passages. In this way God also gives us the words we use in worship. Although Jesus did not prescribe a set structure for worship he did indicate essential components of worship: the reading and preaching of God's word [Luke 24:46,47], baptism [Matthew 28:19], holy communion [Matthew 26:26-28], prayer, thanksgiving [Luke 11:1-13], the confession of our sins and receiving forgiveness (absolution) [John 20:23].

#### **Worship and the Bible**

The main focus for us as we come to worship is what Christ has done for us through his suffering and death. As we gather together [congregate] as God's people today to join in the worship of our God, God's word, the Bible, is central in all that we do because we recognise that God speaks to us in and through that word. Christ is also referred to as 'the Word' [John 1:1f] because Jesus is the clearest revelation of God's love and care for us.

#### **Worship and the sacraments**

In Lutheran worship, in common with a number of other denominations, we also worship with the celebration of the sacraments. Lutherans believe that Jesus commanded us to celebrate baptism and holy communion as special means through which the Holy Spirit works in a believer's life creating faith and strengthening that faith. The sacraments are God's word in visible forms [water, bread and wine] and in visible actions. Through these sacraments Lutherans believe that they come into a close personal encounter with God as the Holy Spirit works in them and Jesus Christ shares his body and blood with them in the bread and wine of holy communion. The sacraments are not always celebrated in Lutheran school worship, but where they are, it is important that people recognise the special nature of these celebrations. They emphasise both the sense of awe and mystery in worship, but also the intimate way in which God comes to God's people in worship.

### Facilitator theological notes

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#### Responding to issues surrounding worship in Lutheran schools

##### 1. The focus of worship

The triune God [Father, Son and Holy Spirit] is at the heart of all worship, as God comes extending to us God's gifts for daily life and the life to come. The way God has acted through Christ has special significance for us as Christians. Through his death for our sins, we are made right with God. The word of God and the sacraments direct and support our life as Christians and through them the Holy Spirit also comes to us. The Holy Spirit nurtures and strengthens our faith and draws us together as a community.

Because the focus of worship is on God, we need to be careful that it does not shift to a focus on the individuals involved in or leading the worship celebration. Worship is not a time of entertainment or a concert performance. Worship is a time of celebrating the 'worth' of God in our lives. It is to remain focused on the word of God and its relevance for us today.

##### 2. Worship style

There is a certain amount of freedom in determining the format of worship. A variety of styles should be employed in order to reach out to the greatest number of people. The culture and needs of the students must be considered and worship needs to be creative, dynamic and relevant to the school community. However, it should be remembered that Lutheran worship is 'planned' worship, so as to promote the primary action of God coming to us (often referred to as the 'sacramental') and at the same time to allow for our response (the 'sacrificial'). Central to Lutheran worship is the word of God as it is read, sung and proclaimed. Nothing in the practice of worship should obscure the clear message of the gospel. We remember that in worship we come into the presence of God and so we carry out our worship in an orderly and respectful manner. Our worship is not to be a 'performance' based on a false personal piety, as we come as beggars before God. We are totally dependent on God's mercy and care.

School worship needs to reflect the Lutheran heritage of the school and at the same time be considerate of those in the community who may come from other faith traditions or are non-believers. In eliciting a specific faith response, whether it be in a confession of sins, joining in a creedal statement, the saying of prayers, the singing of songs or anything else that may impinge on the good conscience of others, due consideration will need to be given. However, we should not necessarily avoid these things in worship but we should invite, rather than expect others to join in the required response. We should not forget that worship is primarily God coming to us and that our response is an outcome of God's act of loving service.

Music plays an important role in Lutheran worship. In some secondary schools, students struggle in the area of singing in front of others but music can still be used very effectively in worship celebrations. Song selection is important remembering that what we sing should also reflect our beliefs. Music should not be chosen simply because it is a 'good one' for the band to play.

##### 3. Attendance at worship

In Lutheran schools, worship is seen as important for all within the community. It is a part of the daily life of our schools, whether it is expressed in the whole school assembly or in the classroom or individual context. However, it needs to be recognised that with the decline of religious practice in society many students may have had little, if any, experience of Christian worship.



