

# ISSUES

IN CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Summer 1993 Vol. 27, No. 2



**EVANGELISTIC  
OUTREACH  
THROUGH LUTHERAN SCHOOLS**



# ISSUES

IN CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

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## Evangelistic Outreach Through Lutheran Schools

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## reflections

reflections

SEVERAL YEARS AGO WHILE ASSISTING A CONGREGATION that was in the process of calling a pastor to fill its vacancy, I asked one of the ushers how many people had attended a Sunday morning worship service. His answer caused a frown to appear on my forehead. As we discussed the matter further, he said, "Well, pastor, you don't want us to count the kids, do you?" When I ever so gently pointed out that, indeed, children can worship God, the usher replied, "Well, we've never counted children here before!"

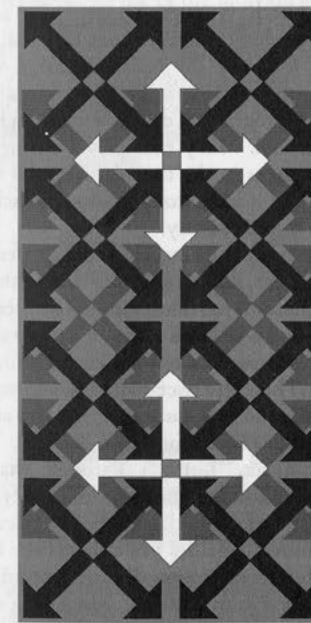
"We've never done that before" might well describe evangelistic outreach through some of our Lutheran schools. To be sure, there has been outreach through our schools. The March 1993 issue of *Alight* pointed out that "during the 1991-1992 school year, 10,933 souls joined the congregations operating a Lutheran school as a direct result of their school . . . 2,806 children were baptized, 3,569 adults joined the congregations by transfer, and 4,558 adults joined the congregations operating a school through adult baptism or confirmation as a direct result of a child's attendance at a Lutheran school." Praise the Lord!

But could our Lutheran schools be even more effective in evangelistic outreach? This edition of *Issues in Christian Education* shares highlights of an evangelistic outreach project of the Center for Urban Education Ministry and the Lutheran Women's Missionary League. Our goal is to share the findings of this project in a way that will provide significant help to leaders in our schools in designing and implementing effective programs of outreach to the unchurched and inactive families being served by the schools. Readers, you have exciting material herein from which to gain new insights for Gospel outreach via our Lutheran schools.

If you want answers to any of the following questions, read on. You will find answers to questions such as:

1. Are the number of pupils from unchurched or inactive families increasing in our Lutheran schools?
2. Have pastors frequently been hesitant to become involved in the spiritual lives of the non-Lutheran families in our schools?
3. Who is the single most important human being in evangelistic outreach in our Lutheran schools?
4. What about the suggestion that Lutheran teachings get "watered down" when large numbers of non-Lutheran students enroll in our schools?
5. How important is it that the principal/director of a school clearly identifies the purposes of the school to non-Lutheran parents in pre-enrollment meetings?

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## editorials

### Lutheran Day Schools: For Such a Time as This

If ever there was a need for Lutheran Day Schools, it is the era in which we are living right now. The whole Magic Johnson issue that came to the front in the first part of 1992 is just one that points to the destruction of American values. Lutheran schools cannot succumb to this destruction. Lutheran schools cannot give in to society. Lutheran schools must be recognized for what they have always been—a strong agency of the church that educates children with the Gospel of Christ, and shares with the children the way of the Christian life.

When Dr. Roy Kaiser addressed the 1989 Department of Lutheran Elementary School Principals Convention in Fort Wayne, he suggested that one of 18 challenges facing our Lutheran schools, as we attempt to keep them exemplary in the 90's, is to make our schools the number one evangelistic agency of the congregation. To accomplish this, Dr. Kaiser suggested our synodical colleges must develop a "new breed" of teachers, namely, those who are evangelists, witnesses, missionaries, those who are ministers. They must be teachers who are God's representatives to families, and Dr. Kaiser said our teachers must feel and know they are in mission.

**David Mannigel**  
Principal, St. John Lutheran School  
Seward, Nebraska

### Evangelism Through Lutheran Schools

Teaching ministers need to become partners with parents so that the children can get the best Christian education possible. Whenever a Christian teacher ministers to a child, that teacher is also indirectly ministering to the whole family. It is like a mobile that hangs from a ceiling in a classroom. When you touch one part of the mobile, the whole thing moves. And so when Christian teachers touch the lives of children in their classrooms with God's Word and His love, they affect the entire family. Get a child excited about Jesus, and that child will in turn get his parents excited. Get a child excited about sharing, and that child in turn will get her parents excited about sharing.

Lutheran teachers spend about 1,050 hours a year with their students. That is a significant amount of time to share the Gospel of Christ with the children. Christian teachers share the Gospel in everything they do in a Lutheran school as they integrate the faith all day long. A pastor who is ministering to a congregation very often has only 52 hours a year that He can share that Gospel with his entire congregation. The Christian Day School teacher has a much larger time base with which to work. The LCMS schools enrolled 251,849 students last year (1991-1992), and of that number 29,273 were unchurched. As a direct result of the influence of a Lutheran school, 3,272 children were baptized and 5,483 adults joined a congregation by baptism or confirmation. Another 3,786 adults joined a congregation by transfer, making a total of 12,541 new members for that year. This is an increase of 2,130 over the previous academic year.

Lutheran Christian education has a definite place in our society today, and the Lutheran school is a major evangelistic agency of the church. It is critical that all of us who are concerned with the education of the children and families in America today get behind the congregations who are working hard to provide Christian education through the Day School. Pray for them, support them financially, support them with your time, support them with your talents, and support them with positive verbal statements in your communities.

Evangelism is occurring through Lutheran schools. Each year approximately 12,000 children and adults join the operating congregations of Lutheran schools as a direct result of their experience in a Lutheran school. Last school year alone, 3,272 children were baptized; 5,483 adults joined the congregation operating the school by baptism or confirmation, and another 3,786 adults joined by transfer, making a total of 12,541 new members. These statistics are reported annually by congregations which operate schools.

As more and more non-members enroll in Lutheran schools (approximately 50 percent of all enrollees), the opportunities for evangelism increase. The number of unchurched children is now approximately 30,000 (12 percent of all students). Their only opportunity to hear the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ is at school.

The project described in this edition of ISSUES is but one of a series of projects to assist Lutheran schools to reach out more effectively.

Teacher witness workshops, which are still available through district offices, help teachers to share the Gospel effectively with children whom they serve and to witness to others as opportunities are provided.

The "Church Growth Through Lutheran Schools" consultation and resulting School Evangelism Kit featuring the book *Church Growth Through Lutheran Schools*, helps congregations plan effective programs of evangelism through the Lutheran school. Many examples are provided from participants in the consultation who were selected as the leading congregations in school evangelism in our country.

The "Intentional Evangelism" project featuring *A Vision for Witness* inservice materials for Lutheran educators provides video-based inservice to help Lutheran teachers more effectively share their faith with parents and families of children they teach. These inservice materials and workshops intended to introduce them are still available through the Board for Parish Services.

A new project, "Growth Through Sharing Christ," is a project designed first to identify and then to share effective classroom strategies for helping children in grades 3 to 8 share their faith more openly with each other. Six Lutheran educators with expertise in such peer witnessing have been trained and are ready to provide workshops

Dr. Lester Beyer

## Description of the Project: Evangelistic Outreach Through Lutheran Schools

Description of the Project

to district teacher's conferences at no cost to the district. Presentations which include hand-outs of specific strategies and materials for use in classrooms can be arranged through contacting the undersigned at the synodical Board for Parish Services.

In order to preach the Gospel to children, it is important that the children are present to hear. Thus, the newest project, "Marketing Lutheran Schools," is designed to bring children into the school where the Gospel can be preached. First, marketing; then, evangelism.

The research and contacts made by the "Evangelistic Outreach Project" fit very nicely into the overall evangelism emphasis in Lutheran schools around the country.

Many people feel that the future of Lutheran schools lies in their ability to reach out to their communities. The most effective agencies for bringing people of color into the Lutheran church are Lutheran schools. Our church body has said for years, "The most effective education agencies available to the church for equipping children and youth for ministry are the full-time Lutheran elementary and secondary schools so that the Gospel of Jesus Christ may become ever more effective in the life of the individual Christian."

Lutheran schools are not just for nurture. They are effective, dynamic congregational agencies for sharing Christ with their communities. May God continue to bless those who seek to "Share the Caring Christ" through evangelism efforts through Lutheran schools.

**Carl Moser**  
Director, School Unit  
Board for Parish Services  
The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod

### Seven Ways to Sabotage Outreach Through Lutheran Schools

Consider some of the many ways that Lutheran schools contribute to Christian outreach:

1. Lutheran schools provide long-term relationships with children and their families. These relationships generate many, many opportunities for demonstrating and articulating the Christian faith.

2. Lutheran schools open doorways to urban and cross-cultural ministry. They build bridges over cultural chasms by providing quality, caring, forgiving education to children.

3. Lutheran schools incorporate and assimilate new people into Christ's church by building social networks and spiritual bonds among school children and their families.

4. Lutheran schools offer a unique, family-oriented model for satellite ministry and church planting.

Because Lutheran schools provide exciting outreach opportunities, teachers, administrators, and congregations must beware of some factors that can severely restrict the evangelistic potential of Lutheran schools.

1. View outreach as optional. Instead, congregations must verbally and repeatedly commit themselves to evangelistic outreach as a primary purpose of their Lutheran schools.

2. View teachers as being only for children. Faculty and congregations alike must recognize that teachers are witnesses to both their students and to the families of their students.

3. Refuse to grow. Even though it is cheaper and easier (temporarily) to ignore expansion needs and opportunities, Lutherans must be ready to welcome both the pain and satisfaction of growing God's kingdom through additional students, classrooms, teachers, and discipling strategies.

4. Settle for poor quality education. Lutheran teachers and administrators serve as ambassadors of Christ himself. They must constantly seek to enrich their educational skills, and congregations must provide time and funds for them to continue their learning.

5. Lose touch with today's changing world. Lutheran educators must constantly prepare themselves to use new educational technology and to respond to critical social issues.

