

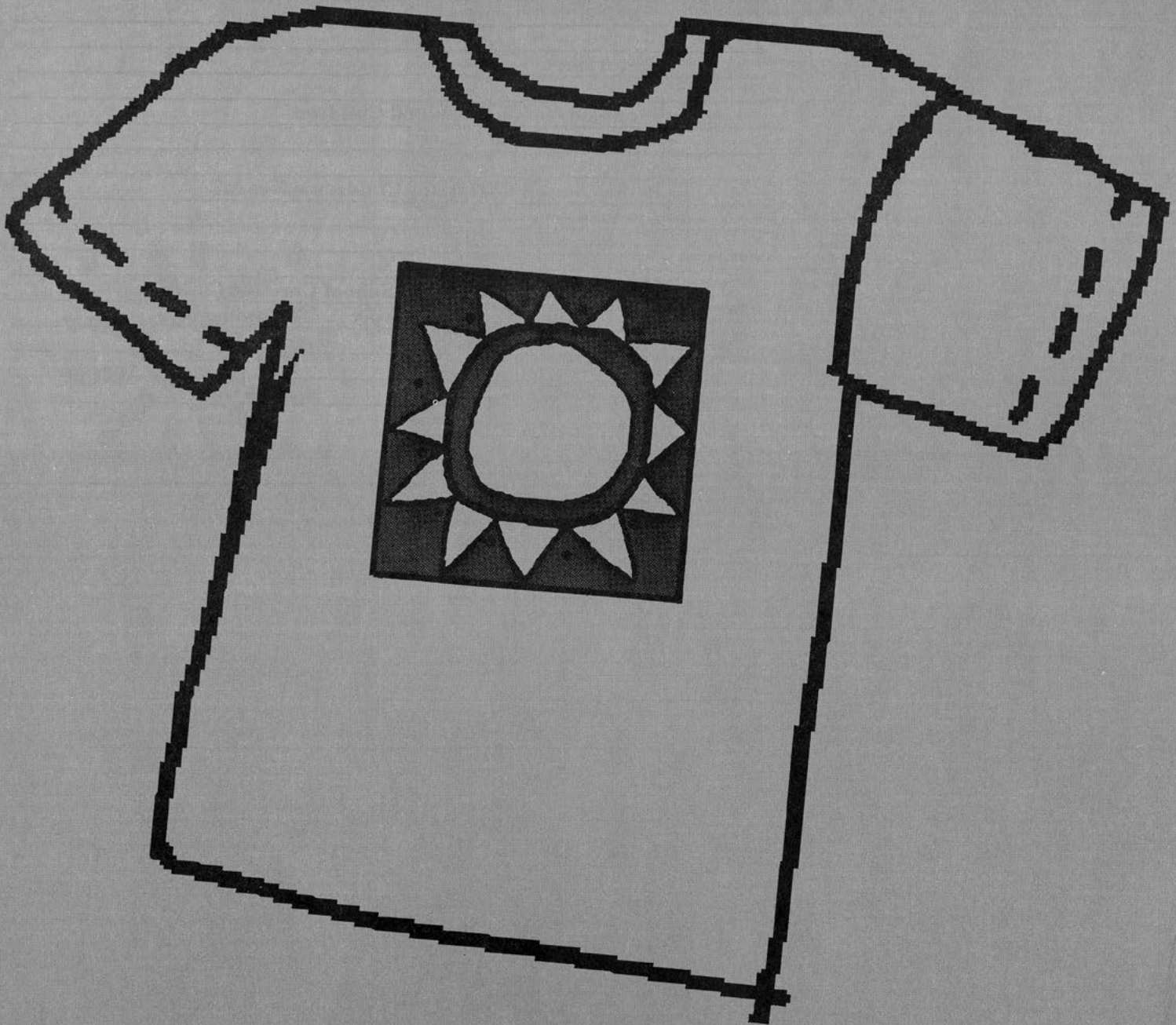
ISSUES

IN CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Summer, 1988

Vol. 22, No. 3

Concordia College
ARCHIVES
Seward, Nebraska



CARING FOR CHILDREN'S NEEDS

ISSUES

IN CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Caring for Children's Needs

Reflections

By Ralph L. Reinke

Editorials

Troubled Times, Troubled Children

by Judy Preuss

Is the Church Caring for Children's Needs?

An Assessment

by Ted Schroeder

How Can the Church and School Care for Children and Families More Effectively . . . A Proposal

by Dean Dammann

Book Reviews

Editor

Glenn C. Einspahr, Ed.D.

Editorial Committee

Marvin Bergman, Ed.D.

Book Reviews

Gilbert Daenzer, M.A.

Associate

George Heider, Ph.D.

Editorials

Ralph Reinke, Litt. D.

Associate

Richard Wiegmann, M.F.A.

Art

Administrative Secretary

Elizabeth Schmidt

EDITOR'S NOTES

This number of *Issues in Christian Education* completes eighteen volumes under my editorship. It all began when I informed Dr. Ted Janzow, then President of Concordia-Seward, that I was returning a call to an editorship with the Board of Parish Education of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod in St. Louis. He smiled and said, "Good! Now I have the man I need to edit *Issues*."

This editorship has been a blessing to me personally for eighteen years. Hopefully, my work has also been a blessing to the dozens who served on the Editorial Committee, the hundreds who have written copy for *Issues'* pages and the thousands who have read it. Completion of the current volume seemed a good time to ask for a replacement.

A special farewell tribute is due to two colleagues whose special talents always helped meet the deadlines and pull everything together. Professor Richard Wiegmann has been a joy to team with as he prepared the art work, helped clarify the themes, and produced the layout. Mrs. Elizabeth Schmidt always remembered those details I forgot, managed the budget and provided the printer with impeccable manuscripts for the typesetters.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Ronald Brusius is Director of Adult and Family Life for the Board for Parish Services of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. His office is in the International Center of the LCMS, St. Louis, Missouri.

F. William Chandler is principal of Trinity Lutheran School, Grand Island, Nebraska and a member of the Concordia-Seward Board of Regents.

Dean Dammann is Administrative Assistant to the President for Education and Youth of the Southern California District of LCMS. His office is in Los Angeles, California.

Robert Eggold is Executive Secretary of Parish Education of the Kansas District of LCMS. His office is in Topeka, Kansas.

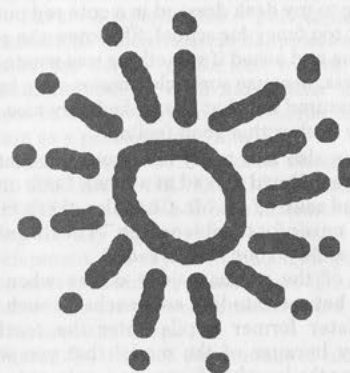
Ted Schroeder is the newly appointed Resource Specialist for Education in the Division of Congregational Life of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. His office is in Chicago, Illinois.

All other contributors to this number of *Issues* are members of the Concordia College, Seward, Nebraska faculty.

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

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

Readers are invited to reprint portions of *ISSUES* materials provided that the following credit line appears: "Reprinted from *ISSUES in Christian Education*, Volume 22, No. 3, Summer, 1988, a publication of Concordia Teachers College, Seward, Nebraska." The editor should receive a copy of the reprint.



reflections
LETTER FROM

Just before copy for this column was written the Nebraska Educational Television Network presented a week of special programs on the urgent need for affordable quality child care. If we were looking for evidence of the timeliness of the theme of this number of *Issues*, those six television presentations certainly would be reassuring. Our church and nation have a major unsolved problem when it comes to caring for children's needs. Unfortunately, the day when we can believe we are implementing the solutions to childcare needs in the United States isn't even on the horizon yet.

