

# ISSUES

IN CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

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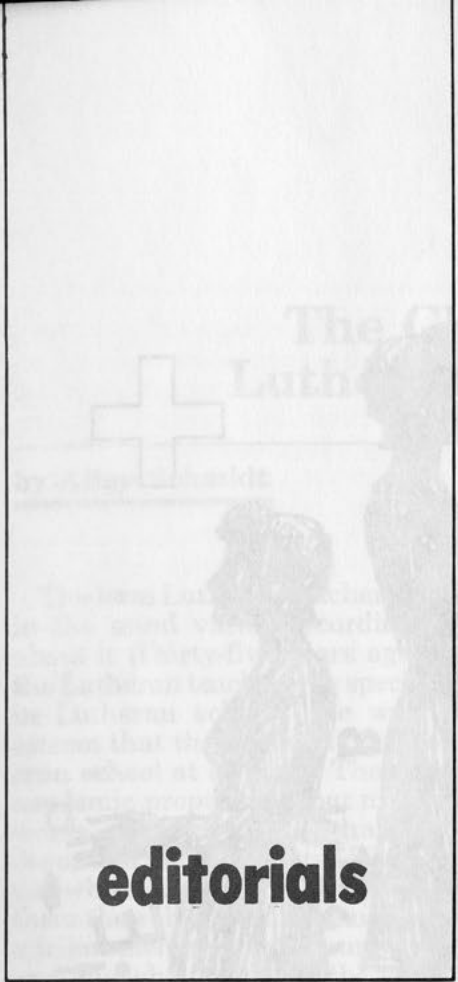


THE CHALLENGE OF CHANGE FOR CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

# ISSUES

IN CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

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## editorials

### Why Bother With Educating Lutheran Teachers?

From the days of the Saxon fathers and throughout Missouri Synod's history the Lutheran day school has been a vital tool as Synod responds to the Great Commission. Today Lutheran schools continue to thrive and grow because they remain true to their historic purpose, to equip saints for ministry. Numerous factors contribute to the continued quality of our schools. But none has been as important or as steadfast as the synodically trained Lutheran teacher. Committed to serving Christ, Lutheran teachers proclaim the Gospel and nurture young people in the Faith. They daily teach God's Word. They infuse it into all learning. They model life together in Jesus Christ. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, Lutheran teachers literally work miracles. In large measure they make Lutheran schools what they are, an immeasurable blessing to the Church and a dynamic force in the world.

This powerful teacher corps exists because Synod through its system of higher education consistently has prepared teachers who 1) are committed to serving Jesus Christ, 2) are knowledgeable in Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions and apply them to all learning and to the lives of their students, and 3) encourage and support one another as co-workers in Christ. Our system of teacher preparation is admired and even envied by other church bodies. On a recent visit to the U.S. Pastor Thomas Reuther, director of Lutheran schools of the Australian Lutheran Church,

expressed the need for a similar system in the Australian Church.

Australian teachers attend public colleges for four years to obtain teaching certificates and then attend a Lutheran institution for one year to receive theological training. Pastor Reuther emphatically stated, "It doesn't work!" He explained that even if you can convince people to take the extra year's work, which you often cannot, simply teaching a number of theology courses on top of the "humanistic instruction" of secular teacher education does not imbue teachers with the ability to apply a Christian approach to all learning.

In synodical colleges prospective teachers live together under Word and Sacrament. They receive Biblical and doctrinal instruction equivalent to a religion minor. Christian instructors infuse Biblical and Confessional considerations into their classes, and give witness to their faith in private conversations. Faculty and students worship together. They debate and affirm their place in God's plan for the world. They grow together as saints, never forgetting they are also sinners. They learn to appreciate and enjoy God's gifts, especially the fellowship of one another.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer explains the importance of such a supportive community in the preparation of people in ministry. In his book, *Life Together*, he reminds us that living with other Christians is a special blessing in God which prepares us to go like scattered seed "into all the kingdoms of the earth" (Deut. 28:25) (and) dwell in far countries among the unbelievers (and) be the seed of the Kingdom of God in all the world." (p. 17)\*

Projections are that in a few years the United States will face a severe teacher shortage. The good news is that young people again are becoming interested in teaching. Many would like to be Lutheran teachers. The bad news is they are not enrolling in Lutheran colleges. When they discover that the cost of attending a synodical institution is significantly higher than attending a public institution, students pause. They and their parents look at their projected indebtedness after four years of college and a teacher's potential beginning salary and conclude that they have no choice but to attend a secular institution.

If our unique system of elementary and secondary schools is to continue to be a dynamic force of Gospel outreach and nurture, the LCMS must renew its commitment to a synodical baccalaureate teacher education program. This will require action from congregations, synodical officials and college faculty. Faculty must reexamine the effectiveness of current programs in light of changing student populations, revised placement procedures and the expansion of non-church work programs. We must make

necessary changes to insure continued preparation of well qualified, committed servants for ministry. Synod must find financial resources to make possible the education of Lutheran teachers. Individuals and congregations must tell synodical decision makers that they not only need and want synodical support for colleges but are also willing to pay for it. Teachers, pastors and congregations must recruit and then support qualified students with affirming words and generous gifts.

The Holy Spirit is at work in the hearts of young men and women creating in them the desire to serve His Church as teachers. We must make teacher preparation possible so that these gifts of God can be used to His glory and for the welfare of His people.

Priscilla Lawin

\*Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*. New York: Harper and Row, 1954.

### Will "They" Become "We"?

During the second semester of this past year one of Concordia's full-time professors served as an interim principal and teacher in one of our Lutheran elementary schools while he was on sabbatical leave. At the conclusion of his semester he shared perceptions with his colleagues. He wrote, "To be with a broad cross-section of God's community of Christians was a growing experience. I have relearned to appreciate the desire of other Christians (non-Lutherans) to have a Christ-centered education for their children."

My colleague brought to his semester's leave what many of us in the professional ministry of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod experience. We are placed in positions where most of our contact is with Lutherans, and even more specifically, members of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. The longer we live in that environment the more limited may be our vision. Such a narrow experience may even move us into a syndrome of talking about "we" and "they" when we refer to students in our educational agencies or worshippers on Sunday. "If they weren't here, we wouldn't have this problem," or phrases with similar overtones are all too common. It's disturbing that a church body so committed to carrying out Christ's command to "teach all nations" seems to give the impression at times that its focus is on steps to keep "them" separated from "us" in experiences with the means of grace and fellowship. We tend to forget that we don't have a corner on those who can and want to benefit from Christian education.

Sometimes such actions can be embarrassingly visible and audible. They

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**EDITOR'S NOTES**

Readers will note a change in the Editorial Committee membership roster on this page. We say "farewell" to Dr. James Pragman whose management of the Editorials section, "Points of View" columns, and other contributions through the years have made him one of the better known Concordia faculty contributors. We welcome Dr. George Heider to the Committee as Editorials Editor. George has already become known as a contributor to *Issues* during his two years plus as a member of the Concordia-Seward faculty.

**ABOUT THE AUTHORS**

Mr. Allan H. Schmidt was Executive Director of the Lutheran High School Association of Baltimore when he wrote the manuscript for this number of *Issues*. We are pleased to report that, as of July, 1986, Al has assumed responsibility for the secondary teacher education and student teaching programs at Concordia. Keeping the above in mind it can be said that all of the contributors to this *Issues* are members of the Concordia faculty.



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## editorials

are the easiest to do something about. However, most often they are more subtle and unintentional. We don't recognize them until later or until we step back and change our perspective regarding how our words and actions might be perceived.

My colleague during his semester as interim principal and teacher in another setting was suddenly reminded of the realities of demographic descriptors referring to students in many of our educational agencies. The majority is not always Lutheran and white and not always from two-parent, stable homes with adequate incomes. My colleague had experienced that in several unique geographic areas of ministry many years ago, but then he came to the environment of Concordia's campus where 95% of the students are white and 90% are Lutheran. He had to relearn to appreciate the desire of other Christians to have a Christ-centered education for their children. I was happy to hear he found it a growing experience to be with a broad cross-section of God's community of Christians. That's as it ought to be for all of us.

