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Process vs. Context

For the past several years, as I served in the capacity of Associate Editor of this journal, my colleague and now Co-Editor, Jon Barz, identified my departmental affiliation on the masthead as Educational Foundations. The truth must now be told. There is no Department of Educational Foundations within the organizational structure of our institution: The story behind Jon’s creation of this fiction is not pertinent here. However, as we begin our two-year stint as teammates, he needs to know how deeply I appreciated my departmental identity being associated with the Foundations of Education rather than with Educational Leadership or Teacher Education and our readers need to know why I cling so tenaciously to this distinction.

My advanced schooling was in educational foundations. My current specialty fields and interests are in the history of education, professional ethics, and school law—each related to the broadly conceived field of foundations of education. So that the reader may gain insight into what drives my thinking about education and also what subsequently develops as my agenda in writing this commentary, allow me to quote at length from the standards of the learned society with which I am affiliated. Educational foundations as a field of study derives its character and methods from such different disciplinary perspectives as history, philosophy, sociology, and political science, to name but several. One aim of foundational studies is “to describe accurately the connection between the internal organization of schools and their socializing mission.” There is, however, much more to the field. “Foundations also refer to a tradition of academic inquiry that seeks to expose and make explicit the relationship between educational methods and values. Foundational inquiry compares words and deeds and intentions to consequences. In so doing, it helps judge whether an action is warranted, that is whether it is supported by reason and evidence. A foundational approach to the study of education assesses the logical connections between the educational goals we select and the means we employ to achieve them.”

Educational foundations, consequently, “contains a prescriptive as well as a descriptive dimension: to consider in tandem what schools are doing and what they ought to be doing. Such study focuses on the ways schools carry out their mission of preparing individuals to occupy productive roles in our society. A common theme is discernment of educational aims that are
implied in current school practices as well as in recommendations for modifying such practices. Foundational study serves to gradually deepen the ability of prospective and veteran teachers to answer the overarching question: Why do American schools operate the way they do?" (Standards for academic and professional instruction, 1996, p. 8)

My great concern is that the role of educational foundations in undergraduate teacher education and in graduate level education programs (including those of our synod), especially relating to the teaching of the history and philosophy of education, is increasingly falling prey to concerns that substitute the primacy of "process." By "process," I mean teaching how to think without learning anything worth thinking about; it's the belief that we can teach how to understand schooling without conveying the events and ideas that have brought it into existence.

Process without context lacks a sense of time. Certain components of teacher education programs based on process or methodology, while necessary, often have been exaggerated, sometimes to the point of trivializing the educational endeavor.

Courses in the history and philosophy of education labor to contribute to the collective memory of teachers. Along with their other responsibilities in teacher education programs, history and philosophy of education courses perform at least three essential functions. One, they exercise a descriptive function that tells us what happened and what is happening in education from a cultural perspective. They create intelligible narratives that describe, explain, and examine our past and present educational contexts. Two, they exercise an analytical function that examines the meaning of educational issues, policies, and situations. Three, they are commentators that blend narratives and analysis to create meaningful and integrative interpretations of our past and present educational contexts.

In teacher education programs, the history and philosophy of education are courses well designed to reconcile the issues of context and process. Scholarship and teaching that examine the history of educational ideas, in particular, are well designed to reconcile description and analysis into contextual commentary. Courses in the cultural foundations of education can and do transmit the educational heritage and restore our collective memory.

What does all this have to do with the Lutheran teacher? The history and philosophy of Lutheran education offers insight and perspective for those in the teaching ministry. Just as the study of American history and ideals can contribute to the loyalty and appreciation a citizen of our country may have, so the knowledge of Lutheran educational history and philosophy can build loyalty and commitment to the teaching ministry.

To be sure, Lutheran educators should avoid anchoring themselves securely in the safety of completed events. However, many of the problems of Lutheran education have grown out of the past and are intimately connected with it. (Two such issues, funding and governance, will be treated at length in a forthcoming issue.
of Lutheran Education.) In order to understand contemporary issues in Lutheran schooling, Lutheran teachers must be aware of how they developed.

Interpreting our educational past is never finished because our interpretation affects our sense of self and our power to influence the course of future events. Lutheran teachers must think in terms of the future in order to prepare those they serve to cope with whatever events and issues may develop to affect them. To do so, those preparing for and already in the Lutheran teaching ministry need to understand the history of Lutheran educational ideas and develop a collective educational memory. Having done so, they will better appreciate the distinctively Lutheran contribution to the transmission of the larger cultural heritage and will be better able to examine and reassess Lutheran educational and cultural traditions as a guide for making judgments about the future.

In a very real sense whoever controls the interpretation of the past—the beliefs about Lutheran education’s origins—gains an immense power in interpreting the present and perhaps shaping the future. Without knowledge of our educational heritage and its meaning, Lutheran teachers are disempowered.

Finally, the study of Lutheran educational history and philosophy may serve to recall past techniques and concepts with which those who have previously served in the teaching ministry have had success or failure. Much of what is regarded as new or innovative in education has a long historical record. Lutheran education should not overlook these experiments, for they can supply valuable information on proposed educational change. Simply put, without knowledge of the past, Lutheran teachers may find themselves “reinventing the wheel.” Given the ever-shrinking availability of financial resources, this would not be good stewardship.

Knowledge of the historical and philosophical influences on Lutheran education may empower the Lutheran teacher in understanding the present and building the future. Substituting process without that context will not.

Reference

The “learning explosion” (Marsello, 2001) is occurring: it seems that people want to learn about everything, including spiritual matters. In recent years we have witnessed widespread interest in religion. Many people are searching for something or someone to give life meaning and purpose, for something unchanging in the midst of rapid change, for a still center in the whirling world about them. The church knows the treasure that is being sought and needs to find better ways to teach about God, more effective methods for introducing Jesus to those who want to learn of him, and improved means of bringing the Protector and Comforter into the “public square.”

Even those of us who are well acquainted with the Gospel desire to continue learning so that we may grow in knowledge of God and develop stronger faith in the One who controls the world, even when it seems like no one is in charge. Church members and non-church members are seeking knowledge on their own initiative. Some of these lifelong learners are
Lutheran adults, and not only adults, chronologically speaking, but persons of all ages who may be considered adults by virtue of having chosen to pursue their learning interests. Adult educators in the parish are the ministers to whom these would-be learners turn for guidance.

Before proceeding further with how Lutheran educators may approach adult learning, it is appropriate to revisit the first question of adult education, namely, “who is an adult?” Adult educators have long held that the key to defining adulthood is related to voluntary participation in a learning activity and taking responsibility for one’s own learning, or self-direction. Today’s youth, middle-agers, and older adults are choosing to participate in classes, workshops, Internet courses, and a whole variety of learning opportunities. Being motivated by a topic that grabs their attention or by an activity they believe will help them meet a personal goal, they are assuming responsibility for their own learning. Such self-directed learning is the most effective learning.

What follows is a perspective on how adult education theory can be useful for educators in the Lutheran, Christian congregation, agency, or school. Lutherans are always teaching and learning (through adult Bible class, catechesis for youth, new member classes, women’s and men’s groups, retreats, staff development, and the like) with a focus on continuing our professional, personal, and spiritual education. To state the obvious, we want these learning activities to be effective, to actually meet the cognitive and affective objectives set for them. The assumptions and processes set forth by Malcolm Knowles (1978), often called “the father of andragogy,” can provide a foundation for designing and implementing creative, effective, and stimulating learning activities in which “adults” of all ages will choose to participate.

**Andragogical and Pedagogical Models of Learning**

**Assumptions**

Andragogy is a term given to a methodology for teaching adults, as different from, not opposed to, pedagogy, a methodology specifically suited for children. The latter tends to be teacher-directed and the former more self-directed. Pedagogy assumes that the learner

1. is a dependent personality,
2. has limited experience which should be expanded,
3. is ready to learn based on age level,
4. is oriented to learning a particular subject matter, and
5. is motivated by external rewards and punishment.
The assumptions of andragogy are that the learner
1. is increasingly moving toward self-direction;
2. has a rich experiential basis for learning which serves as a resource for self and others;
3. wants to learn that which will help in the performance of life tasks and in solving problems; and
4. is motivated by internal incentives and curiosity.

Certain characteristics of adult learners are reflected in the andragogical assumptions stated above. Generally, adult learners seek out learning activities that will help them cope with specific life-changing events, and they bring a great deal of life experience to the classroom or place of learning.

Process Elements—Climate, Planning, Diagnosis of Needs, Setting Objectives, Learning Activities, and Evaluation

The processes of pedagogy and andragogy also differ. Pedagogy, at its worst, tends to create a learning climate that is tense, formal, authoritarian, competitive and judgmental. On the other hand, andragogy, at its best, seeks to provide a relaxed, trusting, mutually respectful, informal, warm, collaborative and supportive learning environment. Here it is clear that the andragogical approach is being adopted as educators increasingly realize that it is more conducive to learning by persons of all ages.

In the pedagogical model, planning for learning is done primarily by the teacher and reflects the teacher’s content preferences for the learner. Sequencing of learning content is logical and the courses syllabus is organized accordingly. The teacher diagnoses learning needs and the teacher sets objectives, again, to meet those identified needs. Andragogy calls for learners and facilitator to mutually assess needs and negotiate objectives for designing learning contracts or projects that are sequenced according to the learner’s readiness.

Pedagogy and andragogy also differ in their traditional approach to learning activities and evaluation. The former tends to use techniques that transmit knowledge, i.e., lecture, assigned readings, and expository teaching. It follows that
evaluation would be norm-referenced by the teacher for the purpose of assigning grades. Andragogy depends on inquiry projects, independent study, and experiential learning techniques to facilitate learning. Evaluation entails collection of evidence by learner and validation by peers and facilitator; it is criterion referenced and performance based. A good example of this type of evaluation is the portfolio, a technique now required in teacher education programs for accreditation by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education.

Related assumptions and processes (Knowles, 1978), which flow from the above, include the need for programs of adult learning to be designed to

1. accept viewpoints from people in different stages of adult development, thus having varied life task needs and different levels of experience upon which to base one’s views;
2. help learners integrate new ideas with what they already know if they are going to keep and use the new information;
3. protect minority opinion, keep disagreements civil and unhelated, and make connections among opinions and ideas;
4. present a variety of potential solutions to problems;
5. provide a learning environment that is physically comfortable; and
6. allow transition time and focused effort so that new knowledge and skills can be integrated into one’s beliefs and performance.

The two models of learning should not be seen as dichotomies, rather as a continuum of assumptions and processes that need to be evaluated in terms of how applicable they are to the particular learners with whom one is engaged as teacher, mentor, or facilitator of learning. The andragogical model has been criticized for characterizing adults as we expect them to be rather than how adults really are. While the model is flexible, it may be less useful with some groups than with others. It should be used for the strengths it has in helping to set objectives and plan learning activities.

R. E. Wickett, in Models of Adult Religious Education Practice (1991), presents andragogy as a traditional model and criticizes it for having an “instrumental attitude” in that it views developmental tasks and other needs as sufficient for defining the goals and objectives of learning. However, it is the view of this writer that the model can be adapted to fit varying situations. Identified needs are to be used for setting objectives in the early learning activities, but as the learner progresses deeper, additional “real” needs are discovered and the skillful facilitator of learning will help “students” address those needs as they arise. For example, the person who feels an emptiness and knows that he or she has spiritual needs may not
be able to identify the particular learning that would bring healing and comfort. The wise adult education minister provides guidance for that person within a supportive group learning environment and on an individual basis if the learner so desires.

The focus in adult learning should be on creating a learning community in which each individual learns from others and also contributes to their learning. The facilitator is a resource and a guide to content and to additional resources. Viewed broadly, andragogy can serve as a foundation for the learning community. However, adult educators should explore the many group and individual models, then choose that which is most suitable for the learners and the situation at hand. Wickett’s Models of Adult Religious Education Practice is a valuable resource for becoming familiar with religious education models.

What Does this Mean for Lutheran Educators?

How can Lutheran educators use the assumptions and processes of andragogy to meet the learning needs of those who choose to turn to us in their search for growth in knowledge, understanding, and faith? How do we help the members of our congregation who want to live out their Christian vocation in the marketplace? How can the Sunday morning Bible class be made relevant to the lives of congregational members and guests throughout the work week, on the job, at home, in community activities, and the like?

The following are two examples, from the literature and from this writer’s experience, of ways to address the questions above. They are presented here to stimulate your thinking and perhaps provide some ideas that would fit the needs and learning situation of the learners to whom you minister.

Harry J. Van Buren III (1998) has recounted how he helps Christians in business connect what they learn on Sunday with what they do on Monday. Through Christian education in the form of a Sunday morning discussion group of eight to twelve congregational members who are business professionals, he forms a support group to learn about Christian ethics and decision-making. The learners discuss their challenges in the workplace and examine Scripture to find guidance for meeting the challenges of living as a Christian in the corporate world. The curriculum is as follows:

Week 1: What is Christian ethics? How might theology help us understand ethical dilemmas in business?

Week 2: Life inside the corporation and conflicted loyalties

Week 3: The business as an organism: employment, production and honesty issues
Week 4: The business in its social and cultural milieu: pollution and political activities
Week 5: Obligations of multinational businesses
Week 6: Values inherent in capitalism
Week 7: What is the church’s history on the subject of ethics in the workplace?
Week 8: Making the Monday Connection (pp. 455-456)

Van Buren’s curriculum “combines learning about theology and ethics with reflections on experience” (p. 457). He uses Thomas Groome’s (Van Buren, 1998) model of “shared praxis” to teach a process for theologically analyzing ethical issues in business. The shared praxis exercise consists of the following five elements:

1. The participants are invited to name their own activity concerning the topic for attention (present action).
2. They are invited to reflect on why they do what they do and what the likely or intended consequences of their actions are (critical reflection).
3. The educator makes present to the group the Christian community Story concerning the topic at hand and the faith response it invites (Story and its Vision).
4. The participants are invited to appropriate the Story to their own lives in a dialectic with their own stories (dialectic between Story and stories).
5. There is an opportunity to choose a personal faith response for the future (dialectic between Vision and vision). (p. 459)

Groome summarizes shared praxis in Christian education as “a group of Christians sharing in dialogue their critical reflection in light of the Christian story and its vision toward the end of Christian faith” (Van Buren, 1998, p. 457). Van Buren believes that “Sunday school sessions should increasingly resemble shared praxis exercises” (p. 457) and further comments that the model he uses “would work best if the ultimate goal is less to tell participants what the right answers are than to help them learn a process for discovering the right answers on their own—which can (and should) be the goal of shared praxis” (p. 462).

Although Van Buren doesn’t mention andragogy, his model is clearly based on assumptions and processes of the andragogical model. He assumes his learners are moving toward self-direction, that they have a rich experiential base, that they want to learn that which will help them solve problems, and that they are internally motivated. He facilitates their learning in a trusting, informal, warm, mutually respectful, and supportive learning environment. Objectives seem to have been set according to the learning needs of the participants, and members of the class
Adult Education in the Congregation

(business professionals, church professionals, and facilitator) are both learners and resources for learning.

