

# ISSUES

IN CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Summer, 1985

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**RESEARCH  
IN THE CHURCH**

B. Wiegmann

Summer, 1985  
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# ISSUES

IN CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

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#### EDITOR'S NOTES

In our lifetime we have experienced an information explosion. To turn the mountains of information now available into personal knowledge which can be used in a person's search for truth and for bits to add to his or her wisdom bank still requires use of the process of personal assimilation. That process doesn't change much, but the tools that are available to assist one in managing the environment and in understanding it continue to change. Choosing the best tool is not a simple task in an age of endless technological innovation.

Church leaders have to deal with the information explosion successfully or face personal and organizational results no less devastating than those experienced by business leaders and their corporations. Authors for this *ISSUES* focus on the fact that, when research is used properly as a tool by leaders in the church, it can help them make better decisions. The suggested topics for study point to the mountains of ignorance that research can help leaders conquer. Our hope is that this will lead more church members to discover that data can be a friendly aid for doing the Lord's work and for making better decisions.

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## editorials

### RESEARCH: A BASIC INGREDIENT IN TEACHING AND LEARNING

A recent newspaper editorial in the *Lincoln Journal*, Lincoln, Nebraska, February 24, 1985, entitled "What Are the Facts?" began with the following paragraph:

A bit of institutional research would be useful: Why not run a review on how many Nebraska college students financially helped by the federal government's grants and loans fall into the luxury profile (stereo, automobiles, and three weeks on the beach) drawn by Secretary of Education William J. Bennett?

David Broder, a nationally syndicated columnist, in an article appearing in the same newspaper, questioned Bennett's remarks on the basis of substance and assumptions.

Several other writers, also recently, reminded us of the explosive age in which we now live. Sydney Harris, a national columnist, wrote that there is no alternative to an education other than a blind alley. Ninety percent of the occupations today are service-related compared to ninety percent self-employed at the founding of the country. He writes, "These are bad days for square pegs."

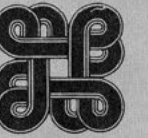
John Naisbitt in *Megatrends* has identified the present age as the Information Age. The amount of information available is simply staggering. Still another writer, Gregory F. Rehmke of the Institute for Humane Studies in Houston, Texas, focused on electronic networks — fancy words for writing letters over the telephone — to foster intellectual growth.

All the writers I have mentioned suggest that the need for research is greater than ever. Questions concerning facts, assumptions, substance, change, and new procedures are the ingredients of research. The need to establish the facts in this Information Age requires more than opinion; it requires research.

I think all educators should be involved in some type of research. It may only be the gathering of data, reading research articles, or perhaps doing a small study in the classroom.

To students on the graduate level the word "research" may remind them of a thesis or a dissertation. Oftentimes the remembrance is not necessarily a joyful remembering. More often than not, it is a recollection of a torturous experience along the way to obtaining an advanced degree and, therefore, in many cases, it is also the last piece of research completed.

What I define as needed research is not necessarily the long and tedious effort required in completing requirements for an advanced degree. What comes to mind is more a kind of research which would make instruction fresh and



## POINTS OF VIEW

The articles and editorials in this journal focus on what many might view as mundane (and not very exciting) work. Research is hard and slow and plodding work. To carry out a program of research requires a fair amount of "Sitz-Fleisch." But research is necessary. Through research questions are formulated and defined and refined in such a way that positive approaches to perceived problems can be devised. As somebody once said, "You can't get right answers to wrong questions." Through research problems can be analyzed and dissected and weighed and resolved (or, at least, the way to their resolution can be clarified). Research is not an option.

Programs of research in church and school challenge the decision-makers in our circles to understand problems and to be responsible in offering and devising solutions to those problems. It is a simple thing to "shoot from the hip," but it is a far more demanding thing to do the research on an issue and then delineate the conclusions that such research leads one to reach. However, as one of our authors reminds us, the doing of research is not a substitute for making a decision. But the research, we hope, is one of the most significant component parts in the decision-making process.

One of the most significant emphases in these articles and editorials is the clear call for all of us to do research and then also to use that research in the process of reaching decisions. The catalog of research projects, the suggestions for developing research programs, and the focus on the use of research in these articles and editorials provide all of us with some challenging POINTS OF VIEW.

— James H. Pragman

recent. Since one of the key ingredients of teaching is being current and fresh, I'm suggesting that all of us should be involved in at least one research project per year - actually doing research. A small survey searching for new data or an experimental study testing a new method of instruction would be sufficient.

If an extensive research project is to be attempted, an ingredient needed in addition to those mentioned previously is *time*. The basic elements required would be time for planning, time for writing objectives, time for writing procedures, time for applying evaluation techniques, and time for sharing results. Time for research must have the same priority as time for teaching and administration.

Research does make a difference. Research results can help one discover new directions, generate new ideas and suggest new ways that might be translated into action. The winners are the learners, since they will be the recipients of better programs and better instruction.

- Reuben V. Stohs

### CEREAL OR CASKET?

During the past century many theologians, philosophers and humanitarians have attempted to describe an epoch-making change whose roots go all the way back to the Renaissance and the Reformation. These changes, triggered by the industrial revolution, remained somewhat a part of the Western unconscious mind until the information age of contemporary societies became a reality at practically every human turn.

How does one wake, eat, drink, work, relax, play or sleep without being bombarded by the signals of informational crossroads and crosswalks at all levels of living and dying? For every move we make, whether it be eating our cereal, brushing our teeth, buying a car, or picking out a casket, data is of the essence. Even more important is the testing of the data. How can you be sure that one cereal is better than another or all of the rest? And when it comes to dying - is one casket better than another just because the one costs more than the other? We are at the point that before we die we had better plug in casket costs and values to the computer!

Seriously, data should be an important tool to use when making the vital decision in our work as well as our domestic life. As John Naisbitt has so vividly portrayed in *Megatrends*, we are in the information age! There is no escaping it: moving from a forced technology to a balanced human response.

Not even the church can run from it any longer. As Peter Berger puts it:

It will be clear by now that religion is by no means the only area of experience and thought affected by the transition from fate to choice. Morality, for one, is crucially affected, as are all institutions (notably political ones) that lay claim to any kind of moral authority. But the modern situation of religion will remain inadequately explained unless its relation to the aforementioned transition is understood.

(*The Heretical Imperative*, 1980)

Little wonder that pastors, and particularly younger pastors, express frustration over their inability to deal adequately with many of the problems confronting them. This is especially true for those who have not pursued any graduate work beyond initial seminary study.

In addition, pastors, parochial school teachers, DCEs and other full-time church workers report a dramatic increase in the complexity of problems for which they may perceive they have inadequate professional skills. The utilization of data-based instruments, where feasible and necessary, is still a long way from materializing in the administration of many parish programs.

The problems of aging, alcohol and drug abuse, unemployment, divorce, family relations, personal and professional relationships, and promiscuous relationships of varying degrees and stripes seem to converge at the parish level without notice. It is imperative that the leadership of the church at all levels, local, district, and synodical be afforded the pertinent and appropriate data-based information. Which shall it be? The new cereal for our times, the necessary data-based research which enables us to deal intelligently with many of the problems confronting us? Or, a casket that costs far too much?

- E. George Becker

### USE OUR FACULTIES FOR RESEARCH!

Where research is needed by the Church, it can best be performed by people who understand the special nature of the situations in which the research is to be performed and who have the research skills to carry out the studies. Many of the members of the faculties of our schools have had advanced training in their field and have been trained in research methods in their field as part of their academic background. The trained personnel are available.

Professors in the higher education institutions

of Synod have usually carried full teaching loads which leave little time to engage in research activities. Research by professors is encouraged, but not generally supported by a college. Nevertheless, college administrators would like to be able to point to research activities accomplished by faculty members when visited by an accreditation team, but time is not generally provided within the scope of a faculty member's assigned duties to accomplish the research. The result is that research is undertaken by those professors who desire to accomplish the research so badly that they are willing to use their leisure time to do so.

The thesis of this editorial is as follows: The LC/MS should look to members of the faculties of its institutions of higher learning to carry out the research needed by the Church. Why don't the agencies of the LC/MS look to their college faculties for research needs? Maybe it is because professors don't have time, in addition to their regular duties, to devote to research activities. The skills are available, but time must be provided.

Time has a value. Time must be purchased. The research can be done by our professors, but it is unreasonable to expect the research to be accomplished unless time is provided. Time for research means salary support for those activities or the purchase of teaching time to substitute for the professor's time.

This writer believes that if the Church looked to its professors to perform needed research, great benefits would ensue. The obvious benefit would be that needed studies could be carried out by those most qualified to do the research, i.e., those trained to work in the field of the research and trained in research methods.

Additionally, the quality of teaching might well be improved. The active conduct of research by a professor helps to keep that teacher up-to-date in his field. As an active researcher, a teacher is able to interpret other research in his/her field to students more effectively than if he/she is unconcerned about research.

This writer does not advocate that our institutions of higher learning assume the secular university model of "publish or perish." It need not be a responsibility of all faculty members. However, when research needs do surface, before attempting to secure outside research services, the possibility that able researchers might be available on the faculty of one of our colleges should be pursued. If appropriate research skills are available, then those skills should be "purchased" from the teaching program.

