

Fully Alive Grade 3

Grade 3, Theme One

Family Letter

Dear Family,

We are ready to begin the first theme of *Fully Alive*, our family life program. Because the partnership of home, church, and school is so important, this letter is written to let you know what we talk about in class, and to offer some ideas for your involvement. For more information for families, please go to www.occb.on.ca. If you have any questions, please contact me.

About Theme One

The first theme of *Fully Alive*, called “Created and Loved by God,” is like the foundation of a house. Everything else depends on it. In this theme we explore the Christian belief that we are made in God’s image, and that God knows and loves each one of us. We are a very special creation. Because of this, we respect and value ourselves and others.

In Theme One we will:

- explore what it means to be known and loved by God, known so well that God calls each one of us by name.
- find out more about what it means to be a person — to be unique, but also alike in many ways; to have feelings and to make choices about the way we express them; and to have talents and gifts we need to develop.
- discover that when we share our talents and gifts with each other, we are sharing ourselves.

Working together at school and at home

- Your child will be bringing home an information sheet about his or her name, and will need your help to complete it.
- We will be learning about some of the ways we are alike and different, and about our gifts and talents. Talk to your child about the gifts and talents of your family members, and the special contribution each person makes to your life together.
- The students will learn more about feelings and the choices we have in how we handle them. When you see your child making an effort to express feelings in a way that respects others, let him or her know that you appreciate it.

• One of the stories we will be reading involves bullying. If this is a concern you have, please talk to me or to our principal. Even if you have no specific concerns, it's important to talk to your child about this topic, and to encourage them to stand up for anyone who is being bullied.

Teacher: _____ Date: _____

Theme One Topics

In Grade 3, this theme is developed through four topics. The theme begins with God's knowledge and love of each person. The students learn that God knows them as unique individuals, and calls them by their names. In the remaining topics, the students learn more about the unique characteristics of each person, their feelings and the choices they have in how they express them, and the talents and gifts God has given them that are meant to be share with others.

Topic 1 — God Knows My Name

*I have called you by your name,
You are mine.
. . . You are precious in my eyes,
and honoured, and I love you.*

Isaiah 43:1, 4

Summary

This topic helps the students understand how well God knows them, so well that God calls them by their names. The students begin by sharing what they know about their names, and then read the scripture passage from Isaiah. Together, the class reflects on the idea that that God calls them by name. The teacher brings the topic to a close with a brief prayer service in which each student places on the prayer table a copy of the passage from Isaiah with their own name added (for example, I have called you by name, Mary).

Main Ideas

- Even though there are so many people in the world, God know each one of us and calls us by our names.
- We belong to God. We are God's special creation.
- Each one of us is precious to God. God loves us.

Family Participation

- Children are always interested in hearing about how their names were chosen: whether other names that were considered; if they were named for a family member, a friend, or a favourite saint; and whether it was easy or hard to choose a name. If your child was named for a particular person, you might explain that one way we honour someone we love and admire is to give one of our children the same name as that person.
- Children learn that they are special to God by how special they are to us. When we see and respond to all that is good in them, and encourage them to share the best of themselves with others, we are teaching them about God's unending love for them.

Topic 2 — Different and Alike

In the home, in schools, and in all situations where perceptions and judgements about right and wrong are formed, there must be patient, imaginative, and untiring efforts to teach respect for others, which completes and perfects self respect.

To Love and Serve Life, Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1986

Summary

This topic helps the students understand and appreciate their personal characteristics and those of their classmates. The teacher and the students discuss a self-portrait of Eddie Petrowski, a boy whom they will get to know more about through stories in later themes. The students complete a "Getting to Know You" survey with their classmates, and then reflect together on ways in which people are alike and different.

Main Ideas

- We are alike and different. That is the way God made us.
- Our variety of interests, characteristics, and experiences enrich each other's lives.
- What we share in common helps us to understand each other.

Family Participation

- Ask your child to tell you about the survey the students completed class in order to learn more about each other. What did your child learn about the interests, likes and dislikes, and other characteristics of their classmates?