One of our graduate students, who had lived with his family in Canada before moving to our country, helped add meaning to statements which claim that the United States does less to care for the needs of children than most other civilized countries. He said that the Canadian Government sent his wife a sizeable check at the end of the year in payment for her having stayed home with their young children instead of going back to work at a wage earning job. As a nation, and sometimes as a church, we should be shamed into action by his report. Furthermore, one of our Chinese graduate students say that her father, a medical doctor, receives about the same pay that she does, and she is a school teacher in mainland China at what we call the junior high school grades. Space prevents me from adding more evidence from still other nations.

One trend that is having and will continue to have a negative impact on the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod's ability to move toward more adequate levels of care for our children is the decreasing numbers of available Christian teachers, directors of Christian education, and pastors. Every LCMS member has a big job to do if he or she really cares about the welfare of our children, and for that matter, the future of the mission of the church. That job is to activate our congregational youth to enroll at Concordia and our congregational members to support those who will be studying to become our professional church workers of the future.

Let us follow the example of our Savior who took children into His arms and blessed them — in spite of the admonitions of the disciples, who probably were suggesting that He didn't have time for that. Let us also act in response to His admonition when He said, "Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them; for to such belongs the Kingdom of God." (Luke 18, 16)

Ralph Reinke, President

What Students Do To and For Their Teachers

What impact do students and teachers have on each other? The answer to this question lies primarily with the teacher. If a teacher's only concern is to impart knowledge, very little impact will be felt. If a teacher has as a primary concern the success of the students, a greater impact will occur. If, however, a teacher regards the students as fellow members of the body of Christ and believes that developing a Christian relationship with the students is essential to positive growth, there will be a marked impact on both teachers and students. The students will sense a teacher who loves them, is concerned about them, and ready to help them grow as children of God. The teacher will see each student as a unique personality that can enrich the teacher's life.

For a teacher to truly appreciate children, it may take a change in attitude toward them. In my early days of teaching, I taught grades three, four and five. One year the fifth grade was especially vexing. There were numerous cases of hostility between us. At the end of the year we all breathed a sigh of relief to be able to part company. To my chagrin (and probably the students') a teacher was added to our staff, and I was given grades five and six. This meant that my problems were returning as sixth graders. I decided I needed, with the Lord's help, to change my attitude toward them, if I were to last the year. What a difference it made! I went from one of my worst years of teaching to one I treasure among the best. The students even arranged a surprise thank you party for me.

Positive relationships with students change over the years. In the first years I was blessed with little blond third grade girls who had "crushes" on me. In my first year I hung my coat with the students', and Diane always hung her coat by mine. One day I received the report that "Diane is kissing your coat." On Judy's spelling paper I found the extra note, "I like you." A few spelling papers later it read, "I like you for a teacher. That's all." Then I had to discipline Judy - a rare occurrence. On the next spelling paper she lovingly said, "I like you however you are!" As the years go on, the student crush on the young teacher subsides, but the love is still there. It may manifest itself in a hug, a kind word, or just a warm smile.

Speaking of discipline, students understand and accept it, if it is approached from the proper Christian perspective, as Christ also disciplined. Danny asked me why I was always watching him. I replied that if I didn't, he would be into trouble. Obviously, I was not developing a relationship with him, and I never would. On the positive side, I appreciated a comment by eighth grader Julie:

"Mr. Chandler gets so mad at us for something we've done wrong. Then he goes back to teaching as if nothing had happened."

In my years of teaching I don't remember teaching successes as much as personal love between me and the students. I still clearly picture Suzanne, a fourth grader whose mother had died, coming to my desk dressed in a cute red outfit - almost too fancy for school. She knew she could trust me and asked if something was wrong with her dress, because some classmates were laughing. I assured her that she looked very nice. She left my desk with a good feeling.

I have also had many humorous encounters. Grade four David looked at a music book on my desk and said, "Yup, Mr. Chandler, that's music for us - music for terrible voices." The title of the book was *Music for Treble Voices*.

One of the ultimate joys comes when the impact between student and teacher is such that years later former pupils enter the teaching ministry because of the model that you were. Such was the joy when Sue gave me a hug as a former pupil and now as a fellow teacher. I knew her feeling because years before I became a colleague of teacher, Arnold Lohse, who had made the same impact on my life in my elementary years.

F. William Chandler

Caring for Children's Needs

The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod is well-known for the quality of its educational system. It is possible for a child to start in the LCMS network as a preschooler and continue right through to being qualified to enter one of the various ministries of the church and even to go on to a graduate program in a particular ministry specialty.

What many of our people don't realize is that we are also leaders in family life education. For example, the Concordia Sex Education Series is widely acclaimed as home-centered, values-oriented sex education for preschool through the adults years. The basic concept of the series is so simple and yet so profound. Parents are charged with the responsibility of rearing their children as God-fearing males and females with a reverence and respect for their sexuality. This seems out of place in a society which sees sex as a toy to be used capriciously and carelessly.

Combining what we know about human development and strong families with what we know about the Gospel as source and motivator for all of our life, it is amazing that we so often

leave out a key ingredient when we talk about caring for children, namely, by strengthening households we will strengthen children.

The sad fact about our society is that we live in an age which is really anti-child. At one time children were considered gifts from God and economic necessities. Today they are often spoken of as burdens and economic liabilities. We have adopted the philosophies of organizations which measure happiness and success by the earthly goods that we are able to accumulate and by what individuals can contribute to society. We should instead see each person as a precious gift from God.

A recent report to President Reagan titled *THE FAMILY: PRESERVING AMERICA'S FUTURE* quotes Urie Bronfenbrenner as identifying the key ingredient in successful human development. He says, "Somebody's got to be crazy about the kids." A main thesis of the report is that we all need to be clear, unashamed, values-proclaimers and lovers.

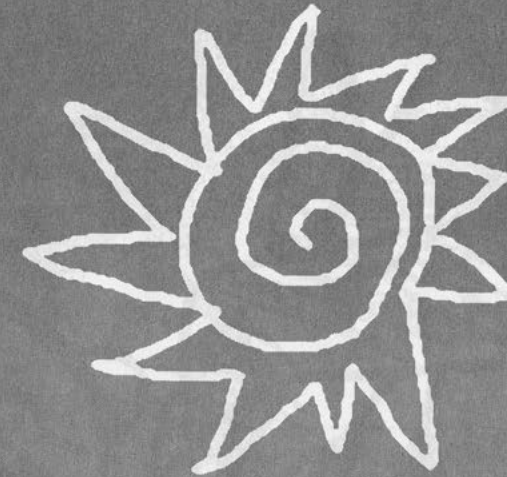
Ultimately, it is not the amount of money we are able to muster for programs, equipment, resource people, and materials. It is how we see ourselves in relationship to one another as brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ and how seriously we take households as partners in all that we do. We need congregational members, administrators, and professionals who "are crazy about the kids" as a present reality rather than future assets and who see the vital role assigned by God to families and household units.

In an age of consumable goods and services, we need to stress the importance of strong Christ-centered families. One serious task is to recognize the role of fathers and to provide them with support to become spiritual participants and spiritual leaders in their families. Another important task is to provide as much support and stability for single parent families as possible.

The church is one of the few places remaining where there is contact among all age groups. We need to take advantage of that and seek ways to bring ages together rather than ways to separate them.

Lutheran schools offer a unique opportunity to care for children by strengthening households. Home visits are still an important part of student orientation into a new classroom, and Lutheran teachers are respected and influential within students' homes. What is needed is an intentional plan which recognizes the importance of the home-school partnership and is implemented by people who are "crazy about the kids" for who they are today as well as who they will become.

Ronald Brusius



The Fun in Watching Tommy Grow

It's great to watch a child grow up and especially to watch an immature, troubled child grow out of his bad habits and take on a positive spirit. Good teachers help make this happen. This is one of the great joys of being a teacher!

An example of what I have in mind is this comment, heard at a school staff meeting. They were talking about ten-year-old Tommy. "It's a miracle how he's changed. When he first enrolled in second grade, he was rebellious and filled with anger. But now, look at him. He's a different boy, cheerful, pleasant, under control!"

