

Dear Faith Shapers,
July and August are wonderful months here in Iowa. It's the perfect time to spend time with family and create lasting memories. May you find plenty of time to enjoy God's wonderful creation together as friends and family before the school year begins. And as the summer winds down, may you feel and see the many blessings that the Lord has given us each and every day. The next time you're around the dinner table, ask each other these questions:

- ⇒ What does the word "blessing" mean to you?
- ⇒ Share a time you were blessed by someone this summer?.
- ⇒ What gave you joy this summer?
- ⇒ What has been your greatest joy this past year?

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Deacon



Fun fact: God's work doesn't take a sabbatical during summer months. So how can your church seize the unique evangelism and fellowship opportunities of the season?

Try some of these fresh summertime ideas:

- Plan a "summer nights series" of outdoor worships and fellowship.
- Invite the church neighborhood for a homemade ice cream party.
- Do a free outdoor family movie night, projecting on a large exterior wall.
- Challenge every church member to plan a "Cookout with Your Neighbors" at their home sometime during July to develop friendships and invite neighbors to church.
- For the Sunday prior to July 4th, plan a "red, white and blue jean" Sunday. Invite local government leaders to attend your worship service, present them a gift, and voice a prayer for them.
- Plan day trip adventures for moms and kids.
- Organize a Wii bowling league with multiple projections on a large exterior wall.
- Do a reading club or weekly kids' story hour in the church library.
- Organize a bike ride that ends at the church.
- Arrange a Christ-focused teens' art day-camp.
- Invite the community to join you for outdoor tournaments, such as volleyball, horseshoes, softball, bocce ball, 3-on-3 basketball.
- Plan a father and kids' campout on the church lawn or a huge kids' sprinkler party.
- Your youth can organize a drive-through to pass out free snow cones and an invitation to Sunday worship.

This information is prepared for you by the **Northeastern Iowa Synod-Home Life Network** for use by families and local congregations. Like our page on Facebook and our posted resources will appear in your newsfeed. Our page is [Northeastern Iowa Synod Home Life Network ELCA](#)

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Celebrating Back to School

Bible Study Ideas

Celebrating Back to School

The carefree days of summer are coming to an end, but for school-aged kids a new adventure is just around the corner. Back-to-school means new friends, new teachers and new memories! Get your little ones excited about the new school year and celebrate with a Back to School Party.

Hand Prints Bible study: You need washable paint and a large sheet of paper for kids to place their painted hand print on. Talk About: Form pairs or trios, and then read aloud Psalm 19:1-3. Ask kids to discuss these questions in their groups:

- Why do you think God went to the trouble of creating us and our world?
- What's one way you could use your hands to honor God at school?



Let groups share their answers. Then have kids make a handprint by dipping their palm in a paper plate of paint and pressing it on the large piece of paper. Near the handprints, have kids write their first name, age, and a prayer about one way they want to put their hands to work for God in school this year. Pray together, thanking God for the kids and asking his blessings on all the prayers represented.

Tennie Ball Art Bible study: This fun and crazy game will produce lots of laughs and totally unique artwork to spruce up your walls.



Supplies: An old white sheet, tennis balls, plenty of washable paint, and old t-shirts. Have kids surround the perimeter of the sheet and grab an edge. Soak three to five tennis balls in different colors of paint and, on the count of three, drop the balls in the center of the sheet. The kids' goal is to maneuver their edge of the sheet to roll the balls toward someone else. They don't want the balls to fall off or touch them. After two minutes, have kids place the sheet on the ground. Compare who has the most paint marks on their hands and clothes.

Ask:

- What did you do to keep the balls away from you? How well did your strategy work?
- What was easy about this game? Difficult? How is this game like or unlike your life with school starting?

Read aloud Psalm 16:5-8.

- What does this Scripture tell us about how to approach the challenges and trials we'll face in school this year?

Ask kids to place one hand on a line in the sheet. Close in prayer, asking God to be present in kids' lives as they intersect — just like the lines made by the balls — and remind us of the wonderful things and new friends God has placed in our lives.