ISSUES
IN CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Summer, 1986   *Vol. 20, No. 3*

NEGLECTED
MINISTRIES

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EDITOR'S NOTES

Summer is a good time for ISSUES readers to take stock of how well the ministry in which they are engaged is meeting the needs of those they are serving. It is also a good time to consider who is being neglected, why they are being neglected, and what can be done to remedy the situation.

The ISSUES Editorial Committee hopes this number of the Concordia faculty journal will be a useful tool for locating some neglected ministries. The number of such ministries is more numerous than can be treated in the pages of one number of our journal; therefore we have selected three areas that are grossly neglected in some parishes, districts and Synod.

The level of Christian education falls far below an excellence rating in many parishes. Zwick's article should help point the way toward remedying the situation. It is also shameful that the church today washes its hands in practice generally of having any responsibility to minister to the publicans and sinners in our society. Schlie identifies both why this is true and how the church can begin to follow the example of Jesus in His encounter with the woman of Samaria at Jacob's well. Nafzger identifies the seemingly insurmountable problem The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod must face if it is to become effective in being its brother's keeper by relating to followers of Christ who are members of other Christian denominations.

May God bless the use of this ISSUES in your ministry.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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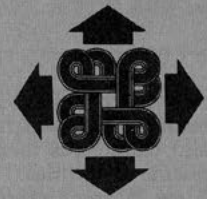
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editorials

The Ministry of Inclusion

My wife is involved in special education and so can quickly recount the limitations of the LC-MS ministry to people who have unique types of handicaps or limitations in many different areas of development. I am involved in evangelism and have observed many limitations in the way that we minister to one another within the household of faith. We are also inconsistent in reaching out to others whom God has placed into our lives or into our paths as we go about our day-to-day activities. It appears to me that in all areas of ministry we are not as effective in responding to the emotional and social needs of people as we ought to be and can be. We fail in the ministry of inclusion.

At the same time, we do not want to give the impression of discounting or not giving proper weight to the work of the Holy Spirit as He works through our sharing of the Gospel and through our living testimony of His action in our lives. However, when surveying people who have been brought into the church later in life, the overwhelming majority have given credit to a friend or relative who not only witnessed to them but also invited and brought them into the community of saints. That was often a small caring group within the congregation.

After people are brought into the congregation, they do not really grow in discipleship unless they are involved in some significant area of ministry. In many cases they need to be involved in a small primary group such as a home Bible study

POINTS OF VIEW

This issue of ISSUES touches a touchy subject: how do you live and work with "other" [read "different" or "unusual" or "not like us"] people?

Our authors take us through a gamut of ideas to suggest varying responses to these questions. We are told to pay attention to the emotional needs of children and to remember that we must minister to the whole child or adult (not just to certain aspects of others' personhood). We are told never to abandon our integrity and our principles in dealing with "others" who identify themselves as Christians in ways much different than the ways in which we might identify ourselves as Christians and/or Lutherans. We are told to be inclusive, rather than exclusive, in our approach to "others," to open our arms and our hearts to welcome those "others" into our fellowship. We are told to pay attention to the different age groups in our congregations and to recognize that some of those "others" are already a part of our fellowship and should be attended to with greater deliberation.

There is a lot of "other"-directed ministry in and around the church. And we Christians are called to minister to "others" as we have opportunity to do so. It might be helpful in these discussions if we recognized, first of all, that at one time or another we were some of the "others" to whom ministry has been directed. We were children with emotional needs; we were young adults "betwixt and between;" we were (and still are) Christians struggling to respond in a God-pleasing way to "other" Christians. Our authors have done all of us a service by focusing on various groups of "others" and thus challenging us to consider what we are doing (or not doing) to fulfill the calling Christ has given us to minister where we are as His people each day of our lives.

Yes, this issue of ISSUES touches a touchy subject so that we can sharpen and refine our POINTS OF VIEW.

James H. Pragman

cell and/or given some task or area of responsibility which is meaningful to them and challenges them to utilize their gifts, talents or abilities. The research done by Dr. Alan Harre and others who have been carefully studying and doing research in church growth bears this out.

As people reach decision points in life where they must change the intensity of their responsibility, or in our present society make career changes a number of times, they also need a great deal of support from their fellow Christians. In our present economy we have many people who are experiencing extremely difficult times due to what we term the "agri-crisis."

The times when individuals need inclusion, to feel wanted and needed, are multiple. People are most receptive to our caring and sharing when they are in a period of transition or when something dramatic and/or traumatic happens in their lives. Those who are strong in faith need others to care for them at such times in a very demonstrative way. Those who are not in faith may be most receptive to our testimony and caring and so we can communicate the Gospel most clearly to them at such times.

In the Gospel of Matthew, when our Lord and Savior describes the Day of Judgment, He indicates that there are many things that we, His children, have done for other people as His representatives. We may not always be conscious of the times that we have visited the sick or those in jail, given food or drink or clothing to those in need. It appears that the overriding point He has made with His disciples is that we must care for people in response to their needs, and while so doing are living the Gospel for them, and also sharing it through our word and deed.

Young and old today are most often attracted to congregations that they feel are friendly and caring. If members of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod are not responsive to the felt needs of people in their congregations and communities, someone else will fill the gap. Cults and other non-Christian groups are very responsive to the social and emotional needs of the people they attract. Many churches with a charismatic approach, a highly evangelistic approach, or a fundamentalistic approach also seem to be quite responsive to felt needs of people. A ministry of inclusion in our congregations and communities may very well be the direction that The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod must go in order to most effectively carry out the Great Commission, for the rest of this century and into the next century.

William Preuss

Ministry to Those "Betwixt and Between"

"Give me a child until he is five years old; then you may have him for the rest of his life." So runs a quotation variously attributed to Ignatius Loyola, Josef Stalin and others. The point is, of course, that the first five years of life are crucial, formative years of human development. Yet very nearly as crucial is surely the time of "young adulthood," from roughly ages 18 through 24 or 30. While for many American adults this period features the "bright college years" celebrated in memory and song, it is in fact a major time of passage. It is during the early part of this period (from 18 to 21 or so) that many American young people make two of the most important choices of their lives: a profession and a spouse. In sum, these years often mark a major transition, from membership as a child in one nuclear family, through a shorter or longer period of independence, to the formation of a new nuclear family.

How well is the church ministering to those at this important juncture? All too often, not well enough. In the words of one Lutheran congregation's staff member who serves this age group:

There's almost always a high school youth group. But once a person has graduated, the church's attitude too often seems to be, "We'll wait until they get married and have kids—until then, we won't worry about them." With first marriage and having children occurring later in people's lives, it is not inconceivable that congregational ministry may not impact in a person's life for 10, 15 or even 20 years.[1]

To be sure, ministry to young adults has its special challenges. Looking again at the early portion of these years, those away at college or in the military are often absent from any one locus of ministry, with some time (chiefly holidays) spent in their legal residence ("back home"), but the majority spent where they really live, away from home. Secondly, the necessary process of "leaving the nest" can include leaving behind features of life identified closely with the family, including participation in the life of the church, if the young person has not sufficiently "taken ownership" in the church for him/herself, but rather regards church activity as something done because of membership in the family. Thirdly, throughout this period of life, as was the case in the earlier transition period of adolescence, those of this age group may feel themselves "neither fish nor fowl," comfortable neither with high-school-age youth, nor with the "adults," whom they still identify primarily with their parents.

What can be done to improve our

handling of this all-too-often neglected ministry? The Synod as a whole and several Synodical agencies are to be commended on a couple of fronts. First, after a decade of resolutions concerned primarily that campus ministry be done **rightly**, the 1983 LCMS convention expressed its concern that campus ministry be done **at all**, taking special pains to bring together information from home congregations and congregations serving campuses about students in need of contact (Resolution 1-04). One look at the "Campus Ministry" section of the *Lutheran Annual* shows clearly why such sharing of information is important: the vast majority of colleges and universities are served not by full-time chaplains, but by local pastors who seek to care for young adults at local institutions of higher education in addition to a full workload in their parishes. Secondly, the Lutheran Women's Missionary League is supporting the Synod's Board for Youth Services in efforts to train developers of young adult ministries at the district and local levels (and a manual on ministry to young adults is now available for purchase from the BYS).

Nevertheless, in my view, it will inevitably be in local parishes, where the issue is most acutely and personally felt, that the most progress will be made. Some parishes already have in place effective interst groups, young adults Bible studies (often at non-traditional hours!) and opportunities for ministry within the peer group. Yet first things must come first: a congregation must know which of its members are in this age group, where they really live and work and then make every effort to stay in touch with them or to seek local ministry for them, if they are at a distance.

Such efforts will come none too soon. Demographers inform us that 1992 will mark the low point in the post-baby boom college-age population. Thereafter, a new generation of young adults will be with us (the "baby boom-boom"?) in increasing numbers and in need of ministry. Will we be there, ready to serve?

[1] Wayne Duchow of St. John, Denver, CO, quoted in LCMS *Reporter* 12:10.

George C. Heider

Meeting the Emotional Needs of Children: A Neglected Ministry?

Times have changed! The once comfortable, homogeneous classroom consisting of almost totally Lutheran, white children from stable two-parent families has been transformed to a challenging heterogeneous classroom consisting of children from families of a variety of faiths, colors, and marital standards. "In the majority of Lutheran schools today, teachers minister to a multi-racial, multicultural, multi-ethnic, multi-denominational, and non-Christian community of children. God has placed a diversified audience before Lutheran teachers."[1] Within this wide audience are children from homes of divorced parents, unmarried parents, live-in-parents, dual working parents, adoptive parents, step-parents, and the like. These children bring to the classroom a wide range of emotional needs.

These changes suggest that Christian educators take a long, hard look and determine what is being done in Christian classrooms to meet the needs of EACH child—especially the emotional needs of each child. If a child is going to be a success in life, that child will need to have the realization that he is a special creature created by God and is very much wanted, needed, and worthwhile. Jesus said, "Love your neighbor as yourself." If a child doesn't love himself, he can't very well love anyone else. Christian educators have the responsibility of helping children love themselves. Christian Day School staffs cannot neglect this phase of ministry.

So that ministry to the emotional needs of the child is not neglected, I would like to propose four steps for congregations to consider.

