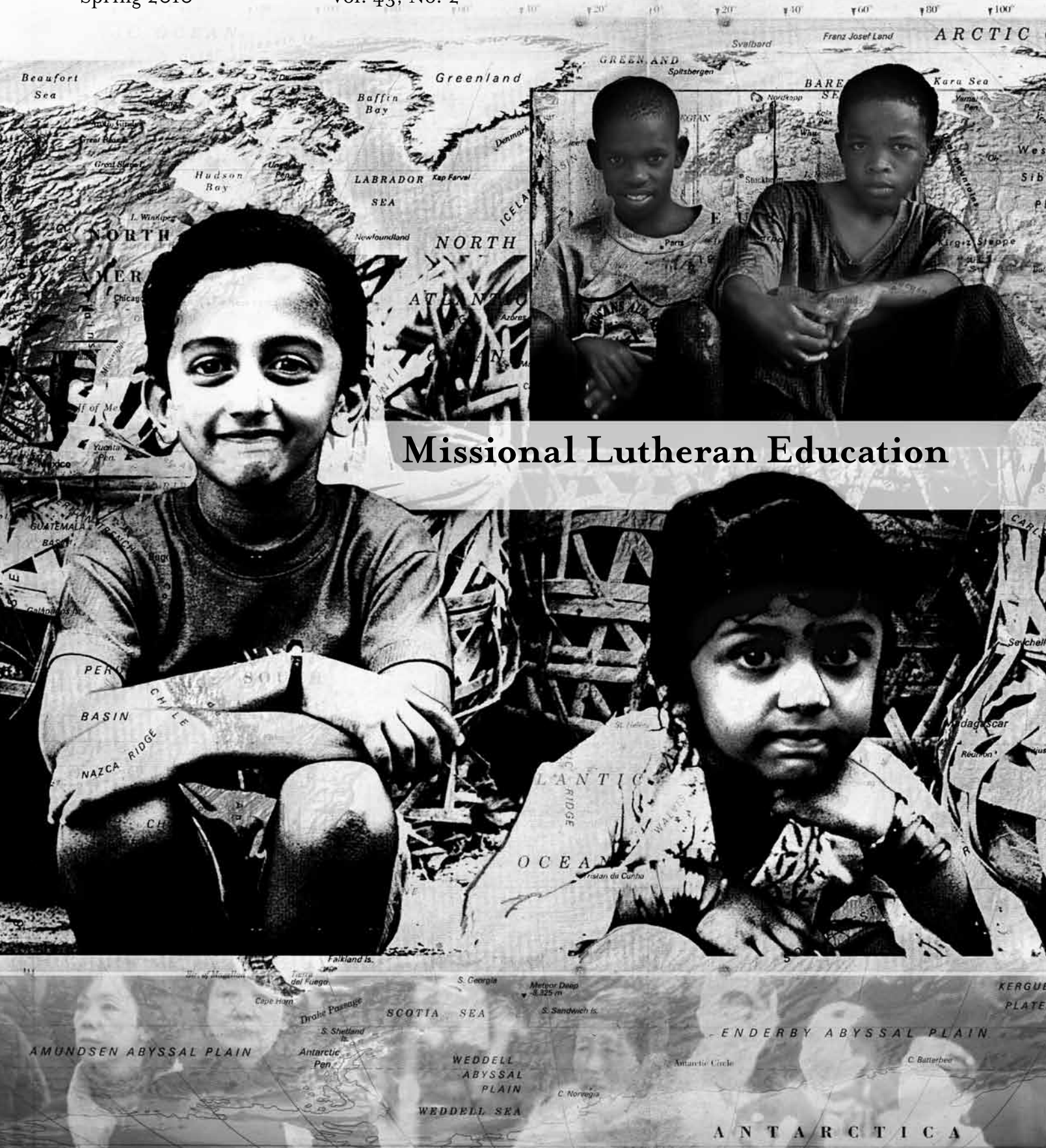


# ISSUES

## IN CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Spring 2010

Vol. 43, No. 2



### Missional Lutheran Education

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# ISSUES

## IN CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

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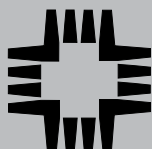
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# reflections

Nearly a year ago a small group of faculty, staff and board members was convened to kick off a strategic planning process to help lead Concordia University, Nebraska toward 2015 and beyond. As we assembled, Dr. Mark Blanke, our facilitator, reminded us: "It all starts with *mission*." Our first assignment was to review Concordia's mission statement. Without our mission firmly in hand, the balance of the planning process, developing vision, values, goals and strategies, is exceedingly difficult if not impossible. With our mission firmly in hand, the process of planning for our future is dynamic, exciting, propelling and fun!

As God's people, we know our mission. Jesus' commission to His disciples of all time and every age is recorded in Matthew 28. He said: "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you" (19-20a; NKJV). Our mission is crystal clear! This edition of *Issues* underscores how Lutheran education can be employed to help God's people live out the Great Commission. It is my prayer the edition is edifying and compelling as you work to carry out the task of Gospel proclamation where you serve, work, equip and live.

The following quotes were especially thought provoking and encouraging for me as I serve in Lutheran higher education and work to equip a new generation of students for mission in the church and throughout the world.

- "Everyone has a mission, that is, everyone is being sent by God to do something, somewhere, at sometime. Whether they fulfill the purpose for their sending is another matter." (Huneke and Steinbronn, page 9)
- "In other words, missional education is a part of everything we are and everything we do." (Snow, page 17)
- "When one sees daily living, going to school, interacting with family, spending money, being with friends, playing sports, and engaging with the media as contexts for living as Christ's disciple, this identity enables one to see multiple opportunities for service and witness." (Bergman, page 26)

"Missional education is not an easy task" (Snow). Amen! However, by God's grace, through faith and with the Holy Spirit at work in His people, we can accomplish even more in our efforts to assist Lutheran schools, Lutheran congregations, Lutheran Christians in doing and living missional education.

Brian L. Friedrich, President



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## Intruder Alert

In our homes and communities, we have all sorts of devices which enhance our ability to protect our children. From smoke detectors in our rooms to security systems in our homes, from obnoxious chimes in our cars reminding us to buckle up to community sirens warning of tornado danger, alarms warn us of potential danger. Our mission is to protect our children and those in our community.

The community of believers has also been given a mission, to teach the faith. This mission dates back to Moses and before, "You shall teach them diligently to your children" (Deuteronomy 6:7, 11:19). Are we not charged by our Lord himself to provide not only adequate instruction but quality faith formation when He said, "teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:20). There is no doubt; this is a vital part of the *missio dei*.

There is much work to be done in this mission field within our very walls! Researchers such as Thom Rainer, Search Institute and George Barna consistently indicate that our young are being taken from our midst. Kenneth Haugk estimates that 30 percent to 35 percent of our membership is not worshipping. While our Synod membership dropped 4.5 percent in ten years, 1993-2003, our Sunday school and kids' Bible study attendance dropped by an average of 25 percent! Concordia University's own Institute of Religious Education has identified that 50 percent of the children baptized are no longer in our churches by the time they enter junior high and that another 50 percent of traditional confirmation-age young people exit by senior high graduation.

Intruder alert! Who's in charge of ringing spiritual alarms for our children's eternal well-being?

Search Institute has clearly identified quality, formal Christian education as the key to predicting a maturing faith, but

who is guarding Christian education in our churches and schools? "Danger, Will Robinson, Danger!"

If there were a dangerous intruder in one of our public schools, emergency procedures would be in place to ensure the security and safety of our children. An intruder of another kind, a roaring lion, seems to have entered our faith communities, seeking to devour many of our children. Who's initiating emergency procedures to ensure our children are not taken away from us?

Each of our churches and schools needs "alarmists," perceptive guardians (pastors, parents, DCEs, grandparents), to make sure that our children have the best curriculum, gifted teachers, and well-equipped parents, and that first priority is given to Christian education in budget discussions. As our Synod restructures, we must demand that our children's faith formation is a top priority in resource allocation.

The Lutheran church is an apostolic, missional church, and quality Christian education is the mission given to us. Those who have ears to hear will hear the alarms ringing. It is time to boldly enact our spiritual emergency procedures!

1. Identify a person at the synodical level who is charged and empowered with advocating Christian education and healthy, effective confirmation training.
2. Allocate budget for this person or people to do the work well.
3. This is a mission of the church; allocate *Ablaze!* funds to do it well.
4. Districts and larger churches offer continual training for all teachers, pastors and laity. Support and expect "in-service training" for them.
5. Empower and equip parents to faithfully be the primary educator in the home. Offer resources and support groups for these vital teachers of the faith.

6. Expand curriculum beyond cognitive content to include application of our biblically faithful, doctrinally sound truths.

7. Assign someone or a group in your congregation to read the research, identify proved methods in faith formation and share this information with appropriate committees and boards. Encourage creativity!

8. Encourage one another to learn from each other how to build upon and improve healthy Christian education. Support and pray for fellow congregations.

9. View the faith formation of the children in our midst as priority one, and give this mission the first fruits of our time and funds.

10. There is no limit to the things which can be done to respond to the dangers facing us.

This emergency did not occur overnight, and it will not be remedied quickly either. But if we each adopt one or two things to improve upon this year, and another one or two or three next year, we will begin the emergency procedures to alleviate the danger to the children the Lord has given to us.

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## A Leaky Roof

Lutheran education, as a whole, gets a rather unimpressive grade in promoting the mission of the Church and evangelism.

Before you dismiss this assessment as being wholly cynical and overly critical, consider for a moment the historical purpose of Lutheran education. Our churches built schools to meet a need. When public education was not available, Lutheran churches provided an opportunity for children to learn to read. As they taught the children to read, they taught them an even more valuable life lesson, that we are a people in need of forgiveness and forgiven thoroughly by a Savior named Jesus. Youth confirmation programs are developed to empower young people at the brink of personal spiritual discovery to commit to a life of faithfulness to Christ. Seminaries and colleges are built on the premise that church workers, once educated and trained properly, will more effectively reach the people with Christ's message.

Yet, in 21st century America, an individual is more likely to believe in a God that wants one to be a "good person and to feel better real quick" than a God who made himself incarnate among us. Our educational models have failed to make a sociological impact on our communities and our culture. Confessedly, my educational programs have failed to make an evangelistic impact on my community.

Alan Hirsch, in the glossary of his book, *The Forgotten Ways*, defines the missional church as a church that "organizes its life around its real purpose as an agent of God's mission to world" (p. 285). Simply put, a missional church is one that views itself exclusively as a mission church regardless of context. The view of mission invades the very DNA of the congregation and defines how the church teaches, preaches, and reaches.

Describing our Lutheran educational systems (schools, confirmation programming, Bible studies) in their common modern form as a missional or *the* missional arm of a congregation is a misunderstanding of missional ministry. Mission in the church as Christ commissioned in Matthew 28:19 denotes sending our people into unknown groups of people and their communities. Frankly, Lutheran schools, churches, and the vast majority of American Christianity rely almost exclusively on the principle of attraction for growth. That is, it asks that members of the community be attracted and come to our facilities, join our programs and, at least in several minimal ways, become like our congregational community. It is an unfortunate reality that some Lutheran schools serve as a cloister for families who disapprove of the local public educational system or who would rather hire out the duty of teaching the faith. It is an unfortunate reality that church discipleship programs often function as an isolator for the youth and adults involved, being distant from their neighbors or protecting themselves from strangers who have yet to hear the Good News of Christ. For those outside of the church who are unlike the members of the church or who don't understand church customs, this separation is deeply alienating. We can anecdotally share stories that contradict this reality. But they are the exception, not the rule of the state of Lutheran education.