Another example of a Christian education program is developed from my experience as Minister of Adult Education in a small, urban congregation. When asked to assume that position I drew upon the theory I had been taught but had not yet applied in the congregational setting. The first step was to ask what members of the congregation would like to learn and also what knowledge they would be willing to share with others. Questionnaires were distributed and returned, and objectives were set. The current program consists of Sunday Bible Class, Wednesday Bible Study and Prayer Group, and occasional book discussions based on a mutually chosen book which each person reads before coming to the discussion, usually held just after church on Sunday. Topics for study on Sunday and Wednesday are selected by group consensus and all sessions are informal discussions and reading together from Scripture and a study guide. Facilitators change as the need arises. Application of the Scripture to everyday life is the focus of discussion, and that is followed by intercessory prayer led by the facilitator and group participants. Prayer is the first step to living out the Christian message that has just been received.

Adult educators have the exciting job of connecting willing and eager learners with sources of knowledge, wisdom, comfort, faith, strength, competence, and all the host of treasures that come through learning. The “learning explosion” is happening and adult educators are blessed to be a part of this awakening to God and the world created by God.

Concluding Remarks

Learning is a lifelong endeavor and learning to live as God intends us to live—the abundant life—is a daily effort and joy. Adult educators have the exciting job of connecting willing and eager learners with sources of knowledge, wisdom, comfort, faith, strength, competence, and all the host of treasures that come through
learning. The “learning explosion” is happening and adult educators are blessed to be a part of this awakening to God and the world created by God.

References

“Knowledge cannot be judged by itself. Knowledge must be judged by other knowledge, and therein lies the essence of wisdom.”

“If we try to remember how others before us tried to get it right, our own chances are improved.”

Neil Postman, *Building a Bridge to the Eighteenth Century*
The Participation of Adults in Religious Education Experiences

My travels take me to over 30 congregations every year. During those visits I have the opportunity to get a quick peek at the workings of religious educational ministries through the eyes of the called staff and the active laity. After visiting over 200 congregations, I am prepared to make a sweeping generalization (is there any other kind?) regarding adult religious education in The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS) today: it is inadequate. I don't mean to say that there aren't a lot of good things happening in congregational education programs for adults--there are--there just doesn't seem to be an abundance of the good things while there does seem to be a great deal of ambiguity about education of adults.

Perhaps my expectations are too high. What is it that one should expect when assessing levels of participation? Strangely, I have found no data that suggests an "appropriate" level of participation. I suppose defining how many members should be attending religious learning experiences would be a...
little like asking someone to determine how many members should be regular in worship participation—we would hope that 100% of members would avail themselves of this important component of their Christian life. In truth, most LCMS congregations satisfy themselves with less than 50% of their membership worshipping on any given Sunday and less than 20% of their adult membership in any type of formal study opportunity.

Occasionally, I will visit a congregation that involves a great number of adult learners in its educational programs. Usually the congregational leaders will attribute this to one of three factors—an innovative program, a skilled teacher, or a history of strong participation within the church. I am surprised when more than one of these elements is present in the same congregation, although it does happen, however infrequently. Overall, it seems that reliance on one existing factor is sufficient to warrant an above average participation level. Interestingly, many of the congregations that I have visited have one or more of these elements in place and still do not have high levels of participation. The variables that contribute to participation are many and the interplay of other factors may negate the effectiveness of one or more of these factors. In other words, can an innovative program increase participation if there are not skilled teachers to implement the program? Or, are there variables within the community outside of the church (e.g. a high level of two-income families and few available discretionary hours for program implementation) that adversely affect successful program implementation?

We would hope that 100% of members would avail themselves of this important component of their Christian life. In truth, most LCMS congregations satisfy themselves with less than 50% of their membership worshipping on any given Sunday and less than 20% of their adult membership in any type of formal study opportunity.

If your congregation is one of those gifted with one or more of the three factors that seem to contribute to strong participation, should you count yourself as blessed and sit back, confident that your adult educational ministries will continue to
flourish? If you do not have one or more of these factors, or if you do have one or more, but other variables seem to be negatively affecting your participation, do you write the whole situation off as too complicated to calculate a plan of action and continue to try your best and pray for increased participation? There might be something that every congregation can do that could help to increase participation no matter what its present circumstance.

Motivation for Participation

Much has been written in the secular press regarding the participation of adults in learning experiences—some have even called it the most researched aspect of adult continuing education (Pryor, 1990). Much of the research has focused on barriers that inhibit participation. Darkenwald and Valentine (1985) identified six categories of deterrents; two of these categories—the perception of the value of education and the relevance of educational opportunities—are areas, which might be strongly influenced by the actions of a congregation (Blanke, 2000). However, this would still leave the door open to other barriers that the congregation was unable to influence.

Perhaps it might be better to focus on the issue of what motivates learners to participate rather than concentrate energies on reducing the barriers to participation. When addressing motivation, it is important to note that we are centering on the individual while acknowledging that his or her outside environment (including the congregation) greatly influences that participation. This understanding is critical lest we determine that our learners are just "not motivated" and therefore feel we religious educational leaders are powerless to change that individualized condition. Courtney (1992) states that concentrating on the individual alone when assessing participation issues could "mislead us into viewing all actions as a result of individual factors." He continues by indicating that participation in adult education "is as much a social act as it is an individual act. To deny this sociological dimension is to ignore what may well turn out to be the most significant aspect of the problem . . . People conduct themselves in tune with their membership or perceived membership of groups" (pp. 96-97). I contend that the local congregation contributes more significantly to influencing the participation of adult learners than most congregational leaders realize.

What can a congregation do to enhance the motivation of adult members in religious educational experiences? At the outset it needs to be said that the spiritually "mature" believer will likely be more drawn to participation in religious education than the less mature—for a characteristic of spiritual maturity is a desire
to be involved with continued study of God’s Word. We know that regular involvement in a community of believers, hearing God’s Word preached, and participation in the sacraments will enhance faith maturity. I am assuming that these actions are being carried out effectively in congregations, as the subject would prove too broad if this assumption were not made. I will attempt to add insight into how congregational planning, especially relative to educational programming, may prove to influence participation.

It also must be said that participation is not the sole indicator of an educational experience that truly enhances faith maturity. It is quite possible for a congregation to have a high level of participation in educational activities that aim at social or personal issues that have only a distant relationship to faith issues. A good review of components of a congregational religious educational experience that seeks to enhance faith maturity is the 1990 Search Institute Study, *Effective Christian Education*, or the 1995 study done by Search Institute for the LCMS titled *Congregations at Crossroads*.¹

My hypothesis then, would be that congregations could increase participation of adults in educational programs if they were to increase clarity regarding the goals (as they relate to the learner) of the congregations’ educational experiences.

Assuming that within the congregation the Word is being preached and the sacraments administered in a Christocentric manner, that the educational program is competently run in a manner that seeks to enhance the faith maturity of the participants, and that the congregation has one or more of the three participation factors mentioned above in place, *what then can the congregation do to enhance motivation of adult learners to participate in the congregational educational opportunities?*

In 1961, Cyril Houle completed a seminal work in adult education called *The

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¹Editor’s note: For an analysis of the *Congregations at Crossroads* study, see Louis Jander’s “Revisiting *Congregations at Crossroads*” in this issue of *Lutheran Education.*
Inquiring Mind. In it, Houle identified the foundations for much of the motivational research that has followed. His research identified three motivational orientations for the adult learner: the activity-oriented learner, the learning-oriented learner, and the goal-oriented learner. At the risk of over-simplifying Houle’s work, suffice it to say that the activity-oriented learner is motivated to participate because he or she seeks the social interaction or activity that he or she finds in a learning experience; the learning-oriented learner seeks structured learning because he or she holds learning as a priority and finds satisfaction in ongoing participation; and the goal-oriented learner has a particular outcome that he or she hopes to foster through a particular learning experience. My experiences in visiting congregations has led me to believe that the vast majority of congregations seek, through the designing and implementation process of their educational programs, to appeal primarily to activity and learning-oriented learners—those who are drawn to the social nature of Bible studies (particularly the small group experiences)—or those who just feel the need to participate and have demonstrated their dedication to the learning experience through the years that they have been regular attendees of the Sunday morning study.

Unfortunately, Houle’s work, as well as the work of others since Houle (including the United States Department of Education), has found that the majority of those who are motivated to participate in continuing educational experiences operate from a goal-orientation. My hypothesis then, would be that congregations could increase participation of adults in educational programs if they were to increase clarity regarding the goals (as they relate to the learner) of the congregations’ educational experiences.

Goals for Participation

At this point, those of you who are educators are sighing a collective “Duh!” at the simplicity of this hypothesis. Yet, I have asked most of the over 200 congregations I have visited over the years to define the goals of their adult educational program and only one has had written goals that have been shared with adult learners. Granted, when I ask the question “What changes do you hope to see in your adult learners after they participate in three or more years of your adult educational programs” most of the congregational leaders will be able to articulate some sort of hoped-for outcomes, yet only one had clarified these outcomes in writing, and it was also the only congregation to assess the degree to which the learning activities were aiming at these outcomes.

We must identify the specific goals of an education program if we wish to appeal to the goal-oriented adult learner. It is true that we can assume that certain
self-directed adults will identify goals of their own for a particular learning experience, but stronger goal-orientation is not necessarily synonymous with stronger self-directedness. (A study by Morstain and Smart, 1974, suggested that Houle’s goal-oriented learner could be divided into the self-directed individual and the person who pursues a goal based upon external stimuli.) In other words, not every goal-oriented learner is self-directive enough to identify his or her personal goals and relate those directly with the learning opportunities being provided by his or her local congregation. (My belief is that very few learners would be so deliberate.) What, then, can congregational leaders identify as goals related to congregational educational experiences?

We are unable to assess spiritual maturity in the individual unequivocally. God alone can look into the heart and determine if growth has occurred. Only the Holy Spirit can enable this growth in a person. Congregational leaders should be assessing the hoped-for outcomes of a congregation’s religious education program as a whole, and those outcomes should be aiming at equipping the participants to carry out the work of Christ and his church more effectively. Luther saw education as a “crucial instrument in orienting the Christian toward service in the world” (Harran, 1997, p. 270). His focus on preparing the Christian for vocation becomes the key to defining at least one central goal for our educational programs. According to Harran, Luther felt that “education provides both the context in which one comes to know one’s vocation and the tools for becoming proficient in it” (p. 19). How well does the congregation articulate that goal and aim educational programs toward achieving that goal? We assume too much to think that a member will understand these goals upon merely reading in the church bulletin of an upcoming class on Matthew taking place in the parish hall starting next Sunday.

**Learner Orientation**

My research sought to assess congregational climate as well as learner orientations to see if there was a relationship to participation. I felt that a congregational member could rightfully view himself or herself as a “resource” at times or a “recipient” at other times. A “resource” was a person that had a felt need to provide himself or herself as a resource of the congregation, to be used to help carry out the congregational ministry in the church and the world. A “recipient” was a person who saw himself or herself primarily as recipients of a congregation’s goods or services. I posited that there would likely be degrees within the orientation of an individual. Thus, a person could have a stronger recipient orientation than another recipient-oriented individual. Also, the degree of one’s orientation may vary
Participation of Adults in Religious Education

over time based upon personal needs or understanding. The resource-oriented individual likely has a better ownership of Luther’s understanding of vocation—perhaps because of where he or she is in life, perhaps due to hearing the concepts preached from the pulpit, perhaps through what he or she has learned in educational experiences, or maybe from personal experience. The resource-oriented person, I assumed, would be more likely to seek out educational experiences because they were more likely to be seeking the goal of being better equipped for their vocation which an educational experience would likely provide, even one without clear goals. In other words, the resource-oriented learner would likely have the felt need of increasing his or her competence, which would provide a goal that could be associated with learning experiences. They would be more likely, I surmised, to seek out learnings for reasons different from the activity-oriented or learning-oriented of Houlé’s learners. They would be seeking to achieve the goal of stronger competencies.

Were these assumptions borne out? Part of my study involved a quantitative piece. I administered a survey to members of two congregations following a worship experience. The goal was to attempt to assess whether the respondents were resource or recipient-oriented and to gather data regarding their level of participation in educational experiences. I did not receive an adequate percentage of responses from one of the congregations, but did receive completed surveys from over 50% of worship participants at the second congregation. The data showed two items that seemed to support my assumptions. First, there were noticeable differences in how individuals viewed themselves in relation to their role in the church (resource or recipient orientations). Secondly, the data showed that a significant relationship existed between the resource-oriented respondents and those more likely to participate in Sunday morning learning opportunities; between resource-oriented learners and those participating in a weekly study other than Sunday morning; between resource-oriented learners and those likely to participate in personal devotion time; and between resource-orientation and the frequency in which they participated in study opportunities throughout the year. The significance of these relationships was weakest at a .043 probability and averaged out at a .01 probability. In other words, the data suggests a significant probability that a resource-oriented learner participated more in adult learning experiences because of his or her orientation.

The data, despite its significance, does not suggest causality. The next question then, would logically be, did the individual’s orientation come first or was the orientation influenced by increased participation in the learning experiences? I
hesitate to make interpretations (at least not in writing). Without appearing too flippant regarding this important question, I would suggest that, in some regard, it doesn’t really matter. Research over the last 30 years has borne out that most adults seek learning for pragmatic reasons: they have a problem to solve, or they have had an experience or a life transition that triggers a need for a specific learning. They desire to use or apply knowledge or skills. We know that they have the need for immediacy of application of their learnings (Knowles, 1980). Those that felt they had the role of contributing to the ministry of the church (a clear goal) were more likely to participate. We also know that motivational factors are influenced greatly by one’s social setting.

We can say our adults have a resource-orientation, are primarily goal-oriented learners, or are seeking practical application from their learning experiences. No matter what we call it, we know that the research indicates that the majority of our adult learners will be motivated to participate primarily because of a desire to achieve some sort of a goal, usually a relatively short-term goal.

This fact should not cause alarm in planning for adult educational programs; rather it should encourage. These statistical truths about factors influencing adult participation in educational experiences fit beautifully with Luther’s concepts of the church’s role in preparing believers for their vocation and with the reformational concept of the priesthood of all believers. Leaders of educational programs for adults need to be asking, “What are our goals?” and “How can the learner immediately apply the learnings we will provide?” First and foremost, that is the role of the church’s educational programs. And second, clearly articulated answers to these questions will increase the motivation of our adults to
participate more fully in the learning experiences we offer.

References


Revisiting Congregations at Crossroads

Dr. Louis C. Jander is Mission and Ministry Facilitator for the Texas District of the LCMS, where he works with congregations in developing strategic plans, provides leadership training and resourcing in all areas of parish ministry, assists congregations in developing a wider understanding of the mission of the church, and provides team leadership building experiences. He holds a B.S., an M.Ed. in Administration and Supervision, and a Doctorate in Adult Education.

