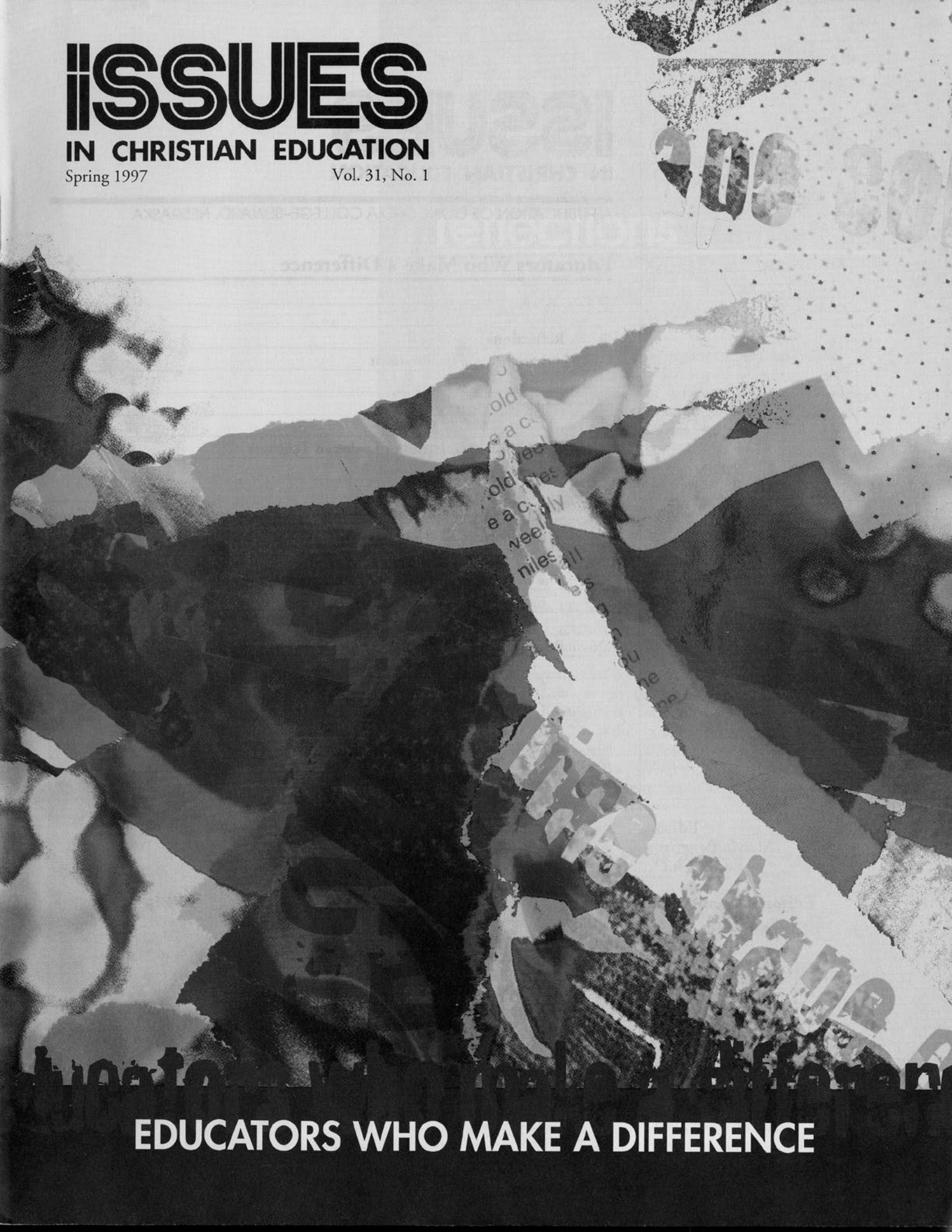


# ISSUES

IN CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Spring 1997

Vol. 31, No. 1



**EDUCATORS WHO MAKE A DIFFERENCE**



Spring, 1997  
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# ISSUES

## IN CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

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## reflections

A Concordia student recently explained the reaction she received while a senior in high school when friends and acquaintances learned that she was planning to become a teacher. Many discouraged her from preparing for this life's vocation. "You have so much talent and so much to offer. Why would you want to be only a teacher?" Even worse, when she told those giving advice that her plans included coming to Concordia-Seward to prepare to become a Lutheran school teacher, friends again cautioned against such a career, asking: "Do you know how little Lutheran school teachers receive in salary?" How sad!

The purpose of this edition of *Issues in Christian Education* is to highlight the impact and the potential impact of church educators. Particular attention is given to the ministries of Lutheran school teachers, directors of Christian education, and family life educators. Both current and potential contributions of church educators to the mission of congregations are explored.

Teachers and teaching are ignored so often today. Yet, the power of teachers and teaching to stimulate growth and change is great. This edition of *Issues* highlights contributions of teachers and their teaching to the mission of the church in our current social contexts. For me personally, being called a teacher is one of the highest accolades anyone can bestow. Of various names Holy Scripture uses in referring to Jesus, the title most often used in the four Gospels, no less than 48 times, is *teacher*.

It is my prayer that this *Issues* emphasizes in no uncertain terms the marvelous, God-given treasures His church has in the thousands of teachers, DCEs and family life educators who minister for Jesus Christ in our congregations. As Jonathan Laabs points out in an editorial, this ministry can at one and the same time be "time consuming . . . frustrating . . . and overwhelming, but also growing . . . rewarding . . . fulfilling."

Orville C. Walz, President



Graphic Design by Angie Heins  
of CONCORDesign, Concordia College, Seward



## editorials

### Can You Really Make a Difference?

As a Lutheran educator can you really make a difference? We wonder about this question and about ourselves sometimes. The problems and the challenges for the educator today are often so numerous, so frustrating, so overwhelming. Some of us come home after a trying day in the classroom, the office or the parish, and we ask ourselves how long we will be able to sustain and continue in this ministry. Sometimes it does not appear that we are making any difference at all. Our daily experiences seem to be telling us that things are not getting better. In fact, compared to ten years ago, things are not better in the classroom, the parish or the home.

We are not blind to the abuse and violence in our society and world in general and in families in particular. We witness more aggressive behavior among our children, and we experience the increasing disrespect of children, kindergarten through grade 12. Studies show that at least one in five children may have a mental, emotional or behavioral problem. We see and interact with these children in our classrooms and congregations. In the midst of these challenges, and more, we ask if anyone can really make a difference.

You and I need to remind each other that, in spite of the way things are, we really do make a difference. The reason we can say this so boldly and confidently is because we are in ministry. We make a difference because, fundamentally, our ministry is a ministry of the Word. True, at times (perhaps more often than we would want) we wonder about ourselves. We feel lonely, frustrated, and at some low points just plain failures. Perhaps we can hear an echo from the prophets and apostles of God who might say something like "Welcome to the club," or "We can understand what you're going through." Yes, they knew experientially all about this. They also knew, however, that the Word is the power of God unto salvation. They knew that the Word worked because God worked through the Word. It has not changed. It is still the same Word and work of God today. Classroom teacher, director of Christian education, administrator, family life minister/educator, can you, do you, make a difference? Of course! First, *you are different!*

Consider the three articles of our faith as we learned them in *Luther's Small Catechism*. Here is how you are different. God has created you. God has redeemed you. God has sanctified you. By this alone you make a difference because of what God alone has done to and within you by His Spirit through His Word.

Second, you make a difference because, fundamentally, your ministry is the unique and powerful ministry of the Word, God's Law and God's Gospel. You make a difference because the center of your life and your ministry is the Gospel, the doctrine of justification through faith for Christ's sake. No matter how it looks at times "out there," or even how we may feel at times within, the difference is in that quiet but dynamic faith and confidence in God and His Word.

The real difference is not just in an intellectual knowledge of the Gospel, but in the conviction of the heart which *knows* the crucified and risen Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. We make a difference because He has made a difference. Jesus said, "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). Here's the power and here's the reason for the difference. Yes, my sisters and brothers, fellow ministers in the Lord, you make all the difference in the world because the center of your life and your ministry is Jesus Christ. All ministry in the church begins with Christ and flows from Christ. His cross and His resurrection has made all the difference in the world and in the lives of everyone who hears, believes, and follows Him. You do make a difference! Why? Christ! The Lord Jesus Christ!

**Paul Vasconcellos**  
Professor of Theology  
Concordia College-Seward

### The Unique Ministries of Lutheran Teachers

*Time consuming . . . . . frustrating . . . . . overwhelming . . . . . growing . . . . . rewarding . . . . . fulfilling*

A project conducted by the Lutheran Education Association as part of its 50th anniversary

celebration in 1992 produced a "snapshot" of what being in ministry is like in the 1990s. Lutheran educators from around the country responded with predictably variant expressions of feeling (such as those above) and with descriptions of everyday life as teaching ministers of the Gospel . . . challenges and opportunities . . . highs and lows . . . successes and failures . . . joys and sorrows: all were identified with the Lutheran teaching ministry. Respondents included veterans and recent graduates; preschool, elementary and secondary teachers; women and men; second-career and lifelong educators. Diversity was evident. Yet a common thread of dedication to the call, commitment to mission and optimism about the future of Lutheran education exemplified the broader scope of those who call themselves Lutheran teachers.

Why is it that Lutheran educators of all types have decided to meet the challenges, cope with the difficulties and accept the call to serve in the teaching ministry on a full-time basis? What are the unique characteristics of Lutheran teachers today? How has the Lutheran teaching ministry changed since the first days of the sesquicentennial history of the LCMS? What does all of this mean for the future of Lutheran education? Lutheran educators traditionally have found most rewarding the opportunity to serve their Lord in ministry through teaching the Word to God's children of all ages. It is working with *people* that makes all the difference: experiencing the joys that come with learning and the sorrow that comes with the death of a close family member—all at once! The Lutheran teacher has, indeed, over the years needed to become a surrogate parent, advisor, counselor, referee and family advocate. Today's Lutheran educator has at the same time had to accelerate advancement toward an additional degree, learn new skills in a variety of content areas and the integration of technology and keep abreast of developments in the community, the church, the country and the world. The challenge of ministering to children, youth, and adults has grown more complex and has intensified the need for willing, capable servants in Lutheran education.

