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To be perfectly honest, “social justice” is not a term that rolls easily off my tongue. During my upbringing in Lutheran churches and schools, I can recall few, if any, appeals for active engagement in the public arena. I can remember many demonstrations of patriotism and calls for love of country, but almost no suggestion that we as Christians have any duty to be actively engaged in making the social, political, or economic spheres of our country more just, equitable, or moral.

It’s always dangerous to generalize, of course, but I suspect my experience reflects that of many individuals growing up in Lutheran schools and churches. Beyond our involvement in the pro-life movement—of which Lutherans can be justly proud—and the occasional statement of moral indignation expressed in a resolution at a synodical convention, Lutherans as a people have been conspicuously absent from the hurly-burly of social and political life. The recent item in the Reporter (July 1998) noting that only three of the 535 members of the U.S. Congress are LC-MS members is only one example of our traditional social and political quietism.

One might offer a variety of theological and sociological explanations, I suppose, to explain the social and political quietism typical of Lutheranism in America. Theologically, Luther’s conception of the “two kingdoms” seems to have fostered within Lutheranism a separation between the spiritual and the social or political realms. I can recall from my childhood hearing the term “social Gospel” uttered with disdain for those who would dilute our spiritual mission as a church by meddling in the affairs of the kingdom of this world. In this view, social activism is seen as separate from, and even antagonistic to, the mission of the church, rather than as a logical and inevitable result of our call to discipleship in Jesus Christ. Thus, Christ’s bidding to “love one another” becomes divorced from the call of the Great Commission, rather than being considered a crucial way in which the call to make disciples is carried out.

In her essay in this issue of Lutheran Education, Jean Bethke Elshtain argues that the erosion of religious faith in American society is one of the root causes of our current “crisis of democratic authority.” Ironically, however, conservative Christians have often contributed to this crisis by becoming increasingly distrustful of democratic institutions, adopting, it seems, Henry David Thoreau’s dictum that “that government is best which governs least.” Such distrust significantly contributes to the deepening cynicism toward American government of which Elshtain speaks.

Sociologically, for generations our status as an immigrant church,
committed to maintaining a distinctive cultural as well as religious identity, isolated many Lutherans from the mainstream of American life. Lutheran schools originally functioned, at least in part, to help this immigrant culture maintain its distinctiveness from the larger culture, rather than to encourage and enable more active engagement in or with that culture.

Of course, we are an immigrant church no longer (or at least not a church of northern European immigrants). As many have noted, the boats stopped coming over some time ago.

I would argue that the changing demographics of our schools demand increased social engagement. If one looks around many Lutheran schools, particularly in urban areas, one is immediately struck by the many cultures which comprise these schools. There is no longer a single, homogeneous culture to be sheltered and protected from the assimilating forces of the culture around it; instead, there are students from many cultures, some of them still trying to gain full participation in the larger culture. Our concern for such students ought to be one of the forces moving Lutheran schools toward increased engagement in social concerns. We might look to our colleagues in the Catholic school system in many center city locations to see how schools can be agents of social action in such communities.

Even more fundamentally, however, the command of our Lord to be salt and light in the world compels His people to enter the public arena, to contribute a strong moral voice in support of our democratic institutions, and to seek to make these institutions more just for all citizens. If we are to teach our students to be effective citizens of both kingdoms, we must teach them, as Ken Lueders reminds us, “to act justly and love mercy,” as private individuals living out their faith in the vocation God has given them, but also as citizens of a wider community, striving to bring justice and mercy to others.

The Rev. Dwayne Mau, in his remarks to the faculty of Concordia, River Forest, at our recent faculty seminar, made this point emphatically: “The Gospel has a clear social dimension to it and requires action in the public sphere.” Too often, he continued, “our faith has tended to remain an individual relationship between us and God, without the horizontal dimension of reaching out to our neighbors.”

Mau’s criticisms point to the importance of the concerns addressed in this issue of Lutheran Education: the first three articles address questions of democratic authority and how Lutheran schools at all levels might contribute to restoring confidence in our political institutions and enabling our students to function as agents of social justice. The other two articles reflect a concern for finding more equitable ways to embrace groups who have often felt excluded or marginalized in our schools and churches.

As Mau warned the Concordia, River Forest faculty, at stake is the credibility of the message we proclaim, the good news of a God who comes with love and mercy for all of humankind.†
There is widespread agreement that American democracy is in trouble. Social scientists offer up a mountain of data showing that we are civically depleted; politically cynical and rootless; socially mistrustful; personally fearful. This is a strange turn of events for a country associated with can-do optimism; with a robust democratic faith; indeed, a country once quite confident about its institutions and its ability to transmit them intact over time. An anemic and faltering democratic faith—a decline of confidence in our basic institutions—threatens to render us incapable of sustaining these institutions over the long haul.

One can approach this matter—this concern—from a number of angles. Social scientists who have tracked the sharp decline in associational life in America argue that the evidence points to nothing less than a crisis in “social capital formation,” by which they mean the forging of bonds of social and political trust and competence. Political and social theorists, of whom I am one, evoke Tocqueville and speak of the thinning out of that dense fabric—that social ecology—that historically did much of the hands-on work of democracy. Certainly
the debilitating effects of rising mistrust, privatization, and anomie are many. For example: there is overwhelming empirical support for the popularly held view that where neighborhoods are intact, drug and alcohol abuse, crime, and teen-age child-bearing diminish. Because families and neighborhoods are less and less likely to be intact, all forms of socially- and self-destructive behavior are on the rise among children and young people. The list goes on and on. All of this suggests that the buoyant confidence that long sustained democratic prospects, especially the notion that human beings were capable of self-limiting freedom and sturdy self-government, is badly battered and our public culture shows considerable signs of wear and tear.

I will focus on but one dimension of our discontents: the crisis in democratic authority. I am convinced that our collective decline of confidence flows, in part, from a general crisis of authority. That crisis cuts across all formative institutions—religion, education, families, and government. And it raises questions about the continuing power of what political theorists call "foundings" or founding moments.

Much overshadowed by the epistemological debate over foundationalism, a concern with specifically political foundings has faded. But it is worth recalling what such moments were about and what they set in motion. Imagine the following: a new civic order comes into being. Certain questions must be asked. What is the nature of this new order? How is it to be instituted among men and women? Where does authority reside? For no exercise of political power is legitimate without general sharing of certain authoritative norms, standards documents, institutions, even cultural narratives, stories, and songs. The democratic story added the following. Through pledges and promises—a social contract or covenant—persons throw in their fortunes with one another. They seek, not a perfect world, but a better one. And authority is necessary to its realization.

But perhaps we have lost this understanding of authority. At least so Hannah Arendt believed. Among the many strong claims lodged by Arendt (1980), one must include the following: Authority, she claimed, "has vanished from the modern world. Since we can no longer fall back upon authentic and undisputable experiences common to all, the very term has become clouded by controversy and confusion" (91). Arendt here seems to refer to the deep and wide sharing of an overarching as well as grounding set of experiences of labor, work, and action as what we must fall back upon and, if we cannot, authority "vanishes."

She continues: We late moderns "no longer know what authority really is." What we have lost, Arendt adds rather elliptically, is not authority in general "but rather a very specific form which
had been valid throughout the Western world over a long period of time” (92). Arendt doesn’t note, though she might have, that much of that history of the Western world was not democratic—did not take shape as a democratic polity in the form we now honor and recognize. Perhaps, we might reply by way of rejoinder, if Arendt had limited her lament to traditional pre-democratic authority, she wouldn’t have wound up with such a mordant conclusion.

But Arendt is cutting deeper than that. Democratic authority, too, she would argue, depends on taking certain truths as self-evident, certain things for granted. The sovereignty of the people is never absolute but checked, shaped, and reformulated in practice through a variety of institutions that help to modulate the passions and to give shape and form to democratic interests. And these institutions, in turn, have always taken a good bit of their legitimating force from some point outside themselves—in nature or “nature’s God,” for example. In a sense, democrats historically worried that the self-sovereignty of the people might become an absolute principle, a tyranny in practice. So it could never be a law simply unto itself. The American constitution’s legitimacy derived, in part, from the nobility and right reason of founders—consider here the American reverence, until recently, for the Founding Fathers—but that “right reason” wasn’t simply theirs, a product of their own self-confirming ratiocinations; rather, it was “right reason” as discernment of a certain kind, discovering (not inventing) certain perduring principles that pre-dated (at least in situ) the lives of Jefferson, Franklin, Madison, Hancock, Hamilton, and the others.

If Arendt is correct, the brief narrative just recalled of America’s founding no longer holds water or, rather, it is water dripping rapidly through the holes of a sieve called “late modernity.” The problem with our inability to distinguish authority from other human possibilities and enactments generates and perpetuates a base confusion, the tendency to conflate power, coercion, even violence with authority. Mao did this most famously, of course, with his: “Power grows out of the barrel of a gun.” No niceties about authority here. Just brute force and legitimation will follow once the enemies are vanquished.
Arendt blasted Mao for this. What grows out of the barrel of a gun is violence, not power. Failing to distinguish between different modalities and ways of being in a political world, we fall into a conceptual and political abyss. We lose the past as “the permanence and durability” of the world melts away. This loss is “tantamount to the loss of the groundwork of the world, which indeed since then has begun to shift, to change and transform itself with ever-increasing rapidity from one shape to another, as though we were living and struggling with a Protean universe where everything at any moment can become almost anything else” (95). Arendt singles out for critical fire tendencies within philosophic liberalism, by which she refers to that mode of thought most deeply implicated in the conflation of coercion and authority. This, in turn, spawns political actors who similarly disdain any distinction between authoritarianism, on the one hand, and authoritative rule of governance, on the other. But authority is not tyranny; indeed, the resort to tyranny is a sign that legitimate authority has broken down and given way to violence.

The legitimate authoritative figure historically was one who was bound. He or she was bound by law, bound by tradition, and bound by the force of past example and experience. Being bound in particular ways guaranteed a framework for action and helped to create and to sustain particular public spaces—whether of church, polity, or other institutions of social life. The bound authority figure was, therefore, not free to do just anything, to make just any claim and to make it stick. That was the lawlessness of the tyrant, whether the King who had become tyrannical and might. therefore, be killed as a scourge to his people and a rebel against God (here John of Salisbury’s Politicraticus is my touchstone) or the twentieth century tyrant, a Hitler or a Stalin, who knows and recognizes neither the laws of God, nor of nature, nor of human decency (a “common sense,” in Arendt’s formulation) and makes himself a law unto himself, hence an enactor of capricious terror and violence. To see this sort of thing as an instance of unusually harsh authority is, for Arendt, to vulgarize; it is to do violence to the truth, to what she unabashedly called the stubborn fact of the matter. Authority and obedience or faithfulness are twins. But in obeying—in offering fealty to a tradition that is shared, constitutive of the self and of a world—one remains free, free yet bound. This bounded freedom is the only way to guarantee creation of a common space, to simultaneously constrain yet to nurture and to make possible human action.

Arendt was most concerned with a political world constituted by authority, a world, therefore, that rejected despots as unfit to rule. For the power to coerce is incompatible with the freedom of others and “his [the tyrant’s] own freedom as
well. Wherever he ruled, there was only one relation, that between masters and slaves" (105). Between masters and slaves (or so the Greeks thought) there was no possibility of commonality or a common tradition; the gulf was impassable. All of subsequent political thought, at least until late modernity, is an attempt to establish “a concept of authority in terms of rulers and ruled . . . and there is no philosopher-king to regulate human affairs once and for all” (116). This, then, involves a search for a community of equals who share ruling and being ruled and share as well a mutual commitment to authoritative rules and norms.

For the life of the polity was not just about life but about the “good life.” This good life plays a formative and educative role. It inducts the next generation into a way of being in the world made possible only when free people submit to authority mutually, the sort of authority created when citizens pledge themselves to something, hold one another accountable; keep their promises. As well, in Arendt’s account, authority is natural in the pre-political realm of necessity (this is where she located the family, for example.) But authority takes on something—only something—of a volitional dimension in that sphere of action we call politics. The word auctoritas, deeded to us by those most indefatigable of antique lawgivers, the Romans, derives from augere, to augment, to deepen. What is deepened is an authoritative moment of political birth or founding. Without such an authoritative moment, there is only violence or a rampant antinomianism.

This is the worst case scenario unpacked by Alexis de Tocqueville when he fretted about the future and fate of American democracy. It seems just possible that democratic authority—if it is lodged in a radically skeptical epistemology—cannot sustain itself over time.

For Tocqueville, religious belief “was inseparable from free government and free public life because it was the channel of a self-imposed moral restraint that shaped and, in so doing, liberated the individual for participation in the republic.”

Democracy requires laws, constitutions, authoritative institutions. But it also depends on democratic dispositions, those habits of the heart that are formed and forged within the framework such institutions provide. Thus, Tocqueville warned of a world different from the democracy he surveyed. He urged Americans to take to heart a possible corruption of their way of life, a corruption that would creep up stealthily
on cat's paws, rather than in one dramatic moment. But at some point Americans would awaken to realize that something terrible had happened for, disarticulated from the saving constraints and nurture of overlapping associations of social life and a horizon of an authoritative set of laws with "higher" justification, we would be more dominated by a lower and lower mean on the level of culture and, as well, would be caught up in webs of control from above that aimed to muffle at least somewhat the disintegrative effects of "bad egoism."

