

ISSUES

IN CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Fall, 1985

Vol. 20, No. 1

Concordia College
ARCHIVES
Seward, Nebraska



Fitting Christian Education to a Changing Society

Fall, 1985
Vol. 20, No. 1

ISSUES

IN CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

<i>Fitting Christian Education to a Changing Society</i>	
3	Points of View
4	Editorials
6	Which Methods of Religious Instruction Are Needed Today? by Marvin Bergman
12	The Changing American Family by Luther B. Otto
18	What Shall Our Schools and Parishes Teach? by Ewald Kane
23	Book Reviews

Editor
Glenn C. Einspahr, Ed.D.

Editorial Committee
Marvin Bergman, Ed. D.
Book Reviews
Gilbert Daenzer, M.A.
Associate

James H. Pragman, Th. D.
Editorials

Richard Wiegmann, M.F.A.
Art

Administrative Secretary
Elizabeth Schmidt

EDITOR'S NOTES

Some people thrive on change. They are soon bored if, according to their perception, something new or different isn't on the horizon. Others bemoan change. They prefer things the way they are. They perceive happiness as being nearby when one's life and activities can be routinized.

The golden mean between change and changelessness is seldom reached. In the church no less than in other organizations, some change is necessary for efficiency and sometimes for survival itself. This number of ISSUES is therefore devoted to presenting some data reflecting societal changes and some ideas on how adjustments can be made to give Christian education a better fit (greater relevance) to the society that exists today.

Marvin Bergman makes recommendations on how to adjust teaching activities to fit a variety of learning situations. Luther Otto updates the reader on trends in the American family and comments on what those trends should signal the church are changes that it should

make. Ewald Kane provides a concise summary of the steps that a church must take to assure itself that it is going where it wishes to go with its Christian education program. The editorial writers, book reviewers and poet add related items for the reader's reflection and use.

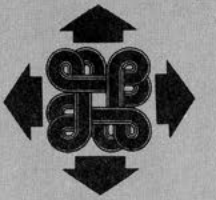
ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Dr. Jack T. Ledbetter is Professor of English at California Lutheran University, Thousand Oaks, California.

The Rev. Dr. Luther B. Otto is Director of the Career Development Program and the Youth Division Studies at Boys Town, Boys Town, Nebraska.

Mr. Ewald Kane is Director of Educational Services for the Ohio District of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. His office is located in Olmsted Falls, Ohio.

Other contributors to this number of ISSUES are members of the Concordia-Seward faculty.



POINTS OF VIEW

This time *ISSUES* brings you a series of articles and editorials highlighting the fact that Christian education "changes" as it responds to the new situations facing families in the context of more sophisticated studies about curricular patterns and methodologies. The authors of these articles have some challenging thoughts for all of us to consider.

The problem of "change" is intriguing. How does one cope with change? Change can be so threatening and disturbing—whether it is change in age or in teaching methodology or an office move or a realignment of job responsibilities. Of course, we could agree to bury our collective heads in the sand in the hope that those changes will vanish, but that is how it is in the real world.

It seems to me that the Christian does not fear change at all because the center of his life is God, and He never changes. God at the center means that there is always stability and security and certainty in the Christian's life, even as we change the way we have taught things in the past and even though we change the curriculum in significant ways. The solid, unmoveable center is always there for the Christian because that center is God.

It is exciting to be involved in Christian education these days: creative people of God are seeing and suggesting things for you and me to consider doing as we go about the business of ministering to one another as educators. Changes will come and they will go, but God is always there and He strengthens us for His purposes. With God at the center of all things, the convergence of POINTS OF VIEW will be creative—and good.

— James H. Pragman



CIRCULATION POLICY — *ISSUES . . . in Christian Education* (ISSN0278-0216) is published three times a year by the faculty of Concordia Teachers College, Seward, Nebraska 68434. *ISSUES* is sent free to each church, school, district and synodical office in The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. Copies are also sent to high schools, colleges and universities affiliated with the Synod.

Individuals wishing personal copies may obtain them as follows: Single copy @ \$1.00 each; Subscription @ \$3.00 per year; 10 or more copies mailed to the same address @ 60¢ per copy.

Readers are invited to reprint portions of *ISSUES* materials provided that the following credit line appears: "Reprinted from *ISSUES in Christian Education*, Volume 20, No. 1, Fall, 1985." The editor should receive a copy of the reprint.

How About A Christian Growth Consultation?

As we consider "Fitting Christian education to a changing society" I have four simple, intertwining suggestions for the reader to consider. Together these suggestions hold promise of deepening the Christian nurture efforts of a congregation, as well as giving direction and substance to the activities of the boards and full-time staff (i.e. DCE) who give guidance to Christian education programs of the parish.

First a few words of background. Some years ago I spent a morning with a DCE who was serving a Lutheran parish in Houston, Texas. In describing his ministry he mentioned that 40% of his time was spent in one-to-one, family, or small group meetings with parishioners in which he helped each person reflect upon and develop specific plans for his/her spiritual nurture in the coming year. Often this meant clarifying the particular Christian education needs of the persons, alerting them to the parish offerings for the coming year, and responding to any other personal concerns they might have. This reflection and planning meeting was then repeated annually. From his perspective his calling to the parish was to serve, in part, as a spiritual nurture diagnostician who could help people to keep growing in their faith and in their ability to serve both within and outside of the local congregation. I liked his approach then and am still taken by the importance and timeliness of such personal interchanges, especially amid social change that further isolates, compartmentalizes, and encourages church-going to be just another spectator sport.

Now to the suggestions:

1. *Institute an Annual Christian Growth Consultation:* The purpose of the consultation would be to provide all confirmed members of the congregation the opportunity to look back on how they've grown in their faith during the past year and to identify present Christian nurture and training needs in the coming twelve months. Efforts would be made to connect them to planned study opportunities or to create specialized opportunities for them. No other agenda! No pressure to sign a financial pledge card or to identify how one plans to serve the church for the coming year.

2. *Prioritize Staff Time for Parishioner Consultations:* Meeting with people about their spiritual nurture needs takes time.

William Karpenko

Real Change Or Running In Circles?

To tell classroom teachers that they live in a changing society and that as a result they will see dramatic changes in the curriculum and methodology of their classrooms will probably elicit a response similar to "So what else is new?" Teachers who have been around education for more than a few years can recite an almost endless list of innovations which have come into the classroom and a list almost as long of those which have gone. We have lived through the advent of television and tachistoscopes, of learning machines and overhead projectors, of cassettes and VCRs, of Apples and IBM-PCs.

Change that advances or improves education we welcome. But as educators we have seen too much change that more closely resembles the proverbial "running around in circles with our heads cut off." In reading instruction, for example, we have moved back and forth between phonics approaches and comprehension approaches for decades. The much maligned Dick and Jane readers grew out of research which found that while children could pronounce every word on the page, they could not answer questions regarding content. Basal readers were introduced to teach silent reading and comprehension. When it was discovered that many children using these readers could not decode words, basals were revised to give greater emphasis to word attack skills. As a result of these changes, test scores now show improved decoding skills but poorer comprehension. Next year two reading publishers long known for their strong traditional phonics emphasis will put on the market substantially revised editions of their basals. Their major change is an increased emphasis on comprehension. In the meantime, others, reading experts as well as critics, have offered us the language experience approach, the individualized approach, the systems, i.t.a. and organic approaches. Popular in the sixties and seventies, they have almost disappeared in the early eighties. But they shall return soon if recent news articles are any indication.

And so we rush from one new idea to another only to find ourselves on bandwagons that are often the result of sociological and political conditions beyond our control and which do nothing to improve education. Why do we permit

ourselves to be pulled first one way and then another? We do it because we are genuinely interested in helping children learn, and we believe that we can discover new and better ways of teaching. But we also do it because we are not knowledgeable enough about history, philosophy, theory and research in education to analyze the value and potential success of a proposed new curriculum or method. Too often we work at what one of my colleagues calls the "technician" level as opposed to the "professional educator" level. We adopt materials and methods without understanding or seeking to understand the philosophy or learning principles undergirding the ideas.

If we really want to get off the bandwagon going nowhere, we need tools to help us understand the social and political forces which often determine curriculum and methodological change. We need skills to evaluate proposed improvements in resources, curriculum and methodology. We can acquire these tools and skills by studying history, sociology, philosophy, and psychology (both the broad disciplines and the specific application to education) as well as child development, learning theory and educational research. As Christian educators we need also to continue our in-depth study of Scripture and theology.