Lutheran education is neither wrong nor bad. Quite the contrary. It has a great and deep value for many families and congregations. It equips many young Christians with deep spiritual truths that they carry through life. And yet the vigor and vitality of the missional mindset is all

too absent from our conversations about education in our church body.

We have allowed the wonderful aspects of Lutheran education to be restricted to those who can afford it and who are already enough like us to belong in our community. We've isolated it from those who need the life-saving Gospel message. We have wandered a far way from going to the people of all nations and baptizing them.

There is a leaky roof in our house, but everyone is afraid of the repair costs. We must look beyond the cost and onto the joys of a functioning roof.

We have to talk about our fears and the cost of setting aside what we have known comfortably for years. We need to meet new community needs. We may need to restructure how we fund our Lutheran schools and the target audience of our schools. We may redesign our Bible studies so that they reach into neighborhoods. We can use coat distributions to help some families, divorce care groups to reach others, and an after-school tutoring program to help others, teaching Christ's love to each person along the way. As educators in the church, we do these things while compelling our members to focus on sharing Christ's message of grace in every context.

Education for its own sake cannot be the goal of Lutheran education. Missional education never falters in teaching Christ's Gospel and invading all segments of the church and community.

We can do this. We can make changes. I know we can because we've got a gracious, sending Lord behind us.

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## Missiodoctrinology

I wondered what planet I was on. I read online a DCENET question about confirmation and outreach. I replied, "I appreciate the concerns and opportunities I have seen about managing the program with guests/visitors/unchurched. I was somewhere else: Confirmation as Mission Education?! Absolutely!! Some part of confirmation is equipping, intentionally, our confirmands to be in mission."

To be in mission, to pass on the faith to others, "is not beyond the reach of the 'average' Christian. It is neither the sole province of professionals nor an optional activity for any Christian witness" (Kolb, *Speaking the Gospel Today* (1995), 18). We miss this reality easily and count ourselves unworthy or unable. When I assign college students the topic, "Myself as Theologian," most struggle with it.

Can we do youth and adult confirmation instruction in a way that fosters personal mission with Gospel-doctrine? Can Christian education enable us to become comfortable and occasionally competent, not only to say the right words to people who know the right words, but also to say the Truth of Jesus in other terms as well? Can we teach doctrine personally enough so that participants can speak it in "Digital" or "teen" or whatever language is needed?

Yes. We have and we can. Mission and confirmation instruction belong in the same program. We can:

1. Teach mission history: trace the moving of the Gospel from Jerusalem to Rome to Wittenberg to St. Louis, and also from Jerusalem to India in the first century A.D. Trace the mission history of our own church body or congregation.
2. Teach mission practice:
  - a. teach that some do go overseas or cross cultural, some do learn and say complex Christian things,
  - b. but teach also that each of us can:
    - i. Be courteous, especially to the stranger. U.S. citizens are assumed to be Christian; even our kindness to speak English slowly and clearly might open a door to witness.

- ii. Mature personally and include being comfortable with our weaknesses and troubles. To do mission from our "goodness" may simply convince others to stay away because they know they are bad. (Kolb argues that we witness in our vulnerability, p. 16.)

- iii. Develop relationship skills, small talk, even. Talking about Jesus is easier if we are comfortable talking about how the Packers are doing.

### 3. Teach "missiodoctrinology"

- a. I coined the term to make three points for students:

- i. Doctrine moves out to mission;
- ii. Mission comes from God's Gospel-doctrine;
- iii. Neither is complete without the other.

- b. Teaching doctrine well in mission in confirmation means teaching the connections to daily life. See the connections in *Screwtape Letters*. Consider also these connections:

- i. I frequently break the Fourth Petition in worry over upcoming meals.
- ii. Church workers trying to "solve any and all problems that come their way" violate the first commandment. They honestly "believe they are God" (Rockenbach, *Issues*, Winter 2008, p. 8).
- iii. We miss the Good News that the Gospel applies to us, e.g., to our prayer life. The name in which we pray (Second Commandment) is the name God gave us in baptism, His own.

I appreciate our efforts in confirmation instruction; a month ago I was the teacher. I passed a basketball around the sanctuary for 100 fifth to eighth graders and their parents, making a point about the Third Commandment. I was grateful that there

was a program in which I could teach. But I wonder:

Can we confirm parents—strengthen them—as teachers of the faith, to be in mission to their children and their communities? Particularly if "classes" at church supported them, parents could:

1. Do the basics: Commandments, Creed, Lord's Prayer, with children up to age five;
2. Do Luther's "meanings" with children up to age ten;
3. Use Luther's *Large Catechism* with children from age ten, perhaps reading a couple paragraphs at dinner each night (God grant us families that have meals together!).

This proposal (based on Luther's Preface to his *Small Catechism*) might mean that we no longer have confirmation instruction "at church," but might mean also that parents and children learn to hear and speak "Christian" at home. Children improve their language skills in schools, but schools build on what families have already begun. (Here I own up to what my lay parents taught me: mission. They saw that children in our neighborhood didn't go to Sunday school, so they opened one in our house.)

I realize that many people have had painful or boring experience with things Lutheran, not least the *Small Catechism*. Given the Catechism's appearance in languages around the globe—and Luther's intention that the head of the household teach it at home—might it be that our American English experience has lied to us? As we hear Gospel personally in the Catechism and doctrine, we might well be confirmed in missiodoctrinology.

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PAUL HUNEKE AND ANTHONY STEINBRONN

## What is Missional Lutheran Education?



• Illustration by Rachel Dermody •

SPRING 2010

## Introduction

Both of us enjoy a good story, and one of our favorite scenes from a great story takes place toward the end of J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Two Towers*. Frodo Baggins, the main character of the story, is extremely tired from his quest to destroy the "one ring of power" in the lake of fire at Mt. Doom. He is so tired and worn out that he tells his best friend, Samwise Gamgee, that he can't continue in the journey any longer. In response, Sam helps Frodo to understand their story in light of a much larger story that had been going on for ages. In those stories, too, people had plenty of chances of turning back and giving up, only they didn't because they were holding on to something important, life-changing and worth fighting for—they were part of *a story that really mattered*. Encouraged by those words, both Frodo and Sam continued their journey to the lake of fire in order to complete their quest and "save the Shire" (along with the rest of middle-earth).

One way that we can explore the question of "What is Missional Lutheran Education?" is through the interpretative lens of story. Life is all about stories, and every person and every culture has a story. As a matter of fact, the way we understand life depends on what conception we have of the *human story*. The challenge for each human being is that making sense of one's life story is not that easy to do, and that the majority of the world's population never does figure out the meaning of life and the way of salvation in Jesus Christ (Matthew 7:13-14; 13:1-9).

There is hope, though, for human beings as they seek to make sense of life: God has a story that makes sense of every human story. The aim and goal of *missional Lutheran education* is to help people make sense of their story in light of God's story. In order to accomplish

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• Illustration by Rachel Dermody •



this purpose of God for every human life, it is essential that those who believe in and know Him to *hear, know, tell and live* the stories that really matter and *serve others*, as His edifying and missionary priests and people.

## Mission, the Heartbeat and Essence of the Church

**Everyone Has a Mission.** Everyone has a mission; that is, everyone is being sent by God to do something, somewhere, at sometime. Whether they fulfill the purpose for their sending is another matter. Personally, we have embarked on many mission projects in our lives. Some of them are rather trivial, such as Tony's forty-year quest to make a hole-in-one in golf. But other mission projects are much more important, such as: earning a paycheck to provide for our families; being a loving spouse and caring fathers to our children; and being good friends to many. Yet our primary mission, the foremost reason that we exist according to God's plan, purposing and sending is to "go and make disciples of all nations." This mission is to permeate all of our life and, if you are a Christian, it is to permeate your life as well. Forrest Gump, in the movie, would periodically ask his mother, "Momma, what's my destiny?" Your destiny, as a Christian, is to be and live as His disciple and to make disciples of the nations.

**Abraham, and His Descendants, Blessed by God in Order to Be a Blessing to the Nations.** This was the missionary call that Abram received from God when God asked him to "leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land that I will show you" with the purpose that all the nations would be blessed. God is the One in search of the lost and, in His grace, He called Abram, the idolater (Joshua 24:2), and placed him into the service of those whom he did not yet know and who lived in places where Abram had never yet been.

After the calling of Moses and the dramatic deliverance from Egypt, Israel's understanding of its covenant relationship with God as His chosen instrument of blessing to the nations was more fully

developed and strengthened. Through Moses at Mount Sinai a covenant was made with Israel, an election not only to privilege but also to service, to further God's purposes for the nations. God did not choose Israel because they were more worthy than other nations or because He had no interest in the other nations; He chose Israel because He had a concern for *all the earth*.

However, as time passed, Israel neglected her mission to the nations and came to see herself as the sole object of God's mission. Consequently, they came to see their mission as one of preservation rather than of proclamation, of determining "who was in" and "who was out." This was a far cry from the conversation and the sending that God intended for the descendants of Abraham as His missionary people for, and to, the nations so that they might be blessed (Genesis 12:1-3; Galatians 3:6-9).

In baptism God reaches into the life of the baptized and claims him or her to be His own. The newly baptized is commissioned into His service and mission with the words, "through baptism God has added you to be His own people to declare the wonderful deeds of our Savior, who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." Every baptized believer has been called and set apart as the temple and instrument of the Holy Spirit, to be a kingdom of priests and to be His light to people walking in darkness, so that they might know Him who is the Light of the world (Matthew 4:13-16; John 1:9-14; 8:12).

**Our God Is a Missionary God.** From the very beginning of time and history, God's fundamental mission is to *save humankind*, for God wants all people to be saved and come to the knowledge of their salvation in Jesus Christ (1 Timothy 2:4). This mission of God began in a beautiful garden many, many years ago. Adam and Eve walked with God in intimate relationship of love and fellowship. They knew God not only as their Creator, but also as their friend and close companion. But Adam and Eve were not alone in the garden. Satan was there, and he came to Eve (and to Adam also, for he was standing there with Eve) and shared with them a vision of a

different way of life and tempted them with a different story.

**To Change a Life, You Have to Tell a Different Story.** *To change a life, you have to tell a different story*, and that is what Satan did. He wanted to change their relationship with God and their eternal destiny of life with God, so that they would die physically and perish eternally. Tragically, Adam and Eve embraced Satan's story and believed that they would be like God if they disobeyed God's command; instead, they brought about a "3-D world" filled with *despair, darkness and death*.

In response to Adam and Eve's sinful rebellion, God, in His grace and love, came to them. He came to have a conversation of *judgment*, by confronting them with their wrong actions against Him but, more importantly, He came to have a conversation of *hope*. For *to change a life, you have to tell a different story*. He promised them a Savior who would destroy the work of their enemy Satan and bring *rescue* and *salvation* to all who believed in that Savior (Genesis 3:15; John 3:14-18). Adam and Eve believed this promise, and their lives were changed for eternity. As a result of this conversation of hope with God, they began to have conversations of hope, and of life, with each other and with their descendants through this promised Savior.

