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NOTE: In order to continue to serve our subscriber base in the best possible manner we have found it necessary to alter our publication cycle. We will no longer publish each volume according to the academic year. Rather, each new volume will be published based on the calendar year. The first issue of each new volume will now be published each Jan./Feb. with subsequent issues to follow each Apr./May; July/Aug.; and Oct./Nov. Please contact Peter Pohlhammer with any questions. Ph: 708-209-3110; e-mail: peter.pohlhammer@curf.edu
With boot heels five inches above the two-lane asphalt, the steady rhythm of the V-Twin through handlebars, the wind-rush past my helmet and Lynne's (that would be my wife's) arms around my waist, I'm completely absorbed. I can retreat to a mental place where the only concern is the motorcycle – the lean angle into the next curve, the pavement, checking each farm lane and cross-road for traffic and letting the air blast from on-coming semis wash over us. Relax your body and make it part of the machine but keep your mind on full alert; trust the bike, trust your training, enjoy the ride.

It's not for everyone. There's a level of risk involved, something that good riders accept with the understanding that their training must take over when things get dicey out there.

There are predictable situations such as left-turning cars at intersections or drivers changing lanes, that warrant consistent responses. Always, always, always roll off the throttle, downshift, cover the brakes and assume that the left-turner doesn't see you coming. Never, never, never ride in another driver's blind spot – either speed up to make your presence obvious or slow down to allow room for the driver to change lanes without a pause in their cell-phone conversation.

There are unpredictable situations such as the woman who backed her car out into the middle of a two-lane rural highway...and just stopped. So did I, from sixty miles per hour to zero, about ten feet from the passenger-side door. She never even looked at me as she then turned and drove in the opposite direction. But because I'd had training and had practiced high-speed emergency stops, a non-accident occurred.

You can't protect yourself from everything -- the only way to do that is to sell the bike and stay home. A good full-face helmet, sturdy boots, gloves and, yup, the classic motorcycle leathers are the essential attire. One doesn't dress for the ride; one dresses for the crash.
Good riders don’t just jump on a bike and go. You spend fifteen minutes checking tire condition and pressure, the fuel and oil, the turn signals, brake lights and headlight, the play in the throttle and clutch cables and walk around the bike, carefully making sure that everything is in safe working order, including what’s going on between your ears. And yes, as the bike is warming up at idle, I stretch a leg over the saddle and before putting it in gear, I pray.

Riding a motorcycle means inclusion in a group of interesting and mostly friendly people. The two-finger “wave” or nod to every oncoming rider is a given. Restaurants where bike people gather for breakfast turn into informal bike shows. You show up not so much for the food as for the chance that someone will walk past, look at your “ride” and give the ultimate motorcyclist compliment: “Nice bike.” There’s some segregation by brand - with the one that originated in Milwaukee predominating - but, in general, it’s not a big deal. The most important thing among riders is that one rides. There’s an assumption that we’re all brothers and, increasingly, sisters, many of whom ride their own bikes rather than being satisfied with sitting in back of someone else, usually male.

Certainly the “biker” stereotype still exists – it’s obvious when one walks into a fast-food restaurant for a coffee break, still wearing the leathers, and mothers quickly gather their small children closer. (Hey, don’t worry. It’s just me, a college professor who can’t even scare some of his undergraduate students into coming to class on time.) But the outward appearance sends the first message and what non-riding people have been led to believe about “bikers” still predominates.

It’s easy to see how the whole thing can take on the form of a religion and for some, I suppose, it substitutes in some inadequate way. On the other hand, there’s some allegory here.

Suppose, just suppose, that every Christian educator approached his or her faith and profession in the same very noticeable ways. Could anyone tell that one is a Lutheran educator just by what they see – or do we do some things that scare people off because of stereotypes?

Do we always, always, always “put on the full armor of Christ” as Paul says in Ephesians, knowing that we need to be prepared for the worst scenarios each day? Do we trust our training and, as a church body, do we ground our new workers in survival skills so that these take over when things get dicey out there? Wouldn’t it be good that the novices (or even the veterans) among us are well prepared enough to see
things coming their way and that potential disaster becomes just another “non-accident”?

Professional church work, like motorcycling, isn’t for everyone, so do we understand how important it is to recognize and support each other as a given, brothers and sisters alike? Do we recognize the contributions and worth of educators from other traditions — in parochial and public schools — even though we may have our own traditions and “brand” affinity? Is the line easily crossed or do we park ourselves in different places in our communities and never interact?

Are we willing to take calculated risks — new programs, continuous training and self-improvement — assuming that the statistics about what we do are in our favor if we do it the right way? Or are we afraid to get out there, choosing the same predictable and safe routes and routines?

Finally, do we trust who moves us? Really hard-core motorcyclists ascribe almost mythic attributes to the machines they ride (a belief they may come to regret should they have the occasion to meet their Creator sooner than they’d planned). But can we say that we’re so wrapped up in our faith that our moves and His are the same and lead us to the same place? And, most importantly, are we enjoying the ride?

At the end of a day’s ride I’m tired, but in a satisfying way. With the bike back in the garage, it feels good to pull the helmet off — and not even care what my hair looks like — peel off the gloves, unzip the jacket and find a source of...um...refreshment. A long ride in a car is something you endure. A ride on a motorcycle is something you accomplish. Maybe a school term should be like that too — the accomplishment part, not the need for a helmet.

Okay, maybe it’s all a stretch, but so is that next highway. If you ride, you know what I mean.

So, Sister and Brother Lutheran Educators, keep the shiny side up, rubber side down and your knees in the breeze. And let’s work out how to do that wave thing when we see each other out there.—LEJ
Notes:

1 Lots of people are getting into this pastime. A training course through the Motorcycle Safety Foundation, whether a novice or experienced rider, is highly recommended and available at minimal cost in most areas of the country. Check their web site at www.msf-usa.org.

John Zillman, is Editor of Lutheran Education Journal and a professor in the Psychology Department at Concordia University, River Forest. His current ride is a stock red and silver 1999 Honda Shadow Aero with wire wheels, a Mustang custom touring saddle, Memphis Shades screen, Leather-Lyke bags, two-into-one fish-tail exhaust, dual disc brakes and soon to be added Corbin chin spoiler, all powered by a single crank-pin, dual carb, overhead cam 45-degree 1100 cc V-Twin, not that details about these things are all that important. Rider or not, you're welcome to share your stories of the road and journeys of any kind at crfszillman@curf.edu.
This article addresses some common themes about God's will and prompts inquiry for further discussion. It applies to these themes some insights about the Gospel from Luther's book, The Bondage of the Will, his Commentary on Galatians, his Treatise on Christian Liberty, and from the doctrine of vocation.

**Case 1:** Dan's first serious struggle with the question of God's will came during his first Call yet had nothing to do with his Lutheran school placement. Rather, his confusion came from being jilted in the name of God. He met Nancy, a member of the congregation, early in his Call. They dated and enjoyed each other's company. As the months passed, the compatibility seemed right and the relationship grew. Beginning to think of marriage, Dan cautiously and sincerely mentioned the idea to Nancy. To his relief, she didn't balk at the possibility. Dan deliberately brought up the topic from time to time and Nancy seemed steadily receptive, until one spring night when Nancy called and said they had to talk. As the conversation unfolded, Nancy emotionally yet firmly informed Dan that they could not marry. Praying about the matter, Nancy had concluded that it was God's will that she not marry Dan. Stunned yet respectful, Dan did not believe it was his place to challenge God's will. He agreed to break off the relationship. Three years later, he was still unmarried and still confused about what had happened.

**Case 2:** The third article of the Apostle's Creed raises questions about death and funerals. During an eighth grade religion lesson, students shared experiences of deaths in their families, relating how Jesus' death and resurrection sustained their trust in God's care and promises. Rachel raised her hand and, without waiting to be called on, quietly reported that when her grandpa died last year, someone at the funeral home approached her and her mom and told them in a sympathetic voice, “It was God's will that your grandpa died.” Rachel then asked, “Did God really want my Grandpa to die?”

**Case 3:** Paul did not get the job even though he was qualified and had an excellent internship. The company flew him out to their headquarters for a battery of tests and interviews which he passed “with flying colors.” All of his documentation was submitted ahead of schedule.
He got great reviews from the company personnel office. Though several entry-level positions were available, he got no offer. When the turndown phone call came, Paul was devastated since his hiring had looked like a sure thing. The only thought Paul could summon to console himself was that it just wasn’t God’s will and that God had another position for him somewhere else.

**Case 4:** Kelly had a Call and she didn’t know what to do. She was ready to graduate certified for both high school and middle school ministry. The placement office had sent her credentials to a school with an opening in its departmentalized seventh and eighth grades. The congregation’s Call included the exact parish duties Kelly desired. With the pastor’s and principal’s support and encouragement, all the circumstances seemed right. The congregation was waiting, the days were passing, but Kelly couldn’t give an answer. Was this the place God wanted her to be? Maybe she should wait for a Call to high school. Why didn’t God give her a sign or some indication of what she should do?

**What Do You Say?**

Marriage, death, occupation, and professional church work, are all among the important events and decisions that compel the Christian to ponder God’s will. What sorts of things do you say about God’s will? Would you say to Dan, Rachel, Paul, and Kelly? What do you say as you face your own important life events and decisions? Whether you’re a candidate for placement or a veteran church worker, understanding the “God’s will” discussion is an essential part of doing our ministry.

Since the people we serve face these issues every day, part of our Call as a teaching minister of the Gospel is to speak Biblically and helpfully to others about God’s will for them. Also, part of our competence in ministry includes applying biblical principles about God’s will to our own lives. Few concepts are more vexing and perplexing to Christians and church workers: the subject pertains especially to the Call. Consider a few of the many questions the subject provokes:

- Does God have a particular planned outcome for my decisions? Does he have a preference?
- Since God is all-powerful, is it possible for me to violate God’s will?
- To what extent does God intervene in human affairs and change the course of events? In what ways does he and does he not intervene?
- Does God have a plan for my life? If so, what sort of plan is it? Is it a life map” or “program?”
Has God pre-selected someone for me to marry? Chosen an occupation for me? Called me to work in the church? How would I know? On what basis would I know this?

How should I deliberate my first or next Call in a God-pleasing way?

Fraught with many questions, the concept of God’s will is also plagued by many conflicting answers. Christian bookstores display books from various authors, each offering diverse views and solutions to the mysteries and secrets (real and claimed) concerning the will of God. Exchange on the topic of God’s will in adult Bible class or a college bull session offers as many answers as participants. These questions also contain important theological and philosophical ideas such as freedom and determinacy, the nature of revelation, and our source and norm for what we teach and what we say. We cannot unpack such large themes here (see the resources suggested at the end of the article). However, we can examine some of the confusion over the “God’s will” discussion. Also, we can apply a few basic Lutheran insights about the Gospel to this discussion and to our understanding of the Call.

An instructive place to start is Deut. 29:29, “The secret thing belongs to the Lord, our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may observe all the words of this torah.” There are, then, secret councils that belong to the divine Majesty of God to which we have no access. This insight will keep us modest and humble in our discussion God’s will. We won’t presume to penetrate God’s secret councils and omnipotent will, which are beyond our comprehension. Yet God has revealed some of himself to us in Christ and the Scriptures and we can locate our discussion of God’s will in this revelation.

Back to Law and Gospel

The Lutheran heritage actually says little about God’s will in the typical sense of God directing or orchestrating our choices and decisions. Though this lack may not sound helpful at first, such silence is a significant clue to examining our thinking about God’s will and our deliberation of a Call. The Book of Concord addresses the subject of will in terms of sinful will and God’s desire or will for our salvation. (See the index listings and cross-references under “Will, of God”.) The systematic studies of Biblical doctrine do not include treatments about God planning events and decisions in our lives. Instead, they simply acknowledge God’s constant presence and his general providence for our daily needs.
without trying to detect any special will. Consonant with the real complexity of life, sin and faith, Luther's discussions of God's will are correspondingly practical and complete. Luther located our Christian freedom in his teaching about God's calling or vocation. This rich and important concept not withstanding, Luther's statement about I Cor. 9:19ff begins to set his teachings apart from the usual things we say and hear about God's will. He notes that the Apostle Paul,

Ate, drank, and lived with the Jews according to the law, even though it was not necessary for him. With the Gentiles, he ate, drank and lived without the law, as they did. For only two things are necessary: faith and love. Everything else you are free to do or leave undone. Therefore, you may do everything for the sake of one [situation or person], and for the sake of another refrain from everything, and in that way, treat all impartially.

Gustaf Windgren's book (1957), *Luther on Vocation*, explains: "Sovereignty of love before the law involves a creative factor whose expression it is impossible to foresee, since it can steadily open up fresh and unsuspected perspectives for life's activity. In this connection, we must recall Luther's frequent statements about the freedom of the Christian 'to do and to omit.' Through this freedom, faith and relation to God attain real significance for vocation, and vocation is shaped solely according to the needs of others."

Or, as St. Augustine, from whom Luther took his cue, insightfully asserts, "Love God, and do as you please."

What do these assertions mean for us? "Do as you please" does not mean we have a license to sin or indulge the preferences of our own weak flesh – Augustine begins with the First Great Commandment (and also the Second by implication). Historically, Lutherans have not troubled themselves much about discerning God's will; also, whatever others may be saying about discerning this or that decision, the Bible takes God's providence for us as a given. In most Bible stories, efforts to penetrate God's secret designs are discouraged (e.g., I Sam. 28; John 21: 20-23). Apart from the Ten Commandments' moral implications about our decisions, the Bible does not address God's preference of this decision over that decision. Even so, this observation today seems counter-intuitive and needs further discussion.

An important slant the Lutheran tradition gives to the subject of God's will is the Biblical interpretive principle of Law and Gospel. This principle teaches that all God reveals to us should be understood in
terms of Law -- what we are to do, not to do, and how we are to be -- and Gospel, what God has done and continues to do for us and for our salvation. Now consider that life's events and decisions are areas of our activity: what we do and don't do. To search for God's will or preference for us about behavior in our domain of activity means to look for a Word of Law, that is, a commandment to rule what we are to do. This search drives us back to Scripture and the moral code of the Ten Commandments. Apart from these Commandments expressing God's moral will for our lives and conduct, we draw a blank in finding prescriptions for particular personal decisions (We will consider the Gospel and God's will in a later section.)

