

## VITAL SIGNS OF THE SUNDAY SCHOOL

### 1. Do we strive to create a caring community?

- a. Time for group gatherings is a part of our regular schedule.
- b. We have from 4-6 celebration events each year.
- c. We recognize key events in the lives of individual learners.
- d. We show our support of families and individuals in crisis.
- e. We have a systematic way of encouraging attendance and following up on absentees.

### 2. Are our teachers given the support needed to accomplish their task and grow as Christians?

- a. We have a positive system for recruiting teachers that enables us to enlist the best teachers for our classes.
- b. We provide ongoing training for our teachers in teaching skills.
- c. We offer opportunities for our Sunday school staff to be nurtured through Bible study and fellowship.
- d. We publicly recognize those who serve our Sunday school at worship and through church communications.
- e. We show our appreciation in specific, concrete ways for those who minister through our Sunday school.

### 3. Are we intentional about evangelism in our Sunday school?

- a. We provide practical training to help staff and learners of all ages share their faith with others.
- b. We expect learners to bring visitors with them to Sunday school and make a special effort to invite the unchurched to be a part of our Sunday school.
- c. Our Sunday school is “visitor-friendly” with adequate directions and signs in the building, greeters, printed information, etc.
- d. We are prepared for new people to be a part of our Sunday school with extra materials, space and staff on hand.

\_\_\_ e. Our Sunday school leaders work with the evangelism/witness committee of our congregation to optimize the potential of the Sunday school as a vehicle for church growth.

**4. Does the focus of our program extend beyond an inward caring for ourselves to an outward caring for others?**

\_\_\_ a. We provide opportunities for learners to actively care for other people and all of creation.

\_\_\_ b. We provide learning experiences that increase the global awareness of our learners.

\_\_\_ c. We include opportunities for learners to be exposed to people of cultures and lifestyles which differ from their own.

\_\_\_ d. We encourage youth and adults to struggle with issues of social justice through our Sunday school.

\_\_\_ e. We inform our learners about the benevolent ministry of the ELCA as one means of caring for others.

**5. Do we seek ways to encourage parental involvement/support of our program?**

\_\_\_ a. We strive to involve our parents in the Sunday school as leaders and helpers throughout the year.

\_\_\_ b. We regularly inform parents about our Sunday school activities.

\_\_\_ c. We provide opportunities for children and parents to learn together in our Sunday school.

\_\_\_ d. We provide resources for parental involvement in the Christian nurture of their children at home.

\_\_\_ e. We actively seek input and feedback from our parents about our church's Christian education program.

**6. Is our Sunday school part of the total ministry of the congregation?**

\_\_\_ a. Our church schedule encourages adults and children to attend both worship and Christian education classes.

\_\_\_ b. Our church leadership is actively involved in planning, teaching and/or learning in our Sunday school.

\_\_\_ c. Our Sunday School is adequately supported through our church budget.

\_\_\_ d. We invite all members of the congregation to participate in special Sunday school events.

\_\_\_ e. Our Sunday school students regularly make special contributions to our worship service.

**7. Is our physical environment one that is conducive to learning?**

\_\_\_ a. Our facilities are warm, inviting and comfortable.

\_\_\_ b. Our class areas are furnished appropriately for the age of the learners using them.

\_\_\_ c. We have adequate space for all of our classes.

\_\_\_ d. We provide sufficient storage space to our teachers and staff.

\_\_\_ e. We decorate our space in a way that communicates enthusiasm about our Sunday school.

**8. Are our teaching resources theologically/educationally sound?**

\_\_\_ a. Our curriculum resources reflect the theology of the Lutheran Church (grace-centered, Biblically based).

\_\_\_ b. Our curriculum resources are educationally sound.

\_\_\_ c. Our curriculum resources deal responsibly with issues of inclusivity (related to age, sex, ethnic background, disabled, singles, etc.).

\_\_\_ d. Our curriculum resources are relevant to the lives of our learners.

\_\_\_ e. We provide adequate teaching resources for our teachers, including audio-visuals and other teaching aids.

**9. Do we carefully plan and evaluate our program?**

\_\_\_ a. We have developed a plan for ongoing evaluation of our Christian education program.

\_\_\_ b. We include an assessment of the needs of non-participants and seek ways to involve them in our Sunday school.

\_\_\_ c. We have a statement of purpose for our Sunday school that we review at least annually.

\_\_\_ d. We have specific goals and objectives for our Sunday school for the year and a plan for accomplishing them.

\_\_\_ e. We provide Sunday school leaders and participants with a calendar of events which are scheduled for the year.

**9. Are we sensitive to the varied needs of learners?**

\_\_\_ a. We are sensitive to people from a variety of family backgrounds (singles, children of

divorce, etc.).

- b. Our facilities and classes are accessible and responsive to people of diverse abilities, including the physically challenged and learning disabled.
- c. Our adult class(es) allows for the varied needs and interest of adults, including both content needs and relational ones.
- d. We provide childcare for children of staff and adult learners during Sunday school.
- e. We welcome people in our Sunday school who are from non-Lutheran backgrounds.

**10. Are we intentional about communication within our Sunday school and publicity about our Sunday school that we share with others?**

- a. We publicize Sunday school events in our local news media.
- b. We include ongoing news about our program in congregational communications.
- c. When publicizing new classes, programs or events within the congregation we present the idea at least five different times in at least three different ways.
- d. We have an effective system for communication within our staff.
- e. We have at least one visual display area in our building that communicates Sunday school concerns.

**11. Does our program include learning opportunities for all ages in the congregation?**

- a. We have opportunities for preschool children.
- b. We have opportunities for elementary-aged children.
- c. We have opportunities for both junior and senior highs.
- d. We have opportunities for adults.
- e. If not, we have a plan to develop such classes.

## IMPROVING THE VITAL SIGNS OF OUR SUNDAY SCHOOL WORKSHEET

### A. Assessing your strengths and weaknesses

As a committee, take the vital signs survey and average your collective scores in each of the 12 areas.

- \_\_\_ 1. caring community
- \_\_\_ 2. teacher support
- \_\_\_ 3. evangelism
- \_\_\_ 4. outward focus
- \_\_\_ 5. parental involvement
- \_\_\_ 6. part of total ministry
- \_\_\_ 7. environment
- \_\_\_ 8. teaching resources
- \_\_\_ 9. planning and evaluation
- \_\_\_ 10. sensitivity to needs of learners
- \_\_\_ 11. communication
- \_\_\_ 12. opportunities for all ages

Which three are your strongest areas?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Which three are your weakest areas?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

### B. Strengthening your program

You can strengthen your Sunday school program in two ways:

1. by building upon your strengths
2. by working on your weaknesses

**1. Building upon your strengths**

Consider each of your areas of strength and discuss why you are successful in those areas. Identify ways in which you might build upon them.

**2. Working on your weaknesses**

Rewrite the three areas to work on in the form of general goals for your Sunday school. For each goal identify from one to five specific objectives. (Objectives should be specific, attainable and measurable: SAM.)

Goal:

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Objectives:

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Goal:

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Objectives:

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Goal:

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