Step One - Look at Research

Research shows us that the following practices are prevalent in many classrooms across our country:
1. Most teachers tend to seat slower students farther from the teacher.
2. More eye contact, smiles, etc. are given to high achievers.
3. Low achievers are called on less by their teachers.
4. Low achievers are given less time to respond to questions.
5. The high achiever receives less criticism.
6. The low achiever receives much less praise.
7. More feedback is encouraged from high achievers.
8. Less is demanded overall of low achievers.
9. The low achiever is interrupted more than the high achiever and isn't given time to correct his own mistakes.[2]

Not all children can achieve at the same

intellectual level, but ALL children can achieve in some area and thus be a success. The elementary teachers at the school I serve keep a success chart on all the children in their classes. They mark the chart weekly to verify the fact that each child is having some type of a success each week and is indeed being made to feel important. If a child is not successful in a given week, the teacher tries to determine the reason and immediately sets up situations to make the child feel successful.

Step Two - Listen to Children

Children need to know what they say is important. Each individual needs a certain amount of attention and recognition. Every teacher needs to have a listening ear and a feeling heart. In addition to teachers' consciously taking time to listen to children individually, the following three ideas might also be incorporated in school programs:
1. Students in grades K-4 seem to thrive on sharing news about themselves or sharing favorite keepsakes with their classmates. Structured "Show 'n' Tell" periods in these grades provide excellent opportunities for students to have a captive listening audience.
2. Teachers recognize that certain students need more time to talk than is possible to give in a classroom situation. If a child's cat dies on a school morning, that child needs to talk about it. If a child's grandfather has a heart attack, that child may need to talk about it. A "Listening People" program can help meet some of these specific needs. Senior Citizens can be trained to listen. The seniors can meet with individual children on a regular basis just to listen to their cares, joys, and worries. Some of the seniors can be called in on emergencies to listen for a short period of time.
3. PEER is another program that has been developed to help the emotional needs of the child. This program works well with upper elementary and junior high aged children. Students are selected to be in PEER according to reinforcement they may need from others or according to their ability to help build the low self-concepts of others. The central purpose of PEER is to assist students in becoming aware of their unique potential as healthy human beings.

Step Three - Assist Parents to Help Children

Helping parents help their children grow emotionally is a vital ministry for schools. Caring schools will take time to plan and implement programs which will assist parents in this neglected area of ministry. Some very workable and profitable programs can be established with careful planning. The following suggestions have worked for us:
1. TRAIN UP is an education program for

parents of preschoolers conducted six to eight weeks out of the year. It provides a wide-range of topics led by experts on the topic being covered. Programs are held at times that are convenient for parents to attend. Babysitting services are provided so that parents do not have the burden of seeking out and paying for babysitters.
2. Parent Teacher Leagues can schedule topics which deal with the emotional growth of the child, especially the school-aged child.
3. Support groups are set up for parents who are frustrated and concerned as to what can and should be done to help their children develop postitive self images. These support groups are non-structured and have no specific agenda. Parents share any pressing need at the moment.

Step Four - Use Common Sense in Daily Routines

Dr. William Mitchell makes the following suggestions to help children feel good about themselves:
1. Say something encouraging and complimentary to children each day.
2. Create a warm, friendly atmosphere where smiles abound.
3. Make every effort to help children understand that they are worthy members of families and classrooms.
4. If a child fails in some endeavor, help him understand there are many ways he has been successful and that failure may turn to success by trying again.
5. Treat each child as an individual; do not expect the same performance from all.
6. Help children understand that although you may dislike some specific behavior, you do not disapprove of them as persons.
7. Ascertain a child's need for attention and recognition and meet them. Each individual needs a certain amount of attention and recognition, and when this need is met in a postive and friendly manner, the necessity for gaining attention in a negative way is greatly diminished or eliminated.[3]

[1] Marlin W. Schulz, "Past Future." Performing Our Patterns, #32, Board of Parish Education, St. Louis, Missouri.
[2] POPS' INK, Vol. 1, No. 5, Cumberland, Maryland, January 1986.
[3] William Mitchell, "From Generation to Generation." POPS' INK, Vol. 1, No. 5, January 1986, 3.

David Mannigel
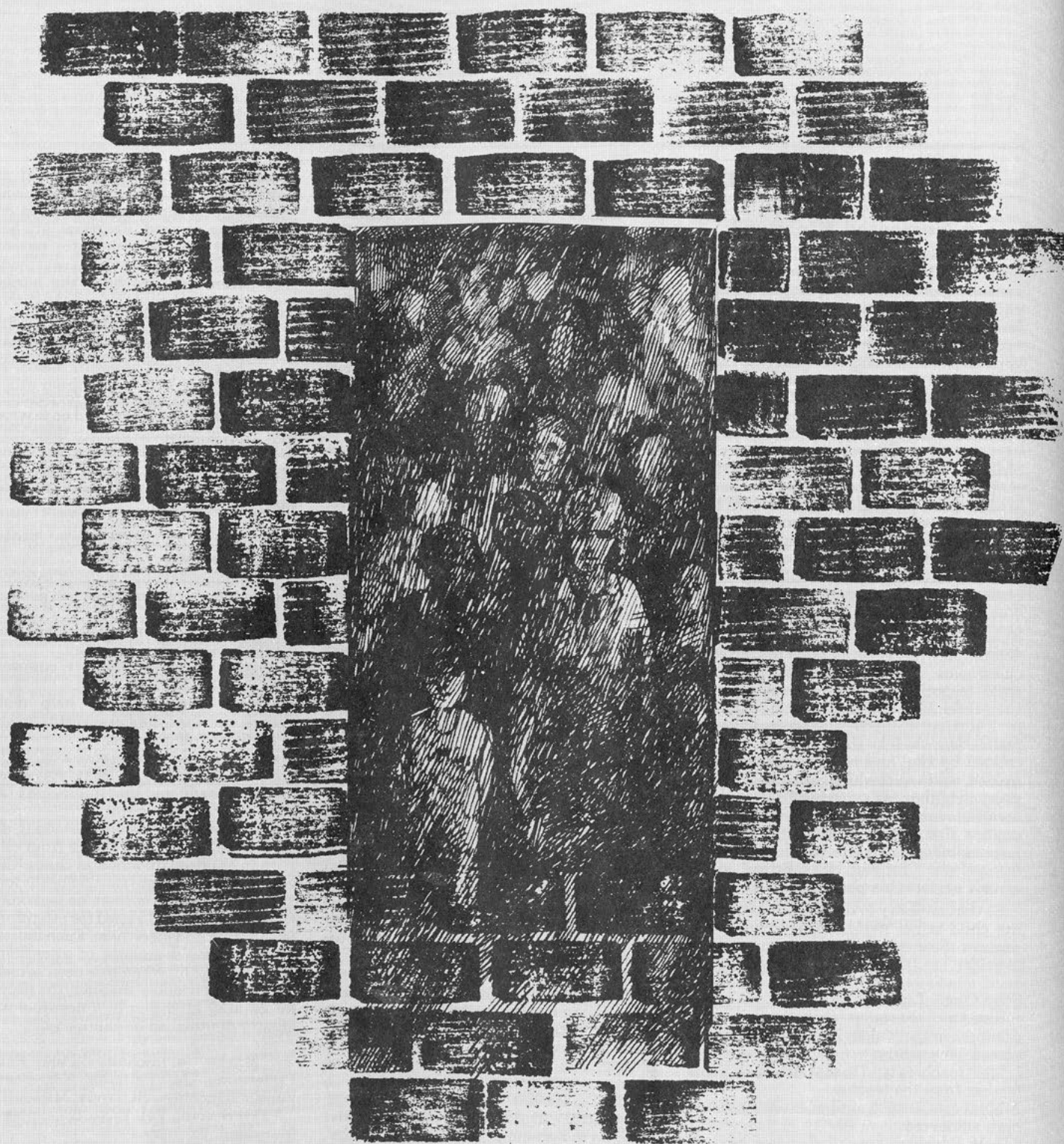
Why Should We Minister to Those Other People?

by David Schlie

A number of years ago I served a mission parish in the city of St. Louis. It was located in a large highrise housing project, near several other projects a short distance from downtown. The "projects," as they were called, abounded in crime, brokenness, dirt, disease, and helplessness. I remember traveling one day on Interstate 70 and looking down toward the "projects." The thought occurred to me, "Those projects are 'reservations'." Its inhabitants were really separated from the life of the city. One could live in the "projects" and never know the world on the outside. One could be a productive and responsible citizen of the community and be totally untouched by the plight of the people doomed to live in the "projects."

"Others" as a Life and Death Matter for Congregations

On one side of the "projects" stood a large old church. It had once served an ethnic group that had lived in the area, but whose members had long since moved away. The church was bounded on all sides by a huge brick wall. There was very little evidence of life behind the wall. The church was dying! The members had chosen isolation from the community and lived for themselves. But the church didn't live; it died! To protect itself, it had chosen to build a high wall which had only secured stagnation.

On the opposite side of the "projects" was another old church. It too had served an ethnic group which no longer lived in the area. But what a contrast to the church mentioned above! Could its location years ago have made a difference? The church building stood right by the sidewalk on a busy corner. It was, it seemed, meant to be accessible to every person who passed by. No fence, no wall! A school attached to the church seemed to issue the invitation, "Children wanted." **Imagine, in an area marked by dirt, broken windows, and broken street lights was a school with brightly decorated windows and the smiling faces of children. It was a bright spot in a dark brickscape!**

When I think of the "projects," the churches, and our little mission right in the middle of it all, the story Jesus once told of the rich man and poor Lazarus and its implication for our ministry today comes to mind. The rich man fared sumptuously every day while poor Lazarus was lying at his gate. Walls, fences, gates—all meant to keep some people out and to protect the people on the inside. For the church, it's a way of isolation and death. It is the opposite of the way of the cross which says, "Whoever would lose his life shall save it and whoever would save his life shall lose it." We want a mission that moves forward, not backward! So we take seriously the question, "Why should we minister to those 'other' people?"

Why Christians Should Minister to "Others"

A simple and most obvious answer to the above question is, "Our faith demands it." Anything short of a ministry to all people is a contraction of our faith. Our God is not a small local diety, neither is he a God of individual nations or races. Neither is he a God who shows partiality toward people because of their economic, social, or intellectual status.

We confess in Luther's explanation to the First Article, "I believe that God has made me and all creatures." The Psalms also are filled with words of praise acknowledging our God as Lord over all the lands and peoples. The Scriptures attest that God is God of the rich and poor, the great and the little. Since he is God over all, our ministry, like his, can therefore be no less than a ministry to all.

This ministry to all is rooted in God's comprehensive and all-inclusive plan for mankind. God in Christ saved the whole world. It is then the destiny of all creation and people who accept Jesus as Savior to share in this salvation and one day be gathered together before the throne of God, regardless of their social standing, race, or color. His love excludes no one. How then would we dare to build fences and walls to limit our ministry? Do we dare to compromise our faith by a narrow and restricted outreach? Certainly not!