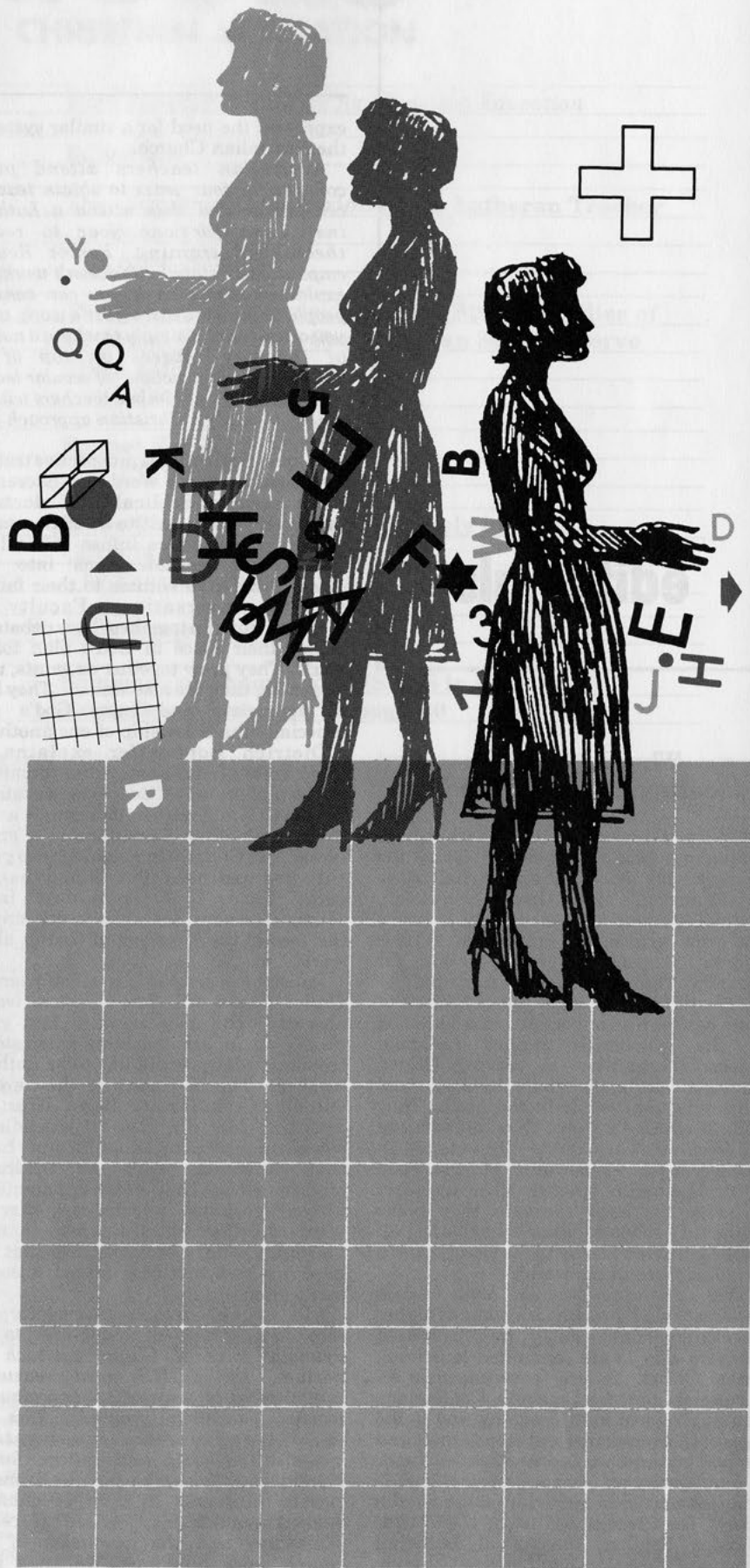
More and more of the populations in our educational agencies are different from what they were twenty years ago, even ten years ago, and they will be even more different ten years from now. One of the articles in this volume addresses those differences. Such changes in population usually mean we need to reassess whether what we've done before is appropriate now and whether this presents some new opportunities we didn't have or see before. The important thing is our point of view, our attitude as reflected in our words and actions as well as our non-verbal signals.

My colleague serves as an appropriate model for us in that he saw this contact with a diverse population as a positive, rewarding experience. He saw it as an excellent opportunity to respond to Christ's challenge to "teach all nations." He gained a renewed appreciation for what we so many times take for granted and of what others need to remind us. He commented in his written reflection on the fact that other Christians have a strong desire to have a Christ-centered education for their children, and then he added, "How they admire The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod for its stance on church-related education."

Changes in Christian education as reflected in diverse populations present us with challenges. They also present us with new opportunities when our perspective is proper.

Jack Duensing

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## The Changing Complexion of the Lutheran Teacher... Does It Matter?

by Allan Schmidt

The term Lutheran teacher and what it conjures up in the mind varies according to who is thinking about it. Thirty-five years ago my parents thought the Lutheran teacher was specially prepared to teach in Lutheran schools. He was held in such high esteem that they wanted their son to attend a Lutheran school at all costs. They were interested in the academic preparation but more importantly, in the words of my mother, so that I might learn to know Jesus and the Bible better. The Lutheran teacher was one who could lead children closer to Jesus and teach them the subjects at the same time. The teacher was a fellow member of the church, known by my parents and one who worked in the vineyard with them.

### Lutheran Teacher Education 35 Years Ago

Some call 35 years ago the "good old days." Perhaps that has some merit, but certainly the Lutheran teacher prior to the 1970s came out of an educational setting which had some very unique qualities.

Young people coming to a synodical college campus often had a positive role model in a former teacher and had the conviction that they wished to enter the Lutheran teaching profession. They probably had attended a Lutheran elementary school and may have attended a Lutheran high school. By the time they set foot on the college campus the students had been taught *Luther's Small Catechism*, the Bible, Lutheran hymns and basic doctrine. They entered with a sense of expectation for professional preparation.

The Synodical college was a single-purpose institution in preparing Lutheran teachers. The Christian professors were themselves products of synodical schools and colleges who had obtained graduate degrees at other universities or seminaries. There was a unified purpose...to train the students to enter Lutheran schools as educators and sharers of God's Word with children. Classes were taught from that perspective. Dormitory devotions, daily chapels and special worship services pointed to entering the classroom or the parish. The extra curricular activities, including athletics, emphasized training the whole child and using all opportunities for sharing God's Word. Teachers to be became friends with teachers to be, and a four year education was enhanced by the relationship with others who also were committed to becoming professional servants

of the Lord as Lutheran teachers, pastors or directors of Christian education.

The student teacher experience was in a Lutheran schools, and many went for a year of "supply teaching" in a Lutheran school to fill vacancies and to get a year of experience between the junior and senior year. This made their college career a five year program. By the time "Call Night" came (and the accompanying exciting anticipation of the location of the congregations that had called them) there was a heightened understanding of the meaning of being prepared not only for teaching but also for a broader ministry to the people of God. Such graduates were looking forward to teaching children, heading youth groups, assisting in the parish and leading worship with organ and choirs or youth groups.

When the college awarded the diplomas and the young person was declared eligible for a Divine Call, the college was giving assurance to the church that the called teacher was theologically prepared with the equivalent of at least a minor in religion and educational training appropriate for most assignments required by the call. As the graduate accepted the first Call with some anxiety, he or she was equipped with the experiences of at least four years of intense professional preparation, Bible study and doctrine. These provided a sense of readiness. Knowing that hundreds were joining the Lutheran teachers' fraternity and that all were starting a career in the church added to the candidates' sense of well being. All those young teachers did not remain in Lutheran school teaching but a high percentage have remained as faithful teachers of the Word to God's young people in the schools of the church.

### The Lutheran Teacher's Status in 1960

My parents' perception of a Lutheran teacher was quite common in the Missouri town in which we lived. When we moved to Tennessee and Ohio (no, my father was not a pastor or teacher) there too the Lutheran teacher was respected educationally and as a teacher of the Word in the school and the parish. In 1960, following graduation from Concordia, River Forest and acceptance of the first Call to Catonsville, Maryland, I was respectfully called "Teacher Schmidt." This denoted special preparation and being "called out from among" to teach children in the school, and adults in the congregation, the truth of the Word and the grace of God in harmony with the Lutheran confessions.

The expectations of the teacher in the elementary school, high school, or parish tended to influence the professional/ministerial direction of the teacher.

There was an emphasis upon school academics and catechetical content that encouraged a very academic direction. Accepting a full sense of ministry of the Word, including nurturing both students and congregational members through the teaching of Scripture, was also encouraged. It was assumed that with the acceptance of a Call to a congregation a Lutheran teacher would fulfill the congregational purpose of teaching and nurturing from a solid base of pedagogical and theological training.

