

Handouts

Walk and talk

The goal is for each person to have uninterrupted time to reflect on and talk about their experiences, memories, questions, reactions and wonderings associated with worship in the Lutheran school context. This could be related to class and home group devotions, staff devotions, whole school and sub-school chapel services or worship generally.

It could be that you respond to the question:

what challenges has worship in a Lutheran school presented for you?

The procedure:

1. Find a partner.
2. You have ten minutes of dedicated time for this activity. You can walk any place so long as you are back with the whole group at the end of ten minutes.
3. As you walk for the first five minutes, only one person speaks. The accompanying partner is an attentive listener (no questions, no comments).
4. At the end of five minutes, swap roles so that the second person talks and reflects on the way back. Again, the accompanying partner is an attentive listener (no questions, no comments).

It is fine for periods of thinking and silence to take place within the dedicated time for each speaker.

Participant 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?

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.'

Participant 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!'

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.

Participant 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.

Participant 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.

Participant 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.

Participant 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.

Participant 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)* 2nd 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>

3:2:1 strategy

Read

- A biblical insight from *Participant theological notes*
 - Aspects of the theology of worship from *Participant theological notes*
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Write 3 insights into the nature of worship that you have gained from the reading.

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Identify 2 means by which Jesus comes to his people in worship.

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Note 1 statement from the text that you found enlightening, or a question the text raised for you.

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Short Trails available online at www.lutheran.edu.au

Login to the member area and select *Resources/publications* then *Pathways* then *TRIAL MATERIAL ONLY Pathways: theological focus*



Art Short Trail: Select two or more from the range of art works and respond according to the guiding notes.



Music Short Trail: Select one or more of the arrangements for the musical options:

- *Jesu, joy of man's desiring*
- *How great is our God*
- *He reigns*
- *Here I am to worship*
- *Psalm 148*

Each has YouTube link. After listening, respond according to the guiding notes.



Reading Short Trail: Additional readings can be used to expand, extend and challenge their thinking about worship.



Liturgy Short Trail: 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: Think about and respond to worship space visuals, architecture, design and furnishing.



SMS Short Trail: Summarise, More views, Synthesise

Work with any of the three options:

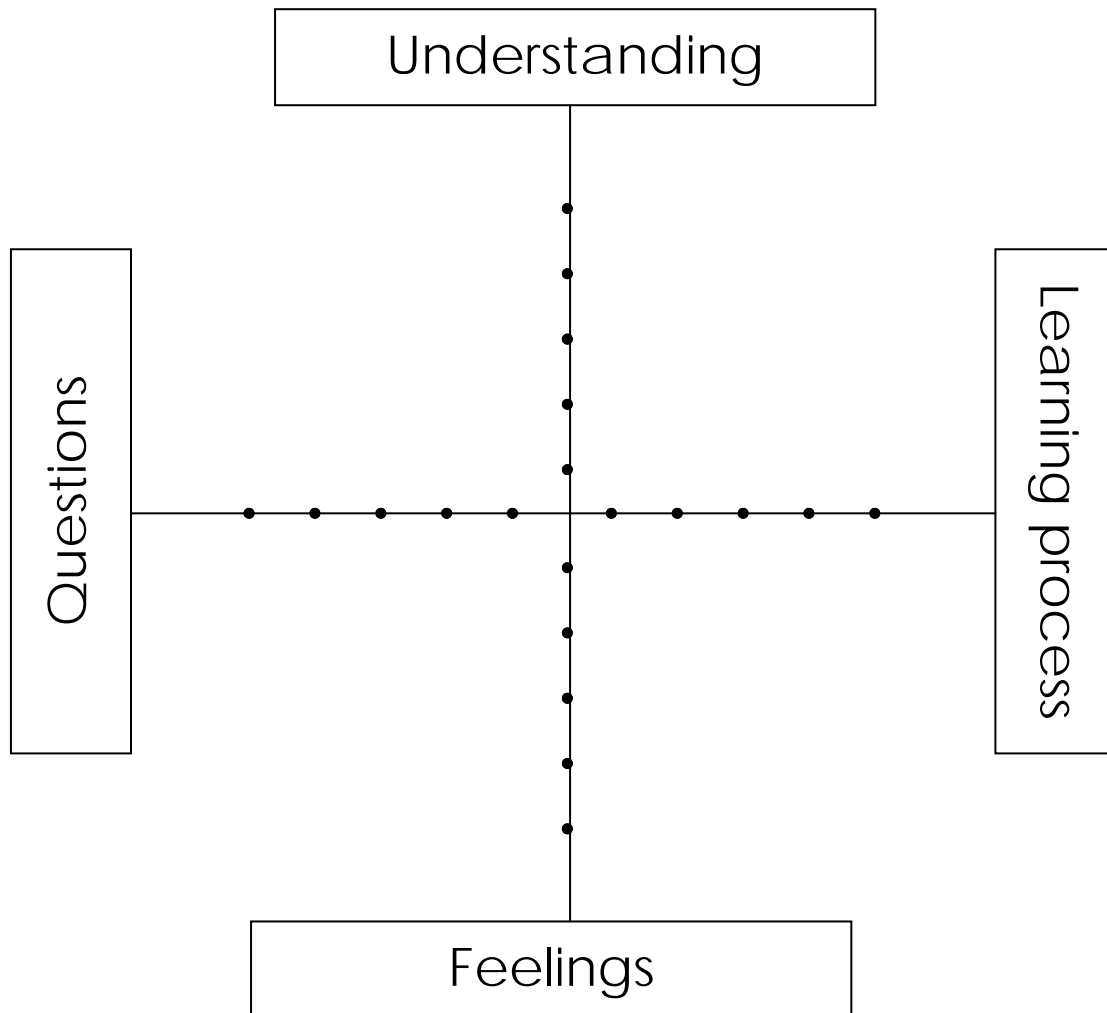
- responses to prompts
- questions
- responses to statements on worship