*Change* is the best word to describe the nature of students of today and tomorrow. In many ways and for many reasons Lutheran teachers will be facing a very different classroom profile than they experienced themselves as students. According to

1990 census data, of a total of 30 students (15 girls and 15 boys), 21 are whites, five are African Americans, three are Hispanics, and one is a second-generation Asian American. Four white students, two African American students, and one Hispanic student are from upper-income homes. Families commonly labeled "traditional" are in the minority: 19 are two-parent families in which both parents hold or have held recently at least part-time jobs; nine are single-parent families (six of them are below the poverty line); and only two are two-parent families in which only the father works outside the home. Two students of the 30 speak Spanish when they get home. Five students spend part or all of their day in learning-disability classes, speech therapy, gifted programs or other non-homeroom environments.

Not all challenges facing Lutheran teachers today come from outside the system. Changing models of financing schools often have brought more overall income to the school program but with very little benefit to teachers themselves. Lutheran educators have in a sense become the "fourth source" of funding schools in situations where salaries and benefits are not increased appropriately, or sometimes even reduced to balance budgets or allow for emphases in other ministry areas. Some members of the LCMS recently have questioned the very definition of the teaching ministry and the use of the Call. Evidence of misinformation, doubt, and a desire to "reform" has surfaced at conventions, in editorials, and through actions taken in some areas of the church over the years. In addition, many Lutheran schools have chosen not to call synodically trained teachers for reasons that range from cost savings to geographic convenience. This often has led to confusion about the teaching ministry at the congregational level and the perception among young women and men who are prospective teacher education candidates that pursuing a Lutheran Teacher Diploma does not really make a difference.

*The Lutheran teacher:* a minister of the Word facing growing challenges in unique and rewarding environments. Is it worth it? Just ask the 285,000 students whose lives are touched by Lutheran teachers each day!

**Jonathan C. Laabs**  
Director of Teacher Education  
Concordia College-Ann Arbor

### Directors of Christian Education Make a Difference

What is director of Christian education (DCE) ministry in today's world? Is it a "programmer" of activities? Might it be a staff person who takes care of all the details related to carrying out various educational endeavors in a congregation? Is it a person who specializes in ministry to children and youth? Is it a job? Is it a calling? Maybe it's just another position to make the work of a parish run more smoothly?

During the 20th century Christian educators have been making a difference . . . making a difference in the lives of people . . . making a difference in the ministry within our churches . . . making a difference in classrooms, camps, churches, playgrounds, homes, offices, and anywhere two or three are gathered together. DCEs have been involved in many different functions and roles during these years. Some are graduates of one of the DCE programs offered at our universities and colleges. Some entered DCE ministry through experiences gained as classroom teachers. No matter how one entered DCE service, the purpose was to share the love of Jesus with others and help others grow in the understanding of what God has done for us.

Sometimes misunderstood, sometimes brash, sometimes anxious, and sometimes outspoken, DCEs have made a mark in the educational ministry of the church. They have been involved in teaching confirmation, vbs, Sunday school, youth and adult Bible classes. They have taught women, men, parents, little children and older adults. They have taught other teachers how to teach.

While the role of the DCE grew primarily out of educational work with children, DCEs currently fill positions as youth ministers, family life ministers, older adult ministers, music ministers, ministers of assimilation, ministers of outreach, district education executives, national staff directors, camp directors/staff, college professors and editors. As various needs are identified in congregational ministry, DCEs will have the opportunity to continue to expand their experiences and use the special gifts God has given them. They will develop their ministries on the basis of educational and theological foundations.

Over the years I have been blessed to serve in various capacities in congregations, district and the synodical office. I have worked with many DCEs and have always been impressed by the sincere desire they have to be in ministry with others. The key to that ministry is one of preparation: preparing others to do the work of service . . . preparing others to be leaders . . . preparing others to be teachers . . . preparing others to be mentors and models for others . . . preparing "God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up." The DCEs I have known have worked in humility to build up others and see Christ as center in their lives.

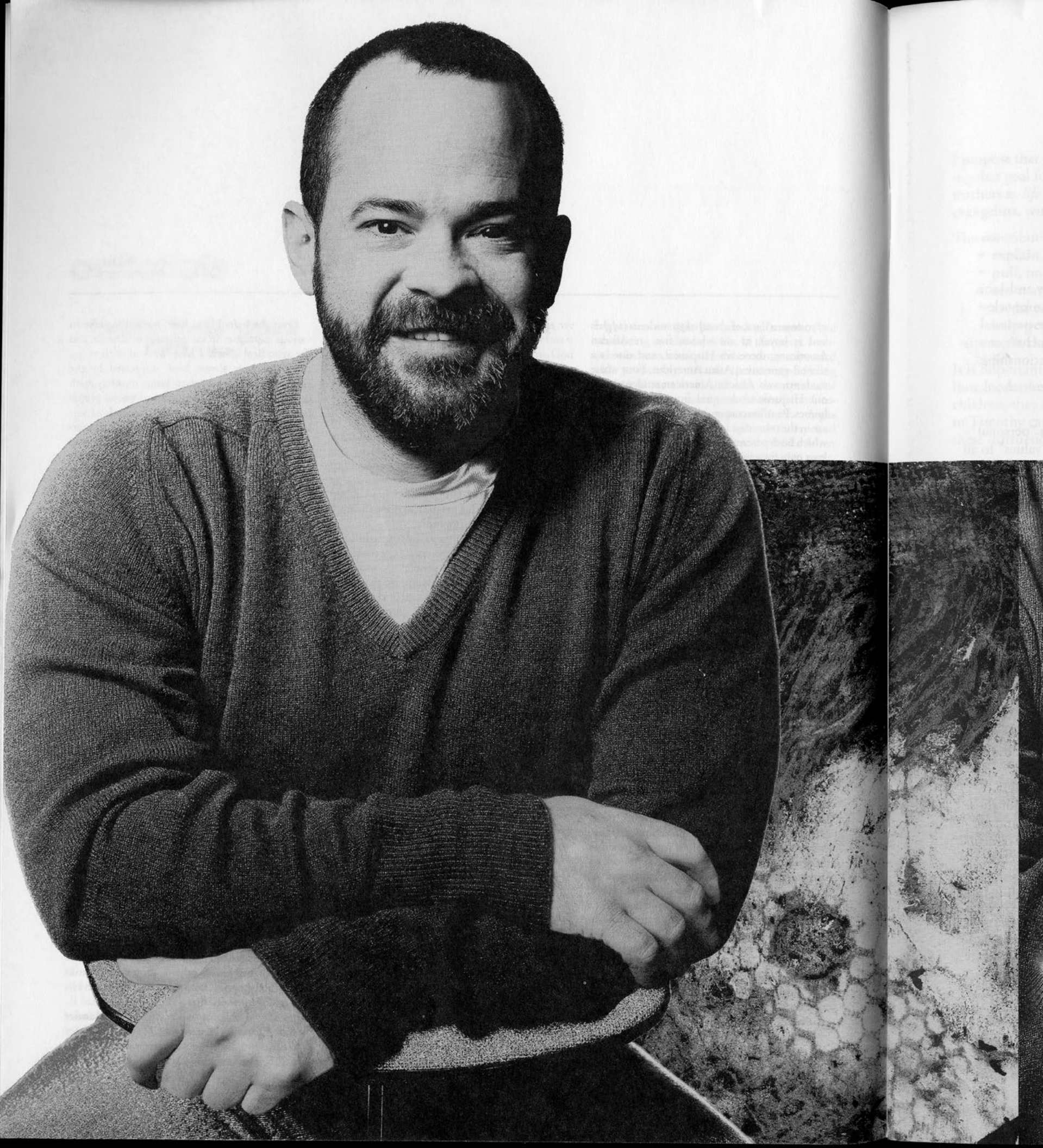
What are some of the challenges for DCE ministry as we live in a post-Christian society?

- To grow in knowledge through continuing education
- To stay in touch with the changes taking place in the world and in the lives of the people with whom we are in ministry
- To continually spend personal time in the Word and in prayer when tempted to ignore both since "I have so many other things to do"
- To make "team ministry" a high priority
- To nurture family life within a DCE's family
- To remember always that we are "equippers" of the people, not just "program activity planners"
- To make relationships a major key part of our ministry

The Lord has brought us into a ministry which lifts up His name, His Word, and His work. We are blessed to have so many people serving in so many different areas of church life. Educational ministers in all types of service are really "Directors of Christian Equipping." We give thanks to God for His guidance and His blessings over the many years. We ask for His hand of strength, His words of encouragement, and His breath of life for telling the News to others. . . and we say thanks to all the equippers who have and will serve His church.

**Louis C. Jander**  
Director, Department of Adult Ministry  
Congregational Services  
The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod





Roy Kaiser

## Ministries of Lutheran Teachers

**I**T NEEDS TO BE STATED that Lutheran teachers are unequaled in the field of education. They are a rare, particular, matchless and extraordinary group. We can find these special people in the 2,300 pre-schools, elementary schools and high schools of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod.

Their uniqueness is centered in teaching the glorious news of Jesus as the Savior of each child and family member under their care, as well as in their demonstrating a Christ-like servanthood in every aspect of their calling.

Note how teacher Kristen begins her weekly letter to her fourth grade parents.

Dear Parents,  
The air has been chilly. Your toes may be cold, but our Heavenly Father still keeps the fiery warmth of the Holy Spirit burning inside of our hearts! Stay warm in the love of Christ.

**Lutheran teachers tell of God's love.**  
**Lutheran teachers share God's love.**  
**Lutheran teachers care because of God's love.**  
**Lutheran teachers witness to their faith in God's love.**

Thank God for Lutheran teachers!

I am indebted to those teachers and administrators in the Southern, Florida-Georgia and Michigan Districts of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod who kindly provided me with a wealth of answers to a questionnaire that was related to this topic.

### Distinct Ministries—Have They Changed?

MY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL years were spent in a rural one-room Lutheran school in Michigan. My father was the principal and only teacher of 50 students, grades 1-8. He served also as church organist, choir director, youth director, Sunday school superintendent and teacher, children's choir director, athletic director and coach, custodian of the school and secretary of the congregation.

I did not realize fully his workload until I entered the teaching ministry and tried to juggle a classroom of 42 fifth and sixth graders and the congregation's youth program.

Distinct and varied ministries are the trade mark of Lutheran teachers. Although we need only to adjust the temperature control in our classrooms today, numerous other roles and responsibilities with varied titles have been created. Teachers serve as counselors, curriculum specialists, computer technologists, remedial teachers and programmers, media center specialists, communications directors, special education teachers, foreign language teachers, extended care teachers, directors of outreach, etc. They also have the more common roles of Sunday school teachers, vbs teachers, youth leaders, athletic directors and coaches, choir and music

**Dr. Roy Kaiser, now retired, served as principal of St. John Lutheran School, Rochester, Michigan, for many years as well as a member of many district and synodical boards and committees. He continues to serve the Michigan District as a consultant.**



directors, and Bible class teachers. There is also the host of duties that the classroom teacher inherits with the position, from playground supervisor to drama coach for the school operetta.