In 1990 Search Institute released a report of a three-and-one-half year study of Christian education. This study was conducted in the following six major Protestant denominations: Christian Church (Disciples of Christ); Evangelical Lutheran Church in America; Presbyterian Church (USA); Southern Baptist Convention; United Church of Christ; and the United Methodist Church. The summary report dealt with such key areas as faith, loyalty, and congregational life.

A group of key leaders in The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS) participated in discussions regarding how the study’s findings could be utilized within their church body. While acknowledging the significant information contained in the 1990 study, the group recommended that the Synod work with Search Institute in expanding the study in order to have a “fresh perspective and new insights into the needs, interests, strengths, and concerns of individuals and congregations” (Benson, Roehlkepartain, & Andress, 1995, p. 1) across the LCMS.
Revisiting Congregations at Crossroads

The study report, titled *Congregations at Crossroads* and authored by Peter L. Benson, Eugene C. Roehlkepartain, and I. Shelby Andress (1995), posited two primary purposes. These were to: (1) "create an awareness of those qualities in a congregation that promote a strong and dynamic life of faith among youth and adults;" and (2) "encourage congregations to use this information to renew their sense of mission and ministry" (p. 1).

While *Congregations at Crossroads* does not pretend to be a comprehensive analysis of the findings from the 387-item survey, it does effectively consolidate information that has practical implications for congregations including: (1) "An examination of the faith, beliefs, and behaviors of LCMS youth and adults"; (2) "A presentation of key elements of congregational life that enrich the faith lives of youth and adults"; and, (3) "A call to action to congregations and the church-at-large to focus energy on strengthening congregational life" (pp. 1-2). In addition to the findings summarized in the report, other key issues are identified from its extensive compilation of data.

While this study was completed over six years ago and while there were also a variety of reports, workshops, articles, and other means used to share the findings, not much has specifically been done at various levels in the Synod to intentionally address the study’s many implications. This article attempts to resurrect the study’s findings and explore possible actions that might be initiated. Even though the data was gathered in 1994, there are strong indications that the findings are still valid today.

Faith Maturity

It is not, of course, possible to measure a person’s faith. That ability is not
extended to the church. Only God knows the hearts of people. Yet, we have for years looked for tangible ways to understand where people are in their faith journey. We teach confirmation, ask questions publicly of the confirmands, and suggest that elders call on people especially when they indicate by their behavior (e.g., poor church attendance, absence from the Lord’s Supper, that they may be struggling spiritually). While one’s attendance at worship and presence at the Lord’s Table do not measure faith, they do serve as a basis for possible concern.

Some 42 statements related to a person’s faith journey were included in the Congregations at Crossroads survey. These 42 statements were grouped together into “nine indicators of faith maturity” (note the word “indicators”). The following is a chart indicating the percentage of respondents (adults and youth) who averaged 5 or higher on a seven-point scale for the statements under each of the nine listed indicators:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Youth</th>
<th>Adults</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Trusts and believes</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Experiences the fruits of faith</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Integrates faith and life</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Celebrates the good news</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Seeks spiritual growth</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Nurtures faith in community</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Holds life-affirming values</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Advocates social change</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Acts and serves</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Key Observations**

Based on these percentages, the following observations are offered:

- There is cause to celebrate the understanding people generally have related to a basic knowledge about God and the trust people have in him.
- We also need to celebrate adults attempting to integrate faith and life.
- It appears that youth are struggling to move their beliefs and understanding into real life situations.
- Seemingly, adults and youth possess head knowledge, but have difficulty in behaviorally living out those beliefs (16% of adults and 20% of youth “act and serve”).
- The LCMS appears to do well at inculcating head knowledge. The struggle comes in helping people put that knowledge into “action” in daily living; in
Revisiting Congregations at Crossroads

providing “experiences” or “opportunities” for people to practice using the knowledge that has been taught; in moving the knowledge from the “head to the heart to the hands and feet.”

Implications

While it’s possible to provide numerous examples for each of the nine indicators, for the purposes of this article, I’ll explore the three ranking lowest: “acts and serves,” “experiences the fruits of faith,” and “seeks spiritual growth.”

Acts and Serves

How do congregations provide means by which people may serve or act out their faith? For many congregations, it is most often through service on boards or committees, some special “groups” in the congregation, and/or some “care ministry” situations often focusing on those who are in the fellowship of the congregation. But what can congregations do to expand the manner in which people think about acting and serving outside of its official “organizations?” How might the church help make people aware of opportunities to be of service beyond the congregation, i.e., in the larger community? The following are some possibilities:

- Hosting blood drives.
- Giving people an opportunity to serve at a food pantry.
- Identifying community issues or concerns in which people in the congregation can become directly involved.
- Identifying and listing specific needs and issues in the community surrounding the congregation for which people can utilize their gifts and talents.
- Providing opportunities to improve the environment (e.g., a beautification project, etc.)

Acting and serving can be done within existing organizations of the congregation, but it is necessary to move beyond talking about possibilities and actually initiate specific action!

Experiences the Fruits of Faith

As an indicator, “experiences the fruits of faith” addresses such items as dealing with responsibilities, finding purpose and meaning in life, dealing with problems and crises, and responding to stress and anxiety. The responses in the survey indicate that people struggle with self-acceptance, a feeling of being overwhelmed with responsibilities and obligations, and a sense of stress and anxiety with life in general. The question that evolves is, “How might a congregation cause people to
have these feelings or lift them beyond?” The following are some aspects that those in ministry should be mindful of while seeking to assist individuals in experiencing the “fruits of faith” in their lives:

- Work at involving more people in the life and ministry of the congregation so that the “same” people don’t have to “do everything.”
- When people have a chance to “serve” others by such activities as making a meal, or fixing a car, it helps them feel good about themselves. Not doing something for others sometimes causes a person not to “like him/herself.”
- Consider ways to consolidate meetings that are held at church and approaches to make each and every meeting a meaningful time. Stress and anxiety can result from simply looking at the church bulletin and reading the church calendar for the week.

The challenge for all church leaders is to review the various ways that might build up all those people who presently serve in the congregation and to consider those who wish to serve but experience feelings of inadequacy because they don’t feel equipped. Key actions might be to evaluate, encourage, affirm, and equip. People equipped for service serve with less stress and anxiety and feel better about what they do.

**Seeks Spiritual Growth**

The indicator of seeking spiritual growth was not ranked the lowest of the nine, but it does appear to need some attention. The indicator revolves around the area of personal and group Bible study, prayer time, and spending time participating in “spiritual growth” opportunities. Statistically, the LCMS has been declining in the number of people involved in Sunday school (down 39% in the last 30 years) and in vacation Bible school participation (down 22% in the last 30 years) and has about the same percentage (18% of adults) attending Bible study some time during the
week as it did 30 years ago.¹

The survey responses indicate that the amount of time spent in personal Bible reading and study of the Bible is slightly better for adults (25%), but lower for youth (9%) (Benson. et al., 1995, p. 52). Troubling? Yes! How can we expect to see a change in any of the indicators of faith maturity or in the way people journey through this sin-filled world when they don’t spend time in God’s Word, personally or in a group?

What Adults and Youth Understand

The data from the research also revealed information regarding key terms and phrases that are utilized and taught within Lutheranism. Respondents were first asked to review sixteen religious or theological concepts and indicate how well they understood each of them. The respondents were than to indicate for the same sixteen concepts how important each of the concepts was to them. The following table indicates the percentage of respondents who had a “good or very good understanding” of each concept or felt the concept was “important or very important.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Understanding</th>
<th>Understanding</th>
<th>Importance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adults</td>
<td>Youth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanctification</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grace</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justification</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gospel</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priesthood of all believers</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baptism</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evangelism</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stewardship</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Means of Grace</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lord’s Prayer</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Original Sin</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apostles Creed</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is not too difficult to reach some conclusions about where people in the LCMS are in regard to “understanding” and “importance” of terms or concepts that would seem to be basic to its teachings. The foregoing table would serve well as a discussion piece for purposes of reviewing the “educating” of Synod’s youth and adults in key concepts of the Lutheran tradition. The following might serve as “discussion” starters:

- Why is it that “priesthood of all believers” is the least understood and the least important of the sixteen concepts?
- Running a close second for the least understood and least in importance is the concept of “sanctification.” What does that indicate for our teaching of sanctification?
- How do adults and youth view their role in the mission and ministry of the church?
- For adults, what is the relationship between confession and absolution?
- For youth, how does the understanding of original sin fit into their daily life journey?

In faith enhancing congregations, the faith life of people is vibrant, filled with excitement for the Gospel; people are actively involved in personal growth activities; faith life seems to be lived out in action and devotion; people are sharing the Gospel with others; and, people are being empowered for ministry.

It would be well to spend time revisiting the methods and the environments in which these terms and concepts are taught. We need to address the question, “How do we use experiential learning processes to teach these key concepts?” That question is important since many of the concepts could be treated purely from a “definition” perspective. It might also be possible that the concepts are taught, but not the vocabulary. In other responses throughout the survey indications are that there is not only difficulty with the words, but also with the living and practicing of
Qualities of Faith Enhancing Congregations

The study affirmed that congregations have a "great deal of influence in shaping the faith, beliefs, and actions of youth and adults" (Benson, et al., 1995, p. 15). In faith enhancing congregations, the faith life of people is vibrant, filled with excitement for the Gospel; people are actively involved in personal growth activities; faith life seems to be lived out in action and devotion; people are sharing the Gospel with others; and, people are being empowered for ministry (Benson, et al., p. 15).

Through careful study of the data generated from this study, it was possible to identify 30 qualities reflective of a faith-enhancing congregation. The 30 qualities can be grouped into eight major categories. These major categories are key areas in congregational ministry and can become targets for enrichment as a congregation seeks to enhance the vibrancy and maturity of the faith life of people of the congregation and community. The following table contains the 30 qualities divided into the eight categories:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualities of Faith-Enhancing Congregations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Engaging Climate</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The congregation has a warm, welcoming, and friendly climate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The congregation has a thinking climate that encourages questions and expects learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The congregation experiences little conflict.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• People are excited about the congregation and its ministry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Youth only: Adults and children spend quality time together.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Caring Community</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The congregation helps members meet their personal needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• People feel that others in the congregation care about them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• People take time to get to know each other.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The congregation shows love and concern for people in the community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Youth only: Youth often experience care and support from an adult.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Effective Christian Education</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The congregation has quality youth education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The congregation has quality adult education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• People spend three or more hours per month in Christian education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Christian education for all ages emphasizes interactive learning.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Jander**

- The congregation offers excellent Bible study.
- The congregation makes Scripture come alive for all ages.
- The congregation helps members apply faith to daily life.
- *Youth only*: The congregation has quality education for children.

**Evangelism and Mission Emphasis**
- The congregation emphasizes evangelism and mission.
- The congregation teaches people how to share their faith with others.

**Inspiring Worship**
- The congregation has strong preaching.
- People get a lot out of worship.

**Support for Families**
- The congregation intentionally strengthens family life.
- The congregation helps parents learn how to nurture the faith of their children.

**A Clear Vision**
- The congregation has a clear vision.
- Members can explain their congregation’s vision.

**Empowering Leadership**
- The pastor’s leadership is open and affirming.
- The pastor is excited about the congregation.
- The congregation involves many people in decision-making.
- Many members share responsibility for the congregation’s ministry.
- The congregation makes use of members’ talents.
- The congregation is open to change.
- The congregation deals well with conflict.
- *Youth only*: The congregation involves youth in decision-making.


As one might expect, the greater the number of these qualities rated as “always”...
or “almost always” present, the stronger are the following:

- Integrated faith
- People growing in faith
- Congregational loyalty
- Frequency of worship attendance
- Willingness to volunteer and serve in the local congregation
- Telling others about one’s faith
- Helping people in the community
- Frequency of Scripture reading.

The *Congregation at Crossroads* report states, “To be sure, there are probably many other factors that are also important in congregations. And there are probably unique emphases in specific congregations that are not captured by this framework. But this list provides an important place to start in thinking about what it means to be a faith-nurturing congregation. By seeking to build these characteristics into their life, congregations have great potential for renewing and enhancing the faith and commitments of members to live their faith and share that faith with others through acts of evangelism, outreach, and service in Christ’s name.” (Benson, et al., 1995, p. 26)

In considering the 30 Qualities, it is important to contemplate the strengths indicated by the data:

- Over 75% of the respondents indicate that worship in Lutheran churches is inspiring and the Sacraments and the Word are visible.
- People, especially older adults, seem to be excited about the ministry of the congregation
- The preaching seems to be well received by the respondents.
- The respondents generally seem to have a good “head knowledge” of the teachings of the LCMS.

It is also important to reflect on some challenges that may have resulted from congregational neglect:

- Helping people feel a sense of application of beliefs to every day life.
- Moving people to understand the “vision” of the church and how that can be lived out in congregational ministry.
- Providing learning experiences that do more than just “tell people” the information; making learning an active, experiential study and living of the Word.
Jander

- Getting individuals to receive others, especially those who are not “regular” in their membership, in a warm and friendly fashion.
- Moving people into ministry action by moving more people into volunteer services.
- Having parents assume a greater role in the Christian education of their children.

*Congregations at Crossroads* offers some non-specific areas that might be considered “points for reflection.” While they are certainly general in nature, it is possible to identify some specific action steps under each of the headings. They would indeed be a challenge for each area of ministry in the congregation and beyond. Among the key headings under which we might develop some action steps for ministry are:

- **Moving from the head to the heart and feet**: Right beliefs and right knowledge don’t always move to the heart, hands, and feet. How might that be accomplished?
- **Expressing faith in compassion and care**: How do we become a “caring community” both to those who are members and those beyond our membership?
- **Revitalizing Christian education**: If Christian education is such a vital force in nurturing faith in youth and adults (as indicated by the research), how than do we broaden the support, training, and priority of Christian education?
- **Addressing patterns of active leaders, passive parishioners**: Leaders with all the answers make for passive lay people. What are specific ways to cultivate strong leadership that “equips the saints for ministry?”
- **Equipping families in their faith-nurturing role**: What ministries do we develop that are designed to equip and support parents in their role as primary Christian educators?
- **Tapping undervalued strengths**: There are all types of gifted people, male and female, young and old, who could be using their gifts more specifically. How do we identify, train, and empower them and “release” them into ministry?
- **Engaging youth significantly**: How do we move the youth of the congregation into meaningful and significant ministries of the congregation?
- **Integrating young adults into congregational life**: Young adults feel disconnected from the local congregation and from ministry opportunities and they are leaving the church. How do we make intentional efforts to involve young adults in the life and ministry of the congregation that go beyond serving on boards and committees?
Revisiting Congregations at Crossroads

- **Moving beyond cultural homogeneity:** With the “face” of America changing, how do we lead our church in the direction of “looking like the community” in which the church is located?