6. Eliminate standards for spiritual support. Lutheran churches and schools must state clearly their expectations for parental involvement in worship, in witnessing to their children, and in prayer.

7. Fail to listen to unchurched families. While

excellent teaching can occur in a classroom setting, effective listening requires fewer participants. Parent-teacher conferences, home visits, and other consultations allow the Gospel to spread through caring, sharing, and preparing people for spiritual growth.

Finally, we must never mistakenly believe that growing God's kingdom through Lutheran schools is simply a matter of avoiding these seven pitfalls. Outreach through Lutheran schools is truly an undeserved gift and ministry that totally depends upon God's great mercy!

**Tim Bode**  
Director of Christian Outreach  
St. John Lutheran Church  
Rochester, Michigan

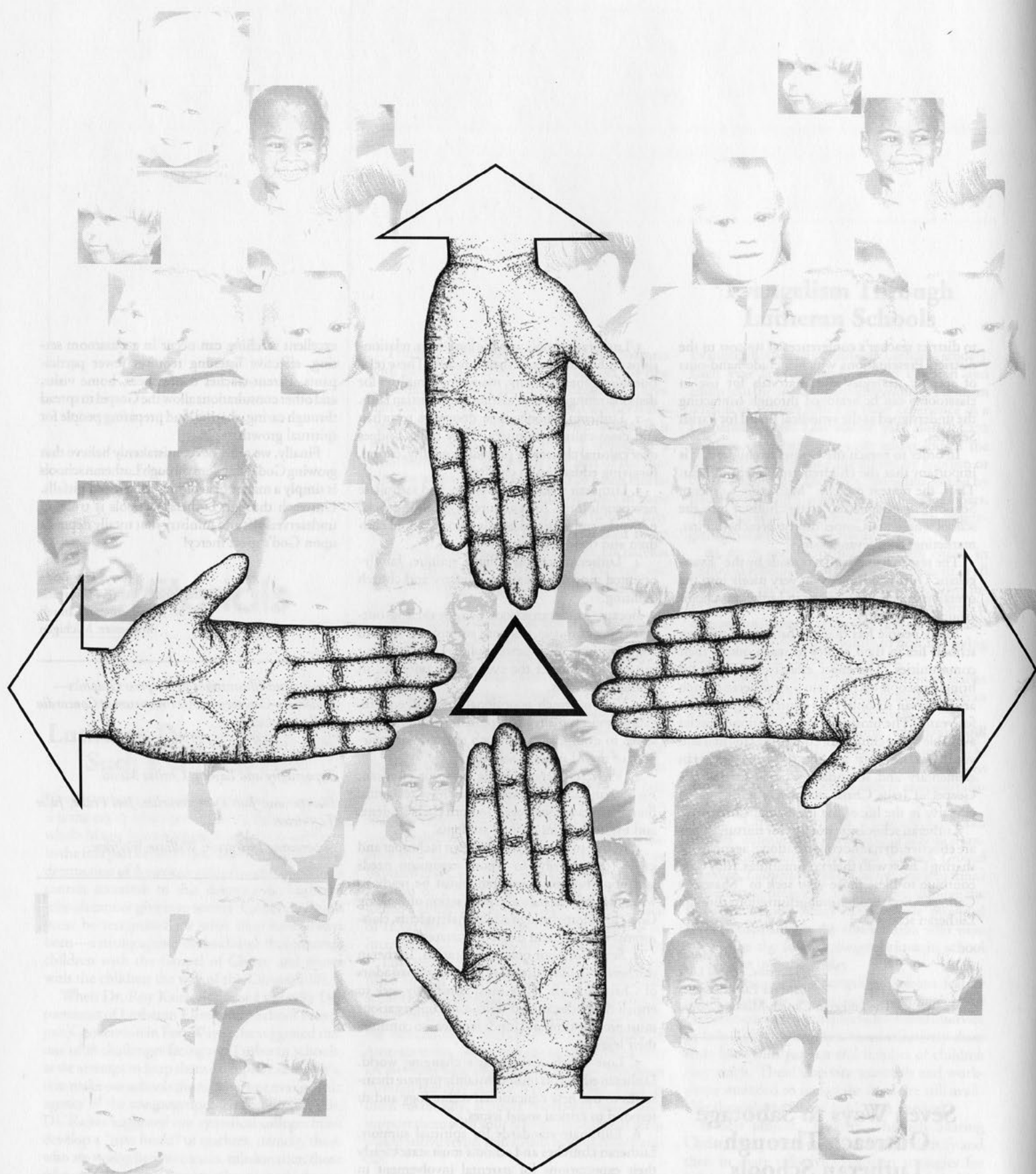
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Dr. Lester Bayer

## Description of the Project: Evangelistic Outreach Through Lutheran Schools\*

### Description of the Project

THE CURRENT ENROLLMENT PATTERNS in the pre-schools and elementary schools of the LCMS indicate great opportunities for evangelistic outreach through our schools. Statistics show that about 20,000 unchurched students enroll each year. In addition, thousands of Lutheran school families claim some form of church membership, but, in fact, do not demonstrate any evidence of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

Another reality which makes the opportunity so important is the multi-cultural dimension. Often the unchurched school families include diverse ethnic and racial groups. They provide an excellent opportunity to do international mission work right here at home.

Various synodical boards, especially the Board for Evangelism Services and the Board for Parish Services, have seen the need and opportunity and have developed some excellent resources. Unfortunately, these resources have not always been utilized, or have been used on a fragmented basis.

The goals of the project which is the focus of this edition of ISSUES were:

- to help 25 Lutheran congregations with elementary schools throughout the U.S. develop a soul-winning vision, design and conduct a comprehensive plan of action using appropriate materials and methods, and plan for an ongoing outreach program after the end of the project;

Dr. Lester Bayer is retired and living in Austin, Texas. He most recently served as Director of the Center for Urban Education Ministry and Vice President of Concordia College, New York. Earlier, Dr. Bayer served as principal and teacher in several Lutheran elementary schools, as Academic Dean at Concordia in Austin, and as Associate Executive of the Board for Higher Education of the LCMS.

\* (A Project of the Center for Urban Education Ministry and the Lutheran Women's Missionary League)

- to gain, by the Holy Spirit's direction, a minimum of 300 persons to join the congregations involved during the 18 months of the project;
- to utilize and build upon evangelism resources already available;
- to provide for the entire Synod proven models for reaching out to the many unchurched and underchurched families who come to our schools each year.

More than 150 congregations were considered for participation in the project following an article in the *Reporter* announcing the program and inviting congregations and schools to apply to participate. The 25 schools and congregations selected reflected the broad diversity in the church. Geographically they ranged from Rhode Island to Hawaii. Ethnically they represented a spectrum from all white to virtually all black, plus many Asians and Hispanics. The schools included preschools, elementary schools, and day care centers. The congregations were located in small towns, suburbs, and the inner city. Average Sunday morning church attendance ranged from under 100 to over 500.

The participating congregations and schools authorized their involvement by a local official resolution. Each school appointed a formal task force to manage the program at the local level. Dr. Mel Kieschnick, Director of Projects for the Center, and I directed the project. Materials were designed to assist the congregation and school leaders and the task force members to develop and carry out their plan.

Six volunteer consultants were selected to work with the project. Each was a retired District Education Executive and volunteered to assist four or five of the congregations and schools in the project.

The consultants made on-site visits at the schools and provided advice, guidance and assistance to ensure careful planning and action. The volunteer consultants and the Districts they formerly served were: Dr. Ben Eggers (Kansas and Florida/Georgia); Mr. Robert Eggold (Kansas); Dr. Richard Engebrecht (Atlantic); Dr. Edward Keuer (Texas); Mr. Edward Krueger (Central Illinois); Dr. Don Rosenberg (North Wisconsin).

A total of 648 persons from school families joined the parishes during the program. Each of the schools involved is continuing with an outreach program. The learnings from the project and a model for outreach are described in the articles which follow.

Our Lord truly has given us great opportunities for outreach through our schools. He richly blessed the project described here in ISSUES. May He bless the continuing efforts of all our congregations and schools to reach out with the saving Gospel message.

### Learnings from the Project

The three key words used in the Center for Urban Education Ministry as projects were selected, conducted and evaluated are *help*, *learn*, and *share*. The Evangelistic Outreach Through Lutheran Schools project was designed to *help* the congregation and school leaders involved reach out to unchurched and inactive families, to *learn* what happens in successful outreach programs, and to *share* this information with the Synod. The purpose of this article is to *share* some of the key learnings of the project.

### First Findings

As the first reports came in from consultants and congregations, a number of important learnings relating to the evangelistic efforts at our schools became evident.

1. There is great potential for outreach through Lutheran schools. Each of the 25 parishes and schools involved in the project reported that the number of pupils from unchurched or inactive families was increasing.
2. We do have schools and congregations which have been very active and successful in evangelistic outreach to school families. A definite paradigm shift is happening in some schools: a move away from a total nurture emphasis toward including also a heavy outreach emphasis.
3. However, evangelistic outreach has not been a priority in many other schools, including those with large unchurched enrollments. In the preliminary data submitted, only a small minority of the schools had any organized program of outreach. Some reported that none of the unchurched pupils had been baptized during the previous year.
4. Our Synod has developed some excellent material to help prepare teachers, pastors, and congregations for evangelistic outreach through the school, but often the material is not being used.
5. Pastors frequently have been too hesitant to become involved in the spiritual lives of the non-Lutheran families in our schools. When asked about having the

pastor talk with them about spiritual matters, the parents generally react more favorably than the pastors think the parents will react.

6. We have frequently been too shy about membership recruitment among our non-Lutheran parents. We have been concerned about sheep stealing even among those who do not yet know the Shepherd. This reality grew in importance as the project developed and is the focus of the article by Dr. Engebrecht in this edition of ISSUES.
7. Outreach stops (or never gets started) when staff members are at odds with each other.
8. Many pastors and teachers feel it would be very difficult for them to find time for outreach efforts.
9. Our schools are usually ahead of other congregational programs in reaching people from a variety of cultures and races.
10. However, we still generally continue to be unsuccessful in our membership recruitment efforts to reach non-Lutheran school families who represent cultures, races, ethnic groups, or family styles different from those we have traditionally had in our congregations.
11. What appear to be four of our more common mistakes in reaching these "different" families are: (a) we fail to allow enough time for trust to be developed; (b) we give the impression that we have a "better way"; (c) we fail to listen; (d) we fail to remember that we Lutherans do not have all the answers (and do not even know all the questions).
12. There is a declining level of ownership of our schools by congregation members. Interestingly, financial support usually begins to decline later than other support.