Lutheran teachers also serve on congregational, district, synodical, and community boards and committees.

The distinctiveness of many of the roles today requires an expertise that was unknown in years gone by, yet each continues to focus on teaching, nurturing, shepherding and witnessing in the light of God's Holy Word.

Today more than 17,800 Christian teachers are conveying distinctively to children and adults God's redeeming love in the Lutheran school arena.

*Preschool* teachers have the unique opportunity to begin family ministry through Christian education. It is step number one in the educational journey. Teachers in our 1,100 preschools provide a loving, Christ-centered atmosphere for a child's first non-home learning experience.

*Elementary* teachers in our nearly 1,000 elementary schools are in a position to develop a Christian foundation for learning built on God's love for all people. Not only do they explore the heritage of faith with their students, but they invite them to express and share their beliefs and personal faith.

The *high school* teachers provide a high quality college preparatory academic program as well as a strong vocational program with a distinctively Christian focus on ethics and values. They have a special responsibility of helping to mold and shape 14-18 year-olds during the difficult teen years. They serve as effective role models with intensity and excitement that motivates many to full-time church work.

Teachers in all categories have the marvelous opportunity to present "Christ" to all their students and families, member and non-member alike. Their challenge is to instill a servant-like attitude in the hearts of the young in a world that says to the young, "Have others serve you!"

### What Are Their Special Contributions?

IS IT THE WAY OUR teachers

- lead worship?
- build self-esteem?

- develop good study habits?
- model appropriate behavior?
- provide Christian guidance?
- make home visits?
- help parents with family problems?
- teach values?
- participate in parish activities?

It is all of these and many more. Gary Smalley and John Trent in *The Blessing* suggest that there are five key elements which when blended together can cause personal acceptance to blossom and grow. Lutheran teachers consistently use these elements in their teaching relationships.

The "meaningful touch" is so evident at the pre-school and primary level.

The "spoken message" by the teacher relates a "personal care" for each student. Teachers "attach high values" to all students, recognizing them as persons of precious worth—redeemed by the Lord.

Teachers can "picture a special future" for each child, and they "actively commit themselves to fulfill the blessing." They do everything possible to help the students be successful.

More than 100 special contributions by teachers were listed by those who completed the survey. Space permits naming only a few.

- The common faith of teacher and student creates a special bond that builds relationships.
- Christianity is applied to the issues of the day.
- Study habits are taught effectively.
- Teachers extend their care and concern for students beyond the classroom in extracurricular activities and events.
- Teachers minister to whole families besides the students in the classroom.
- The special needs of children are met through programs and activities such as Rainbows (for those who have experienced the loss of a parent) and LAP (learning abilities program) which provides remedial help. Special consideration is given to each child's individual needs.
- There is a deep concern for the spiritual well-being of each and every child.

The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future summarized its challenge to the American public. After two years of intense study the Commission concluded:

"We propose an audacious goal—by the year 2006 America will provide all students with what should be their educational birthright: access to competent, caring and qualified teachers."

I propose that our Lutheran schools have been accomplishing that goal for many decades. I like to think of our teachers as *life-touchers*. *Life-touchers* are those who are evangelists, witnesses and missionaries.

The contributions of *life-touchers* are that they:

- **explain**, not tell
- **pull**, not push
- **are examples**, not give examples
- **are interesting teachers**, not are interested in teaching
- **help people find themselves**, not label kids
- **walk the message**, not just take the message.

It is important to note that *life-touchers* are not super-human. As they speak, live and love the Word into the children, they also need spiritual renewal. St. Paul's advice to Timothy can be applied as a principle for teachers. "Give these instructions. . . as you feed yourself spiritually."

In a brochure entitled *150 Ways to Show Kids You Care*, three of the ways impressed me as ways in which Lutheran teachers contribute to the good of children.

#131. *Magnify their magnificence.* Teachers see each child as a significant, special human being who is so special and magnificent that Jesus died for him or her personally.

#148. *Empower them to help and be themselves.* The teacher's goal is to help each child be responsible and accountable for one's own actions and be everything he or she can be with God's help and direction.

#150. *Love them, no matter what.* Teachers try to love to the degree that they experience God's love in their lives.

Sales people in the business world feel successful when they have satisfied customers. Educators are humbled by the same response. When parents feel good about their child's teacher and school, and when students look forward to each school day, we have positive signals that the teacher's goals to provide a quality Christian education are on target. Consider the following snippets which are cherished by classroom teachers and administrators and are found in their memoir file with a "save" label stuck on each one:

Notes from parents

"I have tried and tried, but could not find the words to express my admiration and appreciation for the utmost commendable efforts extended by you to help my son. My son said, "This is the best school in the world!"

"Thank you for taking the time to give a deserving student a 'pat on the back' through your encouraging letter. Gestures like this set you apart from others. I am continually grateful that my children have had the opportunity to attend a school where

high standards of education are perfectly blended with such genuine loving concern."

"... finally, continue strong in your faith, know that many families pray daily for each and every one of you. Our children look to you as examples and how grateful we are that we have such loving examples as all of you!"

Notes from children:

"Thank you for the smiles and hugs! I've had nine special years at your school. I have a 'way of life' that will continue wherever the path takes me. God bless you." Tarah

"I love you. I think you are nice. I wish you were my dad!" Katie

"You are the best teacher I no!" Patrick

"This is an invitation into my heart. Thank you for your warmth. If I was your teacher I'd give you an A+. With all my love, Danielle."

"When I came to your school I was scared because I thought it was like the other schools I was in. Nobody liked me. But now 'our' school is different. If I were the president of the U.S., I would give 'our' school an award for the way you care about us—not just me but all the students!" Kathrin

The key factor regarding the special contributions by teachers can be summed up by referring to Bill Hinz's dissertation. In surveying 701 Lutheran teachers in Michigan, he found that the opportunity to share their faith and the spiritual dimensions involved with Lutheran teaching were very positive factors contributing to job satisfaction for the majority (81 percent) of those involved in the study.

### Who Are These Contributors?

GORDON MACDONALD in his book, *Ordering Your Private World*, compares called people to driven people. I would like to believe that all Lutheran teachers fit the definition of called people. He says,

They are people who have strength from within, perseverance and power that are impervious to the blows from without. . . . They may be the unnoticed and the unappreciated. Like the disciples they

"The common faith of teacher and student creates a special bond that builds relationships."



**“Teachers are in the forefront, the front line of proclaiming the Gospel to all children.”**

are among the ordinary. But Christ called them and that made all the difference.

In the questionnaire I asked the participants to identify Lutheran teachers who are making a difference in the lives of students. How exciting to share a few of the responses.

Dave, who brings the never-aging Gospel to this high school generation in a loving way.

Kathy, who is touching congregation members and school families by sending notes, cards and prayers to those who are hurting.

Ruth, who is building a warm relationship with non-member pre-school parents.

Norleen, whose love of science instills such into the students.

Jim, who in sports displays a Christian attitude.

Candi, who teaches “Rainbows” for hurting students.

Linda, who provides a “Mom” presence to many of her students.

Fritz, who has a special ability to identify musical talent in students and creates opportunities for them to develop it in a meaningful way.

Art, who planted the “seed” of full-time church work in me years ago.

Cindy, who witnesses and demonstrates her faith outside of the religion period.

While editing this list, I came across one example that says it all in a few words. It reads: “For special teachers who make a difference in the lives of children—refer to the *Lutheran Annual*. Pick any name you want under the list of teachers.” How blessed our school system continues to be with loving, accepting and forgiving educators.

Elvin Eyster in a seminar, “Qualities of Professional Persons,” said:

A truly distinguishing characteristic of a professional person is that he loses himself in his profession; he forgets himself; he is dedicated to the service of others; he loses himself in something that is larger, something that is greater than he himself is.

Lutheran teachers, both “he’s” and “she’s,” are professionals.

## How Do Teachers Impact the Outreach of the Church?

FROM DAY ONE our church has said that Lutheran schools are the most effective educational agencies available for equipping children and youth for ministry. Historically, congregations saw their schools as “nurturing centers” for member children.

As changes have occurred in society and the church, more and more church leaders see Lutheran schools as the open door for reaching people with the Gospel and inviting them into the fellowship of the congregation.

Teachers in Lutheran schools touch more lives on a daily basis than any other ministry of the congregation. It is ironic to note that unchurched parents actually are willing to pay good money in order to have their children hear about the love of Jesus at the feet of Lutheran teachers!

Current synodical statistics show that more than 33,000 unchurched students attend our Lutheran schools throughout the United States. When parents are included, between 75,000 to 90,000 people represent a mission field that must be reckoned with!

During the 1995-96 school year, over 3,500 students and 5,700 adults were baptized as a result of the Lutheran school experience.

*Teachers are making an impact!*

I posed the following question in the questionnaire: “How do the ministries of teachers impact the outreach of the church?” Here are a few of the very meaningful comments.

- Teachers are in the forefront, the front line of proclaiming the Gospel to all children.
- Preschool teachers are in a position to direct unbaptized children to the Lord. They can lead parents and students through a “non-threatening door” to the church.
- By being “Christ with skin on,” they can extend God’s love and invite them to fellowship.
- Teachers serve foreign mission fields right in their own back yards!
- Many unchurched families seek a more stable environment. Our Christian beliefs, practices and modeling make the difference.
- Teachers greatly impact students who will be the church leaders of tomorrow.
- Teachers, because of their varied responsibilities, model the Christian life far beyond the classroom walls.
- Non-churched students from the community often enroll in our school because of the *teachers*. Their excellent reputations are known!

- Our high school music and athletic programs are tremendous examples of witness and outreach to the community.
- Where families feel that they are “losing the battle” in raising their kids, Christian teachers can provide encouragement, assistance and a caring attitude.

Families looking for a door that leads to a solid educational foundation not only find it, but they come away with spiritual knowledge through which the Holy Spirit opens a new door.

It is very evident to me that Lutheran teachers are most significant in carrying out the Great Commission of “making disciples of all nations.”

## What Are the Special Opportunities and Challenges Facing Teachers in Today’s Social Contexts?

IN ORDER TO ADDRESS this question, we must continue to be very clear about our distinctive mission and purpose. Congregations must be very clear about their own mission. The schools must be clearly supportive of this mission. We must have a collective vision and then respond to the real needs and challenges that society places before us.

Fred Hinz uses the following illustration: If a school makes changes just to keep the doors open, it is called *survival*. If a school makes the same changes in an effort to serve the community better, then it is called *ministry*.