- **Renewing one congregation at a time:** The study findings are most significant for the local congregation, and they need implementation at that level. How do we train, empower, inform, and move individual churches into action?

This article merely scratches the surface of the findings from the *Congregations at Crossroads* study completed over half a decade ago. But it remains important, even critical, that we address the issues identified at that time. Taking the time to consider practical ways to implement, to plan, to educate, and to make some change in one’s personal approach to ministry will be an important step.

**Resource**


“...We live in a culture in which people travel many miles and never arrive because, quite frankly, they do not know that they should have a destination... Our culture—and this is particularly true in the academic world—values ‘process over product’: it values ‘the means of making over and above what the making means.’ And so we trivialize outcomes. We talk about critical thinking, but we often do not have anything worthwhile to think about.”

Jill Pelaez Baumgaertner, “Faith and Imagination” in *Should God Get Tenure*
Reaching the Un-Churched Through Bible Study

Tim Hetzner recently became Executive Director of Lutheran Church Charities in Addison, IL. Previously, Tim spent 24 years in parish DCE ministry, the last 20 at Immanuel Palatine, IL, as Director of Discipleship. Tim founded Good Samaritan Ministries, which ministers to the Human Care needs of individuals and families throughout the NW Chicago suburbs and the world. He has authored a book and produced a video through The Word Among Us project titled “Three Days and Three Nights – How Can This Be?”

I have been privileged, while serving several congregations as a Director of Christian Education, to be directly involved in adult Bible class education. Over the past twenty years, I have been able to lead more than 2,600 adults through a two-year study of the Bible. Less than half were members of my parish. More than 50% were either non-members or non-Christian.

On the basis of these experiences, I believe I am able to address a number of concerns in attempting to reach both the churched and the un-churched through serious and intensive Bible study. This article will consider facets of successful teaching as one specifically attempts to reach the un-churched and will also serve to dispel some of the myths many hold regarding the study of the Holy Scriptures.

Over the years I have often heard the question from other church professionals: “I have a hard time getting committed Christians into Bible study, how do you get non-churched or non-Christian adults into serious Bible Study?” I typically respond by indicating that getting “committed” Christians into Bible study is one issue. Getting non-churched or non-Christian adults into Bible study is quite another
issue.

What Non-Christian/Non-Churched (NC) Adults Fear about Bible Study

Being asked to look up something in the Bible and not knowing where it is.

This is a fear that most adults have, whether or not they are NC. When making a Bible reference it is best that the instructor read it. Let the class know that if they have not found a passage by the time the instructor starts reading, all they need to do is simply to listen. Bible tabs are also useful. The instructor should make these available to all adult education students. Some of the shorter Bible books are difficult enough to find even with tabs!

NC’s may be afraid that they will be asked to read and not be able to pronounce some of the words.

Let all know that many of the words, especially those of names and places, originate in the Middle East and can be pronounced in several ways. It is always best not to put people on the spot to read until they are comfortable in doing so. When you reach the point that you sense that they may be comfortable, always ask for volunteers. In addition, be careful that you don’t ask the Christians to read and then not ask the NC, as they may feel second rate.

Getting “committed” Christians into Bible study is one issue. Getting non-churched or non-Christian adults into Bible study is quite another issue.

Afraid that as NC’s they will be in a class where others will have superior knowledge.

Many times the only difference between Christians and NC’s in Bible study is that the Christians think they have the answers and don’t, while the NC’s know they don’t and wish they did! In his book, The Kingdom of God: The Biblical Concept and its Meaning for the Church, Professor John Bright (1980) offers the following observations:
It is unnecessary to furnish proof that there exists among Christians a widespread biblical illiteracy, and gratuitous to deplore that fact as disastrous. Indeed, one might go so far as to say that Protestantism will not forever survive if steps cannot be taken to remedy it.

There has grown up in the Church alongside a total neglect of the Bible, a dangerous partial use of it. As a Church we declare that the Bible is the Word of God, and we draw no distinctions between its parts. But in practice we confine our use of it almost entirely to selected sections—the Gospels and the Psalms, portions of Paul and the prophets . . . and ignore the rest as completely as if it had never been written. The result is that we not only neglect much that is valuable but, what is worse, miss the deepest meaning of the very parts we use because we lift them from their larger context. (pp. 7-8)

As an instructor of a class with Christians and NC’s, I try to make sure that the “Christians” don’t go off on little knowledge trips to show off to the NC how much they know. It is important to emphasize with the groups we teach that all are learners, and that that process will not end until the day we die.

**Afraid that there may be a hidden motive in their being asked to be in the class.**

A major concern NC’s have is that the Bible class is an automatic avenue leading to church membership. Relieve that fear! I had a class creedal statement that stated:

“If you are a non-Christian or non-Churched, your name will not be put on any mailing or calling list. You are on neutral ground. If you choose to worship at our congregation—you are free to do so, but we will not send you anything or follow-up on your visit unless you request it.”

To the Christians that were in class but were not members of the parish, our creed was:

“If you are a Christian but are not a member of our parish—you cannot join our parish while you are in this study. We are not here to steal sheep from other churches but encourage you to take what you learn and use it in your congregation.”

**Afraid that they will be judged for their current views on life issues or their current life style.**

As a Christian I cannot expect a non-Christian to behave or see things as a Christian does. The more the NC studies the Bible, the more the NC will come to
realize that their view or lifestyle may be contrary to the will of God. Let the Word convict and change!

**What NC’s Want.**

**Serious Bible study where you are actually studying the Bible.**

Contrary to what many church growth adherents teach and practice, NC’s do not desire fluff. They are not looking for a devotional study of the Bible or, if you will, a “Bible Bingo” approach (i.e., here a verse, there a verse, everywhere a verse-verse, and now how do you feel?). NC’s are looking for truth; they are looking for answers in the Bible! Give that to them!

**Contrary to what many church growth adherents teach and practice, NC’s [Non-Christian/Non-Churched] do not desire fluff. NC’s are looking for truth; they are looking for answers in the Bible! Give that to them!**

**The full context of the Bible — explaining the problem texts.**

NC’s want to see the unity of Scripture: how does it all tie in? Teach them the Biblical narrative and how the 66 books flow with the consistent voice of God! When coming across problem texts, help them understand the context. Most of what they will view as difficulties can be understood in the larger narrative.

**To learn “How” to study the Bible verses rather than just reading the Bible.**

Many NC’s have actually read part of the Bible on their own. That is one reason they are motivated to get into a Bible study. Their reading of Scripture may have confused them. What does the Bible actually say here? Clarify the text! Where is the sense of this passage? These elements help to focus on the actual study of Scripture as opposed to superficial reading.

The Jewish method of interpretation of Scripture is fascinating and most applicable as well as adaptable here:

*Peshat:* Look at the sentence (not just the verse). Ask yourself what does it
mean?

Remaz: Look at the sentence in the full context of what that author wrote. Ask yourself what does it mean?

Derush: Compare the sentence in question to the context of the author and the entire Biblical message. Then ask yourself what does it mean? Note that one must always funnel it through the mind of Jesus, the final interpreter of Scripture.

Sod: Scripture also speaks through its silence.

One must to be careful with this last concept. Perhaps an example will be helpful. The New Testament makes no written mention of baptizing infants. There are, of course, references to households being baptized (which would include infants), but that Scripture does not specifically mention baptizing infants offers one of the strongest proofs for baptizing infants. Then, were infants included as being part of the Covenant of Abraham? Absolutely! Genesis 17 clearly indicates this, specifically with circumcision occurring at the age of eight days as the sign of this covenant. So, then, in the New Testament would there be any question infants were included in the command to baptize all nations? Also, when one then considers the historical practice of the church we find that the Apostles did, in fact, baptize infants.

The point here is that a proper method of studying the Bible needs to be taught so that all understand that Scripture interprets Scripture. The Word (both written and Living [Jesus]) is what determines truth!

Other factors

Flexibility in schedule

Whenever possible, it is helpful to offer a variety of time options. Be flexible in teaching the course. I would run three separate times for every course (e.g., 6 a.m., 10 a.m., and 7:30 p.m.). Class members could choose to attend any one of the three classes each week. This varied time approach also allows couples with children to take the course at different times and not have to get a baby-sitter.

Able to ask questions – but not always in class

Many NC’s have a multitude of questions. However, they sometimes don’t care to, or are afraid to ask them in class. Provide means to ask the questions outside of class: using e-mail, being available at certain times for phone calls, or having note cards for their questions are some of many alternatives to “open” class discussion.
Make all feel they are cared for

Everyone wants to feel they are more than a number. Many do not want “exposure” in class, but they do want to feel cared for. Be available before and after class to greet them. Find out about them.

Clarification on what Christianity is

Many NC’s have a limited or warped understanding of Christianity. This may come from the media or past direct experiences with Christians. Both sources might be questionable or even incorrect. Help all to understand Christianity as Jesus defines it. Note for them that Christianity, as practiced, may not necessary be true Christianity. The media, with its plethora of preachers, witnesses, “faith-healers” and fortunetellers, has done much to confuse many about Christianity, and many have been exposed to these elements.

Clarification on what the church is all about and why it seems so conflicted

A universal question, “If Christians are all to be followers of Christ and all are reading the same book, why is that they cannot get along with each other or have similar views?”

Good question. When the news media reports that some Christians are in favor of homosexuality, abortion, capital punishment, etc., and others are opposed to these, the NC tends to wonder what is wrong. Help the NC’s put these things aside and look only to the Bible for their source of truth on these many issues.

The NC is also confused by the different “brands” and “labels” that Christians use to identify themselves. After all, what does “Missouri Synod” mean to an NC when they do not live in Missouri? We do need to explain how different denominations and their interpretation of sections of Scripture support or detract from the truth of Scripture. Let the NC person see Scripture to be the guide in determining beliefs and creeds. Steer your class members toward being faithful believers in God and the Word of God (i.e., being a Christian). Have them consider being a Missouri Synod Lutheran because of our denomination’s adherence to the faithfulness of God and his Word.

NC’s seek Biblical truth, not opinion

The NC does not look for opinion, but rather for truth. They can solicit many different opinions if they so desire. However, what they want to know is, “What does the Bible actually teach?” Let Scripture speak!
Applying what they learn through making a difference in their lives and in touching the lives of others

In thorough Scriptural study, it is impossible to miss what all are called to do, that is, to serve Jesus by serving others as Jesus would have us serve them. One must connect what is learned in the head and apply it to the heart. The instructor may suggest or provide opportunities for class members to be involved in human care ministry. During my more than twenty years in ministry, I have witnessed some remarkable and wonderful applications of faith to life and living. As the Holy Spirit acts upon people immersed in Scripture, they can and do affect the lives of others. (Set that example yourself as a teacher!)

Misconceptions
Two years is too long — NC’s want short three to four week studies

The old adage "What you put into it is what you will get out of it" remains true. People want a serious study. Several weeks just does not cut it! It can often take five to ten weeks just to get comfortable with studying Scripture! If a NC is to become a disciple, a long-term commitment and long-term study is a necessity.

Isn't studying the Old Testament just a study of a lot of history?

Remember history is HISstory. To view how God worked with his people throughout history, we can study how God continues to work with his people today. Humankind has not changed that much since the fall. We have invented a few new sins and perfected many of the old. Humankind is still lost and in need of a Savior, and that remains the story of the Bible.

In Conclusion

Will Non-Christian/Non-Churched adults get into serious Bible Study? The
answer, I would argue, is most emphatically, yes! One of my greatest joys in ministry has been to look into the eyes of a NC person as they begin a Bible study and to note how God is changing them each week as they study his Word. I believe if you are serious, committed, and intentional in looking for the NC adult in serious Bible study, you will find that there are thousands looking for you! And remember, the Word works, but one must work the Word!

Reference

“I’ve come to a frightening conclusion that I am the decisive element in the classroom. It’s my personal approach that creates the climate. It’s my daily mood that makes the weather. As a teacher I possess a tremendous power to make a child’s life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or humor, hurt or heal. In all situations, it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated and a child humanized or de-humanized.”

Haim Ginott
Reflections on Science and Faith in a Parish

Dr. Richard J. Gotsch is the director of the Academy for Professional Church Workers in the University College at Concordia University, River Forest. He is the former pastor of Grace Lutheran Church, Northbrook, Illinois and holds a Doctor of Sacred Theology degree in Biblical studies from Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago.

For some mentioning the relationship between science and faith raises images of debate, hostility and conflict. Many see the teaching of the Bible and the discoveries and theories of science as enemies. In such an atmosphere, people are required to choose one or the other and join the battle.

I’m grateful to say that this has not been my experience. Most of my ministry has been spent as a parish pastor. In the setting of a congregation with good people of God, this issue has been lively and important. In conversations, classrooms, group discussions, and dialogue, we have had to wrestle with some tough questions. But it has been stimulating and good-spirited and I’m grateful for these experiences.

Over the years there have been young people in confirmation class, high school, and college who have raised good questions and sought honest answers. Many adults in the congregation have joined in discussions and programs. Members have included a research bio-chemist, high school teachers,
in science and English, a physicist from Illinois Institute of Technology, a theoretical engineer at Northwestern University and an industrial engineer who read voraciously in the field of cosmology. In addition, many conversations with other members would turn to topics about God and his relationship to his creation. All were patient teachers of a parish preacher who was trying to learn about this new world of understanding that was unfolding around us. In concrete ways (including a sabbatical at Mansfield College, Oxford) they encouraged me to expand my horizons. For such people of honesty and integrity pious platitudes and tired jargon are not enough.

Here are committed Christians whose interests and research in science raise new questions which had not been part of their past experience in the church. They have made the discussion of these issues so worthwhile. I thank them for that. It is from these conversations that the reflections in this article have come.

The Languages of Science and Faith

One of our early observations was that science and faith speak different languages. It came up in the form of a simple question in a Bible class: “Where do babies come from?” One answer would be found in a chapter on human reproduction in a human biology textbook. Another answer is found in the Bible: “Behold, children are a gift of God!” (Ps. 127: 3). At this point we could launch into a battle between science and faith defending one or the other position. But this simple example illustrates the obvious point that both statements are true. The difference lies in the kind of language that is used. The first is the result of human observation and research. It takes what can be seen and measured and puts its finding in descriptive form. It used the scientific method and the evidence available to answer the question. The second response uses the language of faith, “the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1). It is based upon God himself revealing the deeper reality of this awesome experience. Each human life is a gift from the creator of heaven and earth. It is a statement of faith that no human observation can prove or disprove. Agreement on this basic perspective about the languages of science and faith would be invaluable in further discussions.

Another way of drawing this distinction between science and faith is to speak of outer and inner meaning. What we can determine scientifically would focus on the observation of what is visible and measurable. Scientific language describes that. Inner meaning for us Christians is revealed in the Scriptures where God speaks to us in the language of faith.
Genres

Another significant issue that frequently emerges is the interpretation of individual passages in the Bible. While we are always ready to talk about what a Bible verse means to us today, we soon discover how essential it is first to determine as much as possible what God and the human author were trying to communicate to their hearers and readers. Not only is it necessary to know the meaning of Hebrew or Greek words, but it also is important to see what kind of literary/traditional form or genre was being used.