Perhaps you have a similar story. You remember a child in your classroom. You vividly recall the growth, healing and recovery that gradually took place over many months. You can still feel the thrill of the unfolding miracle within the child's life. That was a precious event in your career.

As you consider this, some questions come forward. Can we expect this recovery to be repeated in the lives of other troubled children? Yes, we can, is our answer. Why? Because we know what happened. This was not a rare and isolated episode in the life of the school. We have solid hope that we can change the lives of many children for the better. This is our reason for being a Lutheran School in our community.

To understand this more fully, let's try to explain this dramatic change in the lives of troubled children. What really happens? To answer that, let's hear Tommy's story. In the first few months it became clear that Tommy felt worthless, unloved. This made him feel helpless and angry. He was fighting back, but he began slowly to trust his teacher.

She was different from all the other adults in his life. She accepted and cared for him. She really wanted to be his friend. Even better than that, Tommy listened closely to the stories she told about Jesus, his special friend. When Tommy was mean and selfish, she talked to him and helped him to see what he was doing. She forgave him, and assured him that Jesus forgave him.

As time went on Tommy began to relax and be more open. His sullen attitude faded; he could laugh and play with the rest. He felt good to have friends. His work improved and his stubbornness about his lessons soon came under control. He responded well to loving motivation. He liked pleasant surprises from his teacher, and she made sure there was one for him at least once a day.

By now Tommy was eating and sleeping much better. The doctor took him off medication. The pastor noticed how cheerfully he sang in chapel services. One day he timidly asked his teacher if he could be baptized. That was a big event for Tommy and his family.

Tommy's next school year was even better. His mean and angry outbursts were much less frequent. He thrived on the many new opportunities his teacher gave the children who were cooperating and completing their lessons well. His teachers were careful to be very consistent in their dealing with Tommy and in their expectations of him. Tommy felt loved, supported, appreciated. School was fun!

In the meantime Tommy's parents enrolled in a course, taught by the principal, showing helpful parenting skills. They learned effective ways to work with Tommy at home. Both at home and at school Tommy began to realize that there were clear limits, beyond which he was not to go. He was expected to show self-control. He was held responsible for his unacceptable behavior. He realized there was always a consequence. He was held accountable, but he felt plenty of support on those "off-days" when he sensed he was slipping out of control.

Looking back, after three years at the Lutheran School, Tommy would joke about what an awful boy he had been. Then he would give a big smile as he said, "I'm not that boy anymore!"

Robert L. Eggold



**troubled
times**

**troubled
children**

by Judy Preuss

God's Way for Rearing Children

Recently, while witnessing a familiar scenario, an infant baptism, I was struck by the admonition of the pastor to the parents, sponsors and congregations. The parents were reminded of God's plan for families through Bible verses such as, "Bring up your child in the nurture and admonition of the Lord," and "Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Prov. 22:6). Their responsibilities were enumerated in the context of God's plan that parents provide a safe nurturing environment for children.

Throughout the Bible God provides guidelines for parents. Parents are to be teachers — to share God's love with children (Deut. 6:7). Parents are to train their children (Is. 38:19). Parents are to provide for their children (II Cor. 12:14). Eph. 6:14 and Col. 3:21 direct parents to admonish or discipline their children. I Tim. 3:4 speaks of teaching respect for authority and Titus 2:4 speaks of parental love for children.

Psalm 127:3 states "... children are an heritage of the Lord ..." They are an inheritance, a gift, something to be treasured and cared for. The pastor next directed his attention to the sponsors indicating their responsibilities to assist the parents, to pray for the child, and to help with the child's Christian education. Finally, the congregation was directed to accept this child as a fellow believer, to love him in Christ, to pray for him and for the young family. Why was this familiar scenario so impressive that particular Sunday morning? Probably because I knew the family well and had witnessed the development of this baby's father years earlier.

Several days prior to this baptism I enjoyed a visit with this infant's grandmother. As we reminisced, we rehearsed children's birthday parties, school picnics and programs, scraped knees, graduations and weddings. This reflective time allowed us to focus on and share treasured family memories. It also caused us to conclude that those were safer, quieter and less hurried times.

Pressures That Inhibit Family Effectiveness

Times have changed and with them lifestyles and family structures. Parents and children face a different world today than we faced twenty-five plus years ago. There are many reasons for these differences: the disintegration of the extended family, alternate family structures, lack of religious training, pressure to succeed, peer pressure, materialistic emphasis, social immorality and world unrest.

Spatial limitations prohibit the examination of all these stressors; however, the remainder of this article will focus on several of these factors which are viewed as contributing to problems faced by a growing number of children.

Stressors

The very living of life exposes children to stressors. These events, whether emotional, physical, social, or intellectual, are in and of themselves neutral. Stress results when a child is faced with an unusual demand for adaptation which causes use of an energy reserve over and above that which is ordinarily expended. ⁶ Everyone has a different level of energy reserve, hence the ability of some children to adapt better to specific situations than others. The use of this energy reserve is viewed as positive if the event is emotionally, physically, socially or intellectually stimulating and provides an exciting experience. It is viewed as negative if it results in pressure, strain and/or tensions which are prolonged or repeated. ²

Children deal with two types of stress, internal and external. ³ A poor self-concept is an example of internal stress. External stress, things like sibling rivalry, family disruptions, school, child abuse and death can be experienced directly or vicariously. Many children experience vicarious stress through many hours of unrestricted television viewing. Stress is real. The consequences of stress in children have stimulated much research and discussion in recent years. Focusing on some of the research and statistics might help sharpen our view of possible church related intervention strategies.

Altered Family Structures

Current Bureau of Labor statistics reflect marked changes in family structure in recent years. Today only 20% of families consist of father as breadwinner, mother at home with children under 18. Ten years ago it was 41%. Fifty percent of children five years old and younger live in two parent households where both parents work as compared to 28% in 1970. Fifty-eight percent of children ages six to thirteen live in two parent families where both parents work. One of the greatest social changes of the century is the increase in the numbers of women joining the work force. "Mothers of young children are the fastest growing group of workers in the nation." ⁴

Women working outside the home are sharing in the financial responsibilities of raising a family. These financial responsibilities are real and they are increasing. It is estimated that one year of child rearing consumed 29% of the median family income in 1984 as compared to 11% in 1966. ¹

In a household where both parents work the children's daily routine is dictated by parental workload. Predictable schedules such as meals, bath, and bedtime are a thing of the past. Even the amount of quality time (special, individual attention) spent with children is dependent upon parental job responsibilities. At the University of Michigan Institute for Social Research a recent study found that working mothers spend an average of eleven minutes of quality time with their children on weekdays and about 30 minutes daily on weekends. Fathers spend about eight minutes of quality time with their children on weekdays and fourteen minutes on weekends.

Child Care Practices

Another result of the two income family is the need for child care. The use of quality child care is not necessarily harmful to children. However, the fact that "75-90% of day care centers are unlicensed and unregistered"¹ constitutes a concern. Those children who are not in child care facilities, but who care for themselves while waiting for parents to return from work, are another source of concern. The children involved in either of the aforementioned situations suffer from stress as the result of separation from parents, the competitive environment at child care facilities and/or the need to care for themselves. Even the most self-reliant children become frightened when the evening news centers on world hunger and war while the milk carton on the breakfast table displays pictures of missing children.

The estimated 7 million latchkey children under the age of 14 in America spend an average of 4-6 hours daily watching television. A 1982 report by the National Institute of Mental Health states that children who watch a lot of violence on television display more aggressive behavior and accept violence as normal behavior.¹ Television also serves as a communication substitute in many families. If parents spend a combined total of 19 minutes of quality time with children daily, that leaves children on their own to solve their problems much of the time. The lack of quality time, the separation from parents, day care and television as a substitute for family communication, are all part of the erosion of a strong family unit which, by God's design, is to provide a safe, comfortable environment in which to grow.