When the proper time had come, this Promised One walked the earth and fulfilled the promises that God had made with humankind. Just as God walked with Adam and Eve in the garden, and changed their lives through a conversation of hope, so God became flesh in the Person of Jesus Christ

and had many, many conversations of hope with sinners. In the days of Jesus' ministry, as people heard His words about the Kingdom, and saw His loving and caring actions, many sinners repented of their sinful and perishing way of life, put their faith in Him as the world's Savior, and followed Him as His disciples.

## Biblical Foundations of Missional Lutheran Education

There are many biblical passages that could ground our understanding of missional Lutheran education, but the primary passage is 2 Timothy 3:14-17. Missional Lutheran education is predicated upon:

1. making known in the lives of all people the holy Scriptures which are able to make a person wise for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ (for it is in the stories of Scripture that we are able to see His heart revealed and His saving intentions made known through His words and actions);
2. thoroughly equipping, from infancy, God's people for every good work that God has prepared for them to do through the use of Scripture for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.

In other words, Lutheran missional education seeks to make disciples through *evangelism* and *edification*. In this 2 Timothy passage, we have the testimony of Paul that ever since Timothy was an infant, Lois and Eunice were active in making known "the stories that really matter" in the life of Timothy so that he could know of his Savior Jesus and be thoroughly equipped for his life as a disciple. Just as Jesus grew "in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men," so Lois and Eunice, along with other believers in Lystra as the body of Christ in that place, taught and modeled a way of life for young Timothy so that he could grow "in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13) and live a life that was pleasing in the presence of God (*coram Deo*) and a blessing in the presence of others (*coram hominibus*) as a disciple of Jesus.



Lois and Eunice understood and lived out the admonition that Moses gave to God's people during their wilderness journey. As the Israelites journeyed toward the Promised Land, they were to "love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength" *and* to impress His commands upon their hearts and upon the hearts of their descendants (Deuteronomy 6:5-6). Wherever the Lord led them, they were to tell the stories of the sacred Scriptures and impress His design for living upon one another as they sat in their homes and walked along the road, when they laid down and when they got up (Deuteronomy 6:7).

### **The Mission and Ministry of the Church's Educational Agencies**

The mission and ministry of the church's educational agencies is to make disciples<sup>1</sup> of all nations. The Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20) lays the double obligation upon His educators: the strengthening of present disciples in their already existing discipleship and reaching out to those who are not yet disciples with the hope that they will become His disciples.

Therefore, every task of the church makes sense only if it serves His mission of making disciples of all nations, whether this ministry takes place in the home, in the Sunday school classroom, in catechetical instruction for all ages, or in the classroom and hallways at one of our Concordia universities or seminaries.

### **The Integration of Mission, Ministry and Education**

Missional Lutheran education understands the importance of, and is committed to, a proper balance between *edification* (building one another up in the Christian faith and becoming mature in Christ), and *evangelism* (proclaiming the Good News of Jesus to those who do not believe in Him), and fostering a *healthy, vibrant organic body life*.

This integration is achieved through the counsel and practice of the five-fold gifts given to humankind from our ascended

Lord (Ephesians 4:11-13) which were clearly seen in the life of those who followed Jesus after His resurrection and ascension. Day after day, they met together and devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer (Acts 2:42), and being of one heart and mind (Acts 4:32). Because of their message, and their way of living together, the Lord added daily to their group others who were being saved. Their mission was not to preserve institutions and buildings, forms and structures, fill slots on various boards and committees, but to live His design for living and proclaiming the Good News to those estranged from the God who loved them and gave His life for them.

There is not sufficient space in this article to present a comprehensive examination of counsel and practice, but only a cursory introduction into their wisdom for our edifying and missionary endeavors.

**Apostolic and Prophetic Counsel and Practice.** Apostolic counsel and practice: answers the big questions that every person has in life;<sup>2</sup> examines the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ being the cornerstone;<sup>3</sup> puts the members of the body in their proper condition for their works of service so that the body is built up and edified; fosters an organic, healthy body life; engages in indigenous church formation; equips and sends workers into the harvest fields; and advocates a missionary posture by God's people as they interact with the nations so that they might become all things to all people so that they might bring others to a saving knowledge of God's grace in the person of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 9:19-23).

Prophetic counsel and practice would seek to help God's people remember who God is and what God has done for us and all people; to remember who they are and why they are in the world; to keep themselves free from idolatry; to engage in knowing the belief systems and life ways of the non-Christian nations and peoples who dwell in their mission context; convicting national, congregational and individual sins;

communicating a living hope in Jesus Christ; and to use their lives to prosper the Master's business of making disciples (Matthew 25:14-30).

#### **Evangelistic Counsel and Practice.**

Evangelistic counsel and practice would encourage and equip God's people to reach out to others with the narratives of Scripture so that they can help those who do not know God's story to make sense of their story in light of His saving story.

This is what Philip, the evangelist, did with the Ethiopian official as he had opportunity to talk about these things on the road from Jerusalem to Gaza (Acts 8). The official could not make sense of the passage that he was reading from Isaiah so, beginning with that very passage, Philip "told him the good news about Jesus."

It is our understanding from God's Word that every person is precious to God and that every person's life is like a "text." Evangelistic counsel and practice would encourage and equip God's people to understand and interpret the "text" of another person's life in light of His "texts," the sacred Scriptures, especially the saving "text" of the Word become flesh, Jesus Christ (John 3-4) so that those who do not have a saving relationship with Jesus might come to know and believe in Him.

**Pastoral and Teaching Counsel and Practice.** Pastoral counsel and practice would focus on: feeding and caring for the body of Christ; guarding and keeping the one true faith; forming and equipping God's people to be able to test the spirit, for not every spirit comes from God (1 John 4:1-6); guiding and exhorting God's people to be faithful stewards of the Gospel and of His many physical blessings, so that they might be a blessing to the nations through their Gospel proclamation and their deeds of love and compassion within the body of Christ and in the world; and cultivating a biblical spirituality in God's people.<sup>4</sup>

#### **Some Concluding Thoughts**

Life is all about stories, and life is all about hermeneutics, that is, making sense of

life's story. Thus, every person who dwells upon the face of the earth has a need for some kind of interpretative story line, a *metanarrative* if you will, that is able to help every human being make sense of their story, *and* to live out their story in ways that are pleasing in God's sight and a blessing to others.

Consequently, missional Lutheran education knows and believes that:

1. The most important place for discipleship formation is the Christian home as parents are equipped to teach and model the Christian faith and life and to instill a biblical worldview and live God's design for living;
2. To change a life for eternity, you have to tell a different story (John 3:1-8). We know from the Scriptures, and from human experience, that a person cannot by his or her own reason or strength come to Jesus Christ nor believe in Him but must be called by the Gospel and enlightened by the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, someone must be sent, and someone must preach the Good News, for "faith comes from hearing the message and the message is heard through the word of Christ" (Romans 10:11-17);
3. It is the mission of *every believer* to pray for the lost and, like their Lord who came to seek and to save the lost, to be the friend of sinners so that they may hear the Good News, confess by the power and work of the Holy Spirit that Jesus is their Savior; and join His people in the continuing search that "the found" undertake by God's grace for those whom He loves, "the lost." It will be those congregations, schools, and church's educational agencies who, being led by missional Lutheran educators, will equip His servants for personal proclamation of the Good News as His living letters and ambassadors to the nations;
4. Just as faith constitutes the proper relationship of the Christian to God, so good works and love exercised in vocation<sup>5</sup> define a person's relationship



to one's neighbor. That is, the Christian life can be summarized in two words, *faith* and *love*, through which every believer is placed midway between God and one's neighbor, becoming God's instrument of blessing as His missionary priests and people to the nations;

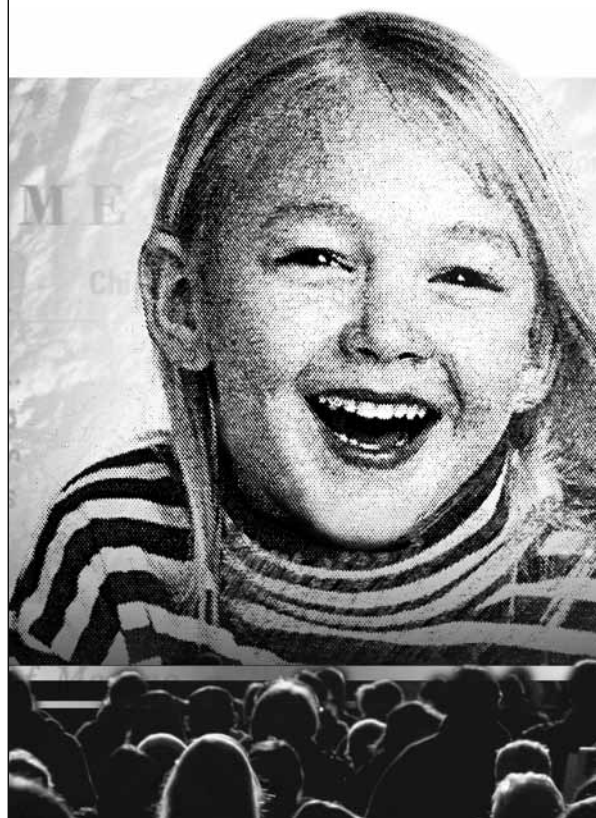
5. Missions is a test of our faith and an expression of our hope and of our love. The modern Church follows in a long succession of bridge-builders throughout history—Christians who have tried to relate the biblical message to their particular cultures. Yet, if we are to build bridges into the real world, and seek to relate the Word of God to the hearts and minds of people in our day, we must be committed to three things: (1) a lifetime of studying God's Word; (2) a lifetime of studying and listening to the peoples whom we are seeking to edify and evangelize; and (3) being His "incarnational bridges" as we communicate His Word and message of hope in words and ways that the hearer can understand (Romans 10:11-17).

## Notes

1. What does it mean to be a disciple? A disciple is a believer in Jesus Christ who is an active student of God's Word, building one's life on the person and word of Jesus Christ. A disciple does more than just master the Word; a disciple is stamped and fashioned in the mold of Jesus Christ and is a living witness to Him. Jesus identified two fundamental marks of a disciple: (1) if you hold to My teaching, you are really My disciples (John 8:31-32); and (2) if you love one another (John 13:34-35).
2. Who is God and what is God like; how does God feel toward me and the rest of humankind; how did this world come into existence and for what purpose was it created; who am I and why am I here; what will happen to me when I die; what is true and what is false; what is right and what is wrong; and what role does religion play in the organization of life.
3. There is only one foundation upon which a person can build one's life now and for

eternity and that one foundation is Jesus Christ; consequently, apostolic counsel and practice are concerned about what kind of foundation (Matthew 7:24-27) will be built upon and what kind of building (1 Corinthians 3:11-15) will be constructed in a person's life.

4. Luther's understanding of a biblical spirituality consisted of prayer (*oratio*), meditation upon God's Word (*meditatio*), and trials/struggles/temptations (*tentatio*). Life is filled with tribulations and trials and temptations; these drive us to prayer, asking God for His help and counsel; and these drive us to His Word for counsel, wisdom and consolation.
5. The purpose of our callings in life is that one's neighbor is served as God reaches down, through His servant, for the well-being of humankind. Thus, God clothes Himself in the form of an ordinary person who performs His work on earth. Through vocation each believer serves as a "mask of God" behind which God can conceal Himself as He scatters His gifts, and proclaims Good News, to the nations.
6. Each believer is His disciple, witness, ambassador, priest, servant, steward, salt and light in the world.