One of our members, who taught world literature, kept us on track on this one. She reminded us that not only is the Bible a collection of different books written over a long period of time, but in its diversity it also contains many different kinds of literature. She once compared what we have in the Bible to a large gallery filled with display cases. Each case is labeled with a particular genre. Inside each case is a selection of that genre collected from the pages of the Scriptures. One case contains samples of parables. In another we find oracles of doom. As we walk among the displays we see legal statutes, genealogies, eyewitness history, sagas, proverbs, wedding songs, laments and other forms of poetry and prose. The gallery full of display cases represents the “many and various ways God spoke to our ancestors in times past” (Hebrews 1:1). To understand his message we need to consider the medium in which that Word of God comes.

For example, much of the teaching of Jesus is in parables. He tells them to make a specific point. While some of his parables may have their roots in actual events, most of them are the product of our Lord’s creative ability to tell an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. If we understand the nature of this particular genre, then we would not insist that the good Samaritan, the prodigal son or Lazarus are historical figures. To understand the message of the Bible we must recognize that God employs a variety of literary and oral forms. In these earthen vessels we receive the water of life.
Life Situation

Another important aspect of Biblical interpretation is to understand the situation in which the message is given and received. Since the Bible was written over a period of hundreds of years, the more we know about each situation, the better we can grasp the meaning of a particular passage. For one of the wonders of the Bible is that God did indeed communicate directly with his people in a variety of settings over many generations. As we go back to a particular time and place we bring with us the perspective of our own time and place. The danger is that our perspectives, presuppositions, and expectations replace or overshadow those of the setting of the text itself. We may even insist that it is saying something that the Holy Spirit never intended to convey to the first hearers. If we avoid that pitfall and put ourselves as much as possible in the time and place of the text itself, we will hear what God said then. From that perspective we can then discuss what the application of that message might be to our time and place.

While these principles of interpretation outlined above are basic and obvious, the consensus we reached on them was most important as we began some lively and intense discussions of the Biblical witness to God as our creator. Simply stated, we agreed that the Holy Spirit was speaking the language of faith here and that our task was not to address questions couched in the language of science from our time and place.

We found it much more fruitful to explore how the authors were setting forth their message to their contemporaries and how people might have understood it in that time and place. That quest yielded some interesting observations.

What was it like to be a wandering shepherd in the wilderness of Sinai or a tender of grain and grapes on the hillsides of Israel? In that simple setting the Holy Spirit proclaimed a message of faith that spoke powerfully to them: “God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good” (Genesis 1:31).

Our world of libraries, books, and computers filled with scientific data would have been a strange world to them indeed. And yet even as God reached his ancient people with a message they could understand and respond to with thanks, so in our world that same language of faith invites us to recognize that all of creation is God’s gift, for which we can surely thank and praise, serve and obey him. “God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good.”

The fact that our understanding of the universe has grown and changed so dramatically does not mean that the voice of science has drowned out the song of faith. In fact, the growing complexity of our understanding of the creation should increase the height and width and length and depth of our sense of awe. The
Biblical narratives are a simple, unaccompanied song of wonder. Our doxology ought to equal our vision of the universe and its music of the spheres. Often those who have a deeper understanding of the nature of the creation are those who can show us the way to greater praise. “And God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good.”

The careful use of these basic principles of Biblical interpretation may seem so obvious that they don’t even need to be stated. But we found that clarifying our operating presuppositions was important to do, so that we might all be on the same page. We came to recognize that the dialogue between science and faith has come a long way since Copernicus and Galileo. That consensus also reminded us that different interpretations of the same passage were to be expected and even welcomed. For one of the lessons from the history of the church is how easy it is for us to assume that our particular interpretation of what the Bible is saying is exactly the same meaning God intended when he first spoke. In the course of one discussion an attorney, well trained in the interpretation of words and concerned about the voice of faith in our world, pointed that out quite forcefully. He reminded us that interpreters of Scripture should have a good dose of reality and humility, so that we do not assume that we have spoken the final word on what God means. We learned from each other as we discussed the texts and were not afraid to let different points of view stand. That’s why there is no final, official interpretation of every Bible verse in Lutheranism. When we say Scripture alone is the authority for faith and life, we exclude our own traditions as well as those of other denominations. The Holy Spirit still speaks in the Word of God, hard at work opening our eyes and expanding our horizons.

The fact that our understanding of the universe has grown and changed so dramatically does not mean that the voice of science has drowned out the song of faith. In fact, the growing complexity of our understanding of the creation should increase the height and width and length and depth of our sense of awe.
Lessons Learned

Another blessing from these conversations was a better understanding of the language of science in the dialogue. While they didn’t transform a preacher into a physicist, they instilled a healthy respect for their profession. They are serious and competent in their work. There is integrity, humility and openness in their lives. I never met a wild-eyed scientist bent on the destruction of faith. They are people of faith who listen and speak carefully.

One such person was a theoretical engineer. He introduced me to Edwin Abbott’s *Flatland, A Romance of Many Dimensions*. It’s about a world that has only two dimensions. The inhabitants are confined to move on a flat plane. They have no knowledge of anything beyond that plane. They experience north-south and east-west, but cannot even conceive of up-down. Near the end of the book a sphere from a three-dimensional world of Spaceland appears and tries to explain what it means to possess another dimension and to be a sphere. In the story the flatlanders are not able to accept a third dimension of reality. Our engineer friend saw in this story a lesson for his own profession. He compared his scientific work to the limitations of Flatland, a two-dimensional world where the methods and language of science prevail. As a child of God he recognized a deeper dimension in touch with God and the realities and language of faith.

Another memorable impression gained is the rapidity of change that occurs in scientific research. In a seminar on current issues in pharmaceutical research, we heard an amazing recital of developments. Six months later our presenter told me that his research had already moved far beyond what had been the possibilities and discoveries described earlier. New evidence, further observation, and revised theories keep changing the world of science. This realization helped us to be circumspect about matching up scientific data with material in the Bible. We have tried to avoid that classic medieval defense of Ptolemy’s theory of the movement of the sun around the earth with the words of Joshua, “Sun, stand still at Gibeon!” (Joshua 10:12). More recent examples have included working “the big bang theory” into Genesis 1 or matching periods of earth’s history with the six days of creation. The nineteenth and early twentieth century debates over the understanding of miracles as the suspension of natural laws have come under scrutiny with the experiments supporting the notion of probability in modern physics. The well-intentioned coupling of a current scientific hypothesis with a Bible verse can take several generations to undo after the theory has changed.

It is also true that science can provide us with models that can be instructive for the life of faith. One of the more interesting examples emerged in a demonstration
of the nature of light by a physicist in an adult education class. With instructive props he was asking the classic question, “Is light a wave or a particle?” After showing us that in some experiments light manifests the properties of particles and in others the characteristics of waves, the conclusion seemed to be that light is both. Based upon our level of understanding and scale of observation (where a particle is like an apple or a wave like ripples in water), that conclusion seems to be contradictory. We think it has to be one or the other. But for the moment or until some better explanation comes along, we let the statement stand as it is. We offer ourselves a bit of protection by giving a long name to such situations. We call it complementarity. Two truths which seem to be in contradiction are both true.

Someone then raised an interesting question. Could this model of complementarity be applied to the language of faith? Could two truths that seem to be contradictory stand side by side in our profession of faith? We confess that Jesus Christ is true man and true God. We believe that the Bible is the Word of God and the words of men. In a world of suffering, pain and death, we pray to God as all-powerful and all loving. In holy communion we receive bread and wine and the body and blood of Christ. Many who hear the Christian message see these as contradictions and reject or alter them in part or in whole. Perhaps the notion of complementarity might persuade them to take a second look at the witness of the Bible. If our human reason cannot solve a mystery of creation, perhaps we shouldn’t be surprised that the reality of God and his work should rightly lead us to awesome faith in his presence among us in Jesus Christ.

A Final Note

There is a difference between dogma and theological opinion. That’s a lesson we all learn in Theology 101. But lessons learned for tests aren’t always lessons learned for life. One of the blessings of being in a congregation for a number of years is the privilege of walking with people through many experiences: baptizing a critically ill child, waiting for a wayward child to come home, losing a job, undergoing surgery or losing a loved one. The faith and witness of these people of Grace Church puts a certain perspective on the science and faith conversation. Dogma is not only what the church believes, but also what we hold on to in the face of adversity and death. There are a host of theological opinions floating around in the church today. It’s good to discuss and debate them as time allows. But when it comes to dogma for which to die, then I’m convinced that less is more. “God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good” (Genesis 1:31).
Change!!??: Reflections on Lutheran Schools at the Dawn of the Millennium

Dr. Carl Moser, recently retired from his position as Director of Schools for the LC-MS, is the Executive Director of National Lutheran School Accreditation (NSLA). Dr. Moser also served as professor and dean at Concordia, River Forest for 7 years and as a Lutheran elementary school teacher and principal for 18 years. He has written countless articles, bulletins, and manuals, most notably the past 17 years of Alight, a publication of Synod’s school department.

How many Missouri Synod Lutherans does it take to change a light bulb? The response: “CHANGE??!!!”

As with most humor, contained therein is a stinging truth. Our church body and its schools have a reputation for resisting change. A recent example might be the controversy regarding the suggestion that “The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod” is no longer an appropriate name for our church body. Another example could be the King James English still used in our churches when we pray the Lord’s Prayer. While God doesn’t change, his people and his Church need to change in order to continue to serve his people effectively.

Evidence of resisting change in Lutheran schools is varied. Some teachers teach as they did 30 years ago. Some school buildings and classrooms look as they did in the 1930’s. Some schools resist the use of computers, audiovisual aids, and new teaching techniques. This resistance to change has been
obviated by the onset of a few Lutheran schools that consider themselves "classical" schools. For them, change is a reversion to education as it was many years ago, believing it to be better.

Like it or not, however, there have been many changes in Lutheran schools over the past half-century and many more in the congregations that operate them. Not every school has changed, and of those that have, not all have changed in the same ways. Many changes have been superficial (e.g., the width of neckties, the length of skirts and hair, the type of student desk, and whiteboards instead of chalkboards). Other changes have affected Lutheran schools, but have been outside their control (e.g., the secularization of society, global warming, decreased support by families for education, the urbanization of rural areas, and, tragically, terrorists hijacking airplanes and blowing up buildings). From a national perspective, seven significant changes have occurred in Lutheran schools over the past 50 years. These changes are in the spheres of purpose, integration, numbers, accountability, trust, educators, and funding.

**Purpose**

The most significant change, because it changes the very nature of Lutheran schools, is in purpose. When The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod (LCMS) was formed, member congregations were required by the denomination to operate schools. The purpose of schooling was to educate member children in Scripture and the doctrines and practices of the Lutheran church. Children were expected to memorize significant portions of the Bible and Luther’s Small Catechism, as well as hymns, liturgical forms, and prayers. In this way congregations and member families were complying with the Lord’s command “teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:20, NIV). Congregations operated schools to propagate the faith and to cultivate new, educated leaders for the congregation and the denomination as a whole. As children were taught Bible stories and Catechism doctrines, they applied the lessons to their lives through written sentences and paragraphs. The goal was to provide a solid, Christian education for children so they would “not depart from it.” However, some complained that this schooling didn’t affect student lives as they thought it should. Students learned about God’s Word and the Catechism but had difficulty putting it to use in their lives. Although the Gospel was central to Lutheran schooling, it was the law that was being emphasized. Learning Biblical information became the rule in religion classes, rather than rejoicing in the Gospel. After all, students came from Lutheran families and knew the Gospel, did they not? The purpose of Lutheran
schools, consequently, was to nurture that faith and to “make disciples.”

In the last half century, the number of students in Lutheran schools has rapidly increased. Most of the new students have come from non-member families. The number of students from outside the sponsoring congregation has gradually increased, now constituting more than half of all students enrolled. In some schools, particularly in the cities, the percentage of member children in the school is as low as 5%. The traditional assumption that Lutheran school students knew the Gospel because they learned it in Lutheran homes is no longer true, if, in fact, it ever was. Congregations began to wonder whether congregational resources should be used to educate children who weren’t present at Sunday worship.

Fortunately, pastors and teachers gradually began to realize the opportunity such enrollment trends provided the congregation. As a result, congregations no longer require non-members to appear at a congregational board meeting to plead for the acceptance of their child into the school. Lutheran schools now market themselves to their communities and warmly welcome all non-member students who apply, and, of course, pay the tuition. The opportunity provided by the influx of non-Lutherans is obvious: evangelism. People who are not Lutheran choose to send their children to Lutheran schools, and many of them are unchurched or only nominally churched. No longer are non-Lutherans sought after; instead they are coming of their own volition in droves. To evangelize them, Lutheran schools need to emphasize the Gospel message of a loving God who gave his only Son to be sacrificed for our sins. Through that

Through the Holy Spirit, many children and their parents meet Jesus through the efforts of Lutheran schools. Lutheran schools now have a dual purpose: evangelizing and subsequently discipling.

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1 All statistics contained in this article were provided by The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod’s Board for Congregational Services, Department of School Ministry. Current statistics were taken from the 2000-2001 Statistical Report Summary: Schools and Early Childhood Centers of The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod. Previous report summaries provided additional data.
powerful message of love, the Holy Spirit works miracles in the hearts of unbelievers.

Non-member children don’t need to learn how to be disciples until they first become believers. Thus, the purpose of Lutheran schools has expanded beyond nurturing faith to introducing children to Jesus Christ. A true story from a Lutheran school exemplifies this new emphasis in Lutheran schools. “Jimmy,” from a non-member family, was really excited to go to school chapel in the sanctuary. His teacher noticed the five-year-old’s excitement and asked, “Jimmy, why are you so excited to go to God’s house?” Jimmy responded, “I hope he’s home. I want to meet him.” And, through the Holy Spirit, many children and their parents meet Jesus through the efforts of Lutheran schools. Lutheran schools now have a dual purpose: evangelizing and subsequently discipling.

Integration

Lutheran schools have changed from having a homogeneous student body of only Lutherans to a heterogeneous student body. Lutheran schools have integrated many different types of students into their school families. As noted above, many more non-Lutherans now attend Lutheran schools, compared to the past. Most of them come from protestant denominations. Approximately 12% indicate no church home at all. A growing number of churched, non-Christian children are enrolled in Lutheran schools in order to gain what their parents perceive to be a quality education. Included in this group are Jews, Mormons, and Buddhists, among others. Typically, and appropriately, Lutheran schools require all students, including non-Christian children, to attend religion classes and school chapel services and to participate in classroom prayers and devotions.