Ninety-one percent of Lutheran teachers throughout the Synod were trained in colleges and seminaries of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod and were looked upon as respected educators who were willing to serve the children in the school and the whole membership with a sense of mission paralleling that of the Christian congregation.

#### Changes in Teacher Preparation

The preparation of Lutheran teachers has changed over the past two decades. Sixty-eight percent of the teachers in Lutheran schools are still trained in synodical colleges, but the atmosphere has changed. The teachers colleges are not only training teachers and professional church workers. They train young people in the liberal arts and to be Christian lay persons. These are certainly worth goals, but the teachers are not trained in the same nurturing environment which was totally dedicated to the Lutheran teaching ministry as in years past. Certainly the mix of ideas may be stimulating but the total focus of the college and the students is not on preparation for ministry as professional church workers. The colleges have expanded offerings, presumably to increase enrollments and thereby to meet their growing financial burdens.

The teacher education programs are vigorous and challenging and the academic preparation, by my perception, has been generally improved and enhanced. As a high school administrator, I have seen the requirement of two majors become common for high school teachers and the number of credits required for a major increased.

#### Changes in Hiring, Qualifications and Teachers' Roles

The perception of a Lutheran teacher has changed also. Parents do not always expect that a Lutheran teacher is trained in a "Concordia" operated by the LCMS. Teachers serving many Lutheran schools today may be trained in any institution, but they are expected to be certified by the state in their subject field or grade level. In the 1973-74 school year 90% of the full-time degreed personnel in Lutheran schools were trained in colleges and seminaries of the Missouri Synod. By contrast, only 71% were trained in our church's colleges in the 1985-86 school year. Numerically this means nearly 3,000 teachers in our

elementary schools are trained in secular institutions. The trend will likely continue as the need for teachers increases. (There are 249 more professional staff in 1985-86 than in 1984-85 in Lutheran elementary and early childhood programs.)

Teachers with a degree from an accredited institution outside of the LCMS system are being asked to teach in Lutheran schools in ever growing numbers. The increasing number of early childhood centers account for a large number of non-synodically trained teachers. The "1985-86 Statistical Report Summary" shows that 62 early childhood centers and four elementary schools opened that year. *Seventy-seven percent of elementary full-time personnel but only 40% of preschool/day care full-time personnel are synodically educated. Grade schools and high schools are also recruiting teachers with varying backgrounds, including those who are not Lutheran by church membership.*

The Lutheran teacher is not always a member of the congregation that operates the school. Parents do not always expect to see their child's teacher in church on Sunday. The parent may want the teacher to be a professional educator with no further obligations. Parents' expectations often depend upon the location of the school and the background of the children and parents.

Congregations, school boards and associations are employing teachers who are available locally. One reason for this is a shortage of synodically trained teachers. A local teacher does not need to be moved to the school and often will work at a lower salary because another primary income supports the family. Another popular reason is that a contracted teacher can more easily be dismissed should the needs or enrollment change. *Although seldom given as a reason, some school boards do not wish to have their school be "different" from other community schools.*

Another change in the Lutheran teacher is the declining number of male teachers who are entering and remaining in Lutheran teaching. In Lutheran elementary schools, 25% of the teachers are male. Less than 30 years ago it was more than 50%. The balance of male and female role models has been a strength of Lutheran schools over the years.

Although the reasons are yet unclear, Lutheran teachers, on the average, serve in a particular school longer and have more experience according to Dr. Carl Moser, Associate Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Schools. In 1973 male teachers averaged seven years of experience teaching in Lutheran schools and four years at one particular school. By 1984 these numbers had increased to ten years total experience and six years at the current school. During the same period, female teachers' total years of experience in Lutheran schools increased from four to seven years.

*The statistics indicate a growing number of teachers in Lutheran schools who may be called "lay" teachers. They are employed by the school board of the congregation and may or may not be Lutheran. Their theological background may include attendance in Sunday school, confirmation or Bible classes, or none at all. Parents and congregation members cannot have the same confidence in the theological soundness of the preparation of their faculties that was a trade mark of teachers in Lutheran schools 20 to 35 years ago.*

Viewing these changes in the preparation and perception of the Lutheran teacher encourages reflection upon the effects on Lutheran education. We need more teachers in our Lutheran schools to fill the positions in new and expanding schools. The lay teacher has been and continues to be a valuable and dedicated worker in filling the classrooms that are not filled by the teachers prepared in the LCMS colleges. Those trained in educational institutions outside Synod's colleges bring an added diversity of educational background which can be an academic stimulus. They can often open new networks into public and private education and draw on their training and experience to offer innovation and positive change.

The more varied experiences of approximately 30 percent of Lutheran teachers often help our schools to be more open and accepting of their increasing enrollments of nonLutheran, nonChristian students. The Lutheran school, on the positive side, has become more open to innovation and change as the make up of the Lutheran teachers corps has evolved.

The benefits of improved and enhanced teacher preparation in our synodical schools is positive. Young teachers are often well prepared to enter classrooms upon graduation. Many are eager to continue their education through inservice and graduate programs and continuous study of Scripture.

#### Can Lutheran Schools Afford Lutheran Teachers?

Many Lutheran leaders are concerned over a growing number of teachers who do not have theological courses in Old and New Testament, Christian Doctrine and the Confessions, Teaching the Faith, the Lutheran Worship, the Church in America, the History and Principles of Lutheran Education, the Lutheran Teacher's Ministry or an indepth study of the Gospels or Romans. Lutheran teachers make Lutheran schools Lutheran. When teachers do not have an understanding of why they are teaching and what they are teaching, the school's mission will be blurred.

To assure the church of committed Christian teachers who were prepared spiritually and

theologically, the LCMS developed the synodical colleges for such training. Lutheran trained teachers who are committed to Jesus Christ and exercise the ministry of the Word know that the ultimate goal is nurturing the faith of God's children. The Lutheran teacher is an extension of the congregation's professional staff. The teacher, through the school, completes the golden ring of the home, church and school. Together they train young people for leadership in the church and community.

A Lutheran congregation and school should want teachers who present Jesus Christ, His death and resurrection for the forgiveness of our sins and for eternal life. A Lutheran school is both centrifugal and centripetal. The young Christian is whirled out into the world like children off a merry-go-round if they ever let go. But first the child needs to be centripetal, that is gathered around the Word. That is what Lutheran teachers do in Lutheran schools. *First, however, we must have teachers in our schools who know the Word and the confessions and who use them in their daily life.*

As a Lutheran administrator I have received many applications from teachers who wish to teach in our schools. Very often the motivation is to find a safer educational environment. They are looking for a "job" and think of our school as a private or non-public school with good discipline.

A Lutheran teacher, however, has a vocation as Martin Luther defined it. Education is the vehicle to bring God's Word to young people. *Lutheran teachers are often inspired to enter the teaching ministry by excellent role models.*

Usually the addition of a lay teacher does not lift up the ministry. *Seldom have I seen a non-synodically trained teacher recruit a young person for service in the ministries of the church.*

Our synodical colleges can handle many more students who wish to be Lutheran teachers. More teachers trained means more will be available and that the shortage can be reduced.

With the number of single parent families increasing, the male role model in Lutheran schools is more important than ever. A balanced teaching force of males and females is desirable. The majority of locally hired teachers is female.

The complexion of the Lutheran teacher is changing. There are both positives and negatives. Perhaps the issue is adequate preparation for all teachers in Lutheran schools. There is no more serious business than teaching our children and ministering to their spiritual needs. Who has a child five days a week for six hours a day and 36 weeks a year? Parents have difficulty spending that much time with their children, but teachers do.

Our church has said that "the most effective educational agencies available to the church for equipping children and youth are the full-time Lutheran ele-

mentary and secondary schools, so that the Gospel of Jesus Christ may become even more effective in the life of the individual Christian and of the congregation" (Constitution of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod Bylaw 2.223a). This includes early childhood programs also. For the schools to equip children with the Word and for service it is essential that teachers are "full of the Gospel" so that it overflows.