### Facilitator theological notes

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Attendance at school worship is compulsory and despite arguments to the contrary, worship can provide a positive outcome for all within the community, also from an educational and community building perspective. In this setting, the action of God coming to us through his word should be emphasised, rather than the giving of a particular faith response.

As worship is compulsory, the rights of those present to join in worship, or not to do so, have to be respected. Many students who in the initial stages of their enrolment at school have questioned this activity have later considered it to be one of the most significant aspects of their schooling. Through worship, God's Holy Spirit has established and nourished the faith of many. It should be remembered that students and their parents have made a choice to enrol in a Lutheran school knowing that worship is integral to the life of the school. This is therefore a critical issue for discussion in the enrolment interview.

#### 4. Life as worship

Christians see their total life as an act of worship to God, as we respond to God's gifts by the life we lead in the world [Romans 12:1]. We worship God by our vocation in the various areas of responsibility into which we have been placed, by the way we care for others, through our own devotional life as we set aside time to read the Bible and pray. However, one mode of worship does not replace the other, as God not only calls us to worship as a community of believers but also individually and through our daily living. For this reason, and for the sake of maintaining our faith in Christ, we should make use of congregational, school and private worship opportunities.

Students will also need to be led to see how worship relates to the whole of their life as students and that it is not simply a necessary way to begin the school day or week.

#### 5. Leading worship

While leading worship may at first seem a rather daunting responsibility for students and teachers new to leading worship, it is also an opportunity for them to put their faith into action and grow in confidence as God's gifted people. There are various forms of worship within the school and they may be designated as 'school worship', 'doing chapels', 'leading devotions', 'classroom worship', 'leading prayers', 'guiding meditations', etc.

If they have not taken worship activities before, teachers should seek guidance from the chaplain or principal in regard to the format and content of their worship planning. This is even more important if they are a Christian other than Lutheran member of staff. This contact will assist them in the preparation of their worship celebration and put to rest any concerns they might have about the appropriateness of what they are preparing. It will also give them a good opportunity to sit down with a spiritual mentor and discuss any issues they might have about worship and their own journey of faith. This collaboration is helpful not only in the initial stage, but it will prove a useful avenue for direction and feedback as teachers lead further worship activities in the school. Teachers can also ask students for their opinion about their worship experiences and give them a sense of involvement and ownership in the school worship activity.

Since worship is so central to the life of the Lutheran school, those who prepare worship should try to use the best resources which they have available. Schools need to provide quality resources and the gifts of music, drama, etc, available in the school need to be encouraged to help to enhance worship.

### Facilitator theological notes

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Remember that God uses our efforts and through the Holy Spirit changes the lives of those within the community. For this reason alone, worship is important for the life of every Lutheran school. God continues to come to us with the gifts of life and calls us to live as God's people in the world.

#### **6. Celebrating the sacraments in school worship**

The sacraments are celebrated in some Lutheran schools. In providing worship celebrations including the sacraments, schools can be seen as extending the worship experiences normally associated with a local congregation to worship in the school. In fact, the school may be the only environment in which some students and their families experience sacramental worship. The school may also provide the supportive environment for preparing students for the reception of baptism and reception of holy communion and for continuing support for growth in their Christian faith and life.

However, not all schools are comfortable in providing sacramental worship because of the nature of the school community. This is an area in which the consciences of members of the school community must be respected.

## Discussion questions

1. Why is worship important in the life of the Lutheran school community? Can we call what we do in Lutheran schools 'worship'?
2. How do you understand Lutheran worship?
3. Is Lutheran worship different from your experience of worship in other churches or religions? In what ways?
4. How can worship experiences in your school or classroom be improved?
5. Give reasons why you believe that worship should or should not be compulsory.
6. What are some of the advantages or disadvantages of staff and students leading worship?
7. Should the sacraments of baptism and holy communion be celebrated in the school or left to congregational worship?
8. What is the difference between worship being interesting and appropriate and worship being entertainment?
9. How would you go about planning a whole school worship service? What would it need to include? What outcome would you seek to foster?
10. What elements of worship are appropriate in a Lutheran school where not all members of the community profess faith in Jesus Christ?
11. How can students be helped to see that their life as a student is part of worship?