It is worth remembering that for Tocqueville, religious belief "was inseparable from free government and free public life because it was the channel of a self-imposed moral restraint that shaped and, in so doing, liberated the individual for participation in the republic" (Kelly, 1974, p. 103). The collapse of religious authority necessary to sustain those institutions that engage in ethical formation fuels a political crisis in turn: on this Tocqueville is eloquent and clear. Over time, the horizon of democracy recedes as complex authoritative traditions erode or collapse. People refuse to take anything on trust. Why is this a problem? In Tocqueville's words: "If man had to prove for himself all the truths of which he makes use every day, he would never come to an end of it. He would wear himself out proving preliminary points and make no progress . . . some beliefs must be accepted without discussion so that it is possible to go deeply into a few selected ones for examination. It is true that any man accepting any opinion on trust from another puts his mind on bondage. But it is a salutary bondage, which allows him to make good use of freedom. So somewhere and somehow authority is always bound to play a part in intellectual and moral life" (p. 434). But it is precisely authority that takes a continual battering in the maelstrom and movement of the energetic, restless American democracy. So we move from plural institutions to fissionable sects, applying the doctrine of self-interest even to religion. The upshot is not more freedom but democratic despotism, a world in which authority has collapsed and been replaced by a flattened world without distinctiveness and absent powerful institutions of formation, political and religious.

Fast forward to the present moment. It seems that we have arrived at a point where our options get cast either as a desperate attempt to reaffirm and reassert traditional modes of authoritative determination of the sort Arendt argues modernity has shattered, on the one hand, or, on the other, a kind of political and epistemological free-for-all. We are, then, stuck increasingly in a political realm in which, lacking either recognition of, or commitment to, an awareness that "the source of authority transcends power," we are confronted
daily "by the elementary problems of human living-together" (p. 129). Because we place so little confidence in authoritative norms and claims, nearly everything at every moment is up for grabs. By Arendt's reckoning we aren't doing a very good job of confronting this crisis of authority. If we see the world as a series of volitional acts, as if anything that I affirm marks a new beginning, we are in a world of radical antinomianism and romantic flailing that all too easily fuels cries of "oppression" whenever any constraint is put on the self: whenever the self is called upon to bend the knee or to bow the head before the authority of God within a religious tradition or, in politics, to aver the legitimacy of a constitutional regime even if we disagree with it in particulars. One effect of the crisis of authority, then, is that all institutional rules of the sort needed to define institutions, to hold them intact in order that they might create space within which individuals can act and react, can be formed and reformed, are construed as tyranny. It seems to be the case that, traditional belief over time growing less reliable as an authoritative standard, human beings in Western democracies turned to constitutionalism and adherence to certain fundamental laws and rules. Initially, these were not merely or simply procedural but exuded a strong normative content, an image of what citizens might aspire to, what a democracy should live up to. This dense lattice-work of laws is now under assault. condemned as nothing but the window dressing for the power machinations of a narrow-minded, self-serving elite. And there is just enough truth in this charge that we all feel the sting. The upshot is that cynicism is deepened. If one sees nothing but coercion and arbitrariness in any proclamation of "self-evident truths," there is nowhere to repair to. If all is power and violence, one grabs as much for oneself as one can. This helps to account for the fear and worry, even despair, surrounding American democratic life at century's end. We are unable to justify authority in any robust sense, but without justifiable authority we flounder and flail politically. Why should anyone be obliged to adhere to law if all that one is confronted with is so many arbitrary injunctions dressed up as natural law or right or the good opinion of humankind?

Let's dig a little deeper. Remember that Arendt spoke both of the "groundwork of the world" and of "experiences common to all" as what we have lost and yet what we cannot do without if authority, including democratic authority, is to endure or to revive. And remember the alternative to authority is not some free-form utopia but coercion, domination, violence, unaccountable methods and systems of manipulating persons. Let's begin with the standard that Arendt argues we can no longer live up to or, perhaps even aspire to, namely: "experiences common
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to all.” One wonders if Arendt could have meant this in the strong sense. Even in a relatively self-contained Greek polis of the sort Arendt much admires and in which authority, presumably, was intact, experiences weren’t “common to all,” as she herself notes when she mentions that between masters and slaves there can be no commonality.

But there is another sense, a more American sense, if you will, that goes like this. Democracy requires laws, constitutions, authoritative institutions. But it also depends on democratic dispositions, those habits of the heart that are formed and forged within the framework such institutions provide. The ever prescient Tocqueville, remember, had offered foreboding thoughts along these lines. For should a richly textured world of associational life—a world in which citizens were both free and bound—weaken, bad egoism and the isolation that resulted from it would, in turn, generate new forms of domination: democratic despotism. The social webs that once held individuals intact having disintegrated, the individual would find himself or herself isolated, impotent, exposed, and unprotected. Into this power vacuum would move a centralized, top-heavy state or other centralized and organized forces (the maw of consumerist society comes to mind) that would, so to speak, push social life to its lowest common denominator. The collapse of religious authority necessary to sustain the institutions that engage in ethical formation, in turn, fuels a political crisis.

Arendt, too, saw this coming, or some version of it. She detected it in the assault on authority in every arena—including the family and the school. She saw it in the attack on truth, the “blurring of the dividing line between factual truth and opinion” (“Truth and Politics,” p. 250). Knowing, as she did, how totalitarian societies can simply make embarrassing facts disappear down the memory hole, she embraced factual truth as the last redoubt of political possibility, by which she meant the need to have a record, to begin from some common understanding.

I agree with Arendt that facts are stubborn: they are superior to power. But they require authority to be known. And those authoritative teachings necessary if anything like a tradition is to be upheld and to be formative are on shakier and shakier ground. When you add a radically skeptical epistemology into the mix—especially in its late modern form in which anything goes, more or less, and I am to be untrammeled in my expression of myself (as the self is claimed as the ground of its own being)—you are in a world in which all that is solid melts into air, the world Hannah Arendt imagined over thirty years ago.

Remember Arendt insists on the necessity for common understanding if we would sustain democracy. But common understanding is not the same
as "experiences common to all." What I am concerned with is the continuing possibility of "common understanding" despite vastly different experiences. For this is the democratic wager. To cast it epistemologically: you cannot found and sustain a democratic society if you presume experiences are so vastly different for distinct categories and groups of people that the gulf thus created is, in principle, unbridgeable. A likely scenario in such a situation is that, first, any possibility of a rough and ready sharing of moral norms and aspirations goes out the window. Some might argue that this isn't necessarily devastating because it leaves political authority, including the legitimacy of certain procedural norms, intact. But that doesn't seem a viable option over the long run. Procedures themselves are substantive and reflect a moral vision. We must have enough trust and confidence in the propositions that ground a democratic experiment and that give rise to legal and political procedures and regularities (a system of criminal justice, for example) that we know we can repair to these propositions, whether in solidarity or in opposition. The matter can be cast rather starkly: unless citizens or would-be citizens are able to have recourse to a shared political and normative vocabulary, a democratic society cannot sustain itself over time. Indeed, Arendt argues in her masterwork, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, that "the ideal subject of totalitarian rule is not the convinced Nazi or the convinced Communist, but people for whom the distinction between fact and fiction (i.e. the reality of experience) and the distinction between true and false (i.e., the standards of thought) no longer exist" (p. 474).

Let's consider this claim through a concrete example of solidarity and opposition. I will draw upon Frederick Douglass's oration delivered at Rochester, New York, July 5, 1852, on "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?" He begins by asking: "Are the great principles of political freedom and of natural justice, embodied in that Declaration of Independence, extended to us? and am I, therefore, called upon to bring our humble offering to the national altar . . . ?" His answer is not in the affirmative. "I am not included within the pale of this glorious anniversary! Your high independence only reveals the immeasurable distance between us. The blessings in which you this day rejoice, are not enjoyed in common. " You cannot drag a man forward in fetters before the temple of liberty and call him to join you in a "joyous anthem." God does not take such mockery lightly. And He will smite the nation that does: note that Douglass can here draw upon a common religious and civic idiom to drive home his point to his listeners. The nations are under God's judgement: woe and behold!

Following his thundering exposé and denunciation, Douglass begins to build
toward common understanding. And, he insists, there already is a base to build on. We don’t have to prove that slaves are men. “That point is conceded already. Nobody doubts it. The slaveholders themselves acknowledge it in the enactment of laws for their government. They acknowledge it when they punish disobedience on the part of the slave.” This is a brilliant move on Douglass’s part, for he shows the ways in which, through their incorporation into a legal and constitutional system in important ways, the status of the slave here affirmed runs counter to the degraded status slavery presupposes. “What is this but the acknowledgment that the slave is a moral, intellectual, and responsible being.” And because your founding documents argue “that man is entitled to liberty, that he is the rightful owner of his own body,” where can you go to justify slavery? Then you must repair to a bad theology but that is blasphemous on its face.

So: “What to the American slave is your Fourth of July? I answer, a day that reveals to him, more than all other days in the year, the gross injustice and cruelty to which he is the constant victim.” In “revolting barbarity and shameless hypocrisy. America reigns without a rival.” Douglass can make this argument—and he knows that he can make this argument—because he has access to certain standards, norms, “self-evident truths,” constitutional and sacred, that his countrymen arc flouting and, in so doing, are violating their own civic temple; are poisoning their own political well. Douglass bridges the gap that separates the experiences of slave and free by appealing to understanding common to all—even, he insists, to the slaveholder himself. Authority is alive and well in this account because certain shared norms and idioms, a language of denunciation and affirmation, is sturdy and reliable. Douglass knows he can count on it. Most of our great democratic reformers knew they could count on it. From vastly different experience we reach common understanding because there is common understanding on some deep level already. If not, the slave, the disenfranchised woman, the disempowered factory worker wouldn’t have a language of protest available that calls those with different experiences to account.

Let’s take up Arendt’s other reason for claiming that authority has simply disappeared from modernity. It was, you will recall, that the “groundwork of the world” itself has shifted and become uncertain. The permanence and durability of the world has melted, or is melting, before our eyes. I can’t be certain what all Arendt has in mind here, so I will give her insight a twist I owe to Charles Taylor in a recent essay, “The Immanent Counter-Enlightenment.” Denying transcendence “means denying that human life finds any point beyond itself.” The twentieth-century process of denying transcendence has been powerful
and effective. It means that man really has become his own measure. We find no meaning in anything above or beyond our selves. Lived life exhausts itself, it is self-encapsulated. This doesn't mean we accept what is given. It means that, increasingly, we reject the whole idea that anything is given; rather, we presume anything and everything is constructed. We are the masters of our own fate and so on. But the upshot, over time, is a kind of flattening out of human possibility and a deep sense of emptiness. People yearn for meaning. But the prevailing climate of opinion dictates that they must find it immanently, so to speak. (Taylor writes of a “metaphysics of immanence”). Small wonder we have become so fascinated with end-things, with death and violence and experiences on the edge: they alone promise to deliver much needed relief from the self circling endlessly around itself.

In this world of absolute immanence, where all is flattened out and no standards can be upheld, authority simply cannot survive. For authority is about distinctions and accountability; it is about norms and standards and trying to live up to them; it is about seeing oneself in a long stream of life; it is about being able to utter the ancient prayer. “That I may see my children's children and peace upon Israel.” Our humanism has become anti-humanistic without some sort of transcendental aspiration at least: without some notion of a higher, a beyond, a something more, a solidarity that is not reducible to the concatenation of all our private interests. Perhaps one acknowledges a groundwork—a grounding—a notion that “here I stand,” on this ground, only if one acknowledges the possibility of some sort of “greater than” or “higher” or “above.” I don't know. But it surely isn't merely historic fortuity that democracy's trials and the further erosion of democratic legitimacy go hand-in-hand with the loss of common understandings or, perhaps better put, with our insistence that there are no common understandings to be found and, as well, that our own ends and purposes are ultimate, that there is no authority, human or divine, who can judge us.

What moves can we possibly make to restore some of the texture of a world in which authority makes claims on us and we, in turn, on it? For authority helps to solidify the world; indeed, helps to make
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a world out of what would otherwise be William James's "blooming, buzzing confusion." Given our current dilemma, we seem to seek more of what ails us by hobbling ourselves in advance when it comes to robust arguments about this important matter. If we talk "rights talk" we can say pretty much anything we want. But if we start to talk "norm talk" we are accused of wanting to start a new civil war. We are urged to retreat where we should advance, and we advance where we would be well advised to retreat.

A recuperative project must preserve our commitment to the dignity of the human person, to democracy under law, and to traditions of political and religious faith in a world in which each is under assault. No one thinker or book or conference can offer a definitive statement as to the shape and scope of such a project. But I am obliged, in light of my call for a renewal of democratic authority or, perhaps better put, for a deeper recognition that authority still makes claims on us, to offer a set of necessary recognitions. Necessary in the logical sense and necessary in the historical sense, in a world in which experiences "common to all" seems an impossible standard. But that depends, in part, on how one thinks about what we might have "in common."

In arguing that we do, perhaps, have more in common than we may believe—for we all breathe the rarified air of self-overcoming and putative mastery so characteristic of late modernity—I will turn to St. Augustine's brilliant unpacking of false pride. For that seems to me to lie at the heart of much of our current trouble. It is pridefulness that holds up as normative a view of the self constructed in such a way that she is immunized from the claims made on her by others. False pride is the presumption that we are the sole and only ground of our own being. False pride lies behind much of the contemporary assault on all authoritative claims and traditions. We deny our birth from the body of a woman. We deny our dependence on her and others to nurture and to tend us. We deny our dependence on friends and family to sustain us. We most certainly deny what Frederick Douglass so fervently believed—that the nations are under God's judgement. This false pride is the name Augustine gives to a particular form of corruption and deformation.