I suggest we need to refocus our mission in the following areas:

*Teachers need to promote “all out” evangelism through Lutheran schools.* We live today in a global community. Our schools, whether in suburbia or the inner city, have youngsters of many nationalities, races and beliefs. God is bringing the mission fields to us! Our schools are seen as entry points for a new generation of members.

Are our teachers equipped to minister effectively with unchurched students? During a recent National Lutheran School Accreditation team visit, I listened to a pastor and principal who shared that their biggest concern was how to witness effectively to the 70 percent non-Lutheran school families and assimilate them into the congregation.

Are we ready to renovate and/or build new facilities so that the percentage of non-member and unchurched students can be increased? The National Lutheran School Goals (“Lutheran School Teachers of the 21st Century,” Board for Parish Services, LCMS, p. 15) challenge our schools with this statement: “By the year 2000. . . 20 percent of unchurched families which enroll in Lutheran schools will become Lutheran.”

*Teachers need to be responsible to the changing communities.* Current statistics on Lutheran schools report that 94 percent of all Lutheran teachers are white, and 84 percent of all students enrolled are white. The racial change in America in the past decade has exploded. An estimate is that by the year 2000 the majority of public school-age children in the United States will be non-white.

The racial changes have been less than dramatic in the Lutheran school system. The challenge is evident. We need to recruit more non-white teachers along with concerted evangelism efforts among the varied ethnic populations.

Lifestyle changes also affect school and congregations. Wade Roof in *A Generation of Seekers* shares many insights into the lifestyles of the people that teachers serve.

Teachers need to understand these lifestyle changes. They also need to know how to relate effectively to cultures other than their own. It may be necessary for them to find new and fresh ways of teaching, witnessing, worshipping, and serving in our changing communities.

*Teachers must address the changing nature of families.* Clearly the implication is that a ministry to children and youth must include parents. Teachers must see themselves as ministers to families.

Teachers, together with other team members, are in a position to offer approaches to families on how to create close family ties, communicate with each other, share the faith and pray with each other, clarify moral values and pass these on to children, and develop clear grace-oriented discipline at home. This is no short order!

*Teachers need to continue to strive to keep our schools uniquely and distinctively Christian.* We thank the Lord that we have continued to meet this challenge. How important it is to set a moral base in the light of a changing society! How important it is that Scriptures are used effectively in helping students cope with everyday concerns! How important it is that Christian values are at the core of the curriculum!

John Lounsbury in speaking to a National Middle School Association Conference said, “Excellence in ethics is the most needed priority in American education today . . . *Values are more basic than the basics.*”



“Many teachers would love to specialize in one or more professional areas.”

How important it is that teachers continue to prepare and advance themselves academically! They need fresh insights in pedagogy that will help to strengthen the quality of Lutheran schools. When we speak of Lutheran distinctiveness, we envision a mission statement and curriculum that clearly articulate the Lutheran Confessional and Scriptural positions. We further envision a staff committed to and trained for ministry.

Participants who completed the questionnaire named the following opportunities and challenges that are facing today's teachers:

- Remain confident in the power of God's love
- Stay on the edge academically
- Show the community that Christians can live as Christians in a non-Christian world
- Share Christian values with children
- Model the Christian faith and life in a classroom setting of a growing number of unchurched students
- Minister to families that are hurting
- Be able to find contentment while living under the stress of time and finances
- Take the opportunity to teach Christian ethics and morality in an age of situationalism
- Teach teens Christian morals when society teaches the opposite
- Make the Gospel message relevant to the life style of the 21st century
- Minister to single parents, blended parents and step parents
- Help students understand material wealth from a Christian perspective
- Help students who are less focused on learning, less prepared to work hard, and satisfied with a lower quality of work
- Give attention to the many families who place material wealth, social life, and extracurricular functions as priorities
- Be steadfast and true to the teachings of Jesus. Spread His Gospel, no matter how the world resists us.

What blessings are so many opportunities and challenges in ministry! Lest we be overwhelmed with where to begin, we need to remember the words of St. Paul, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me!”

## How Can Congregations and the Church-at-Large Tap the Potential of Teachers to a Greater Extent?

THE HARDEST QUESTION is the last. This article in many respects presents a workload for teachers that seems overwhelming. The question being asked is, “What else do we want these willing workers to add to their agendas?” Edward Keuer in an LEA Monograph states that:

The teaching ministry is never static, but always in the process of becoming. Transition implies a need for ability to use change and movement, together with a willingness to risk, to grow intentionally toward greater servanthood for God and His people. To that end it's important for Lutheran teachers to understand and appreciate the development of their ministry in the Synod, to be able and willing to examine and evaluate its present status, and to develop thoughtful judgments regarding its future that will contribute towards its preservation and strengthening.

As I think back to my father's responsibilities in the one-room school, I can see that some of those “chores” he was asked to perform could have been handled very easily by others in the congregation and community. Many teachers are saddled with duties that are far removed from their professional training. Many teachers would love to specialize in one or more professional areas. Yet the opportunity is often not made available due to finances, time and other responsibilities. We need to let them fully utilize their spiritual gifts for the advancement of the Kingdom.

Being specialists does not mean that teachers cannot continue to be generalists. Generalists are those who are still willing to stay involved, to say “yes” to students, to love and care and share.

Some congregations utilize the expertise of our teachers to the fullest. Yet the church-at-large many times overlooks the professional qualities and abilities of teaching ministers to serve on committees and boards and as officers in the church. This is particularly true of women teachers. By the year 2000, 40 percent of elementary school principals will be women. What a potential for church-at-large service! Teacher franchise is still an issue not satisfactorily resolved at the district and synodical level. The church-at-large has a pool of almost 18,000 teachers, yet these voices are seldom heard in the church-at-large.

What is important to the Lutheran teacher is that the church-at-large continues to view our called teachers, both men and women, as Commissioned Ministers of the Gospel—men and women called to be servants to God's

people; men and women who not only share the Gospel but are Gospel people.

Note the interesting reactions to the following question on the questionnaire: “Can the teachers' potential be tapped to a greater extent?”

- This is a real “push me, pull you.” The desire to improve the classroom teaching and family concerns of our students with the other responsibilities in the congregation cause a real personal family stress problem. The desire to do all is in each teacher. How this can be done is the mystery.
- Release teachers from the old model of being present at every church function.
- Encourage, compensate and train teachers for appropriate timely service.
- When did teaching stop being a full-time job?
- We need to extend 10-month contracts to 12 months.
- Teachers need to teach!
- Those teachers who have the expertise should be repositioned.
- Congregations must continue to be supportive and uplifting.
- High school teachers should be encouraged to be part of the local congregational ministry team.
- Professional workers need to train lay people.
- Congregations should not be fearful to ask teachers with special gifts to use them.
- Congregations should provide support at all times and provide time to carry out these new ministries.
- Teachers who feel full support from their congregation will work up to their potential.
- Teachers need to be recognized and acknowledged as valued ministers of Christ.
- Congregations need to educate all teachers for outreach.
- Teachers need to be compensated in a way that relieves them from related stresses and pressures.
- Teachers need to be regarded as the highest professionals, which they truly are!
- Congregations need to study the time factor involved in parish services.

Many valuable comments and suggestions were shared in answering this difficult question. As teachers review their role, they need to consider their calling as a special opportunity to serve the Lord. They need to feel and know that they are in mission, in ministry. They need to feel privileged that they have the opportunity to profess Jesus Christ. They need to believe that they are called servants of the Word. Anything less will make it a job!

## A Final Thought

LUTHERANS HAVE been bullish on Christian education since the days of Luther. We have realized that the home is the

institution where the commitment to Christ begins, but we have further realized that because of the changes in society, the home responsibility has in many instances shifted to the school. How important it is, therefore, that we highlight the role of the teachers in Lutheran education! These committed men and women are truly gifts of the Lord. They are a special breed of persons. They are many-sided, with many roles to fill. They teach life. They teach by precept and by example.

One of the greatest challenges that teachers face in Christian education is a change of philosophy of ministry—to make changes to meet the challenges. They can either let things happen or make things happen. Lutheran teachers make things happen. Lutheran teachers make a difference! Thank God for Lutheran teachers!

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“Lutheran teachers make things happen. Lutheran teachers make a difference.”





Lisa Keyne

## THE DIRECTOR OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION: A MINISTRY WHOSE TIME HAS COME

### The Context

**T**HE 21ST CENTURY rapidly approaches, and much is getting written about the role of the church in contemporary society and what we as church need to be doing to live faithfully as God's people in this time and place. For example, William H. Willimon, dean of the chapel and professor of Christian ministry at Duke University, wrote in *This Culture Is Overrated*:

There was a time when I would have agreed this was one of the primary purposes of Christian preaching—to relate the gospel to contemporary culture. However, I have come to believe that is our weakness rather than our strength. In leaning over to speak to the modern world, I fear we may have fallen in. . . . Rather than worry a great deal about reaching our culture, I think we mostly ought to worry about speaking to the church—laying on contemporary Christians the stories, images and practices that make us disciples. (pp. 29-31)<sup>1</sup>

A year before Willimon's article, Brad Smith asked *What's Next on the Horizon?* After reviewing the church movements of the last 25 years, Smith concluded that "the next move for many churches is to rethink how current strengths can be better focused on equipping lay people to understand their gifts and serve. . . ." (p. 1). Terms like

"volunteerism" and "gift assessment" are being replaced with "equipping-centered churches," "permission-giving leadership," and "shared vision."

The equipping movement today is different because 1) the concern is in implementation, getting people to use their gifts; 2) equipping is seen as the basic task of the church; 3) more resources are being invested in education so people understand spiritual growth and maturity; 4) leadership is more decentralized, based on team ministry; 5) people and ministry are put above facilities and programs; and 6) the goal is a changed paradigm of leadership, not a new program. Smith concludes that the 21st century will see the church return "to an Ephesians 4 emphasis on equipping people in a fresh way that has not been seen in the U.S. in decades" (p. 4).<sup>2</sup>

Take into consideration the work done by Search Institute in *Congregations at Crossroads: A National Study of Adults and Youth in The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod*. After surveying almost 2,000 adults and 500 youth selected randomly from 163 LCMS congregations, several challenges for the LCMS become apparent. While 98 percent of adult

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respondents believe the Bible is God's inspired Word, only 31 percent read the Bible several times a week. Sixty-three percent recognize the distinction between Law and Gospel, while only one-third of those spend at least an hour a month helping those who could benefit from assistance.