### Lutheran Teachers Study for Continued Spiritual Growth

Certainly Lutheran teachers, as disciples of the Lord Jesus, will want to grow spiritually. The very word "disciple" implies that study and learning is continuous. Every teacher is expected to grow academically. Lutheran teachers are expected to grow spiritually too. Being prepared in a synodical college is certainly an excellent beginning. Continued growth toward spiritual maturity occurs through fellowship with other Christians and reading, digesting and applying God's Word in our personal lives and in our relationships with others. Praying that the Spirit will instruct and empower the teacher to be a witness in Word and deed is commendable. Reading spiritual literature, taking Bible class courses in our churches, and attending summer sessions at a synodical college do enhance ministry. Conferences, inservice workshops and symposiums made available by Synod's districts or arranged by a school's administrator or the pastor are opportunities for growth. Staff Bible studies and prayer breakfasts not only solidify a staff but also help individuals grow to be what St. Paul refers to as the "spiritual man" in I Cor. 2:15. The power of the teacher's testimony will be commensurate with the intimacy of his relationship to the living Lord. When the teacher knows Him and daily walks with Him there will be a ring of truth to his witness to Him that will be unmistakable.

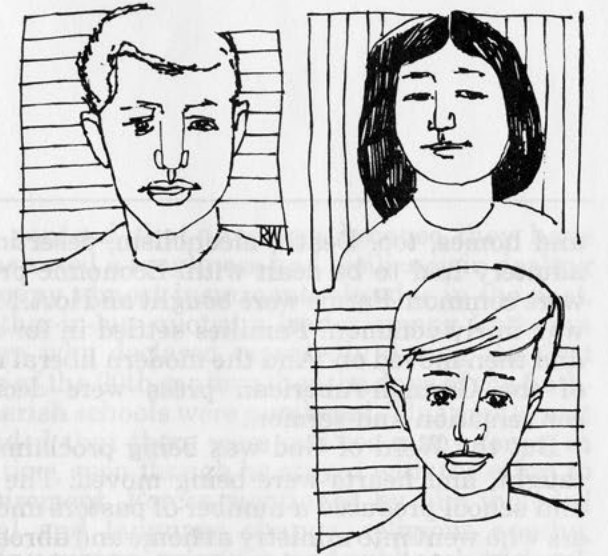
It would be easy but naive to suggest that a commitment to authentic ministry through Lutheran schools can be obtained by having all teachers trained in synodical colleges. But that is a good place to begin to get the spiritual fellowship, gather around the Word and prayer and to learn about teaching the faith. It is a good place to learn St. Paul's selflessness (Acts 20:22-24 RSV) and to be inspired by Christ. "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me." (Gal. 2:20) The Lutheran teacher as a disciple can turn the world upside down, stimulated by a ministry to accomplish, a witness to give and grace to share. Congregations, teachers, pastors, the district and synodical officials all need to encourage young men and women, elementary and high school age, to become Lutheran teachers and be prepared for such ministry.

Administrators and school boards may encourage teachers to grow. Expecting all teachers to be involved in workshops and Bible studies and sending all teachers to conferences of the church is minimal. School boards and congregations can pay part or all of the expenses for non-synodically trained teachers to go through the colloquy programs. Some districts are having colloquy courses, taught by synodical college professors, at a central location in the district. The Southeastern District of the LCMS, for example, offers teachers a certificate signed by the District President, District Education Executive and the College President when a teacher completes 12 hours toward a colloquy. Some districts encourage a salary differential, giving credit for reaching the half way point, and then again upon completion of the colloquy. Making the colloquy more available in the district often removes teacher objections motivated by family responsibilities and the teacher's need to travel to a synodical college. This year eight teachers are in the program in Glen Burnie, Maryland and two are at Concordia, Bronxville completing their residency requirements.

### Student Recruitment Is a Church-Wide Responsibility

District and synodical boards may help by stressing the shortage of teachers and the importance of proper preparation. Although teachers colleges contact prospective students individually, recruitment is a church wide concern and should be approached that way. A coordinated synodical campaign for full-time professional church workers is a must. A public relations effort, using all synodical means of communication, should be aimed at promoting the teaching and preaching ministries. Each teacher and pastor should be asked over a two year period to recruit a church worker for full-time service who is to be enrolled in an LCMS college or seminary. Bible studies could be written on the spiritual gift of teaching. The whole church could be praying for the Holy Spirit to lead young men and women to the teaching ministry of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod.

A strength of the church is the faithful teaching of God's Word by qualified Christian teachers in Lutheran schools. Teachers who live, teach and witness to their faith in Jesus have a far-reaching ministry in training faith filled young people to be thrust out as servant-leaders for the Lord in the church and community of tomorrow. The preparation and perception of the Lutheran teacher has changed, but the need for a vital Lutheran teaching ministry is more critical than ever.



## The Changing Complexion of the Student Bodies of Lutheran Schools

### Can Lutheran Schools Serve Them Effectively?

by Gilbert Blomenberg

Man has been confronted with the reality of change since his expulsion and exile from the glories of the Garden of Eden, and its end can only be celebrated when the saints are gathered around the throne of glory enjoying the reality of eternal bliss. Until then, change with all its uncertainties, strains, and stress is a fact of life with which each one of us must cope throughout the span of his or her earthly years. It is only when we have come to the end of our lives that the struggle will be put to rest.

Meanwhile there are items that demand attention. One of these is the seeming acceleration of change. Changes taking place in education during this writer's lifetime are astonishing.

#### A Rural Lutheran School in the 1920s

All the children enrolled in the parish school he attended as a boy were of German ancestry and lived within a radius of seven miles—a daunting distance for those who had to make the daily trek on foot! Electrical power was still miles and years away. The school had no inside plumbing, and the outside facilities were most primitive. Water for drinking was secured by bucket from a well located 300 feet away. During the early years the pupils just dipped into the bucket with a cup when they were thirsty. Several years later a water dispenser was installed, but there was no real gain in sanitation, since the same bucket was used for carrying the fresh water and collecting the run-off!

Being in school often proved to be a test of

endurance. There were those distances that some of the children had to walk. The schoolday ran from 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Nearly half of the lessons were conducted in German. The playground was a field of some eight acres with a creek flowing through it diagonally. Physical education seemed somewhat unnecessary after walking all the way to school and being responsible for morning and evening chores.

Adequate heating in the upper grades classroom remained a dream. This writer typically had chilblain on his toes and feet from before Thanksgiving to the middle of March. It took a lot of oil of wintergreen to keep from getting infected.

The school was minimally equipped. The textbooks typically were used for a generation or two. School libraries were virtually unknown. But few seriously missed that since they were planning to be farmers anyway. There was a steady diet of repetition, memorization, and rereading. The available resources comprised the basic texts, *The Holy Bible*, *Webster's Unabridged Dictionary-Second Edition*, and several world and health charts.

The pupils, however, did learn. There were many compulsions and few distractions—a rooster crowing, a horse neighing, a Model T rattling by, and an occasional wagon lumbering along. And there was a sense of community. If you got into trouble in school on a given day, your parents typically had heard about it before you had a chance to explain. Occasionally a person's positive accomplishments preceded his arrival at home as well. Those were the days when a teacher's disciplinary decisions were seldom called into question. His central obligation was to keep order in the school.

In those years there were problems in the families



and homes, too. Death, alcoholism, desertion, and adultery had to be dealt with. Economic problems were common. Farms were bought and lost. Mobility was fairly common. Families settled in for a while and then moved on. And the modern liberal notions of the German-American press were decried in conversation and sermon.

But the Word of God was being proclaimed and taught, and hearts were being moved. The parish and school produced a number of pastors and teachers who went into ministry at home and abroad. And why? Simply because these people of God and others like them took Jesus Christ at His Word when he commanded, "Ye shall be witnesses of Me." They did what they could to meet the challenge in their day, moved by the Spirit of God who worked in their hearts and lives.

#### Rural Lutheran Schools of Today

Parishes and schools like the one surveyed above have changed extensively during the past 50 to 60 years. Improved roads, better transportation, and the range of advantages that electrical power can bring have served to make labor less physically demanding and recreational variety more accessible. Through the mass media the wider world has been brought into rural areas in ways formerly undreamed of. However, all of this has not turned out to be unmitigated blessing.

In many localities opportunities for making a livelihood have declined substantially. A result has been a decline in population, particularly among the young. The remaining family units have tended to become smaller. Besides all this we find that the prevailing problems of the larger society have asserted themselves here also. Family disruptions occasioned by a host of factors have brought with them a range of difficulties barely imagined in former generations.