## References and further reading

BLS (2001). Session 6 Worship, *Theological Orientation Program for Staff (TOPS)* 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (pp. 4-8) Adelaide: BLS.

Jaensch, A. (2008) Full immersion: a valid approach to worship in Christian schools. *Lutheran Theological Journal*, Vol 42 No 2 August 2008 92-99.

LCA *Commission on Worship documents*. Available online

<http://www.lca.org.au/worship/>

LEA (2005). Key idea 3 Christians pray, worship and celebrate sacraments, *Christian Studies Curriculum Framework Theological Notes* (pp. 29-35). Adelaide: LEA.

LEA (2002). *Statement on school worship*. Available online

<http://www.lutheran.edu.au/tools/getFile.aspx?tbl=tblContentItem&id=22>

### Purposes of the *Worship encounter*

The purposes of this encounter are for participants to:

- explore the question: **why is Lutheran worship central to life in a Lutheran school?**
- identify the 'essentials' of worship in a Lutheran school
- consider how worship can be both God's action and a call for our response

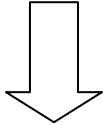
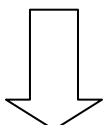
### Plan for the *Worship encounter*

- welcome and introductions
- orientation to the encounter (setting out)
- exploring information, developing understandings (gathering pace)
- sharing perspectives, discussing questions, developing understandings (multiple views)
- reflecting on learning (in a quiet place)
- close

### Facilitator encounter preparation checklist

- ☐ read *Facilitator theological notes*
- ☐ read *Workshop*, select and prepare handouts needed
- ☐ record interview with teachers if using that *Setting out* option
- ☐ make adjustments to Slides 4 and 5
- ☐ organise a place/places where participants can access internet
- ☐ have weblink live and ready, and be familiar with it
- ☐ find music to play during *In a quiet place* phase
- ☐ collect orders of service from school worship and make available for the **Liturgy Short Trail**

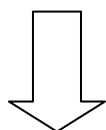
### Workshop

<p><b>Welcome and introductions</b> (5 minutes)</p>	<p>Welcome participants to the encounter: <i>Worship</i> Introduce yourself and if needed make time for participants to introduce themselves to each other. Ensure everyone has the material for the encounter.</p>
<p><b>Setting out</b> (15 minutes)</p> 	<p>Show Slides 2 and 3 Share the purposes of the <i>Worship encounter</i> with participants and briefly outline how the workshop will run.</p> <p>Show Slide 4 Invite participants to choose from the following options:</p> <p><b>Option 1: Walk and talk</b> In pairs, participants share their worship/devotion/chapel experiences and questions as teachers new to a Lutheran school (see <i>Walk and talk</i> in <i>Handouts</i>).</p> <p><b>Option 2</b> Watch a pre-recorded interview with teachers who reflect on the questions that rippled through their minds as they adjusted to the worship-related expectations of school life. or Invite current staff members to reflect on and share early reactions to, for example, preparing staff devotions, leading chapel, organising school-congregation visits, home group or class devotions.</p> <p><b>Option 3: Pair and share</b> Participants read <i>A real life scenario</i> in <i>Participant theological notes</i>, then pair up and talk about similarities and differences with their own experiences.</p>
<p><b>Gathering pace</b> (40 minutes)</p> 	<p>This phase has two parts. Show Slide 5</p> <p><b>PART 1: 3:2:1 strategy</b> Provide participants with a copy of <i>3:2:1 strategy</i> (see <i>Handouts</i>) which explains the process. Refer participants to <i>Participant theological notes</i> and ask them to read <i>A biblical insight</i> and <i>Aspects of the theology of worship</i> and then complete the <i>3:2:1 strategy</i>. Alternatively, <i>A biblical insight</i> could be encountered through</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the Steeles' sung version of <i>On the road to Emmaus</i> online at <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=avA4xUYLg5U">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=avA4xUYLg5U</a> or</li> <li>the storytelling of <i>My Girls</i> online at <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hq8l22U6GY8">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hq8l22U6GY8</a></li> </ul> <p>As participants finish, they find one other person with whom they share their responses.</p>