Pridefulness denies our multiple and manifold dependencies, and authority, in fact, is one way we have devised to recognize such dependencies. Those who refuse to recognize dependence are those most overtaken by an urge to dominate, or "the need to secure the dependence of others," an observation from Peter Brown, who goes on to argue that "first the Devil, then Adam, chose to live on their own resources; they preferred their own fortitudo, their own created strength, to acknowledge their dependence upon God" (p. 320-21). Every "proud man heeds himself, and he who pleases
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himself seems great to himself. But he who pleases himself pleases a fool, for he himself is a fool when he is pleasing to himself,” Augustine writes (“Psalm 122: God is True Wealth,” p. 250). In late modernity we have all become self-pleasers, and self-pleasers cannot sustain institutional forms, for that seems nothing but the imposition of unacceptable constraint on a subject deemed sovereign. So we are in the soup. We lament that the center does not hold. But we will not permit ourselves to be “held,” so to speak. Our political commitments are thin. Our religious commitments increasingly chafe under any constraint. Thus, we daily surrender a bit more of the pluralistic, communal, formative dimension of that world known as the American democracy—one that requires institutional robustness of considerable variety. We are all alone with our freedom and coerced in ways beyond our imaginings. We may well and truly be approaching the moment Hannah Arendt dreaded: the moment when the actions of free citizens and the power they create when they come together are a frozen tableaux from a lost time and place rather than an ever present possibility.

But let us end on a note of democratic hope. There is a powerful counter-tradition in America—counter to the Panglossianism that pervades so much of our history and now serves us ill. It is an ironic and tragic and darker thread, one attuned to life’s vulnerabilities and pitfalls. What does this counter-tradition tell us? It tells us that life can never be fully controlled and managed. It tells us that we should keep alive an appropriate skepticism about promises of endless progress or glorious futures and the like—a skepticism very different from the current cynicism that pervades our polity. This cynicism is, in fact, the flip side of the optimistic coin. But realistic hope, what I here call for, is very different from optimism. Too often when Americans sour on something (like welfare) it becomes a nigh wholesale repudiation. And there are reasons. We didn’t just try to ameliorate some of the worst effects of poverty, or set the goal of reducing the total numbers of people in poverty; in the not-too-distant past in America we declared a war on poverty, no less. And wars are fought to be won. There are victors and there are vanquished. You cannot win a war against a social problem, and when you declare a war you are bound to lose it. Then ordinary citizens lose confidence in anything government promises or pledges. If we held on to the ability to pursue more modest ends and aims—if that more skeptical and ironic strand were sturdier—my hunch is that we would achieve far more than we now do when confronted with a vast array of social concerns and perplexities. Utopia is for the end-time; in the meantime, we do the best we can.

Our tradition is many things. In permitting one strand to run roughshod
in other possibilities, we find ourselves on the cusp of the twenty-first century cynical and politically apathetic. Our political resources seem depleted. A sturdy recognition of our capacity to restore vibrancy and decency to politics and schools and civic life generally eludes us. And yet the tales of democratic hopefulness are there for the telling. When human beings all over the world are risking their very lives in order to attain just a bit of what we take so much for granted, now is not the time for either cynicism or faintheartedness but for a modest and therefore more realizable set of democratic prospects to open up before us. Giving up on our arrogant pridefulness will help us to see these more clearly.

References
Augustine. Psalm 122: God is true wealth. *Selected writings, homilies on the psalms*, p. 250.

1. Portions of this discussion of Arendt and authority are drawn from my essay “The Question Concerning Religious Authority” prepared for a conference at Notre Dame. Those papers are forthcoming in a volume edited by Paul Weithman. The primary question taken up by participants in the Notre Dame event had to do with the inclusion or exclusion of “religious language” from political life.
2. The great Fourth of July oration appears as an Appendix to the first “Narrative” and can be found on pp. 431-435, from which all quotes were drawn.
4. See, for example, Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace*, for a discussion of at least some representatives of this counter-tradition. Our greatest President belongs somewhere in here as well; indeed, any great moral realist does and Lincoln was certainly that.
How does one who is not a political or social theorist react to the thoughts of one who is? Might this educationist, a Lutheran educationist at that, suffer from “hubris,” one of the seven deadly sins, and that which Elshtain (1998) points to as being at the crux of our crisis in democratic authority (pp. 15-16)?

One option would be to agree with Elshtain (which I do), reiterate her arguments, and heap deserving praise on her cogent thinking. While I considered that strategy as well as several others, I have chosen a path that is congenial to my agenda and will attempt, however feebly, to connect Elshtain’s scholarly musings to Lutheran philosophy of elementary and secondary education. In the process of attempting to make that connection, it is hoped that Lutheran educators might initiate a sustained dialogue about the metaphysical basis of Lutheran schools in a democratic society and about worthy cultural narratives that we may enfold. Just as Elshtain relied extensively on the work of Hannah Arendt, I am considerably indebted to Neil Postman (1995) and his extraordinary work, The End of
Democratic Authority and Lutheran Education

Education: Redefining the Value of School.

A “god” to Serve

Eishtain, among other elements, references the general sharing of cultural narratives and stories as contributors to our understanding of authority (p. 5). It seems to me that her treatment parallels Postman’s compelling conception of cultural “narratives”, or “gods” as he calls them (p. 5). Borrowing a major theme from other areas of academic inquiry, particularly psychology, Postman expands the notion of narratives, i.e., the stories we tell ourselves in the process of making “meaning,” to a cultural level. These narratives, he contends, are the great, transcendent stories our culture tells about itself: about our history, our identity, and our future. Postman explains his synonymous use of the terms “god” and “narrative”: “[I]t is the purpose of such figures or images to direct one’s mind to an idea and... to a story—not any kind of story, but one that tells of origins and envisions a future, a story that constructs ideals, prescribes rules of conduct, provides a source of authority, and above all, gives a sense of continuity and purpose. A god, in the sense I am using the word, is the name of a great narrative, one that has sufficient credibility, complexity, and symbolic power to enable one to organize ones life around it... Without a narrative, life has no meaning” (pp. 5-6). Without a narrative, a country has no meaning.

And, of course, without meaning, schooling, including Lutheran schooling, has no purpose.

Beginning in the late thirteenth century in the West and for 500 years thereafter, God (with a capital “G”) was a sufficient justification for the founding of institutions of learning, from grammar schools where children were taught to read the Bible to universities where men were taught to be ministers of God. One may find the historic roots of Lutheran education in America within this five century continuum.

Postman would, I believe, look at the contemporary Lutheran elementary and secondary school in a favorable light. He would view the ultimate aim of Lutheran education, i.e., the praise, glory, and pleasure of God, approvingly as a narrative. a “god” with a small “g.” that animates our learning institutions with a transcendent spiritual idea that gives purpose and clarity to learning.

However, if Postman had included the history of Lutheran education in his broad portrayal of American education in the late nineteenth and early portion of
this century, our story might not have been viewed in as favorable a societal light. During this period he finds the mission of schooling, at least public schooling, to be clear, i.e., to create a coherent, stable, unified culture out of a people of diverse traditions, languages, and religions. As he sees them, schools at the time were meant to provide citizens old and new with a common attachment to America's history, its future, and its promise of freedom. All this was contained within narratives having to do with opportunity, equality, and pluralism.

The first such narrative Postman identifies is the narrative of democracy - or the great "democracy god" (p. 13). In his book he demonstrates how the great narrative of democracy embodies the principles of civic participation and equality.

A related narrative is expressed and celebrated by Emma Lazarus' famed poem ("Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses . . ."), in what might be called the great "melting-pot" story (pp. 13-14). Postman illustrates how such a story answers many profound questions such as how a coherent, stable, unified culture can be created out of a people of diverse traditions, languages, and religions.

A third American narrative, the "Protestant ethic," tells of the role of hard work, self-restraint, and delayed gratification within yet another narrative — the story of the "American Creed" (p. 14). In this story, America provides everyone, regardless of creed, the chance to create opportunity, to find reward for hard work and ingenuity, and to rise above prejudices of class and ethnicity.

The cynicism that Elshtain points to that currently pervades our contemporary democracy would probably be quite antagonistic to Postman's perceptions of public schooling as contained in the aforementioned narratives. For evidence, one need go no further than some of the relatively recent revisionist educational historiography of Colin Greer, Joel Spring, and David Tyack, to name but a few. More to the point, however, while Lutheran elementary and secondary education historically were not antagonistic to these narratives, neither is there much evidence that we embraced them in such a manner that they drove the aims of our schools. A separatist attitude seems the more prevalent attitude during the era in question, reflecting a much broader Lutheran marginalization which has been identified by Noll (1992, p. 31) and which appears to continue today.

Be that as it may, I seriously doubt that we can affix sole responsibility for the erosion of these once powerful cultural narratives to Lutherans being on the fringe of the American experience. However, Postman reveals that as these significant narratives have faded from view, they have been replaced by stories that are thin, crass, and certainly without transcendent meaning.
The New Narratives

The first new “god” Postman identifies is the “god of economic utility.” In this story we are told that we are what we do for a living. Consequently, the primary purpose of learning is for entry into economic life. This story, according to Postman, is much “too limited to be useful, and... so diminishes the world that it mocks one’s humanity” (p. 31).

Related is the “god of consumership” (p. 33). In this narrative, we are what we own. This is a dominant narrative of television and television commercials. Might this narrative also be a source of the concerns many of us share about the pressures breaking up the family? How much of the radical change in culture brought about for fun and profit and the shifts in acceptable public behavior can be attributed to the simplistic values of the messengers of this god of consumership, i.e., the advertising industry? Money, luxury, and sanitized sex are the values and powerful images thrown at us daily telling us what it is to be human and frequently destroying healthy family values. Might there even be a principled objection mounted against the use of Channel One in schools?

Thirdly, there is the “god of technology” (p. 38) which is based, according to Postman, on the false premise that never before in history have we seen a time of such great technological change (pp. 31-32). Might the degree of technological change during the nineteenth century have been at least as dramatic, if not more so, as that marked by the Internet, e-mail, and virtual reality? Postman thinks so, and I tend to agree. Many of us who have lived through all the highly touted instructional cure-all’s (16 millimeter film, closed circuit television, 8 millimeter film, teacher-proof texts, and now computers, to name a few) also maintain what Elshtain calls an “appropriate skepticism” (p. 16). So then, is the primary purpose, or one of the primary purposes of learning to help us to accommodate ourselves to vast technological change, i.e., to help us become what technology will make us become?

Finally, influenced by Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.’s (1992), *The Disuniting of America: Reflections on a Multicultural Society*, Postman identifies the “god of multiculturalism” (p. 50). This narrative should not be confused with cultural pluralism, “a 70 year old idea whose purpose is to enlarge and enrich the American Creed” and to show how “tribal identities and narratives fit” within “a more inclusive” and more “comprehensive American story” (p. 50). If multiculturalism and cultural pluralism are used synonymously, Postman sees no problem. However, when multi-culturalism “is used to promote... exclusivity, or a point of view that stresses above all else love of tribe, implying separateness from, if not hostility toward others, then
multiculturalism is indeed a dangerous
god to serve. [It leads] to a privatizing of
the mind, and it makes the creation of a
public mind quite impossible (p. 57).
Might the Lutheran marginalization
referenced above be a by-product of our
own distinctive form of tribalism? While
the distinction between our private selves
and our public selves is always in tension
and quite often blurred, do Lutheran
schools tend to stress the private (e.g.,
personal salvation) over the public?
What, in fact, do we do to contribute to
the creation of a public mind?
My sense of things
is that, in varying
degrees, these new and
markedly different
narratives shape, or at
least influence, not only
public schooling, but
Lutheran schooling as
well. Perhaps I have
been jaded by my
quarter-century of
service in Lutheran
higher education where
it seems that we
increasingly and, too
often, uncritically,
embrace at least elements of these thin,
crass gods, albeit in subsuming fashion
with appropriate genuflection to our
ultimate aim, and allow them to erode
our ability to organize around an
institutional sense of continuity and
purpose. Certainly, these narratives do
not and should not represent our
transcendent story, but might they have
infiltrated what appears to me to be
survivialistic and market-driven thinking
at all levels of Lutheran schooling which
contributes to confusion regarding our
narrative?

Some Alternative Narratives
I have chosen three of five narratives
suggested by Postman which particularly
engaged me, though in varying degrees,
and which he believes, as I do, may hold
the potential to change the thin, crass
stories currently shaping our culture and
development, these new and
markedly different
narratives shape, or at
least influence, not only
public schooling, but
Lutheran schooling as
well. Perhaps I have
been jaded by my
quarter-century of
service in Lutheran
higher education where
it seems that we
increasingly and, too
often, uncritically,
embrace at least elements of these thin,
crass gods, albeit in subsuming fashion
with appropriate genuflection to our
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our ability to organize around an
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transcendent story, but might they have
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survivalistic and market-driven thinking
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narrative?

Certainly, these narratives do
not and should not represent
our transcendent story, but
might they have infiltrated
what appears to me to be
survivalistic and market-driven
thinking at all levels of
Lutheran schooling which
contributes to confusion regarding our
narrative?

our ultimate end, i.e., the praise, glory,
and pleasure of God, and meaningfully
further define our role in Elshtain’s call
“for a deeper recognition that authority
still makes a claim on us, to offer a set of
necessary recognitions” (p. 15). While
our ultimate purpose sets Lutherans and
Lutheran schools apart, might a
conversation regarding the following narratives, which already exist in the culture around us, assist us in how we think about what we might have in common?