Agriculture has always been an occupation of considerable risk. Factors like unseasonable weather, changing markets, and infestations of various types have been a part of the scene since man's expulsion from paradise. But gains in one or more areas always seem to be accompanied by position losses in others. For example, agricultural markets have moved from being local and regional to being national and even worldwide in scope. Today the prices farmers get for grains and produce are strongly influenced by conditions in other parts of the world.

Less than a century ago a large family could make a tolerable living on a 40 acre plot of land. Today that would be difficult indeed. So churches and parish schools have found it necessary to pattern their educational structures and practices very closely to those of the suburban and urban centers. Interparish schools with their expanded

curricular and co-curricular programs have been organized to prepare the young for successful participation in the larger society. These efforts have met with considerable success.

#### The Prosperous Suburban Lutheran School

Since World War II there has been a long span of years during which many people have looked at and strained to become a part of the suburban dream. Such an environment offers the quiet security of the rural life and the advantages of urban employment and entertainment. This arrangement appears to be an opportunity to enjoy the best aspects of both the rural and the urban situation. But all of this has not turned out to be the total Eden either!

To sustain such a lifestyle makes heavy demands on energy, time and money. Homes are often situated in restricted neighborhoods which are well-kept and expensive. Ownership of two and more automobiles per family unit is almost mandatory. Supporting such a lifestyle makes dual and even multiple employment on the part of family members a virtual necessity! And then there are those miles and hours spent on driving to and from work.

Both parents often are fulltime members of the work force. If they have any children, these have to be taken to babysitters or other caretakers. If the children are older, they may be left to fend for themselves after school until the parents return home from work. A result may be that the children receive more attention and nurture from others than they get from their own parents. With less than adequate monitoring they may also be tempted to experiment with drugs, alcohol, and other harmful diversions.

The stress and temptations are many. The increased break-ups of marriages and families during the past several decades have been widely documented, and the deleterious effects on family structure and functioning have been alarming. The impact on children can be both obvious and covert. The principal of one such suburban school noted that the teachers in his school feel that many of the children with whom they are working need unusual amounts of emotional and personal support—almost more than the teachers were able or willing to give! A survey of homelife revealed that two out of every five children came from single-parent homes!

The suburban family is also strongly influenced by the many social and cultural forces which lure members away from the spiritual and eternal verities. The mass media pay massive attention to "Me-ism," but pay scant heed to things of the Spirit of God. Christian broadcasting on the major networks is largely restricted to Sunday mornings or very early weekday mornings. Advertising in newspapers, periodicals, and on radio or television typically describes the "good life" as the acquisition of things and the pursuit of pleasure.

It is in this kind of context that the Christian day school must operate. On the one hand it must work to meet the needs of children who may be starving socially, emotionally, etc. On the other hand it must meet the challenge of Christian nurture for children who are coming from environments where the spiritual elements of living are not primary among the parents' concerns. Parents also find it difficult, if not impossible, to reorder their financial and other priorities so that adequate school support can be forthcoming to help meet their children's needs.

#### Lutheran Schools in the Changing Neighborhood Situation

A number of older Lutheran parishes and schools have found themselves situated in neighborhoods which have become dramatically different from the ones which surrounded them when they were first established. Non-whites of many origins and religious traditions have moved in. Sooner or later the question of witness or non-witness will have to be addressed. And the challenges can be daunting. How do you address such cultural and religious diversity? What relevant words can you speak to a Buddhist, a Mohammeden, a Shintoist, or a Zoroastrian? How can you make a German choral relevant to a person who believes the essence of music is rhythm?

Some parishes have viewed the situation and decided to abandon the effort and move the whole congregational plant to the more understandable and benign suburbs. Others have elected to sit tight and take up the challenge of change and bring "the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ" to any and all who will listen. Such an effort could prove even more demanding than the one faced by our forefathers who had to accept the reality that English was the language of concourse in the United States.

The problems associated with educating multicultural students are many. Questions which require an answer include some like those which follow. Will we use the language they bring from home in any way or will the instruction be in English exclusively? To what extent will we be able to use the background and experiences they bring to the teaching-learning situation to help them adapt to contemporary American life? How will the parish(es) support the costs of educating them, since many will have to be subsidized? How can we adequately acculturate them when the children and their families live in ghetto-type neighborhoods?

#### Lessons the Past Teaches about Facing the Present

In the light of difficulties like the ones enumerated above, can Lutheran schools be optimistic about their potential for meeting the many problems facing them now and in the immediate future? This writer

would contend that they can because they have demonstrated a toughness and resiliency in dealing with many almost insurmountable odds in the past. My father-in-law quoted a leader among Lutheran teachers who declared repeatedly during the first decade of the 20th century that the days of the Lutheran parish schools were numbered. This gentleman contended that there were just too many forces in opposition, even though he stayed with the effort to his retirement. Forces mentioned by him included cultural and language change, religious apathy, changing cultural priorities, and public school development and growth.

But what happened? Many Lutherans continued to believe that under God's gracious guidance such hurdles could be met and overcome. Over a span of years Lutheran schools achieved a language change to English. They were not undone when it was decided in Cincinnati, Ohio in the Von Schlichten case that sending their children to the parish school could not be mandated for LCMS members and that failure to do so did not warrant church discipline. There was a gradual movement away from limiting enrollment to children whose parents were also members of the congregation. A number of teachers became involved in programs of community betterment, and some went on to serve in political offices at state and national levels. Vigorous efforts were mounted to meet the criticisms of ineffective teaching of religion and the secular subjects. J.C.W. Lindemann's *Schul-Praxis* was superseded by carefully prepared curricular outlines in the 1930s, and vigorous efforts to improve catechism and Bible history instruction were led by men like H. Boettcher and A. Schmieding. Efforts like these have been continuing with success to the present day, and many of the materials have found their way into other sectors of Christendom.

An interactive relationship has also been developing between public and church school officials that has proved helpful. Transportation needs, local and national pupil benefit programs, surveys of the implications of proposed public school curricula, and other common concerns are approached with an eye to obtaining the greatest common benefits. Addressing present societal needs, introducing an innovative and developing technology, and educating for personal and social responsibility can be approached within a context where each group can direct its strengths toward attacking pernicious influences which threaten to destroy the very fabric of American society.

The annual Gallup Poll reports with high consistency that the American public views school discipline as a perennial, unsolved problem. Educational leaders have formulated a number of models with address themselves to this task. With adaptations and variations some, like assertive discipline, have

been applied with success in the Lutheran school situation.

In a majority of Lutheran schools the daily and annual school schedules are strongly congruent with those of the local public school systems. Parent-teacher conferences, major vacation times, and time set aside for professional meetings and conferences tend to follow similar patterns. (Gone are the halcyon days when pupils in the Lutheran schools had to wait from early April to the end of June to enjoy vacation with their public school counterparts! The writer had to endure this indignity throughout the eight years of his elementary school career.)

Today Lutheran school faculties have professional preparation comparable to that of their public school counterparts. A bachelor's degree has become the accepted minimum for entry into the teaching ministry. But that may give way to five years of pre-professional and/or master's degree level preparation. And, of course, every teacher can be expected to have both broad general knowledge of many subjects and special expertise in at least one area like PE, art, English, or computer technology.

To keep abreast of surging change also requires paying close attention to housing the various components of the educational enterprise. When school facilities are being renovated or new ones constructed, full consideration must be given to incorporating adequate potential for changing expectations, needs, and technology. (There are communities where public foundations are willing to underwrite architect fees so any school in the area can get the best architect available to help plan facilities to meet current and future needs.) Pupils with a variety of handicaps must be provided for. Labs and equipment that accelerate language learning, facilitate musical instruction, and that provide for computer access, etc., must be included in the equation. In fact the facilities will probably be called on to serve the whole parish and/or school association including an age range extending from the pediatric to the geriatric group. This is no small task, but it can be done, as some parishes have demonstrated.

#### And What About the Future?

In an era of dynamic change what might Lutheran parishes, Lutheran school associations, synodical districts, and the Synod itself be doing to anticipate developing needs and to position themselves for student body agglomerates which are significantly different from the faculty and staff? A few ideas suggest themselves.

First of all, we need to take the Holy Scriptures seriously where we are enjoined "to honor all men" and to "love our neighbor as ourselves." God's love as manifested in Jesus Christ and brought into our hearts through the working of his Holy Spirit can

bring this about. Then, too, there is a continuing need to take a close look at answering the question, "And who is my neighbor?" There is a very good chance that the answers will involve people who are significantly different and who live uncomfortably close by!

