

Fully Alive Grade 4

Grade 4, 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.

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

- recognize and appreciate the gift of love God has given each person, the gift of our lives.
- explore the value of similarities and differences among people.
- learn about the early stages of human development (pre-natal, infancy and childhood), and discuss our need for other people to help us grow and develop.
- examine the impact we have on other people by our words and actions, and the importance of awareness of other people’s feelings.

Working together at school and at home

- Ask your child to tell you the story of Beatriz Perez and her special gift.
- At around this age, children often begin to want to be like everyone else. In class we will be talking about how much unique personal characteristics contribute to the richness of life. It’s important for children to learn to respect differences and value their own uniqueness.
- We will be learning about the first stages of human development. Children love hearing about their early years: when they first walked and talked, funny things they said, and the activities they especially liked. You might share some of these stories together.
- Learning to be sensitive to the feelings of other is another topic we will be discussing. It

takes time for children to learn that they have an effect on other people, even when the effect was unintended. When you take the time to explain the reasons something may be hurtful, you are helping your child to grow in sensitivity to others.

Teacher: _____

Theme One Topics

In Grade 4, this theme is developed through five topics. The theme begins with a story about a special gift, which leads the students to explore the greatest gift of all — their lives. In the remaining topics, they discuss the ways people are alike and different, the early stages of human development, and the need for other people to help them develop. In the final topic the students consider the impact they have on other people, and the need to be aware of other people's feelings.

Topic 1 — My Life is a Gift

*I believe with a passionate, unshakable conviction
that in all circumstances and at all times life is a
blessed gift; that the spirit which animates it is one of love,
not hate or indifference, of light, not darkness,
of creativity, not destruction, of order, not chaos...*

Malcolm Muggeridge, *Jesus Rediscovered*

Summary

This topic helps the students understand that human life is a gift from God. The teacher and students talk about different kinds of gifts, and then read a story about a special gift Beatriz Perez receives from her grandmother. They explore some of the ways in which they can enjoy, respect, celebrate, protect, and love the gift of their lives.

Main Ideas

- Each one of us has received a very special gift of love from God. That gift is our lives.
- Each person is a unique and precious gift.
- We thank God for the gift of life.

Family Participation

- You and your child might enjoy reading together the story about Beatriz Perez’s special gift, “A Present from Grandma.” You will find it at the end of this theme. What did your child like best about the story? What did your child learn from the story?
- At school the students and teacher said a prayer at the end of this topic, thanking God for the gift of their lives. You will find this prayer, “Life-giving God,” in Prayers: Grade 4. Your family might like to say this prayer before a meal or at bedtime. Or perhaps your child would like to create a prayer about the gift of life for the family.
- Children love to receive gifts and to give gifts to others. You might like to talk about special gifts that each person in the family has received or given that didn’t cost any money — something that was made at home, or a small service that was done for someone. When parents encourage children to make gifts and cards for people, spend time with someone in need of company, or do small chores for older relatives and neighbours, they are helping them learn that the value of a gift doesn’t lie in its expense. The value of a gift is in the meaning that it has for the person who gives it and for the one who receives it.

Topic 2 — Alike and Different

*Human ... individuality, written and signed by God
on each human countenance ..., is something altogether sacred,
some thing for resurrection, for eternal life.*

Leon Bloy

Summary

This topic helps the students understand and appreciate the ways in which people are alike and different. The teacher and students read a story about a class in which everyone is identical. They discuss the value of each person being unique, yet sharing the experience of being human. The student complete a survey about some of their interests, likes, dislikes, personal characteristics, and talents, and then compare their answers with those of other members of the class.

Main Ideas

- Each one of us has a special way of being a person. We have different appearances, interests, likes and dislikes, personalities, and talents. Our differences make life interesting.
- We are also alike in many ways, but the most important way we are alike is that God made each one of us.