We also believe that through the cross of Jesus all humanity becomes one by faith in Jesus and his death. The walls and barriers which sin brought into the human situation have been eliminated by Jesus' death. In him all people are now related. **There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for we are all one in Christ Jesus. Such a faith cannot be content with a church that is exclusive in its make-up and its outreach.** Our faith demands expression by an outreach to the "other" people.

Why Congregations Don't Minister to "Others"

Why is it then that the practice of our faith has not always agreed with our profession? Does our faith tend to become too much a matter of knowledge and not so much a matter of commitment? Do we pay lip service without personal acceptance of God's plan? To the extent that this is true, the outreach of God's people becomes narrow and protective, even exclusive, for the sin of unbelief prevents us from doing what we know we should. It is, therefore, necessary that this sin, which has always plagued God's people, be exposed. Holy Scriptures reveal that God's people have too often been a people who have excluded others.

God's prophets of old spoke against the dividing and scattering of the people. These prophets knew that God had saved his people so all could inherit the blessings of the land. They knew that God's covenant united the people with himself and also united the people with each other. The covenant was a bond to keep his people together and with him. But God's people practiced division and separation, for they drove the "other" people away from God. The prophet Ezekiel was not blind to the sin of his people.

Ezekiel, in chapter 34, accused the leaders (prophets, priests, and kings) of ruling unjustly and driving the "other" people away. The "other" people were the poor, the weak, the sick, the strayed, and the lost. The leaders had abused, misused, and finally diffused the "no-counts" or "other" people under their care. These turned to other gods and other peoples. Ezekiel indicated that the "in" group of God's people was no better than their leaders, for they, too, took advantage of the "other" people and caused their separation and scattering. Because of their narrow and exclusive concept of the covenant which they had broken, God's people were under judgment by God who cared about all these "other" people.

Ezekiel reveals how much God cared and to what extent he would go in order that the "others" might be found and fed. God would himself search for his sheep and gather them in the safety of his flock. God would feed them in green pastures and bind the crippled and carry the weak. This vivid and moving picture of God's concern and care for the "other" people was exemplified in the life of God.

Jesus' Ministry to Those Other People

One only has to turn to the book of Luke and see Ezekial 34 perfectly fulfilled. God's people of Jesus' day also had a hard time accepting, serving, and integrating the "other" people into their fellowship. Theirs was a closed flock with some rather high fences. Then Jesus appeared to break down the barriers. In Luke's Gospel, beginning with chapter 5, we are told how Jesus welcomes the sinner, Peter,

the outcast leper, the sinner paralytic, then the outcast publican, Levi. In chapter 6 the Evangelist tells how Jesus calls twelve non-credentialed commoners to be his disciples and then preaches a sermon about those who are the recipients of God's favor. They include the poor, the hungry, the sorrowing, and the persecuted. But Jesus reached even deeper down the social ladder as he ministers to a Gentile centurion, a widow, a sinful woman, a demoniac (Mary Magdalene), another demoniac from a non-Hebrew territory, and a woman with an issue of blood. These were the "other" people of Jesus' day.

That Jesus had a real purpose in ministering to the "other" people is evident also by his own proclamation. "The spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has annointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." Thus Jesus spoke as he began his ministry. "I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance," Jesus said on another occasion. "Go and do likewise," Jesus said after relating the story of the Good Samaritan. "I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents," Jesus explained while telling the stories of the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin, and the Lost Son.

What Ezekiel had seen in his day was no different from what Jesus saw in his day. The religious leaders resented the mission of Jesus. They complained when Jesus ate with sinners. A Pharisee (Simon) objected when Jesus responded positively to the sinful woman's attention. The scribes and Pharisees murmured because Jesus received sinners. Perhaps Jesus' story of the Rich Man and Poor Lazarus is a paradigm for the fence-building religious policies of the leaders of his day. Their policies were antiseptic in nature, keeping away from their ministry anyone who might be considered contaminated according to their standards. The sad truth was that, in their attempts at self-righteousness, they actually became sterile.

The Barriers to an "Others" Ministry

Breaking down the barriers and ministering to the "other" people in the spirit of Jesus had to be learned by the leaders of the early church also. The disciples had to learn by vision (Peter) and revelation (Peter and Cornelius) that God had accepted Gentiles (the unclean) even as he had accepted them. The church, in convention (Acts 15), heard the witness of the apostles and subsequently removed the barriers which kept the "other" people out. Throughout his ministry, Paul continually worked at tearing down the barriers between Jew and Gentile and freeing the

Gospel of the cross from man-made incumberances.

And the struggle to be a church for all peoples goes on. There is no reason to believe that the church of today has overcome the sin of unbelief in the power and plan of God to save all in Christ Jesus. Neither is there reason to believe it has overcome an exclusive spirit and a desire to serve only itself. The mission seems so overwhelming. The results of our ministries seem so meager. The temptations to withdraw and pull in, to seek self-preservation and economic well-being, are powerful. And yet the mission to reveal our universal God and his plan of universal salvation through Christ Jesus, his plan to unite all in Him, is as necessary today as ever, if we are to be true to the faith we profess. So the struggle to be in mission to those "other" people continues.

It is a struggle, for the walls and fences built by various cultures and races still exist. Even in a country which is a so-called melting pot, cultures which are totally different exist side by side in cities and neighborhoods. Life-styles, dress, habits, values, family structure, dialect, worship experiences, music, literature and countless other cultural expressions tend to divide us and make ministry to others more difficult. Racial barriers are as noticable today as ever, even though they may not be protected by law. Segregation in churches is more common than not. The voluntary integration of whites and blacks and other minorities in worship and social life has been slow in coming. It has often been easier, therefore, not to minister to those "other" people than to face the challenge it presents.

It is a struggle for other reasons as well. Social status and economic status can also create formidable walls and fences. Economics sometimes dictates policy regarding the mission to other people. Can we afford to serve the poor? Where will the mission be started? How much tuition must be charged of the "others"? Questions like these and many more will often be answered from an economic viewpoint rather than from a conviction of faith. In addition, differences of social and economic status have so much to do with ownership, that is, the feeling of belonging and the acceptance of responsibility in our institutions. These differences often spell acceptance or ostracism of the "other" people. Each fence and each wall brings with it a set of problems which make the struggle to be in mission very real.

But the reason the struggle must go is that the faith which burns within us asks, "How can we become God's instruments to carry out the ministry according to his plan?" Below are some ideas which may help. None are absolutely guaranteed to overcome all problems and bring heaven ahead of time. While the church may not be able to eliminate the differences which make some people "other," it can minister to the needs of all. It is the ministering

to felt needs and the acceptance of such sharing that can overcome our many barriers. May God help us minister!

Ideas for Making an "Others" Ministry Succeed

The first step in ministry is to discover the needs of "other" people. Perhaps the greatest need of an "other" person is to be made to feel welcome. The next time you go to any kind of a gathering where there are people you don't know, don't seek out a friend or an acquaintance with whom you can sit or talk. Seek out someone you don't know and become acquainted. We should seek out the "other" person and help him or her feel a sense of belonging. Members and leaders can begin this practice at all church and school functions. It may seem like a small step, but it will go a long way toward increasing consciousness of "other" people and begin an important ministry to them.

Visiting "other" people in their homes is a must. School teachers, Sunday School teachers, pastors, deacons, and neighbors would do well to make this a top priority in ministry to others. Home Bible studies are a part of this ministry as well. Use opportunities to visit "others" on their turf. It is less threatening to them than your turf. It creates a sense of importance. In an age of programmed activity where everyone fits in some kind of slot, it is often refreshing and warming to take time out to visit. It says you care.

Every opportunity for creating a sense of ownership on the part of the "other" person needs to be explored. The "other" needs to be responsible for something. That person needs to be part of the decision-making process. How often it happens that boards and committees are made up only of the experts and established people in the church! These people are then making policies and programs for the "other" people whom they do not know. Why not ask the "others" to increase understanding about themselves? Why not include the "other" people in the decision-making?

Various approaches to worship might also be considered. It does mean a great deal for the "other" person to hear a familiar song more in tune with his or her taste. The difficulty in following unfamiliar orders of worship and locating the parts of worship on various pages of the hymn book also tend to make "others" feel apart. Without destroying good traditions and eliminating cultural expression in worship, it is possible to be sensitive to the plight of the "others" who attend our services.

