


ISSUES

IN CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Summer, 1981

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in the church

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EDITOR'S NOTES

Because evaluation has been done so poorly so often in our individual past experiences, and because the results have so often been misapplied, I believe that a survey would show that a majority of any population becomes uncomfortable whenever an individual or organizational evaluation in which they will be involved is imminent. Evaluation, generally speaking, has a bad reputation, but without it one does not know whether progression or regression is taking place.

This *Issues* is devoted to the theme, "Evaluation in the Church." The authors and the Editorial Committee hope that the ideas presented in this number of our publication will be useful to our readers for planning positive ways to use evaluation as an instrument to make their personal and professional activities more enjoyable and more profitable. Good evaluation pays bigger dividends than the energy investment it requires. Give it an honest try.

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A FOREWORD

Evaluation:

Appraising the Progress of Parish Programs

Evaluation, like dental checkups and physical examinations, is something which most of us tend to avoid and put off as long as possible, until later, when we hope we will have more time.

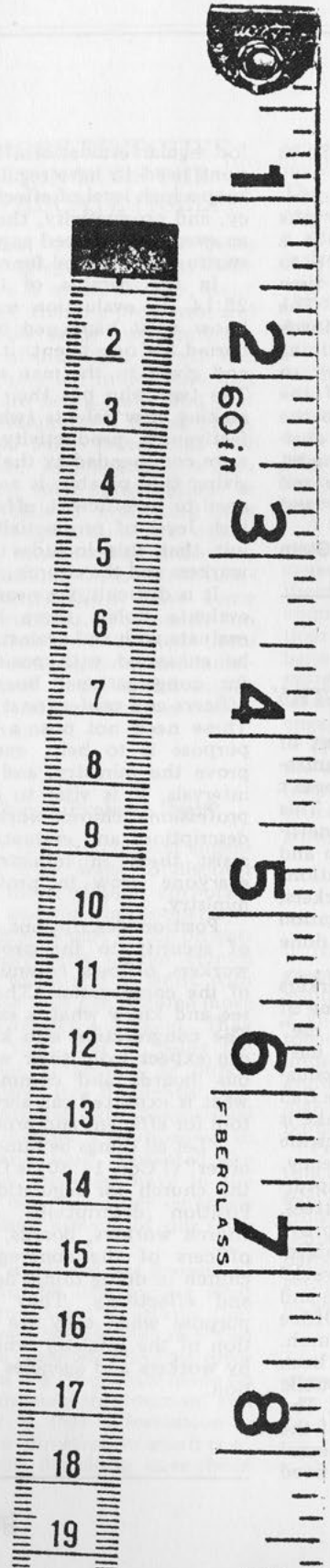
Evaluation should be more program centered than person centered. Its primary purpose is not to grade, rank or oust people from positions but to analyze procedures, measure progress toward goals and hopefully to identify some better ways of getting the work done. Just as the purpose of a financial audit is not to get rid of the treasurer but to provide a clearer picture of income, expenditures and utilization of resources, so evaluation should be thought of as a kind of inventory of methods.

The three major articles in this issue compliment each other very well. They provide a balanced combination of technical, professional and pastoral approaches, to a very sensitive but important activity which should be happening more regularly in the programs of Christian congregations.

We need to be reminded, however, that the process of systematic evaluation leads not only to identifying weaknesses but also to pointing out strengths. Evaluation often will lead to commendation of individuals, thanksgiving and praise to God for progress made and blessings received. As St. Paul assessed the activity of the early church, he always seemed to be able to find some strengths and achievements worth noting and praising as he evaluated the groups to whom he was writing.

We hope that you will not merely evaluate and rate these articles in this issue, but that you will see them as scaffolding on which to stand and as tools to use in examining the structure and progress of your own parish programs.

M. J. Stelmachowicz



EVALUATION — THE CHURCH'S "EYES" FOR MISSION

Too often you hear the complaint, "The church can't see beyond itself," meaning that it has only institutional goals. While that criticism is perhaps well-founded, it does not characterize those segments of the church that are open to objective evaluation of how they are carrying on mission. They do indeed see beyond themselves. That is the purpose of evaluation in the church — to serve as the church's "eyes" — to help us see outside of our own institutional needs and goals to the opportunities for ministry that God sets before us.

Evaluation, if painstakingly and evangelically carried out, gives us a kind of "field vision." It forces us to come out of the unreal and trivial world we often create for ourselves in the church. It helps us see that moving the work of Christ forward in our world means more than just meeting budgets or positive statistical reports. It helps us see the whole world as our mission field and then motivates us not to count the cost in replacing former small goals with large ones.

So much of the statistical success for which we in the church today have been striving has forced the leadership to "press" instead of plan. It has created a lot of frenzied activity and fund drives instead of solid and consistent mission programs.

It is my contention that this kind of thinking is not only driving the joy of Christian service out of many lay and professional leaders but is also driving people away from active involvement in the church's mission. We church members do need to examine and evaluate ourselves and our institutions, but the use of statistical criteria which in many cases has forced us into survival kind of thinking should be superseded by evaluatory tools that answer the question, "Does the church truly send forth a sign people can see and understand as a sign of the love of Christ for mankind?"

The church is in the business of "gospelizing" people. The Gospel has one goal — to help people see God's love in Jesus Christ. All evaluatory tools and measurements used by the church must reflect an understanding of this. They must serve as "eyes." They must help us see the open doors for mission all around us. They must help us search for ways to

enable people to fulfill their potential as God's children.

It is very easy when striving for excellence to pass over the less obvious gifts that God has given to His church. It is also easy to allow our impatience to eliminate many gifts because of the time and effort needed to train them. The challenge, therefore, that faces the church of the '80's is to find ways of examining and evaluating mission and ministry so that we can see not only all of the opportunities God gives us but also the resources we possess to meet those challenges. Then, with that new eyesight, together, we must move off center and out into our world with Easter joy and enthusiasm.

Jonathan P. Stein

EVALUATION — AN INSTRUMENT FOR MINISTRY

Evaluations are an important part of most professions, businesses and organizations. The structure of the church doesn't lend itself to regular evaluations. This sometimes causes a high level of inefficiency in many areas of the church and its ministries. The thought of evaluations often threatens professional workers, boards, committees and the congregation because, in the past, it hasn't been done on a regular basis.

In the church, professional workers have at times hid behind the doctrine of the Call with a "you can't touch me" attitude. Congregations and districts have been afraid to even talk about evaluations, feeling that the divinity of the Call and the structure of the church make it unnecessary. Hiding behind the doctrine of the Call can encourage incompetency.

Evaluations are necessary and scriptural. How can the church, committees, boards and professional workers improve their ministry if there is never an objective or regular evaluation of their work? We have been given gifts and abilities and the responsibility for ministry. The Office of the Keys has been given to the church. Professional and called workers have been given the responsibility for the public function of the Office of the Keys. The effective and efficient functioning of the ministry, which has spiritual and internal eternal significance, indicates a great need

for regular evaluations. If secular professions need to have regular evaluations to keep a high level of effectiveness, efficiency, and productivity, then the church has an even greater need as we deal in things spiritual and eternal for our people.

In the parable of talents, Matthew 25:14 ff., evaluation was expected. We know what happened to the man who buried his one talent; it was taken away and given to the man with five talents. The two who put their talents to work making new talents (which indicates effectiveness, productivity and efficiency) were commended by the Master. Christ in giving this parable is telling us that we need to be efficient, effective and have a high level of productivity. I would submit that this includes the professional workers and the church.

It is difficult, yes nearly impossible, to evaluate unless there is something to evaluate with and against. Evaluations can be enhanced with position descriptions for congregational boards, committees, officers and professional church workers. These need not pose a threat when the purpose is to help, encourage and improve the ministry, and done at regular intervals. It is vital to communicate to professional church workers that position descriptions and evaluations are there to assist them in ministry and to help everyone grow in professionalism and ministry.

Position descriptions can give a sense of security to the professional church workers, officers, committees and boards of the congregation. They help them to see and know what is expected of them. The congregation also knows what they can expect from their workers and various boards and committees. Knowing what is expected can serve as an effective tool for efficient and productive ministry.

"Let all things be done decently and in order" (1 Cor. 14:40) is God's mandate to the church for regulations of ministry. Position descriptions of professional church workers, boards, committees and officers of the congregation assist the church in doing things decently, in order, and effectively. They serve a second purpose when they are used for evaluation of the ministry which is performed by workers and agencies of the congregation.

Eldor Meyer

TOWARD MORE EFFECTIVE EVALUATION DOES THE CHURCH EVALUATE ITSELF?

It appears that evaluation is being done by some congregations and by some individuals. There is much activity, many business meetings, training programs, and worship and Bible study opportunities. There are signs of individual growth and improvement. These are indications that right decisions are being made and that some effective evaluation is taking place.

There are also some indications that many individuals, organizations within congregations and total congregations as well are not effectively evaluating their efforts. Some congregations are experiencing a loss of membership; others are experiencing alarming financial difficulties; and all congregations have some symptoms of problems. Frequently no one has identified and defined these problems. Many congregations and individuals in our church body do not engage in any systematic comprehensive evaluation of their efforts.

Should the Church Evaluate Itself?

The people of the church must engage in evaluation if they want to discover how to involve more of their corporate and individual energies in cooperative ministry. Evaluation is part of the process of thinking. Individuals in the church must wrestle in mind and in spirit with themselves so that they can become more involved in the church's mission. They must overcome their fear of being the victims of unjust judgments or public examples of failure. Too frequently congregations have emphasized the individual natures of their member's relationship to assigned roles and have neglected the togetherness that members have in the Lord. There has been too much emphasis upon keeping many aspects of our faith activities private.