“God Has a Plan For Your Life”

Where, then, does so much talk about God's will and our decision making come from? Return to your Christian bookstore, examine the available books and, for the most part, you will find authors writing from a theological perspective that traces back to John Calvin. Calvin, the brilliant Swiss reformer of the church and contemporary of Martin Luther, wrote one the most important books of the Reformation, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Despite much agreement, one significant point of difference for Luther and Calvin was the doctrine of predestination. Like many other thoughtful Christians, Calvin struggled with the puzzle of why some are saved but others are not. With trepidation, he concluded that people were predestined by God to their eternal state, either heaven or hell (a view that Lutherans label “double predestination”). Since Scripture says nothing about God predestining anyone to hell, Luther and his spiritual kin have consistently denied double predestination, insisting with St. Paul that “God would have all men to be saved and come to a knowledge of the Truth” (1 Tim. 2:4).

Later Calvinist theologians, (notably the Puritans in America) extrapolated double predestination to include a divine “plan” or “will” of all events in people’s lives, elaborating this perspective especially from God’s attributes of sovereignty and omnipotence. Lutherans, by contrast, did not move to such extra-biblical inferences. Luther acknowledges God’s sovereignty and his hand in all that happens but insists that we cannot comprehend this mystery. We can only sometimes
detect God’s hand after the fact and then only roughly at best. Thus, Lutherans have sustained a more modest position of silence about matters on which God’s own Word is silent and have instead focused on the salvation that God has clearly willed for us from the cross. (Cf. I Cor. 2:2 and see Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, Art. XI, Election.)

Present popular thinking about God’s will comes chiefly from one expression in particular, popularized by one of the most widely used tracts of all time, “The Four Spiritual Laws” distributed by Campus Crusade for Christ. The tract begins, “God has a plan for your life.” This expression has shaped the views of countless Christians on the subject of God’s will. Consider for a moment what this expression suggests. What comes to mind for most people is a “cosmic computer” image of God’s will. God has keyed into history a plan or program for all the events of our lives, and our lives are the printers that are turning out the results. What this expression provokes for many Christians is an anxious search for a copy of the program or at least a print preview of what is supposed to come next.

The “God has a plan for your life” view also employs a small collection of oft-cited Bible verses such as Jer. 29:11 and Prov. 16:9. Jeremiah does prophesy God’s assurance in saying, “‘I know the plans I have for you,’ says the Lord, ‘plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.’” The context of the chapter, however, clarifies that God’s words are addressed to Judah in Babylon (29:1) and that the plan is to return Judah to their homeland after a period in exile (29:14). This plan is good news for Judah and for us because God’s will is to bring forth the Messiah from the family of David in the tribe of Judah. The text is God’s Word for us, but it is his Word for us because it is about his salvation for us in Christ, not because it refers to some life script or program. This realization about Jer. 29:11 is at first a bit alarming for some who have never checked its context and meaning. However, the text truly comforts us as we further realize we need no longer puzzle over undisclosed divine plans and instead can entrust our welfare and all life’s events, good and evil, to God’s revealed plan of salvation. (See Rom. 8:28 - 30.)

Similarly, Prov. 16:9, “A man’s mind plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps,” is often used to infer some life script or plan as though the verse could be paraphrased, “We may lay our own plans in life, yet the sovereign God will have his way by intervening and re-directing our choices and life events according to his own perfect will.” But such a
mechanical view of a Hebrew proverb would be quite foreign to a devout Israelite, who already knew how God directed his steps: with the Torah, the written book of Moses. The parallelism in the proverb is an antithetical contrast of the heart of sinful man and God’s good direction (cf. Psalms 1 and 119). This assessment gives us a different sense of the proverb: “We sinful people may plot our ways and intents on our own, but God gives better directions for enacting those ways in the words he has given to us through Moses” (and, we would add, Jesus).

The Popular Expressions

Though we should not be hypercritical about words (1 Tim. 6:4), the language we use and don’t use about God’s will is important because language reflects our belief about God. Some of our expressions are harmless pieties (saying “God bless you” following a sneeze) and some echo Biblical content (“See you next year, God willing” recalls James 4:15, “If the Lord wills, we shall live and we shall do this or that”). But our language is often not Biblical and can be misleading. Consider these common examples:

• Make sure you’re at peace about this decision. (Was Jesus at peace in Gethsemane?)
• Maybe the Lord is trying to tell you something. (How would you know? On what authority would you say so?)
• I hope God shows me an answer to my problem soon. (Does he have a specific answer in mind? How would you know?)
• Are you seeking God’s will in this matter? (Does he have a particular preference about your decision?)
• Whenever God’s closes a door, he opens a window. (This is from the Mother Superior in “The Sound of Music”.)
• I feel God is leading me in this direction. (Are our feelings a reliable guide to knowledge about God?)
• Don’t worry – God has a plan for your life in this situation. (Is this what Scripture means by “plan”?)

All these expressions reflecting common beliefs about God and his will deserve our attention. Not that all popular views are bad, for some of the examples can, with effort, be aligned with Biblical content. But these expressions have a catch: that being right with God is up to us. They imply that God is a map maker, and it is up to us to be wise and holy enough to find and follow the map; or that he is a cryptographer,
and it is up to us to be clever enough to decipher his codes. They imply
that, beyond the Ten Commandments, we should search for pre-selected
decisions or preferences that God has about every detail of our lives (a
notion questionable inferred from Matt. 10: 29-30 where Jesus’ concern
is not about hairs or feathers but salvation). These expressions neglect
that the secret things belong to God.”

Though we tend to use such expressions, the Bible does not. For
instance, Paul’s carefully crafted language in Acts and his letters never say
anything like, “I had an impression that God was telling me to go to
Rome, and I felt that he was leading me to seek his will for me there, so
maybe God is telling you in Rome to be ready for me.” Despite the
absence of such language in the Bible, these expressions are present in
the everyday life of the

...our internal feelings are transient
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able Word.

church, including our Call
process. An application form
used in placing church work­
ers on a district Call list
begins the essay portion with
this instruction:

Specify the type of position and area of ministry in which you feel
God is leading you and in which you have a strong desire to serve.

How does one feel the leading of God? The expression could be
taken in different ways, but does suggest that we search ourselves for
some still, small but audible voice. The first problem with this idea is
that Scripture nowhere instructs us to equate our feelings and emotions
with God’s will. Though we should remain cognizant of our emotional
responses as important content in decision-making, we have no authori­
ty for trusting such impressions as divine. Rather, our internal feelings
are transient and often unreliable. Instead, God has given us his external
and reliable Word. The second problem with such language is that the
expression “still, small voice” comes from the story of Elijah in 1 Kings
19 where God speaks to Elijah softly but clearly, telling the prophet in
an audible voice to get back to Israel. Inner impressions and feelings are
not God’s will, and we are not to use them to second-guess what we
don’t know God isn’t telling us.

A prayer offered in corporate worship on behalf of a candidate con­
sidering a Call was worded this way:

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Lord, please lead [candidate’s name] to make the decision that is pleasing to you.

The article, “the,” casts this petition into theological question and the candidate (and us worshippers) into consternation. By saying “the decision” rather than “a decision,” the prayer leader signals that the candidate can satisfy God’s expectations only by making one specific choice. This signal implies that any choice made other than “the” decision will move the candidate out of what some have called “God’s perfect will.” If she makes the wrong decision, the candidate moves into a fearsome predicament with God by deciding contrary to God’s plan (usually called “sin”). She is now acting and living out of harmony and fellowship with God (more sin). By this reasoning, she not only risks God’s wrath but also misses the blessing God had in store for her had she made the right decision. What’s more, this was a Call to an important position of leadership, and she has probably convoluted God’s will for the Calling body. But such prayer language and its implications are distant from what Scripture actually says. God gives us his Word in Christ and the Scriptures and apart from some direct, specific revelation; God does not prescribe our life choices. (Paul’s decision in II Cor. 2:12-13 is a good case study.)

A memo circulated to announce a church worker’s consideration of a new vocation and location read:

[Church worker’s name] asks our prayers and counsel as he seeks to discern God’s will for his life and ministry and that of his family.

The language concern with this statement is semantic. If seeking to discern God’s will for one’s life means turning to God’s Word for study of “leading a life worthy of the calling to which we have been called” (Eph. 4:1), then well and good. But if it means (as it often does) resorting to inner impressions and other tactics for divining a secret will of God, this language misleads the Christian into unnecessary agonizing and uncertainty.

Many Christians at one time or another do agonize over making a life decision they fear may be outside God’s will. They may know God’s grace well enough to realize God will not abandon them in that decision or because of it. Yet they are still provoked to search for any hidden divine choice or preference for that specific decision such as deliberating a Call. At this point, they may employ two other tactics for detecting this phantom will of God.
Some would have us place a fleece before the Lord, a scheme from Gideon in the Book of Judges. God in a verbal revelation specifically promised Gideon an assured victory over Israel’s enemy, (Judges 6: 11-24). But Gideon began testing God’s promise by asking for signs (6: 34-40). Gideon asked God to keep dry a sheepskin exposed all night to the morning dew. God complied. Then Gideon had the temerity to ask God to again confirm his promise by reversing the sign the next night, wetting the fleece with the dew but keeping the ground dry. Some Christians have wrongly interpreted Gideon’s lack of faith as an endorsement to search for God’s will by seeking signs. Though God, in his infinite patience and to preserve Israel, tolerated Gideon’s weakness and granted the signs, the context of Judges establishes that such sign seeking betrays a lack of trust in God. (Cf. Judg. 8: 22ff; Matt. 12: 38ff.)

Others would direct us to life’s changing circumstances and events as indicators of God’s will. This variation of sign seeking is the “Maybe God is trying to tell you something” approach.

A mild parody will illustrate:

Lord, I’m looking for a Godly spouse, and I think Susan may be the one. But your will, Lord, your will. So if that’s your will, God, have me run into her tonight at the library. Or maybe tomorrow night. Actually any time in the next month will do, Lord, but the sooner the better. Excuse me now, Lord, but I’ve got to get to the library.

Amen.

The assumption is that since God is aware of all life’s circumstances, he must be arranging them to send us all messages about his will. The assumption is mistaken in that it attempts to read the secret things of God with a connect-the-dots method. Life’s circumstances are entangled with sin from the devil, the world and the sinful self, and the Scriptures say nothing about reading circumstances for God’s will in some oracle-like fashion. The assumption also confuses the doctrine of predestination. Predestination refers to salvation for those elected to faith, not to life events and decision-making. (See Rom. 8: 28ff and Eph. 1: 3ff.).

**For Freedom Christ Has Set Us Free**

Scripture does make important and clear Christocentric statements about God’s will. The center and focus of all Scripture is Jesus. Jesus says, “You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life, and it is they that bear witness to me” (John 5:39). At the end of Luke’s Gospel, Jesus explains that to rightly understand Scripture, we must realize that “everything written about me in the Law of Moses
and the prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled” (Luke 24: 27, 44). Luke continues:

Thus it is written that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem (Luke 24: 46-47).

The will of God, as Paul says, is that all people would be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth about Jesus (I Tim. 2:4). That’s the plan. That’s what the Bible means when it talks about God’s plan:

For he [the Father] has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of his will according to his purpose which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth (Eph. 1: 9-10 RSV).

The word used here for plan is the Greek noun oikonomia from which we get the word, economy – ordering, managing, or administering a house or property. The word does not connote a plan in the sense of a script or agenda for every event, but rather a master plan for managing a larger purpose or goal. In this case, the “house and property” under management are “all things in heaven and earth,” and the goal is to unite them all in Christ whose purpose is “that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations.” God’s will is that the Law work repentance among us sinful people and that the Gospel brings us forgiveness and a saving faith in Christ. That work being done, one is then empowered by the Spirit to “lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called (Eph. 4: 1).” Such is the life of freedom living under God’s grace (Gal 5: 1).

The alternative understanding of God’s will as trying to decode some unrevealed divine script would mean a life under the Law. This kind of life would mean always trying to live up to expectations that God never spells out. It would mean living in the shadow of “ought,” anxiously wondering what God would have us decide in any important situation. It would mean endless attempts to distinguish between those important situations where we believe God has some individual plan for our actions and those trivial matters that we manage ourselves (Marriage? A summer job? Lunch?). It would mean constant uncertainty about our relationship with God and, thus, uncertainty about our salvation.

By contrast, God’s actual will for us is that we live under grace. The Law shows us our sin, drives us to God’s promises, and serves as our guide for behavior, but it does not make us “at one” (effect atonement)
with God. Christ alone intercedes for us. Thus, through him and with him, we are now all daughters and sons of God. This relationship is the reason Luther in his Treatise on Christian Liberty insists both that, “A Christian is perfectly free lord of all, subject to none; and a Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all.”

The Christian is absolutely free, forgiven by God’s grace and liberated in decisions and actions from any condemnation of the Law. Yet this freedom is no license for sin and serving the self (Gal 5: 13) since the Christian is also totally a servant, submitting all decisions and actions in the work of God’s kingdom to serve the needs of others’ temporal and eternal well-being. The apparent contradiction of free and slave is not an unsolvable paradox (like sinner/saint). It is harmonized under the purpose of God’s kingdom: that all might be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth. The Christian considering a Call is free in this decision. We are free to accept the Call and we are free to return the Call to the Call body. In either event God’s providence continues to work in his quiet and hidden ways through our decisions and activities (Phil 2: 12-13). God’s grace prevails, and his kingdom still comes for us. Our language, discussions, prayers, and letters of acceptance and decline are sometimes obscure in this freedom. We can better express ourselves about Calls and God’s will when we speak in terms of Christian hope, liberty, and responsibility. –LEJ


Althaus, 95. Note: Because his writings are many and varied, Luther scholars caution us to be careful about citing Luther’s quotations selectively. However, certain themes such as vocation, God’s will, and man’s will are well established in the Lutheran tradition.

Althaus, 147.

Many theologians and Bible teachers in the Reformed tradition are moving away from this mechanistic view of God’s will. See, for example Gary Freise (1999), *Decision Making and the Will of God* (Portland, OR: Multnomah Press).

A related theme to explore is the leading of the Holy Spirit. That theme is important but beyond the scope of this article. A place to begin is “The Holy Spirit and the Conversion of the Sinner” and “The Sanctified Life, or New Obedience” in Robert Kolb (1993) *The Christian Faith: a Lutheran Exposition* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House).