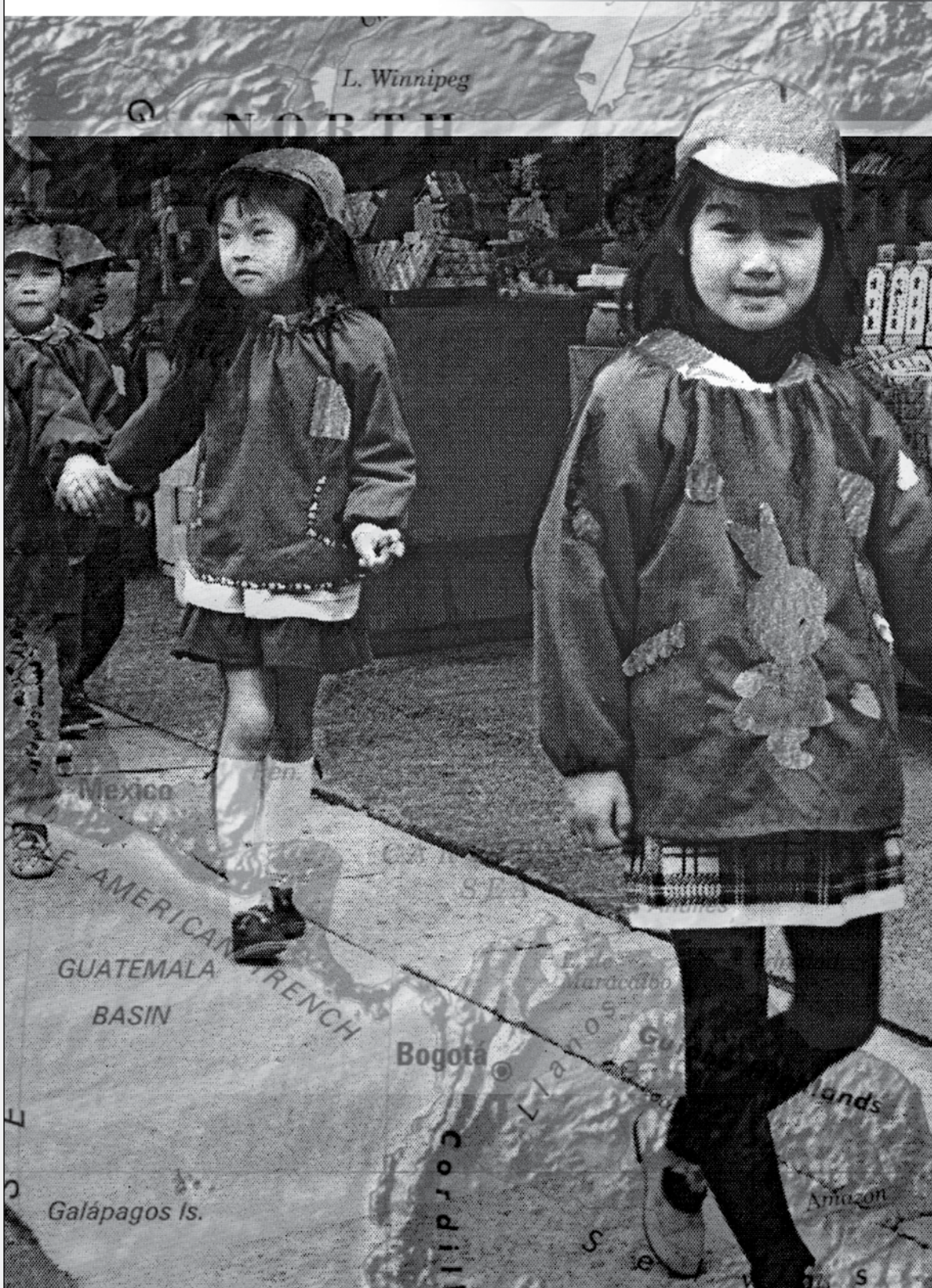






SCOTT SNOW

## MISSIONAL EDUCATION



• Illustration by Seth A. Boggs •

ISSUES



## **Missional Education Starts with Mission, and Mission Starts with the Heart of God**

To get to the heart of missional education, one must start at the very heart of God! And the heart of missional education is the heart of the Gospel!

God was, through the sacrifice of His innocent, holy Son, Jesus, completely and freely forgiving the sins of mankind and reconciling the world to Himself. "God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Corinthians 5:21). And now, we who are reconciled through faith alone, are "appointed by Christ" to be His ambassadors of reconciliation. God, speaking through Paul, told the Corinthian Christians and He tells us, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation: the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And He has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are, therefore, Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making His appeal through us" (2 Corinthians 5:17-20a).

Jesus Himself said that the purpose of His incarnation and earthly ministry, His purpose for coming into our world, was to seek and to save the lost. "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost" (Luke 19:10). It is purely, then, by His grace, that He calls us into that same mission of seeking the lost that He might save them. Isn't that what He means when He calls us to be salt and light? "You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out

and trampled by men. You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead, they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:13-16).

Lutheran Christians are particularly fortunate—"well situated"—to utilize the resources and the opportunities for sharing the Gospel which are afforded to us throughout the whole system of Lutheran education from the earliest ages to our senior saints, and with everyone in between.

LCMS congregations operate the largest Protestant parochial school system in America. A recent report for the 2009-2010 school year showed that the LCMS has 2,444 total schools with an enrollment of 255,176 students in grades pre-school through 12th grade. The average Lutheran elementary school has 114 students and the average high school, 187 students. And in some of these schools, more than half the students are either unchurched or are not members of a Lutheran congregation.

Bill Cochran, Executive Director of LCMS Schools writes: "Lutheran schools celebrate their unique ministry to children and the families they serve. We have an opportunity to share the message with the community in which our schools are located ... that Lutheran schools are Christ-centered, academically strong, and respectfully operated!"

Robert Newton, the LCMS California-Nevada-Hawaii (CNH) District President, recently said in his presidential report to the 2009 CNH district convention, "One of the last bridges remaining between our church and the unchurched in the post-church era is the education of children. Here is where our Lutheran schools, pre-schools and early childhood education centers continue to serve as critical mission posts in our communities."

In many of his private conversations and certainly in most of his public presentations, Terry Schmidt, Associate Director for

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School Ministry, often boldly proclaims that "Lutheran schools are on the front edge of missions in North America! Care and compassion are the hallmarks of Lutheran schools. Christian service is where we are different from the public school. Lutheran schools are caring for and serving children first. They are family-centered and are intentionally reaching out into their communities with the love of God!"

Lutheran Missional Education, then, is all-encompassing and to be effective must involve every aspect of the Church's education system, including: pre-schools and day cares, elementary day schools, junior highs, senior highs, and the colleges, universities and seminaries of the Church.

Each day in our Lutheran schools around the country and throughout the world, the Good News of Jesus, the living and the reigning Savior, must be shared in word and in action. Each day in our Lutheran schools, educators, pastors, secretaries and other leaders all have the tremendous opportunity to share the precious Gospel with children and their families. We celebrate the joy of being in Lutheran education and the blessings of being able to worship, talk about, and be a witness for our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Just how is this done among us? Rachel Klitzing, Executive Director of School Ministries for the Pacific Southwest District of the LCMS, wrote an article in March 2006 of the former *New Harvest* publication of the Center for U.S. Missions, listing ways that Lutheran schools *in mission* reach out to families who do not yet have a living faith in our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Among suggested "touch points" of the Gospel are opportunities for:

- Teachers to teach children songs about Jesus, prayers, and Bible stories. Children repeat these at home. Questions about our faith are welcomed and encouraged!
- The pastor to meet with new non-Lutheran and unchurched parents at the beginning of each school year and talk about what Lutheran Christians believe and teach in making a Gospel presentation.

- All staff members to be intentional in witnessing to newly enrolled families, letting them know that the staff views their role as being partners with the parents in nourishing their children's faith.
- Students to be involved in regular worship services as readers, instrumentalists, ushers, greeters, parking lot attendants, and singers. This gets parents through the doors of the church on a regular basis.
- Follow-up with families. On the school enrollment application, there is a place that indicates if parents would like to be contacted by one of the pastors. Many indicate that they would. Follow-up by the pastors is prompt and timely.

Lutheran schools, and our Lutheran school educators, are challenged every day to provide the highest quality of education, thus assisting and preparing children for success in this world and eternity. They strive to make every program an excellent program in order to draw people to the cross through us, because what we provide adds value to their lives, their families and their eternal welfare!

In another issue of *New Harvest* (March 2005), Paul Mueller, a former LCMS missionary in Africa, wrote, "Lutheran schools can be Christian missionary outposts which teach students to share Christ and which reach into the community not only to find more students, but to find unchurched families too! ... A school will not intentionally reach out to the lost unless it sees its primary job as missionary. Without this passion, the school will simply serve its own."

It would be a mistake, however, to assume that only synodically trained teachers serving in a parochial school setting are able to be involved in missional education. In addition to these dedicated servants of Christ, there are countless numbers of committed Lutheran Christians who are educators within the public school arena. While certain limitations are set on what, how and where they can share their Christian faith, these dedicated disciples of Christ nevertheless have the opportunity to put their faith into





practice through their Christian example, and as opportunity affords, in response to questions from their students, share the living Word of God, Jesus, with the students who know, respect and trust these teachers.

In addition to full-time professional educators within or outside the system of Lutheran education, missional education suggests and necessarily encompasses virtually every aspect of parish life and ministry. In other words, missional education is a part of *everything we are and everything we do*. It includes: worship and preaching; stewardship and outreach; music ministries and athletics; Sunday school, mid-week school and Vacation Bible School; men's and women's group ministries; youth and adult educational small-group opportunities in homes, the church and throughout the community.

### **Being Missional Is Not Simply a Matter of Something We Do; Rather, It Is a Matter of Something We Are (or, Something We Strive to Become)**

Mission education and "being missional" encompasses more than accomplishing a few occasional mission-related activities. As helpful and well-meaning as they may seem to be, an occasional mission trip or activity, a gathering or an offering to "help someone somewhere" as a part of "doing mission work" are not necessarily *being missional*. Rather, being missional means "thinking 'mission' at every level." Being missional means asking, "How does mission touch everything we do and with which we are involved? How is mission a part of every aspect of our congregational life? How can everyone involved in church and school activities begin to see all their work and efforts through 'mission eyes'?"

It's easy for us to see as "missional" those activities which directly involve proclamation of the Gospel, and yet at the same time, there are also hundreds of other supportive activities which, while they may not directly involve sharing the Gospel, contribute

significantly to accomplishing our mission and providing an atmosphere conducive to sharing the Gospel. These are all of the efforts and activities which provide resources, equipment, facilities and support for those who are directly involved in spreading the Good News.

In other words, missional education causes us to see that doing dishes and cleaning up after a meal where unchurched visitors from the neighborhood were invited into the church, setting up and taking down chairs, providing a ride, babysitting for the unwed, unchurched mother who is taking adult instruction classes at the church, for example, can all play an intentional role in the mission of sharing Christ. Some of the work is done “on the front lines,” and other support functions happen “in the background,” with each one playing an important part in the mission of the church, proclaiming Christ.

Our use of church and school facilities, the fellowship activities in which we engage and the people we invite, various types of community involvement, providing a Christian presence and witness in parades and at county and state fairs, interacting with teachers and students by volunteering in public schools, and meeting and working with police, fire fighters, and other public servants are all ways in which the servants of Christ might, with missional hearts, intentionally and effectively engage their community and world, seeking the uncommitted and unreached for the Kingdom of God.