- J.D. Weinhold

## Why Do Research in the Church?

by Elden Duensing

It is the basic premise of this article that decisions can and will be made more wisely if leaders responsible for those decisions have sufficient data and accurate data. The chances of making better decisions are greatly increased if we know more about which questions to ask and then make certain we have the data or answers to these questions before we proceed with selecting a solution.

As a way of answering questions on why the church should do and use research, problem situations at three different levels - the local parish, the district, and the Synod - are summarized briefly in the first part of the article. This is followed by a discussion of potential obstacles to the use of research and the compelling reasons for the use of research in the church.

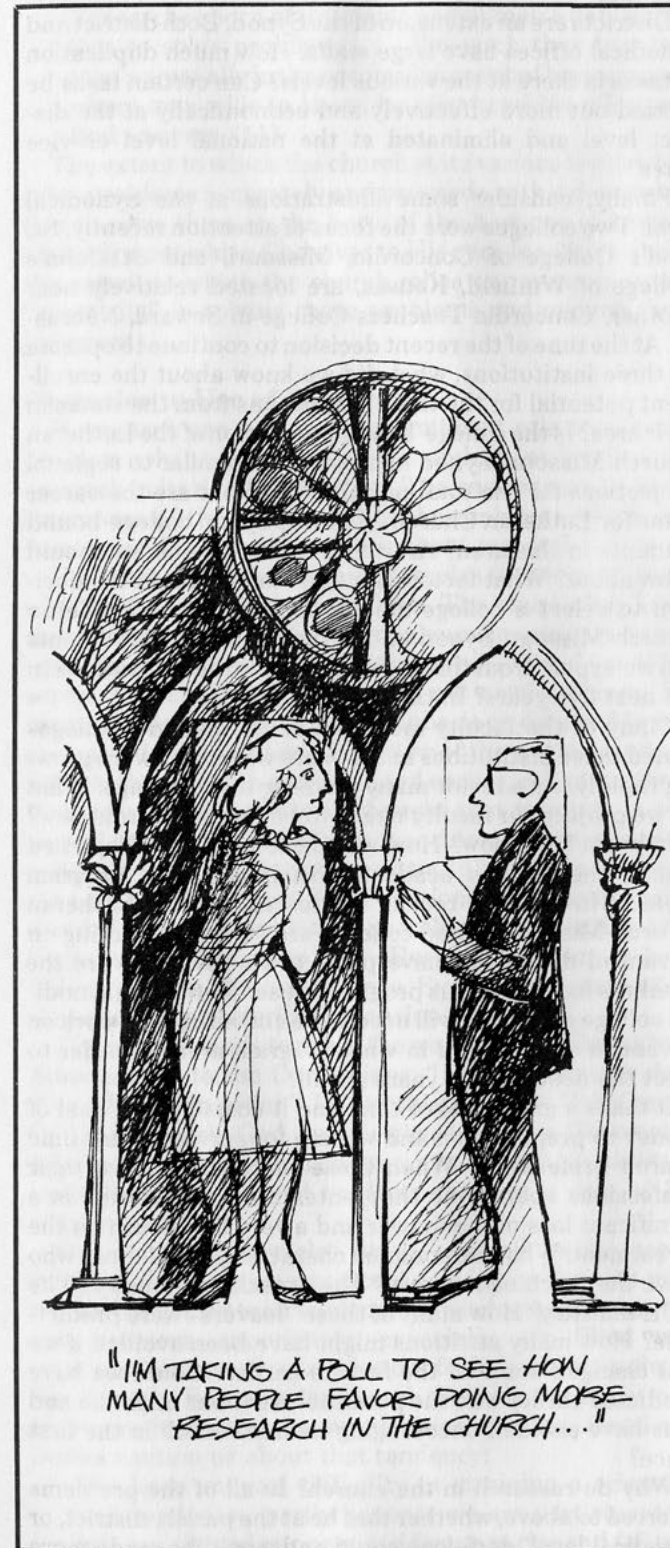
### Problems of Research

Redeemer Lutheran Church has a problem that faces many parishes who built a building to house elementary school classrooms many years ago. That was in the days when wooden floors gave way to asphalt tile. Now, after years of hard wear by thousands of active feet, the tile floors must be replaced, and that poses a problem. What kind of surface should be installed now? Should they replace it with carpeting? If so, what quality should it be? One of the members of Redeemer operates a business that sells asphalt tile and offers the parish a sizeable discount. The best solution seems obvious. Take advantage of the reduced price; give the business to one of the members.

But is that the best solution? What is the comparable cost of carpeting? What is the predictable life of either product? What are the comparable costs of cleaning both surfaces? Which surface will look best with daily, hard use? What effect does carpeting have on reducing the noise factor in the classrooms, and how much does that influence the climate of learning? What other questions should be asked?

St. John Lutheran Church is a large parish with more than 2,000 members. The parish has for years experienced what many parishes have, especially those with large memberships. The number of inactive members continues to grow. There is concern for the spiritual welfare of such large numbers. Furthermore, the growing list of inactive members is taking its toll on the financial and human resources of the parish. What can be done?

Frequently most of the efforts are devoted to programs to "bring them back." Duplicating machines increase their output; special programs are set up to increase contact with "those who have left." Parishes who have put their energies into these solutions generally agree it's difficult to bring back those who have already left.



Wouldn't a better solution be to focus energies on preventing the leaving? What do we know about those who leave? Are there some common demographic factors? Could we have predicted many of those who no longer participate? Could we have done something to prevent many from leaving in the first place?

Beautiful Savior Lutheran Church has a sprawling physical plant consisting of a large nave and fellowship hall, a large office complex, a gymnasium, many school classrooms, and restrooms and storage rooms. All of these spaces are heated in a climate that has winter temperatures dropping frequently below zero. Energy costs continue to mount. Can anything be done to increase heating efficiency? What steps could be taken to reduce heat loss? How long will it take to recover the cost of installation? How frequently are the various areas used and by whom? What savings would there be if some areas were closed off for portions of the week and the heat reduced? What kind of savings could be expected if the parish invested in a computerized control system, and how long would it take to get back the investment?

Do these problems on the parish level sound familiar? Do they suggest others that are as challenging or more so?

Consider some illustrations at the district level. A midwestern district of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod has 250 congregations. Professionals in this district office generally agree that a third of the parishes have a reputation for being progressive and productive in terms of successful programs, membership growth, and contributions. However, nearly an equal number are identified as weak parishes, and the remainder are in that middle ground. The challenge for the district staff is how to move more to the top group.

In the search for means to do that there is a tendency to increase the amount of paper sent through the mails to parishes and to increase staff contacts on the phone and in person. These responses are certainly better than the option of resignation to the fact that this is how things will always be, but the cost of these responses in dollars and manpower can be considerable. Are there other options to consider? What do we know about the characteristics of the strong parishes? Do they have some common factors? What about the weak parishes? Are there significant factors they have in common? If we discover answers to these questions, might we be able to focus our activities more specifically on certain factors? Might we do more preventive work, making certain that new parishes are more likely to be a part of the top third, and spotting earlier those parishes that may be moving in a negative direction?

Districts with a large geographic area are aware even more than most others of the cost in time and financial resources to bring various committees together. The average is probably at least one meeting a week involving travel from considerable distances for a large number of people. What difference would it make if committees met less frequently? What if the membership on the committees were reduced by 10%? by 25%? What would the

savings be if we substituted phone conferences for 25% of the meetings? How productive is committee meeting time as measured in terms of positive outcomes of a given meeting?

Districts are an extension of the Synod. Both district and synodical offices have large staffs. How much duplication of tasks is there at the various levels? Can certain tasks be carried out more effectively and economically at the district level and eliminated at the national level or vice versa?

Finally, consider some illustrations at the Synodical level. Two colleges were the focus of attention recently. St. Paul's College of Concordia, Missouri, and St. John's College of Winfield, Kansas, are located relatively near another, Concordia Teachers College in Seward, Nebraska. At the time of the recent decision to continue to operate all three institutions, what did we know about the enrollment potential for the three institutions from the states in their area? Is the college-bound population of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod in these areas similar to regional projections for the total population? What are the career plans for Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod college-bound students in this area? Are there recent trends we should know about? What factors are most important in the decision to select a college among families of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod in this region? What enrollments can we expect from this region for the three institutions in the next five years? In the next ten years?

Many of the faculty members at the Synod's colleges joined these institutions in the years when they were growing rapidly. As a result many are near the same age. What do we project our faculty needs to be five years from now? Ten years from now? How will these needs be dispersed among the various academic disciplines and program areas? How many recent graduates of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod colleges are currently working on advanced degrees or have plans to do so? What are the numbers for the various program areas? How many synodical college graduates will need to be encouraged to work on advanced degrees and in what program areas in order to meet the needs in the years ahead?

It takes a great deal of time and it costs a great deal of money to prepare men and women for service in full-time church professions. When these individuals leave their professions soon after they enter them, the result is a significant loss of manpower and a very low return on the investment. What are common characteristics of those who leave the teaching ministry? The preaching ministry? The DCE ministry? How many of these "leavers" were predictable? How many attritions might have been avoided if we had changed some of the factors earlier? Could we have predicted earlier who the potential attritions might be and thus have avoided encouraging them to enroll in the first place?