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The question “How do we pay for Lutheran Education?” is significant and pressing. Most Lutheran schools struggle to meet an already trim budget, many have closed in the last few decades. This article will argue that the answer to that question begins by answering a more fundamental question: “Who should pay for Lutheran Education?”

Who should pay has become a problem for a number of reasons. Public education in the United States provides the illusion that education is free, especially for those who do not pay property taxes directly. Many other aspects of American living conceal the expense, giving people the illusion that they are getting something for nothing. Medical insurance and retirement benefits are two other examples. When people speak of getting great health care for free they are ignoring the fact that the employer passes those costs on to the consumer. Whether we are talking about education, health care or retirement income, the fact is that the consumer is always the one who pays, no matter what. And what is wrong with that?

To be a parent is to own the responsibility for your child’s life, including their education. The Bible makes this responsibility evident. After Moses declared the identity of the one true living God to Israel and commanded them to love Him with their whole being, he immediately turned to the parents responsibility to teach their children the same “... and these words... shall be in your heart; you shall teach them diligently to your children...” (Deuteronomy 6:4-12).

Paul repeated this admonition to the Ephesians (6:4) “And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to anger but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” Paul is more specific than Moses in recognizing that the responsibility for education belongs fundamentally to the father. More than just educating, fathers are to teach their children to teach their children in turn (Psalm 78:5-8). If an education is the only thing a father provides, the value of that education ends with the first generation of children. God’s intent is that the determination and ability for each generation to teach the next is just as integral as the
knowledge that is communicated. In this way the responsibility to educate is passed on along with the education itself.

What happens when parents leave this responsibility to others? If education is left to the civil government the surrogate teacher is burdened on two levels. First, the teacher is expected to meet the parent’s expectations without possessing the level of interaction and authority that the parent enjoys. Second, the teacher is expected to meet the civil government’s expectations—an ever expanding mass of requirements generated by the general dissatisfaction of a multitude of opposing interests. At the educational level alone, educational responsibility shifted from parents to civil servants comes at an enormous and multifaceted cost.

What happens if parents pursue “Christian” education as the remedy? The Christian educator is burdened on four levels. First there are the parental expectations, increased to include not only educational excellence but also the behavioral and spiritual. The Christian educator is expected by parents to produce the model child; brilliant, pleasant, saintly. This is often the primary reason why non-members or even non-Christians submit their “troubled” children to Christian education.

Second, there are still the government expectations to meet. In principle one might think that the high ideals and hard work already present in Christian education would easily exceed government expectations. In many ways this is true. Yet the Christian educator is often working at a disadvantage when compared to his or her public counterpart. The most serious disadvantages have to do with compensation and support. The Christian educator is typically paid less, burdened with more responsibilities outside the classroom, provided with fewer physical resources and supplies, yet expected to produce better results. The Christian educator may also have to take time to “reconfigure” or compensate for public educational requirements that are futile or counterproductive.

Third, the Christian educator is expected to meet the congregation’s expectations. Congregations want to see angelic activity from the school’s pupils. They expect choirs and instrumental music, service activity and help with fund raising. They may expect athletic opportunities, at least paralleling public offerings, with no extra coaching staff—and they expect to win. Congregations regularly expect their teachers to
be integral to the life of the congregation as well, serving on committees and serving at most congregational functions.

Fourth, the Christian educator is expected to meet God’s requirements. The previous three categories would be liability enough, but this area is often the burden felt most heavily. Not only does the Christian educator feel like God expects him or her to meet and exceed all expectations but may also believe that God would be angry if they thought of quitting, felt like complaining, or even harbored a thought of self-pity.

Is it any wonder that Christian education suffers so in these days? Both problem and solution have their origin in the issue of responsibility. The solution begins with recognizing that the responsibility for education rests with the parents and with understanding the consequences of pushing that responsibility on to others. When the civil government takes over, the consequence is loss of control, burgeoning requirements from a myriad of parents and from those in authority who may have an agenda completely contrary to that of the parents, and this at a tremendous cost. Recent experience holds that the cost of public education is so high that it effectively eliminates Christian education as an alternative. Many Christian parents consider it impossible to pay for public education (they may well disagree with) and add to that the expense of a private Christian education. The bureaucratic and financial frustration of parents only puts the Christian educator in a more difficult situation. Nevertheless, before we feel too sorry for the American parent we should remember that this situation exists because over time parents have wanted to or been made to believe that they are not the ones to educate their children. Yet the responsibility, not simply to “see to it” (demand it of others), but to actually raise one’s children remains with the parent. And no one can begin to fulfill that responsibility as well.

**Christian Education: Neither Casual nor Accidental**

One of the most compelling reasons for contemporary Christian education is to make the Gospel clear to every student in every subject. If all creation bears witness to God (Psalm 19, Romans 1) then that witness within every subject should be made clear to the students by the Christian educator. Christian education has an absolute and broad perspective for learning. We study vigorously because the possibility to do so is a gift of God; our ability to study and learn, what there is to know about God's creation, what good may come as stewards of God’s creation, and what good may come as those who might more effectively love their neighbor and enemy. The vast potential for doing this in
every subject, through the entire course of education, is a very compelling reason for parents to seek the assistance of others. But therein is the key; the Christian parent does not cast this responsibility upon others who are disadvantaged with less means and less authority, then express bitter disappointment when their experience is less than euphoric. The Christian parent enlists the help of others and works with them in this educational process. Enlisting the aid of Christian teachers includes compensating them fairly.

Christian education is neither casual nor accidental love of neighbor. Especially in these times when people have effectively isolated themselves from one another, how do we reach people with the witness of Christianity? Christian education is an opportunity for which the isolated, skeptical American parent will pursue us! Love of Christian teachers, support of their efforts at education by committed Christian parents and congregation provide the most enviable of educational environments. Pupils of non-Christian parents have an open door and regular opportunity to share what they learn behind the doors of their homes which may otherwise be closed to the Christian witness.

Christian education is no casual witness to the world. Our world watches and assesses academic ability, perhaps more than anything else. Excellent education makes the news. Chambers of commerce place education at the forefront of their efforts to entice families to relocate in their area. Christian educators do have something to say to the world about methods, content, discipline, and the rest. We have an opportunity to affect all education by the paradigm we establish. What’s more, our students who grow to love their educational experience are more likely to consider becoming educators. Thus we might inspire generation after generation of Christian teachers who will continue to support parents in their responsibility and to maximize our opportunity to witness to non-Christian students in our schools. We also have the potential of loving our neighbor by providing teachers to the public educational system who are Christian or at least had the benefit of learning to teach at a Christian university.

**Principles as the Path to Potential**

Romans 13 makes it abundantly clear that we are expected to bear our own responsibilities. If we require assistance from others we are required to compensate them for that assistance. Most parents of Christian school children have occupations. Every occupation is a matter of assisting others in some way; health care, business, trades, trans-
portation, etc. Every such parent expects to be compensated for that assistance in proportion to what is demanded in terms of education, liability, and expectation of those assisted. Physicians who do the most difficult work and which requires the most training and availability are paid the most. Trades people who can do a type of work and quality of work that is unique are paid more. No one in the civil world would settle for letting the people they serve determine what they will pay or if they will pay at all. Not one member of a congregation would be willing to let the congregational assembly decide what that member’s income will be, where he or she will live, or just how many other expectations that member must meet. Yet this is precisely what the Christian educator faces — unless they reject this all in favor of a public school position.

Christian principles teach that relationships within the church take place at an equal or even higher level than with the world Galatians 6:10). Assistance in educating our children in ways of this life and everlasting life would come at a higher, not lower, premium than assistance from those whose work is confined to the physical and temporal world (we pay fortunes to the medical profession who cannot, ultimately, fix what is wrong with us — why wouldn’t we pay more to someone who can make sense of temporal experience and add an everlasting spiritual dimension?).

Besides Romans 13 and civil responsibilities, the Bible also teaches spiritual principles for how we approach life, in this case education. The results of a vibrant faith in the wake of Pentecost and “continuing steadfastly in the Apostles doctrine, fellowship, breaking of bread and the prayers” (Acts 2:42) was that no one considered anything as being their own but divided their resources among all as anyone had need (Acts 2:45; 4:34-35). Christian stewardship originally and ideally flowed from the richness of the Gospel in which the disciples continued steadfastly. As the inspired Word of God became less present in the lives of Christians so did the inspiration to see all their resources as means for advancing the Gospel. Acts 5 records the swift decline in this vibrant faith in the hypocrisy of Ananias and Sapphira. Apparently this decline continued since Paul addresses matters of stewardship in both letters to the Corinthians. In first Corinthians 9:9 Paul refers to an Old Testament law about not muzzling an ox while it treads grain to impress upon them God’s real concern; that those who serve Him in the ministry of the Word be provided for abundantly by those who are served (see also Galatians 6:6). Furthermore, Paul found it necessary to address the cause of this decline as he admonished both Christians and pastors to let the
Word of God dwell among them in abundance and continuously (Colossians 3:16, 1 Timothy 4:11-16). So, Paul urges that Christians at least set aside an offering of the first fruits of their increase. One might suggest, but not demand, that a tithe provides a simple response to questions of "how much of the first fruits?" However, it is important to remember that the Old Testament laws about tithing are not imposed by the New Testament, not because we don't need to tithe but because the New Testament faith supplied by the Gospel already exceeds a tithe as it sees all resources enlisted in the mission of teaching the faith.

Now, consider how we might provide for Christian education if every family tithed. A conservative estimate at one of my previous parishes determined that 120 families that tithed would provide $600,000 more than needed each year to provide for the normal operations and ministry of the congregation. This amount would be even higher in urban areas (though cost of fairly compensating teachers would be equally higher). Add to this the resources available if churches without schools recognized the mission opportunity made available by churches that do have schools. So, for example, my former parish could choose to send all of that $600,000 on to one or more Lutheran schools. The fact that tithing would provide abundantly for a Christian school eliminates the assumed necessity of arguing about tuition. Tithing would also provide for the missionary aspect of the school since non-members could be invited to attend at no cost or with a tuition amount that would not discourage non-members from sending their children.

The other possibility, in the context of faith, is that everyone who sent their children to the school would pay full tuition. This tuition would fully equal the amount necessary to provide well for those who do the teaching. A vibrant faith provides conviction that God has and will provide for me, so I am free to provide for the Christian education of my children and for the life of those whom I enlist to provide that education. Either way, a lively faith provides abundantly for Christian education which might respond to the unique opportunity we have to advance the Gospel in the lives of our own children and in the lives of children who would have not access to it otherwise.

This is the path of idealism that, many argue, cannot be realized. That may be so, but let it be understood that the problem is not with the ideal, nor with the means of achieving it which God has supplied abundantly (the inspired word and God's rich providence in our lives). The problem is that when the Word is lacking in our lives so is the faith it
produces. Where faith is lacking there is a failure of Christian stewardship and responsibility and immense opportunities are lost or diminished.

What are we to do? Historically the church has managed poor stewardship by either closing the school (and eventually the church) or by shifting the burden of stewardship to the teachers. And why not? If teachers pursued a career in Christian education then this was their choice. As people of great faith and commitment they should be willing to model what they would teach. Let them be willing to give all their resources to the mission and let them live a life free from the material world. In many, if not most schools, this is exactly what goes on because the argument is sound. It is right for a Christian educator to teach the faith in words and actions. A life free from material interests does help the Christian educator in many ways; more time to prepare lessons, interact with students, less required from the budget. What’s more, if the Christian educator is as busy as they might be serving, they have no time for the temptations of a materialistic life. Christian educators have “not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin” (Hebrews 12:4). So what are they complaining about? A life of challenging service is right for them. What is not right is for people who claim the Christian faith to impose this manner of living on those who serve as educators. Christian service is always offered, never demanded nor coerced. With these realities in mind, the time has come to consider a faithful and reasonable way forward, in an effort to redeem the time, lest we miss the vast opportunity that is before us.

The Path of a Principled Response to the Current Dilemma

The way forward must be implemented by those who are responsible for the school, who have the faith to support it as an environment that supports the faith. Members and non-members alike, who lack the conviction to provide abundantly for this ministry cannot be expected to originate or even promote the solution. What are those responsible to do?

First, determine what is required to provide a Christian education that is worth providing, worth attending and worth supporting. How much staff do we need and how do we need to provide for them? Here we may not require the same level of salaries, compensation, and class-
room sizes that public education does, but we can still establish levels that clearly and reasonably support the endeavor.

Second, move on to consider support staff, other material resources, then the physical plant. Here remember that buildings and equipment can support but never provide education in and of themselves. If we keep the idea of support in mind, then we will remember that other staff, resources and buildings are not helping the educators if they become a burden that draws support away from those educating the students. History continues to demonstrate the folly of magnificent facilities where little education takes place because the budget is so consumed by debt and administration costs that nothing remains to support teachers. On the other hand, a really magnificent teaching staff continually inspires parents and others to provide for more and better support. Consider all the benefits of a well-paid, excellent teacher who is regularly asked by parents, “how can we help support the education you are providing?” Special care for the teacher’s room, paint, decorating, supplies, equipment are all possible when parents value the education being provided. Parents may even combine their efforts and find new relationships among one another as they engage the common mission of Christian education.

Third, add up the costs (ideal but not unreasonable) and divide by the number of students. This is what quality Christian education costs in total (if funding is on the basis of tithing) or by student (if tuition will be charged) or any combination. Even if neither the congregation nor the parents of students can bear this figure, it is essential that everyone know what it is. In the civil world we understand this well. The services of people or products people make that are worth having come at a corresponding expense. We expect to pay and we expect to be paid. We have no right to demand quality but refuse to pay for it. So, I am proposing that we keep the ideal so people know what we can have if we have the faith to pursue it. The important part of this is that excellent Christian education inspires the support of everyone. Teachers are happy and have high expectations. Students are happy and pursue high ideals in learning. Parents are happy to do their part in accomplishing lofty educational goals. The school builds a reputation that invites support from other sources and invites new students/parents to apply.