Particular thought needs to be given, then, to helping people see the real-life implications of their relationship with God and their knowledge and beliefs in their own lives, their families and their world. Such translation requires caring community and interactive education, not just more leader-centered teaching. (p. 32)<sup>3</sup>

Through observing and reading it becomes obvious that these are challenging times for our churches. The pastor has a demanding task, trying to address the wide and varied needs of diverse members while working toward their growth in faith through Word and Sacrament ministry. When the need for a teaching, educating ministry partner was seen, the Director of Christian Education (DCE) was recognized as a commissioned minister in the LCMS, educated to work alongside the pastor in order to equip the saints.

### Definition and Vision

THE DCE'S UNIQUE niche in the LCMS is in the role of a congregation-based life span Christian educator who concentrates on equipping the disciples. The profession of the Director of Christian Education in the LCMS arose out of a desire to enhance parish education. The LCMS recognized that there was an existing ministry profession, that of teacher, which required similar skills and training, and so the Synod looked to those schools equipping teachers to equip also DCEs. Moreover, the first DCEs were teacher-trained. These individuals could be the "pioneers" needed to get this ministry profession started in the LCMS. The courses they took in education and theology could be generalized from the church's school classroom to the church's broader congregational education ministry.

As one examines present-day DCE ministry, one cannot miss the close connection between teaching roots and activities today. Preparation for DCE ministry has become more

specific to a parish setting, but still builds on the understanding of DCE as primarily Christian educator. The educational process becomes a necessary resource when taking seriously the need to help individuals develop in a particular area. When the area for development is the Christian life, the equipping function takes on exciting dimensions as the equipper recognizes that the task has eternal lifelong consequences.

### The Roles of the DCE

FOR MY DOCTORAL dissertation I interviewed 30 people who have worked to promote DCE ministry in the LCMS during the last 40 years. These leaders used a wide variety of descriptors to identify the "essence" of DCE ministry:

- DCEs enhance other people's ministries.
- DCEs do cradle-to-grave education.
- DCEs start elementary schools.
- DCEs organize groups and provide resources.
- DCEs have job descriptions tailor-made for them.
- DCEs are nurturers.
- DCEs are pastoral assistants.
- DCEs are facilitators, concerned about the whole formation process of becoming a Christian.

DCEs have carried titles such as Minister of Christian Nurture, Minister of Parish Education, Director of Education and Youth, Director of Church Growth Ministries, Director of Assimilation, Director of Development, Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministries, Director of Student Ministries, Director of Music Ministries, and Director of Campus Outreach.

Other DCEs fill positions in synodical or district offices and in synodical colleges, universities, schools and camps. DCE job descriptions vary according to the needs of the parish or other entity where the individual works. It appears that the DCE profession has wandered from its roots in education. One wonders if "jack or jill of all trades," rather than teacher, provides the best description of the DCE's role in churches today.

But such a generic title does not do justice to what is an established position in the LCMS. When one looks at the 38 years since the LCMS in convention approved DCE ministry, one can see the growth of this ministry profession. But the background is larger and more vast going back to the time of Christ Himself. James Michael Lee wrote:

There are many kinds of church work open to lay persons today. Of all these forms of church work, religious education stands above the rest because of its uniqueness.

The basic reasons for the inherent superiority of religious education as compared to other church

activities are threefold. First, Jesus expressly and unequivocally designated religious education activity as absolutely essential for the fulfillment of the church's mission. Second, Jesus was primarily a religious educator, and therefore lay persons who take on the religious education role walk more closely in the footsteps of the master than is possible in any other ministry fully open to lay persons. Third, religious education work requires a greater degree of competency from its facilitators than does the enactment of other ministries in the church (p. 30).<sup>4</sup>

Although Lee is describing volunteer and professional religious educators, he places great value on their participation in the church. In fact, Lee continues, Christ places such a great emphasis on the teaching role, on educating His people, that He mentions it as part of His final, "Great Commission" of Matthew 28:19-20: "Go therefore and make disciples . . . teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you . . ."

There is an important, valuable niche in our churches which can be filled by directors of Christian education, which makes sense with their background in teaching. Living out the role of providing life span Christian education to equip the disciples to live out their faith in church and world, there are opportunities to challenge members toward personal and group Bible study, to involve members in service to fellow Christians and those beyond the church community, to utilize members' gifts in congregational tasks, and to help members see chances to witness to their faith. When the DCE is properly prepared for the position, and the congregation rightly understands how this particular position can expand the existing ministry of the church, greater participation by members in education, service opportunities and worship is inevitable.

The job descriptions of DCEs vary depending on the needs of a parish. Technically the DCE may work in many arenas as long as s/he remains focused on the equipping function. If the job description is youth ministry, the DCE recognizes that there is a variety of ways to help nurture the faith of the youth, and many of those are not traditional classroom experiences. The DCE also recognizes that he does not work in isolation with youth, but works within the family context, and so must be aware of life span issues. The DCE who has responsibilities in outreach and assimilation has the opportunity to equip every member to understand his/her role in witnessing on a daily basis. Offering classes which help every member consider lifestyle evangelism possibilities, educating the congregation in effective means to assimilate new and long-term members, mentoring those who want to learn more about faith, developing small groups for practicing Christian hospitality

and love, and equipping evangelism callers can be ways the DCE utilizes his education function within the outreach job description. The DCE understands the context of the parish and the need to be an effective administrator. There is much that can be done to equip the saints within the church, so the DCE must learn to put structure on an unstructured, potentially overwhelming ministry. S/he understands effective planning, identifying a goal and working toward its successful completion. In my first call I worked in the areas of music, evangelism, education and youth. It is impossible to do justice in so many areas. Yet with gifted lay persons we were able to see progress in many ways. My last parish call was to work with outreach and assimilation. Again, there was much work to be done. But as others saw the need, felt moved, and pursued equipping, the outreach expanded, new members were well-integrated into the congregation, and more opportunities for equipping arose.

A DCE recognizes her/his own limitations, complementing her/his gifts by finding differently-gifted lay people to work with in accomplishing goals. Rather than "working oneself out of a job," ministry opportunities are expanded as more unleash their gifts, calling for more and greater equipping of the saints.

And that is the key to the future of DCE ministry. Just as Smith's vision is a changed paradigm of leadership by equipping, rather than simply creating another program, so the DCE recognizes that equipping will happen into perpetuity. There will always be a need for equipping for tasks within the church, some tasks which have been around for years and some which have not yet been anticipated. But even more importantly, the Christian can be challenged to see the need to be educated throughout his/her entire lifetime about the jobs, mysteries and challenges of living out our faith. The DCE ministry is a ministry profession whose time has come and whose future is secure.

### The Preparation of DCEs

IN A RECENT CONVERSATION with a 25-year DCE-veteran, Dennis Hintz, he shared that congregations see the need for





a Christian educator who can help that congregation see the value of having someone who equips members for something more and for living their faith. The DCE is "being certain of the things that do not change and communicating those to others," according to Hintz. What is the best way to prepare for this important ministry?

DCE students take psychology courses to learn to work with people. They enroll in theology courses to learn the content of their Christian faith and how to interpret Scripture. They take education courses, learning how to set long and short term educational goals for large groups, small groups, and individuals. A variety of educational methodologies are taught so that once goals are identified, the DCE can choose the best method to use to communicate the "lesson."

There are now five schools in the Concordia University System which equip DCEs. At four of the five schools the student can pursue certification as both teacher and DCE, while all five schools have programs exclusively designed for parish-based DCEs. Research and experience have contributed to expanding the theory base which is available to equip DCE students. This theory base allows the DCE student to consider the best way to enter into work in a parish setting, anticipating responses and future patterns based upon the theories s/he has learned, and the examples s/he has observed.

Since certification or a particular course of study is not required in the LCMS before one can use the title of DCE, some congregations are filling this position by hiring a worker from within the membership. The advantages to the congregation may be that the worker already knows the people, that the congregation already knows the worker, that the worker has a loyalty to that geographical area, and that one may have some background which can be integrated into the position.

There appear to be some distinct disadvantages. In one congregation the adult education person has a marketing background. This individual sees his job primarily as administration and recruitment. The result of his leadership in adult education is that the small group ministry is primarily relational, "meeting the needs" of members, rather than focusing on Bible study.

Knowing the needs of members, even considering them when designing programming, is not the issue. Rather, when needs exclusively drive the direction of programming, certain topics, difficult topics, could be bypassed for a "please the consumer" approach. Trends, rather than the solid foundation of Biblical understanding, may drive the ministry of the church. That ministry may be based on learning through trial and error and learning by experience rather than by delving into the theory which is being developed to assist church workers, theory grounded in the Scripture and an understanding of servant leadership equipping the priesthood of all believers.

A congregation considering the addition of a DCE needs to ask why the position is being added. What is it that the congregation hopes to accomplish through this ministry? Once this information is known, attention needs to be given to the kind of "filter," or mindset, which the worker will use to evaluate materials, programs, goals and vision. What are the fundamental, underlying pieces which the individual will not compromise? How does one develop this perspective?

It is possible to bring a strong theological and doctrinal "filter" to a position through experience. But the course work at a college or university of the LCMS is designed to educate students in order to understand parish ministry, to have a strong Biblical foundation, to work towards ministry by building on the best relevant resources, research and work.

Our vision for educating at Concordia-Seward includes demonstrating a variety of the best approaches to teaching, highlighting the needs/developmental stages across the life span, equipping to assess the needs of every member, including the learning needs related to tasks and discipleship, and teaching the content of the Christian faith. There is a logic to the course work, a progression of classes developing workers who understand servant leadership in an equipping ministry. In-depth academic study of the Bible, with practice in interpreting and conveying Biblical truths, is a central focus. The goal is a graduate able to identify the essential equipping needs of those who want to learn the fundamentals of the Christian faith and of those who want to be challenged to grow. Then in the church not only are the needs of the day addressed, but members learn how the Christian faith is different and how that differentness is lived out on a daily basis.

Practice, learning by trial and error, still is essential for DCE students. Supervised practicums and internships are required so the student can be mentored by those who are in parishes. The student identifies how to live out the roles in which he is being equipped, while also identifying future personal growth goals. The DCE understands that his

education is lifelong. As the DCE equips, so he continues to be equipped, learning more about life as a Christian, learning better to live out his roles, and learning more about the times in which he is serving.

### How Do We Go About Calling a DCE?

A CONGREGATION interested in calling a DCE has a number of options.

- Your congregation can gather names of qualified field DCEs through your district office.
- You can add to that list names of other field DCEs received from members of your church.
- The placement directors at the five Concordias with DCE programs can provide additional names and vitas of upcoming graduates.
- You may contact the DCE program directors at the five schools in order to apply for a DCE intern. Some DCE interns are available for placement immediately upon completion of the internship, while others return to school for another year.