The backgrounds of families now integrated into and served by Lutheran schools are also quite diverse. The following examples are illustrative. A teenaged boy was sent to a Lutheran school to avoid incarceration. A junior high aged city gang leader attended a Lutheran school because his parents felt they no longer could control him. The daughter of a prostitute enrolled because the social service agency said they would remove the girl from the home if she didn’t enroll in a religious school. The daughter of a migrant family attended for a few months while the crop was being harvested. One small girl was being sexually and physically abused at home by her mother’s boyfriend. The sons of an upright, long time member of the congregation showed up at school with bruises in strange places and weak excuses. Two gay women enrolled “their” child. The diversity of families is certainly not a negative factor, but increasing numbers of children come from dysfunctional family
backgrounds.

Diversity is also reflected by the different races and languages integrated into today’s Lutheran school. The third grade teacher is surprised that her new student can speak no English. Giving examples in class from the Bible or American culture raises questions from an Arab student. In class, Jewish children ask if they can be saved. Understanding Black English presents a challenge to teachers raised in a different subculture. Today 83% of the students in Lutheran schools are white, a drop of about 15% in the last few decades. Black students make up 7% of Lutheran school students. Hispanics make up 4%, Asian students 3%, and the fastest growing ethnic group, classified as “other,” makes up 3%.

As in public schools, a large number of children enrolled and blended into Lutheran schools live in homes that are broken, break apart, and/or are rebuilt with a new father or mother. Single parent families were not common to Lutheran schools fifty years ago, but families and their children who are students in Lutheran schools have changed. The Lutheran nuclear family is no longer the norm in LCMS schools.

**Numbers**

Lutheran elementary schools are larger today, but class size is smaller. At the present time, there are an average of approximately 180 students in each school and 20 students in each classroom. In 1958 each school had 110 students and 29 students in each classroom. There were 138,338 students in Lutheran schools, compared to the 190,000 in Lutheran elementary schools presently. However, there were 1,267 elementary schools operating in 1958 and only 1,031 today. Fewer schools, but more students! In addition, today the LCMS has 80 high schools with 16,462 students and 1,301 freestanding early childhood centers with approximately 100,000 children in attendance.

The number of elementary schools decreased from 1,350 in 1965, the greatest number of Lutheran schools in history, to 980 in 1995. This is a decrease of approximately 1% each year. Since 1995, however, the number of schools has consistently increased about 1% each year.

A relatively recent phenomenon is the advent of the “super” school, an elementary school of more than 500 students. At present there are more than 50 of these “super” schools. This type of school re-invents the role of administration. Assistant principals, section leaders, and other Lutheran school administrative positions are being developed to meet the needs of students in these schools. Although common in the public sector, these positions were previously almost nonexistent in Lutheran schools.
Moser

Accountability

Everyone seems to have expectations and assumptions about Lutheran schools and those who serve in them. Fifty years ago, most educators were expected to have earned a two-year degree only if they taught upper grade students. State certification was neither expected nor desired. Teachers were respected because they were teachers and principals because they were principals. No longer, however, will one receive respect because of title (i.e., teacher, principal). It must be earned, and earned according to someone else’s expectations and assumptions. A teacher’s suggestions no longer are followed because he or she is the teacher, but they may be followed if the teacher is Teacher of the Year, has an earned an M.A., and has 20 years of experience. A principal is expected to have earned appropriate advanced degrees, state andchurch teaching certification, as well as administrative certification. The administrator is also expected to be an expert in marketing and an effective business manager. All educators are expected to be conversant in the most recent educational innovations, use them in the classroom, and explain them to parents.

In this age of accountability it is only reasonable that Lutheran schools developed their own process of determining quality. Thus National Lutheran School Accreditation (NLSA) was born. From a dozen schools accredited by NLSA in 1987, more than half of all Lutheran elementary schools are accredited by NLSA today. An increasing number of early childhood centers are seeking this recognition as well. Many schools pursue accreditation not only through NLSA, but also by means of state and secular regional accreditation agencies (e.g., North Central Association).

Nowadays, there are many regulations directed at Lutheran schools. State governments pass mandates that require compliance on the part of Lutheran schools. The federal government has legal requirements related to sexism, discrimination, and harassment, to name just a few. The city and county regulate health, fire safety, electrical wiring, and parking. School leaders of the past would probably wonder where the freedoms so proudly proclaimed by our country’s founders have gone. Most of the regulations were developed for good reason, of course, but collectively they put a considerable burden on Lutheran schools. And Lutheran schools are accountable for all of them.

The Lutheran principal of today may bear the brunt of much of this accountability. It is burdensome just to digest these regulations, much less to guard against the violation of any of them. Perhaps this new, imposed accountability is one of the primary reasons why there are so many vacancies in administrative positions.
Influenced by the well-known "Lutheran guilt" syndrome, administrators of the past were internally pressured into doing a good job. The guilt condition remains, but the contemporary Lutheran administrator must deal with the added strain of external expectations and assumptions.

Trust

People today seemingly trust each other less, even, apparently, God. In former times it was believed that God placed his workers where he wanted them. Face-to-face interviews or interviews on the telephone or by video were not necessary. There was no need for a teacher to visit the new location to see if he or she would enjoy where God was calling. It was believed that if a call was received, it was God calling and that his call should be accepted unless there was a compelling reason to stay. Salary was not a point of negotiation; it was trusted that God would provide. This perspective was particularly true of graduates from Synod's colleges. It was assumed that they would accept placement. Seemly, God is not trusted as much anymore. Some graduates today proclaim, "Here I am, Lord, send me." But then they add, "Just don't tell me where to go." Consequently, schools more than 500 miles from their homes are not considered, resulting in many Lutheran schools, even in Hawaii, begging for synodically educated teachers.

This lack of trust is evident in relationships between Lutheran school educators and parents, pastors, board members, church leaders, and school administrators. Fifty years ago parents would respond to suggestions made by the teacher. They came to teacher conferences and made sure they were home to host the teacher on a home visit. Today fewer teachers make home visits, partially because they are afraid to visit many homes. If a teacher attempts to employ an educational innovation, parents want the teacher to prove to them that it works for their child. They seemingly lack confidence that the teacher knows what he or she is doing. Society and administrators require background checks for all staff members. They are unwilling to assume that the workers are trustworthy. Teachers are afraid to provide reinforcement for behavior, good or bad. If a child is hugged or patted on the back for good work, parents and administrators question if the motivation to do so is proper. There are fewer hugs in Lutheran schools today. A swat on a child's rear end for misbehavior today could lead to litigation and removal from ministry. Restrictions on teachers and administrators are much greater nowadays, primarily due to a lack of trust. Quite obviously, most of the restrictions serve a good purpose, but they unfortunately also serve to restrict those who, as Lutheran educators, minister to children and their families.
Many more Lutheran school administrators are dismissed from their positions than years ago, when it took either death or the acceptance of another call for one to leave a congregation. Today they might be dismissed because they didn’t raise enough money from gifts or sales or because the school board felt they weren’t communicating effectively with them or for countless other seemingly trivial reasons. The concept that God himself placed a worker in ministry and that people ordinarily should trust God’s judgment is no longer accepted unless the school is growing and the tuition being generated is defraying an increasing amount of the school’s operational cost.

**Educators**

Historically, most of the teachers in Lutheran schools were men. All of the school administrators were men. Today 34% of Lutheran elementary school principals and 80% of the teachers are women. The number of female Lutheran school administrators has nearly doubled in the last ten years offering this previously untapped resource of talent a marvelous opportunity to add another level of leadership to their already considerable contributions to the LCMS.

Fifty years ago nearly all of the teachers serving in Lutheran schools were certified by the Synod and called by the congregation to serve in the school and perform a major congregational function. Of course, all of the teachers were members of the congregation that operated the school. Today approximately one out of every five teachers is not Lutheran. Most are Christian, but a growing number do not attend any church. Only 9% of the educators in Lutheran early childhood centers are certified by the Synod, and only about 60% of the elementary and

In the past, certification by the church was more important than state certification. Presently far more Lutheran school educators are certified by the state than by the church. Out of necessity, the Synodical Constitutional mandate that all congregations shall be “served only by rostered pastors and teachers” is ignored. Seemingly, called teachers are not valued as highly as they once were.
secondary teachers are certified. In the past, certification by the church was more important than state certification. Presently far more Lutheran school educators are certified by the state than by the church. Out of necessity, the Synodical Constitutional mandate that all congregations shall be “served only by rostered pastors and teachers” is ignored. Seemingly, called teachers are not valued as highly as they once were.

The relationship between the congregation and the educator has changed also. Not too many years ago it was not uncommon for the principal to teach two or three grades full time, play the organ for church services and funerals and weddings, direct both adult and youth choirs, coach all school athletic teams, serve as voters and council secretary, be youth director and Sunday School superintendent, and fold the Sunday bulletins. Most contemporary Lutheran school principals are full time administrators with few congregational duties other than attending or occasionally leading Sunday adult Bible classes. Called workers were expected to have a major congregational responsibility in addition to school duties. Today few teachers, especially in larger Lutheran schools, are expected or need to accept major congregational duties beyond classroom teaching. Youth directors, Directors of Christian Education, music directors, and athletic directors are called to perform ministerial functions in the congregation that were once included in the call of the Lutheran teacher.

**Funding**

Providing a Christian education for the children of member families was once considered a responsibility of the whole congregation. A large percentage of the offerings received on Sunday morning were directed toward supporting the Lutheran school. Christian education today is perceived primarily as a responsibility of parents. If parents don’t pay tuition, their children don’t receive a Christian education. It is worth noting that in our secular, “me first” society, the education of children is still considered a common good and therefore a responsibility of all members of society, not just the parents. Only in the private sector and increasingly, unfortunately, in Christian schools are parents expected to pay the entire cost.

Traditionally, it was the congregation that funded Lutheran schools. Today nearly all LCMS schools charge tuition of both members and non-members. In many schools the congregation provides no financial support for the Lutheran school, with the administrator being expected to raise the funds primarily through tuition, but also through grants, gifts, sales, and other fundraisers. Nationally, the sponsoring congregation provides about half of elementary school costs. Annual
tuition fees are approximately $2000. Interestingly, schools that rely on tuition as their primary source of income tend to pay their teachers more and evangelize just as effectively as schools supported by their congregations.

More Changes To Come

One may assume that the changes that have occurred in the past half-century will continue, and perhaps even accelerate. If no disasters, calamities, or inventions change the direction of the trends indicated above, the following predictions for the future may not be all that far-fetched:

1. Lutheran schools will become less Lutheran and more "generically" Christian. They will continue to provide a "quality Christian education," but one not so steeped in the Lutheran tradition.

2. Lutheran schools will increasingly split from their congregations. Teachers will be employed, not called. Few, if any, teachers will have congregational responsibilities as a part of their employment agreement. Congregations will not provide funding for the school. Member children will constitute a statistically insignificant portion of the student body.

3. Schools will continue to evangelize. Teachers will continue to teach religion from Lutheran textbooks. Pastors will be seen more regularly in the school, inviting non-members to congregational activities. Evangelism will be seen as the primary reason congregations operate schools.

4. Efforts will be made to disciple teachers so they can effectively disciple children. A primary role of the pastor and school administrator will be to acquaint teachers with Lutheran doctrine and practice so that it may be accurately taught. Still, a majority of the teachers in Lutheran schools will not be members of the operating congregation and will lack background in Lutheran theology.

The Lord will continue to bless Lutheran schools and work miracles through the Word proclaimed in them. They will grow and be a continuing blessing to their communities, even as they change to serve God's people in our ever-changing world.
5. Men will be rare in the teaching ranks of Lutheran schools. Unless a “system break” occurs, the only male presence in the school will be the pastor. And some even speculate that the pastoral presence may not be that of a male.

6. Lutheran schools will continue to grow and to prosper. They will become even better known in our communities and in our nation as places where children will receive a safe, moral, quality education.

Now What?

The author doesn’t relish making the foregoing predictions. The changes that have occurred over the past 50 years, however, suggest them. There is the temptation to wish for Lutheran schools to return to the past. That won’t happen, and it shouldn’t. Those who serve in Lutheran schools can be a pivotal force in keeping Lutheran schools Lutheran. The Lutheran schools of today, and of tomorrow, do and can continue to provide exceptional opportunities to evangelize and to disciple. If a focus is maintained on the purposes of Lutheran schools, they will remain strong and Lutheran.

A few decades ago the author asked a coworker for his predictions about Lutheran schools in the future. His response was, “That’s easy. There won’t be any.” He believed, based on the condition of Lutheran schools of that time, that Lutheran schools would cease to exist and do so in a relatively short period of time. That didn’t happen. That won’t happen. The Lord will continue to bless Lutheran schools and work miracles through the Word proclaimed in them. They will grow and be a continuing blessing to their communities, even as they change to serve God’s people in our ever-changing world.
Being Alone in a School Filled with People

Two men were riding a bicycle-built-for-two. Along their journey they came upon a long, steep hill. After much struggling, they finally reached the top. Out of breath from his furious pedaling, the man in front turned to the other and gasped “Wow, that sure was a steep climb!”

The man in back replied, “Yes, and if I hadn’t kept the brakes on all the way, we certainly would have rolled back down the hill.”

Some of the tasks in an administrator’s journey through the school year are fun because they’re done as a team—a team that is pedaling together. But many are not. Some of the toughest, most discouraging days for a principal aren’t brought on by the workload itself but by the feeling that he is pedaling alone. In a school filled with people, it’s easy for a principal to feel alone.

Ralph Waldo Emerson’s statement back in the 1840’s seems to speak to administrators today: “You shall have joy or you shall have power, said God; you shall not have both.” While it’s questionable whether or not an administrator has much real power, the point fits. There seems to be an inverse relationship between happiness and being in charge of a large group of people. Feelings of loneliness are common among principals.

Part of the problem is that no one, with the possible exception of another principal, understands the problems of a principal. The number of tasks, the huge range of areas for which he is responsible, the number of meetings, the expectations of boards, the problems caused by students, the worries about teachers, the concerns brought on by parents, and all the headaches caused by things over which the principal has no control are overwhelming. No one really understands the plight of a principal. But then, no one really understands the plight of a farmer or a truck driver or a secretary or a nurse or a teacher either.

The lack of success, real or perceived, can be devastating. It’s important for administrators to realize that success within a school can’t always be measured in measurable ways. As Albert Einstein observed, “The things that really count in life can’t be counted.” Success in schools comes as a result of the Lord working day by day in the students. It comes through the consistent, faithful, sometimes plodding, efforts of teachers and principals. It’s observed not in glorious revelations but in small, subtle glimpses. Because successes aren’t easily recognizable, it’s easy for principals to feel unsuccessful, discouraged, unfulfilled, and lonely.
Administrative Talk

Principals are often reluctant to share their feelings of loneliness. They realize the need for others to perceive them as role models of strength and self-assurance. They feel that they need to have the answers for other people, not the questions. As a result, they keep their feelings inside.