Learning all we can about such people—their roots, their modes of living, their hopes and aspirations, their hurts and joys, etc.—becomes mandatory. Figures are being quoted now which indicate that the number of children enrolled in Missouri Synod Lutheran schools who are not members of Synod's churches is moving toward the one-half mark. That is a dramatic shift and indicative of further future change.

Demographers are writing that, given a continuation of present population growth trends, Americans of Western European ancestry might well be approaching minority status with Blacks and Hispanics moving to occupy the majority position by 2025 A.D.! And there is more than a numbers shift resident in this. Religious diversity is likely to increase. Asiatic and African religions are growing in numbers of adherents within the country and through the addition of immigrants. "Truly the fields are white unto harvest. Pray that the Lord may send forth laborers into His harvest."

We must learn how to find it easy to support mission efforts close by. God often brings people to us and we will have to learn how we might invite them and share with them the God whom we serve and His Son who is also their Savior. Doing this also on a full-time basis is likely to strain our educational and financial resources even more, but can we do anything less? The church must teach!

When this writer was principal of a Lutheran school, he often heard the query in meetings, "Can we afford to accept these children into our Lutheran school, Sunday school, etc.?" More appropriate comments would seem to have been, "How can we help these children?" and "Let's start now." *Luther reminds us that the Word of God is like a cloudburst watering the earth and that God moves it elsewhere when His people fail to see and seize their opportunities.* When new priorities must be set, let us set them, and if all of this should occasion some discomfort, let us be willing to accept that also. After all we are called on to "take up our cross and follow The Master."

#### Kinds of Professionals Needed in Lutheran Schools

We can anticipate a continuing demand for teachers who can pattern themselves after the Apostle Paul, who wrote, "I am become all things to all men, so that by all means I might save some." Look also at the privations and sufferings he

endured in his constant efforts to share the Christ he learned to know on the Damascus Road. Observe how he made use of his liberal education when making a statement to the Greeks on Mars Hill. Or take a look at his witness in the presence of church leaders and political rulers.

A second need will be a broadened knowledge and understanding of cultural diversity. This requires wide-ranging general study and in-depth work with specific groups. Personal acquaintance with representative individuals can prove helpful. Living with a family, where feasible, has potential for accelerated learning. Becoming conversant with the religious beliefs of a particular group should be sought. It would certainly prove helpful to know more about the religion of a Native American, a Hindu from India, or a Buddhist from Japan. *And pray.* A missionary to China many years ago told me that it took three to four hours of prayer a day for him to gather enough courage to witness for Christ in one of the large cities where he lived!

There is also a growing need to become conversant with the wide range of Christian denominations at work in the United States of America. A number of Lutheran elementary schools and high schools are currently conducting programs where efforts are being made to increase the students' knowledge and understanding of various Christian groups and world religions. Such knowledge and understanding should help prepare students to delineate more clearly what the Christian hope is, and what it is not.

#### What Can We Do?

We can publicize. We can witness. We can pray. There are parishes and schools which have caught the vision. They are successfully adapting their programs and practices to changing constituencies and neighborhoods. Some are well-known, while others are almost unknown. Let the rest of the church hear about effective programs currently in operation in St. Louis, Fort Wayne, and elsewhere. We need to continue sharing with the brethren how the difficulties occasioned by change can be turned into experiences and occasions of joy.

And don't fail to speak of the hope you have in Christ to anyone who will listen. In short, be a witness. This becomes easier with practice, and you can never know beforehand whose eyes might be led to see the Lord.

*And pray.* Remember: "The fervent effectual prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

Can Lutheran schools deal effectively with the changing complexion of their student bodies? In answer to that question this writer offers a resounding YES!

#### Sonnet For My Students



These images are clear and clean and bright  
as pebbles in a stream that runs away  
past hidden shoals where everything is night.

I hear your dreams and know your tortured days;  
I sense the sorrow in your youthful fright  
and see your eyes mist over with a haze  
of doubt, a fear that you would hide from me.

But I can only watch and wait for you  
to find your dream however hard to see.  
So has it been, so must it always be  
with hearts on fire with life, and wanting truth  
and yet afraid of risk or being wrong.

But come. Be brave, and use this time of youth  
to dare to be and sing the dreamer's song.

J.T. Ledbetter

# Is the Church Investing Adequately in New Christian Education Programs?

by **Raymond Huebschman**

Education, as always, seems to be in a state of flux. Concerns are raised regarding curriculum content, inadequate salaries for teachers, lack of funds for programs, and in certain segments of the country, the problem of safety for students and teachers is a cause for concern. Public education in particular is being challenged to produce better educated and better equipped students. The advent of teacher competency tests has added stress to teachers as well as school boards. Confidence in public education has caused people to seek alternatives. In addition, the trends seem to indicate that the number of persons entering the teaching profession is declining. The Rand Report projects that by the next decade, there will be a 30% shortfall in the number of teachers needed.

Many of these same problems affect Christian education as well. Nevertheless, as one of the alternatives to public education, people have turned to private education and church sponsored schools. These schools are showing growth. Within The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, statistical reports show an increase in the number of students attending both elementary and secondary schools. In fact, at the secondary level, the number of schools is increasing! The future for private and church sponsored education is bright. But the problems still remain. Perhaps the greatest of these is the lack of people entering the teaching profession. How can this challenge be met? One of the solutions that has been offered to meet this problem is the use of technology.

Technology in the education forum is not new. Since the inception of "audio-visual aids" in the twenties with the use of radio and motion pictures in the classroom, people have sought to make teaching more effective. The dissemination and utilization of information can indeed be enhanced by technology. Our lives are more and more concerned with the gathering and sorting of information so we can learn and make better judgments regarding our everyday lives. How then can we go about the task of integrating technology into our classrooms? What about the use of technology in the life of the parish, for instructional purposes, for personal growth and for the spreading of the Gospel message?

## New Possibilities of Microcomputers in Schools

Whenever a "new" technology appears on the scene it is often heralded as the remedy that cures the ailing child. Such was the case five or six years ago when microcomputers became available in large numbers and at a low enough cost to be affordable for schools. Now the novelty has worn off and educators are beginning to look at computers in a different light. The question of, "How does it work?" and, "What can it do?" are being replaced with questions concerned with how best to integrate it into the curriculum so its use becomes a natural extension of the teaching process rather than something special.

In many schools, we still attempt to get each child "on a computer" for fifteen to twenty minutes a day or to plan a sequence of study that will make them

computer literate. One state has required computer literacy even to the point of determining whether or not a student passes from one grade to the next.

The next step in computer utilization in the classroom is to use them to do the instructing, thereby freeing more time for the teacher to spend with the students individually. This could enable a teacher to work with more students and perhaps it will be a solution to the problem of fewer teachers in the profession. Teachers are searching for the software that will accomplish that task. To this point, software producers have not responded to the needs of teachers and students, but that appears to be changing as more and more software producers sit down with curriculum developers and discuss needs and how they may be met. We are emerging from the era of expensive machines drawing simple geometric figures to an era when the machines may actually challenge the thinking of a student.

Another emphasis that is emerging in schools is the use of the computer as a tool. The producers of "Bank Street Writer," a popular word processor for schools, has introduced a program called "Three to get Ready." This new product integrates a word processor, data base and spreadsheet. While using the spreadsheet, the student learns mathematics and the principles of economics. The database teaches social studies and the word processor can be used to teach writing skills. As programs such as "Three to get Ready" reach the market, they present their own unique problems. Will the teacher in the classroom be prepared to evaluate the merits of this software? What about new technology that is emerging? Will the schools be able to afford it? Should they make a financial commitment to it, and will teachers know how to use it?

One area of new technology that holds promise for education is interactive video. It is the wedding of computer with video, usually video disc. Interactive video involves the student in a direct way. Unlike conventional computer programs that require the student to make an either/or choice, interactive video allows the student to direct the process and see the result of his decisions. Using real images rather than computer graphics, the student feels involved in an actual event. The ability of the video disc to scan and retrieve information in a second or two holds the students interest much more than conventional computer instruction.

Unfortunately, the cost of such systems is high and while most applications are for business and industry, some programs have been developed for secondary science classes. At the rate at which new technology is developing, it may not be long before such systems make their way into more schools.

## School Applications of the CD ROM

Another new technological tool is the CD ROM.