Evaluation is a part of the process of planning. It begins by determining what to evaluate, formulating questions that are to be answered. In this *first step* two errors have to be avoided. The first error is that judgments are frequently made on the basis of inadequate information, and the other error is that information is gathered with no direction in mind (i.e., no judgments or decisions have been

targeted). *The second step* of evaluating involves the collection of information. The most frequent types of information collection are observation and the use of a questionnaire or some other written instrument.

After the information is collected, *the third step* is making judgments. Judgments are estimates of present conditions or predictions of future conditions (e.g., youth meetings are well attended; in the future we will need a larger meeting room). *The fourth and final step* is making of decisions. A decision is a choice among alternatives (e.g., we can divide the youth group, or we can use the parish hall for meetings).

I think that engaging in the process of evaluation is helpful to individuals because the process leads them to examine themselves and assists them to make commitments of their total selves and their total energy. Too frequently, I believe, individuals are admonished to do *more*, and that directive places upon them a burdensome heart. They do not engage in the process of evaluation.

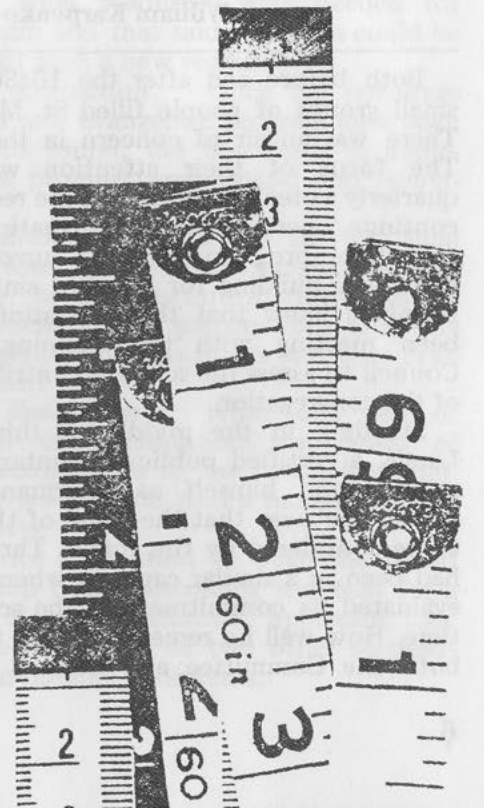
If individuals engage in self-evaluation, the step to corporate evaluation naturally follows. The basic four step evaluation process is the same for individuals and for groups.

What Are the Prerequisites to Corporate Evaluation?

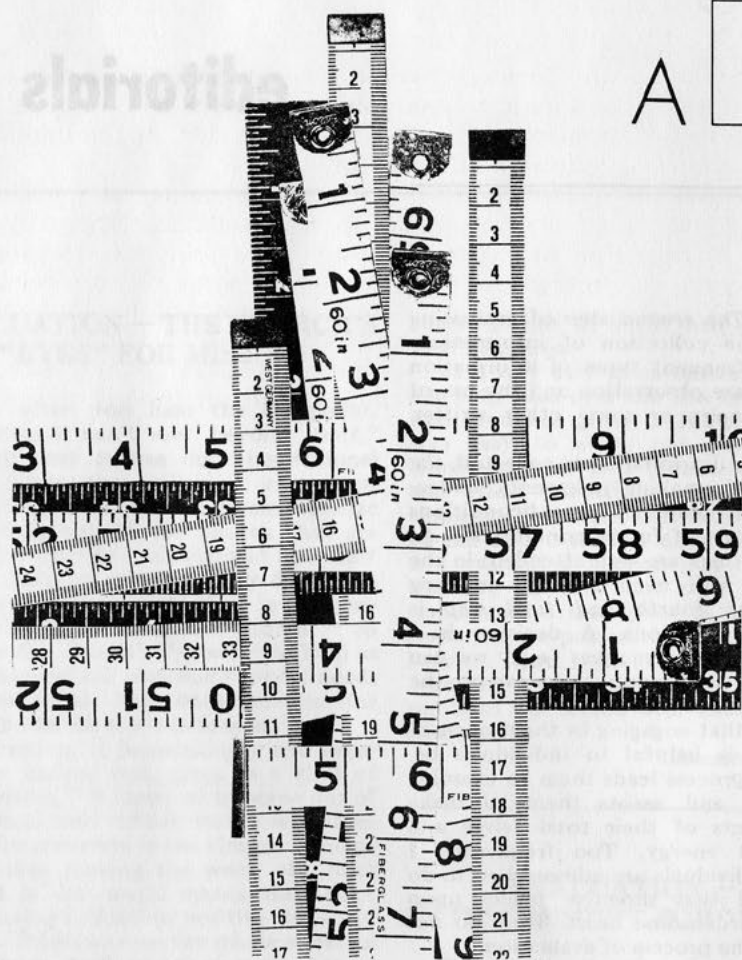
No individuals or group within a congregation will engage in the process of evaluation unless they understand it to be a vital part of their living and growing together. All individuals involved must understand and trust that the purpose of evaluation is to obtain feedback and make decisions which will assist the corporate body to function more effectively.

Our goal in the church should be to function as one body in the Lord. This goal is the same for small groups and large groups within the church. We cannot achieve this goal unless we coordinate all parts of the body. We must work together. Evaluation is a tool that can help us work together more effectively.

Eugene Oetting



A PLAN FOR CONGREGATIONAL EVALUATION



William Karpenko

Both before and after the 10:30 worship service small groups of people filled St. Matthew's narthex. There was an air of concern in their conversations. The focus of their attention was the evening's quarterly voter's meeting and the recommendation to continue operating the congregation's 5½ year old pre-school program. Tension surrounding this vote had been building for months, since congregational members knew that the Education Committee had been meeting with the Planning and Evaluation Council to assess the school's contributions to the life of the congregation.

Standing in the middle of this issue was Ron Lange, a certified public accountant, who had once again found himself as chairman of the Council during the year that the value of the pre-school was to be considered by the voters. Three years ago Ron had been in a similar capacity when the congregation evaluated its commitment to the school for the first time. How well he remembered all the pressures that both the Committee and Council had experienced

and the many long hours of information gathering that eventually had helped the voters to make what he felt had been a God-pleasing decision to keep the school open.

One thing about St. Matthew's that Ron had come to appreciate over the years, in addition to the pastor and people of the parish, was its systematic commitment to thorough planning. In fact, the thoughtful, comprehensive ground work done by the Education Committee six years ago, when the idea of a pre-school was first brought before the voters, had made his evaluation task a lot less treacherous and abstract.

In preparing for his presentation to the voters Ron had been reviewing the folder containing the original committee report and the preceding triennial evaluation materials. In doing so he was reminded of three congregational commitments, made and reaffirmed over the past decade, each of which struck him as being extremely important for today's meeting. First, and most fundamental to a sound pre-school decision, was that both now, and at the prior two evaluation points, the voters were making a judgement within the framework of what the parish had said was its

purpose and its major goals for the next five years. Secondly, each year, while on retreat, the lay leaders of the parish reviewed the planning guide that had been developed by the Planning and Evaluation Committee and adopted by the congregation a decade ago. Those who were unfamiliar with the approach were trained to implement the process. Thirdly, systematic evaluation of existing and proposed programs, personnel, activities, and organizations was expected, and specific guidelines regarding when and how this was to be done had been developed. Without a clear congregational purpose and supporting goals, an accepted and understood planning process, and the guidelines for evaluation, Ron shuddered to think what it would be like to make a recommendation to St. Matthew's voters.

Even though the meeting was now less than three hours away, and his preparation was essentially complete, Ron still found himself emotionally caught up in rereading the original evaluation document that had been hammered out what seemed like decades ago. The rather pompous title — A Congregational Statement Regarding Evaluation: Terminology, Purpose, Assumptions, Focus, and Concerns — still irritated him. Yet this feeling was balanced by a sense of pride and accomplishment when he reviewed the contents and remembered the struggle that took place to birth the five pages of ideas. Thank goodness their pastor had been a patient man who believed that the knowledge and expertise that lay people acquired in their work-a-day world could be "baptized" by the parish and undergirded with theological meaning.

For now we will leave Ron to his reminiscing and final meeting preparation. Let us spend some time concentrating upon that evaluation document that stirred so many feelings in him.

Evaluation Terminology

Exactly what is meant by congregational evaluation? If your parish was to have a planning and evaluation council of seven members, chances are there would be at least three or four differing perspectives on the term "evaluation." Laymen who work in educational settings frequently think in terms of evaluating the outcomes of projects involving a new curriculum, teaching methodology, or a staff member. Sales and supervisory personnel on the council would think in terms of evaluating results and whether sales quotas had been met. Farm folks might think of evaluation in terms of purchases of machinery, feed or seed. And then there is the pastor, DCE, or principal who is asking whether the needs of people in the congregation are being met and whether adults, youth and children are growing in their understanding of and faith in Jesus Christ. Because of such varying experiences with evaluation it is crucial to useful congregational evaluation that secular definitions, perspectives and practices be recast into a

theologically sound framework. As stated earlier, evaluation terminology needs to be "baptized" and undergirded with language that is meaningful to followers of Jesus Christ.

For the St. Matthew's planning and evaluation council this meant three straight meetings of tedious yet necessary discussion. The result was the following mini-glossary of key terms, some directly related to evaluation and some defining dimensions of the overall planning task.

"In order that our congregation plan and evaluate its mission and ministry in an orderly and decent manner (1st Cor. 14:40) the following terms, and their meanings, are to inform and guide all such activity by boards, committees, councils, organizations, and volunteer/paid staff within our parish.

Evaluation: The act of determining the level of contribution that everything and everyone to be evaluated (i.e. an organization, program, activity, process or person) can make, has been making, or did make to the life of our congregation.

We believe that *five kinds* of formal evaluation need to take place in our parish on a systematic basis whether by our own boards, committees, staff and council or by some outside person or group. These are described in Schema One and illustrated on the following page.