Activities of the church and school can emphasize family participation. Parent visitation days, parent classes at VBS or Sunday School can be a part of the offerings. Children's activities during Adult Bible
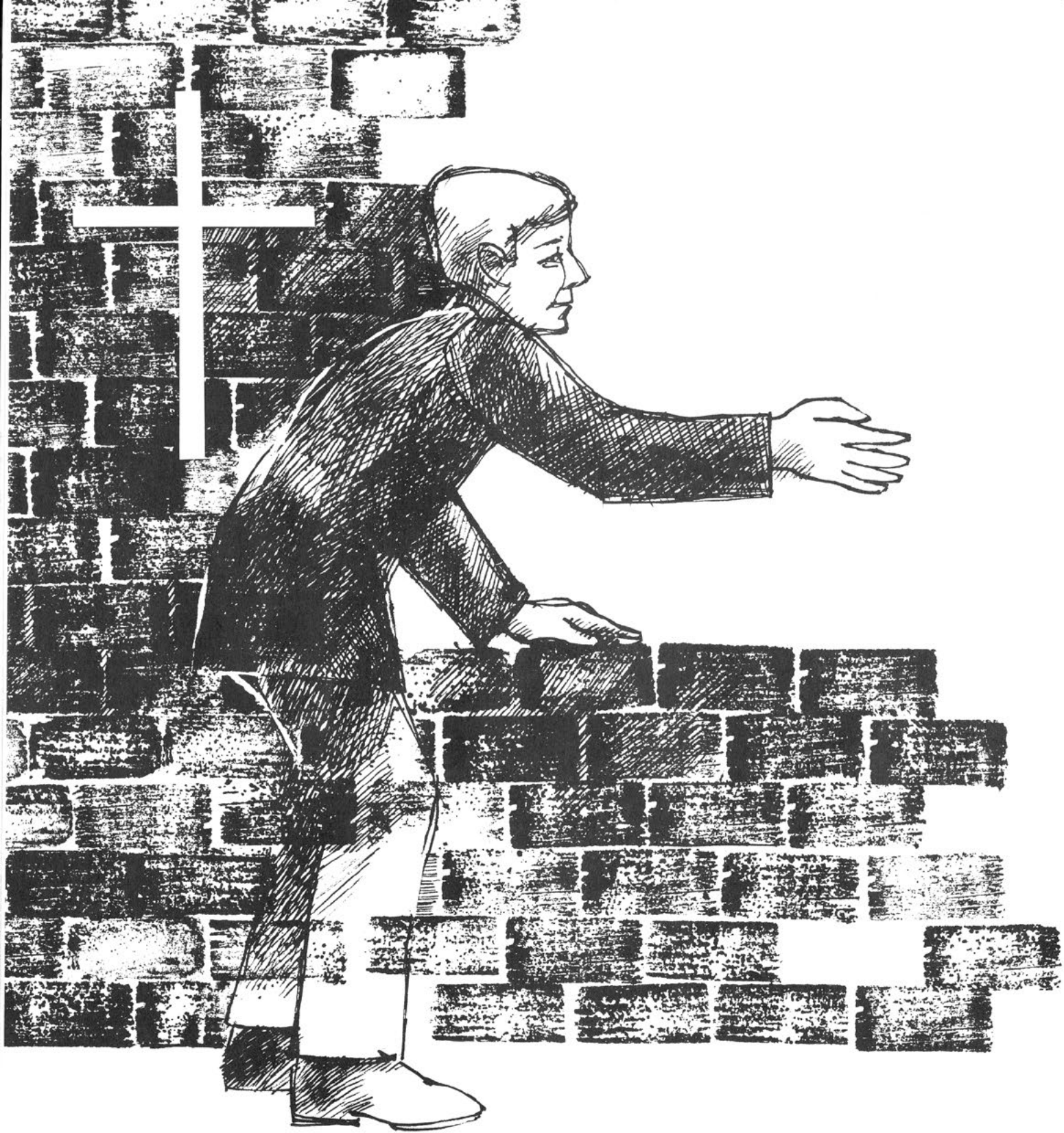
Missouri Synod Lutherans and Other Christians:

A NEGLECTED MINISTRY?

by Samuel H. Nafzger

Introduction

"Are we neglecting ministering to other Christians?" This is the topic which I have been asked to address in this article. It has been suggested that I attempt to provide some insight on such issues as why we in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod should be concerned about a ministry to other Christians in the first place? How can and should we relate, individually and collectively, to fellow Christians in other denominations? Are there examples of what Missouri Synod Lutherans can do at the local, district, and synodical levels to increase the vigor of a ministry to other Christians? What are some of the hindrances to such a ministry? What are some of the challenges?

While always a pertinent topic, this is an especially timely issue at the present moment. David B. Barrett's *World Christian Encyclopedia* reports that in 1980 there were 20,780 distinct Christian denominations in the world, 2,050 of which are to be found right here in the United States. Not only is there a growing number of church bodies and movements in existence today, but we are increasingly confronted by wide differences in theology and doctrine, not only between but also within denominations of the same name, a phenomenon which has led a contemporary theologian to refer to the present day as "an age of ambiguous denominationalism." Increased mobility in our society, the influence of radio and television preachers, and the high rate of interdenominational marriages are among the factors which serve to make the topic of "ministry to other Christians" a priority issue today.

If we are to provide any practical suggestions regarding how we can minister to other Christians, we ought to say a word about what we Missouri Synod Lutherans believe the Scriptures teach concerning the church and inter-Christian relationships. Only then will it be possible to take up the topic of "the neglected ministry" to other Christians.

I. The Spiritual Unity of the Church

The very first book in the Bible tells us that in the beginning God created the world and everything in it, and that everything which God created was good and was characterized by perfect peace and harmony. But the third chapter of Genesis tells us that God's good creation did not stay good—it fell into unbelief and sin. As a result, every thing and every relationship in this world is marred and out of kilter. Brother fights against sister; sickness, pain, and death cast a gloomy pall over our world. Society is scarred by division, hatred, and tragedy; the world of nature testifies to the curse of sin in the form of natural disasters, and even Christians themselves are rent asunder by division and hostility.

It is into this "darkness" which each of us knows all too well that the marvelous light of God's Gospel has shined (John 1:5; 1 Pet. 2:9). "When the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons" (Gal. 4:4). In opposition to all human logic, the Creator God Himself entered time and became a man so that He might become the Savior of the world.

Wherever this Good News is proclaimed today in Word and Sacrament, there God the Holy Spirit is powerful and active, working the miracle of faith in human hearts. And where there is faith in Jesus Christ, there is forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. St. Paul writes to the Galatians: "In Christ Jesus you are sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Gal. 3:26-27). The Spirit wrought faith in Christ Jesus, in other words, brings believers into spiritual unity with their God and Lord.

But the Scriptures teach that faith in Christ also unites believers with one another. The Apostle Paul refers to Christ as the "Head of the body, the church" (Col. 1:18), and he writes to the Romans: "We, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another" (Rom. 12:5). The New Testament uses a variety of images to emphasize that there is in reality only one church in heaven and on earth. Jesus Himself speaks of one shepherd and one fold (John 10:16), and he says: "I am the vine, you are the branches" (John 15:5). St. Paul tells the Galatians: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." (Gal. 3:28)

On the basis of such clear Scriptural passages as these, we members of the LCMS join together with Christians of all ages and from all over the world in confessing our faith in the words of the Nicene Creed (381 A.D.) that we "believe in one holy, Christian, and apostolic church." As the Lutheran Confessional writings make clear, this unity of the church is not something that results from human striving and negotiating. It is rather a unity produced by the Holy Spirit. It is a "true spiritual unity" (Apology VII and VIII, 31) which transcends space and time, binding together all believers wherever they may be in a relationship "which will be and remain forever" (AC VII, 1). Because this spiritual unity is a matter of faith in the heart, no

human eye can see it. But we can be certain, because of God's promise, that it truly exists and that wherever the Gospel of forgiveness of sins through the blood of Christ is preached and wherever the Sacraments are administered, there the Holy Spirit is at work binding human hearts to Christ and to one another. (Is. 55:11)

II. External Unity in the Church

Although the spiritual unity of the church is a present reality, external unity in the church most certainly is not. Sad to say, it never has been. Disagreements and divisions in the church are not unique to modern times, even though the splintering of the church into literally thousands of denominations is a relatively recent phenomenon.

Not even the early church in the years immediately following after Christ's resurrection and ascension was immune from the divisive nature of sin. Personality conflicts, immoral behavior, and false teachers all served to disturb and rend the external unity of the church. Paul and Barnabas got into a sharp argument over who should accompany them on their missionary journey (Acts 15:39). St. Paul was astonished that the Galatians so quickly after his departure from them had followed after those who "pervert the Gospel of Christ" (Gal. 1:6). And the Christians in Corinth, we are told, quarreled with one another in a party spirit, individual factions boasting of their allegiance to various leaders—Apollos, Cephas, and Christ.

The New Testament makes it clear that these divisions, forming a *skandalon* of offense to the world, are contrary to God's will. Significantly, in His High Priestly prayer on the night before His death, Jesus prays, "I do not pray for these only, but also for these who shall believe in me through their word, that they may be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me" (John 17:20-21). In his letter to the Ephesians the apostle Paul lays down a basic principle for Christians to follow in seeking to overcome divisions and separations in the church: "I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, . . . forebearing one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:1-3). With these words the apostle ties closely together the spiritual unity *of* the church and external unity *it* provides the church. The spiritual unity of the church provides the very motivation and foundation for Christians to seek external unity in the church. The unity created by the Spirit produces love, and love works toward bringing about visible, external unity among Christians. But genuine love will always seek to do this in such a way that the unity of the Spirit will be maintained and extended.

In accordance with this principle, the apostle Paul appeals to the factious, quarreling Christians in Corinth "by the name of our Lord Jesus, that all of you agree and that there be no dissensions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment" (1 Cor. 1:10). External unity in the church is divinely mandated. Division in Christendom is an offense. Christ wants the members of His Body to show themselves to be what they in reality already are — one in Him.

At the same time, the apostle Paul recognizes that in some situations Christians, if they are to manifest true Christian love for their brothers and sisters in Christ, may have to warn and rebuke each other, at times separate themselves from one another, and in extreme cases exercise the final steps of removal. At one point, St. Paul found it necessary to oppose the apostle Peter "to his face, because he stood condemned" (Gal. 2:11). Where there is disagreement in the teaching of the Gospel, Paul exhorts Christians in Rome: "I appeal to you, brethren, to take note of those who create dissensions and difficulties, in opposition to the doctrine which you have been taught; avoid them" (Rom. 16:17). He uses even stronger language against the false teachers in Galatia: "As we have said before, so now I say again, If any one is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed" (Gal. 1:9). And the apostle encourages the congregation in Corinth to exclude from its midst an impenitent sinner "that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" (1 Cor. 5:5), even though such an action be accompanied "with many tears" (2 Cor. 2:4). The apostle poignantly sets the tone for all such acts of concern for fellow members of the Body of Christ in his letter to the Thessalonians: "If anyone refuses to obey what we say in this letter, note that man, and have nothing to do with him, that he may be ashamed. Do not look on him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother" (2 Thess. 3:14-15).

III. The Ministry of the Missouri Synod to Other Christian Churches

It is to this understanding of the spiritual unity of the church and external unity in the church, which has been sketched out above, that the LCMS seeks to be faithful as it formally relates as a church body to other Christian churches. On the one hand, Missouri Synod Lutherans teach that there is only one Christian church on earth: "There is only *one* holy Christian Church on earth, the Head of which is Christ and which is gathered, preserved, and governed by Christ through the Gospel." This church is "to be found not only in those external communions which teach the Word of God purely in every part, but also where, along with error, so much of the Word of God still remains that men may be brought to the knowledge of their sins and to faith in the forgiveness of sins, which Christ has gained for all men" *(Brief Statement,* pp. 11-13). The Missouri Synod not only confesses the unity of the one church, but it also seeks to manifest this unity externally. It therefore states in its constitution that its first purpose or objective as a church body is to "conserve and promote the unity of the true faith (Eph. 4:3-6; 1 Cor. 1:10), work through its official structure toward fellowship with other Christian church bodies, and provide a united defense against schism, sectarianism (Rom. 16:17), and heresy" (LCMS *Handbook,* 1983, p. 11). In accordance with this objective the LCMS is officially involved in doctrinal talks at the present time with representatives from Roman Catholic, Episcopalian, Methodist, and Orthodox churches.