### Successful Programs

The consultants individually and collectively sought to identify learnings about the vision, the people, and the program from among those efforts in outreach which appeared to be the most effective during the project. The consultants also remained alert to any additional results and benefits which were not necessarily directly related to the project.

### Findings About the Vision in Successful Programs

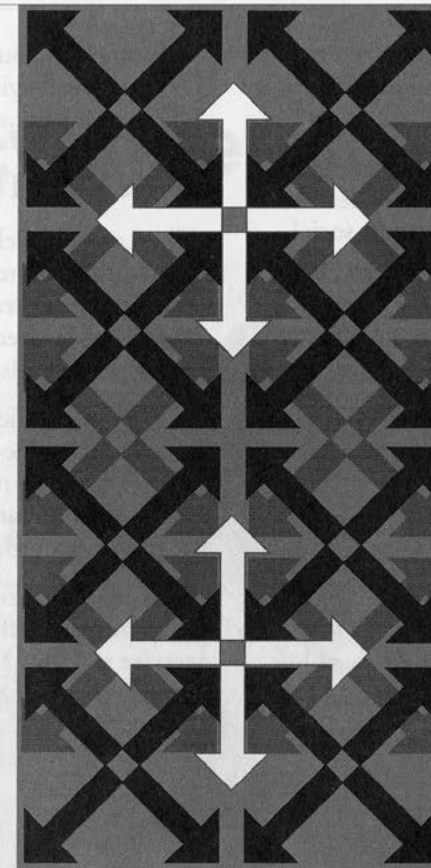
1. The programs consistently emphasized that individuals are brought to faith only through the work of the Holy Spirit and that it is He who blesses our efforts to learn how best to reach out to school families.
2. There is agreement among the leaders on the role and purpose of the school. The agreed upon role and purpose

are communicated to the various communities.

3. The vision encompasses the entire family and is people-focused.
4. Day Care Ministry is seen as social ministry, verbalized Gospel proclamation, and membership recruitment.
5. There is a connection developed between nurture and witness.
6. There is an assumption that membership recruitment is an essential part of the Lutheran school mission.
7. Leaders accept changes, see them as opportunities, and use them constructively.
8. The ownership of the vision is local.
9. The needs and crises points in the lives of school families are seen as opportunities where the Gospel can be demonstrated and spoken.
10. The possibilities and potential for evangelistic outreach are seen as being almost limitless.

### Findings About the People in Successful Programs

1. The pastor and school staff are in alignment on an outreach vision.
2. There is agreement on the role to be fulfilled by the various individuals and groups in evangelistic outreach (pastors, teachers, evangelism committees, boards of education, Lutheran parents, Sunday school teachers, etc.).
3. Ownership of the school by the congregation is retained or rebuilt through intentional efforts and programs.
4. Teachers are involved as early as possible in the planning for the outreach program of the school.
5. The individual teacher is seen as the most important human key to a successful program.
6. In most successful programs the school staff is attached to the congregation.
7. However, non-synodical college graduates and non-Lutheran teachers can be effective in evangelistic outreach and membership recruitment if they are strongly motivated and are provided with adequate training and preparation.



8. There are no feelings of "us" and "them" between the school and church leaders.
9. Pastors and principals/directors become personally involved in the outreach program, playing the role of "quarterback" more frequently than that of "coach."
10. Pastors become key players in evangelistic outreach as they are visible, involved, and supportive of the school.
11. Leaders help develop effective involvement in the outreach program by such selected groups and individuals as the evangelism committee, teacher aides, school secretaries, bus drivers, custodians, Sunday school teachers, non-school congregational families, church council members, and, especially, school parents.
12. Pupils provide the bridge to the spiritual involvement of parents, siblings, and other family members.

### Findings About the Programs

1. The program is people-focused and includes the entire family.
2. Programs are intentional and organized—intentionally organized to *identify* prospects, *reach* prospects, *relate to* prospects, and *involve* prospects.
3. Strategies allow for a variety of approaches in outreach.
4. Yearly plans are focused, planned, implemented, and monitored.
5. A relational rather than a confrontational approach in evangelism is most frequently used.
6. School programs and activities are designed to meet the perceived physical, spiritual, educational, and personal needs of the families.
7. The *Lutheran* teachings in the school are not "watered down."
8. Pre-enrollment meetings, in which the principal/director clearly identifies the purposes of the school to non-Lutheran parents, are used to set the stage for future evangelistic outreach efforts.

9. Outreach is regularly included as an item at faculty meetings. Training is part of the plan and includes skill building.
10. Frequent contacts are made with all parents through home visits, meetings, church and school newsletters, activities aimed at parenting and family needs, social and athletic events, study programs, and support groups.
11. Visits in the homes of the unchurched are a significant part of the program. Home visits by professional ministers are made at any time. Home visits by lay persons tend to be more effective when made after the pupils have been enrolled in the school for at least several weeks.
12. Worship services are easy to follow and are planned with the non-Lutheran school family in mind. Visitors can easily find their way around the building and are intentionally helped to feel welcome and comfortable.
13. School pupils are involved during the Sunday worship services in such activities as drama, art work, essays, and displays, in addition to music.
14. School chapel services are conducted at the level of the pupils, and parents are especially invited to attend.
15. Children in a classroom in which a strong faith community has been developed among pupils and teacher are more likely to become members of the congregation, bring in other members of their families, and remain with the congregation after leaving the school.
16. Teachers are most successful in developing a strong faith community as they intentionally involve pupils in *sharing, worshiping, celebrating, helping, confessing, and forgiving.*
17. A Task Force (short term, focused) strategy is usually more effective than that of a Standing Committee or Commission.
18. Membership recruitment requires as much focused effort as school enrollment.

#### Added Results and Benefits

As the consultants in the project reviewed the reports from the congregations and schools, several additional benefits/learnings, not necessarily directly related to the project, seemed to be evident.

1. Congregational and school leaders who become sensitive to reaching non-Lutheran parents also tend to become more sensitive to inactive Lutheran parents.
2. Families who join the church as a result of contact with the school tend to become and remain more active in the life of the congregation than the average family.

3. Evangelistic outreach programs provide many repeated, shared, satisfying experiences for school and congregational leaders.

#### Some Final Thoughts

The Lord did richly bless the project. A total of 648 people joined the congregations involved. As a result of the excellent volunteer ministry provided by the consultants, much was learned about evangelistic outreach through Lutheran schools.

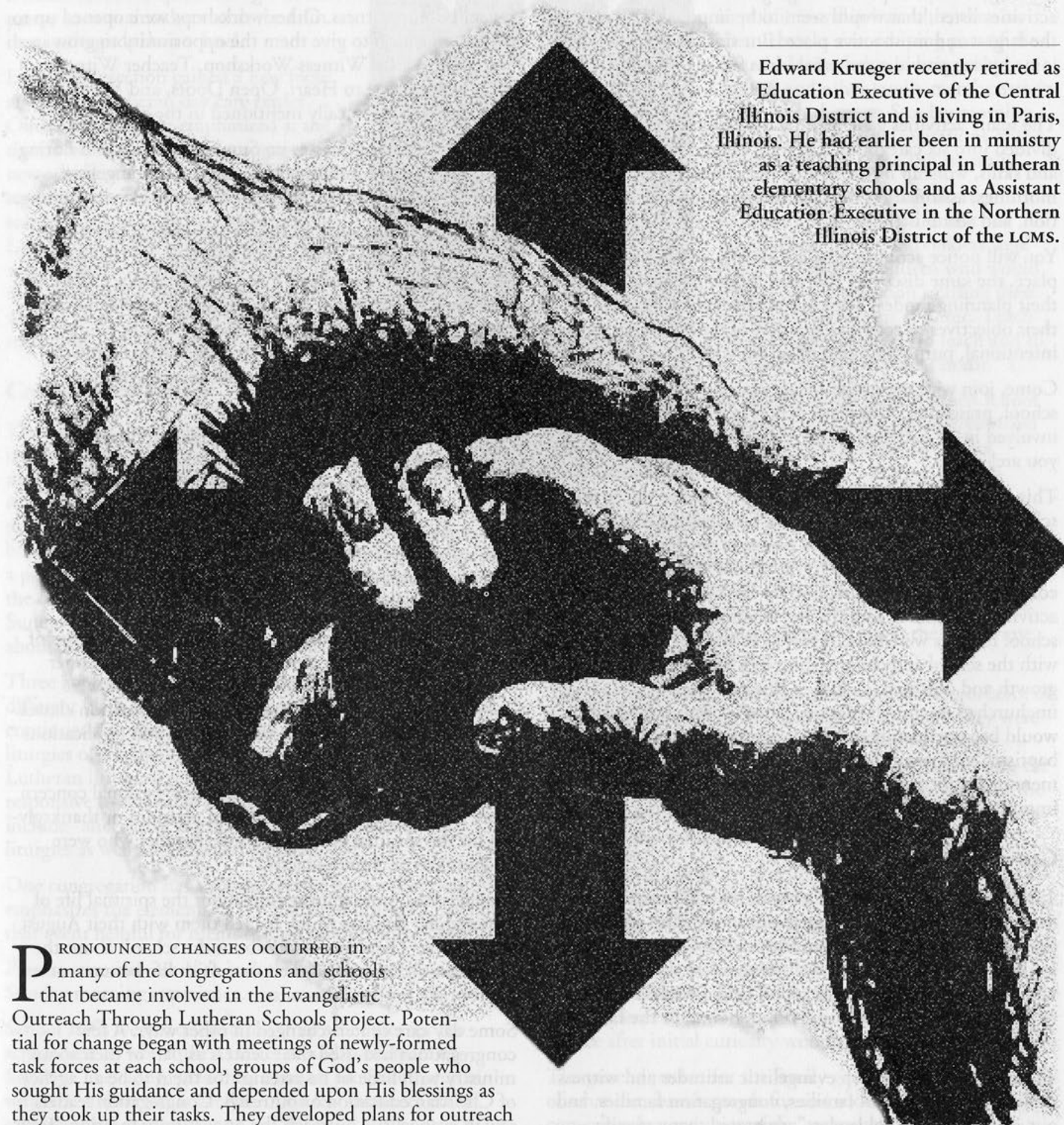
The opportunities ahead are great. As someone has said, "The church is not likely to find another agency like the school at which non-Lutheran parents are willing to pay \$1200 per year or more while giving the school the opportunity to teach their children about the Savior."