CD's are compact discs and are best known as the new medium in music. These small shiny discs are finding their way into more and more homes as they reproduce music with none of the background noise of records or the hiss of tapes.

These same CD's are now interfaced or hooked to computers and contain vast amounts of information. Presently, the entire Grolier Encyclopedia occupies less than half of the space of a CD with the remaining space consisting of an elaborate indexing system which allows the user to access any information from the encyclopedia in less than ten seconds. Rather than selecting a volume of the encyclopedia, the users simply type in the subject of their choice and the CD ROM outputs all the references to the subject to a video screen, or a hard copy printout may be obtained. For those persons who already own a computer and subscribe to an information service via their telephone, this information is already available. A CD ROM in a school library would be a huge time saver for student and teacher alike. CD ROMs are presently available at reasonable prices.

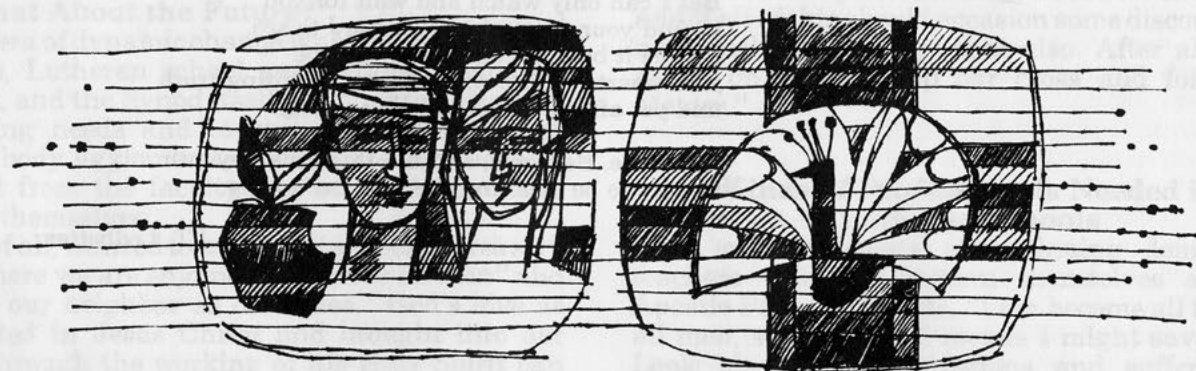
## Microcomputers Becoming Essential in Parish Offices

Technology has made its way into the parish as well as the school. More and more church offices find church secretaries using a word processor for church mailings, the Sunday bulletin, parish papers and the like. Pastors are using word processors to write sermons and outlines for Bible classes. They enjoy the ease of storing that information for future reference.

The typical use of computers in the parish is the integration of data bases for soul accounting...keeping abreast of a changing church roster. It enables the parish to better analyze its membership and put to use the various talents God has given the people in the parish. Other uses for the computer in the parish have been the maintaining of communion records, giving records and other financial data.

But new uses are being found for computers in the parish. One ambitious parish with talented people wrote a confirmation curriculum for the computer. Students work through information regarding the catechism at their own rate and later are reviewed by the pastor in a private meeting.

Pastors, themselves, are finding aids in sermon preparation in the form of computer disk based concordances. These disks are presently offered in two versions of the Bible. When pastors type in a key word, they obtain a computer data base listing of all the places the key word is found in Scripture. Pastors who have used it have found it to be faster and more convenient than regular concordances. The uses of computers in church life by pastors have grown so much in recent years that a conference called





CAMCON - "Computer Assisted Ministry Conference" was held in Los Angeles last March.

### Linking Computers...An Idea for Synod

Pastors are able to talk and share ideas with one another through modems that link their computers together. One church body, the Presbyterian Church, even has its own network, Presbynet, that links many of its pastors by presenting them with paid online accounts. Some information in the network originates from denominational offices and consequently is linked to regional offices, interested groups and individual pastors.

It would be a worthwhile endeavor for The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod to experiment with such a project. A target group of users could be identified, such as, district offices, institutions of higher learning and selected pastors. The experiment could be conducted over a year's period of time and the results shared with those concerned in the church at large. It would be a swift method of sharing information and one that might be more economical than conventional methods.

### A Video Cassette, a Favorite for Many Uses

A subtle change that has taken place in education without so much as a whimper from teachers and students is the introduction of the video cassette. We are used to seeing video and the number of homes with video recorders is increasing rapidly. Shops for the rental of video tapes are opening up everywhere. Video tapes are even found in supermarkets. The variety of material covers everything from entertainment to self-help videos on fitness, the improvement of your golf game to the hows and whys of choosing a particular wine for dinner. We no longer think of video tape as a new technology. It is, however, relatively new to education and we continue to investigate to see how we may use it more effectively not only in our schools but in our parishes as well.

The video cassette in education is sometimes preferred over 16mm film because of its ease of operation and lower cost. Originally video recordings were made of programs telecast by Educational Television stations for the purpose of instruction. As class times differed from broadcast times, member schools of the ETV station were granted permission to record programs for viewing at a later time. Teachers and students were provided supplementary materials to accompany the video as part of their annual fee as a member school. Soon more and more educational material was provided for rental or purchase in video as producers recognized a clear trend to accept video as a new teaching tool.

As the price of color video cameras came down, schools realized the potential of making their own videos for instruction, motivation, or the sharing of information or events in the life of the school. Video

has found its way into the parish as well. There is a wide range of materials available for parish use that covers an equally broad range of ages. Our own church body through Concordia Publishing House has produced video tapes like the "Nanny and Isaiah" series and the "Arch Book" series. These are ideal for youngsters in Sunday school classes and vacation Bible schools.

The Lutheran Layman's League has made available excellent materials for adult study as exemplified by the recent "Yeshua" series. More of these types of materials need to be produced. The positive response to these and other materials indicate that people in parishes are receptive to quality productions.

Synod itself has provided informative video tapes that show the work of the church in mission at home and abroad. These are an ideal method of getting information to synodical membership regarding the mission of the church.

At the local level, parishes are beginning to explore the use of video in a variety of ways. To assist them, Concordia Publishing House has produced a program entitled "Using Video in Ministry: A Guide for the Local Congregation." This video cassette and manual give ideas for the use of video in evangelism, teacher training, youth ministry and shut-in ministry. The program is a result of a two year pilot study involving congregations in Youngstown, Ohio and Austin, Texas.

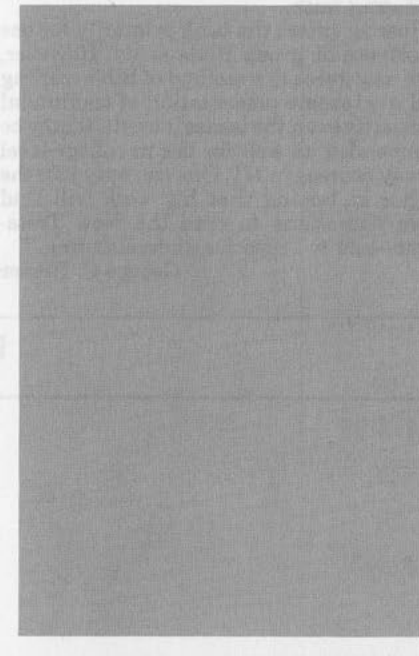
While these kinds of programs can assist congregations in answering the questions of if and how they should get involved in video ministry, it does not raise or answer all of the questions. If a congregation is satisfied with meeting its own needs regarding video, this program does an excellent job. If, however, a congregation would like to do ministry on a broader scale beyond its own members, other questions need to be raised regarding costs, equipment, expertise etc. Should a congregation seek to have access to local cable distribution or should it broadcast? Is there a need? Those questions require a great deal of study before a congregation makes a decision.

### What Shall LCMS Do on the Technological Frontier?

What is the future for technology in our Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod? First we must continue to produce the excellent programs we have in the past. Our publishing house must continue to produce videos that bring the gospel message to people of all ages as well as the instructional programs for professionals and lay leaders. Our Synod should keep its membership informed of programs of

(continued on page 20)

## book reviews



FIVE CRIES OF PARENTS: NEW HELP FOR FAMILIES ON THE ISSUES THAT TROUBLE THEM MOST by Merton and Irene Strommen. New York: Harper and Row, 1985.

As a father of a 13, 10, and 8 year old I am constantly on the lookout for clear, practical, substantial, and Gospel-centered resources that can enhance my understanding of and involvement in my role as a parent. *Five Cries of Parents* is just such a book.