At the same time, the LCMS seeks to take with equal seriousness that which the Scriptures teach about the importance of manifesting unity in Christ in such a way that the means by which this unity comes into existence is not compromised or undermined in any way. The constitution of the LCMS therefore lists as the first two conditions for acquiring and holding membership in the Synod:

1. Acceptance of the confessional basis of Article II [namely, "The Scriptures of the Old and New Testament as the written Word of God and the only rule and norm of faith and practice; 2. All the Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church as a true and unadulterated statement and exposition of the Word of God. . ."]
2. Renunciation of unionism and syncretism of every description, such as:
a. Serving congregations of mixed confession, as such, by ministers of the church;
b. Taking part in the services and sacramental rites of heterodox congregations or of congregations of mixed confession;
c. Participating in heterodox tract and missionary activities. (LCMS *Handbook,* 1983, p. 13).

These words mean that when they join the Synod, pastors, teachers, and congregations, because of what they hold the Scriptures to teach concerning the church and its unity, make certain commitments to their fellow members about how they will carry out their corporate ministry to other Christians. In other words, we in the Missouri Synod make a covenant of love with our fellow members of the Synod that we will actively seek a common confession of the Gospel of Jesus Christ with other Christian churches so that we may manifest for all the world to see in our pulpits and at our altars our unity with them in the Body of Christ.

But these words also mean that we members of Synod make a covenant of love with one another, because of our desire to be faithful to all those Scriptural exhortations to be faithful to the pure Gospel of Jesus Christ, that we will refrain from participating in joint public worship services with pastors and congregations of church bodies not in altar and pulpit fellowship with our church. We do this so that we may give a common witness to the defense of the pure confession of the Gospel of Jesus Christ as it is taught in the Scriptures and in the Lutheran Confessions, not because we believe that only we are Christians or out of any self-righteous feelings of superiority.

To be sure, it is always necessary for us to be prepared to ask ourselves, as the LCMS is currently doing through its assignment to the Commission on Theology and Church Relations to prepare "Guidelines for Inter-Christian Relationships" (1983 Res. 3-03), whether the renunciation of all participation in joint public worship services with churches in doctrinal disagreement with our church is the only or best way to apply what the Scriptures teach about the unity of the church and its external manifestation. Questions we cannot avoid asking ourselves, today, for example, are whether this way of proceeding adequately recognizes and provides for opportunities to give expression to a variety of levels of agreement in the confession of the Gospel, and whether our refusal to participate in all joint public worship is actually perceived by other Christians as a genuine witness to our concern for the truth or whether they regard it as a sign of separatism.

These are difficult and complex questions for which there are no easy and simple answers. They are made even more difficult by the fact that we live in a time when all truth claims are so easily relativized, when strong voices even from within Lutheran circles are calling for a "reconciled diversity" approach to church unity which appears to be nothing more than an agreement to disagree about matters which lie at the very heart of the truths of the Gospel. At a time like this, when nothing less than the very viability of confessional Lutheranism is at stake, we recall the stirring words of Martin Franzemann:

Such then is the unity we seek. And we do seek unity. If we have remained aloof from ecumenical aggregation, it is because we have not seen in them any real and divinely given opportunity for the advancement of real unity, and not because we have sought to hide our light under a bushel. . . We seek this unity in meekness, . . . We have sought to keep ourselves free of arrogance, of doctrinaire cocksureness, and of sectarian bigotry. We are deeply conscious of the fact that we hold this standard aloft with most frail arms and strive to hold it even more firmly, in the certitude of faith and with a sense of eschatological responsibility. *(CTM,* 1937, p. 809).

Dr. Franzemann concludes with these words which beautifully describe the spirit of our Synod's ministry to other Christians at its best: "We take no particular pleasure in the role of His majesty's loyal opposition which current ecclesiastical history seems to have thrust upon us; and we would assure
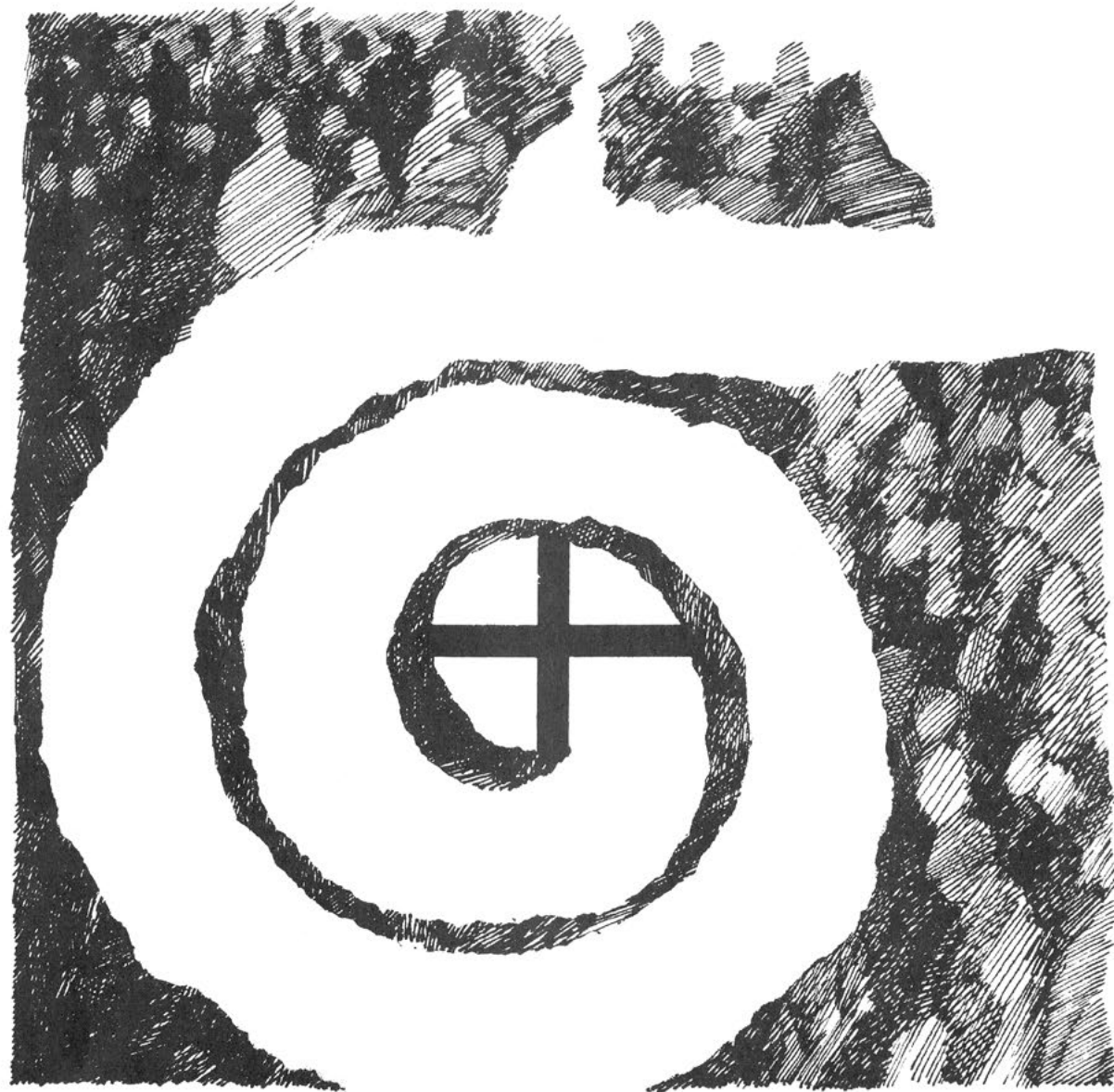
MOVING CHRISTIAN EDUCATION
FROM NEGLECT OF MINISTRY TOWARD VISION

by Richard C. Zwick

Practicing Christian education is an established tradition in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and has been firmly institutionalized over the past 140 years. Given the nature of institutions, we can understand that there is wisdom in re-definition and review. Time has a way of dulling the vitality of our most noble intentions and reducing our actions to mechanical routine, simply "going through the motions." Even those of us who practice professional Christian education need to be reminded of basic issues even though we are supposed to be abundantly informed. In this essay my intentions are to offer a personal view on several basic issues which relate to practicing valid Christian education in a society that seeks to pull us down every which way. Perhaps, reminders about meaning will help us remember that building people in the Body of Christ is the noble business of Christian education.

The term "Christian Education" makes us think about the several educational agencies which churches establish and support to offer children and youth religious training. If a church body supports schools in one form or the other, we are led to assume that such a church "has" Christian education. But the mechanics of Christian education do not assure us that we "have" Christian education. Running day schools, Sunday schools, high schools, and even colleges does not assure us that we are dutifully remembering educational ministries among ourselves the way we should.

Putting Believing into Educational Doing

In the first place we may define the act— "educational ministry"—as inculcating the Christian faith into the minds and hearts of living people from early children through old age. To educate, to pull human beings along from beginning to end, requires the steady application of the Great Commission to every learner's level—infancy, childhood, youth, adulthood and old age. If professional Christian education forgets one of those groups, it is forgetting too much. To get at the dynamic of teaching all people, bringing the essential message of the Christian faith and its concomitants into the

lives of learners, demands an understanding of what the message is and how that message becomes an integral part of thoroughgoing human existence in the world.

Christian faith and the means of delivery have at center a movement toward active unity. Bible, church, faith, academic learning and Christian moral living are essential threads of one fabric. Educational movement spirals toward unity, not fragmentation. This movement is a complex process, requiring an informed understanding of the nature of Christian faith and its power to promote a cohesive love among us. Teachers working in Christian educational agencies seek to pass Christian faith and culture on to learners according to their needs of mind and spirit. Indeed, this awesome task of responsible teaching demands a firm intellectual, emotional, and spiritual grasp of the message's magnitude and magnificence.

Right educational action is based on God's forgiveness. Mind and conscience, sharpened by the Gospel—we love God because He first loved us in Christ Jesus—urge teaching ministers toward informed compassion as they lead students into Christian understanding for living creative and productive lives. So if we begin with God's loving forgiveness, it follows that the right thing for the Christian educator to do is to love learners; conversely, the cardinal failure is not to love learners. The great virtue of Christian teachers, then, is to approach learners lovingly when teaching them mathematics or English or science or religion or whatever. No learning is significant if teachers neglect to apply Christian faith and love as a value which infuses all study with meaning for students through early age to old age, allowing them creative response to Christian perspectives in their lives.

