

Grade 2, Theme Two

Family Letter

Dear Family,

It's time for the second 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 Two

Theme Two of *Fully Alive* is called "Living in Relationship." We are created to live in relationship with others, and to respond to each other with love. Loving relationships begin in the family, and this will be our main focus during this theme, along with one topic on friendship.

In Theme Two we will:

- introduce our families, and talk about the uniqueness of each family.
- explore signs of love in our families, how a change (moving) affects family members, and the relationship between brothers and sisters.
- discover more about friendship, and learn about the meaning of co-operation.

Working together at school and at home

- At school we will be talking about words and actions that are signs of love in our families. Take this opportunity to talk to your child about these signs in your family. It's important for children to know that everyone in the family has difficulty being loving at times, and needs God's help to persevere.
- This year we will be reading a story about a family that experiences the change of moving to a new house. If you are planning a change like moving or are expecting a new baby, it's good to talk to your child about it. Children need reassurance that family love remains strong, even when there is a change.
- Getting along with brothers and sisters and friendship are also important topics this year. In particular, we will be talking about disagreements that occur between brothers and sisters, as well as between friends, and the importance of apologizing and forgiving. It helps to let your child know that everyone finds this difficult, but it is part of being a loving family member and a good friend.

Teacher: _____ Date: _____

Theme Two Topics

In Grade Two, this theme is developed through six topics. The first four topics are about family. The children begin by examining the importance and uniqueness of each of their families, and then explore signs of love in the family. In Topics 3 and 4, the children learn about changes in the family through a story about moving, and about the importance of getting along with brothers and sisters. The last two topics focus on friendship, and examine the ways in which people express friendship and the importance of co-operation among friends.

Topic 1 — My Special Family

Every effort to make society sensitive to the importance of the family is a great service to humanity.

Pope John Paul

Summary

This topic helps the children understand that just as people are unique, so each family is unique. At school, the children introduce their families to the class, using information from the BLM sheet they completed at home. They talk about some of the ways each family is unique, and some favourite family activities.

Main ideas

- Each family is unique. That means there is no other family just like ours.
- It is part of God's plan that we grow up in a family.
- Families are the special place where we are loved and cared for.

Family participation

- At school, the children completed a BLM sheet using each of the letters from the word *family* to tell people something special about their family. You might ask **about** what words your child thought of.
- Young children love family activities, from the simplest, like watching a movie or television program, to special activities, like a family trip or a family wedding. Shared family activities strengthen a sense of family identity and create memories that last for a long time.
- For young children, their families are the most important thing in their lives. They are

aware, however, that not all families are the same. Sometimes children who come from single-parent families are self-conscious, particularly if most of the other children in the class live in two-parent families. They need to know, as all children do, that their families are important. Families are the places where children are loved and cared for. Depending on their experiences, children from homes with both parents may begin to become aware that not all children live in the same situation as they do. They may ask questions, which should be answered simply. The most frequent question they ask is whether their parents are going to get divorced. They need reassurance that this is not going to happen. In situations where divorce is likely or has recently occurred, children are particularly in need of reassurance. It is important to let them know that they are loved, that they will continue to be loved, and that they are not responsible for their parents' difficulties.

Topic 2 — Signs of Love in the Family

The home is the inner world in which human beings enter into their heritage as persons.

Peter Bertocci, *Sex, Love, and the Person*

Summary

This topic helps the children understand that care and co-operation from each member of the family are signs of family love. The teacher and children talk about some of the ways that family members show love for each other through what they do and what they say.

Main ideas

- What we do and what we say can be signs of family love.
- Each member of the family contributes to family love.
- Sometimes it's hard to be loving. We can ask God to help us.

Family participation

- At school the children completed a BLM sheet with some examples of what members of a family say that is a sign of love. You might ask about this sheet. What signs of love did your child choose?
- Ask your child about signs of love in your family. What is a favourite sign of love — for example, a hug, a bedtime story, a special outing with the family? What about a sign of love the child may not like, such as having to wear snow pants in the winter, not being

allowed to watch certain television shows, not being able to stay up late? Also, you might ask about the signs of love that your child shows in the family.

