

WELCOME *Home*

TEACHER RESOURCES

A Simple Gesture/A Powerful Impact

Have you ever received one? I know you have heard about them, and maybe you've been blessed enough to get one: that letter or email from a long-forgotten student who writes in a heartfelt way sharing the positive impact we had on their life a long, long time ago. Automatically, a smile comes to face and heart. And we are so refreshed and encouraged in our work!

On the other side of the coin, at a recent national ASCD Conference, the sectional presenter started his hour-long session asking the 75 people in the room to get out their phones, go to their contacts, and find a special someone they had NOT connected with in a year or more. Then he told us (and gave us time) to send a text to that person sharing a fond memory or kind word. We did that. At the end of the presentation an hour later, truly amazing stories were shared of warm responses that rekindled previous relationships.

So, what if . . .

EVERY WELS teacher, principal, director, aide would dig through their memory banks, old class lists, or congregational directories and find one person (OK, let's commit to TWO people) that they once knew as an active, faith-filled Christian, but now are pretty convinced have fallen away? What if each of us would reach out and re-connect with them by letter, email, text, social media, or face-to-face? That would be over 2800 WELS teachers times two contacts equaling over 5600 *Welcome Home* encouragements!

Could this effort have an impact on God's church? Could this contact come into a person's life at just the right time? Could the Holy Spirit work through this simple and yet mighty and widespread effort from his witnesses? The answers are obvious. Caring, loving contacts from a known and trusted person from their past could be powerful.

But wait, isn't this the work of our congregation's elders or someone else? I think we all realize that even if our primary calling is to third graders, 3-year-olds, or leading a school/early childhood ministry, we all can be part of this effort to lovingly evangelize to those who were on the path but now appear to have drifted dangerously away. Even more, that unique relationship we have as teachers can be an opportunity to reconnect in an authentic way to someone we care very much about. What a privilege it is that we can take part of the gospel ministry connecting people to Jesus!

But what would I say? What's the best way to start? Keep it simple. Even if the email is a bit clumsy or the letter a little awkward, the Spirit can use that! A short text can be a delightful surprise that opens a door. Our humble and sincere "Welcome Home" message and invitation could well be a trigger the Holy Spirit uses to save a soul, to draw them back to the means of grace. Imagine the impact!

Where are they now? Each day you serve current students and families faithfully, but who isn't here anymore? Who can you touch? How can you reconnect with them? How can that special relationship you once had be rekindled to open an opportunity to an encouragement of faith to someone who is wandering and lost?

Open up that contact list now and start writing! Check your Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram contacts. Find an address, an envelope, and a stamp. Imagine their delight to hear from you. Even more, imagine the delight in their hearing, "Welcome Home." May the Lord bless your efforts through the work of the Holy Spirit.

For more ideas go to: welscongregationalservices.net/welcome-home/