Fourth, although I have described how tithing would eliminate the need for tuition, I recommend a full tuition system, even for families that have more than one child in the school. Why? I believe, in principle,
that the cost of education as a civil endeavor needs to be clearly recognized. Those who will be asked to serve in the school have civil/material needs and commitments just like those who are served. What about good tithing practices? Full tuition does not mean that tithing does not apply. A congregation would simply draw the cost of full tuition from a member’s tithe as received from offerings and apply any of the offering that remained to other congregational expenses. What if a member’s tithe comes short of tuition? In this case let the tithes of others as received in the general offerings be applied as necessary to those in need, following the model from Acts. This would be the case for a family with many children in the school whose tuition would exceed their tithe and/or ability to pay.

What if a member could cover the tuition (and more) with a tithe but refuses? Here the civil and spiritual concerns are combined yet distinct. If the member is simply refusing a responsibility that they have the resources to fulfill, then there is an issue of sin and faith for the pastor’s to deal with. If the member is genuinely in need of assistance, then let that assistance be sought. What about the mission aspect for non-members, especially those who cannot afford tuition? Here again, let the interested non-member know and keep in mind the real cost of the education in which they are interested. If they cannot afford full tuition let them apply or appeal to the congregation for assistance. In this way the non-member knows that there is no advantage to seeking membership just to obtain a “free” or “reduced tuition” education. The non-member also is kept aware of the real cost of this education and that any difference is made up in real dollars by a real member of the church. This is a good witness and good opportunity for further witness, to establish a bond or relationship between a member who is willing to help with financial support and the non-member who finds the Gospel working in love of tangible significance. This would encourage a person to pursue membership for reasons of faith and love rather than financial expediency. Notice that in every case, the education of the children and civil responsibility toward the educators is protected.

Is this the End or the Beginning?

Clearly there is tremendous opportunity to accomplish the mission of the Church through education, especially today. We live in a time of unparalleled opportunity. We have Lutheran universities that are prepared to train Lutheran teachers (whether they teach in Christian or public schools they are a blessing). We can provide an education that
develops the potential of our children as Christians and as citizens. We can inspire our children to pursue the unique opportunities that exist in the teaching vocation. We have a society that is seeking better education for its children than public education can provide (in spite of ideological opinions they might hold to the contrary). Though these people may have no interest in Christianity for themselves, they want the kind of structure and nurture that Christian teachers provide.

Tremendous challenges also exist in rallying sufficient funds and inspiration to respond to the opportunity. Providing a Christian education that is valued is expensive and will always be so. Inspiring people to serve in and support this education is increasingly difficult in a culture that seeks maximum financial gain for minimum labor expended. Nevertheless, investing one's life in the lives of others and knowing the significance of that in this time and forever is intensely compelling. hat's more, by the grace of God, through His inspired Word, we have an inexhaustible source of energy. The Spirit of God works faith, grants wisdom, and develops talents that harvest the opportunities all around us. The Word of God shows us the errors of the past and present. The Word of God directs a proper course for the future. The Word of God lifts, raises us to our feet, and moves us with great energy and devotion along that course by the Love of God for the love of others.

The final key is that teachers can hardly advocate this course for themselves. Pastors and congregational leaders need to teach and apply the biblical witness that would guide us in our lives. Pastors are called to teach people what their responsibilities are to their neighbor (civil) and to their children (education). The guidance of the Word and the inspiration of the Word insist that ideals are to be sustained and sought after, never abandoned. Pastors and congregational leaders will surely enjoy the support of Christian teachers as they shepherd the congregation in meeting their responsibility with gladness and the opportunity with enthusiasm. Such support will, in turn, produce Christian education that demonstrates value and unparalleled potential. —LEJ

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Ask almost any Pastor or Principal the question: “Why do you have a Lutheran School?” and the answer will almost certainly include: “To serve as an outreach to the community.” There are other reasons as well. We want a safe Christian environment for “our kids.” Many times there is a discontent with the quality or ideology of the local public schools. And, of course, quality education is deeply ingrained in the tradition of the Lutheran Church. These and other factors have motivated our church body to develop an extensive network of schools that serve as the primary ministry of many of our congregations.

This article will focus on the outreach dimension of our Lutheran Schools. For five years I had the opportunity to work almost exclusively in school ministry, serving as Pastor to the School for 500 students at Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran School in San Antonio, Texas. For the past three years I have served as the Senior Pastor of Family of Christ Lutheran in Colorado, which operates a large Early Childhood program. I have experienced firsthand the joys and the struggles of operating a school, and have become convinced that our schools offer arguably the best opportunity for our church body to reach the world with the good news of Christ.

In the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, only 40% of the 148,000 young people in our elementary schools are from LCMS congregations. According 2002-03 LCMS Congregational Services data, 16% claim no church affiliation whatsoever. Given that a large number of those who claim church membership are not actively involved in the church, the opportunities for outreach are clearly evident. God hasn’t just brought the world to our doorstep; He has quite literally brought them into the house. The question then becomes: “How do we reach these young people and their families with the Gospel?” Or, in other words, “How do we use our Lutheran School as an outreach to the community?”

The main thrust of this article will be broken down into two sections. First, I would like to explore what it is that makes our Christian day schools such wonderful mission opportunities. Secondly, I would propose that we completely rethink how we approach the “mission”
aspect of our schools.

The Mission Opportunities of Lutheran Day Schools:

Lutheran Schools are uniquely positioned to serve as missionary outposts for a number of reasons:

**Lutheran Schools are literally a cross section of our community:**

Like many denominations, the Lutheran church has had a difficult time reaching out beyond the demographics of our heritage. Despite repeated efforts to begin ethnic ministries and reach out to a new generation of people, most - not all - churches remain white, middle class, Germanic and graying. Not so our schools! Compare the make-up of our school students to our church membership and one will usually find a dramatic difference. Variation in race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, religious background, etc., aren’t nearly as prevalent in our schools. More than any other branch of ministry, schools are where we interact with the community around us. As mentioned earlier, over half of our students nationwide are from outside the “traditional Lutheran circles.”

**Lutheran Schools offer us significant amounts of time with the unchurched:**

The amount of time we have with students and their families is eye opening. If a student comes into your school program and remains through the 8th grade, they will be on campus a minimum of 13,860 hours. To get that same amount of time in church, they would have to attend every Sunday for roughly 266 years! We don’t interact with the parents quite as much but, even so, we have a surprisingly large amount of contact. They are on campus at least twice a day, five days a week as they drop off and pick up their child (Oh, that our church members would be present that often!) They show up for ball games, PTL meetings, Parent/Teacher conferences, plays and graduations. The opportunity for interaction during school time is huge!

**Lutheran Schools offer significant relationships with those we are trying to reach:**

Outside of their parents, the most influential adult in a child’s life is
their teacher. Five days a week we get to build this relationship through our schools. Parents, too, have an instant relationship with teachers, because that teacher will play a huge role in the life of their child, their most precious asset in the world. Day in and day out, teachers are involved in the lives of these families. They know when a student is sick and when parents are splitting up. They hear about sibling being born and grandparents dying. The relations that develop in a classroom are huge and give us an incredible opportunity for sharing the Gospel in the right way at the right time. People who would never step foot into a church, will give ear to a teacher whom they have learned to trust.

These are just a few of the things that make schools a ripe mission field. Many more could be listed, but these will suffice. Very few would argue against the mission potential of our Lutheran Schools. The challenge comes in determining how to effectively work in this harvest field. Which leads us to the second main area of discussion:

**Rethinking Our Approach to School Ministry**

Seeing the potential of our schools is easy, and most people recognize the opportunity that is right in front of us. One could argue that our schools are very effective in reaching people for Christ. Last year, 4,208 children were baptized as a direct result of their attending a Lutheran school and 3,308 adults were either baptized or confirmed as a result of their children attending a Lutheran school. Praise God! But, with a changed perspective and some intentional effort, I am convinced that the number of lives changed could be significantly higher.

When churches talk about using their schools as an "outreach to the community," they usually gauge “success” by determining how many people from the school join their church. The thinking goes like this: “We will open a school and hire Christian teachers who will teach the children about Jesus. Since many of those children will not have a church home we will have them sing several times a year in church, invite the families to our new member class, and work hard to make them feel welcome at anything the church offers. As families are looking for a church, it is only logical for them to consider the church where the child attends.” And so, schools become a type of hook for initially engaging families with the goal of getting them into church where they can grow and mature in their faith.

That approach isn’t bad. Thousands of people have come to faith as teachers and pastors share the Gospel in the classroom and in chapel. Thousands more have found their way into our churches and have
become faithful members. That approach is good, but could it be better?

The shortcoming of that model is that it only touches a select number of families. Families that are spiritually searching may come, but what about those who aren’t? Some of these parents see the church as irrelevant and out of touch. They are spiritually searching, but they don’t see our churches providing the answers. A surprisingly large number of them have strong feelings against church. Simply walking into a church building is a huge psychological barrier that many of them won’t cross.

If our schools are mission fields, let’s think for a moment like a missionary. Imagine going into a foreign country that is largely unchurched. How would you reach them? Would you build a church building, fill it with Lutheran hymnals, charter a Constitution and put out a sign that advertises worship on Sunday at 8:00 and 10:45? No. That approach might work well in a largely Christian nation, but it would never work in a mission field. Missionaries are more concerned about bringing the Gospel to people and less concerned about getting the people to church. The goal is not to fill the pews, but to convert a soul. They begin by learning the native language, developing relationships, sitting around the kitchen table with people who will listen, and engaging people in faith conversations on their turf. Official “church” may come quite a ways down the line.

What if we would apply that same approach to our Lutheran Schools? Rather than talking about how we can get the school families into church, what if we would put all of our effort into bringing the Gospel into our schools? What if we would gauge “success” not by how many families joined our church, but by how effective we were at sharing the Gospel in our schools?

This “missionary mindset” toward our schools seems logical, but is rarely practiced effectively. We have wonderful schools and incredible teachers, but very few congregations truly approach their schools as mission fields. “Outreach” is more about trying to get them to come to us, rather than us going to them. So, what would a “missionary mindset” look like? Following are just a few ideas to spark conversation:

Instead of having school children sing three times a year in church, why don’t we challenge every church member to go to three school ball games and engage a school parent in a conversation?

Instead of working to get a family into church to hear a sermon,
why don’t we find an opportunity to “preach” to them on their terms? For example, how about having the pastor write a one page spiritual message on the back of the lunchroom menu that goes home each week with the children? You will find people reading that sermon who would never come listen to one preached from the pulpit.

Instead of inviting school families to the new member class held at the church on Sunday mornings, why not offer a class on their turf during a non-church time? Title it: Come Find Out What We’re Teaching Your Children About God.

Instead of asking school families to come into the “foreign environment” of the church, what if we would challenge church families to go into the “foreign environment” of the school? Teachers readily welcome adults who will come and read to the children, share their unique hobbies or skills, etc. They can serve cookies and punch at receptions, help set up and tear down at carnivals, work with the children on their Spring drama performance, etc. Each one of these puts a church member on the mission field where they can build relationships with unchurched families in an environment that is safe and comfortable for the people they are trying to reach.

Instead of discussing additional roles that teachers should play in church ministries, what would happen if church members would discuss how they could support and build up teachers who have the greatest influence and contact with these unchurched families?

These may seem like subtle differences, but they have far-reaching implications. No longer are schools viewed primarily as a tool for bringing people to churches where they can learn about Christ. Instead, churches are seen as places where “the body of Christ is built up” (Eph. 4:12) and equipped to share their faith. Schools become the mission field where the precious news of Jesus Christ is spread. The schools are where we come in contact with the community. The schools are where the unchurched gather. The schools are where faith conversations are safe for them. The schools are where we have relationships that give us the opportunity to share the message.

By God’s grace and the working of His Word, many of those people will come to faith and some may even join our churches. The important thing, though, is that the Gospel is spread to as many people as possible. It’s how missionaries think, and I believe it is the key to a profoundly different approach to school ministry. Ultimately, of course,
these are not either/or scenarios, but both/and. Our churches need to be continually welcoming people in addition to intentionally and actively working through the school to share the Gospel.

These ideas come not just as philosophical ponderings, but because I have seen firsthand the potential of schools and the fruits of intentionally working in this mission field. Allow me to share briefly with you the model of school ministry developed at Shepherd of the Hills in San Antonio. By no means is it a perfect model. In fact, much of what we tried failed. But as we engaged in a very intentional and different way of approaching school ministry, the impact was profound.

The new mindset started with the congregation officially declaring the school to be their number one mission field. This resulted in the calling of a missionary pastor to specifically work in that mission field. Every month a group of congregation members would gather to brainstorm ways that we could support our teachers (our “missionaries on the front lines”) and reach out to the school families. Specific attention was given to the communication between the church staff and the school staff as they worked together to more effectively minister to the families of our school. A great deal of energy was spent in trying to get the congregation members involved in the school.

Much of what we did was trial and error, as there were very few models of intentional school ministry. In very short time, though, we began to see fruits. In five years, over 100 students and family members were baptized. Many of them eventually joined the congregation. Many joined other congregations. Teacher morale improved dramatically, as they began to grasp the eternal impact their everyday work was making in the lives of their students. The congregation became excited about this mission field in their back yard. Few people could give up everything and go to a foreign country, but this was mission work in which they could all participate. Two congregation members became so excited about school ministry that they left lucrative secular jobs to join our staff working specifically on school ministry. Most importantly, every child who went through our school was very intentionally touched with the love and message of Jesus Christ. Most of the results we will never know this side of heaven.

The key to this changed approach in ministry is that it must be intentional. It is difficult to change things that have “always been done a different way.” Most congregation members do not approach their school with missionary eyes. That will come in time. My prayer is that
more and more congregations will take a new look at the ministry of their schools. I dream of the day when we will have DSM's (Director of School Ministry) just as we have DCE's and DCO's. Until then, I would encourage every congregation to create a position (staff or volunteer) whose sole purpose is working as a missionary to the school. As Jesus said: “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.” (Matt. 9:37-38)—LEJ

References
Membership statistics taken from the 2002-2003 report from LCMS District and Congregational Services.

