

Fully Alive Grade 2

Grade 2, 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.

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 all created in God’s image, and that God 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

- discover some of the ways in which of us is a unique person whom God created and loves.
- explore the children’s growth and development in the past and look ahead to the coming year.
- learn more about feelings and the choices we have in how we express them.

Working together at school and at home

- Take this opportunity to talk to your child about his or her special qualities and gifts, and also those of other members of your family. In class, we will be talking about how important it is to share our gifts with others.
- Your child will be bringing home an information sheet about growing and developing, and will need some help from you. In class, we will learn that we all grow and develop in our own way. Any photos you have of your child in earlier years would be welcome. Be sure to write your child’s name on the back.
- Learning how to manage and express feelings is a big part of growing up, and is something we will be talking about in class. Sometimes when children are overwhelmed by feelings of anger or frustration, the best time to talk to them about these feelings is after they have calmed down. It helps to let them know that everyone has these feelings, and has to learn how to manage them. You might also discuss alternatives to shouting or hitting such as compromising or making a decision to leave a frustrating situation and find something else to do.

Teacher: _____ Date: _____

Theme One Topics

In Grade 2, Theme One is developed through four topics. In the first topic, the children talk about the love God has for each unique person. Then, in the next three topics, they explore how they are growing and developing, human feelings and the choices people have in how they communicate them, and, finally, the personal qualities and gifts God has given each person to develop and to share with others.

Topic 1 — Each One is Special

*See what love the Father has given us,
that we should be called children of God, and so we are.*

1 John 3:1

Summary

This topic helps the children understand that we are all special because God created us. But each one of us is also a unique person. The teacher reads a story and about identical twins, “Amy and Susan.” The children talk about some of ways in which Amy and Susan are alike and different, and share some of their unique characteristics, preferences, and talents.

Main Ideas

- God created and loves each one of us.
- Each of us is unique. There is no one in the world exactly like each one of us.
- God knows us by name. We belong to God.

Family Participation

- If your child seems interested you might enjoy rereading together the story about Amy and Susan. You find find it at the end of this theme.
- The word *unique* was introduced in class, and the children explored some of the ways in which each of them is a unique person. You could ask your child to think about the members of the family, and the ways in which they are unique. What are some of the special qualities each person has? You can help your child deepen his or her understanding of uniqueness by pointing out some of the special qualities that you see in each family member. For example, if your child is sensitive to the feelings of others, you might mention this quality.
- Children love to hear about how happy their parents were when they were born. When you tell them about your joy, be sure to mention that no one else could have made you

happy in the way he or she did. You might explain that each child even has a special place in the family — oldest daughter, youngest son, second son, etc.

- Children come to know and love God through their families. When we tell our children that we love them, that they are valuable, and that no one else can take their place, we are helping them to understand God’s love for them. Many adults find it hard to accept God’s unchanging love for them. If we do not believe that we are lovable, we reject ourselves, and in doing so we reject God’s love for us. It is as if we are saying that even God’s love is not big enough for us. Yet God does love each of us and wants us to know that. Always encourage your child to see himself or herself as a special individual, loved by God, loved by you and others, and as capable of responding to God and to others with love.

Topic 2 — We Are Growing

*At each turn children assertively proclaim their newness and individuality,
and as they grow and change, they draw us, if we will follow,
to marvel at their wondrous and unpredictable ways.*

Paul Connolly, *Building Family: An Act of Faith*

Summary

This topic helps the children understand that people grow in mind and body in their own way. The children share the BLM sheets they completed at home (Growing and Learning), talk about what they learned when they were little, and how they have changed since that time.

Main Ideas

- As we grow, we learn new things with our minds and bodies.
- God made us unique. We grow and learn in our own way.
- Everyone finds some things easy and some things difficult. What’s important is not to give up.

Family Participation

- Since this topic recalls the early years when the children were learning to walk and talk, your child might enjoy looking at pictures from when he or she was younger. Children love to hear about their baby days. It gives you the opportunity to point out how much they have grown and how many new things they have learned to do.

- You and your child may enjoy reading the poem, “One, Two,” from the student book. You will find it at the end of this theme.
- It helpful for children to know that everybody finds some things difficult. Some children struggle to learn to ride a bike, others find printing or reading very difficult. When children are having difficulty with schoolwork, they need enormous amounts of understanding and support. Just listening and letting your child know that you understand is important. Be sure to recognize their efforts and compliment them on their progress. It is also very important to give them opportunities to participate in activities at which they are skilled — for example, music, sports, or arts and crafts.
- Just as we want our children to develop their minds and bodies, we also want them to grow in spirit. Encourage your child to take pride in learning to be more co-operative, to express feelings in a more thoughtful way, to share more readily, and to accept responsibility. Children need to know that these signs of growth are very important. You can help them realize this by encouraging them and letting them know that you are pleased to see them growing in love and care for others.

Topic 3 — Feelings

*Before speaking, it is necessary to listen not only to a person's voice,
but to a person's heart.*

Pope Paul VI

Summary

This topic helps the children understand that it is good to let other people know how they feel, and that they have choices in how they express their feelings. The teacher and children discuss illustrations that show some of the feelings children often experience, and talk about what the little boy in the pictures might do.