In Sometimes I Hurt: Reflections on the Book of Job, Mildred Tengbom writes about the conversation between Job and his wife after the terrible losses they suffered. The book of Job records the dialogue between the two as beginning with her words to him. Her outburst indicates she isn't concerned about how much Job is hurting. Her accusing words are followed by her advice, “Curse God, and die.” She seems to be blaming Job for what has happened. She is of little help. But as Tengbom suggests, part of the problem was Job’s withdrawal in the first place. Job desperately needed to unload his feelings on someone who would try to understand. Instead he withdrew to a section of their property that served as a garbage dump. His silence put up a wall between himself and others. Tengbom concludes, “Those who complain that no one understands them need to ask themselves if one of the reasons is because they have not dared to bare their souls to others” (pp. 61-62).

Sometimes a hurting person is helped not so much by the advice given by a friend or coworker, but by the simple act of opening up to someone and releasing the pent-up feelings of frustration. Having someone who cares and listens well also helps the sufferer to verbalize the problems. As a result, the sufferer can view the situation more objectively and see the remedy more clearly.

The words of Isaiah 40 apply: “Those who trust in the Lord will have their strength renewed. They will rise on wings like eagles; they will run and not get weary; they will walk and not faint.” At first glance the verse evokes images of soaring eagles, flying effortlessly, buoyed up by the updrafts of air. Humans too have their moments of triumph in which they soar victoriously through life’s events, buoyed up by God who empowers them to stay aloft. Principals are occasionally granted brief moments when things work just right. Those moments are akin to soaring on wings like eagles and are to be cherished. But the latter part of the passage brings to mind two images other than flying: running and walking. Both are more common to principals. Principals do a lot of running, figuratively at least. They also do a lot of walking, stumbling through disagreeable and disheartening tasks that arise. And sometimes they are barely able to keep standing. Those times, the times of discouragement, disappointment, and loneliness, are all too common. But at those times the Lord promises to grant strength. Administrators are not good administrators because they’re strong. They’re good administrators because the Lord works powerfully through them.

In a school filled with people, the lives of the individuals that make up the school can be lonely. But there is hope, and there is divine assurance. We aren’t pedaling alone.

It’s 2 a.m., you’re in a hotel room, and you can’t sleep. Suddenly you think, “I’ll join my Bible class right now.” Or the kids have gone to school and, even though you are still in your pajamas, you head to the basement for your Bible Study group. Virtual or reality? A virtual classroom in the local congregation can help participants to think globally and can adjust to a society working with busy schedules, transient employment, and more mobility than any previous generation. Virtual classrooms can help the church provide Biblical studies to anyone, at any location, at any time. Participation is enhanced because participants are studying the Bible at their convenience and on their own schedule.

Virtual classrooms have their roots in distance learning, now active in many universities across the United States. The use of computers in education is a hot topic and organizations are rushing to join the online process (Gibson & Gibson, 1995). Although there are skeptics of computer learning, some research suggests this type of education can be as effective as traditional face to face instruction (Distance Education Guide 1, 1995).

Planning

Organizations starting a virtual environment should identify currently established resources. These resources may include a website, computer equipment, and networks. Organizations need not strive for high-tech options; low-tech options can provide meaningful studies to meet the needs of the students. High tech does not always provide the best results. Likewise, a one-size-fits-all approach does not take into account the needs of each particular organization (Ko & Rossen, 2001). Careful planning is critical to guarantee success in any virtual environment.

The planning starts with a Self-Directed Work Team (SDWT) building a ministry, recruiting teachers, enrolling students, and evaluating the ministry. The first step is to develop an excellent strategic plan. This plan is a set of concepts, procedures, and tools to help leaders plan and think strategically (Bryson, 1995). The strategic planning process takes time, but it is time well spent. A good plan will help a SDWT eliminate distractions, fads, and trendy thinking. The plan should also focus on the mission and goals of the congregation.

Once an excellent strategic plan is developed; the next step is the recruitment of a staff. Teachers require proper and extensive training. The biggest failures result from improper training and support to meet the needs of the faculty and staff.
(Gibson & Gibson, 1995). The training must offer hands-on experience for both teachers and students (Distance Education Guide 2, 1995). Teachers and support staff will need a description of their ministry. Thumbauer (1999) suggests that congregations provide a variety of opportunities and training experiences, including workshops and classes, conversations with experienced volunteers, and practice sessions. The teacher’s role must be clear during the training session. The teacher must understand the process of building a learning community with online students. Unlike in a university course, the community being built not only affects the subject matter presented, but must also build each other spiritually. Jesus states in Matthew 18:20 that “when two or three come together in my name, there I am with them.”

**Presentation**

An online teacher must choose a class presentation that would meet the needs of the student without compromising class content. Correct presentation is very important in a virtual environment. There are two ways to set up classroom presentations. An *asynchronous* course presentation can be accessed twenty-four hours, seven days a week. Students participate in discussion groups, bulletin board threads, or listener discussions. Students answer the questions an instructor posts on a virtual bulletin board and are encouraged to make comments about other student responses (Ko & Rossen, 2001). *Synchronous* learning provides a time when students interact in a live virtual environment. Through synchronous learning students interact by using bulletin boards and electronic mail. Students meet together in a chat room to discuss the assignment and to share thoughts and ideas. This approach provides a feeling of being in a traditional classroom without having to attend classes physically (Ko & Rossen).

**Students’ Success**

Students’ success depends on two factors: the student’s orientation and the methods used by the congregation. First, a congregation must instruct the students about the minimum requirements for participation. Second, the congregation must provide a syllabus with explanations on how to handle materials and activities in the classroom. The topics for the student orientation should include a general introduction, requirements for computer equipment and software, computer skills needed, an introduction to course management, and the first assignment (Ko & Rossen, 2001, pp. 200-203).

**Program**

Once the teachers have been recruited and trained and the students have become familiar with the process, classes may begin. Online Bible studies should complement the congregational on-site Bible studies. In addition, the topics of these studies should be congruent with the overall mission and vision of the church. Classes should meet for no more than six weeks, thus keeping momentum and an
interest in the class. Starting slowly and adding more classes will enhance the success of the ministry and work out any complications.

Publicity is a key to this innovative ministry. Congregational members need to know the flexibility of a virtual classroom environment. They need to understand that participants will have access to the class at their leisure. Congregational members may be skeptical of anything new, so publicity must show the goals, objectives, and opportunities of this new ministry. Publicity done right will lure participants to learn more and join in.

Conclusion

For a virtual classroom to become a reality and a successful congregational ministry, it must rely on consistent and integrated efforts of the SDWT, teacher, and students. This team of people, together with the Holy Spirit, will produce studies that are meaningful and life applicable. The one constant factor in all areas of life, including education, is change. Technologies have presented many changes in education. How a congregation adapts to these changes may determine their success. In his book *Who Moved My Cheese?*, Spencer Johnson (1998) describes key factors about change: change happens, anticipate change, monitor change, adapt to change quickly, change what you are doing, enjoy change, be ready to change quickly, and enjoy it again and again. Change is not easy for congregations, but it is necessary to effectively make disciples of all nations.†

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References


Have You Joined the Movement?

Things are looking up. By now it seems that nearly all fine arts teachers in American schools are aware of the National Standards for Arts Education. A great many administrators at all levels are keyed in to the guidelines established by arts education organizations, adapted in various forms by each state’s board of education, and validated by most educational associations in the US. (It is still a challenge to remember that these standards are for *all* students—"every young American"—in each fine arts discipline.

All schools seem to have some form of visual arts in their curriculum. Most schools have some music experiences. Many schools even venture into theater/drama in some form. But do we find experiences and learning in dance? Has dance/movement education become a regular part of each child’s development from kindergarten through twelfth grade? Where does it happen for your students . . . or does it at all? Do we even know the learning goals we should be striving for?

Dance Standards, Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve

1. *Artistic Perception*
   Processing, analyzing, and responding to sensory information through the language and skills unique to the arts.

   **Dance descriptor**
   Students develop communication skills that include body awareness, motor efficiency, and multisensory integration. They explore the elements of dance (time, space, and energy) and perform and describe dance movement using the skills and terminology of dance.

2. *Creative Expression*
   Creating, performing, and participating in the arts.

   **Dance descriptor**
   Students use choreographic principles and processes to express perceptions, feelings, images, and thought. They create and communicate meaning through dance improvisation, composition, and performance.
3. **Historical and Cultural Context**  
   Understanding historical contributions and cultural dimensions of the arts.

**Dance descriptor**  
Students acquire knowledge of and build understanding about human diversity—differences and commonalities—through dance. They investigate the role of dance in historical and contemporary cultures throughout the world.

4. **Aesthetic Valuing**  
   Responding to, analyzing, and making judgments about works in the arts.

**Dance descriptor**  
Students analyze, interpret, derive meaning from, and critically assess works of dance and the performance of dancers based on learned aesthetic principles and cultural context.

5. **Connections, Relations, Applications**  
   Connecting and applying what is learned in each art form to learning in other art forms, subject areas, and careers.

**Dance descriptor**  
Students apply what they learn in dance to learning across disciplines. They develop competencies in problem solving, communication skills, and management of time and resources, all of which contribute to lifelong learning and career skills.

**Dance Across the Curriculum**  
There certainly have been dance activities within the physical development curriculum. That’s the best place to start. If there are learning expectations in that area in your school, then take time to evaluate those experiences. Are they provided at every level? How well do they meet or surpass the standards for each level? Along with improving that area, however, we must look at the infusion of dance/movement experiences into other areas of the curriculum. We must also keep reality in mind. Rarely will there be a person with dance/movement expertise on the faculty of a Lutheran school at any level. All classroom teachers should be encouraged to seek out assistance from experienced people in the congregation or surrounding community to use as resources. At the same time, we need to realize that some integration of movement can be done by us all if we set that as a priority for the benefit of our students.

   If teachers focus on specific ways dance curriculum connects with mainstream classroom concepts and the content curriculum of other disciplines, they will discover some great possibilities for the enhancement of lessons in virtually every
area of learning. There are ways to include dance/movement as a skill for creative problem-solving and higher level thinking and ways to enhance understanding of various content areas as well as to serve as a form of skill development in its own right.

Use these objectives to help spark ideas for the incorporation of dance/movement into your lessons:

- Students can find value in the creative process while learning about dance as a content area and gaining enhanced understanding of the content of other disciplines.
- Students can experience a variety of creative activities in what becomes a process-oriented unit.
- Students will be able to find connections from dance to everyday life as well as to their classroom learning.
- Students will experience and be validated, each in his own creative process, recognizing dance as a way to interpret, record, and communicate an experience.
- Students can experience some movement intended to facilitate specific intellectual concepts; other movement will be designed specifically to create choreography or simply to enjoy the feeling of being in the body.
- Students can construct a variety of creations, within guidelines, to facilitate various kinds and levels of understanding.
- Students will become aware of space in respect to other performers and audience, as well as the space implications related to environmental constraints.
- Students will be able to observe the creative endeavors of others and give verbal feedback in the form of specific positive reinforcement.

Many teachers may be out of their comfort zone in this area. We probably did not learn with dance/movement as an integral part of our own school experience. Our responsibility, however, is to make learning for our students the best possible experience we can—providing for all types of learners and teaching to the whole child. Enhance your lessons through the use of dance/movement. Get your students moving!
"I had no idea you ended up becoming a teacher!"
"We haven't seen each other for over 20 years!"
"Can you believe we have been serving in Lutheran congregations in the same state all these years and we didn't even realize it?"

These and countless other quotes can be heard ringing through the halls of schools, hotels and convention centers every time Lutheran educators gather together to grow, celebrate, and become reacquainted each year. It is no surprise that DCEs, teachers, and administrators look forward to coming together for a variety of purposes. Even ministry can feel lonely at times! The day-to-day routines can become monotonous. Long stretches of time often separate occasions to mingle with other professional educators or in some cases, *anyone* outside the immediate confines of the building. Even within the place of ministry, there are precious few opportunities to fully develop relationships with colleagues.

Why do professional Lutheran educators need to gather? The classroom becomes a good model for us. Children come to school from a context rich in social interaction. Home life will usually include plenty of time and activities with parents, siblings, and perhaps extended relatives. Most children have friends in their neighborhoods and activities outside of school such as baseball, soccer, dancing, or church groups. However, school offers additional unique opportunities for students to grow spiritually, physically, emotionally, and socially *because* they can do so with other students. Peer coaching, collaboration, mentoring, and team cooperation are just a few examples of how learning is facilitated by participants relating to each other in person. Socialization inspires learning. Students benefit from an environment that thrives on interaction.

Sadly, many Lutheran educators do not have ample opportunities to gather together with the same goals in mind. Because they are actively engaged in their ministries each day of the year—and balancing work and personal time is always a challenge—it is often difficult to find ways of justifying additional social events, meetings, workshops, conferences, and other more informal gatherings. Priorities of time and tasks sometimes prevent necessary interaction and learning with fellow educators. One important dimension of growth and the resulting productivity are lost.

Imagine a classroom with only one student. Though benefitting from quality instruction, generous resources, and even motivating teacher, the child will lack certain benefits that come...
from relating to other students in the learning process. Social interaction and cooperative learning are important ingredients in the big picture of education. Similarly, Lutheran educators need the added value associated with gathering together to learn. Anything less than that is an incomplete professional experience.

From the beginning of her ministry, a Lutheran educator must develop a plan for professional, personal, and spiritual development. Among the objectives in such a plan should be regular opportunities to gather with fellow staff members, other Lutheran educators, and colleagues in related areas of education. Each year should contain specific plans to participate in several types of gatherings. Following are some suggestions.

**Faculty/staff meetings:** Besides what might sometimes seem like mundane business, these events should be seen by participants as important gatherings of colleagues. Elements of spiritual, social, and professional interaction and growth are usually incorporated into successful staff meetings. Make sure to allow enough time for all of this to take place. Many staffs use portions of shortened school days.

**Area forums:** One of the best ways to conduct ongoing professional growth and develop “support systems” among Lutheran educators is to mix together teachers, administrators, and DCEs from several congregations for social and educational events. Ideas may include combining staff meetings, visiting other schools during the day, teacher exchanges, “ministry clusters” (educators with similar areas of ministry), and small group Bible studies. Leadership for these events should be divided up and shared.

**District/state conferences:** Most regional and state organizations in the church bodies conduct annual conferences, sometimes geared to specific areas of ministry and other times open to all church workers. These events must be planned and implemented with everyone in mind. All Lutheran educators should benefit from participation in at least one of these gatherings a year. These are important “bonding” events that uplift ministry in that region and set the stage for additional area gatherings.

**National events:** Though not as easy to schedule or fund as many of the above, national gatherings bring together as broad a cross-section of Lutheran educators as possible for experiences that are usually unique because of their scope. More topics can be covered, resources shared, and speakers heard in one place than anywhere else. Imagine worshipping with 4000 others who share in ministry! The LEA Convocation, National Lutheran Administrators Conference, ALSS Conference, and National DCE Conference are just a few examples of such events. Be sure to include national conventions of other professional organizations such as ASCD, NAESP, ALDE and NASSP in your plans for future years. Information about all of the above are included on LEA’s conference calendar at www.lea.org.