Divorce

Another factor contributing to stress for children is the dramatic increase in the divorce rate. More than seven out of every ten marriages end in divorce. Fifty-eight percent of children ages **five and younger** live in single parent families. Single parent families make up 68% of the family structures for children ages 6 to 13.¹ The number of preschoolers living with a single divorced parent soared 11% in the last fifteen years.¹ Children in these altered family settings are often expected to accept responsibilities beyond their years. Sometimes they even stand in for the absent adult in terms of doing household duties and caring for younger siblings.

Some of these children lead two lives. They are grown ups at home and then go to school to be children. A con-

cerned teacher noticed one of her students often dozed in class. Through questioning the student she discovered that the child's mother worked until midnight and he babysat for his year-old brother. The boy explained, "Sometimes he wakes up early and I have to too." God's design for families is one of shared responsibility between a mother and father; where this design is freely altered, children suffer. The home is to provide a warm, caring, nurturing environment. This is not to say that cannot happen in single parent families; however, it can be much harder to accomplish.

Because they live in altered and/or unstable environments, children of divorce show more signs of stress than children of traditional families.¹ Brophy (pg. 63) warns that another aspect of the divorce dilemma is the "self-perpetuating cycle of destructive behavior (which) may already be in motion because children tend to repeat the parental patterns with their own children."

Suggested Sources of Assistance

A Family Ministry by the Church

An effective intervention in this disastrous cycle would be a reduction in the divorce rate. To accomplish such a task calls for a re-evaluation of the commitment to marriage. This presupposes a return to the study of God's Word regarding marriage and family. This is a sizable but necessary undertaking if children are to grow up to be stable, contributing members of the church and society.

Many Lutheran churches are actively engaged in ministry to divorced or single parents. What about the children in these situations? Who is ministering to them? There is a desperate need for Christian social workers within the church. St. John, Seward, Nebraska has a social worker as a part-time staff member. This individual functions in two ways: providing direct services and training other members in areas of ministry such as respite care. Through the efforts of this social worker sessions are held weekly for children of divorced and/or single parents. The number of children attending these sessions has increased to the extent that it is now necessary for several adults to work with the children. These children not only need an environment in which to discuss their life situation but they need to hear of Jesus' love for them. They need to know their value as a human being is not dependent on family structure but is the direct result of God's love in Jesus.

Reducing Pupil Stress in the Schools

Still another stress producing area for children is school. David Elkind, Early Childhood Education Specialist, stated that "the national trend to push children to achieve academically has led to inappropriate teaching methods and the results are that children face stress and educational burn out in elementary school."⁵ These sentiments are reinforced by Dr. Benjamin Spock who says the emphasis (educationally) on competition and getting ahead minimizes the importance of cooperation, helpfulness and kindness.¹⁴

Studies in curriculum recently have emphasized the fact that content taught in fifth grade as little as ten years ago is

now part of the third grade curriculum. Children are being asked to learn more faster and at an earlier age. The result is an increase in stress-related health problems among children. The estimate is that 35% of American children suffer stress related health problems.¹ These problems include bedwetting, insomnia, acute depression (5% of children) and ulcers.

As a college student, this writer remembers reading statistics on the suicide rate among Japanese young people which were directly attributed to academic stress. The suicide rate among American youngsters ages 15 and younger has doubled since 1980.¹ Not all stress-related health problems or suicides can be directly attributed to academic stress; however, the cause-effect relationship is growing at an alarming rate. When parents and teachers take no action to help children cope with stress, they set in motion a vicious cycle that can have serious consequences for the child's physical, emotional and intellectual development.

Since children spend more time at school than any other place outside the home, school has the potential to minimize educational stress for children. This is particularly true in Lutheran elementary and secondary schools where education is rooted in Jesus' love and forgiveness. Academic and other forms of stress can be minimized in the caring and supportive environment of a Christian educational experience. This experience must not be limited to the parochial school but must be a congregational endeavor to provide a life long Christian educational environment in which learners of all ages can be stimulated to take risks and accept challenges, to learn positive and constructive responses to stressful events in their lives, to try these responses and to be encouraged to grow in their faith and ability to cope with stress.

Providing Christian Education

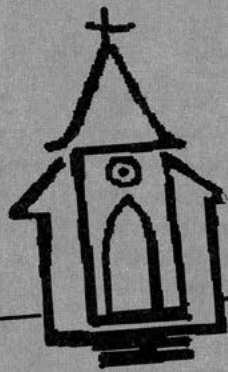
Lutheran education contributes positively to the development of children emotionally, physically, socially, creatively, and spiritually. Children who attend Lutheran schools can daily be made aware of their importance as human beings because of Jesus' love. Daily they witness the modeling of Jesus' love in their teachers. This environment supports their growth attempts in all aspects of their personalities through the consistent application of Law and Gospel. The commitment of our Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod to Christian education has a long and positive history. We believe in Christian education. This belief must be acted upon. Congregations must provide many forms of educational programming if today's children are to become productive members of their churches and their communities.

The social changes - altered family structures, working parents, and competition - which have activated the fast forward button of childhood, are irreversible. The age of childhood innocence is shorter than ever before. This set of circumstances makes it essential for all Christians to be concerned about and actively involved in the spread of the Gospel, especially through the agency of Lutheran schools.