Family Participation

- You and your child might like to read together the description of some identical students in Mrs. Gordon's class. You will find "Mrs. Gordon's Class" at the end of this theme. Would your child like to be in this classroom? Or you might ask what it would be like if each person in the family was identical.
- The survey the students completed about themselves also involved trying to find other members of the classroom who answered the questions in the same way. You could ask your child about this survey. Did other students have the same answers for some of the questions? Did your child have any answers that were different from all of the other students?
- You and your child may enjoy reading the poem, "One and Only People," which the students read at school. You will find it at the end of this theme.
- This topic encourages the children to understand that we are all alike and different. Our differences make life interesting, and the many ways in which we are alike help us to understand each other. At this stage in their development, children often begin to be concerned about being like everyone else. This interest in being like others becomes stronger as they approach puberty. This is normal, but it's also important to encourage your child to be tolerant of other people's differences, and to value her or his own unique qualities. Your example helps. When you indicate, through what you do and say, that you appreciate other people's unique qualities and interests, you are helping your child to be open-minded. In the same way, when you respect your child's unique personality and don't expect him or her to be like another child in the family, you are encouraging your child to withstand the pressures to be like everyone else.
- At this age, some children also begin to become more aware of clothing (for example, the latest running shoes or jeans) and want to dress in the same way as some of their

classmates. It's important to talk about their values regarding clothing or other status symbols. Even when families can afford expensive items, children should know that such material possessions are not essential. Who we are is much more important than what we have.

Topic 3 — Growing Up

Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favour.

Luke 2:51-52

Summary

This topic helps the students understand that all people change in certain ways as they grow and develop. The teacher and students explore the first two stages of human development after birth — infancy and childhood. The students discuss their own development (physical changes, skills they have developed, their understanding of feelings, what they have learned about the world) and identify some characteristics of the stages of infancy and childhood.

Main Ideas

- Everyone goes through stages of development. Growing and developing are part of being a person.
- The first stages of development are pre-natal, infancy, and childhood.
- Our bodies, our minds, our feelings, and our relationships with other people and with God develop as we get older.

Family Participation

- Children love reviewing their own development by looking at baby books, old photographs, or home movies. They enjoy hearing about their milestones and those of brothers and sisters: When did they first walk? How old were they when they were toilet trained? When did they lose their first tooth? What was their first word?
- This topic also provides an opportunity to discuss the differences among children who are the same age. You could point out to your child that nine-year-olds can be very tall or quite short, have different interests, and may be well developed in some ways, and less so

in others. If your child is developing more slowly academically or physically than the other children in the class, you can reassure her or him that children develop in their own way and at their own rate.

- There are other important areas of development besides the physical and academic. For example, when the occasion arises you could mention qualities such as patience, generosity, or perseverance. Let your child know when you see growth in these qualities.

Topic 4 — We Do Not Grow Alone

*We shall never truly know ourselves unless we find people who can listen,
who can enable us to emerge, to come out of ourselves, to discover who we are.
We cannot discover ourselves by ourselves.*

Edward Farrell

Summary

This topic helps the students understand that we all need other people in our lives to help us grow and develop. The teacher and students discuss this need for other people, and the students identify some of the people who have contributed to their growth.

Main Ideas

- We all need other people in our lives.
- We especially need other people to care for us and encourage us while we are growing up.
- Our family members, friends, teachers, and people in our community help us grow and develop.

Family Participation

- At school the students completed a sheet about the people who support their lives. You might ask about the people your child chose. One of the items on the sheet was someone who “loves me no matter what.” You can help your child understand God’s love by explaining that this is what God’s love is like. It is there, no matter what.
- When the opportunity arises, be sure to let your child know that it’s not just parents who help children grow. Children also help their parents grow. You could explain that adults continue to grow, not in size, but in mind, heart, and spirit. Family members and special friends can help parents learn to become more loving people.