- This topic gives you an opportunity to talk about the difficulties we all have sometimes in trying to be loving in our families. Children need to know that every member of the family needs God’s help to be loving.
- There are some signs of love that children don’t like nearly as much as a hug or a treat. Children need to know that when parents won’t allow them to do certain things, or insist on other things, it is because they love them. Children deserve an explanation (“You need snow pants because it’s very cold out” or “You can’t watch that television show because it’s not good for people your age”), but you can expect that often they will disagree with you, and sometimes they will be angry. This topic allows you to talk about the fact that signs of love don’t always make us feel happy.
- Children also need to know how important their contribution is to a loving family. When they co-operate, try to get along with brothers and sisters, and help with family chores, these actions are special signs of family love.

Topic 3 — A Family Moves

...Love is not love which alters when it alteration finds.

William Shakespeare, Sonnet 116

Summary

This topic helps the children understand that family changes, like moving, cause many feelings. The teacher and children read a story about Patti Chang and her family, “A Big Move for Patti.” They talk about how Patti felt when her family moved, and learn that even though families change, the family remains the place where we share love with each other.

Main ideas

- Moving to a new home is a big change for a family.
- We may feel upset or even angry when things change in our families.
- Families are still a special place of love even when there are changes.

Family participation

- Ask your child to tell you about the story of Patti Chang and her family, or you might enjoy reading it together. You will find it at the end of this theme.

- At school, the children discussed how Patti might feel three weeks after the move: Is she still sad? Does she still miss her old house? Did she find a new friend in the neighbourhood? What does she like about the new house? What does your child think about how Patti feels?
- If you have recently moved, Patti's story provides an opportunity to talk about it with your child. How did your child feel when you moved? What was the best thing about the move? What was the worst thing about the move?
- When you make a point of welcoming new neighbours, you are teaching your child about how to treat newcomers. It's a good way of encouraging your child to make new children in the neighbourhood and at school feel welcome. You could suggest that your child invite the new child over to play, or be sure to include the new child in play in the school yard.
- When there is a change in the family like moving, young children often react in the way they see their parents react. If parents are enthusiastic, then the children are also usually enthusiastic.
- If there is going to be a change in your family (for example, moving, a new school, a relative coming to live with you, or an older child leaving home), it's a good idea to talk about it before it happens. It helps children if they know what is going to happen. If they have some worries, you can talk about their feelings. It also gives you the opportunity to reassure them that even with changes there is still the same family love. Sometimes parents find it hard to accept children's negative feelings. We want our children to be happy, and so we often try to tell them that they shouldn't be unhappy, angry, or worried. It's more helpful when parents listen and let their children know that they understand. If your child is worried about going to a new school, for example, you might say, "I know it's scary to go to a new school." Very often, we don't have to say very much. It's the listening and understanding that count.

Topic 4 — We Fight and Forgive

We pardon to the extent that we love.

De La Rochefoucauld, *Reflections or Sentences and Moral Maxims*

Summary

This topic helps the children understand that it is normal for brothers and sisters to argue and fight sometimes, and that they need to forgive each other. The teacher and children read about an argument that Patti Chang had with her little brother, Michael. They talk about the kinds of things brothers and sisters argue about, how they can solve their problems, and why making up and forgiving each other is so important.

Main ideas

- All family members disagree and argue sometimes. It is part of being a family.
- Getting along with the people in our families, making up, and forgiving each other are also part of being a family. They are signs of family love.
- We ask God to help us to be more loving and forgiving with our brothers and sisters.

Family participation

- Arguing and fighting among brothers and sisters happens in every family. And in every family, it both irritates and concerns parents. Some of it is probably best ignored, when that's possible. Children can work many things out for themselves. When children complain to you because they aren't getting along, sometimes you might say, "Don't talk to me. Talk to each other." A parent can be a useful observer of this conversation. With a parent present, but not playing an active role, the children are more likely to try to settle their differences than to continue the fight. There are other times, however, when you will need to take a more active role in bringing the fight to an end.
- Every parent realizes that sometimes children fight because they know that it gets their parents' attention. If this is happening a lot, you might want to check and be sure that they are receiving enough of the right kind of attention at other times. It can also happen that two children aren't getting along because there is some kind of problem between them. Sometimes an older child is too bossy with a younger child, and this leads to fights. Other times, a younger child may provoke an older one, knowing that the older child is more likely to get in trouble. Often you need to keep your eye on a situation between two children in order to figure out what is really causing the fights.
- Family disagreements are not just between children. Other members of the family argue and need to forgive each other. Children find it particularly difficult when parents argue. What may seem a minor disagreement to adults can often seem like a major fight to

children. If you have had an argument with your spouse and the children are aware of it, it's a good idea to let them see you making up.