Each of the five kinds of evaluation described in Schema One can make a vital contribution to our doing the kind of ministry that our congregation purpose and goals encourage. An example of each would be the following:

1. **Resource Evaluation** — A decision to do a family VBS is made by the Board of Education after determining what resources were needed for such a program and that said resources could be marshalled for such a new venture.
2. **Alternatives Evaluation** — Once the resources needed for a new evangelism program have been identified and found, the best ways to implement such a program are assessed and recommended.
3. **Formative Evaluation** — Prior to the final decision on whether the DCE is extended a "call with tenure," he receives information from the Board of Elders on his performance after the fourth and eighth months of his one year "call without tenure."
4. **Summative Evaluation** — After one year of agreed upon experimentation the Board of Education recommends to the voters that mid-week school teachers be paid a modest stipend for their efforts.
5. **Post-Summative Evaluation** — When the Board of Stewardship began discussing the need for a new "Every Member Visitation" approach, they reviewed the evaluation of two other methods that had been used in prior years.

SCHEMA ONE
The Kind of Evaluation To Be Used by St. Matthew Lutheran Congregation*

KIND OF EVALUATION	WHEN USED	KEY QUESTION	RESPONSIBILITY FOR EVALUATION
1. RESOURCE	Prior to making a recommendation to begin a program, et. al.	Do we have the resources (i.e. atmosphere, staff, facilities, purpose and goals, finances) needed to institute this program et al.?	Sponsoring board/ committee or staff member
2. ALTERNATIVES	Prior to making a recommendation to begin a program, et al.	What is the best way to proceed (means, strategy, design, curriculum, etc.) in implementing this program, et al.?	Sponsoring board/ committee or staff member
3. FORMATIVE ¹	At pre-determined points once a program et al. has been instituted and prior to its conclusion	What deficiencies exist and need to be corrected and what strengths need to be affirmed?	Sponsoring board/ committee/staff member or an outside individual or group
4. SUMMATIVE ²	At a pre-determined point prior to the final decision regarding the future of a program et al.	Do we want to continue this program et al. as is, with revisions or terminate it?	Sponsoring board/ committee/staff member or an outside individual or group
5. POST-SUMMATIVE	After a program et al. has been terminated	What can we learn about this program et al. that can contribute to future parish decisions of this kind?	Sponsoring board/ committee/staff member or an outside individual or group

*All five kinds of evaluation are applicable to congregational programs, organizations, activities, processes, boards/committees, or volunteer/paid staff, henceforth described as program, et al.

Finally, we wish to briefly identify seven terms which are important to evaluation, and may even be a part of an evaluation process, but are not in themselves to be understood as evaluation.

Needs Assessment: The studying of a situation in order to discover what is presently happening and to determine whether there is an unmet need, unresolved problem or special opportunity that should be evaluated to see if it can be responded to by an organization, program, activity, process or staff member of the congregation.³

Planning: That activity of boards, committees, councils, and staff members which explores, coordinates and implements existing and proposed programs et al. in a manner that is congruent with the congregation's purpose and goals.

Purpose: That statement which summarizes the reasons why we as a group of Christians have joined together to form St. Matthew's Lutheran Church.

Goals: Those formally adopted, general commitments of the congregation which attempt to implement its purpose and to provide Biblical direction and challenge for the various programs of the parish.

Objectives: Those specific commitments of the various boards, committees, councils and staff members which describe the concrete ways that the congregational purpose and goals are to be achieved.

Prioritization: That process through which the objectives of a board, committee, council or staff member are ranked by some criterion such as their importance for accomplishing a particular goal of the congregation.

Accountability: The assignment of various responsibilities inherent in the congregation's purpose and goals to various boards, committees, councils and volunteer or paid staff with the understanding that periodic reports are to be made by a designated person."

The Nature of Evaluation

When wrestling with the terminology of evaluation one becomes aware of the complex and challenging nature of this activity. In particular, the following features of congregational evaluation are important.

First, and perhaps most obvious, the initial need to evaluate is triggered by the awareness of an opportunity, problem or unmet need within the purview of a congregation's mission and ministry. Inept organ playing and choir performance may bring about an evaluation study that recommends the replacement of volunteer musicians by a full-time paid staff member who is a skilled musician.

Tied to what triggers evaluation is the fact that such assessment action can take place at different times in the life of a program et al. Schema One described four prime times for evaluation activity to happen: (1) *prior* to instituting a new Sunday School curriculum like "New Life in Christ"; (2) once the new curriculum is in process; (3) sometimes before deciding to conclude or continue the use of the materials; and (4) if the decision was to discontinue, doing a post-mortem for future reference.

Thirdly, evaluation takes three basic forms. In *informal evaluation* individuals and groups within the parish draw conclusions regarding the value of what they are or have been experiencing. Thus, pastor's sermon often becomes one of the "main" courses at the Sunday dinner table. On the other hand, *semi-formal evaluation* involves a more intentional and systematic look at the contribution of a program et al. by boards, committees, staff etc. What distinguishes it from *formal evaluation* is the extensiveness of the undertaking. Formal evaluation may take a longer period to complete, involves a formal written report, and includes the use of instruments to gather information on whether the criteria were met.

Somewhat related, semi — and formal evaluation happen through a specific three step process. Initially, the focus of the evaluation is established and the criteria by which to assess each program et al. are identified. The final two steps involve gathering information to see if the criteria have been met and then, most importantly, coming to a decision regarding the level of contribution that the program et al. could make or has been making, or what's to happen to the program et al. in the future.

Fifthly, evaluation is a "snapshot" of what is under assessment. As such it represents a particular "view" which was chosen hopefully for its comprehensiveness and descriptiveness. Furthermore, as camera users know, the quality of the picture is highly dependent upon the instrument used, the accuracy of focus, and the care with which the film is developed. Equally so, evaluation is a human enterprise that is as good as the effort, precision, and sensitivity with which it is done.

Sixthly, congregational evaluation is focused on how well certain dimensions of *institutional* life

within the parish (i.e. boards, committees, organizations, personnel, etc.) are doing and is not designed, in a formal way, to evaluate the day-to-day ministry of Christians as they respond to unplanned, unanticipated needs of people around them.

Seventhly, congregational evaluation is integrally related to the planning process of the parish. Haphazard, incomplete planning hobbles evaluatory efforts. How does one assess a program's contributions if one does not have a clear idea of the purpose and goals for which it was developed?

A parallel and distinctive aspect of congregational evaluation is that the evaluation process is two-dimensional. Beyond determining whether a program et al. has been true to its objectives, that program et al. is to be evaluated also by the contribution it has made to the purpose and goals of the entire parish.

Finally, the nature of parish evaluation has two additional features, namely: it is multi-focused and question-centered. Periodically in this article you have read the focus of institutional evaluation in the litany: organizations, programs, activity, procedure, and volunteer/paid staff. As if those five weren't sufficient, evaluation is also appropriate for me, you and other Christians as we reflect upon our life in Jesus Christ. In addition, there is the evaluation focused upon the congregation's goals. For example, St. Matthew's had a goal of community involvement, and they found their pre-school program contributed substantially to accomplishing that commitment. Whatever the focus of evaluation, there are always a host of questions that are asked, each reflecting the transcendent dimension of evaluation: "This is what we are or have been doing and yet, what does God expect us to be doing?" It is this unique tension that points to the fundamental purpose of evaluation.

Purposes of Evaluation

What are the reasons for engaging in evaluation in the first place? As with any part of the parish planning process, the primary purpose of evaluation is to enhance the attainment of the congregation's purpose and goals. Richard Hutcheson, a Presbyterian evaluator, captured this purpose in a little different language:

"Theologically, the evaluation process may be seen as a form of accountability to the church's true nature. The church lives in the organizational tension between its humanness — the characteristics it holds in common with all other organizations — and its uniqueness, derived from its transcendent dimensions and experienced in the presence of the Holy Spirit. The purpose of evaluation in a church organization is to ensure the accountability of it's humanness to its uniqueness."⁴

There are also some valid secondary reasons for congregational evaluation:

1. Determining the appropriateness of congregational goals for the future.

2. Determining what, if any, of the objectives of the program, et al. were achieved.
3. Providing periodic information on performance for both volunteer and paid staff.
4. Providing opportunities for people to express themselves regarding the contributions of a program et al.
5. Collecting accurate and pertinent information that can be used to make God-pleasing decisions about programs, et al.
6. Reinforcing the importance of thorough planning and appropriate use of congregational resources.

Undergirding Assumptions of Evaluation

Evaluation is not conducted in a vacuum. This article is laced with assumptions that the author holds about sound parish evaluation. These convictions undergird and give direction to how I think and act. If you do not understand what I am assuming to be true about congregational evaluation, my words and actions could be confusing and oblique. Ron Lange and St. Matthew's Planning and Evaluation Council found that their evaluation activities were much better understood and accepted when other boards and committees knew "where they were coming from." They distilled their assumptions about evaluation in the parish into two main categories, theological and organizational. As a congregation of Christians they hold the following convictions regarding the evaluation activities that happen within their parish.

Theological Assumptions

1. Evaluation is carried out with the belief that regardless of man's earnest and well-intentioned assessments and decisions, God is still bringing about what is best for the local congregation.
2. The motivational mainspring for doing and receiving evaluation is the Gospel. As children of God we are free to evaluate our performance and other Christians because each of us has been freed of the burden of having to perform perfectly. Out of Christ's perfection we are able to have our contribution to our Lord and our congregation evaluated because we rest secure in God's grace.
3. We contribute to the evaluation of others out of a desire to edify the Body of Christ and to see that fellow believers continue to mature into the fullness of Jesus Christ.
4. We evaluate organizations, programs, activities, and processes out of a desire to exercise good stewardship over the many opportunities and gifts that God has given to our congregation.
5. We evaluate our congregational and particular programs, et al. goals with the understanding that much ministry is spirit-directed, unprogrammable, and unmeasurable.

6. Evaluation is to be informed by and undertaken while employing those sources of direction and power found in prayer, confession and absolution, worship, Scripture, and the sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion.