The reoccurring theme of this 212 page book is that "family closeness fortifies children with an inner resistance against the toxins of life," i.e. drug use, premarital sexual activity, and other alienating and anti-social behaviors. Who among us, as parents, do not want such protection for offspring!

Writing out of their own experiences as the parents of five sons, and data generated from Search Institute's *Study of Young Adolescents and Their Parents*, Mert and his wife, Irene, have attempted to provide those in the parenting role with 1) a ration-

ale for their efforts; 2) a stimulus to encourage reflection upon how parents are handling their responsibilities; and 3) some specific directions regarding the kinds of help parents may need.

The Strommens contend that parents' most searching questions focus upon their strong desire—called a "cry"—for understanding (both of themselves and their adolescents), a close family, moral/social-oriented beliefs, a shared faith within the family, and an accepting attitude toward receiving help from outside of the family. As a result, they offer extensive descriptions of each cry and numerous ways for parents to respond to these concerns.

For example, as parents seek to deepen their own self-understanding the Strommens encourage that they come to grips with "hidden" emotional forces from the past such as wounded memories, unmet personal needs, feelings of failure, and reactions of anger. Or when parents desire to understand their adolescent(s) the authors offer the acronym "AFFIRMS" which identifies seven goals that parents need to assist their young people to achieve. What's more, the Strommens specifically identify "tasks" that moms and dads have which will aid their youth to achieve these goals.

There are also concrete suggestions for parents in terms of family communications, parental discipline styles, and ways to share the faith at home. In addition, the final chapter deals with six areas that frequently necessitate parents seeking assistance outside of the home: drug abuse, alcohol abuse, sexual activity, adolescent suicide, child abuse, and other out-of-control behaviors. Parents troubled by one or more of these critical situations could, in the three to four pages allotted to each concern, gather a lot of valuable information.

The potential uses of *Five Cries of Parents* are many. The five cries could serve as a year's program for PTL. Congregational youth counselors' training could be enhanced by the study of this book. Church staffs desiring to implement preventive efforts with families having young children could develop a retreat program around this resource.

Sometimes books that are based upon research studies are data-bound, dry, and lifeless. Not this one! Well-organized, full of

stories and understandable illustrations, the Strommens have written a down-to-earth, thoughtful resource for parents and those wishing to undergird their efforts.

The Strommens have captured my most urgent cries as a parent. And they've done so in a positive, caring, and practical way. This soon-to-be classic, in the up-and-coming area of family ministry, is another gift to those who live and labor within the Christian community.

Bill Karpenko

READING THE NEW TESTAMENT FOR UNDERSTANDING by Robert C. Hoerber. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1986.

There is a danger inherent in any book written concerning Scripture: the danger that its readers may substitute a reading and consideration of the book about Scripture for a careful reading of Scriptures itself. Not least of the merits of Robert Hoerber's recent work on the New Testament is his conscious attempt to make such a substitution impossible. Each chapter of the Concordia Seminary (St. Louis) professor's book consists of a series of study questions concerning the historical background or theological themes of a given NT book, together with a list of passages which he believes are helpful in proposing answers to those questions; then follows the author's own solutions, drawn from the cited passages. The reader is thus invited to examine the Biblical evidence for him/herself before reading Prof. Hoerber's views.

What Hoerber is attempting, above all, is to teach a method of reading Scripture which is accessible not merely to trained scholars, but to any attentive and careful reader. With credit to Mortimer Adler, Hoerber calls the technique "reading for understanding." With Adler, Hoerber compares such a close reading to the way moderns read love letters (and little else), "for all they are worth" (p. 12). While the presence of suggested guide passages in the model of the method that is provided by the book

limits the inductive character of a study which follows the book alone, the method itself is unquestionably and positively inductive in that it suggests that the text itself must initiate and control historical and theological hypotheses regarding the text. In short, as Hoerber explicitly states in the Epilog, this book will truly have succeeded only when it leads its readers beyond itself to ask further questions of the Biblical text and there to search for answers.

However, the book is not simply methodological or programmatic. In each chapter Hoerber presents a wealth of background information and an outline for the respective NT books. Hoerber's study has generally led him to favor traditional conclusions on issues like the authorship, dating and integrity of NT books; therefore his work is also a handy source of the passages which may be adduced to support traditional views.

It is in these specific conclusions, rather than in method, that given readers may choose to disagree with Hoerber (and Hoerber himself repeatedly offers counsel like: "always remembering that our suggestions are just that: probable answers

to open questions" [p. 171]). Thus, matters like the degree to which the Gospel of Luke's use of medical terms shows the author to be a physician (p. 54), or who was the author of Hebrews (p. 170) may be debated, even granted when using only the passages cited by Hoerber. Occasionally one might wish for a fuller or more balanced presentation of possible solutions, such as the issue of the original ending of Mark's Gospel (might not Mark have *meant* to end it at 16:8? [p. 44]), or the question of the location of the Galation congregation (p. 83f.). On the other hand, Hoerber presents a full and fair statement of the arguments for seeing Paul's captivity letters as written from Ephesus, rather than Rome, as traditionally held (pp. 129-131).

There is, of course, the danger that the reader will be led to place such issues of background on a par with matters of theological message, even the Gospel itself. In Hoerber's defense it may be observed that he does stress repeatedly the centrality of the Good News to the NT (p. 15 and *passim*). In any event, one suspects that for many modern Christians the danger lies elsewhere: in a tendency to overlook the

historical rootage of the salvation events and the Biblical text, and thereby to verge on the ancient error of *docetism*, a focus on the divinity of Jesus Christ (and of Scripture) to the exclusion of his (and its) humanity. Indeed, Hoerber stresses the degree to which specific historical issues and circumstances shaped the gospels and epistles, so that, for instance, Mark may be heard encouraging the church at Rome to steadfastness under pressure, while Luke assures his Greek and Roman readers that there is nothing subversive about the new Christian faith.

Hoerber offers the book primarily for use in private or group Bible study. However, both as a guide to a method of Bible reading and a winsome presentation of traditional perspectives on the issues it treats, it may be commended as well for use in college-level survey courses in NT. One can only join the author in hoping that his work will lead more Christians to read the New Testament—and to "read for understanding."

George C. Heider

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## ISSUES IN CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

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ministry and mission via the video format. But we as a church must also explore new possibilities for sharing the gospel.

Should we as a denomination have a national television worship program? If so, who would be the speaker? Where should the worship service originate? How will it be funded? When should it be aired? To whom should it be aimed? Should it be evangelistic in nature? Is it needed?...these and other questions need to be identified, discussed and answered. Answering them adequately is not easy.

Should we as a denomination have a network of stations? It is not news that other religious bodies have networks that are successful. We should look seriously at that possibility. It would entail satellite transmission from a central point, possibly the International Center, to various receiving stations throughout the nation. These receiving stations could be district offices and/or select congregations. Local congregations would then be able to receive this information by cable, microwave or satellite as well. This might very well be in conjunction with low power television stations. These stations might be locally owned by congregations or a consortium of congregations. The cost of such stations is quite low if they act as translators only, that is, merely passing on the signal. If the stations are also interested in local production, the cost would increase due to the purchase of origination equipment. Low power stations are designed by the FCC to meet the needs of private or minority groups within a community. Presently the FCC has had to develop a lottery for

the awarding of these stations since the demand for them is great. The FCC continues to look for a more equitable way of awarding licenses.

Such a system is already in place with the American Christian Television Systems - ACTS. Funded by the Southern Baptist Convention, a satellite is already reserved and applications for stations are pending. This group has made a major commitment to sharing the gospel through telecommunications. Can we do any less?

The problems that such a venture would raise are multiple. While cost is always a major factor in an endeavor of that magnitude, nevertheless it should never be a deterrent. Other problems that would need to be overcome include the concern for programming. Quality programs need to fill the air space if viewers are to be reached with the Gospel. It takes a great deal of time to develop such programming. If air time is to be granted to local congregations, they too will need a great deal of guidance in the development of ongoing programming. This is not an easy task. We have seen very little usage of public access on the cable systems as local people come to the realization that producing a television program requires a great deal more time for planning than they have and more skill than they possess.

Despite these problems, a serious look should be given to these opportunities to spread the Gospel by means of television. Our Lord has given us new technological tools with which to spread His saving grace. Let's get on with the task.

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