Why do research in the church? In all of the problems referred to above, whether that be at the parish, district, or synodical level, decisions could and would be made more

wisely if leaders responsible for those decisions had sufficient data and better data. Asking the right questions and gathering the right data is research. Good and Scates in *Methods of Research* remind us,

Research is born of problems and of man's determination to solve problems . . . Research thus becomes man's great ally in the accomplishment of his purposes; where man wills to know, he may bend his effort and find answers. (11)

The extent to which the church at its various levels identifies problems accurately and proceeds with a determination to solve them on the basis of the best use of wisdom and judgment which God gives to His people will determine the extent to which the church relies on research as that "great ally" in solving those problems and making those judgments.

#### Obstacles to Use of Research

If research can play such a significant role in effective problem solving, why would the church at any level *not* use research in its decision making? The answer may be in our awareness of the complexity of the problems which confront us and in our perceptions about research.

Probably one of the biggest obstacles to overcome is one which has theological dimensions. The church has heard many times from God's Word about keeping its values straight, about focusing on the things of God and not of this world, about spiritual things and not earthly things. For many people research with its emphasis on data and facts is associated with a materialistic view of the world. Good and Scates, the research authors cited earlier, call attention to this view. "It is sometimes thought that research is concerned only with physical things and as such contributes to a view of the world as materialistic." (15) Later, however, they add, "Man's careful observations afford material for wonder, awe and reverence, as well as for scientific principles and philosophies . . . . Everywhere there is basic order - pattern, rhythm, balance. Everywhere cause-effect sequences form interlinking chains." (17)

The church needs to recall the words of God through the Apostle Paul to the Corinthians. "Let all things be done decently and in order." I Corinthians 14:40. Our Creator God is an orderly God, and He gave to man in His creative act a mind with reasoning power, a mind with the ability to make judgments based on facts that are a part of His orderly world.

Our emotions may also be an obstacle to the use of research. They play a significant role in our decision making, and they may tend to cloud our wisdom and judgment. Our religious experiences especially are filled with emotions because they involve our feeling and attitudes so significantly. So also in the church there is a tendency to let emotions hold sway in our decision making. Good and Scates caution us about that tendency:

We have unusual difficulty in attaining a scientific, unbiased view, partly because we are participants in our society and our personal fortunes rise and fall with

the direction of social movement; partly because we become used to a world in which we seek to enhance our desires by assertion, by vigorous demand, by some display of emotion, perhaps even a threat. Thus, our everyday experiences and our personal perceptions mislead us into thinking of human affairs primarily in terms of the strength and quality of demand. We commonly have little recognition for the conditions and forces (and historical sequences) which have produced our attitudes and orientations, and we may give scant attention to the social forms and interactions that play their part in molding and guiding group decision in action. Scientific study in the human area will, however, free our view from the immediate and obvious, and direct our attention to the underlying and basically controlling factors. (13)

To what extent are such forces at work at all levels of decision making in the church? At the local level how many times have we heard, "We always did it that way?" Or, as our forefathers said it, "*Wir bleiben beim Alten.*" Might we not be surprised how much such forces are at work also at the synodical level, especially at those unique times when God's people who are members of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod gather in convention? How much do we at those times recognize, ". . . the conditions and forces (and historical sequences) which have produced our attitudes and orientations." (13)? It's especially at times such as that we would do well to remember that, ". . . scientific study (research) will free our view from the immediate and obvious and direct our attention to the underlying and basically controlling factors." (13)

Another factor that discourages people from utilizing research is a feeling that the use of data reduces the decision-making process to a mechanical procedure and eliminates the need for judgment. Such a position is probably the result of a misunderstanding about the role of data or research in the decision-making process. The author of *Applied Business and Economic Statistics* reminds us:

Because of our constant exposure to statistics, we should always be concerned with the search for answers to a number of questions. Are the statistical conclusions that reach us valid? Does the employment of statistics in a given situation attempt to clarify the true state of the world or merely sensationalize the issue? Are the data accurate or biased? What is statistically sound, the claim or the counterclaim. (4)

The use of statistics requires judgment and wisdom in interpretation and application. Commenting on this concern, Good and Scates point out:

Research findings can never replace judgment. They only narrow the range in which judgment must operate. For example, if we have many facts, . . . they tend to make our judgments better. But they do not go all the way in determining the judgment itself. That is a function which only man can discharge. The argument does not, therefore, hinge on research "dictating" to man.

Man dictates to himself. (22)

The cost of research, both in terms of time and money, is often a factor that deters people from including it in their problem solving. In the case of the floor covering problem facing Redeemer Lutheran Church cited earlier, the temptation is to avoid the time and cost for study and take advantage of the reduced price quickly because it's here and now. However, down the road the reality of the time and cost necessary for cleaning one surface as compared to another reminds us that the fast decision now may be a costly one as it relates to the time and cost factor in the future.

#### Reasons for Research

Probably the most compelling reason to do research focuses attention on our stewardship life. God's people recognize the blessings of resources He provides in such rich measure. Church members in America are especially aware of the richness of His gifts because they live in a land that enjoys such abundance. But with these gifts comes the responsibility to use them wisely, especially as these resources are used in the mission and ministry of the church.

In his book, *Christian Stewards, Confronted and Committed*, the Reverend Waldo Werning says:

Maintenance of the full diversity of created things, which are an irreplaceable reservoir from which to draw food and materials for years to come, is the responsibility of human beings. Involved in this is preservation of plant and animal life, energy, and all resources to sustain life on earth. This makes man's technology a stewardship which has potential to care for and aid or to destroy God's creatures and creation. (92)

Among the multitude of blessings our heavenly Father gives to His people is the wealth of information which our current age places before us. John Naisbitt in *Megatrends* includes the movement to an Information Society as one of the ten major trends of this decade. Our high tech society provides for us such an effective way to locate and retrieve data and to do so quickly and in such a sophisticated manner. In all responsible decision-making God's people, living under their stewardship commitment, must utilize this wealth of information in their decision-making. Professor Gilbert Daenzer in his *ISSUES* article last fall commented on how the church will change and predicts, "The church of the future will use this information potential in data analysis." (10) That's accountability, and accountability is what stewardship is all about. Rev. Werning uses the word as he reminds us, "As stewardship of resources permeates our lives, so accountability permeates our existence in Christ." (93)

Accountability demands man's best understanding and judgment. The research text referred to earlier indicates the role research can play to improve our knowledge and judgment, "To satisfy man's craving for more understanding, to improve his judgment . . . these are the large fundamental goals of research." (Good, 15)

The resolve to make decisions on the basis of our best understanding and judgment means that we will be much more concerned about the long-term implications of the solutions we select. How many times haven't we found ourselves in situations where we find years later that what seemed like such a good decision to meet the needs of the moment didn't work out that way as we saw the implications of it from the larger perspective of time and circumstance later? Good decision makers are future-oriented. Why do research in the church today? Because we are living in a time when the thoughts of society are more oriented to the future. The author of *Megatrends* suggests why this may be the case?

During the past decade, the debate over the environment and non-renewable resources has raised our collective consciousness about the dangers of the short-term approach. As a general proposition we have become much more sensitive to the long-range implications of our short-term actions . . . The ground is right for a shift to long-term. Values and necessity are coming up on the same side. (80)

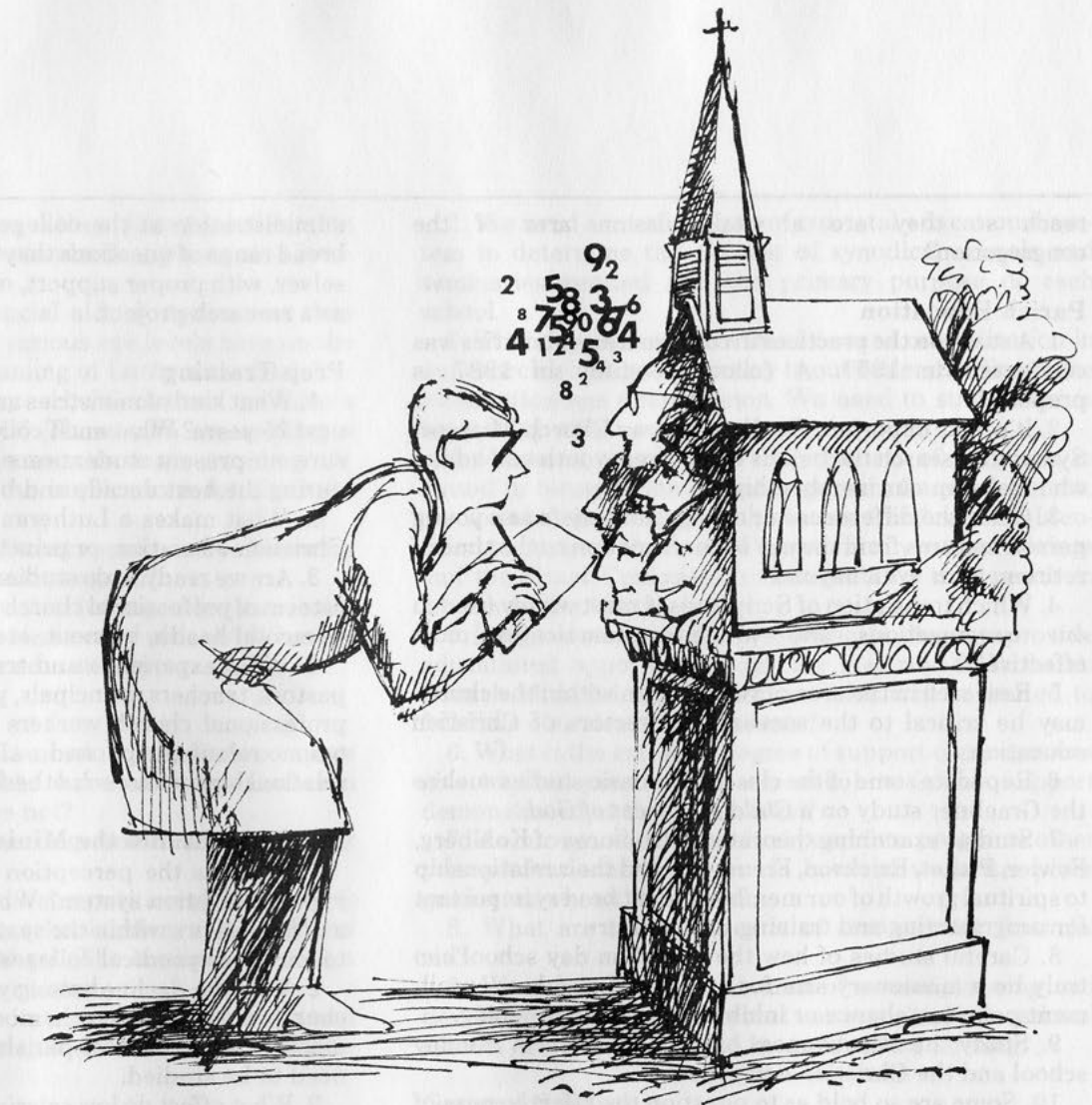
The church, especially also the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, has a history of spending much time and effort in looking back to put our current decision-making in perspective. While that can be a positive factor in providing stability in maintaining doctrine, values, and traditions that give strength to a church body, it can also keep a church body from being responsible, accountable stewards by keeping it from being future oriented. The extent to which the members of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod recognize the need for a proper balance between looking back and looking to the future in their decision-making today will in large part determine how our church body at its various levels responds to the question of how much research will be relied on as the ally it can be in the decision-making process.