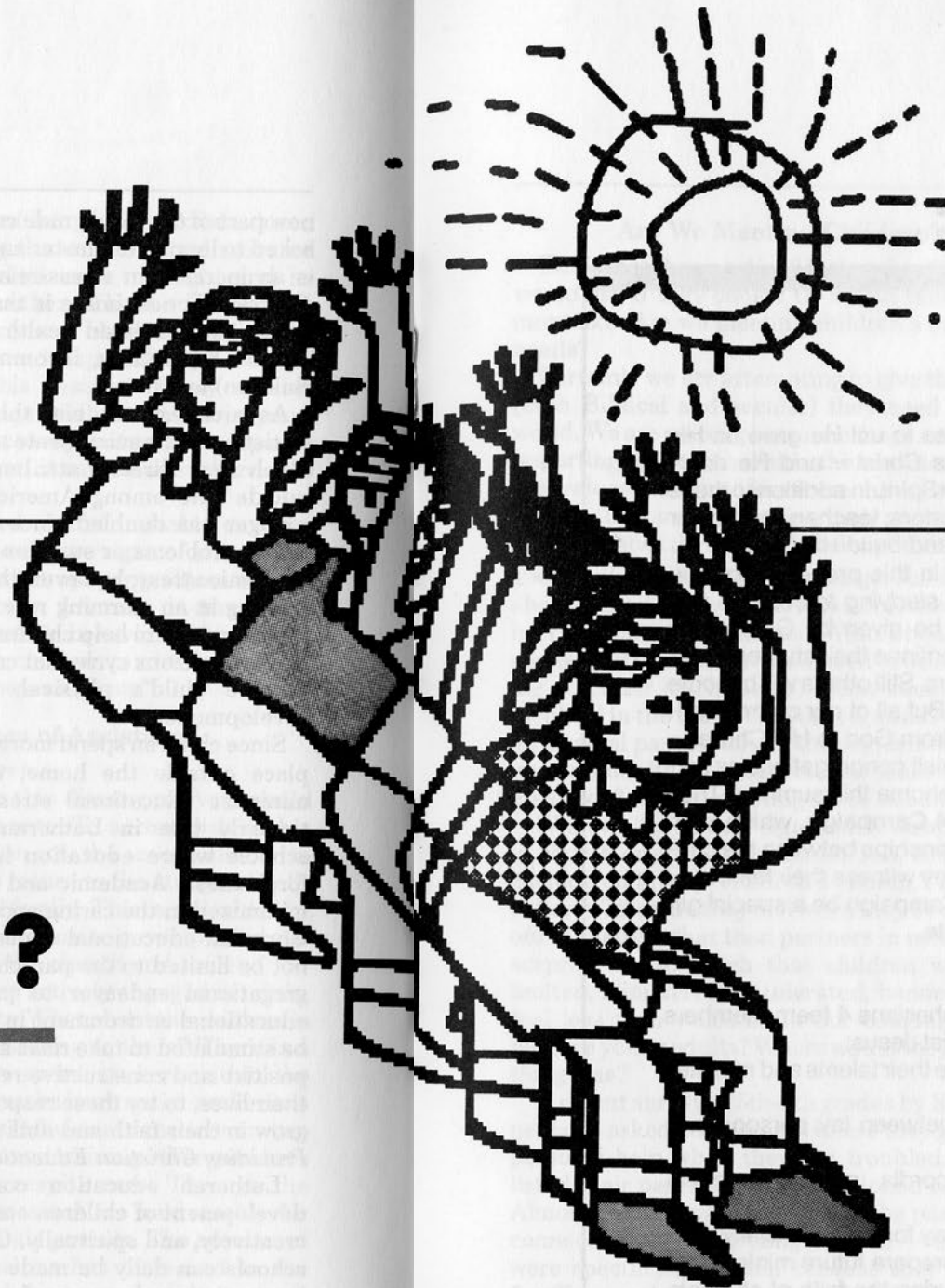
Bibliography

- ¹Brophy, Beth and Maureen Walsh. *U.S. News and World Report*, Oct. 27, 1986.
- ²*Childhood Stress: A Guide For Caring Adults*. Life Skills Education, Inc.
- ³*Children and Stress*. Association for Childhood Education International, Washington, D.C. 1982.
- ⁴Decker, Delia Anita and John R. Decker. *Planning and Administrating Early Childhood Programs*. 4th edition. Columbus, OH: Merrill, 1988.
- ⁵Elkind, David. *The Hurried Child*. Addison-Wesley Publishing Company. Reading, MA, 1981.
- ⁶Elkind, David. *Young Children*. March, 1987.
- ⁷*Handling Stress in Children*. National Association of Elementary School Principals, Volume 3, No. 2, Oct. 1984.
- ⁸Johns, Bruce and Martha. "Stress It Burns Out Kids, Too," *Learning*, Vol. 11, No. 6, Jan. 1983, pp. 48-49.
- ⁹*Kids*, "What Causes Stress in Children." Allen Gonsler, Pres., Kids, Inc., Omaha, NE.
- ¹⁰Kuczen, Barbara. "Even Kids Suffer from Stress . . . and Help Begins at Home." *Early Years*, Vol. 15, No. 4, Dec. 1984, pp. 26-27.
- ¹¹Postman, Neil. *The Disappearance of Childhood*. Delacorte Press, New York, 1982.
- ¹²Shrier, Diane. "Children and Stress: Sources, Reactions and Interventions," *Day Care and Early Education*, Vol. 11, No. 4. Summer, 1984, pp. 10-13.
- ¹³Schultz, Edward and Charles Heuchert. *Child Stress and the School Experience*, Human Sciences Press, Inc., 1983.
- ¹⁴Spock, Benjamin. *U.S. News and World Report*, Oct. 27, 1986.
- ¹⁵Swick, Kevin and Patricia Hanley. *Stress and the Classroom Teacher*. National Education Association, 1980.



Is the Church Caring for Children's Needs?

AN ASSESSMENT



by Ted Schroeder

witnessing and ministering to others. We don't let them even peek into the operation of the congregation. We don't put them at the heart of fellowship activities and only tolerate them in the congregation's worship. Reach children? Don't be absurd. We keep them at the end of a ten foot pole called education and then wonder why they disappear when we "graduate" them from confirmation class.

Well, who is right? Do we reach children or not? Do we minister effectively with them or not? Do we involve them or not? Do we meet their needs or not?

The LCMS Educational Ministry to Children

Certainly, in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, much of the church's time, effort, and funding goes to ministries to children. Currently the congregations of the Synod support 1811 day schools — including 643 preschools with 197,520 children enrolled. No other Protestant denomination even approaches that figure. Our mission to children? Fully 44% of the children involved in these schools are from other denominations or from families who belong to no church at all.

Presently it takes 7,827 full time teachers, 2,825 part time teachers at total operating cost of \$199,225,397 per year to serve those 197,520 students. How could anyone dare to say that we are not serving children?

On top of that massive day school educational effort, in 1986 LCMS congregations:

Operated 6,006 Sunday schools, enrolling 593,068 children and staffed by 83,366 people — mostly volunteers;

Ran 4,627 Vacation Bible Schools with 329,068 children enrolled and 137,498 people gave time and effort to make that ministry happen;

Operated 4,015 weekday schools serving 66,691 young people (mostly 7th and 8th graders) that led to 35,198 confirmations.

Of course more statistics could be gathered to make the same point. In our church a massive effort goes into educational ministries for children. Thousands attend release time classes. Some come to church for choir, for athletics, for scouting, and other activities. Many congregations put together opportunities for camping for children; others offer retreats. Some gather children for regular outings and field trips. Several have children's organizations that sponsor fellowship activities for older elementary children.

It is impossible to even estimate the cost, both in time and money, of all of these formal and informal ministries for children. How can one calculate the worth of the time that more than 83,000 Sunday school teachers invest in their calling every year? How much is the space the children use in the church building worth? How much do the materials cost? Surely the statistics one might gather to answer such questions would be staggering.

If the question is, are we meeting the educational needs of the children in our congregation, the answer seems to be a definite yes.

"Rear Pews Reserved for Parents with Small Children."
"Children Not Permitted in the Sanctuary Without Adult Supervision."

"The children will get fingerprints all over the glass."
"As a special feature, this congregation offers 'Children's Church' during the second service. Children are encouraged to attend 'church' in the gym while the adults worship in the sanctuary."

"At least 70% of our children are enrolled in our parochial school."

"Parents are encouraged to remove unruly children to the cry room."

"The program won't interfere with anything important. All that goes on between services is Sunday School."

"I can't understand why these young people drop out of church. Once they're confirmed you hardly see them anymore."

"Confirmation Class? Spare me! The kids don't care about it. The parents don't care. Why should I?"

"Children at the communion rail just slow things up. They don't need to be up there. All they do is mess around and distract those who want to worship."

"Aren't they cute? And for first graders, most of them are right on tune."

How are we doing at ministering to and with children? How well are they involved? How are we doing at meeting their needs? at reaching them with the Gospel? at making them know they are a part of the congregation? at equip-

ping them for the task of living as a disciple of Christ? How are we doing?

"Very well," some might say. We are reaching children. We are involving them in education, in worship, in the life of the congregation. We have children's church, children's choir, VBS, Sunday school, parochial school, weekday school, confirmation class, family nights, Christmas programs, children's bulletins, a cry room and an occasional sermonette for the children in the morning worship service. What else can we do?

"We're doing very poorly at reaching children," others might say. Sure, we minister TO children, when it is convenient. We educate them, discipline them, put them in their expected boxes, keep them in their tight little roles. But we don't reach them. We don't involve them in the mission of the church. We don't challenge them, set them at the task of

Ephesians 4:

A Gift for You!

What wonderful gifts God gives to us! He gave us His ultimate and perfect gift – Jesus Christ – and He richly blesses us with the gift of His Holy Spirit. In addition to these gifts, He Himself also gives us pastors, teachers, and other ministers in order to strengthen and build His Church.

God uses Concordia College in this process. *Approximately 70% of our students are studying to become full-time churchworkers.* Some will be given by God to His Church as teachers. Some will continue their studies at our seminaries, later becoming pastors. Still others will become directors of Christian education. But all of our churchwork students will be gifts, blessings from God to His Church.

Eight Concordia students will visit congregations as servants in Missouri, Iowa, and Oklahoma this summer. They come as part of our **Ephesians 4 Campaign**, which is an effort by Concordia to build relationships between the congregations and the college. As they witness their faith, may both they and our Ephesians 4 Campaign be a special gift from God to those who participate.

Purposes of Ephesians 4

- Provide opportunities for Ephesians 4 team members to testify of their faith in Christ Jesus;
- Allow team members to share their talents and minister to others;
- Build strong relationships between lay persons and Concordia College;
- Promote interest in Concordia among potential students;
- Identify persons willing to pray for and financially support Concordia's efforts to prepare future ministers of the Church, as well as nurturing the faith of students who plan to enter other fields of work.