It is a good time to be a DCE in The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod! All five Concordias (Irvine, Portland, River Forest, St. Paul and Seward) which equip directors of Christian education consistently have more requests for interns and graduates than they are able to fill. In a church body of 6,200 congregations, the almost 500 parish-based DCEs are appreciated but too few in number. Consider encouraging those in your congregation gifted for this ministry to investigate DCE ministry. There are programs available for traditional age students as well as those who have already experienced other careers.

### The Future

*It was he who gave some to be . . . teachers to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up, into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work (Ephesians 4:11-16).*

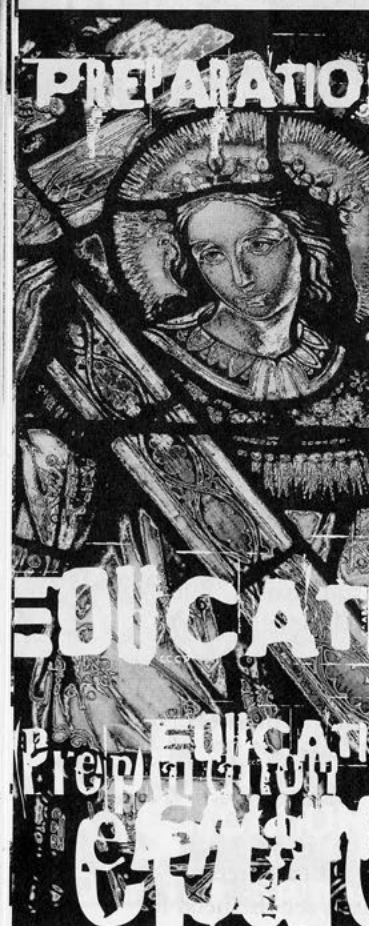
The Ephesians passage summarizes well the work of the church today and the niche of those in the Body who equip. As we look to the future, challenging times are ahead. Christians cannot enter the future ill-prepared for

those challenges. We arm ourselves with the Word, we seek to grow beyond being "infants" in understanding God's truth, and so we are able to address and to wrestle with new ethical and moral choices. Each part of the Body seeks to do its work, modeling true love for a world which does not comprehend.

The DCE, one who is equipped to equip, has the tools and vision to help congregations move in this direction. When the DCE takes seriously his/her roles of educator, instructional leader, administrator, care action minister, researcher and consultant, working within the context of a particular congregation and its reality and complementing the work of that congregation's pastor and other church professionals, it is possible to identify ways to work toward nurturing the faith of members while helping them understand their roles in the congregation. The image of the Body of Christ is strengthened, and the future, with all its unknowns, does not look as frightening as it could. May our future include DCEs in the LCMS taking their equipping function seriously, congregations calling into service more DCEs to enhance existing ministries, and more qualified individuals taking on the challenge of pursuing DCE ministry so that the LCMS will see an expansion in the ways its members live out their faith. To God alone be the glory!

### Notes

- <sup>1</sup>Willimon, William H. "This Culture is Overrated," *Leadership*, Winter 1997.
- <sup>2</sup>Smith, Brad. "What's Next on the Horizon?: Team Ministry in the 21st Century," *Next*, Vol. 2, No. 1, February, 1996.
- <sup>3</sup>Benson, Peter L., Eugene C. Roehlkepartain, and I. Shelby Andress. (1995). *Congregations at Crossroads: A National Study of Adults and Youth in The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod*. Minneapolis: Search Institute.
- <sup>4</sup>Lee James Michael. (1993). "Religious education volunteers are very special," *The Complete Guide to Religious Education Volunteers*, by Donald Ratcliff and Blake J. Neff. Birmingham: Religious Education Press.







Roger Sonnenberg

## The Emerging Ministries of Family Life Educators

**I**T IS MY FIRST CALL as a pastor of a church. After four years of college and four at the seminary, I feel prepared to do ministry. But my confidence soon wanes.

Two weeks after being installed, an elder asks for an appointment. I wonder, "Am I in trouble already?" Shortly after he begins talking to me, I realize that the appointment is not to talk about my ministry but instead to talk about his marriage. Though he has been married for nearly 20 years with two children, his male co-worker propositions him, inviting him to experiment in a homosexual relationship.

Larry is single. He calls to tell me that it is necessary to talk to me as soon as possible. His girlfriend is pregnant. Though he loves her, he's not "in love" with her and wants to have her abort the baby.

Betty comes to me from another church. She tells me, "I can't talk to my own pastor about this, and so I've come to you." In the first half hour she unravels a life of physical and verbal abuse, not only from her husband but also from her two sons who have learned well from their father.

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With each new day I become more and more convinced that I am unprepared to help families deal with the crises with which they are struggling. Though I have been trained to be a homilician, a teacher, an administrator, a janitor, a visitation pastor, I feel inadequate in the area of counseling. I know God's Word is filled with "spirit and . . . life" (John 6:63), but I feel that I do not always know how to apply it or translate it in such a way as to help the many people who come to me.

### From "Leave it to Beaver" to "Beavis and Butthead"

WHAT'S HAPPENING TO the family? Experts are saying that the family continues to deteriorate. More and more families find themselves in crisis.

On the front page of the *Los Angeles Times* we read: "Teen Pregnancies Force Town to Grow Up." The article points out that when one hears the voices of Tipton, a small rural community, one can hear the voices of a troubled America. Babies are having babies; unwed teens account for 11.8 percent of births in Tipton County. The question asked by a 52-year-old physician is "Who's going to do something about this?"

The *Wall Street Journal* (December 13, 1996, R1, 4) reports: "All around them, Americans see a decline in values and



morals. They deplore the diminished authority of the four great repositories of their values—religion, the law, schools and families.” Sixty-one percent of those polled said the state of morals in America is getting worse. Over a third of those polled said that “beyond having a good family, a strong religious faith was the best indicator of personal success.” The majority of those polled said that they believe “media, and television specifically. . . (are) thwarting them from passing their own values along to their children.” The number one movie during the Christmas season of 1996 was *Beavis and Butthead*. Instead of revering parents and others in authority, children have found a new hero—Beavis. They learn well from Beavis, a “smart-alecky, disrespectful little teen.” Why not emulate him? After all, he is the one everyone is paying big bucks to see on the movie screen! He is the one everyone finds humorous.

### Who's Going to Do Something About It?

FOR YEARS Mrs. Jones had taught school. Each morning she would say to her students, “Good morning, students.” In reply the students would answer, “Good morning, Mrs. Jones.”

Upon having her own children, she decided to retire temporarily from teaching and stay at home to raise her family. After raising her family, she returned to teaching.

Much to her surprise, the students seemed to have changed, not only in the clothes they wore, hairstyles, pierced ears, etc., but also in their behavior.

On her first day of school, she began her class as she had years before. She said, “Good morning, students.” There was only silence. A student in the front row shouted, “Shut up, (expletive)!” as all the other students broke out in laughter.

The teacher asked two important questions in a letter she sent to the *Los Angeles Times*: 1) “What happened from the time students said, ‘Good morning, Mrs. Jones!’ to ‘Shut up, (expletive)!?’” 2) “Who’s going to do something about it?”

The first question is answered by St. Paul in Romans 1:18-32. Sin has broken mankind’s relationship with God. When the vertical relationship with God is broken, so is the horizontal relationship between people. The second question, “Who is going to do something about it?” is

answered in and through Jesus Christ. He did do something about it on Christmas and Easter and Pentecost. He came to earth to bring man and God back together again through His own life, death, and resurrection. He became our high priest, literally “the bridge builder,” to bring us back into relationship with God and with one another.

As Jesus Christ ascends into heaven, He clearly establishes who is to carry the message into the world. His people! “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations . . . teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matthew 28:19-20). On Pentecost He sent the Holy Spirit to establish the Christian church, and in so doing, answered the clarion call of not only the woman writing to the readers of the *Los Angeles Times* but also millions of others who ask, “Who is going to do something about it?”

### “Rise Up, O Men of God!”

THE FIRST LINE in the book, *A Tale of Two Cities*, describes our present situation: “It is the best of times; it is the worst of times.” It is the “worst of times” in many respects for the family. There are many factors which seem to be working against the family. But at the same time it is the “best of times” for the church to make a difference, because the church of God has been given the Gospel of Jesus Christ, “the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes” (Romans 1:16). In a popular song of the Promise Keepers, “*Rise Up, O Men of God*,” the song writer challenges us to rise up and to accept the challenge before us.

Charles M. Sell in his book, *Family Ministry*, says:

The church, like no other social institution, is in the best position to prevent family problems. No other institution contains whole families. The church is able to influence people during the crucial transitions of adolescence, early marriage, parenting, etc. In fact, traditionally the church is involved in the lives of its members at crucial family-related junctures: baptism, marriage, and death. This gives church leaders an opportunity to identify and deal with problems before they become unmanageable . . . (Charles M. Sell, *Family Ministry*, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, MI, 1995, p. 20).

The founder of the American Institute of Family Relations in Los Angeles, California, the oldest counseling center west of the Mississippi, Dr. Paul Popenoe, once said:

We shall not begin to meet the needs of this country for marriage counseling until we train pastors on a large scale to do this job. Pastors are to

be found in every community of the United States, large and small. They are in daily contact with people, and the people trust them. They see the sad consequences of marriage failures as no other section of the community does . . . We should give every pastor in the land a basic training in marriage counseling.

While attending the Institute, I discovered far more than just basic training in marriage and family counseling. I discovered others who had a driving need to do more for those in their congregations and communities who were hurting. They believed as I did the words of St. Paul: “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16-17); “He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all—how will He not also, along with Him, graciously give us all things?” (Romans 8:32). We wanted to better equip people to deal with some real problems, such as marital dissatisfaction, depression, occupational changes and crises, and general family dysfunction. We wanted to better carry out the calling God had given to us: “to prepare God’s people for works of service . . . (to) build up. . . (to) become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:12-14).

The cry for help was coming from throughout America, metropolitan as well as rural, “Please help us; things are changing.” Growing churches were asking, “Where can we get men and women trained in specialized ministry to families?” It was a cry heard by Shirley Bergman, Paul Vasconcellos and others from Concordia College in Seward, Nebraska. They wanted to do more than talk about the crises in families; they wanted to respond with some help, some training. Thus, they developed a master’s program in family ministry. The rest is history. Within a few years they had earned the respect of experts throughout the United States in putting together a program that equipped men and women in helping families better live out the Gospel in their lives. The calls for family ministers far exceed the number they can produce each year.