Why do research in the church? We can't afford the luxury of not utilizing it. Only then can we be certain that we are using the resources of the church to the best advantage in carrying out its mission. In some instances this is so important in this time of limited resources and high costs for basic needs and services that our very existence as a church body in effective ministry is at stake.

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by William J. Preuss



## 100+ Research Ideas for The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod

The purpose of this article is to call attention to a variety of topics or areas of study on which the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod needs to do research, if it is to have a data base available as a tool for use in making vital decisions. The writer has appealed to colleagues in various centers within our church for topics. The areas of needed research thus identified may simply serve as a starter list or stimulator to readers who have a desire to make their contribution to the program of the church by setting out to do some of these studies wherever they are involved in the work of the church.

#### Research Suggestions from Synodical Leaders

At the synodical level it seems necessary to have follow-up research on the programming of each of our major boards. One would expect members of the staff to be quite knowledgeable regarding research done by other denominations as well as other educational and research institutions. Each staff should devise means of evaluation

and study which would be helpful to districts and ultimately to parishes. This could include assessment of effective ministries and practices, which can be shared, and also methods of helping church leaders define new frontiers of ministry. The following are suggestions received from synodical leaders.

#### Early Childhood

1. Can we discover the holding power for students who attend the Lutheran preschool and then continue through the elementary grades?
2. What current trends in public early childhood education will affect the future of such Lutheran schools?
3. What are the newest trends in curriculum development for early childhood and elementary level schools?
4. Are early childhood programs coming under the department of education or the department of social resources? Implications?
5. Are our early childhood efforts truly focused on out-

reach so they are a vital mission arm of the congregation?

#### Parish Education

1. A study on the practices in confirmation ministries was conducted in 1977. A follow-up study in 1987 is proposed.
2. It seems important for the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod to research the beliefs of children, youth and adults who make up our membership.
3. Chart the differences or changes in beliefs as a young person matures from the age of confirmation to the time of retirement or even beyond.
4. Which translation of Scriptures is most widely used in our congregations and which communicates most effectively?
5. Research in the area of voluntarism within the church may be critical to the success of directors of Christian education.
6. Replicate some of the classical or basic studies such as the Graebner study on a *Child's Concept of God*.
7. Studies examining theoretical structures of Kohlberg, Fowler, Piaget, Erickson, Freud, etc. and their relationship to spiritual growth of our members might be very important for programming and training in the future.
8. Careful studies of how the Christian day school can truly be a missionary arm for our Synod and how enrollment policies enhance or inhibit that from happening.
9. Study the effectiveness of memory work in Sunday school and the Christian day school.
10. Some are so bold as to question the effectiveness of some of the time spent on the mastery of languages, such as Hebrew, by our pastors.

#### Evangelism

1. Why do 50,000 members of our church drop out each year?
2. How do individuals decide on a particular church or congregation?
3. What happens to children that we lose after we baptize them?
4. Tracking members is an issue that needs to be studied carefully.
5. What is it that meets the spiritual needs of people in terms of worship and preaching? What do people mean when they say they are not being adequately fed by the Word?
6. Study the value of identifying and trying to utilize spiritual gifts within our congregations.
7. How has the growing wealth of members of our Synod affected their spiritual commitment and their concern for outreach?
8. Is there something about our style of church life, our worship, our attitudes, that prevent us from reaching the poor and destine us to be a middle-class church?

#### College Responses for Research Topics

As one would expect, members of the faculty and

administration at the college and seminary level have a broad range of questions they would like to research themselves, with proper support, or have someone else take on as a research project.

#### Prep Training

1. What kind of ministries are needed in the church in the next 25 years? What must colleges and seminaries do to be sure our present students are ready to minister effectively during the next decade and beyond?
2. What makes a Lutheran teacher, pastor, director of Christian education, or principal effective?
3. Are we ready to do studies of the self-concept and self-esteem of professional church workers? Are related studies of mental health, burnout, etc. possible?
4. What experience and training must be provided for pastors, teachers, principals, youth directors, and/or other professional church workers to minister effectively in a team relationship and also to have professional relationships with each other?

#### Recruitment into the Ministry

1. What is the perception of youth about our LCMS higher education system? What can admissions directors and counselors within the system do to attract more youth to enroll in synodical colleges?
2. Why the decline among young people in professional church work? Salary, role models, perception of ministry, demographics in local parishes, and many other factors need to be studied.
3. What effect do low salaries have on the recruitment of church worker students?
4. What programs are being utilized at the congregational level to promote church work professions, attendance at synodical schools, and the like?
5. We need a systematic study of why people leave full-time church work.

#### Church Practice

1. The doctrine of the call may need to be studied again. How do we relate present calling practices to the concept of the divine call?
2. Vital aspects of pastoral, teaching, and DCE ministry should be identified, evaluated, and fed back into the system for training considerations.
3. What is the role of the computer in the parish today?

#### Christian Education

1. Are our Christian day school classrooms truly Christian communities? What are the things that Lutheran schools do best of all?
2. What is the relative success of single grade and multi-grade classrooms in development of growth in the Christian faith?
3. The advantages and disadvantages of consolidation of Lutheran schools and the factors that make those association schools which are very successful effective.

4. What effect do state laws, as they relate to certification standards and accreditation standards, have on our Christian day schools?

5. What effect does financial aid to students as they attend parochial schools at various age levels have on the enrollment and the programming of Lutheran schools?

6. Do our Christian day schools attract member's children? Mission prospects? Those who are seeking a private education or for some reason are avoiding the public schools? What are the implications for the local parish?

7. What is the effect of different approaches to financing the congregation's educational program?

8. What is the status of music (or any other curricular area) education in Lutheran elementary schools? What are the implications for teacher education programs?

#### Societal Changes

1. How do the values of our adult members compare when we contrast those who have attended Lutheran schools with those who have not?
2. What is the status of marriage and family among our full-time church workers?
3. It may be well to study the composition of the teaching staff within our Christian day schools. Many schools do not call synodically trained teachers. The implications of this trend should be carefully evaluated.
4. Delineate the changes in our school population and determine how we can best respond to the needs created by those changes.

#### Outreach Opportunities

1. Is it an effective principle of church growth to bring people within the community into the congregational facility for programs other than worship and religious education?
2. A study of the potential success of new schools that are established in communities (this might relate especially to secondary schools).
3. Certain individuals, religious stations, and programs are gaining a great deal of momentum and financial support. What is the Missouri Synod doing in this area and what can and should we be doing?
4. A summary of the data collected by empirical studies investigating the various facets of church growth and evangelism during the past decade in our Synod.
5. We may need more careful empirical studies of the factors related to back door losses within our Synod.
6. We should study the factors which are related to the positive involvement of adults in volunteer ministry, in evangelism, and in education.
7. What model of higher education will be most beneficial for the LCMS to spread the Gospel in the year 2000 and beyond?

#### College-Seminary Research

1. Identify people who have bona fide talents and gifts for various levels of ministry and administration.

2. We need a careful study of our total educational system to determine the number of synodical schools and seminaries needed and the primary purpose of each school.

3. There appears to be a trend toward centralization in our church which goes contrary to our understanding of the information age phenomenon. We need to study what is happening within our church.

4. We need to study the effectiveness of programs in Synod in terms of membership growth, financial growth, discipleship growth, and other areas which can be identified to support the costs. Do synodical youth gatherings and the Great Commission Convocations truly result in growth within the church?

5. Is it good stewardship for synodical colleges to provide educational opportunities for the majority of Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod youth or should it be limited to full-time church worker students?

