



the Parent LINK

Children's Ministry Edition



April 2013



TRINITY

LUTHERAN CHURCH & COUNTRY
NURSERY SCHOOL AND KINDERGARTEN

WELCOME TO PARENTLINK!

Welcome to the inaugural issue of our Newsletter – ParentLink. Out of God's abundance and in his love for children of all ages, we are bringing you this newsletter as a Christian resource for parents. God has given us the precious gift of children. Jesus welcomed and blessed the children (Mark 9:36-37; 10:13-16). Here at Trinity we strive to carry Jesus' message of love to all children. Through various learning opportunities and family events we seek to teach children about God's love and blessings. We have a variety of family-friendly activities and educational opportunities, including: Sunday School, Vacation Bible School, Church Picnic, annual Carnival, First Holy Communion education, Confirmation education and many other activities. In addition to church activities the preschool also teaches Christian values and the stories of our faith. The children gather together once a month in the sanctuary for chapel. During chapel we pray, hear stories about God, and sing.

Now, as a part of our continued desire to bring God's love and blessings to his children we are very excited to add this newsletter to our resources for families. In it you will find short articles to help you incorporate faith centered discussions and activities into your family life. ParentLink also provides information about various movies, books, games, and other media to help you determine appropriateness for your children. Finally, there is a monthly calendar of family activities. We pray that you will find ParentLink to be a blessing in your family life.

-Pastor Althea Tysk

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Guiding Your Children's Faith Discoveries

As you read through the Gospels, one of the most prominent aspects of Jesus' ministry is his teaching through parables. With great patience, he took time to put what he was teaching into terms his audience could easily understand. He kept it relevant and relatable. He made lofty, hard-to-wrap-your-head-around spiritual truths easier to comprehend—and people grew closer to him and God because of it. Jesus helped guide their faith discoveries so what they learned was cemented in their hearts and minds—because they made the discoveries for themselves. Take a moment to think about your personal faith discoveries. Which do you remember most vividly—and why?

Like Jesus, you can help your kids to grasp some big spiritual concepts and truly own their faith. Stay connected to their world and the things they're interested in. Then, watch for opportunities to draw spiritual parallels between events and aspects of their lives to guide their discoveries about God. When you help your kids engage God in their daily lives (not just at church), you pave the way for genuine spiritual maturity that'll stick with them into adulthood.

Keys to Impact

Here are keys to include in your faith discovery guidance:

- Engage in activities that tie into spiritual concepts. Get your kids moving and interacting, with purpose, as they learn. Keep focused on developing the spiritual tie-in to activities.
- When possible, include sights, sounds, and even smells to fully engage your kids. Stimulating kids' senses helps cement truths into their memory and cultivate richer understanding.



POWERSOURCE

ASK GOD:

1. To grow your empathy for those different from you.
2. For opportunities to model a caring attitude for your kids.
3. For help in showing your kids that we were all made differently by God for very good reason—and he loves us for our uniqueness.

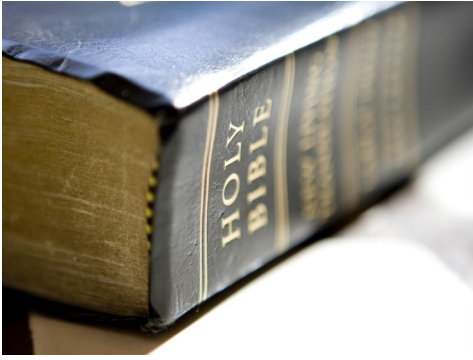
Beyond the Comfort Zone

When we're completely honest, most of us know people in our lives we've had trouble loving. We know our greatest instructions from God are to love him and to love our neighbor, but our differences and various circumstances can make getting along difficult—to say the least. It's human to fall short of this greatest commandment, but not reason to stop trying to follow God's commands. Think about the situations where you feel challenged to show understanding and kindness to others. Strive to honor God and grow spiritually by intentionally loving those you struggle to love. When your kids see you make this effort, they'll do the same.

It's easy in adulthood to get cozy in circles of friends and not stretch out our arms in grace to others. It can be downright scary to go outside our comfort to love others we might not necessarily connect with easily. Give it a try and take your kids along for the adventure. The relationships you'll build along the way will enrich and bless your life.

Joy in Unlikely Friendships

For a visual reminder for you and your kids as you grow grace and understanding of those who are different from you, check out the *Unlikely Friendships* calendar available at workman.com. Every month there's a new picture of unlikely animal friends that your kids will enjoy learning about. It's hard not to be encouraged by a polar bear befriending and cuddling a sled dog. If they can do it, so can we!



“This is my commandment: Love each other in the same way I have loved you.”

—John 15:12

TEACHABLE MOMENT

April Showers Bring May Flowers: If you plant a flower garden, or even a few pots of flowers around your yard, have your kids join you in the planting process. As you work, discuss these questions with your kids:

ASK: “What are the differences you can see in the pictures on the packets of the flowers we’re planting? How are the petals, stems, textures, and colors different from flower to flower? How does each type of flower make our garden more beautiful?”

SAY: “God knew our world needed some unique beauty, too, so that’s why he created us all so differently. We come in different shapes, sizes, colors, personalities, and with different talents. We all have our place and purpose in the world and make it more beautiful.”

ASK: “What are differences you notice in people that make the world like a big, colorful garden? What are some things we can do to show others that we know they’re important because God created them and loves them?”