Gathering together ... an integral part of every Lutheran educator’s professional, spiritual, and personal growth plan. Make it a priority in your growth plans!
The Day the Laughter Died...

Everything changed on September 11!
That has been the consensus of many people as we continue to regroup and refocus after that horrible day. Classrooms, family rooms, staff rooms, and worship places are all different now. And almost everyone—children, youth, and adults—is also more fearful and cautious as they go about their daily tasks. It is still true that “God so loved the world...” but we sure do wonder about how safe this world of his is anymore!

Some have even said that laughter died on September 11. Not long ago we lived in a “laugh-out-loud” world. Letterman, Leno, Keillor, and others saw to that. But how can we laugh and smile and joke now, in the midst of these senseless tragedies? Let me suggest why we can, and must, continue to laugh and smile and joke, especially during these trying times.

We can continue to celebrate life today because laughter did not die on September 11—laughter died on that first Good Friday!

And laughter was resurrected on that first Easter Sunday—when Christ rose triumphantly from the grave! Jesus had the last laugh on the devil—and the first laugh again for us after his Resurrection!

We all know by faith that we live on “this side” of the Resurrection. Easter has happened and will continue to happen each day in our lives.

Even on the Good Friday days, like September 11.
We all continue to have Good Friday days. Because of sin, we constantly struggle with failure and pain and disease and death and, yes, even terrible terrorists and war.
As Isaiah reminds us in chapter 40:30-31, “... but those who trust the Lord will find new strength. They will be strong like eagles soaring upward on wings. They will walk and run, and never get tired.”

Last month a friend of mine gave me a striking gift he brought from the Middle East. It captures so well the struggles and the celebrations in Christ in this world of ours. The gift he gave me is a bullet which was found on a road in his war-torn land. The only difference about this bullet is that it has been re-shaped into the form of a cross. Good Fridays and Easters go together—in his land as well as in ours!

No, laughter did not die on September 11. And laughter
will never die because of the resurrection of our Lord, Christ Jesus. Christ has come to us to bring us life... and to enable us to live it to the full, in the midst of all of our tears, and, oh yes, in the midst of our laughter, too!

Look around you today. Who is it in your life that needs a special smile, or hug, or words of joy? What are we waiting for? Laughter is alive... in Christ Jesus!†

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The Truly Important People

Take this quiz:
1. Name the five wealthiest people in the world.
2. Name the last five Heisman trophy winners.
3. Name the last five winners of the Miss America contest.
4. Name ten people who have won the Nobel or Pulitzer prize.
5. Name the last half dozen Academy Award winners for best actor and actress.
6. Name the last decade’s worth of World Series winners.

How did you do? The point is, none of us remember the headliners of yesterday. These are no second-rate achievers. They are the best in their fields. But the applause dies. Awards tarnish. Achievements are forgotten. Accolades and certificates are buried with their owners.

Here’s another quiz. See how you do on this one:
1. List a few teachers who aided your journey through school.
2. Name three friends who have helped you through a difficult time.
3. Name five people who have taught you something worthwhile.
4. Think of a few people who have made you feel appreciated and special.
5. Think of five people you enjoy spending time with.
6. Name half a dozen heroes whose stories have inspired you.

Easier? The lesson is that the people who make a difference in your life are not the ones with the most credentials, the most money, or the most awards. They are the ones that care.

From the e-mail box, Original Author Unknown
This Is Better than Conflict Resolution!

I have received my first notice of them already this year; have you? You know, they are the flyers promoting world peace in our classrooms. They suggest conferences and speakers and literature to give us the quick and easy steps to conflict resolution and problem solving. They sometimes even go beyond active listening and “I” messages. Partner presentations include ideas on anger management and restorative justice. They are popular and ever present because inevitably our havens of learning are interrupted by that dreaded fear—the discipline situation. Some call it sin.

I am afraid that all too often a student’s disruptive behavior is just the tip of the iceberg. As teaching ministers, our reaction to the student’s offense might prove to be a bigger obstacle for eternity than the original inciting incident was to our classroom. Let me explain.

When I am bothered by a student’s misbehavior, my first priority is usually to stop the behavior. Granted, at times the situation warrants such weight due to the clear and present danger it might be to that student or to others. But I suggest that there is ultimately a greater priority for us as teaching ministers—that of reconciliation.

Webster’s tells us that to reconcile means to “restore to friendship or harmony.” How often do we merely settle for a quiet and orderly classroom or a compliant and obedient student? If I read the Bible correctly, the Pharisees were much more interested in demanding that others follow their rules than they were in developing any kind of relationship with them. Sin in any form is a breach of relationship. It severs and cuts. It divides and separates. Fortunately, God has provided a remedy for such occasions: “All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us” (II Cor. 5:18-20a).

After we discipline students, do we “count their sin against them”? What message do we send to them? Are they back in harmony with us, or are we at war with them, ever vigilant for their next misstep? Do we show that we are interested more in rules or in relationships?
So just how do we convey a message of reconciliation to a fellow forgiven sinner? I suppose the possible responses are many and varied. At the least, it might mean giving a smile and a friendly “hello” the next morning. I submit that this “how to” question will melt away, however, when we realize something first. Have any of our students offended God more than we have?

I don’t think the question is an academic one at this point. And if we further explore the matter, I believe the insights will become empowering. So how has the Master Teacher, the Holy God, reacted and responded to my sinful, selfish thoughts, words, and deeds? How does he reassure me that I am back in his good graces? How does he communicate to me that he is for me and not against me?

Such abiding in God’s Truth of mercy and grace can do no other than move us to bear the fruit of reconciling. What better ambassadors than we who have seen his invitation to come home for supper, we who have tasted the Lord’s goodness, and we who have heard his soft, tender voice in his sweet promises?

Many of our students do not feel or believe they are forgiven. They have parents that count theirs sins of years ago against them. They have taskmaster coaches and slave-driving instructors interested more in achieving some task than in mending two hearts. No wonder they question and doubt if God himself will forgive them. But God is making his appeal through us!

There is some value in conflict resolution techniques. But there is even more value in reconciling. What power lies in these words: “I forgive you.” “I like you.” “I care about you.” “I will not hold this against you.” Before we leave this topic, we should quickly mention the other side of reconciling down here.

“If you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother (student? colleague?) has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother.” Mt. 5:23-24

Power lies in these words too: “I apologize for . . .” “I was wrong to . . .” “Our relationship matters to me.” “Please forgive me.”

My personal and professional experience has been this: when I have focused on reconciling with another, no plan of resolution needed to be created. No new rules or expectations were given. Far greater happened. Two hearts moved toward each other in renewed strength and warmth and love. And good overcame evil. And two people became closer than they were before. Such is the ministry of reconciliation!
Learning Language and Literacy with Children

One of the amazements of early development is the young child’s ability to learn to communicate. Of all the vast array of skills and information a child must master, language and communication are among the most extraordinary.

Even in the early weeks of life, an infant already recognizes the voices of her or his parents, voices she has heard for the past six months since hearing has been possible. Voices he remembers because memory has also been in place since before birth.

Learners and Language

When children arrive in the classroom, whether at six weeks or five years, the challenge of the teacher is to continue the language learning begun in the earliest weeks of life. Children learn to talk, to communicate, by talking. They learn to listen by being listened to, by being validated in their ideas and their expression of those ideas.

The early childhood classroom, whatever the age level, must include opportunities for spontaneous language practice and the free exchange of children’s ideas through oral communication. It follows, then, that the early childhood classroom must be a buzz of conversation and language activity for language learning to take place.

In addition, language is the foundation for literacy. Literacy with books and the written word is built on a strong foundation of literacy and competence with the spoken word. Children whose oral language is poorly developed stand little chance of developing a strong ability in print literacy, reading, and writing.

Supporting Literacy Development

Every teacher is a reading teacher and a writing teacher. This is never more true than in early childhood. And that truth is not reserved for teachers of first or second grade. At all age levels, beginning with infants and toddlers, teachers of young children are teachers of reading and writing.

Does this mean that teachers need to teach the alphabet at two months and letter sounds soon thereafter? Absolutely not! Nor does it mean that the “letter of the week” is appropriate for preschool classes. Children need and deserve more than superficial introductions to the symbol system as a strong
Teaching the Young

foundation for later literacy.

The real support of literacy development is an appreciation for and love of language in all its forms and an attitude of language play with children in the classroom. It also includes an appreciation for the young child’s attempts at communication in all its forms, from the cooing of the infant to the babbling of the toddler, to the words and short sentences of the preschooler, to the beginning conversations of the kindergartner and the continuation of those conversations in the primary grades.

The support of literacy development further includes an encouragement of the young child’s experiments with writing and drawing implements, an appreciation of the child’s early scribbles, an honoring of early attempts at writing letters and parts of the child’s name (no matter how idiosyncratically). It also includes a respect for creative and invented spelling that communicates with consonants, and an acceptance of written communication in its early forms as a prelude to later competent writing.

The Literate Environment

Literacy requires three ingredients: modeling, practice, and a confident encouragement of the child’s development over time. Children need to see and hear language in all its forms. They need to practice using language—both oral and written—for meaningful communication throughout the school day. Children also need to sense and believe the teacher’s confidence that literacy—speaking, listening, reading, and writing—are developing and will continue to develop.

The teacher’s task as a language and literacy model is an important task. The child needs to see the use of language and of reading and writing for functional and real purposes in the classroom. This includes notes written to parents in the infant room and posted on the bulletin board. It also includes reading board books as a lap-time experience from the earliest weeks. It includes signs written to identify block structures in preschool and directives to read (rather than look at) a book in the book center. Modeling also includes making lists of things to be remembered later, giving kindergarten children functional experiences with the purposes of reading and writing. For the primary teacher, modeling involves writing with children and reading as a group, continuing to show children what literate competence looks like.

Literacy practice involves giving children opportunities to read books at all age levels, whether sharing them from the teacher’s lap or listening to a story being read to the entire group or enjoying a favorite book from the comfort of a favorite pillow or chair in the book center. Literacy practice also includes the opportunity to test and practice with all types of writing implements, from crayons to pencils to markers and beyond. Written literacy practice includes the opportunity to be respected as scribbling and writing are tested and practiced over time.

Confident encouragement requires the teacher to be very familiar with the stages
of literacy development and to be able to encourage that development at all points along the way. Confident encouragement requires the teacher to accept the child’s current language ability, print awareness, and writing attempts as the foundation for helping the child to move surely if slowly to the next phase of understanding and competence.

Creating Confident Literacy Learners

Children learn literacy in classrooms and other environments that encourage literacy, expect literacy, and celebrate its unfolding. All children have the capacity for language and literacy learning. How well it develops depends on the adults in the child’s life.

Adults who demonstrate a love of books and of learning from books encourage children to develop a similar disposition toward books and the things to be learned from books. Adults who applaud children’s interest in books and in writing instill a sense of competence and a disposition toward continued striving toward competence. Adults who enjoy the cadences of language and language play with children support an appreciation for the challenge of learning to read and write in a pressure-free environment.

Children take their cues from the adults who are important to them. Adults who pressure children into rote and repetition before they are ready, sow the seeds of frustration and unnecessary challenges. Adults who enjoy language, books, and the written word with children in doses appropriate to the child’s age and understanding, reap eager language and literacy learners. Which shall it be in your classroom?

“Talk underlies all subjects in school. . . . For talk enters into the whole range of human interaction, and drama builds, from that interaction and talk, images of human existence.”

John Dixon
The events of the 11th of September transfixed the world. Emotions ranging from denial to anger to shock to grief have engulfed all of us. As many have remarked, the events of that day will surely prove to be the fixed point of identity and memory for the “Millennial” generation, as surely as 7 December 1941 was for the “G. I.’s” and 22 November 1963 was for us “Boomers.”

Without knowing at this time of writing (early October) what consequent events may have transpired by the time of the publication of this issue of *Lutheran Education*, one thing has been clear from the very first day of (literal) impact: for all of their horror and tragedy, these events offer an extraordinary “teachable moment” for Christian educators and their students.

First among the teachings to be conveyed is the essential role of prayer in the Christian life. Not all of us can be at “Ground Zero” in New York or Washington or Pennsylvania, but all of us can pray for those who bear the scars of the events there. We can lift up our leaders before God, that they may be gifted with wisdom. We can remind ourselves and our students that our intercessions are incomplete without prayer for our enemies, as both commanded and modeled by our Lord himself.

A second essential insight at this moment is the lasting significance of renewed patriotism in our nation. There has been a certain amount of jingoism, but for the most part, Americans have responded to the September events with a healthy combination of rallying ’round the flag and on-going debate over issues like the balance of security and liberties and the proper distinction between justice and retribution. Some have suggested that the new generation is positioned to be the next “Greatest Generation.” Given the international cataclysm that was required to confer this title on the G. I.’s, we can hope not, but if the test should come, the ability of our young people to bear the weight of history will be at least in part a function of their education. The teacher’s role in the formation of citizens becomes more crucial than ever.

Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly of all, we have all received a reminder of the horrors that can be done in the name of God. President Bush had it exactly right when he told the Congress that those who did these things in the name of Allah
profaned that name and the Islamic faith. Those of us who worship the Triune God dare not think ourselves immune from our own blasphemies. To use faith as a rationale for hatred directed at anyone for whom Christ died (that is, any human being) is to set the Name and Word of God at naught (or, most literally, to “take his name in vain”). We must teach that faithful witness to Christ is winsome witness and that standing strong in our confession of faith in a world of increasing diversity requires both clarity and charity.

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A Note from the Publisher

With this volume, we welcome a new co-editor to the offices of Lutheran Education: Dr. William Rietschel, Professor of Education at Concordia University. Dr. Rietschel's past teaching, speaking, and scholarship will make his name immediately recognizable to many of the readers of this journal. He has served on Concordia's faculty since 1974, teaching courses in educational foundations, ethics, and school law and serving for 13 years as director of placement. Before joining our faculty, he served congregations and schools in New York and Chicago as teacher, principal, athletic director, and youth worker. He has delivered numerous conference presentations, has been a frequent contributor to Lutheran Education, and has served on its editorial board since 1994. His book An Introduction to the Foundations of Lutheran Education was published by Concordia Academic Press in 2000.

Beyond the biography outlined above, however, what Dr. Rietschel brings to the editorship is a passionate commitment to Lutheran education and a longstanding habit of thinking carefully and critically about education in all its facets. His background in educational foundations leads him to think beyond the latest trends in the educational landscape to the crucial ideas underlying how we in Lutheran education conceive of and carry out our mission “to have and maintain Christian schools.” I am pleased that Dr. Rietschel has accepted this appointment and confident that he will ably carry on the 137-year tradition of Lutheran Education.

George C. Heider, President
Concordia University