6. What is the extent or degree of support congregations give to the synodical schools and how is this support demonstrated at the parish level?

7. As our synodical schools expand into programs other than professional church work, how can we better place graduates when they finish?

8. What are the true needs of students for financial aid?

9. We need to study the area of estate planning and develop programs to the extent our synodical educational system can be undergirded by endowment funding.

#### General Studies

1. Can we identify the true priorities for our church?
2. Can we identify the factors or characteristics which are common to church leaders at all levels throughout Synod which seem to contribute to their effectiveness as ministers of the Gospel?
3. What are the views of representative black, Hispanic, Native American, and Asiatic groups on changes needed within our church to increase its appeal to different cultural or ethnic groups?
4. Are we comparing our own demographic trends with those of the nation and studying what are the ultimate implications for our church?
5. A current study of comparative responses of LCMS laity, clergy, and synodical administrators and teachers on key issues of doctrine, fellowship, social ministry, etc. is needed.

#### Suggested District Studies

Responses from the district offices called for a broad range of areas of study. The outreach and education emphases seemed to predominate.

#### Outreach and Evangelism

1. Evaluation of the approaches, methods, and programs used in congregations to effectively assimilate new members.
2. Research into the best possible adult membership or

adult confirmation materials and some evaluation of their effectiveness would be helpful.

3. Are we developing a strategy for outreach through the Sunday school?

### The Christian Day School

1. Research showing trends and projections in a number of different categories might be useful. Those categories might include member and non-member enrollment, minority enrollment, synodically trained and non-synodically trained teachers, teachers leaving Lutheran teaching, etc.

2. Any trends in school growth comparing urban, suburban, and rural which would include member and non-member enrollment.

3. Comparison of Lutheran school graduates with other graduates as they complete high school and how far they continue their education beyond high school.

4. We need some research as to why we have limited success in bringing members of minority groups into our congregations.

### Program Areas

1. Adult education and family life education are areas to research thoroughly.

2. Junior and/or adult confirmation ministry is very challenging and we need research related to the materials, methods and practices or policies which are most effective.

3. The effectiveness of our various educational agencies should be researched regularly.

4. The financial situation in Lutheran schools needs to be carefully researched.

### Issues

1. Updated research on Synod's stand and concern about lodges would be helpful.

2. Can we examine the dynamics of the small parish and the rural parish? How can we help parishes remain vital, dynamic and growing even when the population shifts?

3. Can we research the best means of ministering to young adults between the ages of 18 and 35?

4. Can we research how women can be utilized most effectively in the ministries of the church?

### Research Suggestions from Parishes

Pastors in the Nebraska District and a sampling of teachers were invited to respond to the basic question of this article. Many of their questions are similar to those identified by other centers within the church. The following are some suggestions not already stated in this article.

1. Do we have some research on home schooling? Pastors in remote areas may consider home schooling for their own children.

2. Do we have research on the drop out problem at the high school age? It appears as though many of our youth become inactive shortly after confirmation.

3. Research and guidelines for dealing with various types

of humanistic philosophy, psychology or teaching would be helpful to parish pastors.

4. We need a careful study to identify teachers, DCEs, and pastors who remain in the office to which they are called and determine why they are effective and satisfied in their ministry.

5. Have we adequately researched the needs of pastors moving into retirement? Are the programs that are available at this time adequate to answer the needs of retiring professionals?

6. Are there differences in the ministry to congregations of 1,000 plus communicants and those which are smaller? Does the pastor need different skills for each type of congregation?

7. Have we adequately studied how parishes can respond to the need of children and others who have learning disabilities or other handicaps?

8. Are we utilizing the best of what we know from secular educational philosophy and studies in moral education to be more effective in our Christian education?

9. What levels of Biblical literacy do we have among our Christian day school students and among our non-Christian day school students?

### A Perspective on Research Needs in the Church

There are many vital questions to answer and many types of basic evaluations that need to be conducted. Individuals in many different contexts of ministry identify similar issues that must be dealt with if they are to be effective in their planning, programming, and ministry. It seems important to identify and prioritize issues and needs at all levels within our church. We must be convinced that we do need evaluation and data for vital decision making. We must find efficient and effective means of coordinating studies within the college, district and synodical contexts but it may be most important to be sure practitioners in the parish know how to gather their own data, involve their own people, and be most responsive to the needs where they are called to serve at this point in time.

### Synodical

At the synodical level, there is a need for consistent redefinition of the mission and ministry of the church. Leaders must have a shared vision of what goals and objectives have top priority. Leaders with a clear vision of the mission of the church need a sound data base for decision making. There are different types or categories of studies which should be ongoing.

1. A study of trends which affect the various areas of ministry (megatrends as a model).

2. Effectiveness studies to redirect programming, preparation of church workers, development of resources to be utilized by professional and lay church workers.

3. Needs assessment of the constituency. Those change rapidly in our current society.

4. Identify communication practices which are most effective at all levels within the church.

5. Study the commitment of professional church workers

and laity. What *do* and *will* they support emotionally, in their prayers, financially, etc.?

6. Analyze the spiritual gifts and other talents within the church and maintain a "talent bank."

7. Integration of recruitment practices which are effective in our time. We need to recruit the most talented youth into different areas of church work, into leadership within the church, into various areas of volunteer ministry in their own parishes, and the like.

### College and Seminary

At the college and seminary level, there needs to be consistent identification of the mission of the institution and a vision of how that fits into the total effort of the church. While there may be many more areas of vital study, the following seem representative:

1. A college or seminary is as good as its administration and faculty. A series of studies to determine how best to recruit and further develop talented individuals for these two areas of service are wanted.

2. Schools are competing for the same pool of students. Is a shared or collective means of recruiting into ministry needed?

3. Projecting to the future to establish the program in advance of the demands from the field.

4. Development may be critical to the continuation of our education system.

5. Follow-up studies on graduates to determine their effectiveness, methodology, and tenure in full-time church work.

6. Study the spiritual growth of students while on campus and as graduates.

7. Determine the inservice training that practitioners desire and need.

8. Study the rewards and satisfaction of ministry for those who continue in it.

9. Futurism to take into account the types of ministry, the type of skills such as language or counseling needed, etc.

### District Studies

Districts may work very closely with synodical offices as well as with the colleges and seminaries to meet their needs. Some districts may have some very unique areas of ministry which call for special attention. Areas which ought to be of concern to districts are as follows:

1. How to best stimulate the spiritual and professional growth of full-time church workers.

2. Identify areas of inservice training for professional church workers which may be different than those asked for.

3. Programming needs in such areas as evangelism and missions, youth, education, stewardship, etc.

4. The commitment of church workers and the laity to outreach and missions.

5. Effectiveness studies of the various programs within the parish, circuit and district.

6. Training needs of the laity.

7. Study the unchurched in each community and deter-

mine how best to reach those individuals or groups.

8. Special groups which need more effective ministry.

9. Help parishes evaluate how well they are providing for the support needs of members and prospects (high touch).

### Parish Studies

Most of the areas that districts should be studying will be of direct help to the parish and involve the parish. Some significant areas are as follows:

1. Each parish needs to identify what type of congregation it is, mission or maintenance.

2. Each parish should be aware of the *perceived* needs for ministry as both church workers and laity identify them.

3. Evaluate present practices consistently and make called for adjustments.

4. Study the level of awareness of members for different ministry opportunities within the parish and beyond, as well as methods, resources, materials, or approaches that can be utilized.

5. Study the demographics and trends within the parish and do strategic planning on that basis.

6. Study the strengths of their own parish in terms of what encourages the participation of active members and what discourages the participation of inactives.

7. Study the talents and spiritual gifts of members so that each person can grow in ministry and be challenged even more.

8. Study potential members and the changes within the parish which might be necessary to assimilate those potential members.

9. Determine what leadership style is preferred or necessary to be most effective and then select professional and lay leaders on the basis of parish needs.

The questions and studies listed are but a sample of those suggested by others or assumed to be vital by the writer. Our church needs to ask hard questions and seek the answers if our ministry to the world is to be effective. In the Fall, 1984 *ISSUES* one writer pointed out that mainline denominations are losing members while other groups - fundamentalists and charismatics within the church, and various cults outside the church - are growing rapidly. During this time of transition, between the industrial age and the information age, our church must be responsive to the needs of people if we are to make disciples of all nations. We should be as wise as the children of this world in using the tools of our era effectively to do Kingdom work. Can we afford to be satisfied with anything less when the cost is lost souls?

Requests for input were sent to heads of synodical divisions, college and seminary presidents, district offices, Concordia Seward faculty, Nebraska District pastors, selected Nebraska District teachers. Thanks to all who responded.

# What Research and Information Management Can Do for the Church

by John P. O'Hara

Assume you are a national or district Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod staff person, and you had to answer one or more of the following questions:

1. What have been the grade-specific elementary enrollment trends in the 100 metropolitan areas with the largest LCMS elementary student enrollments for the past ten years? How has the percent of non-Lutheran enrollment changed during the same period? Has the percentage for urban vs. suburban non-Lutheran enrollment tended to diverge or converge?
2. What expectations do parents have when they enroll their children in the LCMS parochial school? What are the most important factors which lead parents to enroll their child, or to remove their child?
3. Approximately 60,000 member transfers are effected annually among LCMS congregations. What effects do such people exchanges have on the sending and receiving parishes? What are the nature and directions of such transfers? What do recent trends in such phenomena portend for the affected congregations?
4. How does the presence of a parochial school impact a congregation? Does a parochial school cause lower at-large contributions (that portion of the congregation's income which leaves the local church)? Does the presence of a parochial school increase the congregation's performance in other areas of ministry, such as greater Sunday school or adult Bible class enrollment, greater per member giving, increased gains from the confirmation of adults, etc.?