These activities could be a part of being missional. Missional education seeks to empower, convince, encourage, inspire and equip men and women, boys and girls, grandpas and grandmas in our churches and schools to be a part of Christ’s mission to the world.

Missional education is not an easy task! Being missional isn’t always easy! But God blesses us in this task to which He sends us and His whole Church on earth. His Holy Spirit is at work through His Word, and we’ll know that missional education is happening, and that, as a church body, we’re “getting it”

when: we find out that school-aged children are telling other neighborhood children about Jesus and are inviting them to Vacation Bible School; we hear our college and university students sharing their faith with others in their dormitories and classrooms; young adults are bringing hope in Christ to their friends; adult believers are prepared and are giving “an answer to everyone who asks [them] to give the reason for the hope that [they] have ...” and as they do so “with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience” (1 Peter 3:15-16a).

### **Missional Education for Lutherans Involves Disciples Making Disciples**

It certainly is our goal as Lutheran Christians to share our faith whenever and however God gives us the opportunity to do so. We pray for “eyes to see and ears to hear” so that we will be aware of the “divine appointments” God gives us every day to bear witness to His love through the sacrificial life, death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. God provides “open doors of witness opportunity” for us every day, and our goal is to go through those open doors!

As educators, as parents, as professional church workers, as individual believers in Christ, and as congregations, schools and districts, we seek to share the love of God in Christ with our own children and with everyone with whom we come into contact. By the power of His Word, through our witness, the Holy Spirit works in the hearts of the hearers to create faith.

At the same time, our vision ought not to culminate with the hope of making only one or two disciples here, and maybe one over there. Instead, our Spirit-inspired goal ought to be to share the faith so that God will make disciples who make disciples, who make disciples, who make ... We desire to be a part of mission multiplication, an explosion of mission here and everywhere!

Teachers, and all Christians for that matter, need to learn the basic skills for confidently sharing their faith with both children as well as adults. And, as has been

said, it doesn't end there. We not only teach the faith, but we also teach how to share the faith which has been received. Missional education is a matter of disciples making disciples!

## **The Changing Face of Missional Education**

How have things changed? We live in an entirely different world than a generation ago. Support, motivation, expectations, our competitors have all changed.

The Gospel and its message of eternal salvation through faith in the sacrificial work of Christ, however, never changes. Nevertheless, the ways in which we seek to effectively share the timeless Word of God must and do adapt to the culture, setting and the needs of our hearers. God, I believe, allows the various forms of media, the Internet, YouTube, the use of video and DVD

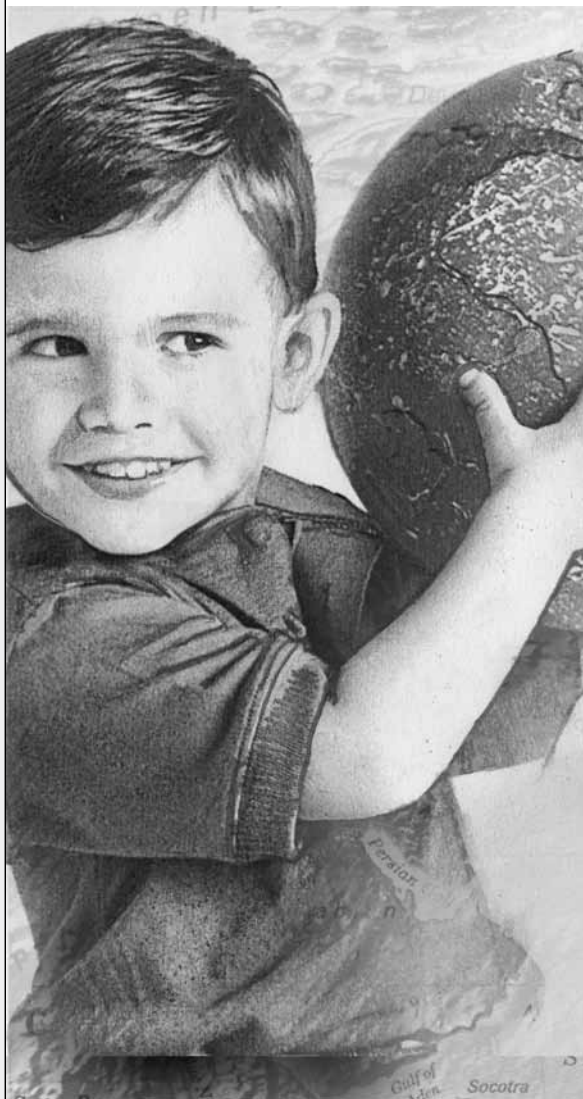
technologies, iPhones, Twitter, Facebook, blogging, the use of brand new technologies "yet to be seen" as ways in which the Gospel can be spread to "a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language ..." (Revelation 7:9a).

Change is hard! John Maxwell stated, "If we are growing, we're always going to be out of our comfort zone." But, perhaps, an even better way for us to think of it is to follow the suggestion of Gene Bunkowske who holds the Fiechtner Endowed Chair of Christian Outreach at Concordia University, St. Paul, Minnesota. Bunkowske advocates the idea of "expanding our comfort zones," that is, learning, growing and becoming more comfortable with what's "new" for us. In this context, it involves being willing to try new things and to do whatever it takes (within the bounds of the Law and the Gospel, of course) to share our faith in Jesus Christ with those who do not know and live for Christ as their Lord and Savior.

## **You Are Not Alone in this Task of Missional Education**

Excellent partnerships exist, and many useful resources are available to assist and equip individuals, church workers, schools, congregations and districts in the Gospel task of missional education. Among others, some of the best might include the Synod's *Ablaze!* Web site ([www.lcms.org/ablaze](http://www.lcms.org/ablaze)), LCMS World Mission ([www.lcmsworldmission.org](http://www.lcmsworldmission.org) or 800-433-3954), The 72—Partners on the Road (the former "harvesters") ([www.lcmsworldmission.org/The 72](http://www.lcmsworldmission.org/The 72) or 800-433-3954), The Center for US Missions ([www.centerforusmissions.org](http://www.centerforusmissions.org)), Lutheran Hour Ministries ([www.lhm.org](http://www.lhm.org) or 800-944-3450) and Concordia Publishing House ([www.cph.org](http://www.cph.org) or 800-325-3040).

May God help us to give "an answer to everyone who asks [us] to give the reason for the hope that [we] have" ... and as we do so, may we do it "with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience" (1 Peter 3:15-16a). To that end may God bless us in this most important task of the Church!







MARVIN BERGMAN

## Confirmation: An Outreach Ministry?!

• *Illustration by Andy Johnson* •

ISSUES



Imagine a confirmation class which includes Roman Catholic, Jewish and Muslim youth! <sup>1</sup> Think of the questions, discussion, interaction, teaching and witnessing! Years later, these young people will remember their confirmation. This is what can happen when leaders, confirmands, and their parents are grasped by a vision of confirmation as an outreach ministry and a "You gotta come" attitude.

The purpose of this discussion of confirmation as an outreach ministry is to: 1. Present a rationale for structuring confirmation on the basis of the Great Commission; 2. Identify those to whom the Great Commission is directed; 3. Highlight opportunities for outreach among American youth; 4. Examine data related to the question, "Is confirmation in The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod an outreach ministry?" 5. Offer perspectives on ways in which confirmation can be an outreach ministry in a congregation's mission.

### A Rationale: The Great Commission

Though references in the literature to confirmation as an evangelism ministry are few, biblical texts which address this perspective are, among others, five grace-based directives given by the Lord of the church in Matthew 28:16-20, Mark 16:15-18, Luke 24:44-49, John 20:19-22, and Acts 1:8. In the Matthew 28 passage, one sees the *basis* of the mission, the *content* of the commission, the *activities* or *process* of the command, and the *promise* linked to "Go and make disciples."<sup>2</sup>

The *basis* of the commission is the authority of a risen Lord who has overthrown the power of sin, death, and Satan. The foundation of Christ's authority is a messenger's announcement on the first Easter morning, "He is not here, for he has risen, as he said"

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(Matthew 28:6). In suffering and dying, rising from the dead, and proclaiming Good News, Christ is exercising the authority given to him to carry out the Father's mission-mandate, that of reclaiming a terminal humankind and world.<sup>3</sup>

The *content* of the commission is equally clear, that of a sending Lord who charges his apostles to GO to the nations! Though GO in the Greek text is not an imperative, its centrifugal force is shaped by a syntactical connection with the imperative, "*Make disciples!*"<sup>4</sup> A contemporary restatement is, "As a disciple, your purpose in life, at work, in the family, in the church, and in the larger community is engaging in the mission of making disciples!" The pursuit of this purpose is seen in early church records which reveal that Christians often witnessed spontaneously in their relationships with relatives, friends and co-workers.<sup>5</sup>

Origen described a Christian who began a conversation by reporting on an event or faith experience in the Christian community while paying careful attention to anyone who listened or asked questions. When a person expressed interest, the Christian would then take one aside for additional conversation.<sup>6</sup> As a church historian reminds us, the exponential growth of the early church occurred through the witness of the apostles and their co-workers such as evangelists, pastors, teachers, deacons, and deaconesses as well as traders, merchants, slaves, workers, state officials, wives, husbands, and others.<sup>7</sup>

The *activities* or *process* of the commission is engaging in a single mission with two sides, baptizing and teaching. Through teaching, an adult is led to the baptismal waters which connect one with the death of Christ and rise to a new life (Romans 6:1-4). Through teaching, one who is baptized is further equipped for service and witness. The relationship of teaching, baptizing and teaching is seen in the early church's catechumenate which transformed pagans into disciples through the work of the Holy Spirit.

The *promise* of the mandate given to Christ's church is a guarantee of the presence, power,

and peace of the Risen Lord. As Christians engage in their mission, attacks by many sources in hostile environments can generate fear, a lack of vision, an absence of initiative, and a disinterest in change. However, that all opponents are subservient to a living Lord means that followers are to take risks and move forward with confidence in carrying out their mission.

### **To Whom Is the Great Commission Given?**

These perspectives on the Great Commission sketched in broad strokes probably evoke an affirming response. What can motivate dissent is the question, "To whom is the Great Commission given?" More specifically, two contentious questions are, "Did Christ commission only the apostles and, in our day, only their representatives who are ordained?" Or, "Did Christ commission every believer as his witness?"

To make the claim that the recipients of Christ's commission are only the apostles and their representatives today, or to say, for example, as some within our circles maintain, that a Christian nurse who shares the message of John 3:16 with a dying patient in a hospital cannot present an effective witness, is a misunderstanding which ignores a basic principle of interpretation, "Let Scripture interpret Scripture."

Questions related to the recipients of Christ's command need to be examined in the light of the Bible's revelation of the character and mission of the living God. The big picture in the Scriptures portrays God as a sending, calling, rescuing God who: called out to Adam in the Garden (Genesis 3:9); made a covenant with Abram (Genesis 12, 15, 17); delivered Israel through the Exodus (Exodus 14); sent the prophet Amos to a rebellious people (Amos 7); promised a Messiah (Micah 5:2); named John the Baptist as a messenger to prepare the way (Luke 1:76-77); fulfilled promises in the birth of the Savior (Luke 2:11); and affirmed the mission of Jesus in his baptism (Matthew 3:16-17). The same mission was given to the

Son who commissioned 72 missionaries, who sacrificed his life on a cross for the sins of the world, who sent the 11 on a world-wide mission (John 20:21), and who, through the Holy Spirit, empowered his followers to carry the Good News to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8).