The first narrative offered by Postman that I found provocative, he calls “the Spaceship Earth” (p. 63). The story of the earth as our one and only spacecraft is a story which has demonstrated significant purchase in our culture, particularly with the young. It is a story, in turn, which promotes a sense of responsibility and commitment for the Spaceship, and thus a sense of unity. In this story, problems are not national, but global. Furthermore, the idea of racism is made meaningless within this narrative. The narrative depicts waste as evil, while requiring a vision of the future and a commitment to the present.

I resonated with this particular narrative because of my experience as a student in Lutheran schools. I was taught that in the book of Genesis it is written that people are made to the image and likeness of God and given stewardship over the things of the earth. I was taught that as Lutherans we can say that the whole story of Scripture is indeed the story of redemption: of God’s and God’s people’s unceasing struggle to see to it that human beings—all human beings—have the possibility of living in an environment which allows them to live with the dignity given them by their Creator. With this God-given right go the responsibilities of stewardship, for the goods of the earth are meant for the good of all. And I was taught that refusal of these rights and denial of this responsibility are inimical to the design of the Creator. Is there not a nexus between Postman’s story of the Spaceship Earth and the mission of the Lutheran school?

Because Lutheran educators need to rely on both the primary source of truth, i.e., divine revelation, as well as on secondary sources, i.e., experience (science) and reason, calling into consideration Postman’s second offering involves a little risk. He calls it the story of the “Fallen Angel” (p. 66). Within this narrative, the story of human beings is the story of error and our ability to overcome error and to correct mistakes. Postman demonstrates that within such a narrative knowledge could not be seen as a fixed commodity but as an ongoing struggle to overcome error. Applying this story to Lutheran schools would entail our students knowing that their textbooks are filled with errors, that their teachers’ minds are filled with errors, that their own beliefs are filled with errors. However, they would also be taught that in learning we have an opportunity to correct errors and that it is wrong to immunize ourselves against correction. The purpose of such a narrative for Lutheran education might be to cure us of a belief in absolute knowledge stemming from experience and reason, and to reveal that we are dangerous to ourselves when we aspire to
it. The Greeks called it "hubris", science calls it "dogmatism", and we Christians call it "pride" (p. 67).

The last of Postman’s narratives I have chosen perhaps best addresses my reading of the current crisis of
democratic authority. He calls it
"America As An Experiment" (p. 70), and it is a story which emphasizes both the successes and failures of our evolving
nation: a story which explains the past, including our mistakes, and which offers hope for the future. It is also a story that
is undergirded by the understanding that this country is not an actuality, but a
potentiality: "The story says that experimenting and arguing is what
Americans do. It does not matter if you
are unhappy about the way things are. Everybody is unhappy about the way
things are. We experiment to make
things better, and we argue about what experiments are worthwhile and whether
or not those we try are any good. And
when we experiment we make mistakes,
and reveal our ignorance, and our
timidity, and our naivete. But we go on
because we have faith in the future—that
we can make better experiments and
better arguments" (p. 142).

Elshtain appears to argue, in part,
that we are unhappy with our democracy
due to a loss of trust and confidence (p.
12). That perhaps our cynicism stems
from holding unrealistic expectations for
the democratic propositions that should anchor us. She avows that "We must
have enough trust and confidence in the
propositions that ground a democratic
experiment . . . that we know we can
repair to these propositions whether in solidarity or in opposition (p. 12). To
this observer, at least, it appears that
Postman’s "America As An Experiment"
might be able to provide the "shared political and normative vocabulary" that
Elshtain believes is essential to sustain a
democratic society over time (p. 12). It
also appears congenial to her call for
hope founded in realism. As Elshtain
maintains, "If we held on to the ability to pursue more modest ends and aims . . .
my hunch is that we would achieve far
more than we now do when confronted
with a vast array of social concerns and perplexities. Utopia is for the end time;
in the meantime we do the best we can”
(p. 16).

Finally, with Postman, I also happen
to believe that this narrative is a fine and
noble story that may touch students and
provide them another reason for learning.
And, given the Missouri Synod’s
penchant for arguing, I see no reason
why our schools could not quite
comfortably embrace it. Others may hold
a different perspective. But then, isn’t
that how dialogues are initiated and
sustained?

It is also important to point out that
Postman makes no claim that the above
narratives nor the additional ones
described in his book exhaust the
possibilities. They merely exhaust his
imagination. Postman believes that
"there are still more ideas that can
provide respectable, humane, and substantive reasons for schooling” (p. 91). The sustained dialogue I am calling for among Lutheran educators could quite possibly put forward additional imaginative and even better stories around which we may further the metaphysical foundations of Lutheran schooling.

The Ends of Lutheran Education in American Democratic Culture

Regardless of whether we adopt, adapt, or add to these narratives, however, it seems to me that the ends of Lutheran schooling will need to focus much more on equipping our students in the development of a public mind if we are at all concerned with the crisis of democratic authority. I do not believe that our faith requires us to withdraw from engagement in the world or to concentrate on our personal salvation while the created order goes to “hell.” God calls us to be active in the life of this world and this great country.

Democracy means more than being able to rack up rights, privileges, and an occasional vote. It is dependent upon interacting and creating with others. It means not only acting towards or against, but being acted upon, to change and be changed.

A viable democracy must center in people’s values, visions, and yearnings. Of course, the Lutheran narrative does not seek a religious empire or religious domination. But Lutheran values as taught in Lutheran elementary and secondary schools need to be introduced into public dialogue. Should not this be an end of Lutheran education? The schooling will need to focus much more on equipping our students in the development of a public mind if we are at all concerned with the crisis of democratic authority. I do not believe that our faith requires us to withdraw from engagement in the world or to concentrate on our personal salvation while the created order goes to “hell.” God calls us to be active in the life of this world and this great country.

Does not Jesus’ commandment to love our neighbor demand that we seek out the economic, social, and political causes which perpetuate human misery? Students enrolled in Lutheran schools need to understand that this causal search requires engagement in the civic and political order, since this is the arena in which social injustice can be remedied.

In a related sphere, does not Jesus’ commandment to love our neighbor demand that we seek out the economic, social, and political causes which perpetuate human misery? Simply attributing them to sin is not enough. Students enrolled in Lutheran schools need to understand that this causal search
requires engagement in the civic and political order, since this is the arena in which social injustice and the denial of human rights can be remedied. After all, if this noble experiment we call democracy is not sustained by the spiritually mature, will it not most certainly be further eroded by the spiritually deformed and degenerate?

Students enrolled in Lutheran schools need to be taught that they are neither exclusively private, personal individuals, nor exclusively public persons. They are rather a mysterious mix of many elements, among them self-interest and self-sacrifice, power and love, change and permanence. Students enrolled in Lutheran classrooms throughout this troubled democracy need to be taught that, drawing on the words and examples of the Bible, they must involve themselves in the democratic process. Educating children enrolled in Lutheran schools in participatory democracy is a necessary precondition to intelligent and responsible adult exercise of democratic citizenship. Democracy is advanced citizenship which requires participatory cognizance to be effectively practiced. While this observance seems to me to be severely under-addressed by parents and by the Lutheran teaching ministry, this failure cannot be an excuse for continued failure.

The education of students enrolled in Lutheran classrooms in attending to civic and political engagement must begin with their teachers and administrators.

Given the current level of cynicism in this country, I seriously doubt that we can rely on parents, at least in many cases, to heed this call. Lutheran educators must teach their charges to reject such thin, crass false gods as economic utility and consumership, and to collectively reach inside themselves and dare to stand for the whole. They will also need to understand that the task will be immense and unceasing, but that they will not be left indifferent.

**Resources, Influences, and Suggested Further Reading**


Tradition, Authority, and Faithful Change: Theological Reflections on Jean Bethke Elshtain's "Democratic Authority at Century's End"

Generally speaking, I find the rhetoric of "repristination" unappealing. Among confessional Lutherans, we hear it often of late in appeals for a return to a pristine "Golden Age" of the Lutheran movement, by which the speaker usually means the seventeenth century. In American political culture, on the other hand, it frequently manifests itself in appeals from the so-called "Christian right" for a return to "family values," which sometimes seems to mean little more than the culture of white middle class America in the 1950s. Such appeals are wrongheaded, I think, not only because a return to the past is impossible, nor even because things may not have been as pristine back then as some seem to think. No, they are wrong theologically because they invite us to shirk our responsibility to live faithfully into the day and time in which God has placed us by deluding us into believing that someone who lived yesterday found all the answers to the problems of today. They reflect a fundamental
misunderstanding. in other words, of the
ways in which living intellectual
traditions like Christianity or democracy
develop, and invite us instead to avoid
the heavy lifting requisite to that
development, and to rest comfortably
with the supposedly settled answers of
the past.

Calls for repristination, for a return
to a past golden age, also tend to work in
tandem with claims that we now live in
an age of social or political decline. In
America in particular, there is good
reason for receiving such claims
skeptically. Our Puritan heritage may
have faded over time, but it still suffices
to insure that many of the reform-minded
among us will be perennially armed with
dyspeptic diatribes regarding the decline
of American culture or morals from some
bygone age, each one only too ready to
prescribe the religious or political
renewal necessary to get us back on the
right track. In fact, one of the great
strengths of America's democracy is its
ability to draw the rationale for healthy
change out of its traditions and
authorities.

Thankfully, Jean Bethke Elshtain, in
her essay "Democratic Authority at
Century’s End,” avoids both the tendency
to romanticize the past and the
temptation of dyspepticism, offering
instead an incisive critique of some of the
intellectual trends in late modern
America which tend to undermine the
authority structures upon which our
democratic political culture relies. There
is plenty in our common experience to
make plausible her claim that we have
suffered “a decline of confidence” in the
basic institutions of the American
democracy: widespread cynicism about
politicians, low voter turnout, and the
like. On the whole, I find Elshtain’s
diagnosis credible. And the treatment
she recommends, a recovery of the
resources inherent in the traditions of
American democracy, should be easily
intelligible to the Christian community.
for we have been utilizing the resources
of our theological tradition to negotiate
faithful change for nearly twenty
centuries now.

Although it makes no claims to do
so, Elshtain’s essay also shows that our
Lutheran commitment to providing the
highest quality Christian education is as
important today as it ever has been. The
late modern cultural crisis of community
which she considers means for Lutheran
educators that people still need the
excellent Christian education we’ve been
committed to offering here in River
Forest for over 135 years now: in fact,
they need it more than ever. Her essay
also has implications for the way in
which we conceive our task as educators.
No longer should we think of ourselves
as simply handing down a set of fixed
and static answers, whatever the subject be
classroom management or systematic
theology. To be sure, there is a certain
amount of information dissemination
necessary to the task of education. But
the Christian institution of higher
learning has to do more: as I see it, our distinctive task as a Christian university is to illuminate the world of learning and scholarship by means of the light of our faith tradition. That work is accomplished not only in the classroom, but in the very ethos of the life we share in academic communities. When they leave here, our students should be enabled by our traditions both to think and to live well: if they have learned to live a genuinely Christian version of the examined life, then they will be able to reflect critically and faithfully as they live into the challenges which they alone will face.

In what follows, I offer first a summary of Elshtain’s essay, followed by my own reflections on its meaning for Lutheran higher learning. Lastly, I suggest that Elshtain’s work might be received quite differently, and problematically, in highly conservative religious or political communities than it would be among the elite intellectual communities of America’s research universities. Her work should not be taken. I argue, as a legitimating argument for the continuing exclusion of women and other oppressed groups from full participation in the decision-making process in our society. and still less in Christian institutions of higher learning. The post-structuralist obsession with relations of power that Elshtain critiques may be overdrawn, but it serves a useful function nevertheless.

Summary

Building explicitly upon the work of the philosopher Hannah Arendt, Elshtain examines some of the ways in which authority undergirds the American experiment in democracy. Together with Arendt, she rejects the Maoist tendency to conflate authority with power—“Power grows out of the barrel of a gun”—and argues in its place for a notion of authority deeply traditional in its shape, drawn in part from the man who was probably the single most influential thinker in the history of Western Christianity, St. Augustine. Thus, her analysis of the perils facing American democracy today begins with an account of the tradition of the “bounded authority” of the state. State authority as traditionally conceived, she observes, is bounded by something outside, either in the “natural” order or...
in the God who created nature itself.

On that time-honored account, the authority of the state—even when it is expressed through the voice of the people—means not unbounded power for tyranny, but bounded authority for rule within the limits established by God or by the natural order. Likewise, the individual within the state is free, but bounded. Note the parallel: as the freedom of the state is bounded from the outside by God and/or the natural order, so also the freedom of the individual is bounded by the tradition and authority of the community. And as nature’s God founds the authority of the state, so also in important ways the state or human community is constitutive of the selfhood of the individual. One becomes truly human (i.e., shares in our common humanity), Elshtain reminds us, when one gives up all pretense of absolute independence and embraces in its place the good of receiving, in Tocqueville’s words, the “salutary bondage” of life in the particular human community which gives us the very beliefs by means of which we see and make sense of the world.

