

## Grade 4, Theme Four

### Family Letter

Dear Family,

We have come to the fourth 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](http://www.occb.on.ca).

### About Theme Four

Theme Four of *Fully Alive* is called “Growing in Commitment.” Each one of us is challenged to grow in commitment to God and to each other. This is part of what it means to be fully human. The best way for children to learn about commitment is to grow up in a loving and committed family. Knowing that they can rely on the commitment of others helps children learn to be dependable, to keep their word, and to make wise choices.

### In Theme Four we will:

- read a story about a commitment that Beatriz Perez wants to make, the complications she faces, and her satisfaction in succeeding.
- explore the process of making a commitment and consider the questions that have to be answered before making a commitment.
- examine the pleasures and difficulties of keeping a commitment.

### Working together at home and at school

- Ask your child to tell you about the story of Beatriz’s commitment and how it worked out.
- At this age, children are often eager to make commitments to activities, teams, or special lessons. These commitments don’t always work out, and parents are faced with a decision — should my child be allowed to drop the activity? Unless the situation is harmful, it’s usually best to insist that the child stay with the activity for a certain length of time.
- At school we will be talking about the questions we need to ask before making a commitment: Do I need permission? How long will the commitment last? Are other people depending on me? Can I keep this commitment all by myself? Encourage your child to think about these questions before making a commitment.

Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## **Theme Four Topics**

*. . . let your yes be yes and your no be no . . .*

James 5:12

This theme is developed through three topics. A three-part story about a commitment that Beatriz Perez wants to make creates a context for the theme. In the first topic the students explore the meaning of a commitment and identify some of their commitments as family members and students. In Topic 2 the focus is on the process of making a commitment. In the final topic, the students consider both the pleasures and difficulties of learning how to keep their commitments.

### **Topic 1 — What is a Commitment?**

*Great works are performed not by strength but by perseverance.*

Samuel Johnson

#### **Summary**

This topic helps the students learn about the meaning of commitment. The teacher and students read a story about a commitment Beatriz Perez wants to make, and discuss the meaning of commitment. The students consider some of their commitments at home and at school and identify some of the people who help them make and keep these commitments.

#### **Main Ideas**

- Commitment means an important responsibility that we try very hard to meet.
- We have commitments as family members and students.
- Commitments aren't always easy or fun, but people depend on us to keep them.

#### **Family Participation**

- You and your child may enjoy reading the story, “Beatriz Has a Problem,” which you will find at the end of this theme. What does your child think about this story? Has he or she ever had the same problem — making a commitment before discussing it with you? At this age, as children are becoming more independent, they can be careless about asking for permission (for example, going to a friend’s house without letting a parent know, inviting someone for dinner or to sleep overnight without asking). You may want to talk about this.

- At school, the students talked about their commitments at home and at school. You might ask your child about these commitments and whether they are easy or hard to keep. Who helps him or her keep them? Are there other commitments your child would like to make? What kinds of commitments do the other members of your family have? Who helps them keep their commitments?
- It's good to let children know that there are ways in which they can help their parents keep their commitments. For example, they could make an effort to be organized before going to bed so that the morning routine of leaving for school and parents going to work is less stressful.
- It's important for children to know that there is satisfaction and pleasure in keeping a commitment, even when tasks like homework or chores around the home may not be particularly enjoyable. When children fulfill their responsibilities, and try to be cheerful and willing in the process, it is important for parents to recognize this achievement, and compliment them on their growing maturity.

## **Topic 2 — Making Commitments**

*Character is not in the mind. It is in the will.*

Fulton J. Sheen

### **Summary**

This topic helps the students understand the process of making a commitment. The teacher and students read the second part of the story about Beatriz, and talk about need for thought before making a commitment. The students explore some examples of commitments they may want to make (e.g., join a choir, volunteer as a Kindergarten helper, look after a neighbour's cat), and develop some questions they would need to ask themselves before committing.

### **Main Ideas**

- There are many questions we need to answer before making a commitment.
- Some of these questions are: Do I need permission? What will I be doing? How long will the commitment last? What happens if I don't keep the commitment? Are other people depending on me? Can I keep this commitment all by myself? Have I talked to other people about my plans? Do I have enough time for this commitment?

Will it be hard or easy for me to keep?

### **Family Participation**

- You and your child may enjoy reading the story, “Beatriz Find a Solution,” which you will find at the end of this theme. You might ask your child what would have happened if Beatriz’s mother had not given permission for her to join the choir.
- Since this topic is about commitments that are chosen, you might ask about a commitment your child would like to make (for example, joining a team, getting a pet, taking music lessons) and go through some of the questions that would need to be asked and answered.
- Another way to help your child understand the process of making a commitment is by explaining one of your commitments. What did you have to think about before you decided? What people did you need to talk to? It’s important for children to understand that people in a family often need to talk to each other before making a commitment.
- At this age, most children are eager to get involved in a variety of activities, and don’t always recognize the amount of time and effort that may be involved. If this has happened to your child it’s important to explain that everyone makes mistakes when learning to make and keep commitments.

## **Topic 3 — Keeping Commitments**

*A promise made is a debt unpaid.*

Robert Service

### **Summary**

This topic helps the students understand some of the pleasures and difficulties that are part of keeping commitments. The teacher and students read the last part of Beatriz’s story, and discuss the mistakes, hard work, joy, and learning that are involved in learning how to make and keep commitments.

### **Main Ideas**

- Commitments are often easy to make, but can be hard to keep. It’s important to think before we make a commitment.
- When we persevere and keep our commitment, we feel proud of ourselves.

- It takes determination and will power to keep commitments. Will power is like a muscle. The more we use it the stronger it gets.
- When we learn to keep our commitments, we are learning to be the people God wants us to be.