Organizational Assumptions

1. The pay-off in doing thorough, thoughtful, and systematic evaluation exceeds the cost.
2. Evaluation is most meaningful when a congregation has a clear, Biblical purpose and a congruent set of related goals.
3. Evaluation is most useful when the pastor understands the need for and encourages the use of informal, semi-, and formal evaluation.
4. Evaluation can be most useful in a climate where the evaluators are not constrained by fear, lack of time, or pre-set agendas.
5. Evaluation can be enhanced when those being evaluated have agreed to the process and genuinely are open to new information about their past or present performance.
6. The quality of the evaluation, especially for decision-making, will be directly related to the meaningfulness and validity of the needs, problems and opportunities that have been identified.⁵

The Focus, Concerns and Frequency of Evaluation at St. Matthew's

If a congregation is clear on the nature, purpose, and undergirding assumptions of evaluation, a very practical question arises, namely, "What and who is to be evaluated, for what reasons, and how frequently?" St. Matthew's Planning and Evaluation Council captured their recommendations to the congregation in a one page format that was distributed to all of the boards, committees, organizations, and staff of the parish (Note Schema Two). The following explanation accompanied the material:

Schema Two of "The Focus, Concerns, and Recommended Frequency of Evaluation at St. Matthew's" is to be understood as illustrative and not exhaustive. We do believe we have outlined the prime foci of evaluation in our congregation. We are *assuming* that the starting point is always whether the program et al. is in harmony with and supportive of the congregation's purpose and goals and therefore we have not listed it as a specific concern. Boards and committees of the congregation are also expected to identify areas of concern other than the twelve listed. Finally, in an effort to coordinate the evaluations done by the various boards we would appreciate your submitting your intended evaluation schedule for the year one month after the Leadership Retreat in August."

SCHEMA TWO The Focus, Concerns, and Recommended Frequency of Evaluation at St. Matthew's

FOCUS OF EVALUATION	MAJOR EVALUATION CONCERN	FREQUENCY OF EVALUATION
A. INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS	Use of spiritual gifts Growth in faith Growth in service	Annually Annually Annually
B. PERSONNEL		
1. Volunteer Staff (S.S. teachers, youth counselors, etc.)	Fulfilling position description Level of performance	Prior to "Contract" ending
2. Paid Staff (Pastor, DCE, secretary, principal, teacher, etc.)	Fulfilling position description Level of performance	Annually if called Otherwise, according to contract specifications
C. BOARDS, COMMITTEES AND AD HOC GROUPS	Fulfilling constitutional responsibilities	Annually
D. PROCESSES (Curriculum, meeting formats, procedures, etc.)	Maintaining balance between task and interpersonal relation functions (meetings) Doing what it was instituted for (curriculum, procedures, etc.)	Quarterly Periodically, once they have been instituted
E. ACTIVITIES (Events that are not a part of a program such as leadership retreat, family nights, special worship services, etc.)	Meeting particular activities purpose/objectives	As they happen
F. PROGRAMS (Midweek, confirmation, pre-school, family, VBS, scouts, etc.)	Leadership effectiveness Meeting particular program's purpose/objectives	After activity is over Annually, unless designated otherwise
G. ORGANIZATIONS (Various groups of the parish, such as LLL, LYF, LWML, etc.)	If educational, quality of instruction Leadership effectiveness	Annually, unless designated otherwise Every six months
H. CONGREGATION	Faithfulness to constitutional purpose/goals	Annually

Is Evaluation Worth All The Effort?

Ron Lange thinks so as does the Planning and Evaluation Council of St. Matthews. The recommendation to continue the pre-school was passed for another triennium amid intense, frank and enlightened debate. Numerous people commented on how much they appreciate the thorough summative evaluation report of the Council.

How about you? Is evaluation within your parish worth all the effort?

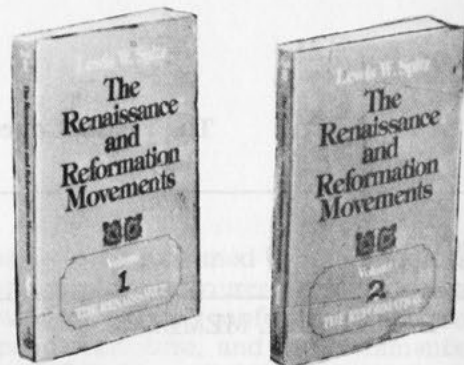
As a long time devotee of evaluations (sometimes shabbily conducted!), this author has mellowed in some of his prior commitments. In fact, his answer to the question of "worth the effort" is now more of a qualified "yes... if," an urgent "yes... because," and a resolute "yes... in order to." Some contributors to each "yes" follow.

YES, evaluation is worth the effort, IF the following legitimate objections are understood and

minimized by the evaluators:

1. That the result of an evaluation be interpreted as a new kind of "good works" which suggests one individual is a better Christian than another.
2. That the specter of a coming evaluation becomes a new form of legalism that binds people to action for the wrong reason.
3. That the achievement of goals becomes more important than the individual Christian's daily journey with his or her Lord Jesus.
4. That human acts of evaluation are absolute and the final word of God regarding a person, program, etc.
5. That evaluation, however well done, becomes an end in itself ("we do the most thorough evaluation in the district").
6. That evaluation activity become so evident that members of the parish feel like their every act is "under the microscope" whether they wish such appraisal or not.

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"One problem with many textbooks is that no one lives longer than a few lines. It is much like dividing up the beautiful Pacific coast and assigning two inches of it to each citizen of California.

"A better understanding of the past can be gained by focusing most of our attention on the major protagonists, allowing the leading actors in the drama of history to speak their pieces.

"Nor should the men of that day, any more than those of our own, escape all moral judgment."

7. That preparing for doing evaluation activity takes so much time that there is little energy left for doing the task at hand.
8. That the evaluation process is a vehicle for achieving a political agenda such as "dumping" a member of the staff or "ramming through" a questionable new program.
9. That the evaluation puts people down rather than serves as a source of edification and enlightenment.

YES, evaluation is worth the effort, BECAUSE most congregations desperately need systematic, agreed upon processes that enable:

1. lay people to informally assess themselves and others through questions such as "How is the Holy Spirit at work on this board I'm serving on?" and "Is God well served by what I (we) have been doing as an elder(s)?"
2. lay volunteers to receive accurate, fair, and clear information on their performance as teachers, board members, etc., which conveys both an appreciation for their efforts and a recommendation on whether they are best serving their Lord through their present responsibility,
3. paid full-time staff (especially those serving the parish on time-limited "contracts") to also receive accurate, fair, and clear information on their performance which conveys both an appreciation for what is being done well and suggestions regarding responsibilities that need a different approach or additional effort,
4. leaders to appraise whether time in meetings is being well spent and whether the processes being followed are permitting the committee, board, voters, etc. to accomplish their tasks and still respond to the human maintenance needs of such groups,
5. all individuals and groups within the parish to repeatedly ask whether their activity, process, program or organization is hindering or enhancing the basic purpose and goals for which the congregation was formed.

YES, evaluation is worth the effort, IN ORDER THAT we may respond to God's urging to be people who:

1. take good care of all that He has given us, by assessing who and what can best contribute to resolving a particular need, problem or opportunity within the congregation, and
2. make decisions fairly, thoughtfully, charitably, and with the whole congregation's mission and ministry in mind rather than those of a special interest group.

Congregational evaluation, in any of its many forms, is not a simple undertaking, nor is it a panacea to cure all parish ills. Rather, it is one more tool, when properly employed, that may enlighten and give

direction to the individual Christian and those with whom he or she is working.

In making way for Dr. Harre's thoughts on evaluation criteria let me leave you with a perspective on evaluation that I believe can serve us all as we attempt to be faithful stewards of all that God has given us this day and in the months and years to come:

"A sense of the limitations of the evaluation process is a good starting point. Final judgements are to be made not by evaluators, or even by the church itself, but by God. *Penultimate judgements should be made*, however, by the church rather than by professional or non-professional evaluators. The implied spirit of every evaluation ought to be something like this: 'We are able to make certain assessments of the evangelism program of this congregation. In terms of quantitative measurements, certain forms of witnessing have taken place, a certain number of persons have been reached to some degree, and a certain number of persons have been added to the membership of the church. In terms of personal judgments regarding its effectiveness, professional judgements are thus and so; the opinions of the members of the congregation, insofar as we have been able to measure them, are thus and so. We have made every effort to evaluate its faithfulness to God purposes. But only God knows the level of personal response reflected by the participation of members of the congregation in the program; only God knows the persons who have been truly reached and in what ways; it is the action of God that has brought the results we have been able to measure. The value of the program, therefore, whether or not it should be continued, and in what form, is essentially a theological rather than a managerial decision, in which the evaluation report can only play one small part.'"⁶

Endnotes

1. Worthen, Blaine R. and Sanders, James R. *Education Evaluation: Theory and Practice*, Worthington, Ohio: Charles A. Jones, 1973, p. 107 ff.
2. Morris, Lynn L. and Fitz-Gibben, Carol T., *Evaluator's Handbook*, Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1978, p.13.
3. Worthen and Sanders, *op. cit.*, p. 139.
4. Hutcheson, Richard G., *Wheel Within The Wheel: Confronting The Management Crisis of the Pluristic Church*, Atlantic: John Knox, 1979., p. 206.
5. Schaller, Lyle, *The Decision-Makers*, Nashville: Abingdon, 1974, p. 202.
6. Hutcheson, *op. cit.*, p. 222.