If your congregation is not among those to be visited this summer, consider the benefits that might be generated in your parish from such a visit. For more information write to:

Ephesians 4 Campaign

Concordia College

800 North Columbia Avenue
Seward, Nebraska 68434



Are We Meeting Children's Needs?

But is that the question? Is that the question the children would ask if they could? Or would their questions sound more like: Are we meeting children's needs — all of their needs?

Certainly we are attempting to give them the knowledge (both Biblical and secular) they need to make it in the world. We are passing on our heritage as Lutherans. We are imparting to them the faith, the tradition of Biblical study, the values and traditions we have inherited from the fathers. But are we meeting their needs?

What about their need to belong? their need for safety in a world that is increasingly dangerous for children? What about their need to be nurtured emotionally? their need to be valuable as individuals? What about their need to be challenged in the faith? their need to be set at the task of living out their discipleship? What about their need to be involved in the life of the congregation? or their need to be an integral part of the worshiping, fellowshiping, ministering community of believers that makes up the local congregation? Are we meeting those needs?

What do "keep out" signs, adult disapproval of children in church or at the communion rail, activities that clearly exclude children, "children's church," and the like say to children? How do they feel when they become the objects of our ministry rather than partners in ministry? Why does it surprise us so much that children who are excluded, limited, ministered to, tolerated, banned, and overlooked feel less than welcome in our congregations when they become young adults? Where would they have learned anything else?

A recent survey of 5th-9th grades by Search, Inc. of Minneapolis asked adolescents where they go for spiritual and personal help when they are troubled. Most, of course, listed their parents. Some mentioned teachers or friends. Almost none thought to mention the pastor or anyone else connected with their congregation — and these children were specifically chosen because they were members of families involved in congregational life. Perhaps what we are doing as we deal with children in the church is meeting our perceived need to give them what we think they should have and not even dealing with their needs as they perceive them.

Who Cares about the Children?

One of the activities I've done to help teachers become more sensitive to the needs of the individuals in their classes is to ask them to "create" a child on paper from a one sentence starter I provide. These starter descriptions read like this: "Oldest child in the family. Father alcoholic. Mother works out of home. Several younger children at home."

Each participant is asked to write a first person account of such a child's life — including hurts and needs, joys and sorrows, wants and dreams, all of it. Many of the "creations" the teachers put together, even in the short time allowed, are beautiful and insightful. Then we

generate a list of the "needs" the children the teachers have created might have. You know what the lists look like. These children need: love, understanding, affirmation, a sense of self-worth, someone to encourage them, someone to build them up, someone to reach out to them, someone to help them overcome their shyness, someone to listen, someone to help them make decisions, someone to care.

Someone.

Do the children, the almost 200,000 children in our day schools, the thousands in our weekday classes, in our Sunday schools, in our VBS efforts, in our confirmation classes find that someone — that someone who cares? Do they find adults living out the call of the Savior to reach out in love to those of whom Jesus said, "of such are the kingdom of God"?

Do they find the affirmation, encouragement, concern, loving acceptance they need in their congregation? Or do they find more busy adults — adults who are willing to dole out the education that the children "should" have, but too busy to be involved in the hurts and pains and fears and frustrations that make up the lives of so many of the children who pass wide-eyed and expectantly through the front door of the church — and back out again?

Do we meet the needs of children? Perhaps. Perhaps we meet some of them. Certainly we have mounted a massive effort to meet their educational needs.

But do we meet their personal needs? Do we meet their needs as individuals — their needs to be loved and cared for and affirmed and included and made safe?

Some of God's people do — to be sure. You can see these need-meeters in every congregation. They're usually around children! Look for them on the floor of the children's play area or at a table with painfully small chairs. All of us have memories from our own childhood of such "saints" who reached us behind our barriers of fear and shyness and made us feel loved.

But as a church, as an institution, as congregations perhaps we fail more often than we should to reach children. Perhaps in our desire to "involve" adults, to please them and minister to them and reach them, we shove the children into the background. Thoughtlessly, we ignore them until we can deal with them, push them aside till a more opportune time.

And if that is true, what are the implications of that failure for us who call ourselves leaders in the church and have set ourselves the task of ministering to children? There are no easy answers. But we might begin a real assessment of our own congregations with a question like this: What would our congregation look like, act like, be like if we took seriously that simple command of the Savior to, "suffer the little children to come unto me"? What would this congregation look like if we got out of His way and let the little children come? Would they find someone then?

How Can the Church and School Care for Children and Families More Effectively? **A PROPOSAL**

The Lutheran Church has always demonstrated a special sense of ministry to children through its Christian day school. Can the church and school continue as an effective ministry to children and meet these new challenges? What change and action is required?

To explore how the church can care for children more effectively, this article will: re-examine the ministry and mission of the church, explore the family dimension of children's needs, propose a new way of looking at the Lutheran school's ministry, and offer some suggestions for church leaders to mobilize all of God's people to better care for children.

The Mission and Ministry of the Church

A simple understanding of the individual's part in God's mission is well stated in II Corinthians 5:17-20, TEV:

All this is done by God, who through Christ changed us from enemies into his friends and gave us the task of making others his friends also. Our message is that God was making all mankind his friends through Christ. God did not

keep an account of their sins, and he has given us the message which tells how he makes them his friends. Here we are then, speaking for Christ, as though God himself were making his appeal through us. We plead on Christ's behalf: let God change you from enemies into his friends!

God's mission is to people. It happens in relationships. Our task is to build a relationship between Christ and others so they can become His friends also. We want all people to be a part of His family. Church and school become the context for our role of "matchmaking."

A good statement of Christian ministry is found in Romans 12. We, as members of Christ's body, the church, are to offer ourselves as a living sacrifice to God, dedicated to His service and pleasing to Him. We use our different gifts in His service. Paul speaks of a loving, caring, serving, joy-filled heart full of devotion, patience in trouble, and prayer at all times.

The congregation is not the church. It is a man-made organization which assists individuals to function together as the body of Christ. People are really the church. Con-

gregations, schools, Sunday schools, and vacation Bible schools are the structures for a coordinated use of gifts in mission and ministry.

The school can be viewed as a structure which functions as church. This concept is purposed not to develop a contest between church and school, but rather to open the door to new understandings of the role of school in our Christian missions and ministry in today's world.

Family Ministry

The family is a key dimension in the church's response to children. The Lutheran church and school have consistently said that they are in partnership with parents in nurturing children. Leaders of church and school have cited Scripture verses such as Deuteronomy 6:7-9, and Ephesians 6:4 to point out that parents have the responsibility to teach their children about spiritual matters.

Teach them to your children. Repeat them when you are at home and when you are away, when you are resting and when you are working. Tie them on your arms and wear them on your

foreheads as reminders. Write them on the doorposts of your houses and on your gates. Deuteronomy 6:7-9 TEV

Parents do not treat your children in such a way as to make them angry. Instead, raise them with Christian discipline and instruction. Ephesians 6:4 TEV

The church has accepted the role of assisting parents to carry out God's will by providing Sunday schools, vacation Bible schools, camping programs, and Christian day schools for Christian nurture.

Current Family Problems

Children are growing up in a different world. Technology has created so much change in our society that we have become detached from our roots. Cultural heritage, family customs, and church traditions are constantly being challenged. Television provides a widening exposure to knowledge, values, and attitudes.

The family needs more help today. The church's ministry to children should be enlarged to include the family. Although we acknowledge parents to have primary respon-



sibility for the growth of children, we are aware that many families do not include both parents. It is estimated that four out of ten children born in the 1970s will spend part of their childhoods in single parent families. There are also a growing number of homes that include a step-parent.

Traditionally the mother was at home to care for children. An increasing number of mothers are returning to the work market. Today, more than 50% of mothers of school-age children and 40% of those with preschool-age children are working outside the home.