Michael Meissner, a 1992 of Concordia University in Austin, earned the M.Div. from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis in 1996. He served from 1996-2000 as Pastor to the School at Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church and School in San Antonio, TX and currently serves as Senior Pastor at Family of Christ Lutheran Church in Monument, Colorado. Having written previously for the Lutheran Education Journal as well as the Lutheran Witness, Pastor Meissner also speaks extensively around the nation on the topic of Outreach Through Our Lutheran Schools. He and Julie, his wife, have two children, Caleb and Courtney. For more information or for additional discussion, Pastor Meissner can be reached at schoolshepherd@yahoo.com.
Why are you doing what you are doing today? I am guessing that you are a full time church worker due to the fact that you are reading this professional journal but if not, the question remains. Why are you doing what you are doing? What is it that took you down the road to where you are today? For many of us, we cannot answer that question without giving credit to God and His call in our life. There is no doubt that I am doing DCE ministry today because of God and His plan in my life. But as I look back and ask why, I see that it was God who worked through people that got me to where I am today. It was a pastor who encouraged me; a DCE, who had a great ministry, that fed me and allowed me to get involved; it was a Mom and Dad who supported me and were excited about the idea of full time church work. It was a collage of people and experiences that God pulled together to open my eyes to His call.

I asked this question of some friends of mine and was not surprised that they all reference a person or persons who had influenced their life call:

“The final turning point for me was a pastor who was persistent.” Heather Bostick, DCE

“One of my professors encouraged me to look into Lutheran teaching” Steven Jahnke, Teacher

“One day a friend spoke one sentence that got me right in the heart...Heidi, you ooze DCEness.” Heidi Fingerlin, DCE

“I had teachers, and especially coaches, that I looked up to and that believed in me.” Chip May, Camp Director

“Two wonderful men influenced me the most about hearing and answering God’s call for the ministry. Grandpa Strege and Pastor Cecil Kluges” Bill Yonkers, Pastor.

For most it was a journey of obeying those in the church, being challenged to consider church work, and being convinced by the Spirit. Time and time again, God uses people in our lives to direct us to His will.

Today, the church is in an interesting place as it wrestles with
“Who’s Got Next?” Who is God raising up to be the future teachers, DCE’s and Ministers in our church?

This is not a new problem. Jesus addressed this very issue, “When He saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into His harvest field” (Matt. 9:36-38). As we continue to bring the Good News to the world, we are finding more and more churches without pastors, more and more classrooms without certified teachers, and the word “vacancy” seems to be used too often. With the shortages of church workers, we ask the question, “Who’s Got Next?” Who is God raising up to be the next generation of workers to bring His Word of hope, freedom, and forgiveness to a world that is harassed and helpless?

This is the question with which we must begin to wrestle and the solution to which we must become proactive. If God has worked through His people to bring about his message in the past, how is God going to use his people today to raise up the next generation of harvesters? It is important to remember that there is no specific formula that will answer all our questions. Let us not forget that it is God’s church and he will grow it in the way that he wants. It was God who changed a man, Saul, whose passion went: from destroying the church to being Paul, the called missionary to the Gentiles. It was God who chose to use a burning bush to convince an outcast lowly shepherd to lead a nation out of slavery.

God loves to act outside our human understanding and reasoning “Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong” (I Cor. 1:26, 27). Let us not become like the Pharisees who thought that they had figured out the ways of God and missed the Messiah. Our responsibility is to stay connected to the vine so we can know God’s will as he reveals it to us and then follow it.

So, how do we become proactive in challenging students to answer the Call to become workers in the field?

First, we need to be aware of some of the potential mistakes we make.
Second, for many of us, recruitment of workers is an important but not urgent issue. The issues of today and the problems that must be addressed in our lives and our ministries take priority. It isn’t that we don’t see the issue; it’s just difficult to fit it into our busy lives.

Third, we see students who have wonderful potential to be full-time church workers but we only encourage them in words. It was not until just recently that the folly in this became apparent to me. Imagine you are a basketball coach at a local high school. The first day of school you see a 6 foot 7 inch freshman walk through the doors. As the coach, would you simply walk up to and say, “Wow, I see some great things happening in your life. God has really blessed you with height. One day you should look at being a basketball player.” No, as the coach you would begin to pursue the student to become involved in the team and begin training to be a basketball player. Too often, I use the words of encouragement and leave out the power of involvement.

Fourth, when it comes to church work, we rely a great deal on the structure we have developed over the years. There is nothing wrong with the structure used to produce full time church workers, but remember the danger of “boxing in” God. He is not boxed in by age, education, or background. The “hoops” that people have in place mean little to the Creator of the universe. Lest we forget that the same Holy Spirit in you and me is the same Holy Spirit that descended on Jesus at His baptism; that was at Pentecost; that gave Peter the words to preach and Paul the heart to minister. It is the same Holy Spirit that was present at our baptism and was there at our confirmation. “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God?” (I Cor. 6:19). It is the same Holy Spirit that is active in the lives of our students, who is calling them into the lives of service in the harvest field today.

Fifth, do you look at potential church workers with human eyes or the eyes of God? Look again at I Corinthians 1:26 “Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth.” Look at whom Jesus chose to do ministry and to whom he trusted his church - fishermen and tax collectors. Jesus looks at those who are available to His call and not just those with the most ability. I often make the mistake of overlooking those who are available to get involved in ministry and focus on those who I think have the ability for ministry.

Finally, we focus on the symptoms rather than the problem. This is
not just about filling slots on the roster or simply getting full time church workers, but it is about a generation of students who are sold out for the Kingdom of God. If we are focused on connecting students to a core, life changing relationship with God and giving them the tools to continue and grow in that relationship, we will not have to worry about having enough pastors or teachers. Whether they are called into full time ministry or ministry in the work place, they will be active in their relationship with God and follow wherever He leads. The answer to “Who’s Got Next” is found in connecting students to a real God who is passionate for them, who has a plan for their life, and who wants a personal relationship with them.

How do we help students into that relationship?

First we must take a look at ourselves. Whether we like it or not, we are Christ’s ambassadors (II Cor. 5:20) and students are watching. They are constantly looking and evaluating to see if our faith is genuine and influential to our life decisions. From time to time I go through a series of questions to give myself a personal faith check-up and help me see the God I am reflecting to those around me:

How connected am I to the vine? Have I become complacent and lazy in my prayer time and my personal Bible study time? Have I fallen into the trap of replacing private time with God with prep time for devotions or lessons?

How have I reacted to God’s direction in my life lately? Have I been attentive to God’s call in my life, I have been answering him with “Here am I, send me” (Isaiah 6:8)? Or have I been answering with excuses and reasons not to follow?

What is my attitude about the place where I serve and the people I serve? Have I fallen into the grumble trap that the Israelites fell into time and time again as they followed God? Have I been complaining about the hours, the pay, or the people rather than trusting in God and proclaiming that he will provide?

How is the balance in my life? Am I working too much or trying to do too much? Am I trying to do what only God can do? I must realize that God will give me enough time in each day to do what he wants me to get done in that day.
Have I neglected my family because of the ministry? Why would anyone want to work for the church if it destroys one's family? One's first call is to God, then one's family and, finally, one's ministry.

The bottom line is, are you healthy in your relationship with God? If not, take time to reconnect with the King. Fall in love with him all over again and be renewed in your spirit. As you grow in him, the light of Christ reflected in you will draw others to him.

Get connected with your students. Jesus spent three years with His disciples. He knew them and they knew him. They ate, talked, and laughed together. They witnessed Jesus' miracles first hand. They experienced the feeding of five thousand. They saw Lazarus rise from the dead. They shared in the ministry, the joys and the sorrows, the highs and the lows. They knew what it was to rely on God because they saw Jesus rely on God and experienced it with him. At the end of those three years, and by the power of the Holy Spirit they became the leaders of what would become the Christian Church.

There is no substitute for being involved in ministry. I had a soccer coach who would always say after our daily drills, "Now to the greatest teacher, playing the game." He knew that playing the game of soccer was where our skills would be honed and used in real situations. The same holds true for the Church. We can teach about trusting in God but until that teaching has been experienced, it is simply a theory that is taught and understood. It is the refining fire of life and life experiences that changes beliefs into convictions and convictions into actions. What would it be like to ask Mary and Martha about their understanding that Jesus could raise the dead - after they experienced seeing their brother come out of the tomb? The disciples knew firsthand that Jesus could control the wind and the waves. At some level they understood these truths of God but their convictions about these truths were deepened after they experienced them. Are we giving our students the experiences that will deepen their convictions? Are we connecting their experiences to Scripture and helping them interpret life in light of God's Word?

One of the most difficult challenges for us as a Church is to trust students of all ages with the ministry of God. Remember the same Holy Spirit in us is also in them. Take another look as Jesus states what the problem is, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few.” (Matt. 9:37). He doesn’t leave it as a simple teaching, but turns it into an experience for his Disciples. Now look at what follows in Scripture, “He
called the twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness.” (Matt. 10:1). He got them involved immediately. In Luke he sent out 72 others with the same instructions as the twelve and they returned with joy over what they had experienced (Luke 10:1-7). Early in the book of John we see that Jesus is getting his disciples involved in the ministry. “The Pharisees heard that Jesus was gaining and baptizing more disciples than John, although in fact it was not Jesus who baptized, but his disciples” (John 4:1, 2). Early on in Jesus’ ministry he shared the experiences with those who followed him.

Somehow we have to break from the classic structure of faith education and help our students get radically involved in the ministry. We need to help move our students from just knowing about a God who loves them and who is passionate, to believing it even to the point of death. We have to be willing to let things change as a new generation is called to follow God and lead His church. This is going to get messy, there will be God-sized successes and God-sized failures, pieces to pick up and hurts to mend. What an amazing opportunity to experience grace and a God who loves us when we succeed and when we fail.

Many of our students who have been in the Lutheran “system” are fat on spiritual milk and need to exercise their faith in the world of ministry. I know; I minister to many of them.

Imagine what would happen if, after high school graduation, we started to have students skip a year of college to do mission work in the inner city or overseas. What would school chapel services be like if they were planned and brought to fruition by a group of students, called to lead chapel, taught about worship, speaking, dynamic teaching, Scripture, and how to bring it before God’s people in a life applicable way? What would happen if spring break was spent in Mexico instead of at the beach and senior trips were to missions in Africa instead of a Caribbean cruise? How would the understanding of sharing one’s faith change if the religion class was taken to the mall and challenged to start spiritual conversations with strangers?

If you are a little scared about what might happen, welcome to the world of the disciples before Pentecost, to the world of Gideon as he said goodbye to an army of 33,000 for an army of 300 (Judges 7). Following the heart of God is scary because it rarely makes sense and often involves a faith like David’s who stood up against all odds, Goliath, and proclaimed “Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he
should defy the armies of the living God...You come against me with the sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the Lord will hand you over to me” (I Sam. 17:26b, 45-46a).

“Who’s Got Next?” God knows! Let us all begin to pray for them! Make a commitment today to pray for those students whom you feel God may be calling into the ministry. Pray for them by name. Ask God to reveal to you ways that they can be involved in ministry and ways you can help direct them. Be open to whom God may give you to pray for. Chances are they are not the students you first think of - remember the fishermen and tax collectors that Jesus chose. He is concerned with availability not just ability.—LEJ

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The “Role of Schools in America,” is a topic that appears to be adequately investigated in the professional literature. In a recent graduate class, I was given an assignment to submit a paper containing my thoughts on the topic. Because of my unique background, and also because I am currently principal of a Lutheran school, I focused the assignment on the role of Lutheran schools.

I am of the firm belief that the role of the school is an issue that Lutheran educators need to be mindful of as we take our schools into the next chapter of Lutheran educational history in America. We claim we are unique. We claim we are distinct. However, we still must address the question, “What is the role of our Lutheran school in today’s society?”

**Culture of Excellence**

One of the roles of Lutheran school is to educate children within a culture of academic excellence. Education is the process of imparting knowledge from one person to another. It is a perpetual act of continuous learning that is always seeking to understand new things, while having a firm grasp on knowledge previously acquired. Education should be specifically designed to prepare the learner for life. In addition, it is a process of teaching and learning that addresses life issues and how best to deal with them. Education is the act of securing knowledge to pass on to others. Lutheran schools want to prepare children for their future lives in Christ as well. This is our mission and our focus for Lutheran educational excellence.

**Curriculum**

To best educate children, Lutheran schools must have a plan. The plan is in the form of the curriculum taught. Therefore, another role of our Lutheran school is to engage in the process of teaching the knowledge set forth in the curriculum. Because many times the curriculum is a narrow band of information, Lutheran schools must involve themselves in immersing students in a wide variety of activities both curricular and extra curricular, thus adding to the educational experience.

Curriculum in Lutheran schools is used to develop the content of the subjects taught, empowering students to aspire to and attain a maximum knowledge base, as well as to achieve learner outcomes. It is also
used to accomplish specific curricular-based objectives, while addressing individual abilities and teaching methods. Curriculum is a means of developing the programs and activities that will best meet the needs of each individual student in the Lutheran school.

Curriculum also includes the goals and objectives that each State Department of Education believes students should attain in order to advance to the next grade. Because the role of Lutheran school is to teach the curriculum, each teacher is responsible for his or her students learning this information. Curriculum is important to help teachers educate students and also to help students learn what they need to excel in the future. This, too, is a role of the Lutheran school.

The role of Lutheran schools is to teach a process of learning and a set of subjects, in both content and a program of studies using a set of materials. To accomplish this, the Lutheran school must require a sequence of course requirements and a set of performance objectives through a specifically designed course of study. The role of Lutheran schools is to offer learning experiences within the context of the philosophy of the school including extra-curricular activities, guidance and interpersonal relationships with the Word of God as a basis for instruction. The course of study should be designed and planned by the staff to allow a series of experiences, which teach the processes of life both in and out of the school in conjunction with our relationship to our Savior Jesus Christ.

Faith-Based Education

Lutheran schools strive to teach at the same high quality of academic excellence of public schools. They want to prepare children to be ready for any task life may throw their way in the realm of academic and educational challenges. But in addition to this, and most importantly, they preach Christ crucified. Faith permeates the school day. Lutheran schools allow faith to manage everything from instruction to conflict, from personal relationships to loving one another. Lutheran schools teach this because the Lord first loved us and we want to share his love with one another. That can be done in the Lutheran school.

When a child sins against his fellow classmate, scripture is included as Law and Gospel, and is utilized to deal with the situation. Discipline is out of love, knowing God hates the sin but loves the sinner. When a family member is sick or dies Lutheran schools can handle it through talking about faith and engaging in prayer. When life’s challenges are too much to handle they are taken to the Lord in prayer. Teachers will
stop what they are doing in class and pray for the Lord's guidance and direction. Lutheran teachers model faith and how to make it practical. That is the role of the Lutheran school.