In September of 1996, the first Family Friendly Summit involving pastors and educators of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod was held in Dallas, Texas. What was most interesting was the fact that when one of the speakers asked the question, “How many of you belong to churches that worship over 350 each Sunday?” almost all of those in attendance raised their hands. Growing churches see the need for family ministry. They see the need to respond to the cries of their families.

### So, What is Family Ministry?

FAMILY MINISTRY IS more than most people think. It involves everything that happens in the church. It is more than ministry to parents with children or married couples. It is ministry to anyone who has a father and a mother.

### Family Ministry is Discipling

FAMILY MINISTRY IS doing the very thing Jesus Christ commissioned the church to do: to “make disciples. . . teaching them” (Matthew 28:19-20). A disciple is one who learns certain principles from another and maintains them. The church is in the business of discipling, training the family of God to be Christ-like. For example, one specific mission of any family ministry is to help parents disciple their children in the Christian faith. Another is “to encourage one another and build each other up” as those in a Grief Support Group or a Step Parenting Group would do.

### Family Ministry is the Application of Biblical Truths

IT IS ONE THING to teach the truths of Scripture; it is quite another thing to apply these truths to everyday life. Scripture never stopped with just the proclamation of the Gospel. It repeatedly gives words of application. For example, St. Paul explains the husband’s role in the following way:

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to Himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself . . .” (Ephesians 5:25-29).

Experts tell us that one cry of those in the Baby Buster and Boomer generations is, “How does what I hear on Sunday morning apply to everyday life?” They want to know if these words from God are going to help them raise their children, whether or not it is going to help them deal with a troubled teenager, whether it is going to help them survive a nasty divorce. What about sex education? They are surprised to discover that the Author, the Creator of Sexuality, has lots to say about it in His Word!

“Who’s going to do something about it?”



## Family Ministry is Evangelism

SCRIPTURE IS CLEAR that the number one priority of the church is evangelism—to “make disciples” (Matthew 28:19). Family ministry is about evangelism. It is about “making disciples.” Parents need support from others in the things they teach their children. The divorced need support from others who struggle as they do. Married couples need to know that they are not alone in trying to resolve conflict. They need to know that there is no perfect marriage, no perfect mate. Perfection belongs alone to the Lord Jesus Christ, and forgiveness for their mistakes comes from Him alone.

As our congregation became more and more involved in family ministry we discovered it became our most effective means of reaching out into the community. We invited the community when we offered *Parenting With Purpose*, a six-week video-based parenting course from Concordia Publishing House, and we provided free baby-sitting. The community responded to our invitation in an unbelievable way. We enrolled 137 parents and 77 children in baby-sitting, with one-fourth of the parents being from outside the church. Several single parents said, “This is

the first time we have ever been able to do something like this because of the baby-sitting you are offering . . . and it's free.” Parents, Christian and non-Christian, want to know how to better parent their children. In offering another course entitled *Teaching Your Children about Sexuality*, over half of the participants came from families outside the church. Because we have been recognized in the community as a “family-friendly church,” we continue to be blessed with new members from the community.

## Family Ministry is Prevention

OVER THE YEARS the medical field has learned that “an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.” HMO's and other health providers are saying that the way to save money is by keeping people healthy instead of waiting until they get sick. Thus, these health carriers require yearly physical checkups and offer seminars on how to stay healthy. For example, they try to prevent heart attacks by educating their clientele on proper diet and exercise.

Healthy families do not just happen. Good marriages do not just happen. They take work. Donald R. Harvey, author of *The Drifting Marriage*, writes:

Marital failure is a process—not an act. It is a destination which is journeyed toward—not an initial port of entry. And like most journeys, the process of marital failure requires both time and the taking of many steps. Step by step. . . one irresponsible action followed by another. . . slowly but surely. . . the dreaded destination is approached (Donald R. Harvey, *The Drifting Marriage*, Fleming H. Revell Company, Old Tappan, New Jersey, 1988, back cover sheet).

One can study many years to be a doctor or serve over a certain time period as an apprentice to be an electrician, but receive very little training for the most important job, to be in a marital relationship with another person. Too often we wait for a crisis to occur, and then we react. As important as it is for the church to help during a crisis, it is even more important to do everything it can do before the crisis occurs. Family life education is an attempt to teach Biblical skills and values to help those in relationship to be better fathers, mothers, husbands, wives, children, parents, and grandparents.

Any family ministry consists of three parts: 1) intervention during crisis; 2) transitional support; 3) family life education. Besides intervention and family life education, transitional support is also vital in any program. This is the support given to someone going through a transition. It is that period of time whenever someone has a change in functioning or in a given role. The transitional time is the period between when one loses a loved one to the time when one adjusts to being alone or until one remarries. Jim Ollhoff, director of Christian education, writes:

Programmatically, it may be useful to think of crisis as the short-term, acute, immediate problem. Then, after that emergency is over, the family needs support in transition back to normal, stable life functioning. Family education is the long-term educative and preventative function designed for when there is relative peace in the family.

No other institution than the church is better able to prevent family problems. Experts tell us that there are key times in a person's life when he/she is most receptive to influence, such as the death of a spouse, divorce, marriage, retirement, pregnancy and Easter or Christmas seasons. No other institution is better positioned to influence people at crucial times in their lives than the church.

## Family Ministry is Teaching Sanctification

ST. PAUL WAS repeatedly challenged by those who suggested that free righteousness provided by the life, death,

and resurrection of Jesus Christ encouraged sin. Some even argued, “If one receives more grace with sin, why not keep on sinning?” Paul's reply was clear, declaring that if one is united with Christ, as one becomes when he/she is baptized, one is united with Him in a “new life” (Romans 6:1-11). Faith and works go hand in hand. As Martin Luther said, “Good works are works that flow from faith and from the joy of heart that has come to us because we have forgiveness of sins through Christ” (*What Luther Says*, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, MO, 1959, p. 1499).

Both justification and sanctification are doctrines of the church. Unfortunately, some churches are heavy on one and forget the other. Though both must be taught, we are aware that sanctification is always and only an outpouring of the Gospel.

Charles Sell correctly states:

Some of today's major issues, such as homosexuality, premarital and extramarital sex, abuse of children, and abortion are family matters. That church that neglects family matters ignores moral matters. . . . Seminars on marriage and parenting are not nice, optional programs intended to make people selfishly happy. They are necessary to keep people morally and spiritually healthy (Charles M. Sell, *Family Ministry*, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, MI, 1995, p. 16).

## The Results Are In

SECULAR RESEARCH is telling us that churches make a positive difference in families. In an article found in *U.S. News and World Report*, September 9, 1996, the title of a lead article asked the question, “Can Churches Save America?” and repeatedly the answer was, “Yes.” For example, research has shown that the two most reliable predictors of teenage drug avoidance are optimism about the future and regular church attendance. It shows that divorce rate for regular churchgoers is 18 percent as opposed to 34 percent for those who go to church less than once a year. The data are fascinating to say the least, but it only says what we already know. God's Word changes lives.

Empirical research is not surprising to the church. What is surprising to many church leaders and even those in the secular world is that the church is not taking advantage of the opportunities it has in making a difference in families. Research is showing that more and more families are leaving the churches they once grew up in to go somewhere else because that “somewhere else” better addresses their real concerns. In part, the lack of response from the church might be that the church leaders themselves are loaded with

so much other work that family ministry is relegated to second place. The real need will be met only when more and more leaders are trained in family ministry and churches add these specialized ministers to their leadership team. No minister or director of Christian education can do all things, and, too often, we expect him/her to do family ministry without any real training. Once again, we can learn a valuable lesson from the medical field. Though there was once a time when the family doctor would do almost everything from surgery to psychiatric care, that time is now history. Now we go to specialists for different areas of our health, such as cardiologists, gynecologists and neurologists. In the same way the church needs to specialize if it is going to do ministry better.

Often the Holy Spirit uses family ministry in surprising ways. For example, a woman who first started attending our divorce recovery group had determined that she needed to divorce her husband for a variety of reasons. After attending three support sessions, she came to my office and said, “Pastor, my husband and I are going to try to make our marriage work. After sitting in the divorce recovery class for three weeks, I felt the pain of the others, and I realized even though I feel some of their pain and know my husband and I have trouble with our marriage, I would be better off trying to make our marriage work. I believe God can direct us to do what we need to do to save our marriage.” It has been a year since the woman came to my office. A week ago she came back in and said, “Pastor, thank you for providing the divorce recovery group. Without it, my husband and I would never be where we are today. We are happy, and every day our marriage is getting better as we continue to work at it and attend your marriage enrichment classes.”

Family ministry is a new and exciting field of ministry! It is ministry that is sorely needed. Because it is new, it is not always well-received at first; however, this does not change the need for it to happen. It is important we remember God's promise: “Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up” (Galatians 6:9).

“Family ministry is about evangelism.”



# book reviews

**ORGANIZING A CHRISTIAN MIND: A Theology of Higher Education** by Denise Lardner Carmody. Valley Forge, Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International, 1996.

Few voices are heard these days arguing for the need to expand the role of liberal arts learning in the undergraduate baccalaureate curriculum. Even fewer voices champion the need for a liberal arts curriculum which intentionally places the mystery of the Divine at its center. Professor Denise Lardner Carmody, however, stands as a notable exception. *Organizing a Christian Mind* addresses "a lack of theological vision in the debate concerning the nature of education in church related higher educational settings. Consequently, Carmody's views are relevant to any consideration of learning in Christian colleges, especially when such learning is directed toward the preparation of future church workers.

For Carmody, placing the study of God at the center of learning means that both teacher and student continually deal with "a Someone or Something that exceeds one's grasp, both physical and conceptual." To illustrate, Carmody's sketch of curriculum begins with a "theological reflection" on human nature. She wants her readers, both student and professor, to ask where they "stand in the universe," to question the goal of their lives and to identify the important tasks of life. She demands that the study of human nature, whether in the context of human psychology or sociology, confront the meaning of "the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life of the world to come." Carmody's assertion is that such creedal phrases, when brought to bear on the task of understanding sin, love, work, ritual, ignorance and death, will lead to learning which is both dynamic and radical. Likewise, her exploration of nature, politics and divinity are equally driven by her recognition that the divine is omnirelevant as the recreative source from which and in which all creatures live and move and have their beings.

Make no mistake about any of the foregoing. Carmody is not about "healthy" social development or Christian piety. She is not interested in the assessment of learning, the fostering of community service, or the development of campus ministries. Rather, she is interested in seeing the arts and sciences as the focus of how higher education ought to shape itself because those disciplines remain the great sources of reflection on personal human experience.

