

SCHOOLS SUNDAY

churches celebrating and supporting local schools

SUNDAY 11 FEBRUARY 2024

... an annual opportunity to pray for and support young people at school

Schools Sunday provides an annual opportunity for churches to pray for and support young people and the local school community at the start of a new school year. We seek to encourage Christian students and staff in their daily life at school.

This year on Schools Sunday we encourage you to plan a specific Sunday focus on schools. If the date, **24 Feburary 2024** is unsuitable for your church calendar, choose another day, early in the school year, that works better for you.

Schools Sunday is an excellent way to encourage Christian students and school staff members to remember that God is not confined to church, but goes with them to school.

This resource is full of ideas for either a complete intergenerational Sunday service or a short segment within a regular service. Use what will best suit your congregation and your situation. Message and prayer ideas and activities are included.

SERVICE IDEAS

USE SOME OF THESE IDEAS TO PLAN YOUR OWN SCHOOLS SUNDAY SERVICE.

ON THE DAY

- Find out which schools are represented by people in your congregation (children, grandchildren, staff).

INVOLVE YOUR LOCAL SCHOOLS

- Invite your school choir.
- Ask your Children's Ministry group and/or youth group to present an item/s.
- Invite someone who is actively involved in a school to share a ministry story (chaplain, SRE teacher, lunchtime Christian club leader, Christian teacher, student leader).
- Invite a school chaplain or SRE teacher to bring a message and share about their work in the school. Or you might like to interview them instead.
- Invite a school volunteer or a parent helper to share briefly about their role in the school.
- Invite a young person to share a personal story of their friendship with Jesus. How were they welcomed into that friendship and/or their church?
- Share a morning tea or fellowship lunch after the service to help make the day more special and to honour any invited guests.
- If you have invited your principal, chaplain, SRE teacher or school choir, use this time to connect with them.

OFFERING

- Take up a special offering that will go towards your local schools ministry work, local chaplain or SRE teacher.
- Invite children or teens to take up the offering and lead offering prayers.

PRAYER

You could invite a chaplain, SRE teacher or people from the congregation already working in schools to share prayer points for their school/s and pray for them. Invite children to write a prayer for their school and read these out on Schools Sunday.

- Thank God for our schools, teachers, school staff, students and all the families connected to our schools.
- Thank God that schools are places where children can reach their full potential.
- Thank God that He goes with us everywhere we go.
- Pray for safety in the playground, in the classroom and through the pick up and drop off zones..
- Thank God for Christians who are part of a local school, students, teachers, parents, helpers, volunteers, help them to encourage, support and enrich school life.
- Pray for God's influence in the education and nurturing of children, young people and their families.
- Pray for God to give wisdom, integrity and vision to the leadership and management of our local schools.
- Pray for God to protect and guide our school chaplains.
- Pray for God to help Christian students and staff to live out their faith day to day in their school community.
- Pray for God to help Christian students to work hard and and staff to live out their faith day to day in their school community.
- Pray for God to help students to work hard and give their best to learn and be a positive influence in school.
- Thank the Lord for sending his son Jesus, as our Saviour.

PRAYER POINTS

STUDENTS

- Beginning school for the first time
- Starting at a new school
- Experiencing learning or relationship difficulties
- Student leaders and Christian students

SCHOOL STAFF

- In your congregation
- Principals and teachers
- Support and administration staff
- Well-being team/ specialists

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

- Ministers for Education (Federal/State/Territory)
- Departmental staff, curriculum and policy makers
- National Student Wellbeing Program (formerly National School Chaplaincy Program)

FAMILIES

- Wise parenting
- Christian families
- Those experiencing relationship difficulties
- Those serving the school as volunteers



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PRAYER POINTS FOR OUR SCHOOLS



SERVICE THEME

PLEASE GOD

WELCOME

As we gather together, we would like to assure those of you involved in the life of a school - whether as a student or an adult - that we, as your church family, are praying for you. We have an amazing God who is with us always and knows us completely.

Read Philippians 2:1-11.

- **Find or make some masks and invite some volunteers to come to the front to wear them.** Ask them to make happy, sad, angry or worried looks behind their mask and see if the congregation can identify their feelings. Remind your volunteers to avoid using other body language clues such as clenched fists or drooping shoulders.
- Point out that when someone is wearing a mask, we cannot see who they really are or tell how they are really feeling. And even without a mask it is easy to pretend to be better, nicer, kinder, braver than we really are. Pretending is like wearing a mask.
- As Paul wrote in his letter to the Philippians, 'Don't be jealous or proud, but be humble' (v3) as Christ was humble (v8). When you are humble there is no need to pretend. We will explore this topic further later.

BIBLE READING **Luke 14:1, 7-14**

- **Invite eight to ten people to the front to help you with an illustration.** Include a range of ages including both children and adults.
- Ask them to stand in line in order of age, youngest to oldest. Then line up according to height, shortest to tallest. Then in order of shoe size. Finally ask them to stand in line in order of importance. Allow just a short amount of time for them to realise that they will not be able to do this.
- Point out that none of us can argue that we are more or less important than any other person. In God's eyes we are all of equal importance no matter what gifts or abilities or experiences we have or have had.
- **Now give each of your volunteers an A4 sheet of paper with a description of someone on each sheet.** Include descriptions such as prime minister, school principal, next-door neighbour, refugee, homeless person, school student, doctor, best friend.
- Ask the congregation if they met any of these people, who would they most like to talk to, who would they be willing to help, who would they be willing to invite into their home.
- You may choose to hear their responses, or you may choose to just have them reflect on their responses in the light of the Bible reading from Luke 14.

USE THESE IDEAS FOR
A SERVICE OUTLINE OR
BASIS FOR A MESSAGE.

MESSAGE IDEAS



• The place of honour

Sharing a meal on the Sabbath (v1) was a special occasion and as Jesus was having dinner in the house of a rich Pharisee, his enemies were watching him so they could find fault. The guests at a banquet (v7) would have reclined at a 'U' shaped table and the place of honour for the host would have been at the base of the 'U' shape. The Pharisees were constantly comparing themselves with others and were concerned primarily with their own status. Jesus advised his listeners to NOT seek the place of honour at the table but to humble themselves so that they may be honoured.

• How to be humble

In verses 12-14 Jesus illustrated how to be truly humble. By choosing to invite those who cannot repay the invitation, Jesus told his listeners that their true reward would come from knowing that they have pleased God. They did not have to seek the approval of others by inviting the 'right' people. That's like wearing a mask or pretending that they are important.

Instead, be humble and do what pleases God and then 'God will bless you and reward you' (v14). Jesus spoke with courage and boldness in front of his critics. Being humble does not mean agreeing with everyone and keeping quiet about things that are wrong; it means putting God first. That is what we are called to do; please God, not ourselves, nor others.

• True humility

True humility reaches out to others and helps them to grow. Each of us can probably think of a truly humble Christian who has used their gifts and abilities to help us to flourish and to follow Jesus. Encourage the congregation to think of such a person who has played a role in their own lives.

How did they offer encouragement, practical support, their time etc? How might we do something similar to help others?

As we seek to follow Jesus in our school, our home or workplace, we are called to share our gifts and abilities with true humility, not for recognition or reward but to please God.



SCHOOLS SUNDAY

Schools Sunday is initiated by SU Australia.

SU Australia's vision is that **every child, young person and family in Australia has opportunities of transforming experiences with Jesus and a lifelong journey of discipleship and service.** To find out more about SU's ministry please contact us below.



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