As Elshtain understands it, the triumph of autonomous individualism (a form of political liberalism which privileges the good of individual self-determination above all claims of the individual’s predetermination by God or nature) in our political life threatens traditional notions of state authority and, therefore, the American democracy itself. Here Elshtain sets her sights on the concentration on relations of power fashionable in much academic discourse today, especially in the humanities. Those who focus relentlessly upon the need for individual self-determination over against the claims of the community label every exertion of external authority a form of “oppression” which illegitimately limits their freedom for self-expression. Combine this with a politics of identity which denies the solidarity of humanity and divides us instead by gender, race, social class, and, more recently, sexual orientation, and the “foundings” of the classical notions of authority on which democracy depends are in deep difficulty. As Elshtain puts it, “you cannot found and sustain a democratic society if you presume experiences are so vastly different for distinct categories and groups of people that the gulf thus created is, in principle, unbridgeable.”

Against the fragmentation and tribalism prevailing in much of the academy today, Elshtain offers the wisdom and the resources of the moral and political traditions of democracy, bringing to her aid the revealing and instructive story of Frederick Douglass’s oration on the Fourth of July. There Douglass criticizes American political culture, giving poignant expression to his own sense of alienation, and to the “mournful wail” of those enslaved in a country “dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.” Douglass’s
strategy, so to speak, for critiquing the practice of slavery is to bring the moral resources of the slaveholders’ own political traditions to bear on the practice of slavery. His is a critique, in other words, from the inside. Its persuasive power rests in the assent which it would demand from all who inhabit the traditions of American democracy. On Elshtain’s account, the democratic traditions of American political life are not merely sufficient to sustain themselves against attack from within. Rather, the inner logic of those traditions should foster and enable thoughtful critique and lead to constructive political change.

Implications for Lutheran Higher Education

Now, what does all this seemingly abstruse political philosophy have to do with Lutheran higher education? As I see it, the implications are many. For the church, too, is a community which “gives sight to the blind.” And the church-related college is the ideal context for exercising and sharpening that Christian vision. At its best, our faith tradition functions, like the traditions of liberal democracy, to enable rather than to stifle criticism and debate. We Christian educators face many and perplexing challenges as we move toward the year 2000, among the most important of which is the daunting challenge of finding innovative ways to create community and to conserve the essentials of our traditions as we live into our God-given vocation in a world much changed from the nineteenth and even from the twentieth century.

As we do so, we must be ever mindful that Christian higher education is grounded in the life and faith of the church. The church is a community brought to life by the very life-giving Spirit of God, made real for us by means of Word and Sacrament. The word of promise spoken to each of us in Holy Baptism marks us as fellow members of the body of Christ, our crucified God. Christ Himself is our solidarity, whatever our gender, race, social class, or sexual orientation. We live into the reality of that solidarity each day, and participate in its renewal—its “re-founding,” if you will—in the Holy Mass each Lord’s Day, especially in the Sacrament of Christ’s body and blood. On account of the grace and benevolence of God, the Church, when it is being what it really is, suffers
no shortage in "social capital formation."

The sending which takes place at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy—“Go in peace! Serve the Lord!"—means that we are individually and corporately sent back into the world as God’s servants. Service in the world is, in the Lutheran tradition, a matter of living faithfully within the vocation given us by God. Generally speaking, there isn’t anything peculiarly religious about the kind of work we are called to do: its peculiarity consists, instead, in the fact that it is done by us in response to God. Freed by the Gospel, we give ourselves in service to the world, not only because we know its true destiny in Christ, but also because the world itself is a good given by God. Such secular activities as vigorous participation in the traditions of American democracy become for us the deeds of love to which the Spirit calls us. We in Christian education serve those traditions well, I think, when we help form and shape young Christians for lives of loving service in the world. If there is a crisis of democratic authority, the church-related college stands ready to prepare for the American democracy young Christians willing to serve, ready to offer that obedience which, as Elshtain observes, is the proper complement to legitimate authority. In that sense, Elshtain’s observations underscore yet again the critical need for vigorous Christian institutions of higher learning.

That cannot mean, however, that Christian education should become, as it sometimes has, the utilitarian servant of the state. At its best, higher education in the Lutheran tradition teaches us not only that we serve God when we participate faithfully in the penultimate structures of worldly authority, but also that we dishonor God both when we honor the state’s false claims to ultimacy—which, using Elshtain’s terms, would amount to the state’s attempt to transcend its own foundings in God and/or nature—and when we refuse to take up the cause of the poor or oppressed even when it means civil disobedience. We Christians have not only insider status in the traditions of American democracy, but also a privileged outsider point of view given to us in the revelation of God in Christ, in Holy Scripture, and in our confessional heritage. Ours, in other words, is a two-fold citizenship. Because Christianity is an irreducibly universalizing discourse, one whose claims to truth and ultimacy apply to all humanity, this cannot be taken as a retreat into a Christian version of tribalism, or as merely a Christian “point of view.” Christian faith functions simultaneously to enable our participation in the structures of authority prevailing in our culture, and, at times, to relativize them sub specie aeternitatis. We Christians respect democratic authority, and out of love for those in need, we are concerned about its erosion, but we also respect God’s Author-ity, and should suffer nothing to take its place.

To teach young Christians to engage
in genuinely Christian political and cultural critique—as we in River Forest will soon attempt to do in the University’s new required interdisciplinary course, “Values & Virtues”—means that we teach them to speak not only from within the discourse traditions of American democracy, but also from outside those traditions, reminding all that democracy itself—and other legitimate forms of government we may construct—rest on distinctively religious presuppositions about God and nature, and criticizing even those foundational presuppositions, when necessary, from the standpoint of our faith. The power of Frederick Douglass’s oration consists, for example, not only in its utilization of the logic internal to American democracy, nor even in its appeal to an “understanding common to all,” but also in its insistence that we stand under the judgment of God. To that extent, Elshtain’s essay functions as a salutary reminder, to borrow a phrase from the title of her recent book on St. Augustine, of the “limits of politics.”

If I am hesitant about anything in Elshtain’s essay, it is the ease with which her arguments could be misused to support the unjust power structures that still prevail in conservative political or religious communities. In the context of the late twentieth century research university, her argument against the fragmentation of interest group politics is a salutary one. But in the very different context of communities which have yet even to grant that women and people of color have been systematically and wrongly excluded from full participation, there is more of a place for such groups than Elshtain would seem to allow. The insider/outsider status of the Christian citizen in America’s democracy should help us to empathize with the alienated and excluded of every kind. While we may reject the tendency of radical individualism to divide us by the barriers of race, gender, class, and sexual orientation, we should also be able to recognize the sinful ways in which many of the subcultures in this country still
unfairly discriminate against such persons.

The culture of LCMS institutions of higher education, for example, could benefit much from effective networks of women working to change the systems and ideologies that have traditionally excluded them from taking leadership roles. Here again, however, the most effective arguments for change will come, as Elshtain's essay suggests, from the inside, from the internal logic of Scripture, Confessions, and sound doctrine. For that reason, any argument for the full participation of women in university leadership is simultaneously an argument for their equal access to theological education at every level. All those who participate in the development of a tradition like ours must be enabled to study and reflect on our sources of authority. It is encouraging to note in this regard that Concordia Seminary (St. Louis) has recently changed its Th.D. program to a Ph.D.; at least part of the logic for that change came from the Seminary's laudable goal of finding a way to admit more women to doctoral study in theology. Our reaction to that change will be a telling one. While the rhetoric of repristination would falsely romanticize a past in which women did not take advanced degrees in theology, and the rhetoric of decline and decay might wrongly demonize such change per se, the argument for faithful change will recognize that we repay the debt we owe to our ancestors when we respect the authorities of our tradition enough to allow them to carry us, as they did our ancestors, faithfully into the future. Doing so will mean living so deeply into the authorities of our tradition that we are enabled to do things our ancestors never dreamed of doing—training women to serve as doctors of the church, for example—in solidarity with their legacy of faith.

In the Lutheran Christian tradition which those of us working in the Concordia University System inhabit, we can be thankful that there is, at least at present, no crisis of authority, except, perhaps, in the sense that we still struggle with the question of authoritative interpretation of that tradition. Instead, our crisis is one of a failure of nerve which manifests itself most often either as the fear of change per se, or, worse still, as the fear that even to advocate change is to mark one's self as somehow unfaithful to tradition and authority. To the contrary, the problem of faithful change always carries us back to our sources of authority; being faithfully Lutheran means, as much as it means anything else, willing and constructive participation in the family quarrels of the Lutheran tradition. In the final analysis, then, Elshtain's essay serves as a helpful reminder of the dynamic interrelationship between tradition, authority, and change, and for that she is very much to be thanked.
Musings on the Ministry(s) of Women

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It was the end of the semester, and I had been asked to speak to a class on women in the history of Christianity. Students under the guidance of a gifted instructor had spent the term reading a variety of texts both by women and about women over the two millennia of Christian history. I had visited the class earlier in the term and had been struck by the complexity of what it meant for women to be "in ministry." But here we were that evening—three professors and a room full of students in training to be Lutheran teachers, DCEs, deaconesses and pastors—locked in a debate over that very topic.

As I reflected on the experience sometime later, it occurred to me that what had happened that evening is what happens so very often when this subject is raised and we tentatively step out onto that slippery slope. We fell in. But what we fell into was more than the usual murky water of what women should be and do. No, we fell into the deeper muck of what ministry is.

No matter how we try, as Lutherans we seem unable to define ministry other than in either/or terms. Call it what you will, once caught in the reductionist trap of
nomenclature, one ends up either ordained or not. The students I spoke with that evening did the same. But here’s my concern. Once the conversation begins, presuppositions run rampant, and one of the prevailing presuppositions evident in that classroom was that ministries are ranked, that some are more important and more valued than others. I think it’s time we disabuse ourselves of that notion.

Just what is ministry and why is it so contested a notion? I find it more and more useful in defining terms with students to have them consider certain words in the plural. Feminism, for example, is one word that becomes far more palatable (and importantly, less fear-provoking) when students recognize that there is a broad spectrum of viewpoints—feminisms—among women and men who all fundamentally agree on the basic equality of the sexes. Stripped of the idea that there is such a thing as either a monolithic feminist agenda or even a generic feminist, individuals who might earlier have prefaced their remarks with “I’m not a feminist but . . .” become less resistant to both language and ideas labeled with the F-word.

Might that be a useful approach to take when discussing ministry as well? Are we open to consider ministries? Some congregations organize themselves around such a concept, redefining their various boards and committees into a ministry of human care, finance ministry, lay ministry, and more. Other congregations boldly claim on their worship folders that all their members are ministers even as they have a professional pastoral staff explicitly named. Such usage sometimes serves only to muddle the debate. Those who subscribe to a high view of the ministry tend to restrict their use of the term ministry to the pastoral office and thereby would find the phrase “lay ministry” an oxymoron. They also object to any consideration of the pastoral office as but one of various ministries within the church, insisting instead that it is the ministry. Others in that same camp reject the “everyone a minister” approach as a pietistic misappropriation of Luther’s notion of the priesthood of all believers.

Such an understanding of ministry is usually underlain with the presumption that there is only one office of value—the ordained office of Word and sacrament—and that if women could get their hands on it, they would. Because they cannot become pastors under the current position of the synod, they take other roles as teachers, DCEs, and deaconesses. In this way of thinking, saying one is called and gifted to serve “as” often translates into a posture of defensiveness rather than a clear and positive affirmation of call. “I can’t be a pastor but . . .” That is what happened in the classroom that evening.

Arguments over the ministry are hardly new to the church. They seem almost genetic among Lutherans who find it hard to strike a balance between the universal priesthood and their respect for
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a set-apart office of Word and sacrament. Consider the reaction of numerous folk to the report on nomenclature offered last fall. Unhappiness over proposed terminology simply reflected a larger and longstanding unhappiness over status, and only served to maximize the us/them nature of the uneasy relationship between the two categories of church professionals, clergy and lay. Gender only complicates the situation.

How have we gotten ourselves in this mess? Some of the answer comes from history, which can prove helpful by giving context to the present. It should be news to no one that since its founding the Missouri Synod has struggled with a perpetual competition of sorts between its pastors and its teachers. It is not the position of this article to debate the problematic history of the synod with regard to the doctrine of ministry—I have done that at far greater length elsewhere—but rather to consider the implications of that history for the ministry of women.

Women in Professional Ministry Opportunities
Thanks in large measure to Catherine Beecher’s advocacy of the appropriateness of women—nurturers by nature—as well as resources available to them. Still, within only a generation, women became a majority of the synod’s parochial school teachers.

Her gender defined her as different. Therefore she was subject to different treatment by the church. Solemn agreements rather than diplomas of vocation, no right to the housing allowance tax advantage granted male teachers, almost from its beginning teaching in America has been the domain (some might even say the special calling) of women, parochial teaching even more so due to the early and primary involvement of Roman Catholic women religious. Women served as teachers in the Missouri Synod already in the nineteenth century, but only began to be trained by the church in this century. By 1929 the synod reluctantly agreed that “the employment of women teachers cannot be avoided altogether” (Proceedings, 74). But from the first men of the church worried about the feminization of the profession (Eiselmeier, 1925; Schmidt, 1972). Also from the first, a distinction was made between male and female teachers, as women were admitted to two synodical colleges but limited in enrollment as well as in the facilities and resources available to them.
teachers and clergy, lesser pay—one might think such egregious discrimination would have discouraged women from pursuing Lutheran school teaching. But it did not. Women continued to enter the teaching profession and continue still. And most would understand what they do as ministry.