Three Powerful Ways to Show Love for Friends With Special Needs

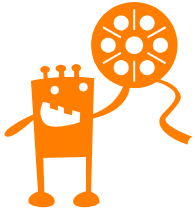
We are all unique creations of God, and our differences make the world complete. However, teaching children about disabilities and differences takes some time and effort. Through conversations and experiences, we can help our children understand and appreciate others’ differences—and, make some wonderful friends in the process! Here’s how:

Give Kids Facts: When children notice differences, they’ll likely have questions. Use these teachable moments to increase their understanding. For example, if a child in your church uses a special communication device, you can say, “When you need water, you use your words; when Alex needs a drink, he uses his talker to tell his mom.” And, don’t forget the most important fact: EVERY child was created—and is loved—by God!

Model Kindness and Hospitality: When your children observe you interacting comfortably with kids with disabilities, they’ll follow your lead. In addition to greeting and chatting with kids, consider hosting a play date or inviting a family to join you at the park. This lets your children practice hospitality and learn empathy while finding common interests and fostering new friendships.

Affirm Kids’ Efforts and Emphasize Grace: Sometimes, children with disabilities struggle with making friends; communication challenges, short attention spans, and often under-developed social skills can hamper successful interactions. Your child may feel rejected or frustrated when attempting to befriend a child who has a disability. When this happens, encourage your child, saying, “I really like how you greeted Bethany. That was so kind. It seems like she was having a rough day. That happens to everyone sometimes. Even so, I’m really glad you tried to make her feel welcome.” These conversations reinforce your child’s positive efforts, and lay the foundation for grace-filled friendships.

by Katie Wetherbee, director of ministry education for Key Ministry (keyministry.org)



MEDIA MADNESS



MUSIC

Artist: Audio Adrenaline

Album: Kings & Queens
(Released 3/12/13)



Artist Info: After six years in retirement, Audio Adrenaline is back with fresh faces and talent plucked from a handful of Christian rock's most popular bands.

Summary: High-energy music with a pop-rock sound and positive, Christian message.

Our Take: With all the new band members, it's safe to expect that long-time Audio Adrenaline fans will notice a difference in the sound. The powerful, thoughtful lyrics and strong musical arrangements, however, remain. *Kings & Queens* is an album the whole family can enjoy.

BOOKS

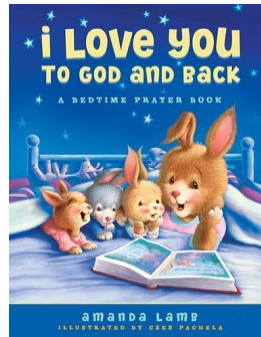
Title: I Love You to God and Back
(Released 2/5/2013)

Author: Amanda Lamb

Publisher: Thomas Nelson

Summary: A bedtime story your kids will cherish because it helps them understand ways they can pray to God.

Our Take: Lamb is an author and mother, bringing the experiences with her children into *I Love You to God and Back*. It's an endearing, relatable story that can trigger a nightly habit of praying with your children. This is a good resource for your kids' spiritual growth and yours, too.



CULTURE & TRENDS

April is Autism Awareness Month

- For insight into ways to lovingly interact with kids with special needs and their families, check out joniandfriends.org and keyministry.org. Both are organizations dedicated to equipping ministries for special needs kids and families—and both offer a wealth of disability-related information.
- A great way for you and your kids to connect with families with special needs is to volunteer at a local “respite night.” Often hosted by churches, these evenings let parents run errands, go have a quiet dinner or date night, or even simply relax for a few hours at home while their kids with special needs are safe and cared for by trained volunteers. If your church doesn't host a respite night, look into being one of the pioneers to get it started!

GAMES, SITES & APPS

Title	Content	Rating & Platform
The Berenstain Bears Games	Your kids can build and read their own Berenstain Bears story at pbskids.org/berenstainbears . Kids will have fun as they learn word recognition.	Free! Best for ages 6 to 8. Always monitor your kids' time online.
Familyminute.com	A helpful website with many resources for dealing with family topics such as sibling rivalry, discipline techniques, achieving life/work balance, and more.	Free! For parents, grandparents, guardians, and anyone interested in good parenting tips.
Toddler Counting	This app provides objects such as food, animals, and other familiar objects toddlers can touch and learn to count.	For iPhone or iPad; available through iTunes for \$0.99.

This page is designed to help educate parents and isn't meant to endorse any movie, music, or product. Our prayer is that you'll make informed decisions about what your children watch, listen to, and play.





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SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1 Easter Monday —church office and TCNSK closed April Fool's Day	2 TCNSK Classes Resume International Children's Book Day	3	4	5	6
7 8:30 & 11:00 am Mass 9:45 am Sunday School 12:30 pm 1st Comm. Project Presentations	8 Scholastic Book Fair	9 Scholastic Book Fair 10:00am TCNSK Chapel	10 Scholastic Book Fair 10:00 am TCNSK Chapel 6:15-7:15 pm 1st Communion MakeUp Class National Sibling Day	11 Scholastic Book Fair	12 Scholastic Book Fair	13
14 8:30 & 11:00 am Mass 9:45 am Sunday School 12:30 pm 1st Comm. Project Presentations	15	16	17	18	19	20 TCNSK Open House 9:00-11:00 am
21 8:30 & 11:00 am Mass 9:45 am Sunday School 12:30 pm 1st Communion Rehearsal	22 Earth Day	23	24	25	26	27
28 8:30 & 11:00 am Mass 9:45 am Sunday School 1st Holy Communion at both Masses	29	30				