New Opportunities for the Church

The family should be the key component to the church's "new look" as a caring ministry to children. While the one to one ministry of classroom, playground, and sanctuary should receive priority time and emphasis, our new challenge is to broaden our ministry to intentionally include parents and families.

This article's focus is on how the Lutheran school can more effectively be "the church" to families. The Lutheran school is the best avenue for serving today's children and families. The needs of society have opened wide the doors of opportunity for Christian child care programs and schools.

The history of the church demonstrates that people responded to the challenges of their time. When the forefathers of our denomination emigrated to this country their church and school were important for maintenance of their religious and cultural heritage.

Today God has given the Lutheran school the opportunity to reach beyond congregational membership to other Christian and non-Christian families. Parents are seeking schools which meet their concern for teaching moral values. Many parents also need the extended day care provided before and after school. Our churches and schools have the challenge to bring people who are not a part of our church family into relationship with Jesus Christ. Equally as challenging is our role in assisting them in their discipleship. The needs of parents and families provide an open door for our ministry.

So What Should We Do? — A Proposal

Most church and school leaders recognize the church's purpose to be in mission and ministry and can affirm and elaborate on the needs of families today. So, what should be done?

Congregation and school leaders are encouraged to take a new look at the Lutheran school as a vehicle for meaningful mission and ministry in today's world. When we do this we will:

I

View the school as church. In addition to Christian nurture, include worship, witness, fellowship, and service as part of the curriculum and extra-curricular activities.

II

Provide a ministry to all school families, both children and parents. Welcome them as part of the fellowship of faith at your place.

III

Make the school an effective outreach to the unchurched families. Use every opportunity both to witness and serve the children and families in your community.

Some Implications of the Proposal

To many children and parents, the school is their only contact with a Christian organization. If you would ask a child to what church he/she belonged, the answer would quite likely be the church where he/she attends school. The school needs to acknowledge this changed circumstance and involve parents and children in meaningful worship activities, e.g., special Christian musicals.

Involving parents and children in Christian service helps them to become part of the Christian fellowship. Visiting the elderly, activities with grandparents, and providing food for the poor are the kind of activities that are expressions of the fellowship of faith.

Our emphasis on church membership often excludes families from wholehearted participation in church or school activities. Is it truly necessary for parent-teacher organization officers to be members of the sponsoring church? Are church member parents the only ones solicited for "getting ready for school" work parties? Are all families visited by teachers and pastors?

If the school is viewed as church, and an effort is made to include all families as part of the family of God gathered at your location, it is much easier to reach out with a witness to those who have not acknowledged Christ as Savior and Lord. The II Corinthians 5:17-20 passages quoted earlier



points out that our task is to "make others His friends." If the non-member families are our friends, it is easier to introduce them to our friend, Christ.

How to Implement the Proposal

The following suggestions and questions may stimulate some action plans to implement this three-pronged proposal:

- Gather data about the families in your community, school and church. How many are single parent families? How many are two parent families where both work outside the home? How many families include a step-parent? What activities are families presently doing together? What are parents doing to help their children develop moral values? Are families encouraging a growing relationship with God? Through interview and focus groups, determine specific family needs.
- Examine findings in a variety of forums. Board, faculty and staff meetings are important places to explore the significance of data to ongoing mission and ministry.
- Re-examine the role of traditional programs and structures in relationship to the needs and challenges. Traditionally the purpose of the Lutheran school has been for nurturing the child. How should the purpose and approach of church and school change if witness to child and parent is an important need?
- How should the church view the need for child care, both before and after school hours? Should the church provide care for infants and toddlers?
- Explore how traditional attitudes affect responding to new challenges. "I am an educator and not an evangelist or pastor. Why should I be concerned about witnessing to and serving school families?" "Mothers should be at home with the children. We should discourage work outside the home, instead of providing a child care ministry." "Our pastor should not visit school families that are members of other churches. Others might think we were 'sheep stealing'."
- Church, Lutheran school, and family are structures for human endeavor and spiritual growth. We often speak of the church as the family of God, community of saints, fellowship of believers. Yet, we do not carry the analogy to the Lutheran school. If we viewed the school as a family of God, would that change our perspective on the school as a place for meaningful worship, witness, and service, in addition to spiritual growth?
- What can Lutheran congregations with schools and child care programs do to create an inviting climate for ministering and gathering into the community of believers those parents and children who are not members of a Christian church?
- Study how your congregation and school activities enhance its Christian witness and nurture. Is your



confirmation ministry reaching the non-member children? Are school families invited and involved in congregational fellowship activities?

- Has the purpose of the Lutheran school been understood and accepted by all parents? Should the purposes be restated to reflect new opportunities for mission and ministry?
- How can the church and school meet the needs of single parents?

Ways to Improve Our Witness and Service to Children and Families

- Involve school parents in the planning.
- Utilize the resource books, *Church Growth Through Lutheran Schools*, from the Board for Parish Services, LCMS, and *Open Doors*, from Augsburg Publishing House, in planning new approaches and activities.
- Plan for in-service activities for teachers and staff in active listening, pastoral counseling, home visits, relationship witnessing, and other skills to enhance a personal ministry with families.
- Review the school curriculum to determine if it reflects the spiritual needs of non-church children, particularly as to their level of Bible knowledge.
- Review present church and school activities from the perspective of a non-member parent to determine how the activities might better serve families.
- Determine, with the help of parents, new programs or activities which would be helpful to families.
- Utilize personal contact between teachers and parents to initiate ministry with all school families.
- Plan occasions for faculty and church members to develop relationships with school families.
- Organize support groups to care for special family circumstances and needs.
- Plan worship that is joyful for all who attend.
- Plan inter-generational Christian education and service activities.
- **BE A CONGREGATION AND SCHOOL THAT LISTENS AND CARES.**

book reviews

SYSTEMATIC RELIGIOUS EDUCATION by Timothy Arthur Lines. Birmingham, Alabama: Religious Education Press, 1987.

The quest for the improvement of religious education motivated Timothy Lines to author a systematically thorough book. In it he details the theory of systematic religious education. The rich and provocative ideas about necessary and meaningful approaches to religious education militate against the reader idly wandering through the 250 pages. Thoroughly discussed theoretical approaches to religious education demand a genuine interest in order to assimilate what Robert Conrad of the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago says is a "challenge to religion, education, and religious education."

According to Lines, elements of religious education are nurture, development, intentionality, interaction, and transformation. "It is a *systematic perspective*: an integrative, transdisciplinary, and dynamic venture that perceives religious education from a teleological viewpoint. The systematic perspective uses the organism as its primary metaphor, where interrelated and interdependent elements interact to create a dynamic and transforming whole. The goal, then, is to develop religious education organismically."

Lines' systematic approach includes four principal elements: paradigm, worldview, model, and simulation. *Paradigms* are shared examples that serve as methodological functions. The *worldview* is a comprehensive set of assumptions and presuppositions about the ultimate reality of existence. *Models* are used in detail because the author believes that they provide ways in which new discoveries can be made. New discoveries are needed if we are to keep abreast of changing worldviews. In order to have actual, concrete demonstrations of the theoretical model, there must be *stimulation*. The entire approach is an "open system" because there is constant interchange with environmental factors.

Next there is a need in systematic religious education to find an integration of thinking and doing. One is fruitless without the other. *Thinking* about doing can improve the doing of some-

thing; the *doing* of something can help in the development of new ways of thinking.

In the design of a systematic model, there are interactive elements, namely, *purpose, function, and structure*. The *purpose* is Christian living. The element of *function* seeks maturity and health as part of a fluid changing process that searches for holistic nexus, which is a binding together of the past while providing a guiding vision of the ideal future. Although the content of religious education must be *structured*, Lines warns that, if this becomes the top priority, there will be closed system thinking and the worldview will become improbable. In keeping with the idea that organism is the primary metaphor, the first concern must be for purpose and function in religious education while content and structure evolve as needed.