Using the knowledge of these disciplines we can then place a proposed innovation into its historical, sociological, and theological context. We can examine research before implementing it in the classroom. We can measure it against the norm of accepted learning theory and our own educational philosophy. No educator can become an expert in all or even perhaps one of these disciplines. But teachers can learn to use the findings of scholars and researchers to force serious consideration of proposed innovations; and college personnel can do a better job of communicating theory in terms understandable to teachers. In other words, teachers need to take seriously those graduate courses filled with theory and research. Instructors need to work with teachers to make appropriate applications for their classrooms. Together we can bridge the gap between theory and practice. This must happen if positive and purposeful change is to occur to keep pace with our changing society.

Priscilla Lawin

The Pygmies' Revenge

H.L. Mencken once concluded that in order to insure a dramatic and recognizable turn in American education the required tonic was to hang the professors and burn down the schools. In contemplating the seriousness of this indictment, from a mind that was noted for its reasoned articulation, several questions occurred to me. First, where is the sober reality that would warrant such a radical conclusion, and also, is the "Christian Education" alternative also a "patient" requiring this dreadful medicine?

Since the topical focus of this edition of *ISSUES* is fitting Christian education to a changing society, I am compelled also to deal with change, an elusive and difficult concept. Nonetheless, I have discovered one tenuous thread that I hope will be helpful in elucidating the role of Christian education as it is confronted by increasingly rapid change.

It is a well known principle in sociological discourse that the social institution of education performs a conserving function as a repository and transmitter of the core values in a culture. This is also true of religion as a social institution. Thus, in treating Christian education as embodied in our Lutheran schools, it must be recognized that a dual function is being performed in our schools. It is also the case that the structuring of Christian education reflects what is deemed desirable from a values point of view. How social institutions are structured is a clue to the prioritization of cherished and desired goals. So what is it about our structuring of Lutheran education in particular that might fall under the Mencken indictment?

If it is true that social institutions are often impervious to change as a result of institutionalization, then it follows that we should pay close attention to our relative ability to adapt to changes in the cultural environment we share with the dominant culture. Naisbitt's so-called megatrends includes some of these structural change requirements that he suggests will be necessary in order to deal with the future in this culture. I am interested in his projections concerning the shift from centralized to decentralized structures, the move from institutional help to self-help, and the move from hierarchies to networking as ways of organizing that will help insure survival of institutions safely into the future.

These forecasts should inform us about the prerequisites that must exist before we can even intelligently talk about Christian education in a changing society. I mean to say that if we compare the structures that exist in our education environments with the rudimentary requirements for institutional participation in the future as outlined above, we might find some justification for the lynch mob Mencken envisioned. It was noted earlier that our schools serve both the religious and educational needs of their students. What I am suggesting is that the titular hierarchical structures of our educational system, that were in large part born out of the perceived needs of our religious institutional concerns, are not postured to make adaptive changes when they are increasingly required to do so. Another aspect of this concern has to do with the status of the teaching professional in our educational structure. I call your attention to the title of this piece. Taken from Richard Mitchell's *The Graves of Academe*, the reference to the pygmies is his perception of the regard for teachers as pygmies or second class citizens in education in general. You might add to this the theocratic distinction that is pragmatically made in our own educational environment.

The title also suggests needed change that would undoubtedly give teachers the self-respect required to meet the challenges of change head on, with dignity and resolve. If it is true that it is the job of teachers to teach what are considered to be fundamental skills and values, then teachers should know best how to do this. Without the appropriate status to accompany the primacy of their role, they will probably not do their job very well. This is especially significant for Christian education, because the uniqueness of the Lutheran school is the opportunity for the provision of THE TRUE values education (a trend that Naisbitt also suggests will be increasingly important in a high-tech high-touch culture).

We had best do better than merely trying "to get by" in the confusion that change brings. If Mencken is even close, that would mean a lost opportunity for the true mission to which we have been called.

Michael Woodburn



Which Methods of Religious Instruction Are Needed Today?

by Marvin Bergman

What are the most frequently used methods of religious instruction today? In a national survey based on a random sample, 500 Lutheran elementary teachers ranked fourteen methods of teaching the faith on the basis of frequency of use during a week or semester.¹

- games
- lecture
- contracts
- television or video cassettes
- memory activities
- learning centers
- problem-solving
- group discussion
- learners reading aloud from a text
- story-telling
- puppets and role-play
- projects
- individual study by learners
- audio-visual resources

Analysis of the data revealed that the seven most frequently used methods for teaching the Christian faith named by Lutheran elementary teachers were:²

- group discussion
- memory activities
- learners reading aloud from a text
- lecture
- story-telling
- audio-visual resources
- problem-solving

When a class of college students enrolled in an elementary education program for Lutheran teachers was asked to rank-order the same fourteen methods of teaching in terms of their importance in teaching the faith, the top seven methods named in this mini-survey were:³

- story telling
- puppets and role-play
- audio-visual resources
- group discussion
- games
- projects
- individual study by learners

Though the samples sizes were not equal and two different criteria were used as a basis of the rank orders (necessitated by differences in teaching experiences), several observations can be made. Three methods of teaching identified by both professional teachers and college students were story-telling, audio-visual resources, and group discussion. Three of the methods named by teachers in the list of the seven most frequently used methods—memory activities, learners reading aloud from a text, and lecture—did not appear in the students' list. Four of the top choices made by college students—puppets and role-play, games, projects, and individual study by learners—did not appear in the teachers' rank-order of the seven most frequently used methods. Of the ten methods named by professional teachers and by college students in their lists of the seven most frequently use or most important methods, only three were named by both groups.

Such differences are not unexpected. A review of the field of religious education reveals that a large number of teaching methods have been promoted as new and exciting approaches to teaching the faith.⁴ Values clarification techniques, experimental learning, case studies, learning centers, questions based on Bloom's Taxonomy, group discussion, story-telling, learning contracts, journal writing, programmed instruction, learning pacs or modules, audio-visuals, concept teaching, discovery learning, computer instruction, role-play, and teaching through moral dilemmas are some approaches that have been acclaimed as answers to the perennial quest to find "sure-fire methods" of "turning on" learners.

Why So Many Differences?

Why were a number of differences observed in the two lists compiled by elementary teachers and college students? Why do so many shifts in methodology occur in religious instruction? Why do discussions of the effectiveness of various methods elicit such a variety of responses by teachers?

A number of reasons can be identified. A lack of data identifying the most effective methods of teaching the faith results in an absence of clear guidelines. Because a teacher's selection of methods is related to a number of variables, such as the background and developmental levels of learners,

the subject being taught, goals and objectives, the experience and skill of the teacher, and available resources, a diversity of approaches to teaching is assured. Another possible factor is a tendency to teach as one has been taught.

A hunch by the writer is that there are two other reasons which may also explain diversity in teaching methods. The first involves differences in teacher assumptions relating to the learner, the learning process, the role of the instructor, and the effectiveness of particular methods. Unexamined assumptions especially will guarantee diversity. For example, if one teacher assumes that a learner will learn best by being told, while another teacher hypothesizes that learning occurs chiefly through discovery, such differences in presuppositions will guarantee a selection of different methods.

A second factor which can result in differing approaches to teaching and learning is the adoption of different models of teaching and learning. For example, if one sees the learner as an empty cup that needs to be filled by the teacher, the selection of methods that center in the transmission of information would not be surprising. Or, if a teacher's perspective of the learner centers in the development of one's potential, methods that promote self-awareness, personal affirmation, and discovery would receive considerable attention.

How Important Are Methods?

Teaching methods impact upon learners and learning in a number of ways. The selection of methods, for example, communicates a teacher's values to learners. Chairs which are arranged in a circle or in rows express what is valued by a teacher in that teaching context. Methods reveal how teachers view their relationships with students and classes. Methods, for example, can say, "I, the teacher, am the master, and you are the servant." Or, a teacher's methods can say to a class, "We're in this together." Selection of methods can have a major effect upon motivation, ranging between "I am doing this because someone told me that I have to" and "I really want to find out more about this question."

The significance of teaching methods also is seen in the degree of communications that occurs in a classroom. Whether learners are reluctant to respond, or whether they participate in an open way may be related to one's choice of methods. Methods determine the extent to which learners achieve goals and objectives. The goal of stimulating moral thinking, for example, through a lecture, may actually result in the opposite effect and thwart moral thinking (though one also can envision direct instruction stimulating moral thinking in certain contexts.).

The choice of methods also signals teacher

recognition of differences in learning styles. While some learners like to have key content synthesized and packaged in discrete units, other learners thrive on independent research and discovery. Providing learners with choices when possible and offering a variety of approaches to learning can help to achieve a better match between a learner's style and methodology employed in a classroom.