- Teaching your child to say, "I'm sorry," is important but it can become meaningless. Children often believe that if you just say "sorry" that's the end of it. Sometimes if they say what they are sorry for, it helps them understand the reason for the apology. Also, it's a good idea to point out to them that they must try not to do whatever they did again and that this is the most important part of being sorry. Some young children like a forgiveness hug. It helps them feel that all is well again.
- Children need to know that no one is perfect. We all have strengths and weaknesses. We all try to be better and we ask God to help us. When you let your child know that you are sorry if you were unreasonable or unfair, you are teaching a very valuable lesson. It doesn't weaken you as a parent to admit you're wrong; it strengthens you.
- Children also need to learn how to forgive others. You can help them understand that *feeling* like forgiving and *actually* forgiving are not the same thing. They can still be angry or hurt, but forgive the other person. It means that they will try to get rid of the angry feeling or not express it in a hurtful way. You might encourage the offended child to say, "It's all right, I forgive you," or some other words that indicate that the argument is over.
- If your child is preparing to receive the sacrament of reconciliation (penance), this topic provides a good opportunity to talk about God's love and forgiveness.

Topic 5 — Being Friends

A faithful friend is a sturdy shelter.

Sirach 6:14

Summary

This topic helps the children understand the ways they can show friendship and how important friendship is. At the school the teacher encourages the children to think about aspects of friendship beyond shared play activities: listening to each other, making up after a disagreement, sharing a snack or new toy.

Main ideas

- Friendship is important to everybody.
- We let our friends know that we like them by the things we do and say.
- What is most important is to learn how to be a good friend.

Family participation

- At school, the children read “‘Cause You Are My Friend,” a poem about friendship, which is at the end of this theme. You may enjoy reading it together.
- As the school years go by, friendship becomes more and more important to children. It takes a long time, but children have to learn that in order to have friends, they have to be a friend. When your child complains about not having friends, or having fights with friends, it’s a good idea to ask about what she or he is doing to be friendly and likeable. You might ask your child what makes a good friend, and encourage her or him to work on those qualities, qualities like sharing, listening, and being willing to compromise.
- Everyone has bad days, and children are no exception. If your child is upset about something a friend did, it’s often a passing difficulty. But it’s still important to listen.
- At this age, children’s friendships are still up and down affairs. They are, however, beginning to learn how to compromise. Often their attitude is, if you do something for me, I’ll do something for you.
- Some children are very sociable and have many friends; others have few. Some children need only one or two close friends. You can help your child understand that the number of friends she or he has is not important. Sometimes, when children are having difficulty making friends, they try to buy friends by giving away candy or toys. If someone is doing this to your child, or if your child is doing it, it’s a good idea to say something about it. You might want to explain that you can’t buy friendship or make someone be a friend. Friendship is a gift you give to another person.
- Always let your child know that Jesus wants to be a friend. He wants to share the good times and the bad times. Your child can talk to Jesus as a friend any time.

Topic 6 — Co-operation Among Friends

*Pleasant words are like a honeycomb,
Sweetness to the soul and health to the body.*

Proverbs 16: 24

Summary

This topic helps the children understand the importance of co-operation with others. The teacher and children discuss the meaning of co-operation. The children are encouraged to understand that co-operation means more than just doing what adults expect them to do without too much protest. It involves participating and contributing as a friend, a member of a class or team, and as a family member.

Main ideas

- Co-operation is for everybody. It means that everyone works together.
- Cooperation is important for having friends and being a friend.
- When people work on a project, play a game, or are on a team, it takes co-operation from each person.