As in all of life, our Lord is involved with us in all evangelistic outreach efforts as he leads, guides, and blesses our service to Him. May we seize the opportunities He gives us to help a growing number of people develop a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.



Edward Krueger

## 101 Ideas for Evangelistic Outreach



Edward Krueger recently retired as Education Executive of the Central Illinois District and is living in Paris, Illinois. He had earlier been in ministry as a teaching principal in Lutheran elementary schools and as Assistant Education Executive in the Northern Illinois District of the LCMS.

**P**RONOUNCED CHANGES OCCURRED IN many of the congregations and schools that became involved in the Evangelistic Outreach Through Lutheran Schools project. Potential for change began with meetings of newly-formed task forces at each school, groups of God's people who sought His guidance and depended upon His blessings as they took up their tasks. They developed plans for outreach

whose goal and objectives were to be met within the eighteen months of the project. Below is a composite picture that reflects the myriad of activities projected by the plans of all 25 Lutheran schools, a group of elementary schools, preschools, and day care centers nationwide.

No single school or parent congregation carried out all the activities listed; that would seem to be impossible, even for the largest and most active place. But this description of the joined plans provides potential ideas for any school anywhere.

The many activities generated by the task forces have been divided into six categories. They are evangelism attitudes and skills, worship forms, visitor reception on Sunday mornings, assimilation into the congregation, communication, and administration.

You will notice activities that are already occurring at your place, the same discovery that task forces made while in their planning modes. The committees, however, chose their objectives or activities as a part of the whole, an intentional, purposeful plan of action with a specific goal.

Come, join with me in the excitement as you picture your school, preschool, or day care center becoming more involved in an outreach ministry as it would apply where you are!

This goal is typical of all the plans: "To involve the entire school and church families so that, God willing, in response to the Gospel and through the power of the Holy Spirit at least twelve persons related to the school will join the congregation." It gave direction for the objectives and activities over the 18 months and beyond. Church and school families were to be involved actively or passively with the school and congregation in a program of inward growth and outreach, so that in this case twelve unchurched or church-inactive school-connected people would become members of the congregation through baptism, confirmation, or profession of faith. The statement of a statistical goal for growth seemed to be very important.

### Growth Within

Task force members realized early in their discussions that they and others in their congregations needed to grow in their own knowledge and commitment to God's Word and in their understanding of the challenges and skills involved with evangelism. One congregation held a weekend retreat to pray for and plan for evangelism renewal for the families of the school and congregation.

The objective "to develop evangelistic attitudes and witness skills among our school families, congregation families, and our church and school leaders" generated many specific

education opportunities for target audiences so that people would have the chance to think about, talk about, pray about, and do evangelism.

Day school and Sunday school teachers were offered experiential courses that heightened their awareness of evangelism opportunities and gave them practice in thinking and doing witness. Other workshops were opened up to the congregation to give them the opportunity to grow in evangelism skills. Witness Workshop, Teacher Witness Workshop, Heart to Heart, Open Doors, and Vision for Witness were specifically mentioned in the plans.

Congregation Bible classes on Sunday morning and during the week featured published courses about evangelism, giving those students experiences that were less demanding.

Staff meetings changed. Ordinary school business continued, but there grew a purposeful emphasis on the spiritual, too. Bible study was begun if not already in place. Teachers spoke more often about the perceived spiritual condition of students and their families. Staff people sought counsel for ways to encourage the families in their spiritual growth. Church and Sunday school attendance received more attention.

Baptism and confirmation became topics of discussion. Teachers, administrators, and pastors now had some specific objectives that kept these subjects on their minds. Ordinarily confirmation had been more of the pastor's concern; now more teachers began encouraging confirmation age students in their studies. Teachers also showed a growing interest in the spiritual lives of the newly confirmed students.

Teachers spoke to younger students about the blessings of baptism, confirmation, and church membership. Other eligible but unconfirmed school family members were encouraged to consider attending adult information classes. School newsletters as well as the congregation publications announced dates for adult classes.

Individuals and families became teachers' personal concern more intently. Staff prayers included petitions or thanksgiving for the spiritual growth of whole families who were unchurched or church inactive.

Teachers had more information about the spiritual life of nonmember families which helped them with their August home visits. Their comments about the school, about the congregation, and about their own faith life became more appropriate for the occasions.

Some day care centers changed in other ways. A few congregations had used their centers as part of their social ministry with little or no attempt for them to be an agency of Christian education or outreach. Congregation leaders saw in evangelistic outreach the opportunity to bring "Jesus

time" and other Christian experiences into the daily programs of their centers.

Some staff members of day care centers are not Lutheran. At one congregation the leaders requested that the staff attend a series of classes led by the pastor to acquaint them with the faith that undergirds their school.

Even staff selection gained a new focus at another Lutheran day care center. Outreach was being emphasized at the time it became necessary to engage a new administrator. Leaders added one more criterion for selection. They sought out and found someone who is Lutheran, a highly qualified woman whose beliefs correspond with those of the congregation and are now communicated at its center of Christian education and outreach.

### Come and Worship

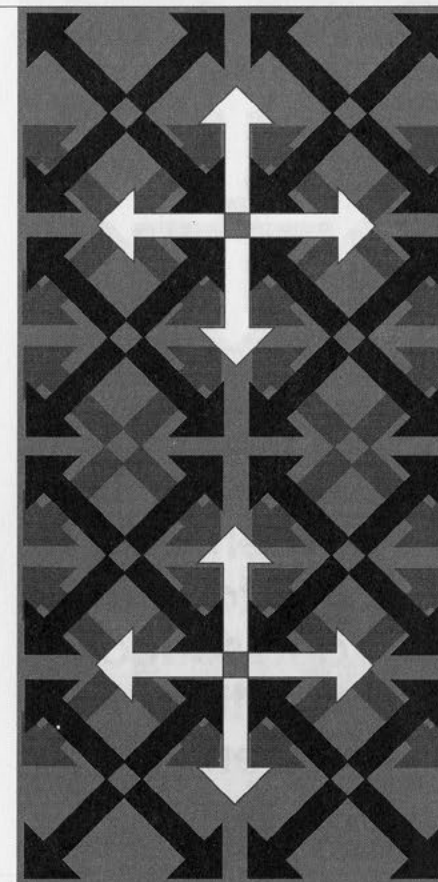
The worship service on Sunday morning is the ritual that reveals the very nature of the group of people gathered in that place. It tells others who the people are, what they stand for, and even some of the behaviors that are acceptable if an outsider wants to become a part of the group. Because of its importance to the life of the congregation and also the desire to attract visitors, Sunday worship came under scrutiny in the discussions about outreach.

Three approaches to liturgical forms surfaced in the different plans of outreach congregations. The first group continued to communicate the Gospel in the traditional liturgies of the hymnals. A second group continued with Lutheran liturgical services but adapted them "to be more responsive to their area's cultures." And the third chose to include "alternative worship styles, e.g., contemporary liturgies as well as praise and worship."

One congregation has a special service once a year that emphasizes the elements of the Lutheran liturgy. They find that event helpful for members and nonmembers alike.

Pastors were also asked to include children's sermons in the Sunday morning experience.

School staffs were requested to set up schedules for the school year in which their classes would participate on Sunday. They sang, presented dramas, provided banners, ushered, and served as acolytes. In a few instances older children were readers.



Weekly school chapel services also saw more leader involvement by children, such as singing, reading, and ushering. School staffs were encouraged to teach the children about church decorum.

In itself children's active participation in public worship has value; they see themselves as a worshiping part of the church. It also helps to bring their parents and other family members along with them on Sunday morning, reinforcing the other invitations of the congregation to come and worship.

An extension of worship, home devotions, was included in one 18-month plan. Devotion booklets were made available to children who would then receive instruction in using them to conduct devotions at home. Teachers made special efforts to teach and to encourage table prayers at home.

Worship services during which school children and/or parents were baptized included special music by school children.

### A Warm Welcome

Meet Dave and Kathy who served as the first team of Sunday morning greeters. They left Bible class early to get to the narthex at least 25 minutes before the service. They were anxious; it was a new program; it was their first time to meet the public this way.

The greeter training meeting had stressed the importance of first impressions. They felt good about the work they were to perform because they not only were briefed about greeting, but they also learned how their activity fit into the larger picture of evangelism. They heard about some of the lead-up activities for the unchurched school families. They were told about the follow-up of all church visitors.

The new outlines of the worship service they distributed on Sunday were helpful to those not familiar with the liturgy. The "Hints for Tots" was a single sheet that helped parents cope in church with the small, wiggly child. Kathy especially liked the whole tone of the message that said, "We welcome children!" The "Children's Packet" for older children kept them busy with quiet activities during the service after initial curiosity wore off.

The general packet for the family gave visitors a good idea of what the church stands for and included invitations to come to other activities of the congregation. The packet

contained a welcome letter from the pastor with an offer to be of service, a calendar of events for the month with a clear invitation to participate, a Gospel message tract, a new brochure about the congregation with its school and organizations, and a pocket cross. Dave and Kathy were happy to hand out all the appropriate goodies.

It had been a little hectic as people were coming into church, but the two of them managed. After warm greetings they placed a yellow ribbon on dress or jacket. Then they handed out the service outline with a brief explanation of its use with the hymnal.

Visitors were encouraged to come again the next Sunday which was to be "Friendship Sunday." Unchurched parents and others on the evangelism committee's responsibility list had received special invitations; some were visited in their homes. Several school classes participated in that service. All worshippers, members and nonmembers, attended a brief fellowship time after church. Refreshments preceded a very brief introduction of staff and lay leaders. Each visitor was personally greeted by at least two congregation members.

