

# SCHOOLS SUNDAY

churches celebrating and supporting local schools

SUNDAY 5 MARCH 2023



# ... 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, **5 March 2023** 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 learn and grow and reach their full potential.
- Thank God that He goes with us everywhere we go.
- Thanks to God for keeping everyone safe, in the playground, in the classroom and through the pick up and drop off zones.
- Thank God for all the 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 His 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 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.
- Thank the Holy Spirit for comfort and the peace and power given to us.

### 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

## BE ENCOURAGED

### 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 no matter where we go and what we do. God knows us by name. In fact, he knows much more than that.

**Read Psalm 139:1-18 together.** You could invite volunteers from the congregation to read a verse or two until the whole passage is read. Or have the leader and the congregation read alternate verses.

#### Talk about names.

Names are very special. They are often chosen for a reason. Briefly share the story of how you were given your name (or nickname) and what it means (if anything).

### ACTIVITY IN SMALL GROUPS

Gather in small groups or family groups. Make sure that the children are included. Allow a few minutes to share stories about how each person was given their name. Ask for any surprising or amusing stories that people want to share with the wider congregation.

Early followers of Jesus were given a nickname that's stuck for over 2,000 years – Christian. It's a good nickname because it means someone who belongs to Christ. But each Christian remains an individual and each individual is known to God by name.

### ACTIVITY

Give everyone a piece of paper. Invite them to tear it into a shape that represents the first letter of their name. Make sure that children are included and also helped if needed. Bring the shapes forward to create a collage headed 'God knows us by name'.

### BIBLE READING Acts 9:26-31

- Invite teens or children to **read the Bible**.
- Watch the animated story from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BK8MM42pi1A>
- **Spontaneous Mime:** as you read the story from the Bible, invite some volunteers (or pre-arranged actors) to mime the story. You will need to stop throughout the reading

to give directions or add more actors as required. You will need:

- Saul
- Followers
- Barnabas
- Apostles
- Greek-speaking Jews

USE THIS OUTLINE AS A BASIS FOR A MESSAGE.

# MESSAGE IDEAS



### WHAT IS IT THAT MAKES SOMEONE A GOOD FRIEND?

It's good to have friends – especially when things are tough. Saul found that out. Briefly fill in the background to the reading (from Acts 9:1-25). Saul was back in Jerusalem. This was the very place that he had been trying to get rid of Christians. Except now he was trying to JOIN the Christians.

If you haven't used it already, this would be a good time to watch (at least part of) the Youtube clip:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BK8MM42pi1A>

Barnabas deserved his name – it means 'encourager'.

- **Barnabas encouraged Saul**  
It must have been hard for Saul not to be welcomed by the Christians in Jerusalem. He needed a good friend. Barnabas stood by him and encouraged him to keep going. We can do this at our school or workplace. Talk about ways in which we might do this like Barnabas. He offered a personal welcome, took the initiative to introduce Saul to the group of believers and looked out for him.
- **Barnabas encouraged the Christians**  
The Christians in Jerusalem couldn't believe that Saul had changed. But Barnabas stood up for him and explained all that had happened. Barnabas helped them overcome their fears by getting to know Saul so that they could see that he had changed. Give local examples of what this might mean for us.
- **Barnabas encouraged the spread of the good news**  
Because Barnabas was willing to take a risk and introduce Saul into the body of Christians, the gospel spread widely. What does that mean for us?

### MESSAGE THEMES

In the third year after Paul's conversion, he is in Jerusalem and having difficulty in convincing the Christians there that he is truly converted. This is where Barnabas enters the picture as a mediator.

We first meet Barnabas in Acts 4:36 where he sells a field and offers the money to the apostles to be used to help them in their work spreading the good news. The name 'Barnabas' means Son of Encouragement. In our passage today he continues to live up to his name. He doesn't take centre stage but helps Saul to take a greater role. Saul was viewed with mistrust, suspicion, and even hostility by the apostles but Barnabas gave him a chance and urged others to do the same. And his trust and confidence in Saul was soon rewarded as Saul became a bold and powerful evangelist in the city.

At the beginning of their first missionary journey Luke refers to the pair as 'Barnabas and Saul' (Luke 13:2) but this soon changes to 'Paul and Barnabas' (13:42), an indication of Paul's growing prominence and Barnabas' willingness to show no resentment but to continue as an encourager in the background.

#### 1 Thessalonians 2:17-3:13

Early in his Christian life Paul learned from Barnabas about the difference it can make to a situation if someone takes on the role of an encourager. In his letter to the Christians in Thessalonica, Paul takes on the role of friend and encourager to them (2:17,18).]

He knew that we all need a good friend who knows us and loves us no matter what (1:2); who supports us and stands by us (3:1); who helps us up when we fall (3:2); who brings out the best in us (2:19); and who cares about our spiritual well-being (3:6).

Discouragement is like a pandemic – it is universal, it strikes everyone, it is recurring, we cannot develop an immunity to it and it is highly contagious so can spread by casual contact. The best cure – remember the Lord, he is sufficient (1 Thessalonians 3:12).

# 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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