

Dear Family,

It's time for the second theme of *Fully Alive*. 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.” God created us to live in relationship with others and to respond to each other with love. Living in relationship begins in the family, the setting in which people first learn about love. As children grow up, friendship becomes more and more important to them. In this theme we will be exploring these two important relationships — family and friends. For more information go to: www.acbo.on.ca.

In Theme Two we will

- consider the significance of human relationships and the unique contribution they make in each person's life.
- examine the importance of families and their contribution to providing children with secure roots for their lives.
- learn about some of the difficulties caused by abusive family members and how important it is for those who are affected to seek help.
- explore some of the challenges of adolescence for both parents or guardians and young people and the need to resolve conflicts in a respectful way.
- discuss the qualities of true friendship and consider some attitudes and behaviours that cause friendship difficulties.
- reflect on the virtue of mercy, which is essential for living in relationship with others.

Working together at school and at home

- The capacity for intimate relationships begins during adolescence, and parents or guardians may notice that their young adolescent's friendships are more intense. Young adolescents are no longer children, but they are not yet adults, and the changes they are experiencing have an effect on their relationships.
- We will be discussing the central role of families — to nurture their children and provide them with secure roots. We will also consider several serious family problems (alcoholism, physical abuse) that limit children's freedom to develop. The students are encouraged to understand that the cycle of family abuse can be broken and the harm it causes can be healed.
- Family relationships change as children become adolescents. We will be learning about the views of both parents or guardians and children during this time of life. The main concern of parents or guardians is the safety of their young people; most often the main concern of young people is their relationships with peers. This difference of perspective often leads to stress, and the result can be conflict. It is helpful if both young people and parents or guardians make an effort to understand each other's perspective — to listen with open minds and to try to solve problems cooperatively. There are times, of course, when it is not possible to solve problems cooperatively, and parents or guardians must make a decision based on the wellbeing of their children.
- The focus on friendships is very strong in early adolescence. Their friendships tend to involve sharing feelings and confidences, which can result in feelings of betrayal if a friend is

disloyal. Because loyalty is so important to most young people, parents or guardians have to be cautious in expressing negative comments about friends. In general, however, it is important for parents or guardians to be open to listening to their children's concerns and to respond to them.

- We will be talking about causes of stress in friendship, some of which are simply part of the process of growing up. Other causes, however, are avoidable. We will discuss exploitation, spreading gossip and rumours, being jealous or envious of others, exclusive friendship groups that exclude certain people, and peer pressure. These have the potential to cause serious harm to young people at a time when they are very concerned to be accepted. It's important for parents or guardians to talk to their children about this harm. In particular, electronic communication — instant messaging, e-mail, social networking — provides many new opportunities for these behaviours. It is essential for parents or guardians to monitor young people's use of electronic communication and to have clear guidelines for what is acceptable online.
- Ask your child to tell you about the virtue of mercy, which is highlighted in Theme Two. We will be discussing how this virtue guides us to have compassionate hearts in our relationships with other people — to forgive, to avoid conflict if possible, and to be gracious to people. Young people often get so caught up in their relationships with peers that they lose sight of the harm they can cause when they retaliate because of hurt feelings or anger. Parents or guardians can't remove all of the challenges of growing up, but they can remind their children to be faithful to the word of God in their behaviour: "The Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love." (Psalm 145:8)

Teacher: _____ Date: _____

School telephone: _____