Plotting thinking

Think about:

- your understanding of concepts relating to worship
- your feelings about participation in the encounter
- answers you now have to questions about worship and the key question: **why is Lutheran worship central to life in a Lutheran school?**
- the learning process and the choices for you as a learner

Using a scale of 0-5, circle the dot where you would rate yourself on each, and join them up to arrive at a picture of your *Worship encounter* learning journey.



Actions you can/might take:

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-
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PowerPoint Slides

Pathways: theological focus

Worship encounter



Worship encounter

1

Purposes

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



Worship encounter

2

Plan

- 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



Pathways: theological focus

Worship encounter

3

Setting out

Option 1: Walk and talk

In pairs, share your worship/devotion/chapel experiences and questions as teachers new to a Lutheran school.

Option 2: Interviews

View/observe reflections on and sharing of early reactions to, eg, preparing staff devotions, leading chapel, organising school-congregation visits, home group or class devotions.

Option 3: Pair and share

Read *A real life scenario* in *Participant theological notes*, then pair up and talk about similarities and differences with your own experiences.



Pathways: theological focus

Worship encounter

4

Gathering pace

Part 1: View DVD

- A biblical insight
- Aspects of the theology of worship and then complete the *3:2:1 strategy*

or

In the *Participant theological notes* read

- A biblical insight (or YouTube alternative)
- Aspects of the theology of worship and then complete the *3:2:1 strategy*

As you finish, find one other person with whom you can share your responses.



Pathways: theological focus

Worship encounter

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Gathering pace

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Part 2: Short Trails

Explore worship individually through any one of the Short Trails available online at www.lutheran.edu.au login to the member area and select *Resources/publications* then *Pathways* then *TRIAL MATERIALS ONLY Pathways: theological focus*.

Art

Music

Liturgy

Places and Spaces

SMS

Reading

Bring your responses and/or recorded work back to the discussion group.



Pathways: theological focus

Worship encounter

6



Multiple views

Whole group approach

- as a group, agree by consensus on a priority order for the questions you wish to discuss
- use the discussion strategy *Round*
- select the first question
- sit or stand in a circle and respond to the question by thinking or writing for a minute
- then you have 30 seconds each to respond, taking it in turns as you work around the circle
- follow with open discussion

Refer to *Responding to issues surrounding worship in Lutheran schools in Participant theological notes* as necessary.



Pathways: theological focus

Worship encounter

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Multiple views

(...cont)

Small group approach

- participants form groups of four
- each group agrees by consensus on a priority order for the questions they wish to discuss
- use the discussion strategy *Placemat*
- for one minute each person writes responses to the chosen question in their section of the placemat
- then in turn you have 30 seconds each to share your responses
- follow with open discussion

Refer to *Responding to issues surrounding worship in Lutheran schools in Participant theological notes* as necessary.



Pathways: theological focus

Worship encounter

8



In a quiet place



Find a quiet spot where you can be comfortable while you reflect on

- your experience
- your thinking
- your learning

Respond to the reflection prompts on *Plotting thinking*



Pathways: theological focus

Worship encounter

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