Methods can express a teacher's recognition of major cultural shifts that affect teaching and learning. That learners in schools today have been shaped in a profound way by television means that their style is no longer oriented as much to books and listening as it is to images and involvement.

One's choice of teaching methods affects the level of interest and continued learning after the completion of a learning experience or class. Whether learners will read and meditate upon the Bible after eight years of elementary school, four years of mid-week school, or two years of confirmation instruction, or never open the Bible again can be related to methods of teaching and learning.

Finally, methods of instruction can affect directly the most important purpose of all in teaching the Christian faith, that of teaching Law-Gospel. Attempting to communicate the Gospel monologically without it being related to the lives of learners will be interpreted as irrelevant. Or, focusing on strategies which largely involve responses by learners may ignore an important dimension of teaching the faith, that of proclaiming and making a personal witness to the Gospel of new life in Jesus Christ.

MODELS TO GUIDE METHODS SELECTION

If a wide selection of methods of teaching the Christian faith can be observed, and if the choice of methods is important, what kind of guidelines can be identified? In the absence of empirical data based on studies which investigated the effectiveness of various methods, the most helpful approach to the selection of methods in the opinion of this writer is an identification of instructional models which are consistent with the major goals of teaching the Christian faith. After identifying the components of two teaching models, attention will be directed to naming several approaches and methods which illustrate methods needed in religious instruction today.

• A Faith Development Model

In an exploratory study, attention was directed to five phases in faith development.⁵

1. *Being in the Presence of Believers*

One who is baptized finds self in the context of a body of believers where faith is nurtured through Word and sacraments. Here the language of relationships is critical, for it is through relationships that one experiences recognition as a person, love, and acceptance. Through the worship, lifestyle, words, values, teachings, witness, and actions of a Christian family and community, a learner is directed to the core reality in all of life, God's revelation in Jesus Christ. It is in the lives of people that one senses the presence of a living Lord.

Methods of importance to this faith development are those which promote communication and relationships. "Ice-breakers," celebration of special events, values clarification activities, disclosures of personal experiences by teachers, sharing of reactions to events in a community, activities designed to promote relationships within the class, and retreats are samples of teaching approaches that can promote the sense of belonging in a body of believers.

2. *Being Shown the Evidence of Faith*

In this phase of faith development, one is introduced to the key events and persons of the Scriptures, the creeds of the church, the doctrines of the Christian faith, the traditions and history of the faith community, hymns and prayers, and experiences of worship, learning, witness, service, and support by members of a body of believers. The focus is being introduced to the roots and key building blocks of the Christian faith.

Possible teaching methods related to this phase of faith development include the telling of Bible stories, the teaching of Biblical and theological concepts, the celebration of important church festivals, engagement in worship and the practice of prayer, reflection upon the story of God's people through the centuries, helping young learners read from the Bible, memory activities, viewing films, filmstrips, and video cassettes, reading resource books, preparing reports, and making a presentation or lecture.

3. *Being Invited to Express One's Own Faith*

The focus is providing learners with opportunities to respond to the Word of God and

express in words and deeds what one sees and believes. Learners need to practice the skills of saying what it means to be followers of Christ and what the Gospel offers every person. Value choices, moral decision making, and setting priorities for investing time and talents need to be placed on the agenda. Skills in the practice of prayer, worship, Bible reading, evangelism, and service to others are to be developed. One is called upon to affirm baptism and the magnificence of God's grace in the struggle to find a role in church and society.

Sample teaching strategies that may be employed include questions formulated on various levels of Bloom's Taxonomy, especially application, analysis, and synthesis; exploration of personal meanings of the creeds and confessions of the church; student research of the Bible or other sources; participation in simulation games; the writing of scripts for a filmstrip or puppet play; and the selection of photos or magazine pictures to express concepts.

4. *Facing and Interpreting Life's Involvement as a Believer*

A learner can go beyond expressing personal meanings by interpreting all of life's events, the gains and losses, the joys and sorrows, sin and forgiveness, death and resurrection. One seeks, ponders, reflects, questions, considers, prays, discusses, shares, investigates life's events in the light of God's revelation. Personal discipleship is related to the mission of Christ's church. At times, one engages in a critique of self, others, and the church in the quest for meaning relating to work, school, family, church, and the larger community.

Teaching strategies that relate to this phase of faith development include forums for discussing issues, small group sharing, issue-oriented Bible studies, writing activities such as letters, newspaper reports, or poems, the making of video or audio cassettes, one-on-one counseling, research projects, and field trips.

5. *Committing One's Life to Work for a Cause as Christ's Servant*

Being surrounded by a multitude of needs and opportunities for addressing those needs, Christians are called to make a commitment to assume specific responsibilities to serve Christ and His world. This sense of calling brings with it questions related to assessing the demands of the task, the adequacy of one's resources to respond, and the situation in which one's calling

is to be lived out. One works with others in the search for expressing faith, engaging in service, and achieving justice in the context of human deprivation and evil.

Methods of teaching and learning that may serve to stimulate this facet of faith development include case studies, participation in service projects, specific instruction in the theology of vocation, recognition of the ministry of the laity, development of support groups, tutoring by respected leaders, and learning events designed to explore the important roles of youth and adults.

• Sharing Our Story and Vision Model

A teaching model based on the image of every Christian being engaged in a faith journey which was developed by a Christian educator includes five steps.⁶ Illustrations of possible approaches to teaching related to each step are included.

1. Looking at Life

The focus is the present context which directs attention to particular feelings, events, experiences, meanings, values, beliefs, or attitudes within the learner's frame of reference. For example, in working with a group of fourth graders, a teacher could initiate the discussion by asking learners to draw a picture of a fight which they had recently. Focusing on the **what**, members of the class may be free enough to tell about the fights described in their pictures. The beginning may be as simple as a single question or a display of a picture.

2. Sharing Our Lives

The intent of this step is to engage participants in reflection and group discussion by exploring the circumstances of the event identified in the previous step. Evaluating why this happened at this time may be one purpose. Learners can also be helped to explore actions in the past, recalling experiences and using their memories to identify factors related to the action. The future also could be explored, with students identifying possible consequences of an individual's actions. In discussing personal fights, teacher and learners could list reasons for fighting, followed by a rank-order of the three most important reasons. At this point individuals may become more aware of their own stories and involvement in conflict.

3. Exploring the Story

Here the teacher's task is that of introducing the Biblical story related to the topic being explored. Through a variety of presentation modes, the Biblical story that correlates with the focus can be presented. For example, after rehearsing the events of the conflict between Esau and Jacob in Genesis 33, a role-play could help to recreate the scene of Esau's vow of vengeance and Jacob's flight. The key is involvement by learners in the story which will lead to a greater awareness of the number one human problem, our sin.

4. Sharing the Vision

The stories of Scripture serve three basic functions, namely, confronting us and identifying sin in our lives, announcing God's response to our need for forgiveness and life, and presenting directives for new ways of living. In stark contrast to human degradation, God's saving actions provide consolation and affirmation. The story of Esau's and Jacob's struggles needs to be continued by a rehearsal of the reconciliation of the two brothers in Genesis 33. This, in turn, can serve as a signpost to the greatest reconciliation of all, God's reconciliation of the world in Jesus Christ. Sharing the vision of His story through filmstrips, character studies, role play, storytelling, a dialogue, or the writing of a skit can direct learners to the Good News of God's saving work in Christ.

5. Living Out Our Faith

At this point, learners are ready to see the connection between the Biblical stories and their own lives. How faith is lived when shaped by the Biblical vision serves as the focus of this step. Ways of living faith are explored, with the intent being to decide on future actions that will appropriately express the Biblical story. Possible teaching-learning activities include a five minute discussion of "What a person can do when someone wants to fight" or a short writing activity. "With whom can I make up today?" and "I want to say 'I'm sorry' to..." are other possible topics.

Several Approaches Needed

What kinds of methods of religious instruction are needed today? What is needed is a selection of methods based on an identification of the most important criteria. To initiate a needed, on-going discussion, consider the following list.

1. Methods of religious instruction that are selected in the light of a teaching model whose aim is the development of faith.
2. Teaching methods that build a sense of community and stimulate a feeling that we're in this together as Christians.
3. Methods that enable teachers to deliver their own learnings, knowledge, perspectives, values, experiences, and Law-Gospel witness in ways that make an impact upon learners.
4. Methods that involve learners at all points in the teaching-learning process and elicit faith-life responses which reveal achievement of goals and objectives.
5. Methods that stimulate interest and a desire for continuing growth and development as Christ's servants and witnesses.