### Become One of Us

The largest number of planned actions was generated in the congregations' attempts at assimilation. "To develop a program to assimilate the unchurched school families into our congregation beginning with our first contact with parents" was the type of objective common among the churches. Merely inviting nonmembers to come to church and school functions is not enough. Events had to be planned and strategies of follow-up were needed to make the concerted but low-key gestures that genuinely show interest in people. Opportunities for growth and fellowship side by side with congregation members had to be offered to target groups.

Home visits by teachers, pastors, and others were among the attempts to build rapport between parents and the school. Family members were invited to midweek chapel services. Fathers participated in father-son banquets and in athletic activities. Mother-daughter banquets and other outings brought them together. Parents' Bible classes were begun as well as prayer breakfasts that allowed time for fellowship. The Parent-Teacher League held a "Welcome

**"Merely inviting nonmembers to come to church and school functions is not enough."**

Dinner" for all new parents.

Pastors spent quality time with classes of school children to give them more visibility. One pastor invited each of the Sunday morning singing groups to join him for cookies and punch on a weekday following the singing. Pastors also invited small groups to their office to visit for a short time.

"Baptism Sundays" were scheduled to highlight the event for the newly baptized and the whole congregation. Some publicized and celebrated the children's baptism anniversaries. The midweek chapel service became a good vehicle for the celebrations.

Education Sunday and the children's Christmas service were occasions of special invitation to all parents and families. Ushers and greeters were alerted to expect more than the usual number of visitors.

Special efforts were made to attract parents to information meetings about baptism, confirmation, and the

religion program of the school. The purpose was always two-fold: (1) that they might grow in knowledge of the Word and accept Christ; (2) that they would be led to become members of the congregation.

Church and school leaders became more alert to the temporal as well as the spiritual needs of the unchurched. Using the personnel and other resources available they set out to help meet those needs. Stephen ministers were mentioned in one congregation. Family crises of nonmembers were included in the Sunday morning prayers. A prayer group was established to pray for church and school families.

Parenting and marriage enrichment classes were offered to all. A family retreat was scheduled. A singles' group was organized. Special invitations were given to participate in small Bible study support groups.

The youth group conducted a carnival for all the children. All school parents were invited to a square dance held at the church facilities. Special musical, evangelistic events featuring Christian musicians were scheduled.

While there was a great mix of activities among the congregations, the common ground was an effort to minister to the unchurched school families as well as member families. Church people displayed a desire to communicate God's

love, to model His caring attitude toward others, to invite without apology, and eventually to bring the unchurched into the membership of the congregation.

### Pass the Word—Within and Without

The best of plans fails if communication breaks down among the several individuals and groups, professional and volunteer, who are in the network for carrying out the plan. Events falter when invitations to attend are late, or jumbled, or never get there. The 18-month plans included entries that dealt with getting the word out.

The membership of outreach task forces included persons from the education, evangelism and elder boards of the congregations. Representatives were instructed to report back to their boards and to bring feedback to the task forces.

Teachers and pastors were alerted to keep in mind the purposes of the school and its outreach ministry as they went about their daily tasks and especially when opportunities arose for spontaneous witness.

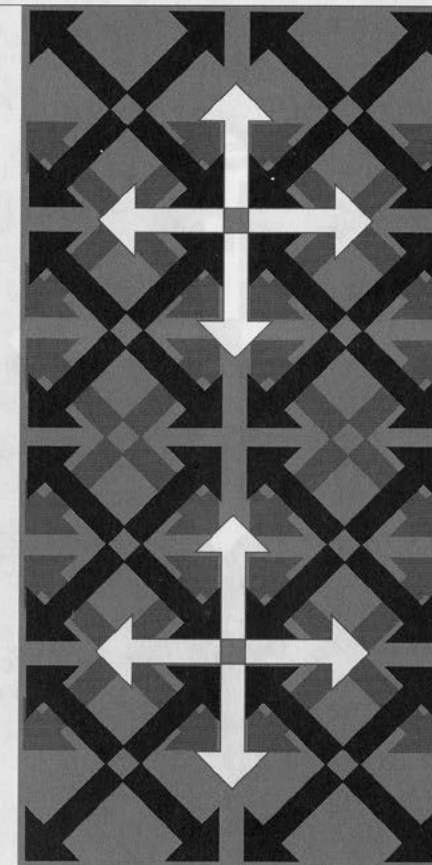
Administrators developed rationales for their initial interview with parents. Teachers planned approaches for their August home visits that would include information about the school and the kinds of questions that would be helpful to gather baptism histories and the families' church involvement.

The pastor was visible to all the children of the school. He visited classrooms, the lunch room, and school events. He made it a point to be known and approachable to all the children.

The congregation received a running account of the task force, its plans, and the activities. Members were invited to participate. They were offered experiences to help them develop their evangelism skills.

Unchurched and church-inactive school families received attention from the congregation's evangelism committee. The committee had a comparatively stable target group and a plan of action with help from others.

Both the congregation and the school newsletters were affected. The congregation's periodical now went to church and school families and was edited to include articles of



interest in language that communicated to the uninitiated. It now contained school news from the school administrator. The school publication in turn carried congregation news and a feature article by the pastor.

Church and school signs on the property and in the community were inspected and replaced or renovated when necessary to keep them attractive. The church and school were visible in the community in the media, in parades, and other local celebrations.

### Meanwhile, Back in the Office

Administration concerns itself with the details necessary to keep the organization and its programs going: record-keeping, monitoring, answering queries, motivating, writing, publishing. The school administrator is a leader for the creativity needed for the success of any school endeavor.

Administrators were key people on the task forces. Often they received the most

assignments of any individual, and they had charge of much of the unnamed detail that a school office performs. They redesigned enrollment forms to surface baptism histories and church membership of families.

The secretary checked the Sunday morning guest register, the visitor information cards, or in some instances the memos prepared by Sunday morning greeters. Form letters to be sent to the visitors were prepared for the pastor's signature. The evangelism committee chairperson received a note, too. Family files were kept up to date. The school mailing list, now also a part of the congregation's list, was periodically monitored. Nonmember eligible children were placed on the congregation cradle roll.

Evangelistic Outreach Through Lutheran Schools is a phrase that conjures up all kinds of images in the minds of Christian educators. We see children and adults who came up to the baptismal font or the altar in church and became active members. We see the faces of students who really never adopted a church home after confirmation. We thank God for those who remained faithful; our hearts go out to those who have disappeared. We look for reasons; we look for ways to bring more in and keep them.

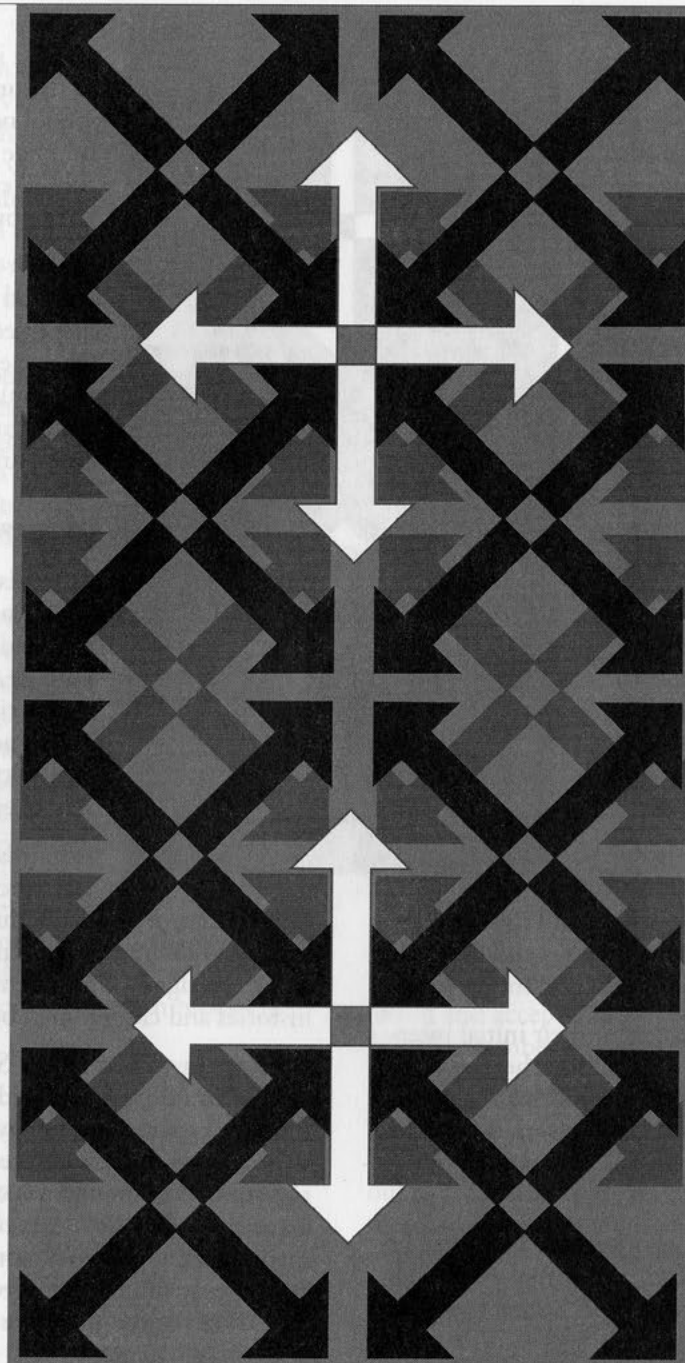
Over 100 ideas were found in the evangelism plans of the 25 congregations. Did you notice? Did you see that many of them can be applied to any school, preschool, or day care



center and its congregation? Some of the activities are found now in your congregation. As you read you probably were saying to yourself, "We do that!"

Evangelism leaders tell us that the potential for an energetic evangelism thrust is present in all of our congregations. The outreach task forces first looked to their God and acknowledged that they needed the power and wisdom that He alone can give. They depended upon Him and the power of His Word. They know that 648 individuals from school families actually joined the 25 parishes during the program because of the power of the Holy Spirit!