That the Great Commission reveals Christ as a sending Lord who assigned his mission to apostles and to every follower is seen in the Book of the Acts and the epistles of Paul and Peter. Acts tells us, for example, that when a persecution in Jerusalem scattered believers, the apostles remained in the city while "those who were scattered went about preaching the Word" (Acts 8:4; also see 11:19-20). Paul encourages the saints at Colossae to present their witness to Christ in winsome ways (Colossians 4:6). Peter names the exiles of the dispersion as a royal priesthood whose mission is to proclaim "the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9).

That every Christian is commissioned to live as Christ's witness is not a new teaching. Luther, in a treatise written in 1523, describes the roles of both pastors and laity. He points out that a congregation of necessity must have teachers and preachers who administer the Word of God, with congregations calling those who are qualified and gifted to carry out the ministries of the pastoral office. He also states:

No one can deny that every Christian possesses the word of God and is taught and anointed by God to be priests ... But if it is true that they have God's Word and are anointed by him, then it is their duty to confess, to teach, and to spread (his word).<sup>8</sup>

Luther's perspectives on the priesthood of believers and the call given to every believer to engage in the mission of Christ's church are discussed in sermons and commentaries in *Luther's Works* and in recent studies of Luther's mission perspectives which correct earlier misinterpretations of Luther's views on world mission.<sup>9</sup>

C. F. W. Walther, following Luther's lead, describes a two-fold glory given to the spiritual priesthood of believers. The first is that a believer can approach the holy God, pray to him, and serve him. The second is that a priest can, in the name of God, make the will of God known to others by bringing them his Word, preaching and interpreting.<sup>10</sup>

On the basis of the Scriptures and teachers of the church as Luther and Walther, we can move beyond arguing about the recipients of the Great Commission by affirming that every Christian has been commissioned by the Lord of the church to follow in the footsteps of Priscilla and Aquila who took Apollos aside and "explained to him the way of God more accurately" (Acts 18:26). We can assert that confirmands, as baptized people of God, are commissioned to let their light shine in the world (Matthew 5:14, 16).

### **"The Fields Are White for Harvest"**

The context in which Christian youth, their families, and congregations can bring light is depicted in a major, definitive research study, *Soul Searching*, which investigated the spirituality of youth in the United States, ages 13-17.<sup>11</sup> The study reminds one of Jesus' exhortation to "look ... lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest" (John 4:35). Here are samples of outreach opportunities suggested by the study.

1. The majority of American youth are not antagonistic toward religion and religious institutions. Instead, American teens generally regard religion as a "very nice thing" that is good for lots of people because religion provides a positive force in individual lives and in society.<sup>12</sup> Even among non-participating youth, nearly 50 percent feel positive or somewhat positive about religion, while one-third are neutral, and only about 17 percent are negative.<sup>13</sup> These and other views expressed by youth led the research team to observe that many apparently non-religious teens could become active through a greater initiative of sincere, committed believers.<sup>14</sup>

2. Religion for large numbers of American youth tends to function in the background of their daily lives.<sup>15</sup> Religion is something that you grow up with during the Sunday school years and then jettison when becoming more mature. What really counts in the lives of young people is school, one's circle of friends, sports, popular culture, family, work, fun, issues related to sex and illegal drugs, and the electronic media.<sup>16</sup> With youth living within a socially constructed environment for five to 17 years, the culture for many is a key shaper of their lives, teaching that religion will become more important when settling down, especially if one marries, and if one has children.

3. The mainstream religion of American youth is described as "Deistic, Therapeutic, and Moralistic." For the majority of youth, God is seen as someone who is "up there," controlling and directing the cosmos, and watching. The character of the Triune God revealed in the Scriptures is largely absent. Instead, God is a butler or therapist who solves problems when one is in trouble. Another feature of this popular mindset is that God is a lawgiver who spells out rules which are good for other people, but not for one's self, since each person is the source and authority of moral knowledge which is to help one to reach the goal of self-fulfillment.<sup>17</sup>

4. Opportunities for faith communities to connect with youth are many. For example, about one-half of non-religious teens say that they believe in a god, while another one-third are open to the possibility of expressing such belief. Only a minority, about 17 percent, reject a belief in God. One in four of non-religious youth believes in divine miracles and the existence of life after death.<sup>18</sup> Only 46 percent of young people who consider themselves to be Christians report that they had confirmed their faith or had been baptized.<sup>19</sup> (This statistic does not include infant baptisms.) Nearly one-half of American youth have attended religious retreats, conferences, or rallies at some time during their lives.<sup>20</sup> Forty-four percent of non-religious teens are incorporating aspects



of Christian practices, such as prayer, in their own spiritual lives.<sup>21</sup> Of the non-attending teens, nearly one out of four says that if it were a personal decision, attending religious services regularly would be their choice.<sup>22</sup> Though only 2 to 3 percent of young people report that they are active spiritual seekers,<sup>23</sup> the level of positive attitudes toward religion and religious institutions suggests that as many as one-half of American young people could become spiritual seekers.<sup>24</sup> Conversations with youth suggested to the research team that more non-Christians are seeking Christianity than Christians seeking non-believers!<sup>25</sup>

5. What is missing in the lives of the majority of American youth is a firm foundation and the resources for believing and living as committed persons. The biggest blocks to faith are an intellectual skepticism regarding faith and other vague reasons for dropping out.<sup>26</sup> Nearly one-half of the non-attenders could not think of a reason for not attending.<sup>27</sup> An ignorance of the basics of the faith is evident in the inability of many youth to respond to questions regarding specifics of the faith, such as the authority of the Scriptures and the reality of miracles reported in the Bible. The researchers note a great deal of slippage in the effectiveness of Christian education, even among conservative Christian denominations.<sup>28</sup>

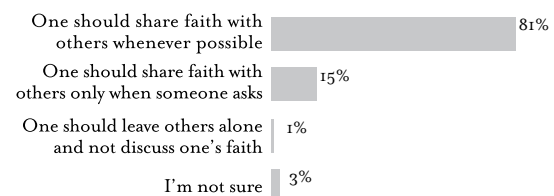
6. The study identifies a minority of committed Christian youth whose faith is making significant differences in their lives. Highly committed youth, about 15 percent of American youth, say that: their faith is very important to them; their parents are engaged in a faith community; they attend religious services weekly or more often; they participate in youth groups; and they pray and read the Bible regularly.<sup>29</sup> Data show that these youth are doing much better in their lives than less-religious youth, reporting, for example, better relationships with parents and higher levels of satisfaction at school.<sup>30</sup> Though faith is not to be seen in an instrumental way of improving one's chances of success as defined by society, such differences are the result of being transformed by what Paul describes as the renewal of one's mind (Romans 12:1-2).

7. While opportunities to connect with this age group are many, the challenges are significant. Though the Millennial Generation (born 1984-2002) is seen as fairly traditional in their religious beliefs, they are less religiously active in a number of ways. They are less involved in any particular faith and attend religious services less often than older generations at a comparable point in their life cycles.<sup>31</sup> Religion is less important for this generation than it was for members of Generation X at a similar age. However, the intensity of the commitments of Millennials who value faith is as strong as it was among previous generations when they were young, which points to the importance of equipping this younger generation for service, witness, and leadership roles in the church.

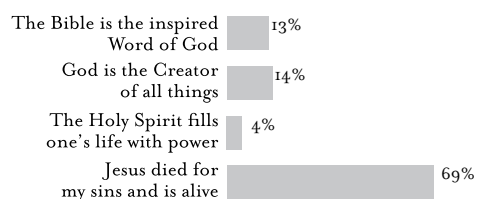
## Is Confirmation an Outreach Ministry?

A multitude of outreach possibilities among American youth raises the question, "Is confirmation in the LCMS an outreach ministry?" Responses by a random sample of confirmation leaders (mostly pastors and DCEs), confirmands and their parents in a study conducted by the author describe the extent to which confirmation is equipping young people to be messengers of Good News.<sup>32</sup>

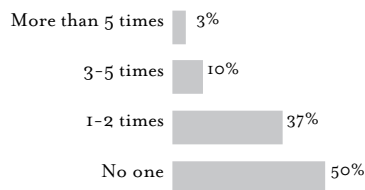
When confirmands are asked, "Is it okay for a person to share one's faith with others, or should one leave others alone?" their responses to four options are:



How confirmands view the content of their witness is seen in responses to the question, "What is the most important teaching of the Bible to share with a person who is not a Christian?"



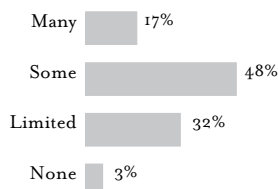
The extent to which confirmands actually engage in outreach is the focus of two items. **"In the last year, how many times have you invited a non-Christian friend to a church event such as worship or youth group?"**



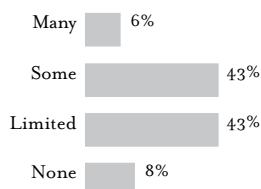
A second statement asks about the frequency of speaking this gospel message: **"That Jesus died for one's sins is a message which I have shared in the last six months with:"**



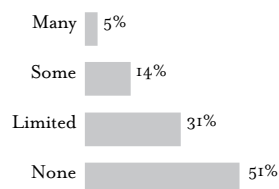
When confirmation leaders are asked to identify **"Opportunities for confirmation ministry to equip youth to share their faith,"** they see their opportunities as:



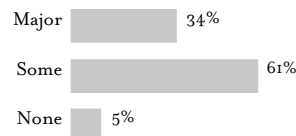
Confirmation leaders' responses to the question, **"What are the opportunities for a confirmation ministry to reach youth not connected to Christ?"** are:



When confirmation leaders are asked about the number of **"Senior high school youth, not confirmed, who one knows could begin confirmation,"** their responses are:



In reflecting on the question, **"How much attention was given to 'Sharing one's faith' as a topic in the confirmation curriculum?"** leaders indicate that the level of attention is:



The data suggest a number of observations. That eight of every ten confirmands assert that one should share faith with others whenever possible, and that about seven of ten confirmands identify the Gospel as the central message of the Christian faith, reflect intentional teaching by parents and leaders. Their impact is significant in a society which sees that faith and spirituality are personal, private matters, and that good works merit God's favor.

Responses by three of every ten confirmands who do not identify the Gospel as the most important teaching of the Bible to share suggest the need to give this central teaching greater attention. A lack of clarity regarding the Gospel among some confirmands also appears in their responses to the item, **"Although there are many religions in the world, most of them lead to the same God."**



That 41 percent of the confirmands endorse a universal view of salvation perhaps is related to the level of parental agreement with the same statement, the 31 percent who agree that most religions lead to the same God. This finding deserves attention, for an absence of a clarity of the Gospel message impacts motivation for outreach.

Two findings, that 81 percent of the confirmands affirm the view that one should share faith whenever possible, but that 58 percent shared this message two or fewer times within the last six months, suggest addressing the challenge of translating stored information into actions by practicing the telling of one's own story and The Story. (See "What is Lutheran Missional Education?" by Huneke and Steinbronn.)