From Dante to Petrarch,
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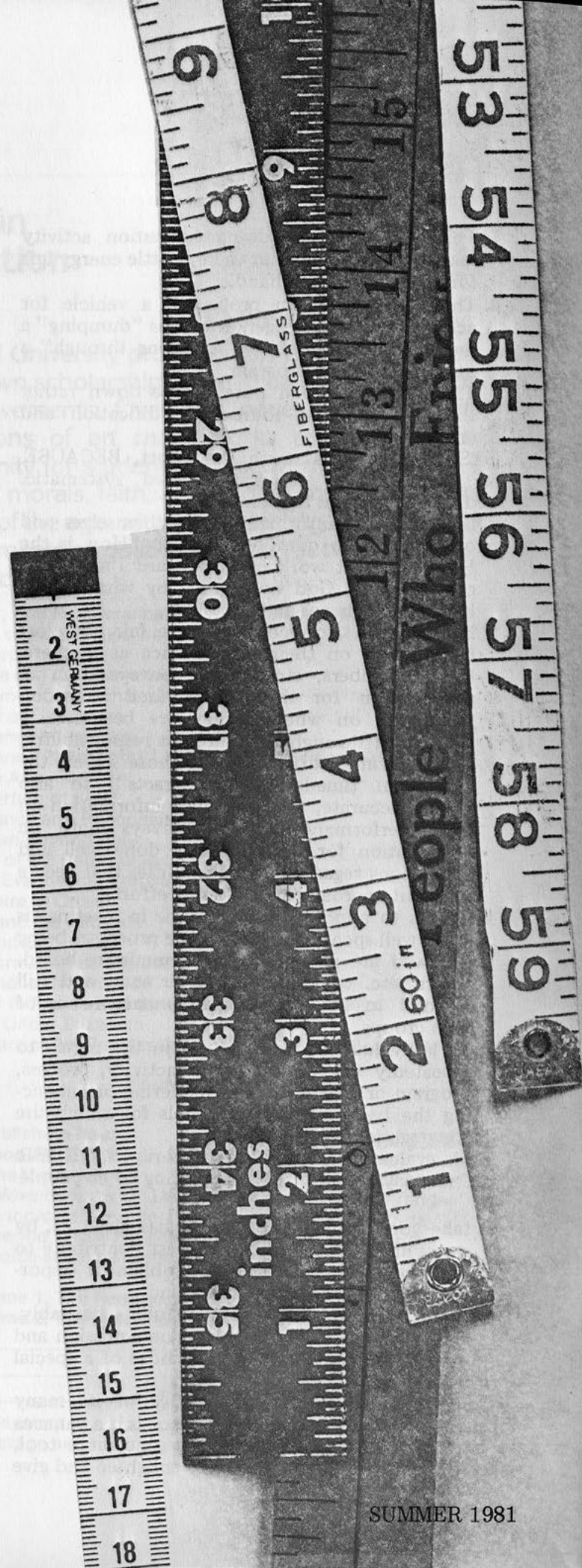
Alan Harre

Any discussion of the subject of evaluation in the local congregation or within a denomination which attempts to be germane must address the issue of what the criteria are that shall be employed in all evaluative processes. Further, any discussion of improving the evaluative processes in the church, whether we like it or not, must confront the fact that many, and perhaps even most, congregations do not purposefully state what criteria are to be used in the evaluative processes. This reality may reflect the fact that congregations do not perceive that the stating of evaluation criteria is a necessary part of every planning process. The bias of the author is that this is an unfortunate reality.

Types of Evaluation

There are four different approaches to evaluation that are extant in congregations. The first approach is what shall be called the *wholistic approach* to evaluation. This type of evaluation assumes that every activity, program, and service project as well as the contributions of the lay membership of every committee, board, agency, council, auxiliary, service group and recreational group will be evaluated. The wholistic approach to evaluation requires that the contributions of each professional servant must also be evaluated. These evaluation activities are carried out using the criteria which are not only implied in the statements of goals and objectives concerning almost all aspects of what the congregation is and does, but also that all these activities, programs, projects, and people will be evaluated by comparing them to criteria which have been mutually agreed upon and which are set forth in writing at the time these activities, programs and projects were planned or when lay people were appointed or selected, or when professionals were hired or called. From the vantage point of effective management and maximum efficiency, this is the preferred approach to planning and evaluation.

A second type of evaluation shall be designated the *constitutional wholistic approach* to evaluation. In this approach, thorough planning and evaluation happens in the boards and committees which are established by the constitution. However, planning and evaluation concerning the ministry of professional staff members as well as that of agencies,



CRITERIA

FOR EVALUATION IN THE CHURCH

auxiliaries, and groups which are outside the purview of the constitution are ignored or done haphazardly. Such an approach to planning and evaluation is less effective and efficient than the *wholistic approach*, yet it is preferred over those approaches that follow.

A third type of evaluation has been dubbed the *piecemeal approach* to evaluation. Some boards and committees plan and evaluate carefully while other boards and committees in the same congregation do little or no planning and evaluating. This situation frequently promotes the drawing of unfortunate and competitive comparisons between the accomplishments of committees and/or feelings of "what's the use" among members of boards who plan and evaluate more completely.

A fourth type of evaluation is the evaluation process which is nonexistent in a formal sense but alive and well in an informal sense. In the *informal approach* to evaluation attempts are made to evaluate during conversations on the church's parking lot, over the telephone and around the dinner table. Informal evaluators use a multiplicity of criteria which are personal in origin and about which there has been no formal agreement at the committee or congregational level that these criteria are indeed the criteria which are to be employed as standards of measurement. This approach tends to increase the number of hidden agendas at official meetings of boards, committees and of the voters assembly. This approach also tends to heighten members' levels of frustration with the process of decision making and often produces alienation over against the congregation and its ministry.

There is no way to do systematic evaluation if there are no clearly stated criteria upon which to base such systematic evaluation. Each of the criteria is a yard stick that helps to "size" one or more aspects of the program.

The most frequently cited criteria for evaluation in the church are goals (more general statements of purpose) and objectives (more specific statements of purpose).

The most frequently cited goals in the church center on three or four major areas of concern. Authors frequently use different words, but ultimately all the authors have similar emphases. Abdon, quoting Douglas Webster, (sic) uses the terms, "preaching, fellowship, witness, and service."¹ Metz employs the terms "community, nurture and service."² Dieterich proposes the words "spiritual

journeying, caring, and empowering."³ Adams writes about "worship, mutual nurture, and witness or mission."⁴

Metz describes these general theological goals as "formal goals." Sometimes they are called "mission goals." These goals reflect the kind of thoughts contained in purpose statements or in the preambles of the constitutions of individual congregations.

But there is another level of goal statements which Metz refers to as "survival goals." Survival goals center on the needs of recruiting and maintaining of individuals and membership rosters, the establishment of physical facilities and the stabilization of a base of financial support.⁵

Survival goals are most useful if they can be recognized as means to the end of accomplishing the formal goals mentioned above. When these goals take on the aura of being ends in themselves congregations experience difficulty, for security rather than mission has become the dominant concern. This is a real concern, for people are frequently seduced into identifying with an institution rather than with the mission of the institution. For such persons the survival of the institution becomes the dominant concern. In its extreme form such an orientation would have to be judged as idolatry.

There is another level of goals present in most congregations that are best described as "informal" or as "subconscious." Such goals are usually not articulated unless something is done or said which is in conflict with the content or spirit of these informal goals. These informal goals reach the level of consciousness when individuals make statements such as, "This program is just not in keeping with my view of St. Paul's Church" or "The program being proposed will bring about changes. I joined this church because I liked it the way it was."

The reality is that these formal, survival and informal goals play varying roles in the planning and/or evaluating that is done in respect to the general life of the parish, the individual programs of the parish and the activities of the lay and professional leaders in a parish. All planning and/or evaluating approaches need to take seriously the explicit and implicit importance of these three types of goals. These goals do imply, at a minimum, the criteria which might be useable for the purposes of evaluation.

Some congregations have at least two other avenues by which criteria may be implied or stated

explicitly. The first of these is seen in congregations that have concluded that if they are going to take seriously a wholistic approach to planning and evaluating, then some group in the congregation must be given the task and the necessary authority to evaluate all the plans of everyone and of every committee or board in the congregation's total organizational structure. Perhaps the church council has been given this task. Abdon in Article 7, Section 2 of "The By-laws of the Constitution" has given this task to the Parish Planning Council. Section 2 says, in part:

It shall be the specific functions of the Parish Planning Council to: 1. Serve as the point of liaison between the Pastor(s), the officers of the congregation, and the various Administrative Boards in planning the total work of the congregation. Comment: This requires the Council to *plan* and coordinate. NOTHING WORKS WELL WITHOUT PLANNING AND COORDINATION. This group makes it possible for the Pastor(s) to reach all areas of the church's activities at one time. It also provides a forum where new ideas and strategies can be exposed and tested.⁶

The second avenue is the testing function. In a very real sense it is an evaluative task. The function of testing assumes that judgements will have to be made, priorities will have to be set, and proposed criteria for evaluation will need to be established.

Criteria for evaluation are also frequently implied in job descriptions. Usually a congregation's constitution describes, at least in general terms, the tasks or areas of responsibility set aside for each board or committee in the church. Upon occasion, in the By-laws of some congregations' constitutions, rather lengthy and specific job descriptions are provided for each officer of the congregation as well as for all standing boards and committees. Job descriptions can provide a very helpful set of criteria over against which, at least, some aspects of performance can be evaluated.

The advantage of having job descriptions as part of the By-Laws of the Constitution is that they are more likely to be taken seriously. The disadvantage of including job descriptions in By-laws is that it is usually a more cumbersome process to make needed revisions in By-laws than would be the case if such job descriptions were provided in another form. Some authors suggest that job descriptions may need to be revised as frequently as once every year.

To be effective, job descriptions should clearly identify the position, enumerate all the tasks that need to be performed, describe all abilities that are needed to fulfill the tasks, indicate how much time will be needed each month to do the task, explain the level of expectation relative to regularly called and/or special meetings that must be attended,

indicate which officer or committee of the congregation functions as supervisor for the position, list all sources of assistance the person may need, list individuals or boards the job holder supervises, list any special training that might be needed to fulfill the tasks effectively, indicate when and how such training can be secured and, finally, set forth the criteria that will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the service of the incumbent in the job.