- Compared to families of past generations, North American parents tend to be more open with their children about their own lives. This has many benefits, but also has risks. Without careful boundaries, children can be burdened by adult concerns, for example, finances or relationship difficulties. Since children have neither the life experience nor the maturity to handle adult problems, they are left with worries and fears about which they can do nothing. It is important not to share too much with children.
- It is hard for children to realize that people whom they do not like, or find difficult to get along with, also help them grow. If there is a particular example in your child's life, you might mention this person. You could explain that when people demand a lot from us, try our patience, or are mean to us, it can be very difficult, but it can also be an occasion for growth. We might discover that we are capable of more than we thought we were. Or we might learn to be more patient and loving. We may also learn that some people who are not obviously popular have valuable qualities that we have overlooked.

Topic 5 — Connected to Each Other

*There is no beautifier of complexion, or form, or behaviour,
like the wish to scatter joy and not pain around us.*

Ralph W. Emerson

Summary

This topic helps the students understand that our actions and words have an effect on other people. We are connected to each other, and need to be sensitive to the feelings of others.

The teacher and students read a story about a Grade 4 boy named Tim Casey, and then discuss the need to think about other people's feelings.

Main Ideas

- We are connected to other people and have an effect on each other.
- We can make other people happy and we can hurt them by what we do or say.
- It's important to think about the effect we have on other people's feelings.

Family Participation

- You and your child might enjoy reading the story about Tim Casey, “Birthday Invitations, ” which you will find it at the end of this theme. What is your child’s opinion about this story?
- In order to be sensitive to the feelings of others, children first have to become aware that they do have an effect on other people, even when this effect is not intended. Parents have a crucial role to play in helping children in this area. When you take the time to explain the reason your child’s words or actions may have hurt another person’s feelings, and ask your child to think about how he or she would feel in the same situation, you are helping your child in an important way. Some children seem to be naturally quite sensitive to other people, while others find it more difficult to recognize the effect of their words and actions and need many reminders and much encouragement.
- Within the family, children have a wonderful opportunity to learn about their effect on people’s feelings. This is particularly true among brothers and sisters. Older children can be thoughtless with younger sisters and brothers and need to be reminded about the impact of their words and actions. When teasing and name-calling get out of hand, the result can be harmful.
- You might want to point out the connection between this topic and the first topic about the gift of our lives. An important part of learning to respect and value our lives is accepting responsibility for ourselves, and this includes what we do and say. When children have offended another person, they frequently explain their actions or words by saying, “But I didn’t mean to.” At times this may be an excuse, but in some circumstances it is probably quite true. Often these situations are best handled if parents accept the explanation (“I know you didn’t mean to”) and then explain why the child’s behaviour caused a problem. Children do not learn to accept responsibility for their actions or become more aware of the feelings of others overnight. It is a long process of development that is greatly helped by the patient, consistent efforts of loving parents.
- The last page of Theme One in the student book is a poem called “In God’s Image,” which you will find it at the end of this theme. You and your child might enjoy reading it together.

Theme One Stories and Poems

Topic 1: Beatriz Perez receives a very special gift in this story.

A Present from Grandma

The small box arrived on Tuesday morning. It had travelled all the way from South America. It was addressed to Miss Beatriz Perez.

When Beatriz got home from school, she saw the box waiting on the table in the hall.

“Uncle Henry!” she called. “Are you up? Did you see what I got?”

Uncle Henry worked at night, so he was often sleeping when the children came home from school.

“I’m up,” he said. “Did you find something addressed to Miss Beatriz Perez?”

Beatriz ran into the kitchen. “What do you think it is?” she asked.

“Why don’t you open it and find out?” he said.

She looked at the box. “I really want to,” she said. “But I’m going to wait for Mom. I’m sure it’s from Grandma. I’ll sit on the porch and watch for Mom.”

After just a few minutes, she could see her mother walking up the street. Beatriz ran to meet her so she could tell her about the mysterious gift.

When Mrs. Perez saw the box, she smiled. “Yes,” she said. “It’s from your grandmother.”

Beatriz carefully unwrapped the package and found a small box covered with blue velvet. Inside it was a gold locket.

“Grandma’s locket!” Beatriz exclaimed.

“Look, there’s a note with it,” Mrs. Perez said. “Can you read it? It’s in Spanish.”