Establishing Christian education in congregations and churches can turn out to be unduly simple and misleading because means become confused with results, existence with action, tree with fruit, and principles of Christ's actions are emphasized to the neglect of Christ's presence in relation to the heart. An active, growing faith can be falsified by reducing it to a set of religious rules, a secure, predictable morality. The peculiar nature of a dynamic Christian morality in an active Christian faith set within the grace of God in all kinds of

classrooms, obligates Christian teachers not merely to follow rules, to obey laws, and to do Christian deeds, but also to love and serve their fellows, and to expand themselves in loyalty to God's love in Christ for every learner.

A key word in what is to be taught is "reconciliation." As God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, individuals in community through the love of Christ continuously become actively reconciled to one another. During the process of learning, Christian people find out that there are times when they must renounce a given principle and embrace another to enhance and to accommodate the circumstances of neighboring according to the love which is in Christ Jesus. Teaching the Christian faith implies connection with God in Jesus Christ and with fellow human beings. In a word, we have a friend in Jesus and in each other. The reconciled environment produces a supportive learning community which promotes academic and religious Christian growth.

All teaching on all levels should reside within a loving frame of reference because in these circumstances everyone is free and dignified, whether the learner accepts the teaching or not. Christian educational agencies that get results cannot be founded upon a recitation of ready-made phrases such as pious cliches ("We educate for eternity") and traditional abstractions ("LC-MS is a sleeping giant"). In the same way it is too easy, besides misleading, to offer doctrinaire solutions: "DON'T do this or that; DO this or that." The reality of the matter is that Christianity exists (and survives) among human beings who are an admixture of doing good and bad, living in a tapestry of gray.

Growing among Confusion

People grow up in the United States today subjected to many diverse pressures and "come-ons" which addle perception and confuse behavioral choices. Sex, for example, is used to sell almost everything except the meaning of sex. Material value is awash with sex. Yet a young person who indulges in sex outside the written or unwritten rules is severely penalized. An American literary artist, Theodore Dreiser, dramatized this horrific dilemma in his cynical novel, *An American Tragedy*. Clyde Griffiths, the hero of this novel, was taught that wealth shrewdly accumulated, debonair sexual conquest, and finding an economically advantageous mate, assure the macho male hero of American success. Clyde set about doing that and did it well. Yet society convicted him by the very rules he was taught to live by and killed him in the electric chair.

To get to the heart of all Christian commands, we simply say: "Thou shalt love." And to make that astounding maxim stick, we have the promise within

the Gospel: "Thou art forgiven." A conscience sensitized by the message of a loving and forgiving Gospel is capable of openness, of capacity to feel, of power and responsibility to act. In the process of Christian education, the principles of loyalty, of individuality, and of honesty become relatively more important than those of a particular kind of fact-telling based on a tradition of lawgiving which can easily become the tenuous basis of a Christian educational philosophy. Rather, the issue is making and nurturing disciples.

Teaching an exclusive Gospel, an egocentric desire for salvation, blinds to the needs of others. Educational institutions must fear the burden of a fixed and brittle interpretation which traditions have given to teaching Faith and Morality. The long established institution becomes so enamoured of self-perpetuation that the individual learner within is sacrificed to preserve the abstractions which keep things not "just as they used to be, but just as they ought to be." Churches, schools, Christian instructional gatherings must continually apply Christian principles according to the real life needs of human beings who populate those institutions (e.g., churches would do well to consider the importance of their helping to supply a family framework for the single parent child). Penultimately, Christian teachers view the whole world as their classroom (Heaven is, of course, the consummate classroom).

Acquiring a personal, Christianized integrity and a meaningful individual identity is often impeded by the truth that Christ's suffering and death and resurrection stand as a sure hope of salvation completely accomplished for us (which, indeed, it has been!) The expedient rationalization goes like this: "Since God in Christ has done it all, we seize our way out of honest Christian sweating and shirk the responsibility of living an industrious Christian life which requires hard work tempered with love." That attitude is understandable if the virtue of not doing— not skipping church, not smoking, not drinking, not gossiping—becomes more important than love, compassion, and courage. Many of the things we learn come from traditional precedent; hence, receiving culture in a Christian context can seem archaic, brittle, and repressive. Often children and youth live their lives only according to an ethic acquired, so to speak, with their mother's milk. There is nothing wrong with a value system of tradition except that its recipients are often unable to personalize inherited value before it is internalized. Necessary here are informed Christian teachers who know that "Truth makes free," and guide the learner's internalization process by the light of the Gospel. Failing to personalize the Christian education process is pseudo education which does not take into account the unique temperaments of individual learners.

That is to say: educate people to love consciously, and not live by imported norms altogether. But instead, guide them toward working and striving to learn things according to their own insight, so that an educationally maturing person may bring an individually perceived life into an enlightened relationship with the realistic feelings of existence. When that happens—a lack of harmony between motive and deed, idea and tangible shape, expectation and experience, the believed and the known—diverse ideas tend to become tolerable and useful to the Christian experience. At such a stage, old motives may be relinquished or kept and new motives added.

The task of Christian educators must be to help learners find a new way to exist in their lives according to the Christian idea of faith. Finally, there is nothing left for teachers and learners to do but bring everything that they do into harmony with what is believed to be the nature of a whole Christian existence (Gerhard Szczesny, *The Future Unbelief*, trans. Edward B. Gorside, New York: George Braziller, 1961, p. 79). In sum, Christian education helps people discriminate within the received image of Christian faith and to discover a Christian existence that guides honest participation in real life experiences and imparts useful power and light within that participation.

Making It Work in a New Testament Age

"If anyone is in Christ, that person is a new creation; the old has passed away; behold the new has come. Therefore, whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave to all" (II Cor. 5:17 and Mark 10:44). The implications of the New Testament imperative are severely humbling to every kind of Christian professional: If one fails to love, that person fails as a redeemed human being. If one fails in everything else, and succeeds only in loving self and others, that person is a successful human being.

Christian education in our age must implant the memory of faith into learners through the Word of God. To bring the secret of redemption from past to present requires the memory of faith. The Calvary event remembered from the past becomes the power of God's grace in the Christian life of the present. Education in matters of faith and life comes to human intellect and feeling through symbolic processes—language, the Word and sacraments. Communication, of course, depends upon a symbolic system appropriate to the context in which messages are delivered. Professional educators, when they think about it, realize that factual memory merely describes the past, but symbolic memory brings past to present through dramatic expression. Said directly, a symbolic and dramatic communication of

Christian Faith binds the remembrance of Calvary to actual Christian living: i.e., "Showing one's faith by one's works" (James 2:18). It bears repeating: our affirmed Focus of concrete meaning is always, totally, and faithfully Jesus Christ.

Fitting into the Faith

The Christian faith is, for the most part, an unharmonious part of western culture. The irony, here, is that while western culture was animated and shaped by Christianity it has never thoroughly integrated with it. A Christian perspective in education is finally the only reliable ingredient which binds culture together, making it purposeful and whole. In a so-called Christian nation, Christian faith and education should be obvious, but neither is. Accordingly, a Christian teacher's role is to inject Christian substance into culture for the people who exist in that culture—here's the list again: early childhood; elementary school children; high school youth; college students; adults of all ages. For all people on all educational levels, ministry in Christian education requires that our church agencies as New Testament institutions open eyes and educate people to see and assimilate the truth: their potential in life is recovering the true meaning of awe in the presence of the gracious God who first loved them: "In Jesus Christ, O God, how great Thou art." Each, remember, is individually redeemed.

Christian education falls seriously short if it does not guide people toward free and responsible living in the present. No matter what age level, people must not live their lives waiting to live their lives. Living in a kind of 'pre-reality' not only avoids responsible living but negates a productive life. Again, if learners are to live productive and free Christian lives, a genuine teacher, physically present, is necessary to pull people along, nurturing them to get into the thick of immediate living and learning. A personal faith joins believers to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and involves them in the universal human condition, fashioning union with Christ and communion with all Christians. To renew faith requires a dramatic teaching of Christ's atonement by integrating it into every educational exercise. Christian educators, by teaching the faith, show people how to get involved in the human condition and how to carry out the Great Commission through vocation and profession. Here, too, they go beyond the symbols of doctrine and the institutional human spirit with the Power of God's Grace. Christian education, finally, is an intensely personal matter.

Since the New Testament defines Christ by what He does, so a Christian's contribution to society is expressed through loving acts. A mere "vale of tears" Christian will not do. Faith must turn into action in schools, on the land, in the factory, in all Godly

vocations. The great drama is that, in Christ, God spoke and lived the perfect life of love—love of unmitigated generosity and self-giving, a valuable lesson in building communities which spring from faith.

Seeing Things Steady and Whole

Christian education seeks to discover the wholeness of existence. Faith and Love affirm the living presence of Christ in any classroom, declaring where Christian teachers stand. They remember that in the Christian faith human love becomes a response, not an independent activity of itself. Christians cannot, of course, love by their own volition: "We love because He first loved us" (I John 4:19). To be sure, God has set us to live in love; therefore, what Christians learn to do may well move people to acclaim: "Behold! see how they love one another." Acts of Christian love applied to human need inform a Christian education which contends that active love must pervade experience in the human community: "Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things" (I Cor. 13:7).

The modern human community is anything but whole. Prevalent themes of sensitive literary expression portray lonely people in isolation, struggling to find a niche in the chaos that grinds about them. They live within themselves and for themselves. The social violence which human beings work upon one another and the uncommunicative nature of the little openness that does exist explain, in part, communal members' refusing to talk openly with each other. Debiliating disorder in a society compels Christian faith and life practiced between parent-child or teacher-child as an imitation of God's free creative love. Growing children and adults need both order and substance to realize their potential as Christian persons alive in the world. It is no surprise that single parents regard Christian child-care centers and early childhood schools as partial fulfillment of their parental responsibility. Many early childhood teachers serve magnificently as surrogate fathers and mothers. Such schools help to keep the family functioning while enlarging a child's maturing perception of living lives of lawful love from the parent-child environment to the larger community.

The pay off of Christian education is that learners, no matter their age, find a new understanding of themselves as judged and forgiven. All academic disciplines notwithstanding, a liberating Christian education for the faithful-in-community pivots on the Christian hope and freedom in life and beyond all the steady power of God's grace—the essential integration for all learning from beginning to end. A well-educated faith always moves into action, using the tools at hand. Christian educators lead learners (remember, all ages) to perform Godly vocations with all their might, made strong by God's powerful grace and an informed intelligence. Every Christian calling becomes valid because workers are able to do things through Christ who strengthens them. Christian education must finally affect each heart of a Godly community.