The congregations had a plan, and they worked the plan. It started with God, His Word, the Holy Spirit's power. The congregation was offered spiritual growth experiences that brought them into the Word and gave them insights into the evangelism process. They could gain evangelism skills



while being motivated by the Word because courses centered on evangelism and witness.

Nonmember school families, meanwhile, were also offered events that brought them into the Word and helped them become acquainted with parish members. The word "assimilation" became important because it led committees to plan activities that brought member and nonmember together in groups that served common needs. The unchurched met church people who cared, who wanted to help, who were interested in them.

There grew among some of the members a mindset, an attitude about their own responsibility to witness, or to serve some role in the evangelism process. The Spirit was at work within them. That same Holy Spirit was present and active among all the congregations. To God be the glory!



Dr. Richard Engebrecht

## A Critical Issue Raised by the Project: Nurture, Evangelism and Membership Recruitment

IT ALWAYS INTRIGUED ME! The banner, that is, that hung in front of the synagogue I passed each morning on the Long Island Expressway on my way to the Lutheran Center in Manhattan. "Membership Recruitment Drive in Process" it declared in large bold letters with an intentionality that no one could miss.

"Why not?" I'd always ask myself. "What is there about our Lutheran upbringing and tradition that militates against such a focus on intentional outreach and evangelism?"

"Why do we have such difficulty in declaring our membership recruitment intentions, particularly within our Lutheran schools which currently provide unlimited opportunities for such invitations?"

As a former Lutheran school superintendent in the Atlantic District of the LCMS, I know that vigorous student recruitment efforts are required if our schools are to be successful. "Why don't Lutheran schools clearly declare that their role and purpose include not only goals of nurture and evangelistic outreach, but goals of membership recruitment as well?" "Why doesn't the banner 'Membership Recruitment Drive in Process' wave freely and prominently throughout their operation?"

My participation in the recently concluded, LWML-supported Evangelistic Outreach Through Lutheran Schools project conducted by the Center for Urban Education Ministry at Concordia College, New York, has convinced me that we must not only discuss the issue of *Nurture, Evangelism and Membership Recruitment*, but vigorously debate the matter as well. In addition, I believe that if we permit the banner of "Membership Recruitment Drive in Process" to wave freely and prominently throughout those schools and order their operation accordingly, we will do even better at our tasks of nurture, evangelistic outreach, and service than we are doing today.

### Definition of Evangelism

Effective evangelism, for me, is defined by three action steps:

1. Intentionally sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ—the good news of God's liberating word for all people;

2. Intentionally inviting persons into the faith life, particularly through baptism, or through the reaffirmation of one's baptism, towards greater spiritual growth; and
3. Intentionally involving persons in the life and mission of a particular congregation so that they remain active.

In this definition the first action step speaks of proclamation; the second step of nurture; and the third step of membership recruitment, including assimilation which is an essential part of that recruitment process.

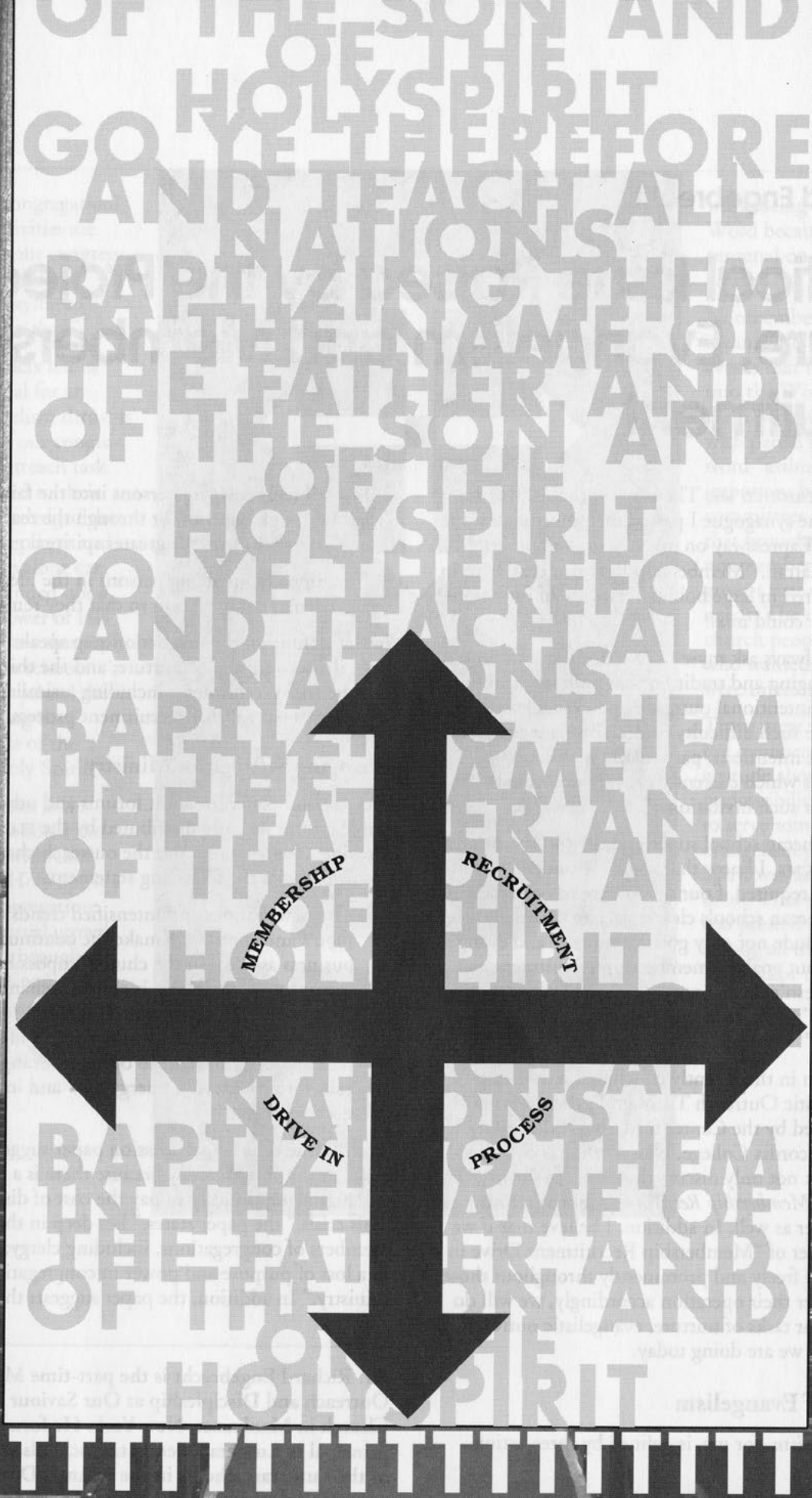
### Changing Settings for Ministry

A discussion paper for adult forums and other congregational groups recently distributed by the ELCA regarding growing congregations and the outreach challenges for the 1990's includes the following statement:

"The new realities and intensified trends of the 1990's and the 2000's make the continuation of business as usual in the church impossible. Overall, the setting for ministry is radically changing. Our changing world challenges the church to address the variety and diversity of American life with renewed commitment to outreach evangelism. It calls for new creative energy now and in the decades ahead."<sup>1</sup>

At the same time, the discussion paper suggests that a crisis exists in the church today because there is a loss of courage and a growing timidity to pay the cost of discipleship. "This crisis," the paper states, "lies deep in the heart of most members of congregations, including clergy; and it results in a loss of purpose and power in congregational life and ministry." In addition, the paper suggests that the complex

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social situation of our time and place is significantly changing the setting for ministry and “calls for the church to shape its evangelical outreach to reach people in new social, cultural, economic and spiritual realities.”

Some of those realities indicated include the following:

- *Believers* who are anti-institutional, or in other words, “people of faith who clearly reject the institutional church,”—many of whom are baptized former church members;
- *Unchurched and churched persons*—true believers who seek spiritual growth and wrestle with religious doubts, usually privately;
- *Poverty (an emerging underclass)*—people locked in deep and permanent poverty;
- *Changing Family Patterns*—single women and men, solo parents and children outnumber the nuclear family;
- *Religious Pluralism*—people of non-Christian religions as well as various Christian sects and denominations;
- *Diverse Cultural Communities*—cultural and racial communities that remain insulated from each other;
- *Race/Culture*—the U.S. is truly a multicultural society with Anglos a minority in many communities;
- *Secularism*—a growing hedonism, a society without religious values;
- *Classism*—a growing economic gap between affluent and poor;
- *Cynicism and Institutions*—growing mistrust of organizations and their leaders, including the church and clergy;
- *Seekers for Meaning*—disenchantment with materialism;
- *Seekers of Meaningful Relationships*—loneliness and shattered relationships leave a void and longing for true community;
- *Complacent Churches*—congregations that do not change to meet human/spiritual needs;
- *Mass Society*—diminishment of the significance of people results in powerlessness and hopelessness; and
- *Urbanization*—75 percent of U.S. population lives in metropolitan areas; most live urban lives detached from specific local community.

The current setting for ministry in America is further shaped by an increasing decline in church membership in our Lutheran congregations. A recent report issued by Aid Association for Lutherans regarding Phase I of its Church Membership Initiative project, the purpose of which is to “set in motion forces which will result in annual increases in the number of members in Lutheran congregations,” noted the following:

“After more than two decades of rapid membership growth, around 1970 the numbers of baptized members of Lutheran congregations in the United States began dropping . . . . By 1990 there were 500,000 fewer baptized members of Lutheran congregations than in 1970. This decline occurred despite increases in the non-immigrant population of the United States and despite some efforts of the three largest Lutheran church bodies to achieve membership growth.”<sup>2</sup>

In addition, the report indicates that “in 1990, 262,007 people were released (not transferred) from membership in Lutheran congregations in America.” But the largest and most frightening statistic reported is that “current estimates are that four million residents of the United States identify themselves as Lutheran, but are not members of Lutheran congregations.” According to the report, “these people became former members for a variety of reasons. Some have moved to a different community and never joined a Lutheran congregation (or any other congregation). Some have stayed in their community, but have passively stopped participating in the local congregation and were dropped from congregation membership. Some stayed in their community and have actively decided to stop participating in their local congregation, but still consider themselves to be Lutheran.”