Church leaders in a variety of positions throughout the church today face very similar questions virtually every week. In almost all cases the data they need to make decisions, or to plan/evaluate programs, is in fact available. Available, but *not* very manageable. (Some would contend that unmanageable data is *de facto* unavailable.) What many of us need, as administrators, is a data collection and report system that is reliable (tells us what it purports to tell us), effective (has a demonstrable relationship to the kinds of decisions we are called upon to make), and efficient (relatively accessible in a reasonable time-frame and at a reasonable cost in terms of dollars and effort).

In some cases, however, the data needed are not available. In those cases, the manager must decide how he will obtain the data, and how much he can afford to spend in order to acquire it. Too often, the latter determines the former, or causes the decision-maker to forego data collection altogether. Unfortunately, the cost of *not* obtaining the necessary information, as great as it is, will not be immediately apparent. How can we assist church leaders to INVEST in research and reap greater dividends in terms of more effective planning and decision-making?

## Dealing with the Inadequacies

Our first step in encouraging greater utilization of the existing data, and increasing church leaders' investment in further research, is to reformulate the existing processes of data collection, to deal with its various inadequacies. Using the three criteria enunciated previously (reliability, effectiveness, efficiency), the current process for obtaining and analyzing information is woefully inadequate.

**Reliability.** Perhaps no element of data collection is more critical than reliability, particularly when one deals with time series data. Data items which vary significantly over time can mean important changes in the observed phenomena, or that the data items are not reliable measures of those phenomena across populations or over time. Ultimately, reliability problems may be traced to face validity, that is, the extent to which a given data item actually measures what we assume it measures. In large organizations such as the church, data reliability or face validity may change over time with changes in personnel, changes in priorities, or other significant structural or contextual changes, if the data collection process fails to keep pace with change or lacks specific documentation on the original data definitions and nomenclature against which to match current needs and understandings. Even the common lexicon of the church may cause serious problems if no level of specificity is defined for various types of local parish organization. For example, at what point does a "preaching station" become a "mission" or an "organized congregation?" Of course, many of us "know" what those words mean. The problem is our "knowledge" tends to be idiosyncratic, unless there is a common frame of reference which we mutually agree to use as the arbiter for any questions as to what kind of local parish organization we are describing.

The issue of validity/reliability is of more than academic interest since the use of unreliable data may well lead to very wrong conclusions. Further, the lack of clarity as to what precisely we are measuring increases the probability that data will be misused or misinterpreted (through no fault of the church leader involved). Hence, questions of data reliability hold important implications for the ultimate utility of the data we collect. **THE NEED TO ESTABLISH A SYSTEMATIC AND MORE PRECISE NOMENCLATURE WITH BROAD CONSENSUS AMONG CHURCH LEADERS IS A BASIC PREREQUISITE TO BETTER DATA UTILIZATION.**

**Effectiveness.** The extent to which data are utilized is a significant barometer of how closely the data match the perceived needs of the user. Data which are available, but

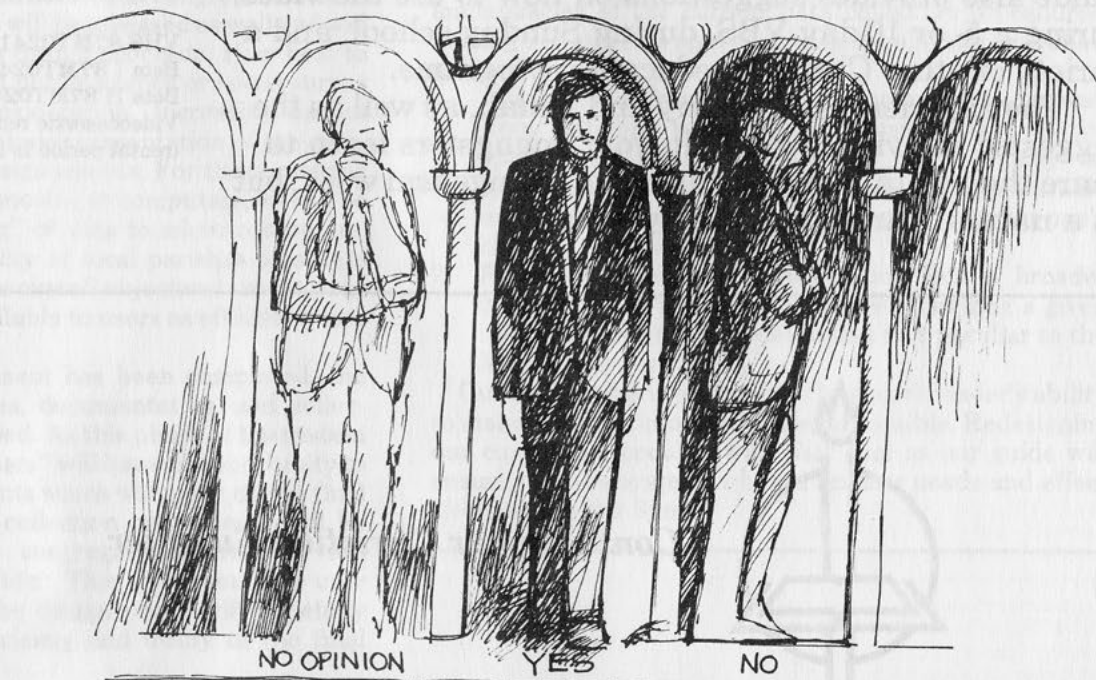
rarely used, may well indicate that the original purpose for collecting them has changed or no longer exists. Underutilization may also indicate non-awareness, which is also a problem we need to address in more effective ways. Periodic and systematic review of the information we collect is essential to maintaining the effectiveness of the data collection process. Here we define effectiveness as: showing a demonstrable relationship with the decision-making and planning process. What decision or planning needs do these data support? Are the data, as currently defined and collected, appropriate to those needs? **THE NEED TO MAKE THE DATA COLLECTION PROCESS MORE RESPONSIBLE TO THE NEEDS OF CHURCH LEADERS IS ANOTHER CRITICAL ELEMENT IN IMPROVED UTILIZATION.**

**Efficiency.** Even when data are available, the cost of obtaining it (in dollars or staff time) may be excessive, or even prohibitive. In many cases the basic problem is not lack of *data* but lack of *data management*. With no systematic paradigm to guide the data collection process, large organizations invariably fall into ideosyncratic data collection and analysis patterns that vary in quality, are often duplicitous and, ultimately, less useful. Even when individual research efforts are well-done, the single-purpose research project may be less effective when we are

unable to relate our findings to similar research in other Lutheran or non-Lutheran church bodies. Finally, there is a vast store of public data - government and general survey data - which we have only begun to tap. These include small area census data, the county level data from the *Churches and Church Membership Study* (Glenmary Research Center: 1971, 1980), demographic and attitudinal data on Lutherans from the General Social Surveys (National Opinion Research Center, University of Chicago), and economic data from the Federal Reserve Board and the bureau of Economic Analysis of the Commerce Department. The problem for the church administrator is "getting a handle on this stuff," in such a way that he can be more effective in his ministry. **THE NEED TO MAKE CHURCH AND PUBLIC DATA ACCESSIBLE AT REASONABLE COST AND IN USABLE FORM IS ANOTHER CRITICAL ELEMENT IN IMPROVING DATA UTILIZATION.**

## A Proposal for LCMS

The need to collect and manage data in a more systematic way leads the writer to propose a research and information management system which addresses various needs throughout the church. What follows is the basic







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book reviews

outline for the development of such a system for The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod.

**Objectives for the System.** The basic objective of the system is to increase the effectiveness of the decision-making process at various points in the church structure (local, district, national/international). In order to attain the basic objective, the system must provide decision-makers with reliable data, demonstrably related to their decision needs, at a reasonable cost and in a relatively short time-frame.

Specific objectives for the system and its various elements (described below) will be determined by the overarching priorities of the Synod, and the objectives of the Planning Units established by the 1983 Synodical Convention. Those priorities and objectives will be formally proposed to the 1986 Convention in Indianapolis. However, the *process* for determining the decision-based data needs will begin as this article goes to press. With the aid of a \$40,000 grant from the Missouri Synod Foundation, the development of this system will be greatly enhanced by our ability to get input from leaders throughout the church. While still undetermined as this is written, the outline of one approach is offered below.

**Designing the System.** The system design process will begin with a thorough needs assessment. The Planning and Research Department, in cooperation with the Department of Personnel and Statistics, will conduct a number of in-person interviews and mailed surveys with decision-makers throughout the church. Parish pastors will also be included in the "user" groups, in order to better serve the information needs of the local parish. However, since they also *provide* the congregation data, pastors can help us design the collection forms, and make them more effective and efficient.

The needs assessment will not stop at congregation data, however. Other data needs will be assessed as well and will be considered as a system design proceeds. How best to integrate congregation and public agency or social survey data will be a major consideration. Increasing use of graphics, to supplement tabular presentation of the data, will also be high on the design agenda. For those growing numbers of congregations moving to computers, we will be able to offer "downloading" of data to micro-computers, greatly enhancing the ability of local parishes to access large data bases. Again, the overall objective is to make as much data as possible available to users as efficiently and quickly as possible.