Endnotes

¹Marvin Bergman and Norris Patschke, "How is Religion Taught in Lutheran Elementary Classrooms?" *Lutheran Education*, 115 (January-February, 1980), 169.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Method in this discussion is defined as an event or a series of events that is directed toward the achievement of a goal or objective. No attempt was made to make distinctions among style, strategy, method and technique in this discussion.

⁵Richard Evenson, "Nurturing the Development of Faith," *Project Serve, The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod*, 1984.

⁶Thomas Groome, *Christian Religious Education: Sharing Our Story and Vision* (Harper and Row, 1980).

||

Move in Grace and Wonder

for Susanna
on her christening
November 23, 1980

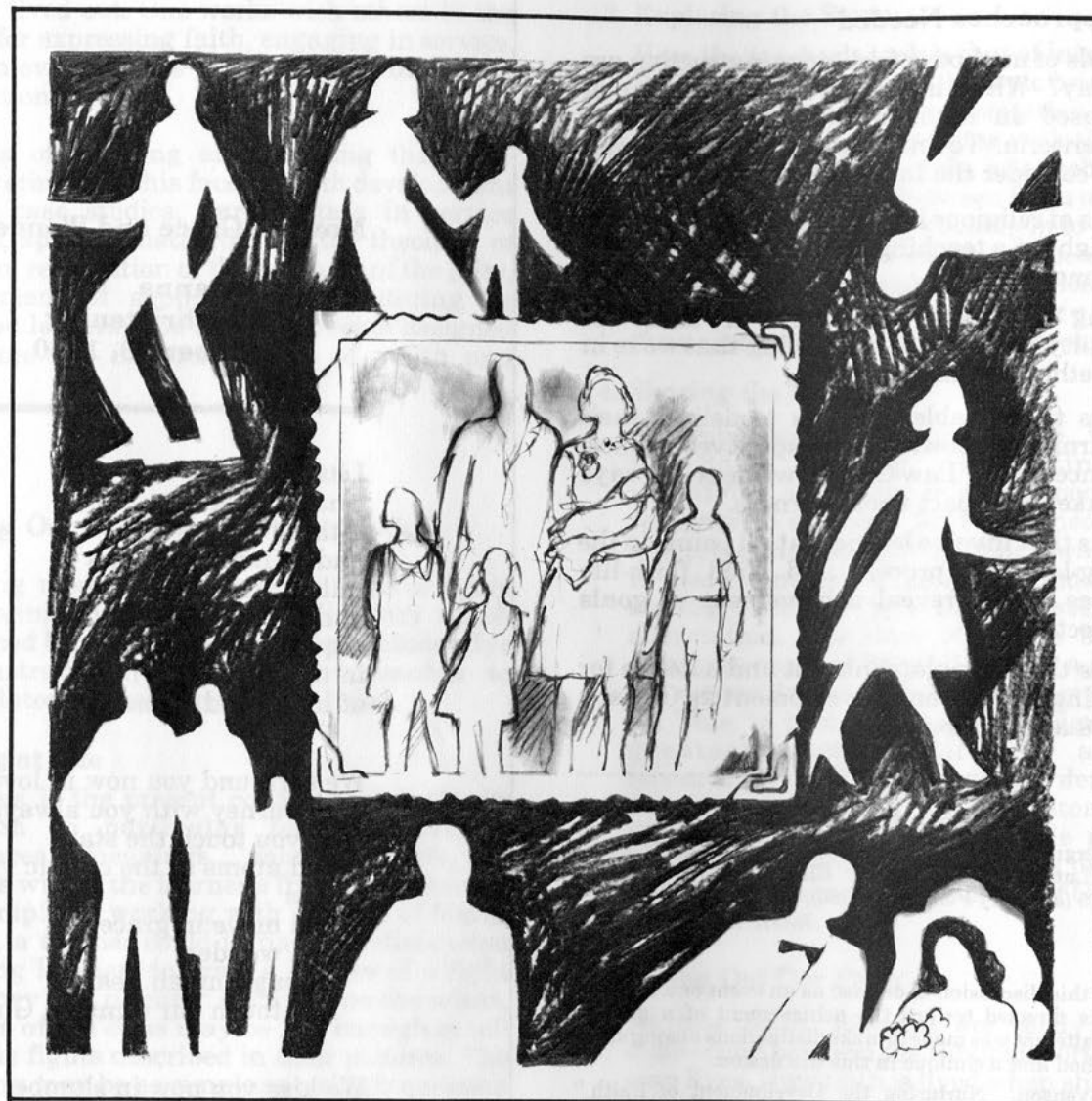
Little pilgrim
small voyager,
these quiet
and brimming waters
full of grace
bathing you in light
sequester you
in this gentle harbor
of home and friends

We surround you now in love
and journey with you always
as you touch the stars
and atoms of the cosmic
seas
and move in grace
and wonder
among human hearts
and touch our common God

We kiss you now in slumber
dreaming the great dream
of life together
and wish you well,
small voyager,
little pilgrim...

J.T. Ledbetter

THE CHANGING AMERICAN FAMILY



by Luther B. Otto

Some of the most hotly debated issues in our society over the past decade—including the abortion controversy, sex education in schools, and minors access to birth control information and services—have focused on changes in American family life. The changes spill over to affect legislation, court decisions, the development of new products and services, and advertising strategies that appeal to single-parent and dual wage earner families. Changes in the American family are so dramatic that there is speculation in the family literature about whether the institution of the family will survive.

The Christian Church has an abiding interest in families. In this article I identify important changes in American family life and suggest implications for the teaching ministry of the Church. My thesis is straightforward: changes in the family represent opportunities for Christian education.

First Marriage

The pattern of first marriages for today's young people is more similar to the marriage patterns at the turn of the century than to the pattern of marriages contracted in more recent years. Women were 23 years old when they first married in 1900, were only 20 years old when they married in 1950, but marry at age 22 today—closer to the age at first marriage of our grand-and great grandparents. So, also, at the turn of the century one of nine women did not marry by

age 45 and, today, one of ten do not marry by that age. At mid-century only one of thirty-three women did not marry by age 45. Again, the pattern is similar to that at the turn of the century.

People no longer believe that getting married is better than remaining single. Twenty-five years ago, half of all Americans disapproved of people who decided to remain single. Today, only one of three Americans disapprove; and today's mothers report that it would not greatly bother them if their children decided not to marry. The attitude that it is best to marry has weakened. Nonetheless, nine of ten high school seniors (84 percent of males and 90 percent of females) want to marry; and the same proportions believe they will stay married for life. Nearly all young Americans value family life, but the trend among both parents and young people is to accept single life as a viable alternative.

Marital Disruption

Divorce rates have moved steadily upwards since the beginnings of our society. Today, two percent of all marriages annually terminate in divorce. If current rates continue, half of all marriages will end in divorce.

Divorces occur much earlier today. Of couples married in 1952, nearly one-third divorced by their 25th wedding anniversary. Of couples married five years later, in 1957, nearly one-third divorced by their 20th wedding anniversary. Of couples married in 1962, another five years later, nearly one-third divorced after only 15 years. Finally, of couples married in 1967, another five years later, nearly one-third divorced after only ten years of marriage. Twenty-five years ago it took nearly 25 years for one-third of married couples to divorce. Today it takes only ten years.

Marriages also end when one spouse dies. Our society has enjoyed more than a century of declining mortality rates and, for that reason, there was a sustained 100 year decline in marital disruptions leading up to 1960. The mortality rate fell faster than the divorce rate rose. That changed in the 1960s when the divorce rate suddenly doubled and began to outstrip the decline in mortality. Today, the rate of disrupted homes is near the all-time high, and the principal cause is divorce.

Increases in divorce rates are sometimes interpreted as signs that the quality of American family life is deteriorating and that marital happiness is on the decline, but there may be other reasons for the high divorce rate. Today's married couples report not lower but higher levels of marital happiness than married couples reported in the past. Interestingly, the same studies indicate an increase in the proportion of people who feel that there are problems in their marriages. Higher levels of both

reported marital happiness and marital problems suggests that people may be more attuned to their marriages today. Couples may have higher expectations for their marriage and, because they do, they may be less tolerant of marital difficulties than they were in the past. They also may be more ready to accept divorce as a solution to problems.

Negative attitudes towards divorce have declined as couples have increasingly accepted divorce as a solution to marital problems. Twenty-five years ago half of all women agreed that parents should stay together for the sake of the children even if they don't get along. Today, more than four out of five disagree.

Social attitudes have been codified into marital laws that made divorce easier. The first no-fault divorce law was passed in California in 1969, but today nearly all states have adopted some form of no-fault divorce. No-fault divorce laws remove some of the stigma of terminating relationships.