Christian Teachers in a Technological Society

Christian teachers have always been involved in transferring and translating messages. Now that task has become formidable to the point of discouragement. In addition, a large majority of the work force these days is performing some kind of communication task, garbling messages even more. For a long time, we have been imbued with the well-known McCluhanism: "The media is the message." This concept unconsciously and radically animates our way of life. Media bomb our senses, infiltrate our beings, and interpret for us our reason for living. The sheer bulk of media messages makes it difficult for us to hear the true melody of the Christian teacher's expressing "the still small voice" of hope and love.

Most certainly, media technology is not intrinsically evil or good, but the wonder of it so dazzles the human user that the magic of its workings, sometimes a substitute for thought, can slickly cloud true ethical meaning and kernels of wisdom buried in essences. A Christian teacher's primary message at all age levels is the Gospel—Jesus Christ, God's Son, is our Savior—which gives reason and purpose for all other useful information. Unfortunately, the mesmerizing effect of media technology can often, without teachers realizing it, dilute and often conceal the pure Gospel message. Christian teachers remember that "in the beginning was the Word"; thus they cannot but "speak of all the things (regarding Jesus Christ) which they have heard and seen." Messages delivered by voices which physically confront the hearer-learner, have the best chance of conveying essences. Television, for example, previously an entertainment medium in people's minds, often mixes means with essence. An entertainment-like machine can filter out crystals of meaning which negate a thoughtful educational experience. Living, breathing teachers must sort out the technological mix-up of media-message, especially those classroom "game-playing appliances" (amoral though they may be) which can become tools to aid learning or an entertaining substitute for genuine thought.

The computer, for example, has enabled us to accumulate enormous collections of information. A danger here is that vast quantity misleads one to believe that sheer bulk assures wisdom. This process generates the trivial pursuit syndrome, duping students into mistaking mere fact for real learning.

Rather, genuine learning engages the dignity and nobility of a God-given intelligence enabling human beings to reason and think. Educated Christian people must be willing to wade into a morass of chaotic messages, but have a spark within them that craves lucid meaning for living. Genuine Christian teachers become that presence which supplies to learners messages of Christian value in all useful study.

Essential in this regard is that teachers must be alive and talking, guiding and helping, as they deliver vital Christian messages applied to all parts of living day by day. Issuing information from an informed brain requires the firm voices of educated Christian teachers, imbued with bright crystals of wisdom shaped into meaning, so that all—from precious little children to venerable elders—see things steady and see things made whole in Jesus Christ. The best Christian schools have the best teachers, namely, people who understand and communicate that the Christian ethos unifies culture and makes it meaningful.

Among the confusion of message overkill and myriad meanings, a worthy educator must be able to help learners sort out essential threads of meaning. From these threads, children and adults may weave a useful costume which becomes the proper dress for living among the ruins of informational anarchy. We can't learn everything, but we must learn something which helps us fashion a reasonable, sensible existence. Christian education is pulling people out of chaos into a state of seeing connections. We are living in a world which has regressed through future shock to past shock to no shock. The teacher—the mature intellect, the passer of Christian culture—strives to furnish students with components of ultimate meaning. Educating for the sane, productive life becomes a penultimate goal of teachers who pass to others compassionate Christian learning. At whatever level, Chrisian educators are to maximize among their students Christ's redeeming work.

Teachers physically present in the class, not mere technological gadgets, become the necessary means which guide learners into an examined Christian life. Leading people into the "examined life," the redeemed life, is the principal function of Christian teachers. I submit: when Christian teachers teach they write poems, making them valid arbiters of Christian culture. A sensitive poet-teacher pulls together strands of meaning and helps learners shape that unraveling into an understandable tapestry which grows into a meaningful part of the omnipotent God's cosmic design in Jesus Christ. Teachers begin poems; informed, God-fearing students finish their poems from within. Human fulfillment in the Christian faith is a *becoming,* a gradual moving toward understanding and control-ling one's own meaning in society. The call here is for a spiritual/cultural education which will counteract the monied-technology and toys which accelerate the disaffection of the young and crystalize the cynicism of the old. By communicating the Christian sense and reason for being, teachers give learners more than a temporary stay against chaos; they give learners a permanent significance in life until eternity.

The process of Christian education and teaching seeks to recover authentic love, comprehensive and pro-active. Christian religious practice must never become departmentalized through the educating process; rather, learning the Christian love of true faith extends to all areas of godly subject matter, both practical and theoretical, applied to the reality of the human situation. *Bon now.* Together, Christian teachers and learners are questing for Holiness, Fellowmen, Faith, and Love. Let us strive to teach and learn together so that we sincerely prefer Plato over "Playboy," Beethoven over the Beatles, and Jesus, the Savior, over Springsteen. Christian education, binding our lives together by Christian faith and love, makes our going a bearable delight and our destination joyful.

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These three books treat areas of religious philosophy which can readily be applied to the practice of Christian Education. They helped me see things a bit more steady and whole.

Boozer, Jack, and Beardslee, William A. *Faith to Act.* Abingdon Press, 1967.
This book searches for and speaks to the point of juncture between believing and doing, seeking to explore the roots and resources of valid Christian behavior in society. Ideas in *Faith to Act* offer strong applications to Christian education.

Cave, Sydney. *The Christian Way.* Philosophical Library, Inc., 1949.
Among Christian churches no real consensus of opinion exists regarding method or content of Christian Ethics. Christians are divided in regard to the application of Jesus' teaching to the social and political problems of our age. This book is an attempt to give several answers to the question, "What is the significance of the Teaching of Jesus, and how is it to be related to our modern situation?"

Wynn, J.C. *Christian Education for Liberation.* Abingdon Press, 1977.
Christian education is defined as the church's enterprise in teaching persons about God in Christ and His invitation to join in His mission of reconciliation. The objective of this book is to understand how the educational ministry of the churches influences persons toward commitment and action.

GIFTED FOR GROWTH: AN IMPLE—MENTATION GUIDE FOR MOBILIZING THE LAITY, by Kent R. Hunter. Corunna, IN: Church Growth Center, 1985 (Revised).

Gifted for Growth is a workbook on spiritual gifts which can be used as a self-study or in small groups within the congregation. It is meant as a follow-up for those who have attended the "I'm Special" spiritual gifts workshop conducted by the Church Growth Center. Hunter indicates that, after such a workshop, participants often ask, "What do we do now?" or "Where do we go from here?" This workbook is intended to address such questions.

Hunter makes no effort to discriminate regarding which gifts are to be studied. The spiritual gifts discussed by St. Paul in Romans 12, I Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4 are all set forth without apology. Nevertheless, Hunter is very sensitive to the many reactions to spiritual gifts, or associations made in regard to *charismata*, in the church today, as well as the history, traditions and doctrines of churches. His approach is evangelical and not legalistic. He seems to appreciate the fact that total uniformity in ecclesiastical perceptions and practice is not necessary. He acknowledges that what is right for one church may not always be right for another. One should not hesitate, however, to come boldly to the Word of God and explore *all of God's riches*.

The workbook is easy to read, uncluttered and well organized. It presents an overview on discovering, developing and using one's spiritual gift(s). This is followed by a detailed Bible study on the various gifts mentioned by St. Paul. There is also that important provision made for receiving feedback from other members of the Body of Christ. Another section of the workbook is devoted to assisting an individual to come to deeper insight as to the manner that one's spiritual gift(s) relates personally to oneself. The last section of the text moves the study and thinking process to the larger whole, the congregation, for, as Hunter indicated repeatedly, ". . . gifts are given for use within the context of the body." The appendix contains cards that may be filled out and given to the pastor for his file and to the spiritual gifts committee for its file. A helpful, selected bibliography on spiritual gifts concludes the text. Noting the variety of publishers and authors cited, one seems safe in concluding that a reader may gain a variety of viewpoints (perhaps a plethora) on spiritual gifts from reading such references.

Overall, the workbook is well done. It is to be commended as an aid in the spiritual growth of the Christian and the Christian community.

Paul Vasconcellos

GROWING A HEALTHY FAMILY, by Jim Larson. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1986.

Add this book to the growing list of works which address the subject of Family Enrichment. Akin to the Marriage Enrichment movement which operates with the philosophy of "improving good marriages," Family Enrichment addresses the needs of healthy families which want to increase their effectiveness in providing and fostering growth in the family members as well as building a strong family unit. Larson's book is a helpful addition to this movement, especially since it represents insights gleaned from practice as a marriage and family specialist.

The book is divided into three parts, the first of which focuses the study clearly on understanding what constitutes a "healthy family." Since families operate under considerable stress, they must intentionally grow to survive and to be healthy. The growth model is to build on family strengths, to enhance family wellness and to identify the areas of relatedness which need some improvement. A definition of a healthy family was achieved, Maslow style, by studying successful families and identifying their strengths. Using current research, Larson identifies six major characteristics of healthy families: commitment, time, appreciation, communication, conflict resolution, and faith.

Part two of the book discusses these six major characteristics and offers suggestions for work in each area. This is the meat of Larson's work. In discussing commitment, the marriage rite is cited as the basis for the question why there is no similar rite for parents to commit themselves unconditionally and uncircumstantially to love and support their children. Filling this void would set the foundation for a healthy family. Having time for each other, being affectionate, and expressiong appreciation for one another ("Affirmation Bombardments") are also essential ingredients for family wellness, along with the quality of "becoming lovable," i.e., able to accept appreciation from others. Communication and conflict resolution are also considered in this book, with concrete steps laid out for assessment and for improvement of these characteristics in the family.

The one major disappointment in this text is the discussion of the role of faith in the family's system. It is laudable that this characteristic is included, but the discussion does not fulfill the promise of the book's subtitle: "How to Be Christian Parents In a Stress-Filled Time." There is nothing distinctively Christian mentioned, except the author's stated commitment to "the historic beliefs of the Christian faith as found in the teachings of the Scriptures." Readers need to add Christian specifics to this discussion of faith.

The final section of the book offers suggestions and guidance for families which are stuck and find themselves disintegrating. Although we need to be very careful, most of this section reinforces the theme that healthy families don't just happen. Family health and wellness is an intentional decision by such families, and they use all the available resources to reach their goals. They work at overcoming dysfunctional patterns, learning new ways of relating and growing together.

This book can be very helpful especially since it is popularly written without use of the technical terms. The many exercises which conclude each chapter also contribute to the value and usefulness of the volume.

I recommend this text as a study guide for family and parenting classes; however, refraining from wide indiscriminate distribution is advised because of the need to supplement the discussion on faith as noted above. This can be achieved in a more structural setting.