### **Family Participation**

- You and your child may enjoy reading “The Spring Concert,” the last part of Beatriz’s story. You might ask your child about what parts of her commitment Beatriz found difficult and what parts she found satisfying.
- At school, the students created some advertising slogans for will power, determination, and perseverance. You might ask your child about these slogans.
- Not all commitments to chosen activities work out, and sometimes parents are faced with a difficult decision — should the child be allowed to drop the activity? Unless the situation is harmful to the child, it’s usually best to insist that the child stays with the activity for a certain period of time before quitting. If the activity involves membership on a team, you may want to point out that other people are depending on your child to participate. Also, there may have been children who would have liked to be on the team, but there weren’t enough places.
- When children are having difficulty keeping commitments, it can be helpful to tell them that this is something that happens to adults also. Sometimes, when we stay with an activity even though we want to quit, we discover that it becomes enjoyable and rewarding. On the other hand, if we continue to dislike it, this is often a good sign that the activity is not the right one for us.
- When you talk about commitments, it’s important to help your child understand that there are two different kinds: those that are part of who we are (for example, a member of a family, a friend, a student) and those that we choose for ourselves. You may want to refer back to the very first topic in this program when the children learned that each human life is a gift. You might explain that we all have a special commitment to God to care for the gift of our lives, and to learn more about the way God wants us to live.

## Theme Four Stories and Poems

**Topics 1 - 3:** During this theme, the teacher and students read this three-part story about Beatriz and her commitment to joining the school choir

### Beatriz Has a Problem

Beatriz Perez dragged her feet as she walked home from school. She was already quite late. It was Wednesday. On Wednesdays and Fridays her mother worked late. She didn't get home until 10 o'clock at night. Beatriz hated Wednesdays and Fridays.

Down the street she could see her cousin Ricky and her brother, Tony. They had a pile of flyers they were delivering in the neighbourhood.

"You're in big trouble," her brother shouted when he saw her. "You're supposed to come home right after school."

"I don't need you to tell me what to do," said Beatriz. "I have a good reason for being late. I joined the junior choir and I had to stay for a practice."

"Did you tell Mom?" Tony asked.

"None of your business," Beatriz said and she scowled.

"Did you know your face gets really red when you get mad?" Ricky teased. "Look, Tony, she's turning purple!"

Beatriz chased the two boys down the street, but they were too fast for her. When she got home she was *very* late.

"Beatriz!" her aunt said. "Where have you been? I want you to go and pick up Carlos. It's very late."

Beatriz sighed. Almost every day it was the same thing. Pick up Carlos from day-care. It wasn't that she didn't like her little cousin. It was just that she seemed to be the one who always had to get him. Tony and Ricky walked a neighbour's dog every morning and sometimes delivered flyers after school. Aunt Maria had just come home from work and was

starting to make dinner. Uncle Henry had to eat early so he could get to his night job at the bakery.

Beatriz thought about her problem as she walked to the day-care centre. She really wanted to be in the junior choir. It seemed like she had been waiting forever to be in Grade 4 so that she could join. But the practices were on Monday right after lunch and Wednesday after school. And later on, when it was near the time of the big school concert, there would be practices twice a week after school. She had to talk to her mom about it. But her mom was so tired on the days when she got home late at night. And Beatriz was supposed to be asleep by then.

What if her mom said no? Beatriz had already told Mrs. Reed, who directed the choir, that she could come. Her mom just had to say yes.

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### **Beatriz Finds a Solution**

Beatriz was sleeping by the time her mother came home. The next day was Thursday. On Thursdays Mrs. Perez usually got home from work early. Beatriz ran home from school and her mother was there. They decided to walk to the day-care centre together to get Carlos.

As they walked, Beatriz told her mother about the choir. "I want to be in the choir so much," she said. "I told Mrs. Leeds I could."

Mrs. Perez looked at her daughter.

"I know I should have asked you first. I'm sorry," Beatriz said.

"How late is the practice?"

"Only till 4:30," Beatriz answered, "and I'll come home really quickly. And I promise I'll get Carlos right way. Please."

"You won't have time to play outside when you practise at lunch time," Mrs. Perez said. "Have you thought about that?"

"I won't mind," Beatriz answered. "I'd rather sing."

"Will you need special clothes for the concert?"

“Just a white blouse and a dark skirt, and I already have them,”  
Beatriz said.

Mrs. Perez thought. “Let’s see what Aunt Maria says.”

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Later that day when Beatriz was getting ready for bed, her mother told her she could join the choir. “But you must come home very quickly on Wednesdays,” she said.

“I will. I’ll be so-o-o fast!” Beatriz said, and she gave her mother a big hug.

“I’m so happy,” she shouted, and she hugged her mother again.

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### **The School Concert**

You might be wondering how Beatriz’s commitment to the choir turned out. She really enjoyed it. She missed just one practice and that was because she was sick.

Beatriz had several friends in the choir. Sometimes one of them asked her to play after practice. She wished she could, but she had promised her mother to come home quickly. She found that part of her commitment hard to keep.

The spring concert was coming soon. Everybody in Beatriz’s family was going, even Carlos. Beatriz had taught Carlos some of the choir songs. He loved to sing them.

“I hope Carlos doesn’t sing when he’s at the concert,” Beatriz said. “Or run around and be noisy.”

“Don’t worry,” Aunt Maria said. “He’ll be good.”

The concert was a big success. The junior choir and the senior choir sang and the band played several times. Beatriz was in the front row of her choir. Carlos waved to her when he saw her. And he did sing some of the songs, but very softly.

Beatriz's mother and her brother clapped very hard after the junior choir sang. So did Aunt Maria, Uncle Henry, Ricky, and Carlos. They were all very proud of her.

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