No-fault divorce laws have changed the main issue of what divorce is all about. The viability of a marriage and the sanctity of the marriage bond have become less relevant. The division of property and child custody rights have become more important. The incidence of family litigation cases have spiraled upward, and the cases typically involve issues of property settlement or child custody, not whether a divorce will be granted.

Children of Divorce

Perhaps the most serious consequence of divorce is its effect on children. Entanglement of children in broken homes is not a recent development. Nearly a third of all children born during the first half of this century lived in a broken home sometime before they were 18 years old. Today, one of three children (two of three black children) lives in a broken home some time before they are 16 years old. Nearly one and one-quarter million children experience the turmoil of divorce each year.

Most children of divorced parents live with their mothers, and the majority live in a home without a father for at least five years. If current trends continue, nearly half of all children in our society will live part of their childhood in a home without a father. Living in a fatherless home does not necessarily end if the mother remarries because between a third and a half of children whose mothers remarry live through a second divorce before they themselves become adults.

Remarriage and Reconstituted Families

Most people who divorce later remarry. Indeed, the remarriage rate following divorce is higher than first marriage rates in our society. Nearly half of all marriages are remarriages for one or both partners. In one of five married couples one or both partners

were previously divorced, and many remarriages involve partners who have been married more than once.

Remarriages occur soon after divorce. Half of all women who divorce while they are young remarry within three years, and two-thirds remarry within five years. Men remarry somewhat earlier. The facts that most young people plan to marry, that most count on marriage and family life for their greatest satisfactions, that the levels of reported marital happiness have increased even though levels of reported marital problems have also increased, and the fact that most divorced people remarry all suggest that marital disruptions originate in dissatisfaction with a specific spouse rather than in disillusionment with the institution of marriage.

In the early part of this century, remarriages usually involved widows or widowers—people whose spouse had died. Today's remarried families usually involve divorced persons, not widows or widowers. That makes today's reconstituted families more complicated. Former spouses are still alive; and children from former marriages often live with the former spouse. In four of ten remarriages of parents in their thirties, one of the partners—usually the husband—has a son or daughter from a previous marriage living somewhere else. In these cases the parent-child relationship, which our society has traditionally honored as inviolable, is split across geographically separated households.

Relationships in reconstituted families become especially complicated when both spouses were divorced, sometimes more than once. One or both may have children from previous marriages, and the couple may have children from their marriage. The complex family configurations that arise from divorce and remarriage add responsibilities and may introduce new conflicts and tensions, particularly for children, because children are the main connecting links between former spouses and current families. Interpersonal relationships are complex in reconstituted families. The complexities suggest why divorce rates for remarriages are higher than divorce rates for first marriages.

Working Wives and Mothers

American women have always worked to provide for their families. However, as late as 1940 only one in four women (16 years old and older) and just one of seven married women were employed. Today, more than half of all women work outside the home. The proportion of women working has doubled.

Not single women but married women account for most of the increase in female employment; and the greatest increase took place among mothers of preschool children. At mid-century only one of nine married women with children under six years old

were working; but today nearly half of married women with preschool children are working—a four and one-half fold increase in 35 years!

Employment of wives and mothers outside the home has been one of the most dramatic changes in benefits and problems to the American family. The benefits include higher standards of living. Wives' incomes have made dreams come true; purchase of a home, college education for children, home appliances, travel, a cushion against husband's unemployment, country club memberships, early retirement, and resources with which to start a small business. On a nationwide basis families with both husband and wife working have average annual incomes of \$30,000 compared with \$21,000 incomes for families where wives do not work—a 40 percent difference.

There are also costs associated with working mothers. Employment of mothers has changed child care arrangements. The trend is clearly away from homebased child care. Over the past 25 years child care in other people's homes doubled and use of group care centers tripled. More than half of employed mothers pay for child care, as do two-thirds of mothers who work full-time. More unmarried women than married women buy child care services, and unmarried mothers—the group that can least afford it—are the biggest users of group care centers.

Changes in Household Structures

Family households have become smaller and less complex, and there is a pronounced trend toward independent living.

The first census of the U.S. population was taken in 1790, and at that time an average of nearly six persons lived in each household. Since the first census there has been a steady decline in the size of households such that by 1980 the average number of persons per household was less than three—half the size of households 200 years ago. People live in smaller households today.

The decline in household size has been accompanied by a substantial increase in the number of singleperson households. In the first census only one of twenty-five households was occupied by a single-person. In the last census, one in four was a single-person household—six times as many as 200 years ago. The number of new households has been growing more than twice as fast as the population. Today, more people live alone.

The trend toward independent living takes many forms. More than ever before, young people leave home after finishing high school but before they marry. They set up independent living arrangements on their own or with friends. Young people who do not marry also live alone. In 1950, one

of ten men and one of nine women who were 25 to 34 years old and never married were living alone. Since mid-century those percentages have increased fivefold. Today, nearly half of 25 to 34 years old never-married people live in independent households.

The most universally accepted form of independent living is the custom that at marriage people set up a new household. But it wasn't always that way. As late as 1950, one of ten newly married couples lived for a time in a parental household before setting up a household of their own. Today, that is true of only one in fifty married couples.

Other forms of independent living involve retirees who, more than ever before, stay in their own homes, relocate in an apartment, or move to a retirement community rather than move in with children. Spouses, usually husbands, move out after a divorce and set up their own household rather than move in with others. Never-married, separated, and divorced mothers increasingly occupy separate households for themselves and their children rather than move in with others. What these forms have in common is the trend to live independently rather than depend on an already established household.

The traditional living arrangement for the elderly has always been for older people to live in their own household apart from their married children. Today, even more elderly live alone. At the turn of the century, one of six married couples 65 or older lived with a married son or daughter. Today, only one in one hundred elderly couples share living quarters with a married child. The custom of elderly couples moving in with their children in our society has almost totally disappeared within our lifetimes.

Single Mothers and Poverty

Many changes in American family life affect women most directly. These include higher divorce rates, higher rates of out-of-wedlock childbearing, lower rates of legitimizing out-of-wedlock births by marriage, lower adoption rates, higher rates of mothers rearing children born out-of-wedlock, and declining rates of first marriage and remarriage. These contribute to another change: higher rates of unmarried mothers living alone.

Households headed by women with children have become common. One of five households with children in the United States has minor children headed by a single mother—twice as many as in 1970, and three times as many as in 1960.

Father's absence is often cited as potentially deleterious to children's development, and that may be; but father's absence is not a family's only concern. Lack of time and money are other serious problems faced by female household heads. Single mothers report higher levels of stress than do most

other people, and probably for a good reason. Single mothers don't have much time, and they don't have much money.

Today's single-mother headed households are poverty stricken. Half with children under 18 years old and two-thirds with children under six years old live below the poverty level. The median income of female-headed families with children eighteen years old is \$9,500 while the median income for two-parent families is \$26,500. Thus, female-headed families with children under eighteen years old live on one-third as much income as many families headed by husbands and wives. Six times as many families headed by single mothers as two-parent families live below the poverty line; and the younger the children are, the higher the percentage who live in poverty.

It's tough to earn a living as a single mother. Virtually all working mothers have the problem of managing competing demands on their time, of arranging child care, and paying for child care. But for single mothers those problems are intensified. Single mothers have less time, less by way of financial resources, and fewer relatives they can depend on. Many single mothers are poorly prepared for the job market. Some were housewives or part-time workers before they divorced. Others are young, never marry, and have little by way of education or training. They may be high school dropouts.

Today's single mother is poor and hurting. She seldom has the personal resources to climb out of her poverty. Her most likely escape from poverty is remarriage. Unfortunately, the divorce rate for remarriages is higher than the divorce rate for first marriages.

Change as Opportunity

Changes in the family represent opportunities for Christian education. The challenge to the Church is to identify the opportunities and to respond creatively. Educators can function as important catalysts in developing models that meet those needs.

To suggest that the Church can do more is not to ignore ministries to families in which parishes already engage. In the past vanguard parishes extended ministry by appointing Visitation Pastors, Directors of Christian Education, and Directors of Youth Ministry; and some are establishing Directors of Family Ministry today—an exciting prospect. Parishes are making more use of Lutheran Family and Social Services and better use of community counseling services. Parishes are offering transportation for young people, programs for singles and the aged, and day care services for working mothers. These are but examples of enlightened responses to changing family circumstances.



Nanny and Isaiah

Learn to Share Jesus

Teaching Children How to Witness

A unique videocassette that teaches youngsters to share their faith! Not through lectures or abstract theories—but through delightful puppet characters who demonstrate what witnessing is all about: *sharing the Good News of Jesus!*

Meet Nanny and Isaiah. They're determined to be the "stars" of Evangelism Week at their Sunday school. With their "Incredible, Supercolossal, Do-It-Yourself Evangelism Kit," Nanny and Isaiah become Wonder Witness and Mighty Mouth! The only thing they overlook in their plan is the Holy Spirit. . .