- You and your child may enjoy reading the poem “You and Me” from the student book. You will find it at the end of this theme.
- All children need to know that they are loved as they are, with all of their different characteristics. God intended each of them to be the unique people that they are. The family is meant to be a very special place that values and develops the uniqueness of each child. When children wonder what their parents think of them, they should know deep in their hearts that Mom or Dad thinks that they are great people.
- When children are secure and have a sense of their own worth, they are able to enjoy and respect the unique qualities of other people. No two members of a family are exactly alike. One is shy, another is outgoing, and another is a bit of a worrier, but very conscientious. It is within the family, and later with friends, that children first learn to accept such differences and respond to them with sensitivity.
- An aspect of our uniqueness that we often ignore or try to hide is our weaknesses. This topic provides an opportunity for you to let your child know that each person has faults. We all have to work on our faults and make an effort to overcome them. This fact about our human nature should neither be ignored nor presented to children in a negative way. When parents help their children understand that each person struggles with weaknesses, and that the struggle is a worthwhile one, they are encouraging genuine self-acceptance and an optimistic spirit.

Topic 3 — All Kinds of Feelings

Emotion is the chief source of all becoming-conscious. There can be no transforming of darkness into light and of apathy into movement without emotion.

Carl Jung

Summary

This topic helps the students learn more about feelings, and to recognize that they have choices to make in the way they express their feelings. The teacher and students read a story about Eddie Petrowski, his best friend, John, and another boy, Adam. Together, the students examine the importance of being in charge of feelings and thinking about how they are expressed.

Main Ideas

- We all have feelings, but we don't all show our feelings in the same way.
- We can't choose how we feel, but we can choose how we act.
- We all have to learn how to be in charge of our feelings.

Family Participation

- Part of this topic extends what the students have been learning about being unique people. Some people find it easy to express their feelings; others find it difficult. Some people are very quiet when they're angry; others "blow up." Something that makes one person upset or angry may not bother another person at all. You might want to explore some of these differences with your child by mentioning people whom they know well — their family members and close friends.
- You and your child may want enjoy reading the story about Eddie, John, and Adam. You will find it at the end of this theme. In the classroom the teacher explored this story with a series of questions for the students: Why do you think Adam was bothering Eddie? Why did Eddie ignore Adam? Why did John hit Adam? Did John do the right thing? Why did Eddie think it was his fault that John was in trouble? Why do we need to be in charge of our feelings? What can we do when we have heart someone else? You may want to ask your child about this class discussion.
- The story about Eddie, John, and Adam raises the issue of bullying. It's important to talk about this issue with your child. If your child has been the target of bullying at school or has been involved in bullying other children, you need to talk to your child's teacher or the principal of the school about what is happening. If your child tells you about an incident of bullying he or she witnessed, it is also important to talk about it. Children need encouragement not to be silent bystanders, but to stand up for victims of bullying.
- One of the most difficult feelings for children to handle is anger. This is also true of many adults. It's important for your child to understand that everyone feels angry at one time or another, and that anger is not a "bad" emotion. When talking about feelings, and especially the experience of feeling angry, you might explain to your child that each person has to learn to be in charge of his or her feelings. We may feel like hurting the person who made us angry, but when we're in charge of our feelings we stop and think because we know that we

have a choice in what we say or do. This does not mean that we don't express our feelings, but that we do so in a way that is respectful of other people.

- Learning to be in charge of feelings is a long process, and children make progress in small steps. It is helpful when parents encourage these small steps, and don't expect too much too quickly. When you see progress in self-control, let your child know that you have noticed and appreciate it.
- It is also important for children to know that people who love each other very much can still get angry with each other. At times they say and do things that they are sorry for later. This happens in every family. Children find it particularly unsettling when parents are angry with each other. It is not always avoidable, but when possible it is better not to fight in front of children. If they have witnessed a real argument, however, it is important for them to see some of the signs of reconciliation. In the same way, if you regret the way you have acted toward your child because you were unreasonably angry, it's important to let her or him know that you are sorry. You might explain that you weren't doing a very good job of being in charge of your feelings.

Topic 4 — We Share Our Talents and Gifts

Envy comes from people's ignorance of, or lack of belief in, their own gifts.

Jean Vanier

Summary

This topic helps the students learn more about the gifts and talents God gives each person. The teacher and students read a story about Eddie Petrowski and his brother, Steve, and discuss some of ways we can develop the talents and gifts God has given us and share them with others. The students learn that special talents, such as music, athletic ability, or mathematics, require personal effort if they are to be developed. They also learn that there are gifts that all people share, such as courage, generosity, kindness, which are developed through practice and God's grace.

Main Ideas

- God gives each person talents and gifts.

- It is our job to try to develop our talents and gifts.
- When we share our talents and gifts, we help make the world a better place.

Family Participation

- You and your child may enjoy reading the story and Eddie and his brother, Steve. You will find it at the end of this theme. What special talent of a brother, sister, or friend does your child really admire?
- At school the children read some little poems called *cinquains*, and composed one themselves. You could ask about the poem your child wrote. You will find some examples of cinquains from the student book at end of this theme.