With 48 percent of the leaders describing opportunities for confirmation ministry to equip youth to share their faith as “some” and another 35 percent identifying their opportunities as “limited” or “none,” one wonders why the confirmation experience cannot equip every confirmand to share one’s faith. That only one of five leaders knows “many” or “some” non-confirmed high school youth who could begin confirmation suggests an opportunity for leaders to “scan the horizon” in looking for youth who do not confess the Name. The 66 percent of the leaders who identify the level of attention given in the confirmation curriculum to “Sharing One’s Faith” as “some” or “none” suggests a consideration of an evaluation of the curriculum in order to find more opportunities for making this topic a priority.

### **Perspectives on Structuring Confirmation for Outreach**

How a confirmation ministry can expand the mission of Christ’s church by engaging confirmands in outreach is seen in four goals. One aim is for parents, leaders, and congregation to assist young people to be “grounded” in the faith. A second purpose is to enable every confirmand to demonstrate and articulate one’s faith relationship with Jesus Christ. A third goal is to engage confirmands in outreach events throughout the confirmation experience. A fourth target is to seek opportunities to involve non-Christian youth and/or their families in intentional outreach events.

The following perspectives on structuring confirmation for outreach are intended to suggest possibilities rather than program prescriptions.

Equipping confirmands for living as messengers of the Good News begins with vision, God’s vision portrayed in the Scriptures which proclaims Christ’s redemption of the world. Leading confirmands who develop a missiological perspective of the narratives of the Old and New Testaments, the chief events, key people, the important messages, the timelines

of the Old and New Testaments, and the basics of the Six Chief Parts of *Luther’s Small Catechism* (easily possible by grade six) will enable young people to stand on a foundation for seeing their role in the larger mission.

A second component in confirmation as an outreach arm of the church is to help young people and parents to see their identities as disciple-servants of Jesus Christ. A study of discipleship depicted in the Gospel of Matthew, for instance, can help young people to move beyond viewing confirmation as a time for becoming a church member (a view still current) or the church being an option in the life of a disciple. When one sees daily living, going to school, interacting with family, spending money, being with friends, playing sports, and engaging with the media as contexts for living as Christ’s disciple, this identity enables one to see multiple opportunities for service and witness.

Another way of expanding opportunities for ministry and outreach is for parents and confirmation leaders to help young people connect faith and vocation. Since many confirmands are beginning to think about their future, confirmation ministry is an opportune moment for exploring an array of biblical and theological teachings that highlight faith in everyday life, such as the priesthood of believers, the ministry of every Christian, and Luther on vocation. As one who has interacted with students in a church university, this writer has observed that only a minority of young adults beginning their university studies reflect an understanding of Christian vocation. By doing a better job of connecting faith and vocation, parents and confirmation leaders can help young people to connect their gifts and opportunities to live as Christ’s disciple throughout the life stages.

A fourth approach is to help young people and parents develop a clear perspective of the nature and mission of the church. While young people largely reject the distinction made by Boomers and the Busters, “Oh, I’m a spiritual person, but I’m not religious,” the majority of American youth, including



believers, see one's connection with a church as an option.<sup>33</sup> By exploring the many corporate images of the church in the New Testament and by identifying the center of congregational life as Word and Sacraments, young people will be able to see the false dichotomy, "I'm Christian, but I'm not part of a church," and affirm the mission of the Body of Christ as well as their personal roles in this mission.

Confirmation can serve as a launching pad for mission by assisting young people and their parents to be supremely clear on the doctrine upon which the church stands or falls, justification by grace through faith. The need for a more clear Law-Gospel perspective among confirmands is seen in their responses to the statement: "In order to be saved and have eternal life, I must obey God's rules and commandments."

I strongly agree—19 percent; I agree—38 percent; I disagree—27 percent; I strongly disagree—16 percent. While the statement asks for a discerning eye, agreement by nearly 60 percent of the confirmands (as well as 41 percent of their parents) with this salvation by good works statement calls for a commitment to find ways in which the heart of the Christian faith can be communicated and assimilated more clearly by confirmands and their parents.

A sixth approach to structuring confirmation as an outreach ministry is to teach the Six Chief Parts of *Luther's Small Catechism* through a missional worldview by following Luther's ordering of the Six Chief Parts.<sup>34</sup> For example, viewing the Ten Commandments as God's radical diagnosis of the human condition can serve to create a sense of urgency for personal restoration and healing. The missional thrusts of the



three articles of The Apostles' Creed present exceptional opportunities for confirmands and parents to see God's character as a gracious, sending God. That the Lord's Prayer is missional can be made clear by examining each of the seven petitions as a prayer for seeking and receiving God's gifts which empower for mission. A missional view of Baptism and Holy Communion transforms one's perspectives on the sacraments and leads to a deeper grasp of the relationship of sacraments and mission. Conceptualizing how Confession and Absolution play an essential role in everyday living as well as in conflicts in the life of a disciple and in the church will lead to healing which motivates for mission. As a bonus, exploring applications of "The Table of Duties" can foster commitment to vocation as disciple-living.

Another facet of implementing confirmation ministry as an outreach ministry is to help parents and youth to develop a storehouse of Gospel images, narratives, concepts and teachings. Learning the language of faith as expressed in biblical images and teachings, the creeds of the church, and *Luther's Small Catechism* provides one with tools that can be used in a variety of contexts. Confirmands who are given opportunities to practice speaking the language of faith and translating into the idiom of their hearers will have resources for sharing their stories and the stories of the Gospel. (See the article by Huneke and Steinbronn.)

An eighth strategy of planning confirmation ministry as an opportunity to equip youth and their parents as witnesses to the Gospel is to assist confirmands and parents to reflect on their social networks. Doing an audit of one's relationships of who is and who is not connected to Christ and his church can result in naming dozens of individuals. With youth engaged in networks that include six to eight close friends, school and community contacts that may number as many as or more than 150 individuals, and the social media which may involve thousands, a vision of witness opportunities in one's relationships can lead to identifying surprising possibilities.

Engagement in service projects within a congregation, in one's community and in national and international settings can provide confirmands and parents with opportunities for connecting service and verbal witness. As a church leader observed, service is the soil that prepares for sowing the seed of the Word that creates receptive hearts. That 43 percent of the confirmands in the confirmation study report that they had engaged in three to six service events in the congregation or larger community during a year reflects leader and parent awareness of the value of service learning.<sup>35</sup>

A tenth perspective is the recognition that welcoming guests, assimilating visitors, and engaging non-Christian youth and possibly their families in the confirmation experience involve responding to a number of challenging variables. Such factors include the motivation of seekers, quality of relationships, an understanding of the culture and beliefs of others, the ability to engage in dialogue, and the readiness of parents, youth, leaders, and congregations to commit to outreach. It is understood that any or a combination of factors may at times make an assimilation of non-Christian youth in a confirmation experience difficult.

### **Confirmation: An Outreach Ministry?!**

While challenges may be many, some confirmation leaders and congregations are shaping confirmation ministry for outreach. In an informal survey, leaders identified a number of strategies, such as: confirmation classes that meet after school so that confirmands can invite their friends; monthly "Jam" events with a focus on "bring a friend"; seminars for young people who desire to explore the Christian faith; small group leaders who nurture non-connected youth; retreats and lock-ins with an emphasis on bringing non-church friends; sports and musical events for confirmands and their guests; confirmation as a summer introductory experience that targets non-members; seminars on parenting during

the teen years for the larger community; confirmands and parents who host a VBS in a neighborhood apartment complex or a trailer park; group service projects that connect with a youth organization in the community; helping confirmands to develop an enthusiastic mindset for growing in the Word and introducing others to Christ.<sup>36</sup>

Think of the benefits of structuring confirmation both as a faith-forming and a sending ministry! That 93 percent of LCMS confirmands, 98 percent of their parents, and 96 percent of the confirmation leaders say that confirmation is "very important" or "important" points to the power and potential of this educational ministry to shape and ignite faith.<sup>37</sup> For millions of Lutherans, confirmation is the major educational event in their lives, especially when followed by one's continuing growth through the Word. What an extraordinary opportunity for confirmation leaders, parents, and congregations to equip young people for service and witness in a society in which 85 percent of American youth do not express faith in a living Lord! What a window of opportunity to equip young people as leaders in the church's mission! What a special time to engage a generation which, among six living generations, could have the greatest impact on the church's mission for years to come. This will happen when "?" becomes "I!"

## Notes

1. Reported by DCE Justin Vertrano, St. James Lutheran Church, St. James, New York, in *The Lutheran Witness* 127.1 (2008):14.
2. Robert Kolb, "The Five Great Commissions and Contemporary Christian Witness," *Missio Apostolica* 2:2 (1994): 75-76.
3. Robert Newton, "The Great Commission: Given to Whom?" *Issues in Christian Education* 41:3 (2007): 26.
4. Daniel Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996) 645. Thanks to Charles Blanco for directing attention to this resource and for his insights related to the Matthew 28 passage.
5. Michel Dujarier, *A History of the Catechumenate* (New York: William H. Sadlier, Inc., 1979), 59-60.
6. Michel Dujarier, *The Rites of Christian Initiation* (New York: William H. Sadlier, Inc., 1979), 33.
7. Neill, Stephen. *The Layman in Christian History*. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1963), 67.
8. "That a Christian Assembly or Congregation Has

- the Right and Power to Judge All Teaching and to Call, Appoint, and Dismiss Teachers, Established and Proven by Scripture." *Luther's Works: Church and Ministry I*. Vol. 39. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1970), 309-310.
9. See Ingemar Oberg, *Luther and World Mission: A Historical and Systematic Study* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2007), Klaus Detlev Schulz, *Mission from the Cross: the Lutheran Theology of Mission* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009), and Volker Stolle, *The Church Comes from All Nations* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2003).
10. C.F.W. Walther, *The Congregation's Right to Choose its Pastor*. (Fort Wayne: Concordia Theological Seminary, n.d.), 64. For a discussion of Walther's and Luther's views, see Joel Lehenbauer, "The Priesthood of All Saints," *Missio Apostolica* 9:1 (2001): 8-17.
11. Christian Smith, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005). For a study of the same population made five years later, see Christian Smith, *Souls in Transition: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009). Both studies provide the church with a significant agenda for the next ten years.
12. Smith, *Soul Searching*, 124-125.
13. Smith, 104.
14. Smith, 270.
15. Smith, 129.
16. Smith, 159.
17. Smith, 173.
18. Smith, 42-43.
19. Smith, 48.
20. Smith, 53.
21. Smith, 82.
22. Smith, 103.
23. Smith, 79.
24. Smith, 76.
25. Smith, 82.
26. Smith, 237.
27. Smith, 104-105.
28. Smith, 44.
29. Smith, 110.
30. Smith, 263.
31. "Religion Among the Millennials." *Pew Forum*. 17 February 2010. 18 February 2010 <<http://pewforum.org/docs/?DocID=510>>.
32. Marvin Bergman, "What's Happening in LCMS Confirmation?" a non-published study (2009). Major financial support was provided by Thrivent Financial for Lutherans, with additional support given by the Departments of Youth Ministry and School Ministry of the LCMS, the Board for District and Congregational Services, Concordia University, Nebraska, and the Nebraska District.
33. Smith, 149.
34. See Charles Arand, *That I May Be His Own: An Overview of Luther's Catechisms* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2000), 129-132.
35. Bergman.
36. The author expresses gratitude to the DCEs and pastors who responded to the survey. Thanks also to Terry Groth for sharing a number of perspectives related to confirmation and outreach.
37. Bergman.