Five Criteria for Evaluation

The nature of evaluative criteria can perhaps be best addressed by using five categories: (1) appropriateness, (2) adequacy, (3) effectiveness, (4) efficiency, and (5) side effects. These five categories are important, for initially the concerns of these categories inform the planners about what they need to take into consideration as they begin to formulate the objectives upon which their plan will be based. Secondly, the content of these categories continue to propose the criteria which will be used to evaluate the legitimacy and usefulness of the newly formulated objectives. Finally, these five criteria will probably be subsumed in the stated objectives as is implied by the previous article in the evaluation processes called "Formative," "Summative" and "Post-Summative."

1. Appropriateness? The question of appropriateness addresses the issue of "rightness" or "wrongness." This is the theological category. To ignore this category of criteria in the church can cause significant harm. The questions that must be addressed in this category are manifold.

- a. Are the stated objectives in agreement with what the Bible says about the nature and mission of the church?
- b. How will the accomplishment of the stated objectives contribute to achieving the formal goals of this congregation?
- c. Are the strategies and tactics which will be employed to accomplish the stated objectives worthy of a Christian congregation?
- d. Are the motivational factors which will be employed based upon a proper understanding of Law and Gospel?
- e. Is there any evidence to suggest that the stated objectives are ends in themselves rather than means to the end of accomplishing the formal goals?
- f. Do these objectives reflect the kinds of activities done throughout history when the church has been most vital?
- g. Are vital churches doing these kinds of activities today?
- h. What light is shed upon the identified objectives by Biblical materials like the following selections:

Gen. 12:1-3; Heb. 11:8-16; Ex. 3:13-17; Mt. 28:18-20; Dt. 6:4-9; Is. 11:1-9; 53; 61:1-4; Lk.

4:18-19; Jer. 7:1-15; Mt. 25:31-46; Mk. 8:27-38; John 3:16-20; 8:31-36; 10:7-18; Rom. 12:1-21; I Cor. 12:4-31; II Cor. 4; 5:16-21; Eph. 2:11-22; 4:1-16; Col. 3:12-17; I John 2:7-11?⁷

- i. Are the proposed steps which will be used in reaching these objectives ethical?
 - j. Is it ethical to spend the needed resources of time, energy and material to reach these objectives given other needs and concerns?
 - k. Are the objectives designed to do something that the vast majority of the congregation's members will find to be acceptable?
2. Adequacy? This question confronts the problem of having enough of what it takes to reach the identified objectives.
- a. Do we have enough resources in time, personnel and money to carry out the objectives?
 - b. Are the steps or strategies we have agreed to employ comprehensive enough to assure that we will reach the objectives?
 - c. Are the agreed-upon objectives big enough to overcome the problem or meet the need that the objectives have been designed to address?
3. Effectiveness? This question tackles the issue of whether or not the objectives have been reached.
- a. Did we accomplish what we set out to accomplish?
 - b. Did we use all the resources and plans that we had agreed to use?
 - c. In other words, did we faithfully follow our plans, and did these plans get us to where we wanted to go?
4. Efficiency? This question forces us to consider whether we got where we wanted to get at the minimum cost to the total organization.
- a. Were there any wasted steps?
 - b. Were our tactics logically developed to maximize our efforts?
 - c. Did we use more resources than we should have used?
5. Side effects? This question confronts us with repercussions or spin-offs because we did or did not reach our objectives.
- a. Had we anticipated both positive and/or negative reactions?
 - b. Were there any unexpected side effects?
 - c. Why did our planning process cause us to expect other side effects?
 - d. Why did our planning process cause us to be unprepared for certain side effects?⁸

An Application of the Five Criteria

Hopefully, the questions raised above were specific enough to be helpful, but in the event that such is not the case, perhaps a listing of evaluative criteria concerning a congregation's program of outreach evangelism would help to clarify and illustrate the five major evaluative questions cited above. The listing of criteria set forth below is meant to be

illustrative and should not be viewed as comprehensive.

1. Appropriateness

- The congregation's program of evangelism shall:
- a. Be concerned about people in their wholeness, not just about their "souls,"
 - b. Reflect the Christo-centric emphasis of Lutheran theology,
 - c. Be based upon a Lutheran understanding of the doctrine of conversion (many popular evangelism techniques do not reflect a Lutheran understanding of conversion),
 - d. Be oriented toward the entire Christian life, not just conversion (the issue here is discipling as well as converting),
 - e. Emphasize the great commission motivation for evangelism efforts,
 - f. Reject any attempt to fixate the evangelism activities on trying to increase the congregation's membership roster or its financial base as ends in themselves (to do otherwise potentially makes people's salvation a means to the end of organization aggrandizement rather than salvation as an end in itself), and
 - g. Emphasize that the power of the Holy Spirit is available to support the evangelism activities of the congregation.

2. Adequacy

- The congregation's program of evangelism shall:
- a. Emphasize that every Christian should be able to give expression to the hope that is within him/her,
 - b. Provide opportunities for youth and children to be involved in the program,
 - c. Take into consideration all the environmental information about the community and its spiritual and physical needs (to fail to do this is to increase the chance that the program will be imprecisely focused),
 - d. Require that lay callers develop a Law-Gospel presentation that they can share with non-churched people and through which they can train others to make Law-Gospel presentations,
 - e. Provide opportunities for lay evangelists to study in more depth the content of the Bible and of Christian doctrine (Lay evangelists will confront a multiplicity of ideas about theological matters. They will want assistance to make them more competent in these matters.),
 - f. Provide methods by which new members can be initiated into the congregation, and
 - g. Provide for both a physical and a spiritual support structure for the lay evangelists (This includes everything from record keeping to prayer groups who pray for the assistance of the Holy Spirit for the lay evangelists.).

3. Effectiveness

The congregation's evangelism program shall:

- a. Provide for periodic evaluation concerning the degree to which the objectives of the program are being achieved, and
- b. Monitor the coordination between various phases of the program (e.g., lay evangelists, adult instruction classes, professional input, sponsoring new members, etc.).

4. Efficiency

The congregation's evangelism program shall:

- a. Practice wise stewardship relative to the time, talent, and treasure made available for the support of the program, and
- b. Restructure its support system, training system and filing system as soon as inefficiencies are detected.

5. Side Effects

The congregation's evangelism program shall:

- a. Sample community opinion relative to its calling program (to correct or minimize any false impressions or rumors that might be surfacing in the community prior to causing major difficulties for the program),
- b. Maintain a close relationship with other neighboring Christian congregations and not practice "sheep stealing" strategies,
- c. Monitor the congregation's ability to assimilate new members and provide for Sunday school instruction of new children and adults, and
- d. Continue to work with any long-time members of the congregation who feel the church is being invaded by a host of strangers. (We need to remember the message of Jesus' parable in Matt. 20 about the laborers who grumbled that the householder should have paid them more for working through the heat of the day.)

A Perspective on Evaluation

If all of the above criteria are taken seriously and if criteria are carefully developed and set down in writing for each program or position in a congregation, then one additional point needs to be made. The author's bias is that evaluation is too often incorrectly viewed as being like the final grade assigned upon completion of a college course. In such a mind-set evaluation is only thought of as the process which should happen, if it is to happen at all, when the project or program is completed or at the end of the term of office of a lay leader or at the end of the year, if the performances of professional ministers are being evaluated. Although this is a part of the service which the process of evaluation can render, evaluation is also the ongoing process of adjusting the fine tuning, making mid-course corrections, and adopting

continual modifications. If we return to the original metaphor, evaluation is not only the final grade in a college course, but it is also all the grades on all the tests and quizzes as well as the evaluative comments on reports, term papers, projects, oral reports, and classroom participation received by the individual student throughout the semester.

The evaluation processes assume that individuals, committees, boards, leaders, and the entire congregation want to do the best job possible given all the possibilities and limitations the actors face. Thus, evaluation is not limited to the *eschaton*. Evaluation based upon sound criteria makes possible growth, positive change, more effective programs, better use of personnel, and a personal sense of having managed a significant accomplishment.

Perhaps the evaluative judgment of Jesus, "Well done thou good and faithful servant," will be partially based upon the criterion of how faithfully we have established criteria for our ministries that are pleasing to Him and how faithfully we have employed those criteria in our efforts to serve Him and His church day in and day out.

Footnotes

¹ Donald A. Abdon, *Organizing Around the Great Commission* (Peru, Indiana: St. John's Lutheran Church, 1974), p. 5.

² Donald L. Metz, *New Congregations: Security and Mission in Conflict* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1977), pp. 54-56.

³ Paul M. Dietterich, *A Model of the Church in Ministry and Mission* (Naperville, Illinois: The Center for Parish Development, 1979), p. 4.

⁴ Arthur Merrihew Adams, *Effective Leadership for Today's Church* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1978), p. 118.

⁵ Metz, *New Congregations*, p. 57.

⁶ Abdon, *Organizing Around the Great Commission*, p. 27.

⁷ Adams, *Effective Leadership for Today's Church*, p. 118.