Then there is the deaconess, a ministry opportunity introduced in the Missouri Synod in 1919. Unlike parochial school teaching, which expanded to include women, the deaconess program from its founding has been defined by its gendered nature, open to women only. That’s the easy part. What is more difficult is how one understands an office defined as one of service and support to, but separate from, the pastoral office? May the female diaconate be one of the ministries of the church or must it be considered ancillary to the one ministry? I would submit that this is more than playing at semantics. Language counts—the way we speak of things is the way we conceive of them. So how one answers that question depends on one’s understanding of the very word ministry itself, and of who is allowed to do it.

Women in Volunteer Ministry Opportunities

The issue of women’s service in the church is hardly restricted to professional church workers, but extends to the hundreds of thousands of women who offer their time to both organizational and congregational work. Many of those women would consider what they are doing to be ministry, and indeed, many call it just that. One group that intentionally uses the word is the official auxiliary of the synod, the International Lutheran Women’s Missionary League. Now preferring to refer to itself as Lutheran Women in Mission, the LWML in its mission statement is explicit and direct:

The mission of the Lutheran Women’s Missionary League is to assist each woman of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod in affirming her relationship with the Triune God so that she is enabled to use her gifts in ministry to the people of the world.

Traditionally the LWML has declared itself apolitical and has therefore stayed out of the fray with regard to women’s service. But that position has not left it immune to criticism, for there are some who consider the League pledge (written in 1946 by an LCMS pastor) subtly suggestive of women in ordained ministry in its expression of “obedience to His call for workers in the harvest fields.”

Since the synod in 1969 extended them the privilege of suffrage, women have become involved in areas of congregational life far beyond the traditional Kinder und Kuche (children and kitchen). Members of boards and committees, lectors and more, women have offered their gifts in service, but again, not without contest. A still unresolved issue in the church body is the
service of women as congregational chairs and elders. Debate over the boundaries and definition of the pastoral office is central to this question, but without waiting for the synod’s Commission on Theology and Church Relations to make up its mind, numerous congregations have opted to accept the service of gifted women in virtually all offices. Not infrequently these offices are defined as ministry.

Clearly the definition of ministry opportunities has changed over the course of the synod’s history as women have asked for and received inclusion in both professional and volunteer positions. Women are in ministry in The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod and are in the ministry of the synod. And the mission of the church is well-served by the diversity of their calls and callings. But when women’s service is not recognized as ministry because the word is limited to the pastoral office alone, not only does this exclude the invaluable contributions of over half the members of the church, but it denigrates and denies the body of Christ model of church.?

References
Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (1929). *Proceedings*.

1. See my Ph.D. dissertation, "*Not in God’s Lifetime*: The Question of the Ordination of Women in the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod. A revised version of this work will be published by Eerdmans as *Authority Vested* in 1999.
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Achieving Cultural Diversity in Lutheran Music Education

The 1990 Census estimated the population of the United States to be 250 million people. This was an increase of 23 million over the 1980 census. It is interesting to note the rate of increase in several sub-populations. Over this ten year period the Asian population grew at 12 times the rate of the native population, and the Hispanic population grew five times faster. And this is only taking into account legal immigrants (Barna, 1990).

It is predicted that Caucasians will reach zero population growth by the year 2000. The Black population is predicted to grow by 15% this decade. But, the Hispanic and Asian populations will increase by 35 to 40 percent during this same period. It is expected that in the year 2000 minorities will make up 23 to 26 percent of the population (Barna, 1990).

In the year 2000 the population of the United States is expected to be 10% Asian, 16% Black, 22% Hispanic, and 52% European heritage. As a teacher in the year 2000, you can expect one out of three U.S. school children to be either Black or Hispanic. And, if you teach in any of the 53 major cities, the majority of your students will be non-white (Anderson & Campbell,
As Lutheran educators we will need to address the cultural impact of this minority presence on our school system and on our churches. Congregations will have to consider minority members as equals and even see them as the key to future impact. Perhaps looking at music multi-culturally will be one way to encourage this. We know that music is one of the few universal cultural phenomena—no people group known is without some kind of music (Nettl, 1964). We also know that music has staying power: more than any other cultural characteristic, it "conveys and enfleshes the uniqueness of a people" (Schattaube, Ward & Bangert, 1996). So let's look at multi-cultural music in our school and in our church's worship.

Part One: In Our Classrooms

The new "National Standards for Arts Education" (1994) suggest that "an education in the arts benefits society because students learn to adapt to and respect others' (often very different) ways of thinking, working, and expressing themselves." These standards insist that students learn about the diverse cultural and historic heritage of the arts. While we should be cautious about "jumping on the bandwagon" with our secular counterparts, there are, perhaps, some aspects of the multi-cultural approach to music we can appropriate for our use.

If students are to learn from a multi-cultural perspective, teachers must develop an educational philosophy which recognizes the many cultural contributions made by different peoples (Anderson & Campbell, 1996). With this type of approach to the teaching of music, students will be able to see the connections between particular artistic styles and the historical development of the world's cultures. This will provide an "equity pedagogy" to all students regardless of their racial, ethnic, or social class (Campbell, 1996).

Campbell (1996) lists three broad generalizations about the teaching of multi-cultural music. First of all, music, like every other kind of information from various cultures, helps in world understanding. Experiencing people's musical expressions may be one of the most direct routes to inter-cultural understanding. Second, exposure to multi-cultural music can lead to critical thought in that it can help students to discern ways to express reasons for their acceptance or rejection of musical sounds and styles. Third, it can lead to the development of musical concepts. For instance, students can study the treatment of melody across several traditions or the function of music at work in several cultures.

Let me expand on each of these generalizations. We know that fear, mistrust, and racism are often the results of cultural misunderstanding. If indeed the core of many of today's conflicts is ignorance, alienation, and fear of the unknown "other" who is different from us, then one of the most conveniently
learned faces of the “other” is his or her music. The next best thing to direct physical contact is exposure to various cultural expressions (Campbell. 1996).

When using a multi-cultural approach, it is important for students to be exposed to a variety of musical styles as early as possible in their education. One way to start the instruction is to use some kind of inter-cultural group of concepts and sounds. The presentation of information from a variety of cultures to illustrate key concepts and principles is called “content integration.” Musical diversity should not be presented through a mere geographical overview, but through looking at musical examples from various cultures which illustrate music’s similarities and differences (Campbell, 1996). Each of the basic concepts of music can be covered—melody, rhythm, timbre, texture, dynamics, and form.¹ As students study a variety of musics, they will become more aware of aspects of their own music that they have previously taken for granted.

Teachers should model respect for the music of others whether or not they like it themselves. When students openly share their dislike for music from other cultures, the teacher can use the experience as a tool for teaching critical thinking. Evaluation questions could be asked such as, “How do we distinguish good music from bad music? Is there more than one way for music to be good? If so, why?” Our students don’t have to like everything they hear, but they should learn to think about the bases for their judgments (Campbell. 1996).

As with other subject areas, we should be teaching multi-cultural music incrementally. That is, we add more complex information at various stages of learning (Campbell. 1996). A number of questions could be answered for each piece of music depending on the information available and the level of the students:

- Who performs the music? When? Where?
- What do the instruments look like? Of what materials are the instruments made?
- How does geography and climate affect the construction of the instruments?
- How are the instruments tuned?
- How are the instruments played?
- What instruments are played together?
- How was this music taught and learned?
- How does the audience respond—listening, dancing, clapping, singing along?

Experiencing people’s musical expressions may be one of the most direct routes to inter-cultural understanding.
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- What age group prefers this music?
- What social group listens to this type of music?
- What style of music is this?
- What is the music used for?
- How is the performance evaluated as good or bad?
- Who made up this music?
- What is the relation of the music to other art forms? (Myers, 1992 and Nettl, 1964)

Multi-cultural music can also make an appearance in the social science curriculum—in geography, history, and social studies classes (Campbell, 1996). Teachers can key into the ethnic heritages of the students and design units that reflect their ethnic heritages. Students’ parents and grandparents who live in the community could be brought in to share various facets of the tradition. Remember, however, to cover the musical traditions of ethnic groups that do not have representation within the school as well (Anderson, 1991). Perhaps study units could be organized around the cultural groups highlighted in the social studies curriculum at each grade level.

Multi-cultural music is relevant not only in our music and social science classes, but also to our choirs, bands, and other ensembles. While there are many musical styles represented in the United States, none of us grows up in an environment in which we become fluent with all of the various styles. Trying to perform multi-cultural music will help us to know more about it. In fact, we may even grow to like some or all of it. It’s when we “fall in love” with a piece that we want to know more about its background. If possible, have recordings available so that students can hear the music performed and imitate the recording. Avoid using harmonic piano accompaniments when they do not resemble the practice of the original culture. It’s especially interesting to learn music that does not use Western staff notation. This helps students to learn that our system of notation is limited—it cannot appropriately convey the intricacies of pitch and rhythm for all styles of music. Many areas of the world have music as sophisticated as our own. There are many different, yet equally valid, ways to construct music (Anderson & Campbell, 1996).

Most collegiate programs in music performance and education are based primarily on Western European art music (Campbell, 1996). You, like me, may not have had any training at all in multi-cultural music. As you think about incorporating music from different parts of the world in your curriculum, remember that some things are worth doing even if they are not done well at first. Practice and further study will enable you to better teach multi-cultural music. I would suggest that you begin by concentrating on learning one or just a few musical traditions first. You can expand later when you begin to feel
comfortable with those traditions. I am including a list of regions for which classroom lesson plans, audiotapes, and videotapes are available.¹ The music of the Americas may be your first priority:

Native American Music

African-American Music:
- Spirituals
- Gospel Songs
- Soul/jazz fusion in contemporary Gospel
- Ragtime
- Jazz
- Rhythm and blues
- Rap (Anderson, 1991)

Southern Appalachian Mountain Music

Shape-Note Singing

American Cowboy Music (Anderson & Campbell, 1996)

Latin Musical Styles:
- Huapango
- Banda
- Jarrocho
- Mariachi
- Norteno
- Ranchera
- Son
- Salsa
- Tropical (Campbell, 1996)

African-American music of Latin America and the Caribbean:

South American Cowboy Songs

Steel Bands of Trinidad and Tobago

The European Art Tradition in Latin America:

i.e., Villa-Lobos, Chavez, Ginastera (Anderson & Campbell, 1996)

Of course, we need to remember that Native American music is the only music indigenous to the American continents. African-American music exists between the traditions of the European Americans and the West African cultures. African-American music makes use of the call-and-response form, melodic ornamentation, and improvisation (Anderson & Campbell, 1996). African-American music is familiar to most of us because, as Pastor Schmidtke (1996) reminds us, “Music that is often labeled ‘black’ is music that is really just one kind of music that is totally part of our experiences as Americans, not just of one ethnic context of the U.S.A.”

There is tremendous diversity among Latin American musical styles, with European, African, and indigenous elements forming separate musical cultures and also influencing musical fusions. When approaching Latin music we must remember that their cultures are not homogeneous. so we cannot lump all of their music under one label.

Beyond the American scene, you will want to explore the music of Europe. This will be less familiar to your students but will still use Western notation and familiar instruments. Include these regions:

- British Isles
- Scandinavia
- Germanic Western Europe
Achieving Diversity in Lutheran Music Education

Part Two: Classroom and Church Connected

Lutheran teachers are concerned about worship. We want our students to attend worship regularly. We prepare our students to understand our worship services and to participate in special ways, perhaps through the preparation of choir anthems. So, we are concerned about multi-cultural worship.

Schattauer, Ward, and Bangert (1996) discuss the concept of multi-cultural worship at length in their book What Does Multi-Cultural Worship Look Like? They encourage us to consider these ideas: Missionaries have noted that the culture of a people generates distinctive practices of worship. In order for the universal gospel of Jesus to be received, it must be communicated with the cultural vernaculars of God’s people in all their peculiarity. The use of culturally-specific elements in worship is a means of communicating the gospel to people gathered for worship in their own cultural idiom. The use of these cultures’ gifts is always for the sake of the gospel and not for the sake of the culture.

As we begin to make our worship multi-cultural we will begin to borrow elements from one culture, preferably from an ethnic group represented in our parish membership. Perhaps music would be a good place to start. Then, as the comfort level increases, we can begin to use elements from a variety of cultures in worship. Schattauer et al. (1996) remind us that there is a five step process...

Romantic-Atlantic Europe
Eastern Europe (Anderson & Campbell, 1996)

There is music of the world that seems “foreign” to our ears. The instruments are tuned differently from our “even tempered” instruments, and the scales are different from our major and minor scales. These regions include:

Sub-Saharan Africa
Jewish Music in Israel
The Arab Middle-East
South Asia--India
China
Japan
Indonesia
Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, Vietnam
Micronesia
Melanesia
Polynesia (Anderson & Campbell, 1996)

When looking for reference material on Micronesia, Melanesia, and Polynesia, you may have to look for the term "Oceania.” The dance is the most significant aspect of this music. While our children may be familiar with the terms monophonic and polyphonic from the traditional music classes, they will hear heterophonic music from many other parts of the world. “Heterophony” is defined as the combination of melodies that are similar but not quite the same (Anderson, 1991). Listen for this on tapes of Chinese and Iranian music.
which we and our members will follow:
1. Gaining Awareness
2. Gaining Understanding
3. Accepting
4. Appreciating
5. Selective Adoption

Gerhard Cartford, in his lecture at the River Forest Lectures in Church Music in 1996, expanded on this last step. It is possible for us to ADOPT, ADAPT, or REJECT multi-cultural elements in our worship depending on local circumstances. I serve in a parish which is becoming more culturally diverse, and I have been part of meetings in which decisions have been made regarding which multi-cultural elements should be used in which service. There is a variety of music available. I would encourage you to choose the best arrangements, and those which your groups are capable of performing not only well, but as authentically as possible. Don’t turn your congregation off to multi-cultural music by doing it poorly or improperly! As in the classroom, incremental introduction often works best.