This new videocassette program consists of five segments—each approximately eight minutes in length. Twice during each segment, you'll have an opportunity for additional reinforcement through the questions and activities in the 48-page Teachers Guide. Your Teachers Guide also provides suggestions on how to use the video during a 5- or 10-day VBS, during Sunday school, and a variety of other Christian education programs.

The experiences of Nanny and Isaiah, as well as the suggested activities, will help your youngsters learn to share their faith, not just during an evangelism week, but as a natural part of their daily lives!

**NEW
for
1985**

This year introduce your youngsters to Nanny and Isaiah. And help them develop the most important skill they'll ever learn!

Nanny and Isaiah Learn to Share Jesus

(videocassette and 48-page Teachers Guide)

\$39.95

VHS 87MT0241
Beta I 87MT0242
Beta II 87MT0243
Videocassette rental:
(rental period is 2 weeks)

\$15.00



Contact your Christian Supplier

But families need more help. Change challenges the Church to reevaluate its priorities and recommit its resources. Change in the family challenges the Church to revitalize its ministry to families.

How can the Church be proactive in family maintenance, not just reactive in family disintegration? Parishes can be most effective by enhancing Christian education programs that prepare and nurture healthy family living. Divorce rates are distressing, to be sure; but the fact that divorces occur increasingly early suggests that the Church target efforts to strengthening its premarital programming. The high rate of births to unmarrieds—one of five births—underscores the need for both young men and young women to learn sexual responsibility. The fact that three of four children born out-of-wedlock are born into poverty extends the need for young people to learn the obligations of parenthood.

It would be a mistake to conclude that Christian education programming should focus on the young. The first need in many parishes is to consider how family issues relate to the parish understanding and practice of ministry. Generally speaking, that is an adult issue that adults dare not shirk. A related need is for parishes to establish how they can address family issues sensitively.

A recent Congressional Research Service report on family problems concludes, in part, that "no simple answers exist." For lack of quick-fixes, the Church must coordinate its efforts to develop more effective models of ministry to families. Colleges and seminaries can enhance family studies curricula; design continuing education programs for clergy, educators, and laymen; and develop resources for parish use. Conference program committees can seize the opportunity to schedule papers on the theology and practice of ministry to families. Parishes can implement and evaluate different forms of family ministry; and those with model programs can schedule workshops to share their experience with others.

Fortunately, parishes need not go it alone. There are resources available, and at the top of the list are the well-trained, dedicated, and experienced teachers with which our church is singularly blessed. Educators have both a personal and professional interest in family well-being. They can apply their expertise by taking the initiative to sensitize parishes to family needs and by tooling-up to use their skills in developing programs that meet parish and community needs.

There are other resources that parishes and educators committed to extending ministry to families might profitably consult. Over the past two decades departments of continuing studies at many state universities have sponsored annual

conferences on building family strengths. These symposia are excellent forums in which to learn (and share and present) models of effective family programming. Educators and parishes interested in ministry to families might consider individual or organizational membership in the National Council on Family Relations—an association of teachers, researchers, counselors, therapists, clergy, and other professionals who are committed to enhancing the quality of family life. The Mormon Church (Church of the Latter Day Saints) has long emphasized family education, and parishes may benefit by learning more about the Family Home Evening Program—a refreshingly old idea.

The largest cohorts born in the baby boom have now married but will not reach the prime ages of divorce until later in this decade and the beginnings of the next. That means that the number of divorces will further increase, not decrease, in the near future. The problem of fractured families is not about to go away.

There are indications that people await and will respond to family ministry initiatives. Scholars assure us people are "tuned-in" to their marriages and continue to value marriage and a satisfying family life. The success of secular support groups—Mothers Without Custody, Parents Without Partners, Fathers Who Care, the Stepfather Association of America, the Committee for Single Adoptive Parents, and the National Single Parent Coalition—suggests an opportunity to make "fellowship" real and alive for family fragments living alone—the young and the elderly, the unmarried, the separated, and the divorced. Single mothers are today's Biblically poor, those whom society is passing by. They above others need to share in the Church's wealth and treasure: the assurance that the Heavenly Father is lovingly disposed towards them, and the experience of that reality as full and accepted participants in the Body of Christ.

The Church as a human institution struggles in finite forms to give living testimony to the Father's love that sustains it. Changes in the family challenge the Church with opportunities to develop new forms for expressing the faith it professes.

Acknowledgements

This article draws on numerous statistical abstracts and resources published primarily by the Bureau of the Census, the National Center for Health Statistics, the U.S. Department of Labor, and the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan. I gratefully acknowledge and credit these primary sources but accept responsibility for extrapolations, comparisons, and interpretations.

||



What Shall Our Schools and Parishes Teach?

by Ewald Kane

Our ever-changing ways and rapid pace of life continue to cause us to rethink that which we would teach in our parishes and schools. It is obvious also that the wealth of factual material is overwhelming and selections need to be made. Changing social issues call for new insights into our faith. Sensitivities over personal relations lead to development and refinement of techniques that can be learned for enhanced individual relationships.

How does the Christian education program at all levels deal with such concerns as drug abuse, computer instruction, retirement planning, high tech survival, ecological balancing and an inflated economy? We hear of such changes as fusion power, memory pills and human brain transplants being on the horizon. What knowledge, skills and behaviors should we select and emphasize in our teaching of religion? The classical question of "What

knowledge is of most worth?" certainly applies to the church as it equips today's saints for a life of servanthood.

Philosophy and Objectives Should Guide Choices

Basic to considering what we should teach is an understanding of a particular type of philosophical system, that of theistic idealism. Its ontology, or nature of reality and truth, centers in the Holy Scriptures, where God is revealed as Creator and Redeemer of mankind and the universe. Its epistemology, or theory of knowledge, is fixed. We know truths about God which do not rest upon other claims to knowing for the assertion of their truth. Its essential theories of value are objectivistic, that is, they have certitude and are absolute. They have been established by a loving Father who "will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of truth" (I Tim. 2:4). He also has instilled a conscience in His foremost creation which provides direction for our human living experiences.

The philosophy and belief system we adopt (Wingo, 1974, 8) paves the way for establishment of distinctive purposes and goals. It is the vehicle called curriculum which then travels upon the road of learning. Curriculum has countless definitions but let it suffice here to say it is a plan for the education of the learner, or, it is that which has been planned to be experienced (Taylor, 1965, 62). In the broadest sense it includes also all unplanned activities in the formal learning setting. The Christian perspective is that "...all aspects of the curriculum come under the Word of God and need to take into account His creative, redemptive and sanctifying work. Christian education is a cooperative work including parents, church, child, and teacher — all operating submissive to God's will" (Wessler, 1978, 2).

Whether we consider a formal religion curriculum for children which presents a year-long plan of learning experiences, a short thirteen week topical or Bible study for adults, or a single lesson for any age level, the plan has to be apparent to the leader and learners. Plans need objectives. Our basic philosophy is projected in the objective of Christian education (Wessler, 1978, 5), namely:

The objective of Christian Education is that everyone through the Word and Spirit may—know God and His seeking and forgiving love in Christ and respond in faith and love;—identify himself as a son of God, a member of Christ's Body; and as such grow in self-understanding and self-acceptance, express His love through service to fellow human beings, relate responsibly to His holy creation; and—live in the Christian hope.

We should teach that which God would have us teach, namely, to accept His invitation to an everlasting relationship with Him in His Son, Jesus Christ. "Christian education is the way in which the church carries out a major function, the teaching-disciplining function commanded by its Lord. By it God's people (the church) express their faith to each other and transmit to each new generation those values that give life meaning, and make the Gospel relevant in today's world. Through Christian education the church enables God's people to worship their Lord, witness to His mercy, proclaim His Gospel, teach His people, and serve all men." (Meyer and Rast, 1971, 25)

Select Materials to Fit the Situation

Specifically, what should our schools and parishes teach? With change on every hand and seemingly in every day, no one can state an exact curriculum for each parish, congregational class, or even for each person. Needs and emphases vary from place to place and from person to person. What is needed in the South Bronx may differ vastly from the concerns of south central Iowa. That which is appropriate for the elderly veteran of the cross is likely inappropriate for a babe in the faith. The point is that need and emphasis at any given time are unique for each child of God.