Family participation

- At school, the children read a poem, “Co-operation is the Way.” You and your child might enjoy reading it together. You will find it at the end of this theme.
- Often in families the word *co-operate* is used mainly to mean being obedient. It is more than that. Co-operation is for every member of the family or the classroom. It means that everyone helps and joins in. You might ask your child to think about the co-operation involved in family meals or in sharing the bathroom. You could also ask about a special occasion when everyone co-operated and something got done. What did each person do? How did everyone feel? Don’t forget family games and projects as opportunities to build co-operation.
- This topic gives you an opportunity to talk about the value of cooperation at a time when being co-operative isn’t a problem. Are there family situations when co-operation would help (for example, in the morning when everyone is getting ready for school or for work)? What could each person do to co-operate?
- Families don’t work very well unless each person contributes and cooperates. Even very young children can contribute to the family. Let your child know that the family is a better place because of his or her cooperation. Children should feel a sense of pride in their families when everyone co-operates and works together.

Theme Two Stories and Poems

Topic 3: The teacher and children share this story about Patti Chang and her family.

A Big Move for Patti

It seemed as if they had been in the car forever.

“Mom, when will we get to the new house?” asked Patti. “I’m tired of being in the car.”

“I know you’re tired, Patti,” her mom answered. “Why don’t you draw one more picture. By the time you’re finished, we should be there.”

Mrs. Chang sighed. It had been a long day. The moving van had come early in the morning and by the time everything was packed it was after lunch. She and Patti and Patti’s little brother, Michael, had been driving since two o’clock and here it was, almost six. Mr. Chang had left early in the morning so that he would be there when the moving van arrived.

“Mom, I finished my picture. Are we there?” asked Patti.

“Almost. What’s your picture about?” answered her mom.

“It’s a picture of our house. I mean our old house.” Patti’s voice sounded funny, as if she might cry.

“I know you’re feeling sad, honey,” her mom said. “I am too but I’m sure we’ll be happy in our new house.”

“But I won’t have any friends, Mom,” wailed Patti. Her crying woke up her little brother, Michael, who had been napping.

“Don’t cry, Patti,” he said. “Daddy’s at the new house.”

“But I don’t want a new house,” Patti sniffed. “I want the old house.”

“Guess what?” Patti’s mom said. “We’re home.”

And she was right. There was Patti’s dad coming down the walk with a big smile. The movers were busy carrying all the boxes into the new house.

When they got out of the car, everybody hugged Daddy and he hugged them all too.

“Daddy, Daddy,” cried Michael, pulling on his arm. “Patti’s sad. She was crying.”

Mr. Chang gave Patti another big hug.

Patti looked at the new house. It seemed pretty nice. Patti wondered if there were any children her age in the house next door. She hoped that there was someone in the neighbourhood to be her friend.

“Would you like to see your room?” her dad asked, but Patti didn’t answer.

“I know you’re sad,” he said. “Moving is a big change, but we’re still all together — you and Michael and your mom and me. That’s what matters.”

Patti looked at her dad, and she smiled. “Let’s go see my new room,” she said, and she took his hand.

“Let’s go,” her dad said, and the family all went up the walk together.

* * * * *

Topic 5: This poem about friendship is from the student book.

‘Cause you are my friend

Where are you going?
Can I come too?
Let's go together
Whatever we do.

When you are laughing
or when you are sad,
I'll laugh along with you;
I'll make you glad.

When you feel lonely
When life seems unfair
You can tell me about it
I'm your friend, and I care.

There's no one I'd rather
have fun with than you.
'Cause you are my friend
And I am yours, too!

* * * * *

Topic 6: The children read this poem as part of their discussion about friendship.

Co-operation is the Way

There was a boy who would not play,
Unless you let him have his way.
I think that boy's silly guy;
He has no friends — I wonder why.

There was a girl who would not share,
But thought her friends were quite unfair.

Her bottom lip was always out;
Her face got frozen in a pout.

There was a class that couldn't agree,
No matter what the job might be.
Their games all ended in a fight,
'Cause all they did was shout, "I'M RIGHT!"

I'm sure those kids are not like you,
You wouldn't do the things they do.
Co-operation is your way,
At home and school, and when you play.

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