Cartford also reminds us that while parts of our worship may be ethnic-specific, there still remains an overarching American popular culture that is based on market capitalism, consumerism, technology, and the entertainment industry. Our worship, therefore, is:

Transcultural—Word and Sacrament apply to all cultures;
Contextual—Situated in our specific place and time;
Countercultural—Challenging what is opposed to the Gospel; and
Cross-Cultural—Making possible the sharing of resources between cultures.

As we plan our worship experiences, we must be increasingly aware that we live in a secular society which encourages religious pluralism. Our mission will increasingly be to reach out to the marginally Christian and secularized persons of our area no matter what may be their ethnic background. As we plan worship experiences we keep in mind that the Gospel is not just an idea that can be expressed in any form or a message that can be delivered through any medium. There is a historic pattern of Word and

The use of culturally-specific elements in worship is a means of communicating the gospel to people gathered for worship in their own cultural idiom. The use of these cultures’ gifts is always for the sake of the gospel and not for the sake of the culture.
Achieving Diversity in Lutheran Music Education

Sacrament. Schattauer et al. (1996) define the essential core or *Ordo* of worship. This is a necessary prerequisite to any discussion of culture-specific adaptation. The *Ordo* of the liturgy is defined as “the Gathering, the Word Service, the Eucharistic Meal, and the Sending.” Christian worship then is centered in these core elements, but exactly how they are celebrated within the context of a particular cultural community is a matter of contextualization.

In conclusion, let me share some comments from Lingenfelter (1986). Writing, I believe, to “missionaries-to-be,” he says, “The key to successful personal relationships and ministry is to understand and accept others as having a viewpoint that is worthy of consideration as our own.” He contends that we are following the example of Christ, that of incarnation, when we undergo dramatic personal reorientation. As we begin to minister multi-culturally in our classrooms and in our parishes we will be “socialized all over again into a new cultural contest.” We will become as children receiving gifts. We will never become 100% insiders in another culture or subculture, but we grow to understand that the real gifts in multi-cultural ministry are always person to person. As cultural gifts are shared with us in a Christian community, the love of Christ is shared with us. Are you open to receive these gifts?

References


1. For ideas on how to teach the elements of music, see my 1990 article in the *Choristers Guild Letters*.

2. For a bibliography of materials you may wish to investigate as you begin your study of multi-cultural music, contact the author directly or *Lutheran Education*.
Time Well Spent

One study of how principals spend their time involved observations of twenty-four principals. After observing these principals for three years, the authors concluded:

Our observations indicate that the principal’s workday is very busy and highly unpredictable. The principal’s time is typically spent in many activities of very short duration, with considerable variety and sudden shifting of gears throughout the school day. The principalship, we found, is a peripatetic occupation, with much of the working day spent in locations other than the principal’s office.

For the most part, the tempo of life in a principal’s workday is not conducive to serene reflection and ordered, thoughtful decision making (Morris, p. 689).

The conclusion that principals are busy people is not news. Principals don’t have to read this article to know that they’re busy. The issue isn’t whether or not principals are busy enough. It’s how they can best use the time they have.

In a study done by Kenneth Freeston and Jonathan Costa, work done by administrators is put into one of three categories. “Value-added work” is work that directly leads to learning. It includes activities such as observing and supporting classroom learning, learning more about how students learn, and engaging in professional dialogue focused on learning. “Waste work,” the second category, involves work that could have been avoided if it had been done correctly the first time. Activities such as correcting mistakes and dealing with complaints regarding poor performance fall into this category. The third category, “necessary work,” involves things that are needed to keep a school functioning, but which have no direct effect on learning itself. Activities like ordering supplies, scheduling, and signing bills are examples of necessary work (Freeston and Costa, 1998, p. 51).

Results of their study done with educational leaders found that only 10 to 20 percent of the administrators’ time at school was spent engaging in value-added work. If the results of their study are accurate, it is obvious that much needs to be changed.

The authors contend that leaders who spend more time on value-added time activities than on waste time “are likely to feel a great sense of worth and pride in their work.” On the other hand, those who spend more time on waste work than value-added work “tend to be numb to innovation, suspicious of new ideas,
dispassionate toward improvement, and not willing to find challenge in their work." The authors also contend that no more than 40 percent of an administrator's time should be spent on activities that fall into the category of necessary work. A higher percentage, they say, indicates inefficiencies in the systems used in the school (Freeston and Costa, p. 52).

Whether these harsh assessments are merited or not, the point is that administrators need to find ways to spend a greater part of their time on things related directly to facilitating student learning. It is imperative that administrators remember that their job is to put their teachers in the best position to teach and their students in the best position to learn.

To accomplish this, the principal has to be visible—to the teachers and to the students. A principal sequestered in his office doesn't do much for his visibility. Principals have to get firsthand knowledge of how things are going in the classrooms and how best the learning atmosphere can be improved.

One way to increase value-added time is, of course, to limit the amount of waste time. Good principals pay attention to details. They are organized. They don't rely only on their memories; they write things down. They make lists of what needs to be done, and they get them done. They do the things which reduce the chances of mistakes being made. And they communicate.

A good administrator realizes the vast waste of time that meetings can become. As the old adage goes, "a meeting is an event at which the minutes are kept and the hours are lost." To make meetings more efficient and more learning-oriented, some schools use a process of pre-screening of issues to reduce the time spent on things not directly related to the creation of learning. Other schools have learned to deal with non-learning issues in ways other than meetings (Freeston and Costa, p. 52).

Generally, value-added work involves time spent with people, not things. Good leaders know that time spent with people is usually more beneficial than time spent with paper.

Lazy, leisurely days are few and far between for administrators. Their time is precious. They can't add more hours to the day. Nor should they steal time from family and self to get things done at school. They should, however, know that being busy isn't always being productive. They should also realize that being smart about how they use their time can actually save them time and can make school more enjoyable and productive for everyone.9

References
Working for the State of the Art

Which statement below best describes your school’s approach to music instruction?

a. What music program!?
b. We do the best we can, given our circumstances. None of our teachers has much training in music.
c. Our (principal, school board, pastor, faculty) doesn’t see the need for spending much time or money on music.
d. Fairly effective . . . we hope.
e. Very comprehensive — but we always look for ways to improve the quality of education we offer.

Whichever statement is closest to your school’s approach to music instruction, the fact is that the quality of music programs within Lutheran schools varies widely. Of course, Lutheran schools themselves are a very diverse lot! Some are blessed with a large, talented staff and enjoy a stable financial base, while others struggle with large fiscal deficits. More and more find themselves unable to obtain staff capable of leading a music program, due to the current shortage of musically trained teachers. Some must rely on volunteer help for any music instruction or offer none at all. Often the outlook for music in Lutheran schools looks bleak. But whatever difficulties schools face, there is one thing which all Lutheran teachers and administrators share: the profound sense of responsibility to provide for God’s children the best quality of education possible in every learning area—and that includes the arts and music.

Every music teacher, whether a music specialist, a general classroom teacher, or a church musician involved in music instruction, can become better through self-evaluation and familiarity with some of the tools available to assess the effectiveness of his or her program. One of the best resources available to music teachers who wish to evaluate their own teaching is the National Standards for Arts Education: What Every Young American Should Know and Be Able to Do in the Arts.

This document, published in January of 1994 by the National Committee for Standards in the Arts, was America’s first national voluntary standard for K-12 education in the arts. The Standards are organized by grade level (K-4, 5-8, 9-12) and by discipline (Dance, Music, Theatre, Visual Arts). For each discipline, both content and achievement standards are given for every level.

At this point some readers might be wondering what public national music standards could possibly have to do with Lutheran
Children at Worship

Our schools are, after all, fundamentally different from public institutions. They ought to be. But rather than ignoring the National Standards, or viewing them as something irrelevant to a parochial system, we ought to consider their possibilities for helping Lutheran schools to strengthen their music programs.

If everyone who teaches music to children in a Lutheran school would take some time to familiarize themselves with the content of the National Standards for Music Education, and then share what they have learned with their principal and faculty, what might be the results?

1. Schools would learn more about the nature of their own music programs. They might get to pat themselves on the back for a job well done, or they might see gaps in their curriculum which need to be filled.

2. Teachers would gain some new ideas for instruction and perhaps be inspired to do further study to broaden the scope of their teaching.

3. Faculties would be inspired to see music as a gift from God for all children, and to try to incorporate more musical experiences into the curriculum of the entire school. This is especially critical for those schools which serve culturally mixed communities.

4. Choral and instrumental programs would improve because of better instructional methods. Does not the Lord ask us to sing “with understanding”? The church at large would truly benefit, as more skilled singers and players were nurtured.

5. Individual schools, districts, and even the church at large might be encouraged to see the need for and develop a national curriculum for LC-MS schools, incorporating our rich heritage of sacred music with a focused and well-planned curriculum of music skills.

These prospects sound exciting. As the new academic year begins, let each of us who teaches music to children decide to become a more accomplished instructor. Let each of us take stock of what we teach, and look outward to see what we can do to broaden the scope of what we offer our students. Begin with something small. Attend a workshop, if it’s been awhile. Become a member of a professional organization and/or begin reading a journal. Become familiar with the National Standards for Arts Education. By evaluating and educating ourselves, we can make music in Lutheran Schools “state of the art.”

To order for further study:
National Standards for Arts Education: What Every Young American Should Know and Be Able to Do in the Arts. (1994). Music Educators National Conference, 1806 Robert Fulton Drive, Reston, VA, 20191
Phone: 1-800-828-0229

Strategies for Teaching. Series developed by Music Educators National Conference to implement the National Music Education Standards. See address above.
Steps Toward Dealing with Social Issues
in the Church

That Was Then . . .

The turbulent, changing times of the 1960s impacted many aspects of our society today. Many of us grew up watching the emergence of new attitudes toward the rights of women and minorities. At the same time the illegal use of drugs and the “sexual revolution” were escalating throughout the country. The values and morals of our childhood were being questioned repeatedly. The role of government in our lives was also being challenged as our generation questioned the decisions and ethics of the “establishment” in such issues as the war in Vietnam and Watergate.

The role of the church during this period also faced many challenges. Some church bodies became increasingly responsive to the social issues around them and were often rallying centers for antiwar, civil rights, or environmental efforts. Discussions and disagreements arose concerning the role of the church and whether it should become involved in social issues or remain solely committed to ministry of Word and Sacrament.

. . . This Is Now

Today, I believe the society in which the church resides will be calling us to address again the issue of our role in dealing with social issues. In the United States, the Congress has implemented the 1996 Welfare Reform Act which has shifted responsibility to the states for providing for the needs of the poor. This shift has called upon the faith community to step up and assist in caring for those in need as well. Many of the states are implementing welfare programs which limit the amount of time a recipient may receive assistance to somewhere between two and five years in a lifetime. After that limit has been met, families will need to be employed adequately or seek other areas of assistance. Social service agencies such as local shelters and food banks are already experiencing increasing levels of usage, especially by families with children and single parents.

What role does the church worker assume in dealing with social issues as we end the twentieth and move into the twenty-first century? We will look at the examples God gives us in Scripture to serve as a foundation for determining which steps to consider.
To Act Justly and to Love Mercy

In the sixth chapter of Micah the prophet is telling the nation of Israel that what the Lord is looking for from His people is not just religious sacrifices but, more importantly, "to act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8). Micah was addressing a people who were becoming increasingly less tolerant of the poor among them. The wealthy were becoming more affluent, often at the expense of the poor. Sound familiar? When we look at America today, we find a very similar pattern emerging. Since 1985, the richest five percent of the population has received more income than the lowest 40 percent combined (The State of America's Children, 1998). To act justly as people of God, we need to be concerned for those who are less fortunate. Too often, our churches become segments of society that close their doors to persons from different economic levels. We need to become aware of issues of justice around us.

Concern for the poor is a recurring message of Scripture as well. Although Jesus told the disciples "the poor you will always have with you" (Matthew 26:11), He also told the rich young man to sell all he had and give it to the poor (Matthew 19:21). Paul also encouraged Christians to remember the poor (Galatians 2:10). Many of the communities in which our churches are located are very blessed economically. Concern for the needs of the poor requires a conscious effort to look outside of our comfort zone and take steps to assist those with fewer resources. It is important also to assist the poor in ways that maintain their dignity as persons as well. Too often I hear people talking about "them" as a blight or a disease, as we place blame on the person instead of looking at the social systems which create much of the economic polarization. Within the Christian community, we are all called to acceptance of one another whether rich or poor (see Galatians 3:26-29, James 2:1-4).

In the years ahead, our society and the church will be challenged working with a political system that is often in conflict with our Christian values. Yet this political arena sets policy which greatly affects our communities and members, either directly or indirectly. Within the church we have often felt we needed to shy away from any contact with the political system out of a need to separate church and state. Many of the efforts churches take to deal with issues of poverty or oppression deal with the symptoms (lack of food, clothing) and not the root cause of the problems. As concerned Christians living in a confusing, changing time. I believe we need to look at ways to take steps which are God-pleasing which can help effect long term solutions in the communities in which we are placed.