Perhaps the best approach to *Organizing the Christian Mind* is to ignore the subtitle and not read it as a theology of higher education, but rather to read it as a syncretic philosophy of religion which centers on Christian spirituality as the lens through which human experience as reflected in the liberal arts may best be seen.

David Dolak  
Vice President of Academic Services  
Concordia College-Seward

**AUGUSTINE AND THE CATECHUMENATE**: by William Harmless. Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1995.

As I completed a reading of Harmless' text, *Augustine and the Catechumenate*, I was struck by the timeliness of two LCMS mailings: the November 1996 Evangelism Ministry Newsletter in which the staff announced the formation of a "working group" and upcoming conference on the "catechumenate for LCMS"; and President Barry's mailing, *What Does this Mean? Catechesis in the Lutheran Congregation*. Both mailings address the significant issue of spiritual formation and the church's continuing search for methods, materials, and the context for spiritual nurture.

In the text, Father Harmless presents his hypothesis: "If the Church has found itself increasingly renewed by the wisdom and richness of these ancient rituals and their underlying pastoral vision, then the Church might find itself similarly renewed by our gleaning the best from ancient styles of catechesis." Harmless is responding to a realization that the document, *The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* (RCIA), presented by the Vatican in 1972, provides a blueprint for reform which in many instances is at odds with many of the Church's inherited liturgical, pastoral, and catechetical habits. Harmless' observations relative to the Roman Church's habits find expression within the LCMS as well. The text offers a perspective which would influence the worship, study, and service life of a congregation.

Fr. Harmless laments that the RCIA document has many catechetical gaps and silences, and he suggests that much valuable assistance in filling these gaps can be gained by conducting an in-depth inquiry into the forms and styles of catechesis found within a single ancient catechumenate, St. Augustine's of Hippo.

Harmless does a scholarly job of introducing RCIA's basic vocabulary and dynamics, identifying the educational problems and using a case study approach to historical research, appealing to Augustine for guidance in the areas of curriculum (the "what" of catechesis), models of teaching (the "how" of catechesis), conversion (the "why" of catechesis) and faith and culture (the "where" of catechesis).

Fr. Harmless uses the four periods of RCIA—evangelization, catechumenate, enlightenment, and mystagogy—as the structural framework within which he reviews the sermons and other writings of Augustine, "reading the texts with an educator's eye: to chart the course and rhythms of his catechesis; to note what issues he thought important, what language he used, what feelings he roused, what actions he called for; in other words, to discern how he envisioned conversion and how he nurtured it."

The last chapter of the text is devoted to an attempt to glean practices and reflections from Augustine which may be adapted for use by contemporary catechists. In addressing the "how"

of catechesis, Harmless identifies the prominence of rhetoric in Augustine's work. Harmless stresses the oral character of catechesis, and he laments the fact that very little attention is paid to the catechist's training in the performing art of rhetoric, the use of metaphors, epigrams, antitheses, puns, paradoxes, parallelism, jingling rhymes and storytelling. Augustine would have the catechist pay as much attention to delighting and persuading as he or she does to instruction, thereby appreciating the affective dynamic of catechesis. Harmless recognizes that during Augustine's time there was an intentional symbiosis between catechesis and liturgy, with catechesis being knit within the ritual rhythm of Scriptures proclaimed, psalms sung, sermons preached, sacraments celebrated, and prayers uttered. The "what" of catechesis for Augustine was the Scripture, both in quantity and depth.

Individuals and faith communities concerned with the spiritual formation and nurture of children and adults will gain much from reading Harmless' text. Insights from the past may indeed inform our practices in the present.

Gary L. Bertels  
Professor of Theology  
Concordia University-River Forest

**CONFIRMATION: PRESBYTERIAN PRACTICES IN ECUMENICAL PERSPECTIVE** by Richard Robert Osmer. Louisville, KY: Geneva Press, 1996.

By lacking a common definition, a uniform rite and a consistent practice, confirmation has become an area in which each pastor does what is right (and what is rite) in his own eyes. Does confirmation involve an oath, a vow or pledge? Does confirmation admit to the Lord's Supper, or does it affirm a supper already long attended? Does confirmation complete, renew or affirm baptism? And isn't the real confirmation the period of instruction leading up to the rite anyway?

With a host of debatable issues already on the table, another text from another tradition may seem more problematic than prophetic. Yet Osmer's view of confirmation, taken as it is from a decidedly Reformed view, provides the reader with a unique perspective.

First, let it be known that the author has a hidden agenda not revealed until the epilogue. That's right! While the reader plows through developmental and adolescent issues, the multi-denominational historical background and the innovative proposal, another process is really at work. The book is a case study in practical theology with confirmation as its subject. Three lines of inquiry form the triangle of Osmer's discipline: the *normative-systematic knowledge* turns to the Word as its authoritative source of understanding. *continued on page 28*

## Summer School Undergraduate and Graduate Courses, 1997 Concordia College-Seward

### First Session (June 9-25)

Bio 451	Gross Anatomy II	A. Meyer
CS 421	Computer Applications in Math and Science (1 hr.)	Staff
CS 432	Educational Computing (2 hrs.)	Staff
Educ 345	Media for the Classroom (2 hrs.)	Staff
Educ 483	Leadership Development	M. Blanke
Educ 501	Contemporary Thought in Education	W. Preuss
Educ 569	Seminar in Reading	P. Lawin
Educ 572	Social and Church Agencies that Assist Early Childhood Education	Staff
Educ 581	Practicum in Ele/Sec School Administration and Supervision	L. Holtzen
Eng 366/466	Shakespearean Festival Study Tour; Stratford, Ontario, Canada	D. Thurber
Psy 324/414	Psychology of Exceptionality and Multiculturalism	G. Grotjan
Psy 421	Psychology of Adolescence	Staff
Rel 131	History and Literature of the New Testament	J. Haner
Theo 251	Interpretation of Selected Pauline Epistles	A. Spallek
Theo 381	The Christian Teacher's Ministry	Staff
Theo 450	Understanding and Teaching the Bible	K. Block

### Second Session (June 25-July 11)

Bio/Eng 324/524	The Nebraska Story (hours will vary)	J. Suhr/J. Roebke
Bio 501	Modern Biology for the Elementary Teacher	J. Gubanyi
Educ 362	Teaching the Christian Faith	D. Mannigel
Educ 551	Elementary and Secondary School Curriculum Construction	L. Schluckebier
Educ 565	The Young Child: Language & Literacy Development	Staff
Educ 595	Educational Research	J. Weinhold
Geog 401	Geography Workshop for Teachers	J. Kinworthy
HPE 491	Management of Physical Education and Sports	Staff
Psy 451	Personality Theory	D. Dolak
Theo 361	Christian Doctrine I	D. Meyer
Theo 460	Factors in Congregational Growth	Staff
Theo 565	Church and Society	J. Pfabe

### Third Session (July 14-30)

Bio 364/564	Marine Biology & Tropical Ecology (tour)	N. Witters/J. Suhr
Bio 444	Nutrition	C. Blanke
CS 542	Management of Computers and Networks	Staff
Educ 552	Processes in Elementary and Secondary School Administration	Staff
Educ 567	The Atypical Learner: Assessment and Instruction in Reading	E. Vasconcellos
Educ 573	Practicum in Early Childhood Education	L. Serck
Eng 431	English Language and Linguistics	R. Zwick
Eng 491	Issues in Literature for Children and Youth	Staff
HPE 492	Recreational and Intramural Programming	E. Goldgrabe
Math 305/505	Mathematics for Elementary Teachers	L. Matthews
Psy 511	The Psychological Foundations of Teaching/Learning	G. Einspahr
Rel 121	History and Literature of the Old Testament	G. Mech
Theo 362	Christian Doctrine II	D. Meyer
Theo 545	Theology and Practice of Confirmation Ministry	M. Bergman

Applied Music may be taken during any or all three sessions. Arrangements can be made through the Music Department (402)643-7282.

### Time-Abbreviated Courses

Soc 545	Theology, Theory & Dynamics of Family Relations (June 9-13)
Psy 545	Foundations of Christian Marriage & Family Intervention (June 16-20)
Psy 546	Ministry to Dysfunctional Families: Assessment & Intervention (June 23-27)



continued from page 26

ing; the *contextual-analytic knowledge* informs the theological inquiry by means of a deep description of contexts and weighing of their relative merit; and the *preceptive-pragmatic knowledge* points to the moment when practical theology and pastoral practice merge. While each of these ways of knowing can function independently, the author's system requires that practical theology be informed by all three. Practical theologians will find Osmer's method intriguing even if they lack an interest in confirmation.

For those interested in confirmation, Osmer brings together the history of confirmation practice from Lutheran, Anglican-Episcopalian, United Methodist and American Presbyterian sources. In so doing the reader's eyes are opened to the realization that no one denomination has less confusion over confirmation than any other. All share multiple questions with few agreed upon answers. One point does draw agreement, however. The Reformation paradigm of "Instruction-Confirmation-first Communion" has broken down, and in its place have arisen a

number of practices. Using American Presbyterians as an example, we discover how the purpose of confirmation has moved from the catechumenal (instruction) to the professional (public profession of faith) and catechetical (comprehension of church teachings). While this transition was happening, pedagogical theory was overwhelmed by developmentalism, with the result that Biblical knowledge has been sacrificed for affective goals and objectives.

All of which brings us to the present creative moment in which the church has the opportunity to reform confirmation into a rite more conducive to the goal of "communicating a compelling vision of the Christian life" to the next generation. Rather than making confirmation one of a series of rites in which instruction and profession of faith are involved (for example, The Faith Incubators Project's video, *Faith Stepping Stones*), Osmer proposes that confirmation be separated from the catechetical instruction that takes place during middle childhood. Instead, a post-catechetical class is provided for those who desire to make a public profession of faith. Upon giving

indication of such a desire, the individual is enrolled in a process that bears some resemblance to the Right of Christian Initiation of Adults. The four parts include: enrollment, spiritual mentoring, catechetical instruction at an advanced level, and the confirmation service. My initial reaction was, "This may be theology, but it doesn't seem very practical. How would I ever do this in a parish!" As I reflected further on the proposal, I realized that as we explore more deeply the catechumenate of the early church and its potential applications for today, Osmer's model offers insight and direction for key issues dealing with assimilating the baptized adult into the congregation. I recommend this book to anyone desiring a better grasp on confirmation's past, present and future.

**John Oberdeck**

Assistant Professor of Practical Theology  
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