Traditionally referred to as “back door losses,” these four million Lutherans must be joined by tens of millions of other former members of mainline denominations here in America. Given those statistics, it is no wonder America is referred to by many as the “largest mission field in the world.”

### The Lutheran School with New and Continuing Opportunities to Serve

Forces for change also affect our Lutheran schools at the pre-school, elementary, secondary, and college/university levels. The life and ministry in these schools today are carried on in settings which are quite different from those just 20 years ago. Most have a mixture of students representing not merely a variety of denominations, ethnic and racial groups, but unchurched and marginally churched families as well. Often, only a small percentage of the children/students enrolled belong to families that are members of the congregations or church body which own and operate the schools.

This phenomenon has occurred in every Lutheran school in metropolitan regions during the past several decades. As the variety of change forces have converged upon those schools and their congregations, new and exciting opportunities for being the church at work in the lives of people have emerged.

Already in 1978 Kent Hunter wrote, "God has moved in history to provide an opportunity right on the cutting edge of mission. The Lutheran school is a field for harvest, an opportunity for mission, right in our own ecclesiastical backyard. The Lutheran school is indeed an opportunity for mission."<sup>3</sup> In addition, Kent Hunter reminded his readers that "overseas missionaries were breaking new ground for the Kingdom of God by organizing Lutheran schools for native children. Being on the front line of outreach, they recognized the potential of the school not only to reach children, but also to serve as a doorway to the entire family. Nearly all the children enrolled were non-Lutheran and unbaptized."

The emergence of unchurched or non-Lutheran youngsters in our schools does not eliminate the tasks of nurture, outreach, and service ministry. Rather it provides new opportunity for those schools to recruit members for Lutheran congregations. Accordingly, it seems imperative that the school's role and purpose be stated in terms of *Nurture, Evangelism and Membership Recruitment*.

If it so desires, the Lutheran school stands poised and ready to become an aggressive membership recruitment agent for the local congregation. With its increasing number of unchurched and non-Lutheran students, the opportunities for such a role seem limitless. In addition, the school alone, of all agencies and institutions of outreach in our church, contributes the following to the membership recruitment process:

*The Lutheran school serves as a "litmus test" in determining which persons and families live and work in our neighborhoods and communities. "Operate a Lutheran school," one pastor in Brooklyn told me some years ago, "and all kinds of people come out of the woods." Lutheran schools do serve as the vanguard of the church in neighborhood and community and clearly attract persons and families representative of the groups which make up urban America today.*

*The Lutheran school serves as an evangelistic outreach model for the congregations which operate them. Our schools are already organized the way congregations must be organized if they are really serious about evangelism and membership recruitment. A professional teaching minister for each classroom of students; a pastor, principal and other resource persons available to help; small relational groups of teachers, parents, congregation members and others established for each classroom for purposes of evangelizing each student and family.*

*To exist, Lutheran schools have already taken the risks necessary for growth in size and numbers. In that respect, our schools can also model that important component*

of outreach ministry and membership recruitment for congregations. Only after a school has declared its intentions in terms of number of students and classrooms as well as the number of teaching ministers required for that enrollment level, can it seriously embark upon its required student recruitment efforts. Congregations, too, must set goals and become intentional about membership recruitment efforts.

*Lutheran schools not only serve as the point of entry for the newcomer; they also can serve as agents of the assimilation process required for new members.*

Helping new persons and families become and *stay* active in the life and ministry of a congregation is an integral part of the church membership recruitment process. School-related activities and events, especially inter-generational functions sponsored by the school and the congregation, are excellent means to help accomplish this required task.

### Why Isn't It Really Happening in Lutheran Schools and their Congregations?

Even though some Lutheran schools have had large numbers of unchurched or non-Lutheran students, not many students or their families have become active participants in the Lutheran congregations which operate these schools. Seemingly overlooked as part of the school's evangelistic outreach efforts is the goal of *making disciples*. This involves working with the children and their families until they become responsible members of the body of church. Of interest here is the fact that the AAL's Church Membership Initiative project plans to do research to "determine why nonmember parents of parochial school children do not join the congregation."<sup>2</sup>

"Why isn't membership recruitment really happening in our Lutheran schools today?" "Why are we so timid in declaring our membership recruitment intentions and goals?" "Why are parents of nonmember students not joining congregations which own and operate those schools?"

Evangelism remains a slippery concept and means different things to different people. To some within the Lutheran church, evangelism suggests sharing the faith in confrontational kinds of ways rather than through a relational building process with persons and families. Others are content to leave the work of evangelism, particularly its membership recruitment component, to the Holy Spirit alone. Still others see evangelistic outreach as the fundamental expression of the church and insist that everything else the church does must be subservient to that expression. Finally, many others believe that mission succeeds only from vigorous communities of faith gathered around Word

and Sacrament—with some of those adherents seemingly suggesting that standing there is sufficient for membership growth to take place.

### Problem I: Tensions between the Church Growth Movement and the Liturgy of the Church

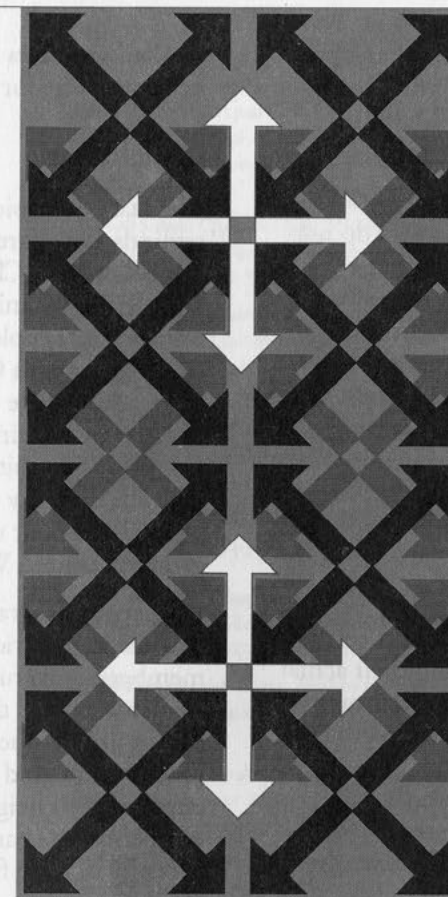
Given the current tensions between the Church Growth Movement and many within our Lutheran family in America,<sup>4</sup> it is almost impossible at times to use the term membership recruitment when we speak of evangelistic outreach, much less advocate it as one of the role and purpose understandings for our Lutheran schools. To some Lutherans, especially our liturgically oriented sisters and brothers, even to speak of membership recruitment moves the church into market place mentality. They seem to suggest that we should never discuss the church and its purpose in such marketing terms, even though that is the world in which we are to give "a life of witness and service."

Most Lutheran schools today know all about the need for student recruitment efforts and the fact that this enlistment process happens within the context of the marketplace. Lutheran schools particularly in metropolitan areas do not enroll nonmember students and families without a vigorous recruitment strategy which is constantly at work.

Good school administrators know that they must be concerned with developing and implementing a marketable recruitment process to assure full enrollments. A sound public relations approach to the neighborhood and community must undergird constant efforts to build and strengthen the relationships needed for that recruitment process.

Simply recruiting students is not the role and purpose of the Lutheran school any more than simply recruiting members is the role and purpose of our congregations. However, such intentional recruitment efforts are a necessity for both to continue to exist in America today. Somewhere along the line we have to assume that increased membership in our congregations reflects those functions which are the goals of the church.

Steve Bouman, writing in the August 1992 issue of *Lutheran Forum*,<sup>5</sup> states that "it is mystifying to me that our congre-



gations can speak volumes about getting the church in the world and fail at least to invite the [world] into their midst." It is mystifying to this writer that our Lutheran congregations operate Lutheran schools with their distinctive roles and purposes of nurture and evangelism and then fail to invite nonmember families into the life and ministry that congregations live out together as the people of God at that place and time.

Using Bouman's words and substituting *Lutheran schools* for his use of the term *social ministry* (many of us who work with Lutheran schools these days acknowledge their strong marks and accents of social ministry), his thesis for parishes determined to live their life in the midst of the world would read as follows: "If a congregation follows the Holy Spirit to a ministry of presence in the world through [a Lutheran school], it is only one part of the effort of that parish to gather a community of believers around the means of grace . . . For Lutherans, [Lutheran schools] and evangelism are one. The ministry of renewed parishes will take responsibility for the unchurched and the powerless in their neighborhood . . . Ministry is at its heart, individual, particular."

### Problem II: Some Lutheran Congregations Don't Want to Grow!

Of interest here are the early findings of the Church Membership Initiative project<sup>2</sup> currently being conducted by Aid Association for Lutherans. These findings indicate "that the vast majority (perhaps 70 percent) of Lutheran congregations do not appear to be particularly motivated to increase membership size." Also indicated in the report is that church membership growth is primarily a local congregation issue. "A strong case can be made," states the report, "that substantial amounts (big numbers) of church membership increase may be more a matter of what happens in over 20,000 individual congregations than any other influence variable."

Only four of the 62 parish pastors in the "six hour" think tank sessions which were part of the process in Phase I of the AAL study "were able to describe a formal congregational goal and accompanying activities being undertaken at their congregation to grow."

### Problem III: Some Congregations Insist that they Want to Grow But When Confronted with the Attitudinal and Behavioral Changes Which are Involved in the Process, Aren't Willing to Grow.

When asked about the value of membership growth, clergy of the 70 percent of Lutheran congregations who do not appear to be particularly motivated to increase their membership size generally indicate a desire for growth. "However, when examining their attitude toward those characteristics which would appear to be necessary for growth to occur, the impression changes completely. On a host of issues (e.g., purpose of congregation, defining needs to be met, worship style, liturgy, program content, style of ministry, openness to change, and on and on) they are consistently and overtly opposed to doing what appears to be necessary to foster growth."

Another key insight which has emerged from the early phase of the AAL study is that "the difference between a congregation saying that it wants to grow and their actual behavior (which generally prevents growth) is critical in understanding prospects for further membership growth."