In Lutheran schools, the role of teaching, imparting, and modeling the faith is a result of the work of the Triune God. All of the expectations regarding curriculum should be accomplished in Lutheran schools as we teach the faith. This is the element that makes us distinctive as Lutherans. In addition to teaching the faith, it is absolutely imperative that Lutheran schools proclaim and teach the Word of God with the proper understanding of Law and Gospel. We must teach about the sacraments and the work of the Holy Spirit. We must include the Bible as the inerrant Word of God as we relate the entire spectrum of our faith to the children. This makes us unique with respect to our education.

Since the Word of God is the basis for everything that should be taught during the school day, it is the role of Lutheran school to lead children to understand that they have a responsibility to help every person to achieve the same understanding that they too are a precious gift of God. It is the role of Lutheran school to nurture and prepare children emotionally, spiritually, physically, mentally, and socially to be servants of God and all humankind.

Lutheran schools have a role to provide a life affirming, loving, Christian atmosphere and environment where children are actively involved in the learning process. Lutheran schools must structure goals to reflect this philosophy. It is the role of an effective Lutheran school to communicate with students and parents, as teachers and administrators, to promote in children self reflection, to construct a positive learning environment, to teach the processes and strategies of sound education, and to promote life long learning both academically and spiritually.

It is the role of Lutheran schools to encourage children to take risks, when it comes to their learning and their faith. It is the role of Lutheran schools to provide age-appropriate, developmentally sound, academically stimulating classrooms and curricula that are centered in Christian values. Lutheran schools must encourage children to grow in Christian maturity, pursue excellence in their lives, and communicate
effectively with others. This is our Lord’s command in the Great Commission.

Lutheran schools have the role of cultivating positive relationships with parents for the good of children. We must enable parents to be positive partners in their child’s education.

When parents send their children to a Lutheran school, they do more than share their faith with them. They put their faith in the school to provide their child with strong spiritual and academic foundations. Lutheran schools take this responsibility seriously, which is why they do more than prepare our students for tests in the classroom. They prepare children for tests in life.

Lutheran schools are places where students learn essential values. They are places where high academic standards meet high moral standards. They have excellent teachers who are also excellent role models. Lutheran schools are places where values such as respect, honor, kindness, and compassion are not just encouraged - they are expected from our children.

The role of Lutheran school is to encourage moral, social and spiritual growth. Students are immersed in the Lutheran religion throughout the school day and the school year. Prayer and reflection are part of the daily routine. Students become more familiar with their Lutheran identity, heritage and traditions as a result of the emphasis on God’s Word, the Lutheran confessions, and religious instruction. Students at Lutheran schools are given opportunities to learn what being a child of God is all about. More importantly, they are given the time they need to have what they learn really make a difference, especially in their own lives and in the lives of those around them. This is the impact we make when the school’s role is congenial with its philosophy.

While teaching students to understand the faith, Lutheran schools also teach them to live their faith. Students learn in an environment where the teachings of Jesus flourish. Subjects such as love, tolerance, patience, benevolence, kindness, compassion, and social justice are built into the curriculum and are demonstrated every day by teachers, parents, and students through examples, attitudes, and interactions.

The role of Lutheran school is to provide faith-based education in a safe, caring environment where our teachers, who really care about their students, act as positive adult role models. The role is to provide the children that attend Lutheran schools with friends that children are able
to bring home to meet their parents.

Lutheran schools provide opportunities for parental involvement. If a parent has an idea or a passion to help out around school there is always room to put those desires into action. The multiplicity of programs offered at our schools would not be possible were it not for the dedication of our parents who get involved.

Lutheran schools never want to lose sight of each student’s potential to learn, to grow, and to make a difference. They are committed not only to each student’s academic development, but to their emotional, spiritual and physical development as well. It is this commitment that leads to success for its graduates, both in the classroom and throughout their lives.

Parental Partnering

It is the role of Lutheran schools to make clear its philosophy as well as its mission. The Lutheran school must encourage parents to understand their role in the education of their children. It must stress that parents cannot be disinterested in the education of their children. It must emphasize that parents become even more aware that the Lutheran school’s role does not exempt parents from their mission. The school exists to assist parents in fulfilling that mission because the parents are the first educators of their children. The role of Lutheran schools is to work at all levels harmoniously with parents as together we faithfully and ardently instruct children in the faith we hold so dear.

The education of children begins long before they are enrolled into Lutheran school. Beginning at baptism, parents are entrusted with their child’s life that God gave them. Along with parents and godparents, members of the Lutheran church community make a promise at a child’s baptism as well. They promise to support the family as they help their child to grow in God’s love. This is a conscious commitment to support the role of the Lutheran school in educating children. It is a commitment that the Holy Spirit leads us to make on our children’s behalf.

As the primary educators of children, parents should always be teaching their children. They teach by their examples, in the words they speak, through their actions, via non-verbal lessons, and through a myriad of experiences. Some of these are conscious, but many are unconsciously performed on a daily basis.

The Lutheran church realizes that parents alone are not the sole educators of their children. Lutheran church communities are partners in the education of children. Consequently, the role of the Lutheran
school is closely connected to the mission of the church that supports it. Congregations provide a variety of resources that support parents in this enormous mission of bringing a child up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Part of the resources provided by congregations includes Lutheran schools and religious education programs.

In addition to programs and resources, Lutheran church communities provide other means of education through the members of the church itself. Adults, parents, grandparents, and congregation members alike, all assume the role of the Lutheran school in teaching children the valuable lesson of how important it is to love one another. Support from the Lutheran church community helps our families grow in their faith and in God's love. Parents, with the support of the Lutheran church community, share with their children the principles in which our faith is grounded, as well as how to live our faith on a daily basis.

The role of the Lutheran school is to remind parents of the important role they play in their children's education. This role of the parents simply doesn't end when the children start school - it just changes. Living as a model of God's love will always be one of the most important means by which parents can educate their children. The Lutheran school must educate parents as well.

The role of the Lutheran school should be to promote high standards and maximize student achievement. Consequently, they must provide quality teachers, classes of reasonable size, and proper facilities to achieve that role.

Community Involvement

Lutheran schools must teach lessons in tolerance and love of fellow man. We must look beyond the inner workings of the church to see how our children can serve the needs of the communities in which they live. Sharing the Gospel and living the faith they have been taught will enable children to lead the church when they achieve adulthood. The next generation of church and community leaders is being instructed in our Lutheran schools.

Lutheran schools must take the lead in recognizing the need to develop and sustain effective partnerships with families and communities. They must encourage comprehensive programs that step out of the
box and set the pace in developing a coordinated method of access to our communities for both children and families. The role of the Lutheran school is to serve as a resource to our communities. The role of the Lutheran school is to assist the community by supporting programs that benefit our community members. Social ministry enables us to do this.

At the Lutheran school where I serve the curriculum is designed to allow the children time during the school year to assist the congregation’s food pantry - an initiative that provides food for needy families. The school, works together with the church to make the building and facilities available for students, parents, teachers, and for community and family activities.

Schools should be viewed not only as institutions that impart certain knowledge and skills to students, but also as environments that take into account their socialization. The role of the Lutheran school is to provide the skills and dispositions needed to actively participate in the many aspects of community life, as God’s children. Its role is to educate children with the ability to think critically. The Lutheran school must develop a sense of commitment and compassionate action in children. It wants children to know that this is what our Lord and Savior desires of his people.

As should be apparent, the role of Lutheran schools is broad, diverse and at times hard to define. However, when it challenges children in ways they can use their God-gifted learning abilities, it gives them the chance to become life long learners. The role of Lutheran schools is to recognize that the focus of teaching is children. It must provide children with new and exciting ways to learn. To sustain and enable children to be productive in their lives as God’s people, Lutheran educators must take the role of Lutheran schools seriously, for the sake of the children and for the sake of our church.—LEJ

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The mission of Lutheran schools is threefold: First, to make disciples by helping parents who are disciples nurture the faith development of their children (nurturing); second, to make disciples by reaching out with the saving message of salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ to children and families who are not yet disciples (outreach); and third, to make disciples by searching for and sharing the precious message of salvation with children of families who have strayed from the Christian faith (reclaiming). (Sandfort, p. 13)

Our Lutheran schools today have more than 50 percent non-Lutherans in attendance. Parents are making decisions on what school best meets their needs. Lutheran schools need to be able to provide a quality Christian education and, in order to meet that need, Lutheran schools need principals who are spiritual leaders.

What is the role of the principal in a Lutheran school? The demands of the principal in today’s Lutheran school involve more than counting the milk money, taking daily attendance and ordering textbooks. The Lutheran school principal is expected to be a spiritual leader. What does it mean to be a Spiritual Leader of a Lutheran Learning Community?

As a place to begin that discussion, National Lutheran School Accreditation (NLSA) has identified twenty-three standards that define the ideal management and spiritual leadership role of the administrator in a Lutheran School.

In 2001 a group of National Distinguished Principals was formed by the National Association of Elementary Principals with the purpose of identifying the role of leadership in the school. This group of Distinguished Principals determined that “everything a principal does in school (whether observing instruction or ordering materials) must be focused on ensuring the learning of students and adults.” (Leading Learning Communities, p. VI). The purpose of this article is to share the six standards that they identified as essential for the Lutheran school
principal to be an effective leader of a Lutheran Learning Community.

The six standards are identified and explained in a book entitled “Leading Learning Communities: Standards for What Principals Should Know and Be Able To Do” and the accompanying “Executive Summary” of the same title. They include:

• Lead schools in a way that places student and adult learning at the center
• Set high expectations and standards for the academic and social development of all students and the performance of adults
• Demand content and instruction that ensure student achievement of agreed-upon academic standards
• Create a culture of continuous learning for adults tied to student learning and other school goals
• Use multiple sources of data as diagnostic tools to assess, identify and apply instructional improvement.
• Actively engage the community to create shared responsibility for student and school success.

Standard One: Balance Management and Leadership Roles

Effective principals lead schools in a way that places student and adult learning at the center. Students in Lutheran schools come from a wide variety of backgrounds and socio-economic conditions. The advances of technology have increased the resources available to teachers and students. The academic standards movement is driving instruction in many of the states where Lutheran schools are located.

The role of the school leader is one that involves continual learning. It involves equipping and empowering teachers and others in the school to identify issues and deal with them in a way that enhances student learning.

In “Making Sense As a School Leader,” authors Ackerman, Donaldson and Van Der Bogert (1996) write that leaders “who embrace open inquiry, the sharing of problems and solutions, and collective responsibility will foster creativity, resourcefulness and collaboration in the work of the staff and the learning of children.”

The challenge for the Lutheran school principal is not to necessarily do more than they are already doing, but to re-think why they are doing what they are doing in a way that focuses on student and adult learning.

What would it look like if principals were balancing these management and leadership roles successfully? We would see principals who:
• Create and foster a community of learners
• Embody learner-centered leadership
• Seek leadership contributions from multiple sources
• Tie the daily operations of the schoolhouse to school and learning goals (NAESP, p. 10)

The important thing to remember is that while student learning is important, it is equally important for adults to continue to learn. It has been said that when the teachers stop learning, so do the students.

National Lutheran School Accreditation standards 5B:05, 5B:13, 5B14, 5B16, 5B22, 6:07, 6:11, 6:13, 6:14, and 6:21 (NLSA Section 5B:Administrator and Section 6: Professional Personnel), focus on student and adult learning.

**Standard Two: Set High Expectations and Standards**

*Effective principals set high expectations and standards for the academic and social development of all students and the performance of adults.* This standard focuses on the belief that all students can and will succeed. The value that all students will succeed and develop as disciples of Jesus Christ is central to the school leaders vision for the Lutheran School (NLSA Standards: 2:05, 2:06, Section 2: School and Congregation; 3:02, 3:03, Section 3: School and Community; 6:08, Section 6: Professional Personnel; and 7:05, 7:07, 7:13, Section 7: Curriculum.)

What would it look like if school communities were to act on the belief that all students could achieve at high levels? We would see principals who

• Articulate a clear vision that reflects the beliefs, values and commitments of the school community
• Ensure that all students have adequate and appropriate opportunities to meet high standards
• Develop a school culture that is flexible, collaborative, innovative and supportive of efforts to improve achievement of all students” (NAESP, p.19).

Lutheran school principals, faculties and boards of education value and focus on this standard. They do the best job they can in providing the resources and opportunities needed for a student to learn. They also realize that in some cases they may not be able to meet the needs of all students that seek admission to the school. They promote this standard
by informing parents that they cannot meet certain needs and help the parents find a school that can meet their child's specific need.

**Standard Three: Demand Content and Instruction that Ensures Student Achievement**

*Effective principals demand content and instruction that ensures student achievement of agreed-upon academic standards.* Successful Lutheran schools are organized around the development of disciples and student learning. It is important for the Lutheran school principal to make sure this happens in their school. The Lutheran school principal and faculty realize that students learn in different ways, but they provide opportunities for students to achieve and move to the next level of their learning process.

What would it look like if principals were providing leadership for high-quality instruction in schools and classrooms? We would see principals who:

- Hire and retain high-quality teachers and hold them responsible for student learning
- Monitor alignment of curriculum with standards, school goals and assessments
- Observe classroom practices to assure that all students are meaningfully engaged in active learning
- Provide up-to-date technology and instructional materials
- Review and analyze student work to determine whether students are being taught to standards (NAESP, p. 30).

National Lutheran School Accreditation has identified standards that help Lutheran schools meet the standard of high quality instruction. (Section 5B: Administrator, 5B:13, 5B:16; Section 6: Professional Personnel, 6:02, 6:03, 6:08, 6:10, 6:19, 6:20, 6:21; Section 8: Instruction, 8:01, 8:02, 8:03, 8:05, 8:06, 8:07, and 8:08).

**Standard Four: Create a Culture of Adult Learning**

*Effective principals create a culture of continuous learning for adults tied to student learning and other school goals.*

Lutheran school principals encourage, and in many cases provide support for teachers getting advanced degrees, attending conferences and workshops, and staying current in their subject area (NLSA standards: Section 5B: Administrator, 5B:06, 5B:14; Section 6: Professional Personnel, 6:02, 6:11, 6:13, 6:14, 6:21).
What would it look like if principals were successfully providing the culture and climate for continued adult learning and development in the school? We would see principals who:

• Provide time for reflection as an important part of improving practice.
• Invest in teacher learning.
• Connect professional development to school learning goals.
• Provide opportunities for teachers to work, plan and think together.