Grouping and grading are suitable for expediency when instructing children and youth. Conversely, selective grouping and choice are mainstays for adults. Scope and sequence curricula (Price, 1959, 153-166) for children and for nurturing the faith of developing adults are available for these groups from the church. Generally, needs of adults center on any aspect of knowledge in the faith. The movement of intergenerational and family groupings is, for the most part, unique and quite effective. The Body of Christ concept found in Scripture describes the growing and supporting relationships to be developed in the church, regardless of chronological age. Much could be said about the significance and importance of such nurturing groups.

Some Curriculum Selection Principles

Some basic principles for selecting materials may be helpful for planners and teachers of Christian education. It is not within the scope of this brief article to provide particulars on curriculum development. Our concern, however, focuses upon criteria integral to selecting materials for the various agencies of teaching in the church of today.

Principle I. *The essential ingredient of content in our material is that it must be exegetically accurate, correctly presenting that which is taught about God in Scripture. To learn of God and His deeds one must know Him from the source of understanding. It is*

only in His Word that we find the doctrines of our faith. A temptation we often confront is to make secular information fit God's purpose. The Christian day school teacher may attempt to promote material on ecological balance from a secular textbook without first considering God's design for nature.

Principle II. *Materials in Christian education have a serving function.* Regardless of the reason for learning, enhancement of the individual is inherent in the process. There is, however, a serving function outside the learner which touches others through direct contact or indirectly by changes within the learner that affect his being. Often the direct influence is to strengthen others and possibly even to work toward their salvation. A teenager in a youth class discussing material on chemical dependency hears a fellow learner explain how she feels God's presence in her life is sufficient in solving personal problems. That witness causes another's reflection to center upon trust, consequently effecting a stronger hold on faith in God's assurances. As William Lehmann stated some years ago, "...guiding them (the learners) to an increased awareness and understanding of God and their life with Him, strengthening their love for Him and their concern for one another, broadening and deepening their basic beliefs and understandings." (Damm, 1965, 19).

Principle III. *Relevant materials are a significant key both in motivating learners and in addressing their needs.* Materials must fit the times in which we live as well as being appropriate for the individual's spiritual development. According to our epistemology, it is mandatory that the unchanging truths of God apply to the changing times and directions of our society. Many adult study topics available in religious education do not emphasize the interests and needs of our people. Where the basis is a Biblical book or reference, curricular offerings project only the Scriptural directive, often in outmoded fashion. Fresh insights, new considerations and contemporary applications are imperative with rapid change. Without direct guidance in the using of material, we must rely on gifted teachers or perceptive learners to give adequate attention to realistic possibilities for nurture. This is not to negate the work of the Holy Spirit but to provide means for His involvement.

Principle IV. *A variety of materials must be available for meeting the variety of spiritual needs among the learners.* Approaches to religious curricular design and content are numerous. "Life-experience," "learner-centered," "teacher-involved," "content-oriented," "problem-centered,"

"task development," are just a few of the approaches to designed materials. Basic Bible study, issue-oriented topics, life/faith development materials, personal spiritual growth techniques, and doctrinal and confessional studies are among the myriad of curricular types. Teaching and learning styles often dictate preparatory work for authors and editors. Discussion groups, audiovisual presentations and the traditional lecture with questions are examples of the variety of instructional settings found in our parishes and schools. The age and spiritual maturity level of the learner must be considered. Interests in the life of the learners may focus upon social issues and therefore the materials must focus these upon the religious perspective and relevancy. The writer is currently conducting research throughout the church to determine what our pastors, teachers and people see as future needs in adult education. Responses indicate a desire for a variety of relevant materials presented in crisp styles. An example is the video cassette material for home and church.

Principle V. *Characteristics of learners of all ages are a most important consideration when selecting instructional materials for Christian education.* Awareness of the differences in spiritual, psychological, intellectual, and social development of persons of all ages is imperative for matching materials successfully with learners and their needs. Individual learning styles are now being regarded as primary factors in determining how people learn.

Psychological understanding of processes must be developed, for it is no more foolish for a farmer to scatter his wheat over a paved street and to expect a good harvest than for religious leaders to ignore the laws of spiritual growth and to expect significant changes in individuals or society. (Chave, 1947, 127)

All Sunday school children do not learn best from any given approach presented in material. Individual learning strengths and level of receptivity must be identified for each child. These factors are even more pronounced with adult learners where acceptance of that which is taught is considerably dependent upon one's perceived needs and choice of involvement.

Principle VI. *In seeking basic guidelines for selecting materials, especially for children, use general objectives which would lay the foundation for study as a guide.* One of the most complete lists prepared in our church body came out of a workshop established for the development of the *Units in Religion*. Time has not altered those objectives and therefore they are presented here.

- I. A growing understanding and appreciation of the nature of God and man's relationship to Him.
 - A. A growing understanding and appreciation of God's work in creating, preserving, and ruling the world.
 - B. A growing understanding and appreciation of God's plan of salvation through Jesus Christ.
 - C. A growing understanding and appreciation of God's power and work in imparting the blessings of salvation.
- II. A growing Christian character.
 - A. A growing understanding of God's will and of the life in Christ.
 - B. The desire to do God's will and to be perfect like Christ.
- III. Love of fellow men, expressing itself in the application of Christian principles in all relationships.
 - A. The realization that love is the basis for all Christian relationships.
 - B. A readiness to discharge group and community obligations in a spirit of love.
- IV. A rich devotional life as a source of spiritual strength.
 - A. The realization that Christian faith and strength for a sanctified life comes from God through the means of grace.
 - B. Faithful use of the Scriptures, through which the power of God flows into human beings.
 - C. The joyful use of the sacraments for the strengthening of the Christian life.
 - D. The use of prayer as a means of daily communication with God.
- V. Active participation in the life and work of the church.
 - A. Appreciation of the grace of God in establishing and maintaining His church on earth.
 - B. Intelligent and joyful participation in the activities of the church in keeping with God-given interests and talents.
- VI. The dedication of time, talents, and treasures to God in a life of faithful stewardship.
 - A. An eagerness to place God first in thoughts and actions.
 - B. In general, a complete dedication of the heart to God in humble and grateful response to God's love in Christ Jesus, expressing itself in a striving after the perfection of Christian stewardship "unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." (Eph. 4:14) (Kramer, 1958, 6)

The Importance of a Curriculum Committee

Who is to determine what material is to be used in our agencies? This is a vital concern. Often pastors alone are charged with or assume the responsibility for confirmation instruction and adult materials. Sunday school superintendents decide, with approval of pastors and teachers, which curriculum to employ. Lutheran school staffs usually give considerable study to religious content and approaches. And over all of this, the Board of Christian education nods approval. This writer contends that we often end up with a conglomeration of religious instructional materials that have little bearing upon either the purposes and objectives of our programs or the needs of the learners.

Our concern here is mostly for agencies apart from the Christian day school. A selected committee whose members have ability and experience should review curricular possibilities for children in light of desired objectives. It should discuss these with teachers and then make recommendations to the responsible board with attendant reasons for favoring certain materials. Choosing materials for youth and adult classes should begin with consideration of the learners' desires and stated needs.

The responsible board or curriculum committee must develop and keep a continuing record of all materials employed in the parish. It is helpful to list all learners in a class together with the materials that were studied. This is of utmost importance for children. Unfortunately, mix and match offerings in the Sunday schools nowadays have resulted in no clear record of a learner's experiences. When were the

Six Chief Parts of Christian Doctrine taught to the young person aged twelve? When was baptism studied during those nine years? Was it? Does anyone know? Is it important? Would not planning and record keeping be helpful? Whose responsibility is it?

Train the Teachers to Teach the Bible

Training of teachers in using teaching materials is not discussed here but it is of such extreme importance that it should be referenced. Material cannot, for the most part, teach itself. It is true that much of our material is excellent, but its excellence is not clearly imparted by poor teaching. Congregations without professionally trained Lutheran school teachers to train lay teachers would do well to acquire these services from a neighboring school congregation's staff. Another approach is to use the professional education talent which exists in practically every local parish.

In summarizing a 1969 Summit Conference on Christian education, John Choitz's words remain most appropriate. "The basic textbook is the BIBLE. Let us not lose sight of this fact. Let's give attention to ways of making this textbook exciting and relevant. The translations must be sharp, lucid, clear. Those who read must be taught to love the Book." (Choitz, 1969, 83)

Some Opportunities Change Provides

Our intent has been to focus on helping resolve the dilemma arising when selection of Christian education materials are to be made for the teaching agencies of the church. This is only one aspect of fitting Christian Education to a Changing Society. We see diverse and significant changes needed in reaffirming commitments, restructuring and updating objectives, redesigning materials and approaches, restructuring programs; in short, more than minor alterations are required for carrying out the imperative Christ gives to His church of today. John Westerhoff may have begged the issue a bit but he did point to exciting possibilities in the "open present":

If our present programs of religious education persist there is reason to believe that tomorrow's children may be denied an experience or understanding of the Christian faith. Yet I do not despair. We are, I believe, approaching what could become a fertile stage in the church's life. The times are pregnant with new possibilities. The joys and pains of birth surround us; an alternative future for church education can break through. Why? For many and diverse reasons. A few: persons are becoming increasingly disillusioned with our present

attempts at education in the church. New issues, problems, and opportunities confront us; old ways of responding prove inadequate. Experimentation and new models erupt here and there." (Westerhoff, 1970, 1)

Though many would be content with the status quo, the future will bring dramatic social changes and continue to force us to look again at what we teach in our parishes and schools.