Richard Pflieger

RENEWING THE SUNDAY SCHOOL AND THE CCD*, by D. Campbell Wyckoff, ed. Religious Education Press, 1986.

Based on historical, empirical, and futuristic studies, this volume surveys the status and role of the Sunday school in mainline Protestant churches, the Roman Catholic church, the black community, evangelistic churches, and the armed forces. The purpose of the paperback is to assist in the reform and development of the Sunday school.

Historical surveys of the origin and development of the Sunday school revealed ambiguity in the basic purpose of this agency. While some have seen its key role as being evangelistic and conversional, others have emphasized the role of nurture and fellowship. The Sunday school also has been seen as the primary church agency for teaching the Bible, learning the history of the church, exploring the doctrines of the Christian faith, and learning to interpret the Bible. A historical perspective documents that the early leaders of the Sunday school never intended this agency to carry the total task of Christian education, but that it was to be complemented by worship, preaching, church fellowship, Bible classes, and other agencies of church education, including day schools and part-time agencies such as the mid-week school.

Though empirical research related to the Sunday school is limited in scope, the research that is cited provided considerable insight. For example, in a survey of 33 denominations, ten denominations reported a percentage gain of 20% in Sunday school enrollment between 1974-1984, with the gains of three denominations accounting for 91% of the total growth (Southern Baptist, Assemblies of God, and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints). During the same ten year period, the remaining 23 denominations reported a decrease of 21%, with three denominations reporting losses in excess of 100,000 enrolled. The decrease in the LC-MS enrollment was 141,067. In an investigation of possible factors related to gains and losses, further statistical analysis revealed that the denominations with growing Sunday schools placed heavier emphasis on local and community evangelism, were judged to be more theologically conservative and less involved in social action. The LC-MS and the Church of the Nazarene were exceptions. Further investigation revealed a high correlation between changes in Sunday school enrollment and gains/losses in church membership. The data presented suggest that Sunday school enrollment may well be one of the most (if not the most) reliable indicators of church membership trends. There is more evidence to conclude that the Sunday school may be the principal keeper of the keys that unlock and lock the front and backdoors of churches in the U.S.A. with a high percentage of those who make a confession of faith coming from the Sunday school membership. Data also suggested that when the faith needs of adults are not met in the Sunday school, there will be more back-door losses.

Recommendations considering the future of the Sunday school were made by various authors for its revitalization and strengthening. The editor's formula (based on a review of the various chapters) is: "Genuine renewal comes to the Sunday school as its character and responsibility are defined in the process of rediscovery, as it knows and draws on the sources of its power, as it focuses on meeting imperative needs, and as it is realistic about the resources that it needs to accomplish its task." A translation of this aim into more specific recommendations includes:

1. The recognition that the Sunday school is a significant entry point for new persons (children, youth, and adults) where they are oriented to the Bible and the Christian life;
2. Linking the Sunday school to other key agencies for the formation of faith, such as the family, the day school, the pulpit, and the mid-week school is crucial;
3. Being aware that adult interest and loss of interest in the Sunday school correlates with increasing and decreasing interest and activity in the church, and that the Sunday school can serve as a key agency for evangelism and nurture;
4. A recognition that a Sunday school experience for adults needs to address adults with different needs and expectations, including those who seek primarily fellowship, those eager for Bible study, those who are searching for a base for social action, and those whose interests encompass two or more of these perspectives;
5. Identification of the key ingredients of a strong Sunday school, which includes a firm sense of purpose, vision and continuity in teacher training, appropriate organizational structure for communication and order, good teaching resources, and adequate facilities;
6. A commitment to the renewal of the Sunday school based on : a. positive leadership by clergy and professional church educators which utilizes this agency to equip the laity for their ministry; b. sharing with laity what is known about teaching and learning; c. a thorough use of Biblical and theological scholarship; d. a rebuilding of widespread regional and national support structures; e. a positive image of the Sunday school and its potential; f. a prayerful sense of openness to the leading of the Spirit;
7. A theological perspective of repentance which can occur by looking to Christ and His redeeming work, recognizing where we are missing the mark, and making a commitment to the Sunday school as a seriously gripping and absorbing ministry;
8. A focus on imperative needs in our day, including a Biblical faith, fellowship with the community of faith, an evangelistic thrust, nurture in discipleship, provision for spiritual growth in personal and social morality in the context of a decay of moral standards, a linkage with the home in the spiritual development of individuals, and addressing significant needs in a changing world, including a stewardship of resources, the scourge of world hunger, and the need for peace and deliverance from terrorist and nuclear threat.

This study is an excellent assessment of the past, present, and future roles of the Sunday school. The study could have been strengthened if the role of the Sunday school had been explored and more explicitly in the light of the *missio Dei*, God's mission and the mission of His people in today's world. However, in a day in which the Sunday school is often seen as existing and enduring as well as it can, this resource stimulates needed attention to the continuing renewal of a significant arm of the church.

Marvin Bergman

*CCD = Confraternity of Christian Doctrine.

all men that we seek unity not on our terms but on our Lord's and that that is an act of love."

IV. The Ministry of Missouri Synod Lutherans to Other Christians

We began this article by saying that I had been asked to address the question: "Are we neglecting ministering to other Christians?" Before speaking directly to this question it was necessary first of all to say something about the identity of those we are here talking about. In other words, who are the "we" who are to do the ministering and what do they believe? And who are the "other Christians" who are to be the object of this ministry? These are the questions for which we have attempted to provide some answers in what has been said above. The "we," we assume, refers to those of us who have studied the Scriptures and who have reached certain conclusions about the nature of the church and about relationships in the church. "We" are pastors, teachers and members of congregations who belong to The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. "Other Christians" we understand to refer to fellow members of the Body of Christ who are members of Christian denominations with whom we Missouri Synod Lutherans disagree concerning what the Scriptures teach about the doctrine of the Gospel in one or more articles of faith.

The question at hand, "Are we neglecting ministering to other Christians?" is therefore directed not only to a denomination called The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod as a church body or even to any one specific congregation, but it is also asked of individual members of Missouri Synod congregations. But since the response to this question, when considered with respect to the ministry of individual Christians, must of necessity take into account so many difficult to evaluate factors such as attitude, motivation, relationships, and circumstances, it does not seem appropriate to attempt to offer here definitive judgment about this aspect of our "ministry to other Christians." It appears to this observer that this question can more effectively be addressed by formulating a series of questions for personal reflection.
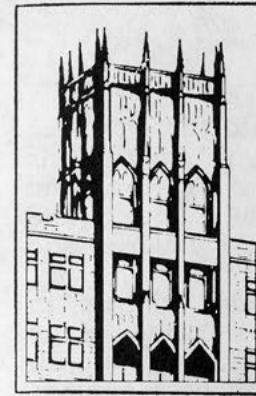
1. Is the divided condition of Christendom an offense to me?

2. Is the inconsistent and false confession of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in erring churches and by erring Christians a matter of genuine concern to me?

3. Do I manifest the respect and love due to fellow members of the Body of Christ for whom He shed His precious blood in all of my relationships with other Christians (e.g., in the way I speak and write about them)?

4. Am I willing and prepared to share with other Christians the Gospel of Jesus Christ as we Lutherans believe, teach, and confess it?

5. Am I prepared to admonish, but as a loving brother or sister in Christ, those who distort the Gospel of Jesus Christ?

6. Am I open to learn from and be instructed by other Christians as we together study the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, the only rule and norm of faith and practice?

7. Do I manifest integrity in respecting and actually abiding by the corporate decisions which we in the LCMS have made with respect to our relationships to other Christians so that we may give a consistent witness to the Gospel?

8. Do I encourage, pray for, and support the efforts of Missouri Synod Lutherans at all levels to resolve our differences with other Christians in the confession of the Gospel of Jesus Christ?

9. Am I prepared to consider whether the applications of the Scriptural teachings on inter-Christian relationships which we have traditionally practiced in the LCMS are the best way to apply them in this age of "ambiguous denominationalism"?

Unless we are able to answer all such questions with a resounding "yes," then each of us will have to confess that "ministering to other Christians" is indeed "a neglected ministry" for us. Also when examining this area of our life under the scrutiny of God's law, we are vividly reminded of how utterly dependent we are on the forgiveness which is ours through the blood of Jesus the Christ.

Conclusion

Words from St. Peter provide a proper conclusion to this discussion of our "neglected ministry" to other Christians. "In your hearts reverence Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to make a defense to any one who calls you to account for the hope that is in you, yet do it with gentleness and reverence" (1 Peter 3:15). Our ministry to other Christians can be summed up in these words—Christ, hope and the giving of a gentle answer. The first word, as well as the last word is Christ, the Word. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the ending. Where Christ is, there must be hope, lasting, eternal hope which never disappoints. It is Christ Jesus the hope giver who motivates us to be prepared to give an answer to all those who call on us—and to give it "with gentleness and reverence." These words encompasses the content, the motivation and style of our ministry to other Christians.

Class can bring homes together rather than keep them apart. Fellowship activities such as picnics and potlucks go a long way in helping "other" people become part of the group.

Every organization, from Ladies Aid to Boy Scouts, should see itself as a mission to "other" people. It is hard to integrate anyone into a body without providing specific places for people to plug in. Each organization should ask itself whether its activities and atmosphere are ministering to needs of "others" or building walls and fences that keep them out.

One word should be said about the school as an agency for ministry to those "other" people. *I don't believe there is any other agency or organization within the church that provides for a felt need by "other" people better than the school.* More people consider education number one in importance as a way of improving the quality of life. It is in the school that people of all backgrounds see a common need fulfilled. It is, therefore, in schools that fences and walls can be destroyed and bridges and avenues provided. Schools are one of our best, if not the best, potential means of ministering to those "other" people. But schools must become ministering schools for this potential to be realized. Teachers and principals must see themselves as ministers and establish programs of ministry to children and parents or the potential is wasted.

Perhaps it is time to re-evaluate priorities in curriculum, extra-curricular activities, and teaching methods. What the school and the teacher does with and for children must come from its basic purpose. That purpose is to minister to those "other" people. Ministry is a service to them to fulfill basic needs. These needs are often social, emotional, and deeply spiritual in nature. The school might well see itself in the role of equipping parents to be ministers to their children.

Why should we minister to those "other" people? Because our faith compels us! Is this an easy task? It never has been and it isn't today. What can be done? We can do what our Savior did: minister to the needs of "others" wherever and however we can. Will we see results? Yes! God's promise of uniting all in Jesus is sure!

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