Recognize the need to continually improve principals' own professional practice (NAESP, p. 42).

Lutheran school principals realize that the Lutheran school is only as good and effective as its least effective teacher. Christ Community Lutheran School in St. Louis, Missouri (Cooksey, personal conversation), is an example of a Lutheran school that provided time and environment in which they could plan together, discuss the learning process, and better meet the needs of their students.

**Standard Five: Use Multiple Sources of Data as Diagnostic Tools**

Effective principals use multiple sources of data as diagnostic tools to assess, identify and apply instructional improvement. Principals in Lutheran schools understand the importance of measuring the success of a student's performance and the school's plan for learning. Achievement tests, IQ tests, subject mastery, student portfolios, daily work, interviews, teacher observation, norm-referenced and standards based tests are some of the diagnostic tools that are used in Lutheran schools to measure student learning and teacher instruction. (NLSA standards: Section 5B: Administrator, 5B13, 5B14; Section 8: Instruction, 8:05, 8:07, 8:08; Section 10: Student Services, 10A:03, 10A:06, 10A:07).

What would it look like if principals were using data as a tool for decision-making? We'd see principals who:

• Consider a variety of data sources to measure performance.
• Analyze data using a variety of strategies.
• Use data as tools to identify barriers to success, design strategies for improvement and plan daily instruction.
• Benchmark successful schools with similar demographics to identify strategies for improving student achievement.

• Create a school environment that is comfortable using data (NAESP, p. 56).

Portfolios are being used more and more today in Lutheran schools. They measure a student's progress over time with samples of their work and achievements. A portfolio can provide a more complete picture of a student and their accomplishments than a standardized test score.

**Standard Six: Actively Engage the Community**

*Effective principals actively engage the community to create shared responsibility for student and schools success.* The Lutheran school community is made up of a number of components: the parents; the students; the faculty and staff; the congregation; and the community surrounding the school. The Lutheran school principal knows that it is important to cultivate support for the school from all components of the community. The Lutheran school principal knows that financial, technological, and various other resources come from the community.

It is important for the Lutheran school principal to promote goodwill in the community and constantly share the vision for the school (NLSA standards: Section 2: School and Congregation, 2:03, 2:04; Section 3: School and Community, 3:01, 3:06, 3:07, 3:08, 3:11).

What would it look like if a school were effectively engaging families and community? We'd see principals who:

• Engage the community to build greater ownership for the work of the school
• Share leadership and decision-making
• Encourage parents to become meaningfully involved in the school and in their own children's learning
• Ensure that students and families are connected to the health, human and social services they need to stay focused on learning (NAESP, p. 68).

As one can see from the description of the six standards identified by the National Association for Elementary School Principals, the task of leading a Lutheran learning community is an awesome task. The Standards for Lutheran Schools (NLSA) provides a framework for quality in the Lutheran school. If used by the Lutheran school principal, NLSA coupled with the six standards identified by NAESP, can enable the Lutheran school to be a quality Christian environment that develops
disciples who reach their maximum potential.

The final chapter of the book "Leading Learning Communities: Standards for What Principals Should Know and Be Able To Do" is entitled "A Call to Action" (p. 79).

In this chapter ten ways are identified to support school leaders:

1. Build principals’ capacity to provide instructional leadership
2. Provide support, funds and flexibility for alternative leadership arrangements
3. Improve working conditions
4. Improve salaries and pay structures
5. Assess principals fairly
6. Demand greater accountability with established frameworks
7. Recognize and reward principals through a national certification process
8. Build learning opportunities and networks of principals
9. Rethink principal preparation programs
10. Develop federal policies that strengthen principals’ ability to serve all students

The “Call To Action” is best addressed by Lutheran school boards and congregations (Numbers 2-6). A good resource for school board is “The School Board Manual.” Lutheran Education Association through the Principal’s Academies, the administrators network and “The National Distinguished Lutheran Principal”, is also addressing it. The office of School Ministry of The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod has developed leadership-training programs for principals and future principals.

The Lutheran school principal also has the promise of God: “I can do everything through Him who gives me strength.” Philippians 4:13 (NIV).—LEJ

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Resources

Association For Supervision And Curriculum Development. 1703 North Beauregard St., Alexandria, VA. www.ascd.org.


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The Varieties of Luther:
A Review of Three Recently Released Biographies
Of the Reformer
Kurt Stadtwald


I have often wondered if it is even possible for a historian to write what might be called the definitive biography of Martin Luther. My skepticism is not so much born of the common problems of dealing with the dead; namely, how one can compress the thoughts and actions of an important and prolific figure into just a few pages, how one can reconstruct a distant past without inventing a merely plausible fantasy, how one can make readers understand and feel the pressure of past events that are totally foreign to them, and the like. What concerns me more is that Luther continues to be a figure who elicits as much multilateral censure as partisan praise—not just from Reformation-era historians, but also from the contemporary clergy of at least two faiths and historians of the twentieth century. There are of course generations of catechumens who having been dulled by their instruction would rather not deal with him ever again. Therefore, what consensus can any historian hope to achieve? While none of the three biographies this review will consider achieve consensus or the coveted rank of a new standard biography, readers have new and readable short biographies that will inform them as to why Luther is such a polarizing figure. Two of the three also suggest intelligent ways for contemporary readers to understand a figure who is not modern, and therefore who acted and wrote in ways that for us, who are so far removed in time and circumstances from him, are profoundly enigmatic and bizarre, if not plainly disturbing.

Martin Marty’s Luther

The release of Frederick Nohl’s and James Nestingen’s biographies were obviously timed to coincide with the release of the motion picture Luther as both are illustrated with scenes from it. Martin Marty’s biography was not similarly timed, but is a new addition to the Penguin Lives series, a collection of biographies by prominent historians for the
generally interested. The series is of an array of figures including Crazy Horse, Andy Warhol, Marlon Brando, St. Augustine, the Buddha and Mao Zedong. Marty, himself like Luther being a celebrity among scholars, succeeds in one important respect: his aim in making Luther accessible to a secular audience was not achieved at the price of making Luther a paled pastiche of a saint in the history of world spirituality. He definitely situated Luther's spiritual struggles, his faith and his theological contributions in terms that require his exposition of the relevant points of Christian doctrine, church history and the Bible. Marty also leaves it to the readers to do some digging of their own. For example, no reader can understand Luther in Marty's view without knowing the Genesis account of Jacob wrestling “a man” at the ford of the Jabbok (Genesis 32). According to Marty, Luther saw himself in this episode and interpreted his travails and triumphs as a life-long struggle to receive the blessing, or as a striving and holding fast to Christ in the face of doubt and fear in order to receive life.

Everything in the wrestling match depended on faith, Luther added, "for this is the highest sacrifice, not to cease praying and seeking until we conquer [God]. He has already surrendered Himself to us that we may be certain of victory, for He has bound Himself to His promises and pledges his faithfulness with an oath" (Marty, 27).

In this way Luther found the certainty that he sought from the time he entered the Augustinian priory and which had eluded him until around 1518, the date Marty assigned to his “Tower Experience”—the moment which he remembered much later in life as the one when salvation through faith crystallized in his theology.

The use of Jacob as the perpetual striver with God allows Marty to see the continuities in Luther's entire life, continuities that other historians have not been so successful in demonstrating. It is a definite problem for biographers to reconcile the career of Luther before and after 1525. What one often finds in the younger Luther is the religious revolutionary who found personal peace in a new conception of Christianity, defended it against the principalities of the Catholic Church and the powers of the state, and made it the basis of a message that rallied millions to it. The older Luther is nearly a completely different man: an irascible polemicist and the founder of a new conservative regime of revered gentlemen and princes. What Marty's biography helps a reader to see is that Luther did not ever reach a final spiritual peace, but had to continually wrestle with himself and his enemies all his life. What often
triggered doubts anew was a question into his personal certainty and his public role as God’s instrument of reformation, if not as a latter-day prophet. It came in the form of a question from the mouths of his interlocutors throughout his life: “Do you think you are cleverer, wiser, more learned and holier than so many church councils and holy fathers—than so many men of great learning throughout the whole world, who also honestly confess themselves to be Christians” (Marty, 150)?

Indeed the episodes of religious torment continued to be severe in his later life and are detailed better in Nestingen’s biography. Moreover Luther was never so far above his contemporary situation, its pressures, limitations and possibilities that he was free to shape as he chose. In fact his wrestling from the time of his rise to celebrity status from the Indulgence Controversy, launched in 1517 by the publication of the 95 Theses, shaped his theology. Therefore, Luther pre- and post- 1525 is not a parable set of Siamese twins—one good and one much less so—but the same paradoxical personality throughout his adult life.

Therefore, Luther pre- and post-1525 is not a parable set of Siamese twins...but the same paradoxical personality throughout his adult life.

This is not to say that Marty’s Luther is the same as the motion picture Luther who is essentially unchanged from the first shot to the last. What changes with Luther is, first of all, his participation in events that became increasingly political. Luther was a great theologian and evidently gifted as a teacher and preacher. He was, however, out of his depth as a political thinker, and increasingly subject to politicians and political pressure. Luther’s original stance toward political authority is one of indifference. He was interested in higher matters, and certainly did not wish to reform the secular world according to a gospel blueprint. That is why he rejected the Revolution of the Common Man, also known as the Peasants’ War of 1524-26, as embodied in the movement’s manifesto for a godly regime called The Twelve Articles. Yet it was in his rejection that he sided completely with the princes in the bloody repression of the movement that according to Marty cost 100,000 lives, and abruptly ended rural enthusiasm for Lutheranism. Luther’s drift toward accepting more and more political authority in his church was also the result of his sanction of the Schmalkaldic League—a 1531 military
alliance of Lutheran princes. Therefore, at the end of his life Luther condoned with no more than a wink the public and illegal bigamy of Landgrave Philip of Hesse, an important Schmalkaldic League chieftain, and penned war propaganda of a visceral sort, Against the Roman Papacy, an Institution of the Devil, for the league in 1546—the last thing he prepared for publication.

A second important change in Luther is keen disappointment about the course of the Reformation that he felt as his having lived longer than he should have, or a sickness of the heart. One is tempted to think that just as Jacob was wounded in his all night wrestling with the divine man, Luther's career-long wrestling left him dislocated in spirit. It manifested itself in a rising angry impatience. For example, he once walked out on his congregation, which did not sing as enthusiastically as he felt they should have. He threatened to leave Wittenberg because he could see no improvement in the public morals of the citizens after years of having preached the pure gospel to them. It was a threat apparently taken so seriously that the city dispatched an official delegation to talk him out of it. But Marty used Luther's changed attitude toward Jews as the best example of his loss of heart. Luther's scope and legacy of anti-Semitism is a subject in itself. Suffice it for this review to note that Luther's more tolerant view of the Jews in That Christ was Born a Jew, 1523 evaporated by the time he wrote The Jews and Their Lies, 1543. Marty viewed this latter tract as similar in tone with his later tracts vilifying the Turks and the Papacy. He believes that Luther's hatred of them was predicated on their refusal to accept the centrality of Christ in the Bible, His role as Messiah, and so their “committing the ultimate blasphemy” (Marty, 172); and that Luther was expressing views similar to other important contemporaries, including his foes such as Erasmus and Johannes Eck. In observing these things about Luther's anti-Semitism, Marty does not want to minimize them. While Marty's biography expresses unmistakable admiration for Luther the Jacob-like wrestler, for Marty, Luther's actions during the Peasant's War and his hate-filled final tract against the Jews are flaws “gross, obvious, and, in the latter case, even revolting” (Marty, xi).

Frederick Nohl's Luther

Frederick Nohl's little volume is certainly handsome and approachable. Its lavish color illustrations (still shots from the motion picture), its glossy paper, and its manuscript-like decorations are a welcome relief from the forbidding black and white sheaves of the academic press. As a

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biography, it definitely disappoints for the following reasons. First, the biography is not recent, but a reprint now some 42 years old. The reader is therefore losing out on a generation of new research on Luther. Second, the 1962 title more truthfully conveys the substance of the treatment: Martin Luther: Hero of the Faith. Hero-worship is a bad business for a historian, if for no other reason than that by erecting a figure on a pedestal, the hero becomes as bloodless as bronze. Third, what Nohl has to do to Luther to make him the hero is to perform the radical Siamese-twin separating surgery. There is no doubt that the young Luther is the more appealing and dynamic, and it is on this part of his career that Nohl concentrated. In a biography of 219 pages, 143 pages are devoted to his career before 1525—the moment at which the Reformation in Germany turned violent and the divisions in the Protestant movement exceeded Luther’s ability to manage. Of the remaining pages devoted to the last 22 years of Luther’s life, sixteen of them are devoted to his family life and ten pages to his death. Such weighty matters as his church-building activities, his dealing with other reformers, and the on-going troubles with the Catholic Emperor Charles V take up only 34 pages. Luther’s spiritual struggles in these years are summarized on a single page under the subtitle “Ups—and Downs” (Nohl, 168) and nowhere did Nohl mention that he wrote anything remotely controversial. In short, the old Luther does not survive the separation surgery. Finally and most unnecessarily is Nohl’s one-sided characterization of Luther’s opponents. Nohl does not grant the possibility that anyone could have intelligently, with a clear conscience and in good faith disagreed with Luther.

James Nestingen’s Luther

James Nestingen’s biography is the only one of the three that seeks to put Luther in the context of his life as a busy academic theologian, preacher, and advisor to princes—all public vocations. From this perspective the reader gains some important insights. First, Luther’s theological efforts were immanently practical. Certainly his most profound insights were personal in nature, but when they came about and how he articulated them was always connected to what he had to do at the moment. For example, Nestingen placed Luther’s breakthrough experience rather early in 1516 (before Luther touched off the Indulgence Controversy). It resulted from his reading or re-reading the Psalms, Romans, Galatians and Hebrews—books he had to read because he had to lecture on them. He posted the 95 Theses in 1517 because Tetzel...
happened to be in the neighborhood. Similarly, the classical statements of Lutheran faith came out of the needs of the moment. He translated the New Testament in 1522 because the moment of rupture with the Latin-Roman church arrived, and because he had the enforced leisure in which to work. He wrote *The Small Catechism* in response to a disappointing 1526 audit of the beliefs of Lutheran congregations, and the *Schmalkaldic Articles* in 1536-7 came about because the alliance protecting him and his church needed it and because his prince gave him the assignment. One can multiply the examples, but from the ones given one can clearly understand why Luther did certain things at certain times, and why Luther was never as systematic as other Protestants.