Beatriz looked at the note for a moment. Then she read, “For my

granddaughter. I hope you will remember me when you wear this. Your grandfather gave it to me when your father was born. I love you very much. Abuelita.” (*Abuelita* is the Spanish word for Grandma.)

Beatriz opened the locket. Inside were pictures of her grandparents.

“Is it valuable, Mom?” Beatriz asked.

“In money? No,” her mother said. “But in love and memories, it’s beyond value. It’s precious because it can’t be replaced and because there’s so much love in this gift.”

Beatriz looked at the locket and thought about her grandmother.

“Just think,” her mother said, “maybe one day you have a granddaughter and give this locket to her and tell her about your grandmother.”

Beatriz gently put the locket back in its box. “This is a very special gift. It makes me think of her and of Papa,” she said. “I wish Grandma was here so I could hug her. I’m going to write her a letter. Will you help me with the spelling in Spanish?”

“I will, her mother said. “She will be so happy to have a letter from you.”

* * * * *

Topic 2: Here is a description of Mrs. Gordon’s class, and a poem that the students read about being unique people.

Mrs. Gordon’s Class

Meet Mrs. Gordon’s class. They are all exactly nine years, seven months, and three days old. The whole class has the same birthday, and everyone has a birthday party on the same day! How many people do you think come to their parties?

The students in Mrs. Gordon’s class are all very good at spelling, but not so good at math. Every morning they arrive wearing yellow shirts and

purple pants, and in their lunch boxes are cheese sandwiches and apples. Ice cream is their favourite food and none of them likes bananas.

When Mrs. Gordon wants to teach her class a song, she has a lot of trouble. No one has a talent for singing. It sounds so awful that Mrs. Gordon has to cover her ears!

Everyone in the class is shy and likes to listen more than talk. "What a quiet class," people say when they walk by.

Sometimes Mrs. Gordon tries to get them to talk about their pets or hobbies. They each have a goldfish named Sunny and they all collect stamps.

Would you like to be in Mrs. Gordon's class?

One and Only People

There's a one and only me,
And a one and only you;
We're growing and we're changing,
That's what we're meant to do.

We're alike, but not the same,
And we need each other's care;
We have a lot in common,
And many gifts to share.

There's a one and only you,
And a one and only me;
We're one and only people,
Just look at us and see!

* * * * *

Topic 5: The teacher and students read this story about Tim Casey.

Birthday Invitations

“Have you got your invitations?” his mom asked, as Tim headed out the door.

“Yeah, I’ll give them out when I get to school. Bye, Mom.”

Tim’s birthday was next Friday and his parents had given him a choice. He could have a big party, or he could invite three friends to go out for hamburgers and a baseball game. Tim had decided on the baseball game, but it was hard choosing only three people. He would have liked to invite all his friends. In the end, he decided to ask Paul, Amir, and Vince.

When Tim got to school he saw his three friends in the schoolyard. They were playing with Mike, another boy in Tim’s class.

“Hey, guys, I’ve got something for you,” he said.

“What’s up?” Paul asked.

“Yeah, what have you got?” Mike said.

Tim pulled the three invitations out of his knapsack. “You wanna go out to eat and then to a baseball game next Friday? It’s for my birthday. My brother is going to take us.”

“Great,” said Amir as Tim handed him an invitation.

“Who’s playing?” asked Paul

“Who cares?” said Vince. “It will be fun anyway.”

Mike didn’t say anything. He watched Paul, Amir, and Vince as they read their invitations. He turned and walked away.

* * * * *

Topic 5: This poem is the last page of Theme One in the student book.

In God's Image

God made you to be full of life,
God made you to be glad,
Feelings are a part of you,
Joyful, proud, or sad.

God made you to need others,
God made you to depend,
On those who love and care for you,
Your family and your friends.

God made you to love goodness,
God made you to be true,
To those you love and to yourself,
And to the One who made you.

God made you in his image,
God made you full of grace,
God's love for every person,
is shining in your face.

* * * * *