⁸ Dorothy P. Craig, *Hip Pocket Guide to Planning and Evaluation* (Austin, Texas: Learning Concepts, 1978), pp. 94-95. This particular guide to planning and evaluation is perhaps the most useful piece available for persons interested in planning and evaluation in the setting of a congregation. Its design emphasizes practicality; its content is very understandable and logically developed and its thoroughness is admirable.

ii



Some Perspectives on Evaluation in the Church

Edmund Happel

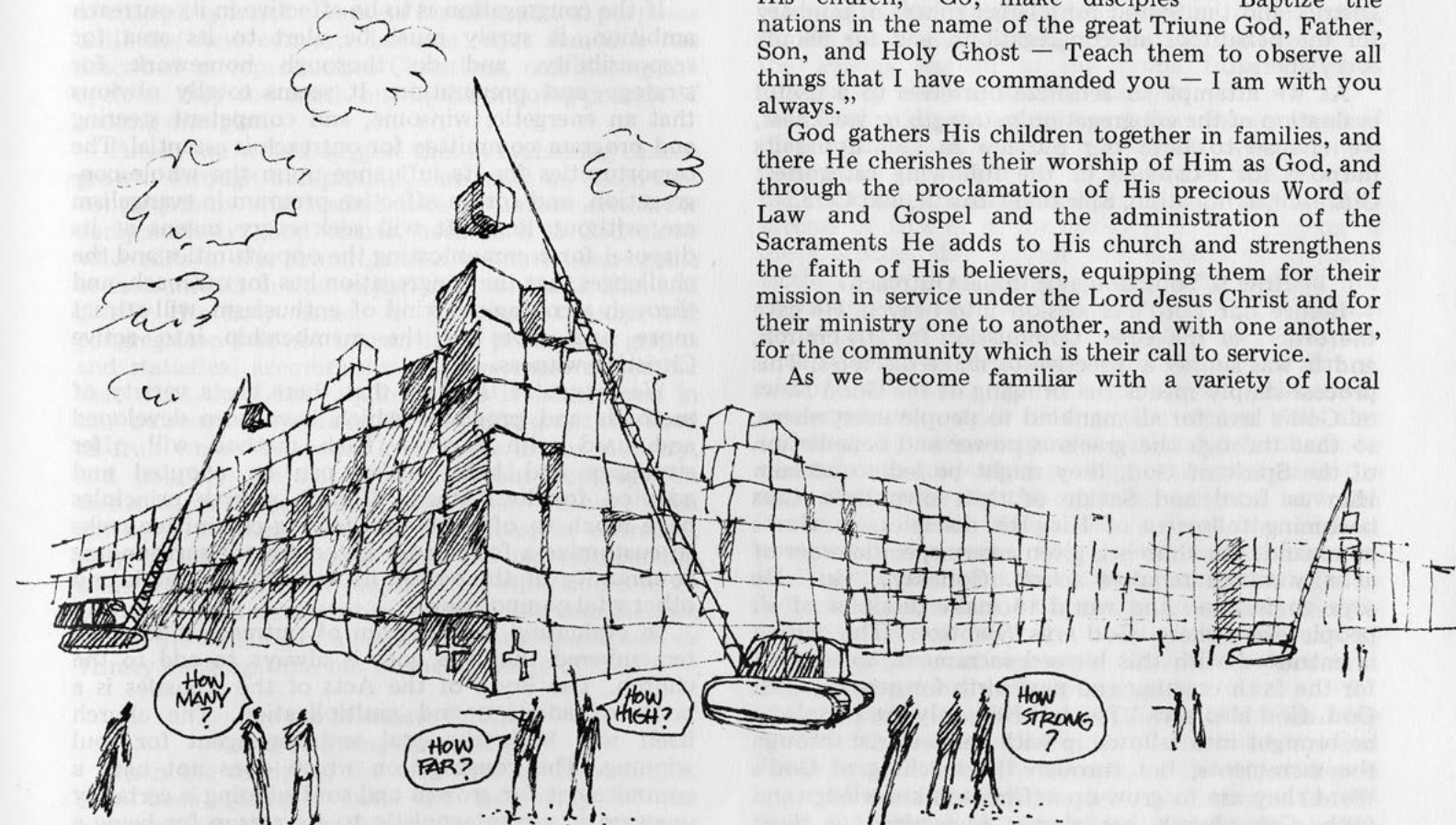
The focus of our attention in the use of the process of evaluation in the church is to note methods by which this may be a useful tool, and how it might also become an instrument for abuse. Obviously, it is essential that we first understand the reason for the church's existence if we are to do any meaningful evaluation. We think especially about our own privilege of fellowship with our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and how we experience these associations in the local congregation, in the District, and in the Synod.

God Provides the Blessings to All

One of the basic and most valuable tools in evaluating a local congregation has been offered to us in the scriptures as an example worthy of imitation. When through the power and ministry of the Holy Spirit large numbers of people were added to the Christian church in Jerusalem, we are told that "they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2, 42). It is absolutely primary that we remember that it is God who adds members to His church. Even as the apostle Peter preached the truth of God's Law and Gospel on that memorable Pentecost day to thousands of people, so our Lord has spoken the instruction of His command and trust to His church, "Go, make disciples — Baptize the nations in the name of the great Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost — Teach them to observe all things that I have commanded you — I am with you always."

God gathers His children together in families, and there He cherishes their worship of Him as God, and through the proclamation of His precious Word of Law and Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments He adds to His church and strengthens the faith of His believers, equipping them for their mission in service under the Lord Jesus Christ and for their ministry one to another, and with one another, for the community which is their call to service.

As we become familiar with a variety of local



congregations, we will note that they also possess unique and distinctive character and are involved in a variety of activities. They are of different size; they fellowship and serve together in many environments and cultural contexts. They are gifted and endowed with different economic and other talents; and they exhibit little or a great abundance of activity. The beehive of action in one parish may suggest that it is a veritable "Grand Central Station" attracting, gathering and involving a constant stream of people. Again, another parish may seem to be almost empty of any activity outside its hour of worship and an occasional meeting. Activity in itself does not necessarily indicate that a local congregation is a viable community of believers in ministry, unless the action is related to the God-given purpose for its existence.

As we evaluate the free association which our individual parishes have with each other through the organization of the District and the Synod, it is important that we make our judgments in light of the reason for the organization to begin with. The local congregation remains the creation of God. The district and the synodical organization are the creation of man. Each exists for the sole purpose of making the best possible use of the variety of gifts which God has given to our church to carry out an effective program within it for the benefit of the parish, and together with other congregations of the District and the Synod for a larger sphere of ministry for the benefit of all congregations, and for people everywhere.

As we attempt to sensitize ourselves to a useful evaluation of the congregation's strength or weakness, we choose to limit our purview in identifying its purpose for existence in the following categories: Outreach, Edification, Spiritual Growth, and Care.

How Is Your Congregational Outreach?

Before our Lord's ascension into heaven, He gave the orders of the Great Commission for His church, and it was simply a directive to make disciples. This process simply means the bringing of the Good News of God's love for all mankind to people everywhere, so that through the gracious power and benediction of the Spirit of God, they might be led to acclaim Him as Lord and Savior of their own lives, thus becoming followers of His, His disciples. In God's command, the church is given a very specific order of activity which requires action. God says "Go." He says go into all the world to make disciples of all people everywhere. God says "Baptize." The church is entrusted with this blessed sacrament, to be used for the faith creating and new birth for new life with God. God also says "Teach." Not only are people to be brought into fellowship with Jesus Christ through the sacraments, but through the teaching of God's Word they are to grow up in Christ in knowledge and faith. Our church has always recognized as most

important for Christian life, a need for thorough study and use of God's Word, indoctrination in depth. His Word is indeed a lamp unto our feet, and a light for our path. We shall focus on this activity later.

What will be some of the activities and plans which will indicate that a congregation is alert to its privilege and responsibility for outreach? Naturally, there must be an awareness on the part of the whole family, which is the local congregation, that this is one of its prime purposes for existence. This phase of activity on the part of the members must be a frequent emphasis in worship, in Bible study, and in congregational mailings for inner public relations, for information, and for motivation. From time to time, a new voice may have a remarkable effect upon the attitude and the commitment for outreach, as guest speakers and strong leaders foster a new spark or rekindle an enthusiastic response. Such outside resource use also assists the congregation to be alert to its necessary in "all the world outreach." God has not allowed us to think only parochially and provincially, but by sharing our resources with congregations all over our church body, we pool our strengths so that the ministry and the Good News outreach goes to the ends of the earth. Outside mission giving is usually a reliable tool for this serious need to evaluate our congregational activity in this area.

If the congregation is to be effective in its outreach ambition, it surely must be alert to its area for responsibility, and do thorough homework for strategy and preparation. It seems totally obvious that an energetic, winsome, and competent steering and program committee for outreach is essential. The opportunities for its influence upon the whole congregation, and for an effective program in evangelism are without limit. It will seek every means at its disposal for communicating the opportunities and the challenges that the congregation has for outreach, and through a contagious kind of enthusiasm, will attract more and more of the membership into active Christian witness.

We recognize the fact that there are a variety of methods and programs which have been developed and used with success. Each method will offer strategies and helps which can be adopted and adapted for local needs. Church growth principles have much to offer, as the steering committee seeks to customize a form most suited for the surrounding community of the parish, its cultural, economic and other vital composition.

In evaluating the program of outreach it must be remembered that the goal is always to add to the church. The Book of the Acts of the Apostles is a book of addition and multiplication. The church itself was both the goal and the agent for soul winning. The congregation which does not have a commitment for growth and soul winning is certainly unaware of or antagonistic to its reason for being a

church. As we read the New Testament account of the early history of the Christian church, we are amazed at the quantitative terms employed. Very precise statistics are offered. We read that the first church in Jerusalem numbered 120 disciples. On the day of Pentecost 3000 were baptized and instructed in the Word and added to the church. Later Luke tells us that the membership numbered 5000, and he continues in later chapters to tell us that the number of disciples multiplied.

One tool for outreach evaluation would obviously be the statistical record of growth. We must be careful, however, that we evaluate the growth in the first place as a net growth. Some communities have a very high rate of transiency, and large congregations frequently record a change in membership at the rate of anywhere from 10-20% in a given year. Care must also be taken to know the difference between real soul winning, and simple soul receiving by the process of transfer from another parish. Another matter which needs evaluation is the strength of true discipleship indicated in the statistical chart on gains in membership so that it is not a mere shallow statistic, which soon is transferred to the so-called "back door losses," so often very large and shocking because of a lack of initial depth of understanding and commitment to begin with. Really, the true goal of discipling is not complete for all practical purposes until the new converts become what someone has described as reproductive Christians, completing the cycle as they too reach out in the ongoing process of making disciples.