Nestingen's wider angle of vision allows the reader to see Luther interact with his contemporaries; especially academic colleagues and adversaries, in a way the other two do not. Particularly noteworthy is the humanist Philip Melanchthon, Luther's collaborator, friend and successor as Lutheranism's most influential public figure. Melanchthon's reputation in some Lutheran circles is poor, as some see him as all too willing to compromise bedrock Lutheran doctrine—especially on the inefficacy of the will in the dogma of salvation—for the sake of ecumenical amity. Particularly repellent are Melanchthon's alternations of the *Augsburg Confession*, a document Melanchthon first wrote for the Diet of Augsburg in 1531 as a statement emphasizing the continuities of Lutheranism with Catholic Christianity, and his acceptance of a burdensome peace settlement, called the Augsburg Interim, upon Emperor Charles V's defeat of the Lutheran alliance in the First Schmalkaldic War. Nestingen helps in understanding that Melanchthon could never have been Luther's twin. He was many things Luther was not: "an academic thoroughbred, pastorally concerned but never ordained, a Greek and Latin professor." He was "close, careful, and more reserved than Luther." As academic colleagues "Luther and Melanchthon formed a close and intriguing friendship, learning from one another, agreeing at the center even as they eventually came to some substantial differences" (Nestigen, 33). As colleagues they also annoyed each other, in Melanchthon's case to the point of incapacitating illness when Luther's consent to Philip of Hesse's bigamy leaked out. By bringing Melanchthon and others into the picture, Nestingen shows that Luther was never a solitary figure who put the Reformation in motion. He was a public person who acted in an academic context and in concert with—and in reaction against—men possessing complementary skills and temperaments.
Even in his family life Luther was a remarkably public figure, and it is Nestingen's biography that sketched it best. Such an open view of private life is unusual for the age and the result of Luther's celebrity status, the fact that he lived in a house that doubled as a hostel—his former Augustinian cloister—and because he married a capable woman, Katherine von Bora. The story of their marriage is well known, as is the dynamics of their relationship recorded in Luther's letters and in the Table Talks. Clearly both were aware that they were on display as models of evangelical marriage. Also clear is that Katherine was quite able to cope with her complicated husband and his growing list of serious illnesses. What Nestingen highlights is her business skills, which garnered her personal wealth in 1546 valued at “more than a half-million dollars in today’s currency” (Nestigen, 67). Unfortunately she did not enjoy a comfortable retirement, but lost everything in the First Schmalkaldic War and died of an injury sustained while fleeing approaching troops in 1551.

Finally, Nestingen is a historian much impressed by Luther’s end of the world expectations and how they grew at the end of his life—at the same time his health dramatically declined. The lack of Protestant unity, the hardness of hearts to the restored gospel among those to whom it had been preached for decades, the growing menace of armed Catholicism, and the life-long military threat the Ottoman Turks posed in southeastern Europe nourished his chronic heart sickness and his conviction of the imminent end of human history. It was this debilitated and gloomy Luther who attacked his opponents and the Jews in vile and violent terms. For Luther all of these were disguises of the Antichrist—the ultimate spiritual foe who would vex the true church before the end—who needed to be unmasked. Now that the fullness of time had been reached, perhaps he did not worry about the future of these writings simply because there was no future to worry about. But Luther obviously hedged his bets on the apocalypse and so does Nestingen. Nestingen, like Marty, devotes some paragraphs to assessing the dimensions and context of Luther’s anti-Semitism in the shadow of its genocidal spawn in the twentieth century. Nestingen recognized it as “one element in the centuries-long negative portrayal of the Jews that influenced their fate in Europe.”

Recommendations

While all three biographies of the reformer are meant for the general reader, they are not all equally readable. Nohl’s is the easiest to read. It is also the one that has the least to offer. Nevertheless what I have identified
as shortcomings in it are unlikely to trouble or deter a Lutheran lay reader from enjoying it and learning something more about Luther. Yet it is simply not a good choice for students, if for no other reason than some future teacher will have to backtrack and fill in before being able to proceed. Nestingen’s book is an excellent one, but the most academic in tone and so may put off some. His biography is a very good choice for such settings as a high school religion course or adult education forum. Obviously this reviewer has found much to commend in Marty’s biography. It is the most penetrating, satisfying and balanced view of Luther by an important American scholar. This book is also the one that will require the most concentration. As with just about everything else in life, what is the most rewarding is often not the easiest to attain.—LEJ

Footnotes

1 Apart from the immense body of scholarly studies on segments of Luther’s life and thought in German and English, until recently lay readers have had a choice between two English, in-print biographies of Luther: Roland Bainton’s Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther—originally published in 1950 and still available in a 1994 reprint edition—and James Kittelson’s Luther the Reformer: The Story of the Man and His Career available in a 2003 reprint edition. Both Bainton, the Quaker, and Kittelson, the Lutheran, offer sympathetic views of Luther.

2 The quote is presumably from Luther’s commentary on Genesis delivered in a series of lectures over a decade ending in 1545.

3 Papal envoy Pietro Paolo Vergerio.

4 Marty preferred to use the untranslatable German term Anfechtungen to describe Luther’s profound spiritual struggles.

5 Nestingen, 64, 65, 69.

6 Marty, 163.

7 Nestingen, 104-7.
The answer to the question of why a loving and merciful God allows suffering and frustration is as elusive for principals as it is for Christians in general. Principals find it easy to identify with the suffering of Job; they empathize with Jeremiah when he says, “My heart is crushed, and I am trembling;” the Psalmist’s words, “Out of the depths I cry to You, O Lord,” could just as well be spoken by a 21st century principal as by someone who lived 1000 B.C.

Why must the students be so uncaring toward each other? Why are some of the school parents making it so difficult for me? Why can’t the teachers be more agreeable? Why must our school live on the financial edge? Why can’t the endless stream of paperwork stop? Good questions, but few answers.

It’s often not the major emergencies that drag principals down, but rather the daily, unceasing grind that becomes overwhelming. The demands of the job and the lack of appreciation felt by principals can be devastating.

It’s been suggested that suffering strengthens us. While there is truth to that, it offers little consolation when a crisis attacks. Well-intentioned words of colleagues such as “Everything happens for a reason” offer little consolation. They sometimes make matters worse, leading us to believe that God is to blame for our misfortune.

The discouragements of the principal seem to revolve around the realization that we can never do all that we had hoped to do. Our schools are seldom what we had envisioned them to be. They too seldom hum with the sounds of unadulterated pure learning. Our faculty and board meetings too seldom reflect the joy of having the Spirit working within us. Our students too seldom work up to their potential. Our boilers and copying machines too often break down.

Each day grants us too little time to work on all the problems that have accrued. And we, the principals in charge of all the things that go together to make a
school, are unable to run the whole school as we had dreamed we could. Our humanity is all too obvious. Our disillusionment centers around our inabilities to be what we had once envisioned for ourselves.

Yet, good does come from suffering, setbacks, and frustration. William Matthews put it this way, "Brightness needs darkness. Too much of either isn’t human. Life is poignant, happiness momentary – I wouldn’t have it any other way. God doesn’t cause darkness to make us grateful for light. Faith in God and human solidarity grow from both suffering and joy. The searching Christian weighs human experiences and struggles to hear what God is saying in each. Others help translate this language – especially in times of anguish, that is what we are here for." (Matthews, 2004, p. 6)

It’s the discouragements of life that allow us to better appreciate the joys. As more than one high school football coach has barked to his sweat-laden players during their grueling pre-season practices, “You have to eat crow before you can eat chicken.” Elbert Hubbard once said, “If you suffer, thank God. It is a sure sign that your are alive.”

Yet, it soon becomes obvious that suffering is easier to accept in theory than in practice. The benefits that come about as a result of suffering are often difficult to recognize.

The job of a principal is to serve. While this mission is the source of problems, it is also the solution. It’s through immersing ourselves in helping others that we draw closer to our own ideal. The therapeutic value of serving others is obvious. In helping, we are helped.

The joys of being a principal don’t often come to us in large doses. They don’t appear in front of us like billboards. Instead, they come in the subtleties of life within the school – the humorous response of a kindergartner, the words of a grateful parent, the smile of a teacher, the respite of a summer vacation.

In the end, God tells us what He told Job. He reminds us that He’s in charge. Like Job, we weren’t there when God created the universe. We don’t know the answers. Our role is simply to live out a life of service to Him through our efforts on behalf of others. As Matthews succinctly puts it, “Let’s stop trying to figure out why and live, as best we can, for.” (Matthews, 2004, p. 7)

Beyond the aggravations, failures, and misery that seem to define us as principals and as humans is a God smiling down on us, forgiving us, and promising His presence. We are reminded of the Psalmist’s assurance, “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.”—LEJ

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References
After coming off of a Rousing and Robust LEA Convocation in Indianapolis in April, over 4,400 educators Re-turned home to continue living out the theme of “Re-deemed, Re-vived, and Re-ady.” All I can say to that is that people were “Re-ally Re-activated” for ministry.

But being a Re-surrection Re-source is much more than attending conferences and getting all charged up and eager to serve. Being a Re-surrection Re-source means that we live out each day as a person of God – Re-deemed, forgiven, and loved by a Savior Who lived, suffered, died and rose again for each of us. And no one will ever take that away from us. We are Re-surrection Re-sources for life ... and beyond.

This fact is so crucial in the lives of all people, especially those of us who teach and serve others professionally. As educators, we need to know and understand our subject matter of “reading, writing, and rithmetic”, but what matters more is knowing the other “R”s of ministry. Our Baptism assures us that these other gifts are given to us by a loving Lord who enables us to share them with those around us. With apologies to the Toys R-Us® chain, here is a list for the “Re-surrection Re-sources R-Us” people:

1. Re-Joice ... “Re-joice in the Lord always”, Paul proclaims. This means that all of our joy in life comes from the Lord! We are Re-deemed, remember. That’s something to be joy-filled about, don’t you think? Hooray for the Lord of life! “... and again I say Re-joice! “(Philippians 4:4)

2. Re-Fresh ... Our bodies and minds need Re-st, sound sleep, a healthy diet. Our routines need to be broken at times so we are able to look at life in new ways. Our habits need to be challenged and Re-viewed. What is it that Re-freshes you? Go ahead right now, and be Re-freshed.

3. RE-New ... Make contact with old acquaintances through e-mail and phone calls. Re-new good habits
of health and hope, like walking and other exercising. Re-new your spirit by Re-ad-ing a new book that you do not need to Re-ad ...do it just because you want to. Re-New your faith - life by Re-member-ing your Baptism each day.

4. Re-Cycle ... Be a good steward of what the Lord has given you. Celebrate the creation by limiting your use of natural Re-sources like water and paper products. Re-cycle books and newspapers, and even ideas and Re-lationships. Be creative.

5. RE-View ... How are you doing in life? Ask for helpful feedback from those who know you. Evaluate your own feelings and accomplishments about your last class, or the study you led yesterday, or the worship you organized, or the meal you cooked for friends. It is helpful to Re-view all of our past lumps and bumps in life...and in so doing, be affirmed in Christ that we are forgiven ...always ...in the Lord.

6. RE-Late ... Tell and listen closely to those around you. Try not to practice “selective hearing” too often. Tell others of your feelings towards life and ministry and worship and the Church. And maybe we should even try to listen twice as much as we talk ...we have two ears and one mouth for some Re-ason.

7. RE-Store ... Re-call Psalm 51:10 often: “... Re-store unto me a clean heart, O God, and Re-new a right spirit within me”. And as the Lord Re-stores our faith and hope, help others to Re-store their faith and hope and confidence through affirming words, kind actions, and mutual modeling of the faith.

8. RE-Vive ... We all run out of breath. We get tired. We are caregivers and often we do not get enough care in Re-turn. And so we get pooped. Be prepared and Re-ady to be Re-vived through Word and Sacrament and the daily support of God’s people around us. We are unable to Re-vive ourselves, but the Lord does the Re-viving through His actions in us...so that we can be instruments of His to Re-vive others. Talk about a real Re-vival ...Wow!

9. RE-Focus ... Re-surrection Re-sources need to Re-focus regularly. We do so as the Spirit works in and through us by focusing us on the Cross and the Re-surrection. Be like the little 5 year old who walked into a worship service, looked up and exclaimed, “Wow, what a large cross ... and Jesus isn’t on it.” Our lives are Re-focused continually as we Re-alize through faith that we have a living Lord.
who died for us and who now lives in us.

10. Re-Member ... What a great word for Re-surrection Re-sources. We are Re-membered in the faith. We are Re-membered constantly with the saints who have gone before us to Heaven - our grandparents, pastors, principals, parents, special friends. We Re-member when we Re-alize that we need each other. We Re-member who we are by Re-membering Whose we are.

Re-surrection Re-sources, you and me, go around Easterizing people. I'm not sure Easterizing is a word ...but it is now.

And so Re-Joice and Re-Fresh and Re-New and Re-Cycle and Re-View and Re-Late and Re-Store and Re-Vive and Re-Focus and Re-Member ... and even Re-Call other “R” words ... as we all go about Easterizing in the Lord.--LEJ
Among the titles I now carry as the new President of Concordia University—Chief Executive Officer of the Board, Chief Operating Officer, Spiritual Head, et al—I treasure none so greatly as Publisher of Lutheran Education Journal. This publication has a long and distinguished history and continues to serve as an important resource for church educators. I hope that readers will continue to be informed, challenged, and inspired by its content.

The Journal also testifies to the continuing importance the university, and I personally, place on the preparation and nurturing of educators. To be sure, the Lutheran tradition employs the word, "vocation," in a broader sense than professional church work vocations. Vocation embraces the entire range of relationships in which human beings stand in relation to one another in this world. God places every Christian in a vocation or "calling." And it is this understanding that prompts Concordia University to equip our students for a variety of stations in life. That is part of the university's own vocation.

The wider sense of vocation does not mean that less emphasis will be placed on the quality of our professional church work programs, in fact, quite the opposite. If the key to vocation is service to God and neighbor, the dimension of service sees its highest fulfillment in the ministries of the Church in the name of the crucified and risen Lord.

I am grateful for the opportunity to lead Concordia University and to serve you through the pages of Lutheran Education Journal.—LEJ