### Problem IV: Some Congregations Operating a Lutheran School Don't Want Some of their Nonmember Student Families as Members in their Congregations

Already in 1973 a project involving the Lutheran schools of Nassau County in New York, *A Study of Parental Attitudes*, was initiated because of an increasing number of African American families enrolling their children. Conducted by the Center for Social Research located at Concordia University in River Forest, Illinois, the study sought to determine attitudes of nonmember parents toward the following questions:

Why did you enroll your child in a Lutheran school? What is your assessment of the experience you and your child are having in that school? Would you be offended if the congregation which operates the school your child attends were to invite you to become actively involved as a member?

Two major surprises which emerged as a result of the study were: (1) the vast majority of parents had enrolled their children in a Lutheran school for purposes of the faith formation process in vogue in those schools; (2) parents were surprised that very little effort was being made to encourage them to join the congregation which operated their schools.

### Problem V: Some Congregations Want to Grow but Don't Know What To Do for Growth to Occur

As pointed out throughout the articles and in the list of

selected resources in this edition of ISSUES, there are many helps available for these congregations and their leaders.

### Conclusion

The ELCA discussion paper regarding growing congregations reminds all congregations that the ministry that takes the Gospel of Jesus Christ seriously and seeks to be faithful in outreach in its unique time and place "will invite and welcome all people to know God's grace and to enter the relationship with Christ and the church." Furthermore, congregations are encouraged to "invite and welcome the stranger into their midst." They are also reminded that "this Gospel hospitality causes us to pursue relationships with the diversity of people who are living without Christ, or living without membership within a community of faith gathered around Word and Sacrament."

Presently, Lutheran schools are in a unique position to become more serious and intentional about their church membership recruitment efforts. Given their various ministry settings they seemingly have unlimited potential in this regard. Without sacrificing their role and purposes of proclamation and nurture as they address the educational needs of their neighbors and their neighbor's children, they can permit the banner "Membership Recruitment Drive in Process" to wave freely and prominently in their halls and classrooms.

Commonality of intention concerning the role and purposes of Lutheran schools has always been an imperative for their productive life and ministry. Such commonality of intention regarding their opportunities for church membership recruitment is also required and seems imperative for their life and ministry. Finally, even as they listen to the call to faithfulness in the 90's, Lutheran schools need to remember God's great faithfulness to them throughout their history.

### References

- <sup>1</sup> *Growing Congregations—The Outreach Challenge for the 1990's: Four Marks of Outreach Ministry*, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 1991.
- <sup>2</sup> Findings Report at Completion of Phase I for the Church Membership Initiative, Aid Association for Lutherans, 15 May, 1992.
- <sup>3</sup> *The Lutheran School: Opportunity for Mission*. LCMS Information Bulletin 32179, Board for Parish Services and Board for Evangelism Services.
- <sup>4</sup> "Evangelism: Liturgy Versus Church Growth," *Lutheran Forum*, Volume 24, Number 1, Lent, 1990.
- <sup>5</sup> "Give Me That Stranger," *Lutheran Forum*, Volume 26, Number 3, August, 1992.

## Selected Resources

by Mel Kieschnick

DR. MEL KIESCHNICK retired on December 31, 1992, as Director of the Lutheran Schools Association in New York and Director of Projects for the Center for Urban Education Ministry. His former ministries include serving as principal of Lutheran elementary schools, as the education executive of the LCMS schools in Hong Kong, as Education Executive of the Michigan District, and as Executive Director of the LCMS Board for Parish Services.

Note: Any failure to do evangelistic outreach through Lutheran schools cannot be due to a lack of printed and other media resources. There is a super-abundance of material available. Listed below is but a small sample of aids to support any serious effort at reaching out.

### Printed Resources Available Through The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

The LCMS Board for Evangelism Services and the Board for Parish Services at LCMS International Center, 1333 S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122-7295 have developed many printed items including books, tracts, and bulletins. Note especially the following:

*Church Growth Through Lutheran Schools* by Ed Schlimpert and Carl Moser, Board for Parish Services Bulletin #31587, available from LCMS Board for Parish Services.

*Dialog Evangelism 2*. A complete outreach training program produced by the Board for Evangelism Services. Includes a participant's manual, a teacher's manual, worksheets, transparency masters and a videocassette for an eight-week core course and subsequent cycles for an outreach program.

*The Evangel-Gram*. The official periodical of the LCMS Board for Evangelism Services, Rev. Lyle D. Muller, Editor, published quarterly, \$2.50 for single 12-page copy, special price for bulk copies. Focuses on experiences of congregations active in evangelistic outreach.

*The Lutheran School: Opportunity for Mission* by Kent R. Hunter, Board for Parish Services Bulletin #32179, available from LCMS Board for Parish Services.

35 *Witness Ideas for Teachers* by H. James Bolt, available from LCMS Board for Evangelism Services.

### Printed Resources Available Through Lutheran Education Association, Concordia University, 7400 Augusta Street, River Forest, IL 60305-1499

*Evangelism Outreach Through Lutheran Schools* by Lester Bayer. Lutheran Education Association Monograph Series, Fall 1989, vol. 15, no. 1.

*Helping Children Develop Witness Skills* by Erwin J. Kolb in Lutheran Education, vol. 124, p. 2, Jan/Feb 1987, pp. 133-139.

*The Non-Lutheran in a Lutheran School* by Lester Bayer. Lutheran Education Association Monograph series, Fall 1986, vol. 12, no. 1.

*The Shepherding Role of the Christian Day School Teacher in the Classroom* by Ervin F. Henkleman. Lutheran Education Association Monograph Series, Fall/Winter 1988-89, vol. 14, no. 1.

### Printed Resources from Publishers

*Go and Make Disciples* by Jane L. Fryar. Motivation, inspiration, and help for teachers as disciples. Concordia Publishing House, 3558 S. Jefferson Avenue, St. Louis, MO 63118.

*How Your Congregation Can Become a More Hospitable Community*. ELCA Division for Congregational Ministries, Congregational self-evaluation manual with practical steps for becoming a more welcoming community. Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 426 S. Fifth Street, Box 1209, Minneapolis, MN 55440.

*On Evangelization in the Modern World*. Pope Paul VI Papal Encyclical, Dec. 8, 1987, available from St. Paul Book and Media Centers located in most major USA cities.

*The Evangelizing Congregation*. Newsletter published quarterly by the ELCA Division for Congregational Ministries. Past copies at \$1.50 per dozen, available from ELCA Distribution Service, 426 S. Fifth Street, Box 1209, Minneapolis, MN 55440.

*The Inviting Church* by Roy M. Oswald and Speed B. Leas. Research findings of the Alban Institute on who and why people join churches. Contains excellent bibliography. Available from the Alban Institute, 4125 Nebraska Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20016.

*Welcoming the Stranger: A Public Theology of Worship and Evangelism* by Patrick Keifert. How liturgical worship and effective evangelism can complement each other, Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Publishers.

### Workshops, Seminars, Training, Consultation

*An Evangelism Consultation Model* conducted by Donald M. Brandt of San Clemente, CA, and described by him in "Strategic Evangelism in the American Context" in *Lutheran Partners*, vol. 6, no. 4, July/August 1990, Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Publishers.

*Making Your Church More Inviting* by Roy M. Oswald. A step-by-step guide for local congregations, available from the Alban Institute, 4125 Nebraska Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20016.

*Parish Consultant*. Lyle Schaller, who has high praise for the potential of the Lutheran school as an evangelizing agency, conducts seminars and workshops to assist congregations and schools. Contact him at 530 N. Brainard St., Naperville, IL 60540.

*Reinventing the Christian School*, conducted by Kent Hunter of Church Growth Center, P.O. Box 145, Corona, IN 46730.

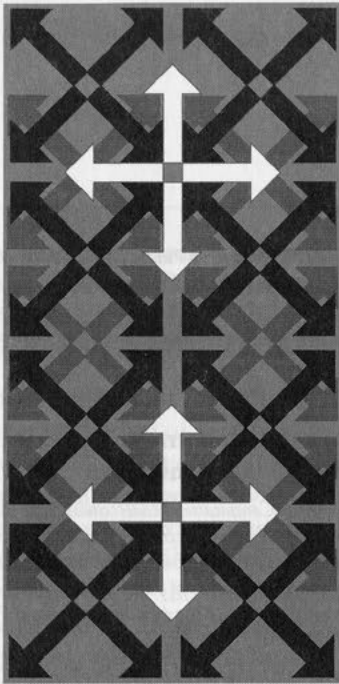
*The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* through its Division for Congregational Ministries and its Synods makes available some 14 workshops, each with trained leaders. They include Evangelism in a World of Diversity, Education Groups: Opportunities for Evangelism, An Inner-city Evangelism Base, Distinctive Elements of Lutheran Evangelism and others.

*The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod* through the Board for Evangelism Services and the Board for Parish Services in cooperation with the Districts offers a wide variety of workshops including Teacher Witness Workshop, Vision for Witness video-supported training workshop, Dialogue Evangelism Clinic, and others.

*The Master's Plan for Making Disciples*. An adaptation of a course originally written by Drs. Win and Charles Arn and published by Church Growth, Monrovia, CA. Especially adapted for use in the LCMS schools by the Texas District Board of Parish Services. Contact Dr. Keith Loomans, LCMS Texas District, 7900 E. Highway 290, Austin, TX 78724.

### Video Resource

*Vision for Witness*. A 6-session in-service training program to assist the classroom teacher to be a more effective witness. It includes a video, leader's guide and participant booklet, available from LCMS District offices, or contact Dr. Carl Moser, Director, School Unit, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, International Center, 1333 S. Kirkwood Road, St. Louis, MO 63122-7295.



# reflections

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6. How can congregations with schools find a common ground to minister to the unchurched school families without detracting from ministry to member families?
7. Why must sharing, inviting, and involving be intentional in effective evangelism?
8. Why do some Lutheran congregations not want to grow?
9. Is it true that some congregations operating a Lutheran school do not want some of their nonmember student families as members of their congregation?
10. As in all evangelism, what safeguards are necessary so no individual claims credit for conversion of the lost?

The opportunities for outreach through our Lutheran schools are great. Les Bayer in this ISSUES points out that “the church is not likely to find another agency like the school in which non-Lutheran parents are willing to pay \$1200 per year or more while giving the school the opportunity to teach their children about the Savior.”

**Orville C. Walz, President**

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