### Workshop

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#### Gathering pace ...cont



#### Part 2: Short Trails

Show Slide 6 and distribute *Short Trails* (see *Handouts*)

Invite participants to further explore worship individually through any one of the following *Short Trails* available online at [www.lutheran.edu.au](http://www.lutheran.edu.au) login to the member area and select *Resources/publications* then *Pathways* then *TRIAL MATERIAL ONLY Pathways: theological focus*. Set the link up to show participants the options as a whole group, or select and provide some that can be explored in hard copy.



**Art Short Trail:** Participants select two or more from the range of art works and respond according to the guiding notes. This material can be provided in hard copy.



**Music Short Trail:** Participants select one or more of the arrangements. Each has YouTube link. After listening, they respond according to the guiding notes.



**Reading Short Trail:** *Additional readings* (see *Resources*) can be used by participants to expand, extend and challenge their thinking about worship.



**Liturgy Short Trail:** Participants select, study and reflect on one or two of the listed liturgies and respond according to the guiding notes.

or

- compare a school order of service with features of worship described in their notes or *The Lutheran* article *The practice of worship* (July 2008)
- follow the *Season of Creation* prompts and reflect on the God who is worshipped and on the worshippers



**Places and Spaces Short Trail:** Participants think about and respond to worship space visuals, architecture, design and furnishing. This material can be provided in hard copy.



**SMS Short Trail:** Summarise, More views, Synthesise  
Participants work with any of the three options:

- responses to prompts
- questions
- responses to statements on worship

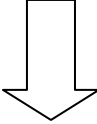
This material can be provided in hard copy.

Other possibilities for managing Part 2 of this phase:

- groups of similar interests could work in rooms with interactive whiteboards
- as facilitator you could choose a number of options from within the trails to run with the whole group

### Workshop

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<p><b>Multiple views</b> (40 minutes)</p> 	<p>Participants gather and bring their <i>3:2:1 strategy</i> responses and any other material they have developed or recorded from their personal engagement with the <i>Short Trails</i>. Work with the discussion questions in the <i>Participant theological notes</i>.</p> <p><b>Option 1: Whole group approach</b> Show Slide 7</p> <p>The group agrees by consensus on a priority order for the questions they wish to discuss. Use a discussion strategy such as <i>Round</i>. Everyone sits or stands in a circle and responds to the same question. They think about, or write it out, for a minute and then have 30 seconds each to respond. This ensures all have a chance and opportunity to speak. Follow with open discussion. Refer to <i>Participant theological notes</i> as necessary.</p> <p><b>Option 2: Small group approach</b> Show Slide 8</p> <p>Ask participants to form groups of four. Each group agrees by consensus on a priority order for the questions they wish to discuss. Use a discussion strategy such as <i>Placemat</i> (see <i>Resources</i>). For one minute each person writes responses to the chosen question in their section of the placemat. Then in turn they have 30 seconds each to share their responses. This ensures that all participants have a voice. Follow with open discussion. Refer to <i>Responding to issues surrounding worship in Lutheran schools</i> in <i>Participant theological notes</i> as necessary.</p> <p>Work through as many questions as possible in the time given. To bring this phase to a close, restate the purposes for the encounter and the means by which you have achieved that (refer to Slides 2 and 3 for purposes and plan).</p>
<p><b>In a quiet place</b> (10 minutes)</p>	<p>Distribute copies of <i>Plotting thinking</i> (see <i>Handouts</i>) Show Slide 9</p> <p>Invite participants to find a quiet spot where they can be comfortable while they reflect on their experience, their thinking and their learning. Ask them to respond to the reflection prompts.</p> <p>Play some restful, peaceful background music.</p>