References

- Chave, E.J. (1947). *A Functional Approach to Religious Education*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Choitz, F.F. (Ed.). (1969). *Christian Education - in Transit!* Twenty-sixth Yearbook. River Forest, IL: Lutheran Education Association.
- Damm, J.S. (Ed.) (1965). *The Teaching of Religion*. Twenty-second Yearbook. River Forest, IL: Lutheran Education Association.
- Kramer, W.A. (1958). *Teacher's Manual for Units in Religion for Lutheran Schools, Growing in Grace*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House.
- Meyer, F.A. & Rast, H.W. (1971). *Foundations for Christian Education*. St. Louis: Board for Parish Services, Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod.
- Price, J.M., Chapman, J.H., Carpenter, L.L. & Yarborough, W.F. (1959). *A Survey of Religious Education*. New York: Ronald Pres Company.
- Taylor, M.J. (1965). *Religious and Moral Education*. New York: The Center for Applied Research in Education.
- Wessler, M.F. (Ed.). (1978). *Planning for Lutheran Elementary Schools: E07-Curriculum Planning Guidelines*. St. Louis: Board for Parish Services, Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod.
- Westerhoff, J.H. (1970). *Values for Tomorrow's Children*. Philadelphia: Pilgrim Press.
- Wingo, G.M. (1974). *Philosophies of Education: An Introduction*. Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath and Company.

ii

book reviews

A GATHERING OF STRANGERS (UNDERSTANDING THE LIFE OF YOUR CHURCH) - Revised edition, by Robert C. Worley, Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983.

The purpose of the book is to clarify the interrelationship of the social and theological foundations of the church. In this revision of the 1976 original, the sections on "power" and "structure" have been strengthened. The book deals with the question, "How is it possible for this human organization to be Christian?" The question assumes that the essence of the church is its unique task of transforming people.

The author, a faculty member at McCormick Theological Seminary, takes the position that the risk in using contemporary sociological and organizational thought forms to understand the nature of the church as a human organization is no greater a danger than absolutizing words and interpretations of previous centuries. Obviously there is a risk that such an approach may reduce the church to only a human organization. Eric Fromm's "socio-biological-historical category" as it relates to the formation of personhood is the starting point of Worley's reconceptualization of the church. The author contends that a significant aspect of church leadership is to understand and direct the identity forming process for members of congregations. Many of the identity words we use — pastor, minister, layman, laywoman, teachers, layminister — have a variety of negative and positive meanings. In earlier days there were definitions of behaviors and attitudes that were generally accepted. Today, however, the lack of clarity regarding clear expectations for all involved has led to frustration, bitterness and withdrawal from the church by clergy and laity.

The book continues by clarifying the impact of personal and organizational goals upon congregations and other types of church organizations. This chapter also contains the first of a series of questions and exercises to assist leaders to analyze and direct their local situations. Chapter four, Forms of Power and the Involvement of Persons, presents generalizations such as: Power in voluntary organizations is not

static and stable, therefore it is not always helpful for leaders to follow the usual pattern of searching out power people within the congregation to gain power from them; power in voluntary organizations is not only personal but institutional. The power of structures is treated in detail, and this chapter also contains numerous exercises to assist readers to understand the structure of their congregations. The book assists readers to think organizationally. The material is helpful for leaders who want assistance in using structures, political styles, polity, control of resources and patterns of information sharing to promote the congregation as an expression of Christian ministry. Another major emphasis of the book is the definition of the "environment" of a congregation. For example: Pastors who are effective in small town churches are frequently considered "eligible" to move up to larger urban and suburban parishes. Many pastors who have done so discover quickly that the new environment precludes procedures and styles that were successful previously.

The book is well designed. It presents pertinent questions and proceeds to present sociological and organizational principles in a straight forward manner. The final section of the book, two short chapters, contains Worley's synthesis of secular theory and theological tenets. His practical theology is easily the most satisfying portion of the book. The earlier extended chapter on power is laborious to digest, but necessary preparation for his practical statements. Worley's practical theology is based on Dietrich Bonhoeffer's *The Communion of the Saints*, and Jurgen Moltman's essay, "The Lordship of Christ in Human Society." Worley understands and appreciates that congregations are more than the sum total of the individuals who hold memberships. Congregations have "character, climate, purposes, forms of power and relationships to the environment." Therefore, they must be understood and led organizationally. Worley contends that the real ministry of congregation leaders is the administration of the congregation. This is contrary to the traditional position that the important ministry of congregations is preaching and pastoral care. He maintains that the

effectiveness of a congregation's proclaiming work is positively correlated to its organizational effectiveness. He believes that the "wise rule" of congregations is the primary need of contemporary parishes. The wholeness of Christ's ministry is not evident in congregations today because professional ministers are expected to "do the ministry." Ministry is the function of the people as much as it is of the leaders. The role of the clergy is to teach, organize, assist, enable and support the members. Each congregation must generate a vision for itself which is helpful to its members and to the community.

Lutheran professional church workers will find this book provocative and worthwhile. The book is not a guide book, although it contains helpful exercises and questions. The book, however, can be very useful as a basis for discussion and reflection. It provides helpful principles which can form part of the foundation for understanding the church as a human organization.

Eugene Oetting

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION IN THE YEAR 2000 by Marion E. Brown and Marjorie G. Prentice. Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1984.

Here is a thought provoking look into the future by two United Methodist women who have pursued the enigmatic future of Christian education by "learning from the present" through research of very successful Sunday schools (2,000-11,000). They state, "The present, coupled with the experience of the past, must provide insight and understanding for futuring." (p. 9) "Information was gathered in scores of visitations to Sunday Schools across the nation, dozens of in-depth interviews, and over a thousand questionnaire responses." (p. 9) In summary, they can conclude that the Sunday school (and the church) needs to focus on the Bible and caring. Although this is news to no one, it does point out the

(Continued from page 23)

significant impact of Christian education beyond a "schooling" model. They discuss intentionality, mutuality, empowerment, spiritual enrichment, voluntary simplicity, and interiority of life. They maintain that, "A lifestyle which focuses on voluntary simplicity couples with a commitment to intentionality and mutuality leads to empowerment of others, fostering a deeper level of interiority and spiritual enrichment." (p. 12) Their predictions of "newforms" require the following changes in "churches":

- from hierarchy to shared ministry
- from clergy to priesthood of all believers
- from Bible as "Conservation" to Bible as "Basic to Living"
- from emotional evangelism to support and true care for others

-from a "schooling" model of Christian education to multifaceted educational ministry

-from "bigger is better" as an end to bigger as a means to facilitate relating the gospel more effectively to people

-from the perception of being Christian as "old fashioned" to knowing the disciplined life in God as the epitome of a truly fulfilling life

-from a belief in "miraculous church growth to planned intentionality

-from a belief that growth in the church is the task only of the pastor and paid staff, to an attitude of mutuality between pastor and congregation on behalf of all.

With a true infusion of the Spirit, we shall see much joy in the future of Christian education. They anticipate a welding of Christian education and evangelism as Christians reach out in loving concern from a community and world perspective.

Based on Ephesians 4:11-13, they see

Christian education as centered on change (*Educare*). It would appear that we Lutherans could profit from their findings. "The Church - A Model of Mutuality in Ministry" is a very significant chapter regarding implications for lay ministry. It discusses specific training "events"; the need for honest, continual recognition of effective workers; the importance of continuous evaluation toward improvement; and the significance of support elements for effective volunteer team success.

The authors conclude with a challenge to Christian educators to use learning approaches, methods and prayer to motivate people toward "Self spending action," daring them to educate with a Christian vision for a new age. (p. 126-127).

Glenn O. Kraft



CONCORDIA TEACHERS COLLEGE
Seward, Nebraska 68434

Address Correction Requested. Return Postage Guaranteed

Route to: _____

Non-Profit Org.
U. S. POSTAGE
PAID
Seward, Nebr.
Permit No. 4