## book reviews

### **Mission from the Cross: The Lutheran Theology of Mission.**

**Klaus Detlev Schulz.  
St. Louis: Concordia Publishing  
House, 2009.**

Detlev Schulz is professor and director of the Doctor of Missiology program at Concordia Theological Seminary, Ft. Wayne. He served the church as missionary in South Africa before coming to the seminary. His insights for mission and missional issues are shaped by his extensive research and study of mission as well as his own personal experience, which enhance his discussion of practical missional challenges of contemporary societies.

As its title indicates, Schulz engages his reader in a discussion of the theology of mission and mission practice that is uniquely Lutheran. In his own words, the book is intended, "to provide a particular informed outlook on mission by calling pastors, theologians, students, and all Christians back to basics, to our theological heritage understood particularly in light of the theology of the cross" (Preface x). The book is divided into three sections: the nature and study of mission today, the mission of the Triune God, and the Church, her task and contexts.

The global missionary task is unfinished. Only 33 percent to 34 percent of the world's population claim to be Christian, and the responsibility of fulfilling the missionary task belongs to all Christians. Schulz says, "All Christians are involved in mission after having received the good news of their reconciliation with God through Christ. They have the desire of sharing that wonderful news with others without selfishly protecting and withholding it from people who live estranged from God. Mission is the measure of the Church's health" (8).

However, the organizing principle for Lutheran mission theology is the doctrine

of justification, and Schulz demonstrates this by evaluating other theological approaches through the Scriptures and Lutheran Confessions. He evangelically introduces contemporary missional issues and provides clear and Lutheran correctives based on the doctrine of justification. He indicates the centrality of the doctrine of justification by referring to Carl Braaten: "The relative importance of any Christian doctrine (is) determined by its proximity to the central article of faith. All doctrines, in fact, must somehow be corollaries of the vital principle of justification" (70). Thus the engagement of all believers in the mission of God is not out of guilt and shame, but a joyful response to the reality of being justified before God by grace through faith.

Schulz's definition of the *mission Dei* provides the reader a window to his position on the organizing principle of Lutheran missiology, "The *mission Dei* is Trinitarian redemptive and reconciling activity in history, motivated by God the Father's loving will for the entire world, grounded in the atoning work of Jesus Christ, and carried out by the Holy Spirit of Christ through the means of grace. God justifies man through the means of grace; delivers him from rebellion, sin, and death; subjects him under His kingly reign; and leads him and the redeemed community toward the final goal in history" (97).

He affirms the role of the church in the accomplishment of the mission of God. The church has to carry out the missional mandate and be concerned about the social, physical, cultural, emotional and spiritual well-being of all people (101-102). He also suggests that the lives of those involved in

mission "must reflect the claims of their message" (179). The Trinitarian mission, thus, does not stop at the temporal needs of people; the ultimate goal is the reconciliation of all people to the Triune God and each other.

The role of the third person in the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, is very critical to the expansion of the *mission Dei*. Schulz has successfully made the Lutheran case on the role of the Holy Spirit in the conversion of the unbeliever and in the equipping of the Church with the "dynamism of mission." The instrumentality of the church in the *mission Dei* is guided and empowered by the Holy Spirit. Through the means of grace, the preached and Sacramental Word, the Holy Spirit revives the unbeliever from spiritual death to life and propels him into the mission field to proclaim the good news of Jesus.

Schulz also provides a balanced view of the role of the priesthood of all believers and the office of public ministry (239ff). Whether one agrees on his position on the role of the laity or not, Schulz gives biblical and confessional reasons for the whole church being engaged in mission. He states that every Christian has an obligation to pass on the witness to others privately. In other words, most of witnessing is done in private, in individual Christians' homes, work places and social contexts.

This book will be important to Lutheran missiological discussion; it is a helpful guide to the Christian leader and affirming to all Christian readers.

**Dr. Yohannes Mengsteab**

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**Mission Accomplished?: Challenges to and Opportunities for Lutheran Missions in the 21st Century. Edited by John A. Maxfield. Association of Confessional Lutherans National Free Conference No. 16 and Luther Academy Lecture Series No. 12; published by The Luther Academy, St. Louis, Missouri.**

The book compiles nine papers presented at the "Congress on The Lutheran Confessions" at Bloomingdale, Illinois, in the spring of 2005. The papers are about mission in the Lutheran church. It starts at Martin Luther's time, describing how missions have developed up to today, including challenges and opportunities for Lutheran missions in the 21st century.

The title, *Mission Accomplished?*, is a rhetorical question demanding a negative answer. The mission will not be accomplished until Christ's second coming.

Klaus Detlev Schulz in his paper, *Wittenberg with Love: Martin Luther's Theology of Mission*, demonstrates that Luther's entire theology is permeated by missionary dimensions. Luther believed and taught that God's Word is constantly in motion and not limited to time or space. In the second petition of the Lord's Prayer, Luther asks that the *kingdom may come through Word and Holy Spirit to those who are not yet in it*. Luther's theology is one of mission. He didn't separate the two.

Frederik Sidenvall's paper, *Early Swedish Lutheran Missions in North America: A Mission Begun but Not Fulfilled*, describes the first mission work done by the Lutherans among the Native Americans in 1642 to 1648. This work was started by Johannes Campanium, a pastor in New Sweden. He translated Luther's *Small Catechism* into the Virginia-American language. Sidenvall also discusses historical factors in Sweden that were involved with the mission work in America and how that came to an end.

Roland Ziegler's paper is titled *Neuendettelsau and Hermannsburg*. His subjects are two rural Confessional German pastors in the 19th century who started mission work outside the structure of their church. They were William Loehe

and Louis Harms. Loehe heard the German immigrants in southern Ohio crying out for pastors. When Loehe made an appeal, he received donations. However, no pastors, candidates, or teachers volunteered. So he began training laypeople as teachers and sent them to America. There they could catechize and lead reading services. The plan was that they were to connect with the Ohio Synod and receive further training at the seminary.

Loehe also distinguished between exterior and interior mission. Exterior mission is directed to those who are not in any way reached by the Gospel. Interior mission focuses on those who are in danger of forsaking the faith or have already fallen from the faith. His plan in doing exterior mission work among the Native Americans was to have an entire congregation settle close to the Native Americans so that the pastor of the congregation could also serve as a missionary to the Native Americans.

Harms also trained missionaries in his congregation. He bought a farm, and the students worked on the farm while taking classes at the mission seminary. They were sent out as missionaries and colonists who were self-supporting through their work. Once an indigenous congregation was established, a group would move on to start a new congregation.

Mark Braun's paper, *The Reiseprediger: A Confessional Lutheran Lesson for Today*, looks at the circuit rider, or as the Germans called them, Reiseprediger. He describes their roles and ministry in the Wisconsin Synod. He also discusses five lessons from the *Reiseprediger* program which we can apply to today's mission work.

Martin R. Noland in his paper, *The Greatest Commission Luke 24:44-49 as the Criterion for Evaluating Lutheran Missions*,

sees Luke 24:44-49 as the foundation of the Great Commission. The seven points for seeing this text as a better Great Commission passage than Matthew 28 are:

1. It was necessary for the Christ to suffer and rise on the third day;
2. The Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms speak of Christ's coming to earth;
3. The passage leads to a greater understanding of the Scriptures;
4. Repentance and forgiveness of sins are expected of the mission audience;
5. Affirming that mission work will happen is relevant today;
6. The language in Luke's gospel is expressed in the indicative mood, while the language in Matthew's gospel is expressed in the imperative mood;
7. Law and Gospel are to be preached to all nations.

Klemet Preus in *Pietism in Missouri's Mission from Mission Affirmations to Ablaze!* looks at the Mission Affirmations resolutions that were adopted in the 1965 Convention and the *Ablaze!* resolutions adopted in 2004. He analyzes these resolutions through a paradigm in *The Lost Soul of American Protestantism* authored by D. G. Hart.

Daniel Preus's paper, "Christianity—Exclusive and Inclusive," delivered during the banquet, states that Christ alone for salvation is exclusive. There is no other way to eternal life. However, God's grace is inclusive. It is universal and offered to everyone.

The last two papers are by Tim Quill and Marcus Zill. Quill deals with global missions, and Zill discusses campus ministry among international students.

These nine papers present a history, theology, and interpretation of missions from Luther's time until today. The book at times reflects some of the tensions in the LCMS related to the meaning of mission for today.

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### **The Gospel Driven Life: Being Good News People in a Bad News World. Michael Horton. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2009.**

Author, seminary professor, and radio host Michael Horton wrote *The Gospel Driven Life* as a follow-up to his previous book, *Christless Christianity: The Alternative Gospel of the American Church*. The goal of this second book is "to reorient our faith and practice as Christians and churches toward the gospel: that is, the announcement of God's victory over sin and death in his Son, Jesus Christ."

The book is written in two parts. The first six chapters deal with "the breaking news from heaven" that Jesus Christ came to save us. Horton suggests that people get this Good News confused.

The average person thinks that the purpose of religion is to give us a list of rules and techniques or to frame a way of life that helps us to be more loving, forgiving, patient, caring, and generous ... We are called to love God and neighbor, but that is not the gospel. Christ need not have died on a cross for us to know that we should be better people ... But the heart of Christianity is Good News. It comes not as a task for us to fulfill, a mission for us to accomplish, a game plan for us to follow with the help of life coaches, but as a report that someone else has already fulfilled, accomplished, followed, and achieved everything for us. Good advice may help us in daily direction; the Good News concerning Jesus Christ saves us

from sin's guilt and tyranny over our lives and the fear of death. It's Good News because it does not depend on us. It is about God and his faithfulness to his own purposes and promises.

Horton concludes the first section by reminding us that "because of Christ's work outside of us, in history, we are not only justified but are being transformed from the inside out." Horton rightly encourages us to look to Christ and His Word, not our own actions. "Live from Christ's work for you, with Christ's work in you, toward Christ's return to deliver you from this present evil age. Don't feed off of your New Year's resolutions; rather, feed off of your union with Christ."

The second part of the book speaks of the kind of community a Gospel-focused ministry generates. As the first part of the book reminds us to look *out* to Christ and *up* to Christ, now we are to look *around* to the members of our new family, the church, and to the world to which God calls us to be his servants and his witnesses. The church prepares us to do that.

Unfortunately, Horton suggests, the church too often gives the impression that we believe in the powers of this age (marketing strategies, catering to consumer whims, and self-centeredness) rather than the powers of the age to come. He suggests the way to escape this captivity is to recover our focus on the drama, doctrine, doxology, and discipleship that center on Christ.

Horton writes, "Church becomes the place not only where individuals get together to share their experiences and express their

piety, but where they become part of a cast in a plot of salvation history. It is no longer just 'me and my personal relationship with Jesus,' but a communion of saints to which we belong."

The second part of the book is summarized by the words, "When we know what we believe and why we believe it, fed richly on the indicatives of the gospel, we find ourselves filled with faith toward God and love toward our neighbor ... While we certainly serve each other through our gifts in the body, the principal place where we do the Word is not in the church but in the world."

The author states in the "introduction" that the book was written for a wide audience of Christians, including teenagers, younger lay people, parents, and pastors. It is aimed at those who want to see their own lives and their churches become more Gospel-centered. It is not a quick or easy read. Teenagers and younger lay people would have to be particularly motivated to wade through all that Horton offers. It should also be mentioned that Horton writes from a Reformed perspective, and his treatment of the sacraments reflects that. While Horton offers some interesting insights into present culture, if someone wants a good summary of what it means to be Gospel-centered, perhaps reading Robert Kolb's *The Christian Faith: A Lutheran Exposition* would be more productive.

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