Finally we would suggest that in evaluating church growth through discipleship, care must be taken that congregations and leaders take no undue credit for comparatively good charts, because it is God alone who adds to His church, and if we have been agents or instruments in that experience, we thank Him and glorify His holy name. At the same time, if our congregation has not known these prestigious graphs and statistical accomplishments, we must remember that what the Lord requires of us is faithfulness in this outreach enterprise. He may not grant the kind of fruit which we would love to see in our ministry, and possibly the net growth in our congregation seems to be rather static, even when we have been having a measure of so-called success in outreach, only to have more and more of our membership transferred to another location. My direction is to be geared toward responsible ministry for discipleship, not in the building of a large St. John's, Immanuel, or Trinity congregation, but of the kingdom of God.

Are the Members Edified and Growing Spiritually

When the disciples, the followers of Jesus Christ, have been gathered into the fellowship of the congregation, they are then to be edified. A primary

function of the congregation is Christian education. The purpose for Christian education is for growth — growth in faith and life. We read in the First Epistle of Peter, "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby." Then again he writes, "You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." Now that we have become the children of God, we are a new creation in God, and we would desire to live lives more and more consistent as witnesses to His love and that new kind of person we have become. As the apostle also suggests to the Ephesian converts, "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained, that we should walk in them."

Our church has always emphasized the fact that the process of Christian education never ceases, but is one continual program all the way from the cradle to the grave. It is essential that the most thorough program for continuing Christian education be provided as the congregation has the ability and as there are special needs. Of special benefit for children are the agencies of the Christian day school, Sunday school, week day school, vacation Bible school. For valuable teaching experiences we use object lesson teaching techniques in public worship, Bible classes, family devotions, Christian literature and, above all, the lessons learned in the home from Christian parents, by teaching and by example.

In evaluating the success or failure in any or all of these programs or services for Christian education, it is essential that there be an understanding of all of the ingredients and possibilities for the venture. The success or lack of it, for instance, in the program of the Christian day school will depend upon many factors. Are the teachers adequately trained for Christian teaching? Are the facilities for the educational program conducive for a good learning experience? Are there adequate tools in the way of library, audio-visual aids, good textbooks, achievement measurements, etc.? The good teacher will also endeavor to seek competent evaluative feedback to ascertain not only what is being accomplished in the way of learning by the students, but also how the lessons are being taught to achieve the highest potential of success. Regular solicitation of the learning process from the student should be sought to indicate the success of the teaching endeavor. Solicitation of advice from the peer groups and use of other professional expertise should be constant sources for growth and understanding.

One of the significant evaluations of the teaching process to be recognized in public worship and sermonizing is the effectiveness of the object lesson approach which is stated to be of special value for the child. It is not at all unusual for the attending adults

to volunteer that it was a more effective tool also for them in communicating the Gospel and the will of God. The simple technique of apt illustration, and the discipline of communicating at a level for understanding are significant criteria for its success. Many pastors have learned valuable lessons for better communication through the sermon when they asked junior confirmation classes to turn in reports on a sermon which they heard and its application to their lives.

In the area of adult education the congregation may use many formats for its program. Bible classes, topic discussions in the organizations of the congregation, Family Life Seminars, Single Parents Educational offerings, Effectiveness Training exposure are just a few examples worthy of investigation. Significantly important in this area is the leader's understanding of the needs of the people and of the issues about which they are especially sensitive, curious, and interested. The success of the program depends upon the level of interest and accomplishment in the educational process. Open and free discussion most generally is far more attractive than a lecture approach, and from time to time the leader should ask for an honest evaluation of the needs being met, or failure that is recognized.

Is There A Caring Relationship?

The spiritual life of the congregation is the result under God's blessing of the whole program of edification for spiritual growth through Word and Sacrament. In a singular way we expect the leadership and the major ministry for this spiritual life level to depend upon the ministry of the called pastor. He is entrusted as the called and ordained servant of the Word, to preach and teach publicly and privately the Word of God, Law and Gospel, and to serve as the administrator of the blessed sacraments. He will do well to evaluate himself and his public ministry frequently, and also to solicit the evaluative help of the leaders of the congregation. We could list many necessary marks for this ministry. Some of them would suggest that goals should be to: honor God; exalt the Lord Jesus Christ; be faithful; be service-oriented; be honestly humble; be responsible; be sincere; be loving and forgiving; be enthusiastic; be an example. Other traits and marks ideal for Christian service can be added.

A most alarming reminder for any pastor is the fact that he and his attitude and conduct can be roadblocks to programs for outreach as well as edification. It is essential to remember that God calls the Christian pastor into ministry, directs him to be a shepherd of a certain group of God's people, asks faithfulness in ministry, and then promises fruits consistent with His grace. God is the one who grants the talents in a variety of number; He is the one who grants the benediction upon the ministry; and He is

the one who demands only that the minister be faithful in His calling.

What a beautiful relationship for evaluation can be cultivated between a pastor and a committed Board of Elders, to share with him their feelings, their commendations, and their constructive criticism.

Finally, the Christian congregation should also recognize that it is a gathering of God's people, to exhibit and offer loving care for one and all related also to the physical and material needs of people. Our Lord, we are told, went everywhere, preaching the good news of God's love and forgiveness of sin, but He also tended the physical needs and wants of the people.

We love Him because He first loved us. He has also, in this context of love, asked that we love one another in word and deed. So many wonderful opportunities are present in the congregation, as we become alert to the needs of God's people and serve them in love. The congregation, too, endeavors to become alert to the needs of the community and the world which lives, not only so much in spiritual ignorance and superstition, but also in need of food, clothing, and shelter.

A good discipline for evaluation in this area would be to see what kind of involvement there is, and what there might be for services in human needs. So often we are tempted to feel that a few dollars here and there pay off our debt for ministry and the care of the needy. It might be well to identify in an organized way the potential resources that exist in the congregation. How many people might be willing to serve in some specific capacity? Which organizations might be willing to accept challenging projects for social services?

The process of evaluation is a most useful tool when it is done in a responsible way. It will suggest to us the need for change. It will offer the introduction for remedy before a tragic collapse of a program in service. It can be a threatening enterprise, but so we may also look upon a complete physical examination. We would do well to cultivate genuine honest evaluation, and then build on our discovery. If it is to be effective, it must draw upon those who have competence for constructive judgment, and not be prone to either bias or prejudice.

God has given our church a most responsible privilege, to be His people, to carry out His directions for reconciliation and service. We will make many mistakes, and we will often fall far short of His expectation. Thank God. In Him we have forgiveness. As we discover our failures by serious review, He is also at our side to assist us in new ventures of faith to glorify His name and to serve the redeemed in His Son. God help us to achieve such constant objectives.



— your eyes hold back the light —
for Frank Espergren



your eyes hold back
the light
as we sit surrounded by a common life
and lose and find meaning in it all —

there are ways to bridge this gap
time opens up —
there are sounds I would erect —
small words placed carefully
for you to cross —
but the world tilts at such delicate pressures
and we heel over
in miasmic seas of rhetoric
each offering balm and sextant
each arming himself against painful metaphors
each lost in his quiet pain . . .

yet there is this hope —
after the silence —
in the warm afternoon
walk
where trees green out in perfect silence
and our talk hangs suspended in a high
faraway sky —

we pick our way among old cares
and new wounds
conscious of the nature of souls —
conscious of the stronger bond
formed without the weak-mortered
words —
knowing by walking together —
making our rounds of this special place —
seeing to the heart of things
without our range of charts and the mirrored
wisdom in our ages . . .

and we come 'round to it at last —
nothing settled past tomorrow's cautious pledges —
no irreversible laws in granite —

just this pleasant walk —
this shadowed and gentle sharing —
this reaching out . . .

J.T. Ledbetter

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book reviews

HIP POCKET GUIDE TO PLANNING AND EVALUATION by Dorothy Craig. Learning Concepts, 1978.

Designed as a basic primer, this book offers a step-by-step description of essential steps for planning and evaluation in educational and service organizations. The basic steps are: 1. defining the problem; 2. setting the objectives; 3. choosing among alternative strategies; 4. preparing for implementation; 5. designing the evaluation; and 6. using evaluative information. An epilogue presents an overview on initiating organizational change.

The value of this kind of guide can be seen in step 1, defining the problem, which consists of 9 sub-steps leading to a formal statement of the problem. These sub-steps include: Write a narrative description of the problem, figure out whose problem this is, consider whether it is appropriate for your organization to be doing something about this problem, and analyze the causes of the problem. Identification of the key problem is then

followed by a number of steps which can aid in translating the problem statement into a description of goals and objectives. Another feature of the guide is that each component of the planning and evaluation process includes a large space for making notes and responding to directions. For example, in considering a number of alternatives for reaching an objective, a diagram of a force-field analysis aids in identifying helping and hindering forces.

The model presented in this guide is one of a large number of planning and evaluation models which have been developed, each reflecting strengths and limitations. One strength of this model is that key components are identified, with each component including a series of questions which serve as "hooks" for collecting needed data. This model also can be employed in a variety of agencies within a parish, such as a day-school, a mid-week school, a youth group, or in a total parish program.

One limitation of this or any planning

and evaluation guide is that the kind of data collected is shaped by the model used and it may not solicit important input. In this goal-oriented model, for example, hardly any attention is given to securing feedback and reactions from a variety of people, within and outside an organization, who could offer important personal observations.

The use of this kind of guide to planning and evaluation will, however, enable parish leaders to go far beyond such conventional approaches as depending upon personal observations and hunches to serve as the basis of developing a program, or using reports collected by a few individuals circulating through the grapevine to provide information for an evaluation. The mission of the church and its educational agencies deserve better, especially in a day when tools that can make a significant contribution are available.

Marvin Bergman