Educators who are satisfied with the transmission of "facts" or "truth" about religion or theology will discover that they are not doing systematic religious education. Mere transmission of fact can hardly be equated with education.

In addition to transmission and memorization, systematic religious education calls for interpretation, values, detection, and movement toward meaning and integration. Systematic religious education is less interested in receiving "right" answers than in asking progressively better questions, and it is a continuous *process* of searching, attempting, creating, and transforming.

Hopefully, the theory of systematic religious education contains the ideals that Lutheran educators have held over the years. The extreme practices of memorization and indoctrination have not provided evidence that the "doing" was an important part of the "knowing." The *application* part of the classical lesson plan was an attempt at creating meaningfulness. Systematic religious education strongly places the emphasis on application to life.

Further serious study of systematic religious education is recommended if Lutheran educators desire to make instruction in the Holy Word more meaningful and relevant. Secondly, turning excellent theory into practice will

become a challenge for developers of curricula and especially for facilitators in the classes and classrooms where learners come together to *know* and *do* the Word.

Systematic Religious Education deserves serious study as education continues to make a difference in the lives of learners.

Herman Glaess

PAUL, THE TEACHER: A RESOURCE FOR TEACHERS IN THE CHURCH by Kent L. Johnson. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing Company, 1986.

This paperback is worthy of wide circulation among workers currently engaged in the various educational enterprises of the Christian church and among those preparing for this kind of ministry. The author has surveyed his subject with a careful eye on the timeless message of God's salvation for mankind in Jesus Christ, on the dynamic witness of the Apostle Paul's writings to communicate that reality, and on an appropriate selection of categories and techniques for effective teaching promoted by several of the leading educators of the present century. All of the foregoing have been achieved with an integration of purpose and message that is impressive. *Christian education is a tool that can help make a difference!*

The Apostle Paul belongs in the front rank of God's messengers of grace. His activities as an evangelist, a founder of churches, and a contender for "The Way" are widely known. But his ability to teach and to communicate through the oral and written word under the Holy Spirit's blessing also continue to inform, inspire, and motivate all whom God has chosen for His own.

Dr. Johnson places the Apostle Paul in the ranks of teachers who fit the authority/enabler paradigm. By means of a careful selection of relevant Bible passages, the author demonstrates that Paul viewed people as learners who require teachers who are awake to their followers' need to

become personally involved and also be given spiritual support as they progress in living a life of faith and love.

The author presents the reader with a distillation of Paul's strategies in helping people learn. The central features include revelation, experience, reason, imitation, and reinforcement. Paul also was a master at dialog and demonstrated a genuine concern in its use even for his enemies as he witnessed to the Word he was chosen to proclaim.

Him (Jesus) we proclaim, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man mature in Christ. For this I toil striving with all the energy which he mightily inspires within me. (Col. 1:28-29) Page 126.

There are books and there are BOOKS. Many Christian educators will want to own a copy of this one!

Gilbert Blomenberg

FAITH AND FAMILIES. Lindell Sawyers, ed. Philadelphia: The Geneva Press, 1988.

Convinced that family ministry is underfunded and understaffed in the church today, a team of theologians, social scientists, and educators offer persuasive evidence in a series of symposium papers that the church faces a significant challenge and opportunity to make important contributions to the lives of families. Some of the challenges become evident in a review of data which reveal startling shifts and diversity in household structures: an increase of 200% in the number of one-parent families since 1970 (70% of children of Caucasian families and 94% of children of Black families born in 1980 will live with only one parent at some time by age eighteen); an increase of 300% of cohabiting couples since 1970; 45% of all marriage today are remarriages. As the baby boom cohort expands the middle-age segment, we will see fewer young and preretirement adults, a constant minority of children, and more elderly, especially the old old.

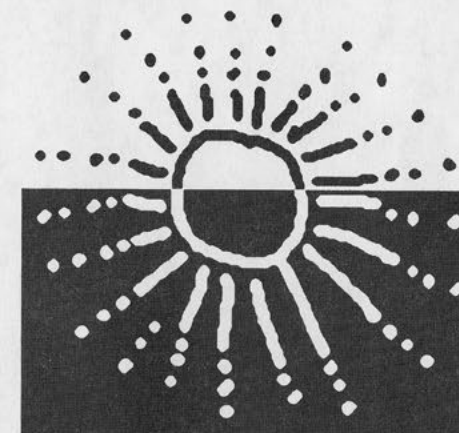
One result of this increasing diversity in family makeup is a wider range of needs and expectations on the part of households.

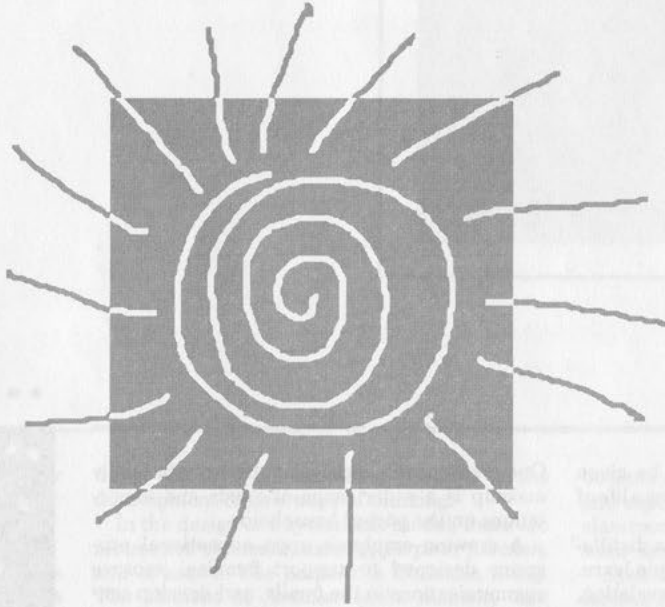
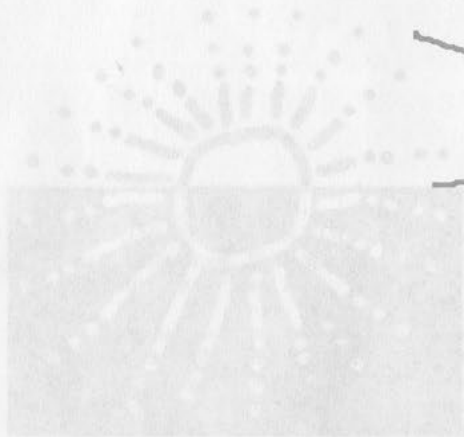
A growing emphasis upon educational programs designed to support families, improve communications in the family, and develop sensitivity, awareness, understanding, and caring is applauded. Possible emphases in the church's educational ministry are identified in studies of resilient families and competencies needed to cope throughout the life cycle. Factors identified in families who reflected critical strengths across stages of the family life cycle included satisfying marital communication, family integrity and cohesiveness, agreement on finances, satisfying sexual relationships, and enjoyment of children.

While the exegetical treatment of several Pauline passages relating to the family is not satisfactory and a Reformed theological perspective dilutes a Law-Gospel accent at various points, three theological position papers are illuminating. In the Scriptures, family images and stories are used not only to express theology, but also to focus on the family as a significant context for the development of faith. When the claim that what is constitutive of families is promise-keeping is examined, the vulnerability of some contemporary household structures is exposed.

In assessing the relationships between congregations and families in the parish, one conclusion was that there seems to be no particular policy in many denominations today. Thus, the examination of the roles of congregations and the larger church in relation to families deserve high priority. Data demonstrating significant shifts in the structure of families in the U.S.A. appeared in the 1960s. Since that time, the mass media have taught so many so much, so well, and often, so tragically. Today, the consciousness of the church concerning the critical importance of a strong family ministry has been raised to a new level. The question now is, "Does the church have the will to respond to this challenge and opportunity?"

Marvin Bergman





CONCORDIA TEACHERS COLLEGE
Seward, Nebraska 68434

Address Correction Requested. Return Postage Guaranteed

Route to: _____

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