A cinquain has five lines: 1) a name or title line; 2) two words that describe or tell about the name or title; 3) three *doing* or *action* words that end with *ing*; 4) a comparing word or phrase (e.g., like a cloudy day; as bright as a shooting star); 5) another word that means the same as the name or title. If your child seems interested, he or she might like to write one of these poems about a family member or a good friend. Perhaps other members of the family would also be interested in writing a cinquain about someone in the family.

- It is good to talk about the special talents that God gives each member of the family. How does each person try to develop her or his talents? How do family members share their talents with each other? You could also discuss the gifts that we all share — kindness, goodness, strength, patience, and generosity. Children need to know that God wants each one of us to develop these gifts of the spirit, and this work continues all through our lives. We are never “finished.”
- It is natural for parents to take pleasure in their children’s talents, and to want to see these talents develop. At the same time, it’s important for children to understand that they are loved and appreciated for who they are. A special talent for music, sports, or art is only one aspect of a person’s identity.
- We all need to take time to think about our children and how we are helping them to develop. What opportunities are there for the child to grow in unselfishness and friendliness? Does the child seem unable to recognize the talents that God has given him or her? Time spent reflecting on our children’s development and on what we can do to support and encourage them is usually time that is well spent.

Theme One Stories and Poems

Topic 2: This poem in the student book reflects the idea of God's love for each unique person.

You and Me

There are all kinds of people,
And one of them's me.
Just one special person
Whom God likes to see.

There are all kinds of people,
And one of them's you.
One more special person,
With me, that makes two.

There are all kinds of people,
Whom God likes to see.
Each one is special,
Like you and like me.

Topic 3: The teacher and students discuss this story about Eddie, John, and Adam.

A Bad Day at School

One day, Eddie came home from school very upset. He went to his room and sat on his bed. He was thinking about what had happened.

Eddie and John were playing together during recess. Adam, who was in their class, started teasing Eddie, and calling him names. When Eddie ignored him, Adam pushed Eddie and almost knocked him over. That's when John got very angry, and hit Adam. Now John was in trouble, and Eddie felt as if it were his fault.

After dinner, Eddie finally told his parents what had happened. They were

sorry he was so upset, and his dad explained to him that it was not his fault. John was trying to be a good friend, but he shouldn't have hit Adam. They talked for a while, and Eddie felt better by the time he went to bed.

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We can't choose how we feel, but we can choose how we act. When we are in charge of our feelings, we stop and think about the way God wants us to treat other people. But if our feelings are in charge of us, we often do something we are sorry for later. We choose to do something we know is wrong, which is a sin. When this happens, we need to ask God for forgiveness and try to make up for any harm we have done.

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Topic 4: The teacher and students read this story about Eddie and his brother, and discuss the talents God gives us and how we share them. The cinquains from the student book also reflect the focus on gifts and talents.

Eddie and Steve

Eddie was so proud. His brother Steve had scored the winning goal of the hockey game. Everyone was cheering.

Eddie's dad put his arm around Eddie. "Great game, wasn't it?" his dad said.

"Was it ever!" Eddie said. "I wish I could play like that."

"And score goals?" his dad asked.

Eddie nodded.

They walked toward the dressing room to meet Steve.

"You know what?" Eddie's father said. "When I was your age I wanted to be good at sports too. But I wasn't. I was good at making things and fixing things, but not at sports."

"How come?" Eddie asked.

“That’s just the way it is. We have different talents.

“And Steve’s is sports?” Eddie said.

“Yes, that’s one of his talents. And you have a special talent for art.”

“I helped Steve with the cover of his project,” Eddie said proudly.

“I know you did. You share your talent with Steve, and he shares his talent with you.”

“How does he share his with me,” Eddie asked. He looked puzzled.

“Did you have fun today?” his dad asked.

“Sure,” Eddie said. “Especially when Steve scored. That was great!”

Steve came out of the dressing room.

“Hey, Steve! Great goal!” Eddie shouted, and he ran toward his brother.

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Cinquains

Mei Lin

Quiet, friendly
Listening, smiling, helping,
Like a sturdy rock,
The artist.

Henri

Funny, clever,
Joking, talking, laughing,
As cheerful as a big smile,
The entertainer.

Barbara

Busy, chatty,
Jumping, climbing, running,
As fast as the wind,
My best friend.

Christopher

Serious, kind,
Practising, thinking, imagining,
Like a quiet song,
The music maker.

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