Once the needs assessment has been completed, the development of procedures, documentation, and collection instruments will proceed. As this phase of the system design unfolds, the "end users" will have an opportunity to review each of the documents which will make up the final system. Finally, the data collection instruments will be field-tested with sample congregations prior to full implementation church-wide. This provision for user review of the system in the design phase will hopefully improve the ultimate efficiency and utility of the final product.

**Components of the System.** At this point, we anticipate five basic data files:

- The Congregation Data File – consisting of data from the Annual Parochial Report Form and elementary school statistics.
- The Public Data File – consisting of several sub-files of public agency data (census data, other government data) and data on Lutherans from the General Social Surveys.
- The Human Resources Data File – made up of existing rosters of professional workers, plus additional data identified in the needs assessment. This file would be expanded to include talented lay members nominated to boards or commissions.
- The Member Data File – this file would include demographic and attitudinal data on LCMS members collected in periodic surveys.

Each of the files will be designed to meet the user needs identified in the needs assessment phase. Based on user input, a series of standardized reports will be designed. This step greatly reduces user cost and turn-around time (the time between initial request for information and receipt of the data). Such standardized reports will be designed to meet 90-95% of user needs. Customized reports will be possible to meet special needs not anticipated in the design phase. Periodic review of the standardized report formats will allow us to meet the changing needs of users.

Early reliance on user needs, and user input during the design phase will help ensure that the system will effectively meet the decision and planning needs of church leaders with data that are more easily accessible at reasonable cost.

**How a Research and Information Management System Will Serve the Church.** Beyond addressing the inadequacies of the current data collection procedures, moving to a systems approach to data collection will allow church leaders to:

1. Integrate data from a variety of sources and view issues from different perspectives. What at first glance appears to be an institutional problem may be demographic or attitudinal in nature. The more usable information one has on a given issue, the better one's chances of understanding it.
2. Put specific pieces of information into a broader perspective. What is the *context* surrounding a given issue or problem? To what extent is it peculiar to the Missouri Synod?

Our overall goal is to enhance the church leader's ability to make the most informed decision possible. Redesigning our current procedures with that goal as our guide will ensure that the system is based on user needs and effectively serves the Synod.

# book reviews

LOOKING IN THE MIRROR by Lyle Schaller. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1984.

Lyle Schaller is one of a kind. He is a parish consultant par excellence. Although his manner is brash, dry, and probing, he has a deep love for and desire to help congregations fulfill their ministry hopes and dreams.

During the past 30 years Schaller has crisscrossed this nation, spending from 70-125 days a year with church leaders—lay and professional—who have asked him to come and appraise the present and future direction of their congregations. This reviewer once chided Schaller about the need to train others to carry out his unique method of working with congregations. *Looking in the Mirror* captures, more than any other Schaller book, the essence of his approach and the many insights that he has into the life and ministry of the local congregation.

As Schaller says, his observations and suggestions about "self-appraisal in the local church" represent "no scholarly research or controlled experiments" but three decades of first hand observations of how congregation's operate. No matter! One only has to read a few pages of Schaller to grasp what he is saying.

The primary purpose of *Looking in the Mirror* is to provide congregational leaders with several different perspectives from which to appraise their parish. The basic goal then is to help professional staff and lay leaders to expand their conceptual framework and to ask new questions in the self-appraisal effort (true to his word, Schaller's 200 page book contains over 1,000 questions and in the final chapter alone he raises over 90 questions).

The layout of the book is very straight-forward. Chapters one through four contain a like number of classification systems which are designed to help congregational leaders to understand the nature of their worshiping community. For example, Schaller begins with his now-famous seven-fold system of depicting a congregation as a cat, collie, garden, house, mansion, ranch or nation. The next seven chapters cover various dimensions of the congregation's life ranging from important "watershed" events, to membership trends, to how programs are planned. Schaller's concluding chapter deals with three frequently overlooked but highly controversial aspects of parish life: youth ministry assumptions, the weekday nursery school, and the building planning committee. Accompanying each chapter, as you might imagine, are a host of questions which the church council, board or staff is encouraged to study and discuss.

The book is not without flaws, most of which are stylistic in nature. Schaller's writing style tends to be tedious to read simply because he packs so much information into a page and because he also writes in outline fashion. Regrettably, Schaller failed to summarize his book with a concluding chapter that succinctly helps church leaders to integrate what they've read and to make some decisions on which Schaller conceptual framework to use. Also disappointing is the sudden disappearance in the last four chapters of visual illustrations and Friar Tuck quotes which had highlighted his initial material.

Church staffs, lay boards, and special *ad hoc*

committees interested in appraising the life of their congregation will find *Looking in the Mirror* to be an invaluable resource. Schaller asks pertinent questions and provides both useful information and an occasional opinion. More than anything else, his book forces congregational decision-makers to surface their agendas and to look at an issue from another point of view.

William Karpenko



## WHAT CAN THE CHURCH LEARN FROM RESEARCH?

**With Lutherans probably being the most studied of any Protestant denomination, one may wonder about the pay-off, especially for church education. The following summaries and discussions by Marvin Bergman of ten selected studies are intended to demonstrate that research provides a wealth of data for church educators and deserves to be tapped in more significant ways.**

HOW DIFFERENT ARE PEOPLE WHO ATTENDED LUTHERAN SCHOOLS? by Milo Brekke. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1974.

Does attending Lutheran day schools, elementary and secondary, have a greater impact upon beliefs, values, attitudes, and behaviors than attending public schools? For years, debates resulting in affirmations and denials were based on personal experiences, limited samples, biases, inconclusive evidence, intuition, and hope. Support for the positive impact of Lutheran schools in the lives of learners is provided for the first time in this landmark study. By testing a number of variables, such as age, level of formal schools, clergy training, and number of years of attendance of Lutheran schools, this researcher showed that years of formal schooling and clergy training did account for some differences in the results.

Those variables that were most likely due to day school attendance included a greater awareness of the presence of the Trinity in one's life, more consistent belief in the divinity of Jesus, greater clarity of justification by grace through faith, greater Biblical knowledge, a fuller devotional life, greater participation in evangelism activities, higher values given to relationships with God and people rather than self-fulfillment, reasonable respect for authority, balanced conservative doctrine (neither liberal nor fundamentalistic), strong tendencies to be forgiving and personally forthright with others, and less tendency to be anxious about one's faith. Where no differences in behavior were reported for day school students, such as the level of social concern for the disadvantaged and certain moral behaviors, one corrective is the inclusion of explicit instruction in social ministry and moral behavior in the curricula of parish schools.

TEN FACES OF MINISTRY by Milo Brekke, Merton Strommen, and Dorothy Williams. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1979.

What do Lutherans believe hinders or contributes to pastoral ministry? This study involved 5,000 Lutheran laity, parish pastors, seminary professors, seminary students and district and synodical leaders representing the three large Lutheran bodies in the U.S.A. They responded to 461 statements about pastoral ministry. Analysis of data revealed that respondents identified 77 characteristics of pastoral ministry which formed 10 areas of ministry, each consisting of a group of related characteristics.

What laity are looking for in pastors is indicated in a sample of findings. Ranked in order of importance they were: the practice of daily personal devotions, a confidence in the Lordship of Christ, a commitment to their own families, a non-defensive integrity that recognizes one's limitations, encouragement of laity's responsibility to the means of grace, and a caring commitment to people and their welfare.

Samples of what laity clearly do not prize in the ministry of pastors included: actions which give the impression of a lordly style of leadership and domination; expressions of attitudes of spiritual superiority; a leadership style that is unbusinesslike; a non-interest in the larger community; and an adherence to Scriptural authority used in a legalistic way. Though the study is marked by a significant blind-spot, namely, ignoring of the critical role of a pastor as a teacher, the report is a valuable resource for pastors, personnel committees, church councils, and call committees.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF LUTHERAN ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS AS AGENCIES OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION by Ronald Johnstone. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1966.

A rereading of this study, which caused a hullabaloo when published, revealed a noble purpose, that of assessing the impact of Lutheran elementary and secondary schools upon the Biblical knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors of Lutheran youth. The sample consisted of 584 youth living in St. Louis and Detroit, with 191 enrolled in Lutheran schools and 381 attending public schools. When significant relationships were found between number of years in the day school and dependent variables, the study controlled for family background by categorizing students on the basis of three family types: ideal, model, and marginal Lutheran families.

Analysis of the data revealed for the most part that few differences in the beliefs, attitudes, and reported behaviors of students were related to day school education. When statistically significant differences were uncovered, as in a higher level of Bible knowledge among day school attenders, controlling for family background usually led to a disappearance of such differences except among "marginal" Lutheran families. Such results led the investigator to assert that day school education has been a determining factor

for very few variables in all three family types, and that youth who have a solid Lutheran background and are moderately involved in the life and work of the local congregation are hardly ever changed by increasing involvement in Lutheran day schools.