Main Ideas

- We all have feelings. Feelings help us understand each other.
- It is good to share our feelings with other people.
- We are in charge of our feelings. We can choose how to show them.

Family Participation

- Although children don't reflect on their feelings in a systematic way, it is important for them to understand that feelings are an essential part of what it means to be human. Human emotions are one of God's gifts to us, and help us understand ourselves and others. Growing up is, in part, a process of learning how to express our feelings to other people in a way that is respectful, and of achieving healthy self-control of emotions.
- Since negative feelings (anger, sadness, resentment) can interfere with family life, they often receive more attention than positive feelings. It's a good idea to comment on the happy feelings that you see when children are playing together.
- Some children need lots of encouragement to let others know how they feel. They have a natural tendency to keep their feelings private. You can help by casually mentioning what you suspect they are feeling — for example, "That must have made you angry," or "You look as if you feel sad. What happened?" Other children have difficulty controlling the way they express their feelings, particularly anger. They need gentle reminders from you that they must not hurt others with their words or their actions. You will want to pick a time when they are not angry and discuss what they might do in a particular situation.

For example, they could tell the person that they are angry without losing their temper. They could also try to resolve the fight by compromising, or by making a decision to leave the situation and finding something else to do.

- Children need to know that no one in a family should punish the other family members with their bad temper or moods. Because children are naturally self-centred, they often do not understand the effect they can have on others. Just as we tell children that hitting or biting can physically hurt another person, it is important to teach them that insults, name-calling, or ignoring someone can hurt another person's feelings.
- Learning to understand and express our feelings in a mature and loving way is a life-long task. You might let your children know that you still struggle with this. Even when we know what we should do, we still fail. We all need God's help not to let our feelings dominate our choices and actions. We also need God's help to share our feelings with others in a loving way.

Topic 4 — Sharing Our Gifts

It should be our concern and delight to recognize early and to cherish those differences which make each one of our child especially beloved . . .

Phyllis Hostler, *The Child's World*

Summary

This topic helps the children understand that each person has unique qualities and gifts. The teacher and children read about the different gifts of Amy and Susan, whom they met in Topic 1. The children learn that each person has unique qualities and gifts, and that these are meant to be shared with others.

Main Ideas

- God gave us our gifts, and wants us to develop them.
- Each one of us has a special personality. It is good to be who you are.
- When we share our gifts with each other, we are sharing God's love.

Family Participation

- At school, the children worked with partners to complete a BLM sheet about their personal qualities and gifts and those of the partner. You might ask about what your child learned from this activity. What were his or her partner's special qualities and gifts?

- Children often mention kindness or generosity when they are thinking about the qualities of people. It is important to remind them that these are special qualities that everyone needs to develop.
- God creates each child with unique talents and qualities. Each child has strengths and weaknesses. The outgoing boisterous child has the gift of joyfulness, but needs reminders to listen to others. The child with many talents is blessed, but may find self-discipline difficult. The shy child may be naturally sensitive to the needs of others, but needs your help and patience to learn to trust others. Our task as parents is to discover and respect the unique qualities and talents of our children and to help them grow and develop into the people God wants them to be. This requires time with our children so that we come to know them. It also requires sacrifice, patience, love, strength, and prayer.
- Even when children are quite young, it is important to help them begin to understand that their talents come from God. God trusts us to look after these talents, to develop them, and to share them with others. Humility and self-esteem are not contradictory. We are humble because God has given us the responsibility of our talents and unique qualities. You might explain to your child that the paint brush doesn't take credit for the beautiful picture the artist paints. In the same way, we don't take credit or brag about our talents.
- When you express your pleasure in other people's personal qualities and talents, you are helping your children to develop a generous, open attitude toward the gifts of others.

Theme One Stories and Poems

Topic 1: The teacher and children read a story about twin girls named Amy and Susan.

Amy and Susan

In a town, not far from here, there are two girls named Amy and Susan. They are both seven years old. They are identical twins. That means they were born on the same day and look exactly alike. Amy and Susan share many things. Can you think of what they might share?

Some of the things they share are: the same mother and father, the same

birthday, the same house, and the same class at school. They also share being a big sister to a little brother named Jack. And they both play the piano, which they like to do very much.

Even though many things are the same for Amy and Susan, many things are different, too. Each twin is unique.

- Amy enjoys being quiet and reading books, while Susan likes to run around.
- Amy is the first one out of bed in the mornings. Susan prefers to sleep until the last minute.
- Susan's favourite food is pizza, but Amy likes spaghetti best of all.
- Susan plays baseball and enjoys it very much. Amy takes ballet lessons and would like to be a dancer.

Amy and Susan are glad they are twins. They enjoy the things they share, and they enjoy being different.

* * * * *

Topic 2: The children read this poem about growing up.

One, two —
See what I do!

Three, four —
Now I do more!

Five, six —

Lots of new tricks!

Seven, eight —
Doing just great!

Nine, ten —
Growing again!

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