That such results were found is not surprising when one considers the following methodological problems in the study: 1. Categorizing youth into five categories based on the number of years of day school attendance resulted often in small numbers of subjects per cell, such as 6, 7, 8, or 9 subjects, which is far too few to allow confidence in the reliability of such findings. 2. Testing for statistical significance on the basis of a chi square analysis is not a relationship test, and thus, discussion which focuses on a cause and effect relationship between day school attendance and a number of variables is faulty. 3. The biggest problem of all involves the investigation of a number of hypotheses on the basis of a survey research method that is descriptive in nature and is not capable of handling the analytical task assigned to it. Needed are far more powerful statistical tests, such as a multiple regression analysis.

When confidence in the validity and reliability of a study are lacking, the absence of significant differences is to be expected. The study, however, is valuable in presenting important information, such as: 1. two-thirds of the samples of Lutheran youth felt that serious disagreement existed between what the Bible and science teach concerning the world and its creation; 2. with a large number of Lutheran youth holding that justification by grace is secondary to sincerity, attention needs to be directed to more effective teaching and resources; 3. nearly 44% stated that their congregations could do more for the youth of the parish. Though the purpose of the study was not achieved, some of its data can be used in constructive ways.

HOW PERSONS GROW IN CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY by William Koppe. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973.

This study, based on a sample of 10,000 children, youth, and adults who were members of the American Lutheran Church and the Lutheran Church of America, described how children and youth grow in identifying with the life and mission of the church. Particular attention was given to how one's personal interpretation of reality, especially one's relationship to God, the self, the church, and others develops.

Some of the important findings include: 1. when one's Pragmatic Life Perspectives (PLP) are adequate, that is, when most of one's life makes sense, one tends to be more self-reliant; 2. when one's PLP are inadequate, a loss of self-confidence is accompanied by a greater dependence upon institutional values, such as tradition, the Bible, rules and authority figures; 3. children and youth oscillate between perspective-building and perspective-applying according to a broad time-table. During kindergarten, the pre-puberty years, and late high school years, young people depend more on their own abilities to interpret their role in the church,

and their moral-ethical relationships with others. During the early elementary and junior high years, young people tend to be more concerned with learning sources of truth and are more dependent on truth and authority; 4. children and youth play an active role in searching for new information for incorporation into the PLP; 5. the growing edges of learning occur when one shifts from the perspective-applying phase to the perspective-building phase and back again. As this discussion indicates, the study performs an important service in helping one move away from a "storing of information" model of teaching to a more useful approach to teaching the faith.

PROFILES OF LUTHERANS IN THE U.S.A. by Carl Reuss. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1982.

Ways in which this book can serve as an agenda for parish educators is seen in a sampling of findings. In a study of beliefs, results indicate that the views of Lutheran laity on such traditional doctrines as original sin, salvation through Jesus Christ, good works, the purpose of the Gospel, and stewardship of property often are at wide variance from the beliefs of clergy.

A majority of laity says grace at meals, prays privately, engages in public worship each week, and receives Holy Communion once a month. Only a significant minority, however, practices daily Bible reading, personal devotions, family devotions, and participation in group Bible study.

Evangelism is seen as the least important function by laity. It was given even less importance than church-sponsored recreation. This problem is compounded by Lutheranism being a family-oriented church of Northern European ancestry located among unchurched populations of Asiatic, Black, Hispanic, Indian, and South European ethnic groups as well as significant numbers of single persons, young adults with no children, divorced persons rearing children as single parents, and elderly who see themselves as "post-family" people who are not welcomed in congregations. Surely this study suggests several significant challenges for parish educators!

FIVE CRIES FOR YOUTH by Merton Strommen. New York: Harper & Row, 1974.

Based on national and regional samples of 7,000 youth belonging to ten denominations, this investigation focused upon values, beliefs, attitudes, concerns, and behaviors. Data analysis revealed 25 characteristics which were combined into five groups: self-esteem, family unity and well-being, welfare of people, achieving favor, and personal faith. The significance of the study becomes more evident through follow-up studies which revealed that youth responses are remarkably consistent over periods of time.

Findings that would be of interest to parish educators include: 1. nearly one-half of the sample wishes that they could find a deeper faith in God; 2. a cry of joy, expressed by 1 in 3 church

youth, reflects a positive identification with a God of love and people who care; 3. what a person believes is the best indicator of what one will do when faced by a moral dilemma; 4. youth who do not trust adults and are primarily peer-oriented generally hold a low self-concept and reflect a negative view of life; 5. gaps in the lives of youth are largely related to adult deficiencies, seen, for example, in low self-esteem which is passed on from parents, family disunity which centers in parental conflict, prejudice which is present more among adults than youth, and a social concern expressed by youth who criticize a lack of care by adults; 6. youth want to belong to church groups which reflect a mutual involvement of youth and adults, a sense of mission, and educational experience that engage minds, develop skills, clarify values, and encourage commitment.

A STORY OF GENERATIONS by Merton Strommen. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1972.

Described as the first portrait of an American denomination based on empirical data, this massive study revealed patterns and diversities in the beliefs, opinions, attitudes, values, and behaviors of Lutherans. Significant findings include: 1. for 3 out of 5 Lutherans, a Gospel orientation based on faith in Jesus Christ is the heart of their belief and value systems; 2. two out of 5 Lutherans (40%) believe in salvation by works, with the highest percentages found among the youngest (15-18) and oldest (50-65) age brackets; 3. resistance to change in ministry is expressed mostly by the 2 out of 5 who do not believe the Gospel, are bound by the Law, and have a high need for unchanging structures; 4. the single greatest source of tension in parishes stems from differences in the values and beliefs of church members, with wide gaps existing between those committed to a transcendental world view and those stuck on self-development; 5. only a minority of youth (20%) has integrated the Christian faith in their world views; 6. with the acceptance/rejection of the Gospel having such a significant impact upon the lives of young and old, the need to focus upon the basics of the Bible, Christian doctrine, and church history is urgent; 7. if educators desire to stimulate change in attitudes, opinions, and behaviors of youth and adults, the focus must be beliefs and values.

YOUTH RESEARCH PROJECT REPORT by Merton Strommen. St. Louis: The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Board of Parish Services, "Lutheran Secondary Schools Quarterly," Summer, 1980.

This study investigated the significant hurts, problems, joys, and concerns of nearly 4,300 high school youth enrolled in Lutheran secondary schools. Analysis of the data revealed both similarities and differences between this sample and youth involved in other studies.

Needs that surfaced among Lutheran high school youth included: nearly 1 out of 5 bothered by feelings of low self-esteem and low

(Continued from page 19)

confidence; about 1 out of 5 was preoccupied with family difficulties, such as lack of parental trust and inability to relate to fathers; the number of youth who expressed a concern over what is happening to people in their communities and world was lower than expected; moral confusion related to a number of ethical issues suggests that values education is desperately needed and wanted; committed youth revealed more of an awareness of a personal, caring God, greater religious participation, and a greater sense of moral responsibility; as youth became increasingly aware of a personal, caring God, they identified more closely with their congregations.

A sample of the top-rated interests of youth revealed that: 70% wanted a closer relationship with God; 64% wanted to learn how to make friends and be a friend; 61% desired to learn to get along better with members of the opposite sex; 59% expressed a need for guidance in finding out what God's will was for their lives; 57% were searching to find meaning and purpose in life.

**YOUNG ADOLESCENTS AND THEIR PARENTS.** (A Report Comparing Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod Youth and Their Parents to the National Composite Sample). St. Louis: The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Board for Youth Services, 1983.

In studying this report, one will learn about parents and their values, concerns and worries

about parenting, methods of discipline, religious beliefs, communication patterns in the family, positive and negative forces in the lives of their youth, concerns and worries about their children, and the kinds of help which they desire from church and community organizations. The report also provides data relating to the peer relationships of youth, their attitudes about school, the values and religious beliefs of adolescents, their relationships to parents and guardians, moral issues facing adolescents, their self-concepts, worries and concerns of young people, and the kinds of help wanted from parents, teachers, church and school.

Findings of interest to those engaged in an educational ministry include: parents say that they can use help in developing effective control and discipline in the family; positive uses of the mass media need to be found; and increasing conversations about sexuality with their children are needed. On the other hand, adolescents, as young as 5th graders, express a need to clarify their understanding of right and wrong, to develop friendship skills, and to figure out what it means to be a Christian.

**YOUNG ADOLESCENTS AND THEIR PARENTS.** Minneapolis: Search Institute, 1984.

This is the parent study administered to 8,000 5th through 9th graders, with 7% of the sample being members of the LC-MS. The study was sponsored by 13 national youth organizations and was intended to help educators develop

resources for young adolescents and their families.

A number of recommendations for the church's ministry among adolescents and their families were made. 1. Programs that help young adolescents develop friendship making and maintaining skills are needed. 2. Programs should be offered which help youth develop skills for communicating with adults. 3. Programs should be offered to help parents develop parenting skills, including methods of effective discipline and control. 4. Ways in which parents can help promote the faith development of their children need to be identified. 5. In some communities, there is a need to develop support groups for parents. 6. Teaching-learning opportunities should be provided which will help young adolescents struggle with moral judgment questions and parents with discussing alcohol and drug abuse with their children. 7. Parishes need to develop programs of ministry involving 5th and 6th graders, since they are particularly impressionable, prone to worry, and lacking in important communication and decision making skills.

For educators who are largely relying upon personal experience and the state of accumulated knowledge and research as the basis of their profession, these studies reveal that significant help for church educators is available. Since a data base for many important questions related to the teaching ministry of the church and the equipping of God's people for their ministry is not now available, it appears that the planning and funding of additional research is warranted.



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