Small Steps Toward Justice

Here are some ideas about beginning steps we can take as professional workers to help our churches in dealing with social problems in our community:

- Personally commit to learning more
about your community and the problems it faces. Get involved with schools or agencies that deal with people in low-income situations. The new perspective will help you envision new priorities in your ministry.

- Inform your congregation and leadership of the issues you have discovered in your community. Communicate your concerns and what God tells us in Scripture about these issues.
- Be patient and take small steps in helping your church become aware of the issues around it. Show your personal commitment through simple, nonthreatening steps such as writing political representatives. Don’t expect everyone to jump on board.

In conclusion, I encourage each of us to step out from behind the desk and get a different perspective on the world around us. Our personal growth will help the people we serve gain new insights into ways God is calling them to address concerns of people in their communities. In this process, we will meet new people and see opportunities to address injustice and oppression. In all steps that we take, we prepare the way with prayers that ask for God’s guidance and a clear vision of His will for us and for our church.


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**Lutheran Education Online**

The Lutheran Education site on the World Wide Web is now open for browsing at [www.curf.edu/~LEJournal](http://www.curf.edu/~LEJournal).

The design and contents of the web page are still under construction; new information, links, and articles will continue to be added during the coming months. The following items are or will be available as the site is developed:

- Tables of contents for each published issue.
- Text of selected articles and columns from current issues of Lutheran Education.
- Indexes for past volumes of the journal.
- Text of selected articles from the archives.
- Author guidelines for submitting articles and calls for papers for future issues.
- Links to related web sites.

Check in periodically to see what’s new.
Morrie the Mentor

“In the beginning of life, when we are infants, we need others to survive, right? And at the end of life, when you get like me, you need others to survive, right?”

His voice dropped to a whisper. “But here’s the secret: in between, we need others as well.”

So goes the relationship between mentor Morrie Schwartz and his student Mitch Albom in the best-selling book, Tuesdays With Morrie. It is an excellent book of a man’s love for his mentor. And it exemplifies the strong need for mentors in each of our lives.

The ministry of mentoring has been a constant throughout the life of the world, as well as the Church. Scriptures and daily life continue to show strong examples of the mentoring relationship. A 1996 survey found that the number of corporations planning mentoring programs has more than doubled in one year, up to 36%. Mentoring is here to stay!

The word “mentor,” is a name that comes to us from Homer’s epic poem The Odyssey. Telemachus, the son of Odysseus, has a guardian and advisor named Mentor. Today’s mentors may not participate in epic journeys and scintillating battles, but they serve critical roles in the development of strong and caring people of God.

Tuesdays With Morrie is a story of an old man, a young man, and life’s greatest lessons. Mitch visits every Tuesday with his former professor, Morrie, who has been stricken with ALS, Lou Gehrig’s disease, a brutal illness of the neurological system. The powerful story depicts the two gentlemen in a mentoring relationship, sharing their lives and their gifts with each other through Morrie’s waning days of life. The story is a celebration of life which depicts the power and significance of people spending quality time with each other in a loving and caring relationship.

And that’s what mentoring is all about. A recent study asks what qualities people looked for in a mentor. The top five responses were:

1. Role model
2. Support
3. Teacher
4. Advisor
5. Inspirer
Certain important skills and behaviors are necessary to support these roles. As you consider becoming a mentor, or one who chooses a mentor, here are a number of skills necessary in the relationship:

1. Mentors practice good listening skills.
2. Mentors ask questions.
3. Mentors are willing to give up control. Mentors don’t tell but rather guide and counsel.
4. Mentors give time to the process.
5. Mentors share openly and honestly.
6. Mentors model what it is like to celebrate life and live in forgiveness.
7. Mentors know how and when to nudge.
8. Mentors trust.
9. Mentors model a positive mind-set and celebrative lifestyle.
10. Mentors take time for relationships to develop.

If you are not in a mentoring relationship, why not begin one this fall? Here are some beginning steps:

1. Choose a mentor whom you feel good about and respect.
2. Ask this person to meet with you at least once a month for one to two hours for the next twelve months.
3. Discuss expectations of each other.
4. Be intentional about developing a mutual agenda for each session.
5. Contract with each other to meet at least for one year and then negotiate your future together.

Mentors need to be chosen, not assigned. If you are seeking a mentor, look for someone whom you respect, whom you like to be with, and who brings some of these qualities to the relationship. If you are interested in being a mentor to someone, be ready to accept the challenge of this special relationship, upon request. The initiative, however, needs to come from the person seeking a mentoring relationship.

Mentoring can be fun! It can be challenging, stimulating, risk taking, and time consuming. And it is another opportunity for people of God to share their gifts and their lives with each other.

A final word from Morrie the mentor: “So many people walk around with a meaningless life. They seem half-asleep, even when they are busy doing things they think are important. This is because they are chasing the wrong things. The way you get meaning into your life is to devote yourself to loving others, devote yourself to your community around you, and devote yourself to creating something that gives you purpose and meaning.”

May the mentors in your life continue to minister to you. And may the Lord provide opportunities for mentoring relationships for all of us. The Lord has given us so much to share with each other!
Sharing the Faith from a Firm Foundation

We know it is important. The headlines silently call for it. We sense the need for it as we work with students and families that are in crisis. We are tempted to employ it as a recruiting device in the face of competition from schools that meet or exceed the academic and co-curricular programs that we have to offer. Our mission statements proclaim its importance to our schools.

Yet it is of even greater importance because it is basic to us as disciples of Christ. It is the message that Jesus Christ is our Savior and through Him we have purpose, hope, and eternal life. That is why it is important that our schools seek to intentionally share this message with their school family. In this article we will share some ways that Saginaw Valley Lutheran High School has sought to share this important message with its students.

An intentional effort to strengthen the faith of the faculty is the foundation on which all other efforts will be built. Faith building begins with the annual pre-school faculty retreat. Although the agenda certainly reflects many important matters of “school business,” the major component is one of Bible study and devotion. Led by the pastor on staff and involving all faculty members, the retreat creates an opportunity to bond not only as colleagues but also as Christians. This unity of faith in our Redeemer and clear understanding of our purpose as Christian teachers prepares the faculty for the year ahead.

Each day during the school year the faculty meets before school. Here various issues important to the daily operation of the school are discussed, but it is the matter of faith building that takes precedence. Faculty members take turns leading daily faculty devotions. Some days are set aside for small groups to join in prayer over issues that face our school or members of our school family. Whether it is group prayer, the reading of devotional material or a passage from scripture, the singing of a hymn, or the sharing of a personal experience, each day is begun with a focus on the reason for our existence—to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ.

From this foundation our faculty seeks to make Jesus a part of our daily life at school. Each day we gather for chapel. Although labeled as such, chapel is more akin to family devotions. Faculty members, religion classes, student groups such as the student council or National Honor Society, local pastors, and other guests lead the Valley Lutheran family in worship and reflection on our role in God’s kingdom. Conducted in the rather informal setting of the gym, each 15 minute chapel takes on the characteristics and
personalities of the leaders. From formal sermons to humorous skits, contemporary Christian music to prayer services, participation by the most “experienced” faculty member to the freshman Old Testament class, all are part of the message that God is always here among us.

Yet, to many students God remains locked up in chapel. This is where a faculty united in their faith in Jesus Christ and accepting of the Great Commission can have its greatest impact. For some teachers a prayer at the beginning of each class gives them a chance to share that simple message. It also is a chance for students and teachers alike to show their concern for each other as prayer requests are shared. It is also an opportunity for students to witness to their peers as they volunteer to lead the class in prayer.

Other teachers seek to share the Good News as they teach in the “secular” subjects and in so doing turn each class into a faith building experience. Science teachers who address the difficult questions of evolution or today’s medical “advances” from the strength of the Scriptures, social studies teachers who examine history and society from the perspective of God’s Word, English teachers who assign journal topics designed to nurture a student’s faith, or any teacher who works with students in difficult situations from the firm foundation of God’s Word—all share the simple message that God is here and Jesus is His Son.

Finally, it is important for each member of the school family to share. Share the bright moments, when students express their faith. Share the dark moments, when our own faith is challenged. Share ideas that help students better understand our simple message. Share the love that we have received from God through Jesus Christ.

“Secondary Sequence” Columnists

In the 1998-99 volume of Lutheran Education, the “Secondary Sequence” columns will be written by teachers or administrators from five different Lutheran high schools across the country. Each column will address issues pertinent to those who minister in a high school setting from the perspective of someone who is “in the trenches.” Our thanks to Nathaniel Grunst for his consistently insightful and thought-provoking columns during the years in which he served Lutheran Education as the writer for “Secondary Sequence.”
At the Pace of the Children

There are several places in both the Old and New Testaments of Scripture where there are references to children which can be instructive for our work as early childhood professionals. In this year’s series of Teaching the Young columns, we will explore together just what those passages are and what they have to teach us about children and about teaching. The first such reference is found in Genesis 33, where the story of Jacob meeting Esau some time after he had wrested the birthright away from his older twin.

Jacob went out to meet his brother Esau, whom he had tricked out of his birthright. He had no idea whether Esau was coming to kill him or just how angry Esau might be. So for protection, he brought along his children and their mothers. In addition, he brought along a sizable herd—droves, Moses called them—as a peace offering for Esau.

Finally Esau accepted the gift and said “Let us be on our way.” But Jacob was still wary. His reply was “the children are tender and I must care for them.” As an added strategy he reminded Esau that the ewes and cows and their nursing young needed to be protected, too. “If they are driven hard in just one day, all the animals will die.” So Jacob convinced Esau to go on ahead while he would “move along slowly at the pace of the droves before me and that of the children.”

Following Children’s Paces

At the pace of the children. This word picture is a powerful image of what our classroom practice needs to be. At the pace of the children. Following their lead. Giving attention to the tempo and the pattern of children’s learning and discoveries.

Teaching young children is not so much leading as it is facilitating and providing inspiration for learning. Following the stride of children in this learning is an important principle for all teachers, but especially for teachers of young children. The pace of the child is the pace at which classroom activities need to be presented. Or, as Vivian Gussin Paley so powerfully tells us, we need to listen to the children as we teach.

Listening to Children

Listening to children means truly listening. It means engaging children in a dialogue about their concerns, about their ideas and questions. Listening to children requires us to provide activities and materials which allow children to follow their interests, to explore answers to their questions.

Questions the children themselves ask are the important ones in the classroom. By comparison the questions of teachers pale in inanity and
obviousness. The skillful teacher knows how to listen to children and to engage children in conversation about their interests and concerns, engrossing them in the exploration of answers to the questions they have asked.

Moving at Children’s Tempos

Moving at the pace of children also requires teachers to find the tempo of children’s learning and to provide an environment which responds to that tempo. It is the child’s tempo which matters, not the get-through-the-book or get-through-the-activity tempo of the teacher.

How many times in a day do you find yourself saying (or thinking) “hurry up!”? How often does the clock become the master of the enterprise? How much does time creep in as the leader of the learning and work of discovery in your classroom?

Inspiration for Learning

For the past year, this column has explored various aspects of the project approach to teaching, an approach which implements several important aspects of following the pace of the children. One of those aspects is the principle of providing inspiration for learning. Teaching at the pace of children requires teachers to know the interests of the children in their care and to provide materials and topics which respond to those interests. Following children’s interests give them intrinsic inspiration for learning.

Combining that following of children’s interests with careful listening to their questions gives the teacher a powerful instrument for instruction which implements the investigation interests of each child. Using children’s evidences of current concepts as strategies for providing materials and topics gives the teacher a potent tactic for teaching and learning. After all, it is learning that matters.

Peace in the Pace

Children’s learning takes on a pace of its own, being owned by the learner and powered by the participant. While the velocity of that learning is at times fleet, at other times it may be almost leisurely. At all times, children need to sense a peace in the pace of the classroom, a peace that gives them the assurance that their interests can be followed, that their questions have answers waiting to be discovered.

“At the pace of children” provides a metaphor for the peaceful bustle of investigation and inquiry in the classroom. “At the pace of children” provides a picture of a classroom tuned to the developmental perspectives of the learners who live there, a classroom in which children’s needs are honored and met. “At the pace of children” provides a parable of learning which falls on fertile soil, carefully tended to assure the optimal growth of each concept.

Jacob’s strategy may have been to use the children as a shield from the wrath of the brother he had tricked. Our strategy needs to be to provide the pace of learning which best meets the needs of the children whom we teach and care for.

References

One of the characteristics of the life of an educator which is both blessing and bane is its cyclical character. Year in and year out, we gear up for the academic year, launch it, teach for the weeks and months allotted, bring closure to the year, catch our breath, and gear up again. The blessing is the sense of rhythm which this affords to the lives of teachers and students alike. The bane is that we can fall into ruts, at worst resembling the proverbial professor who taught not forty years, but one year forty times.

As we’re now in the “launch” stage of Academic Year 1998-1999, it’s worth asking ourselves what we can do to help ourselves (and our students) to benefit most fully from all we’ll do between now and late spring. As any reflective educator knows, there is a great deal that is mysterious about the learning process and few, if any, “how to’s” which guarantee that learning will happen. There are, however, numerous ways to improve the odds (and that, it may be said, is what the academic field of “education” is all about). At the core of those ways is surely an observation which I found well stated in one of the best books on higher education which I’ve read in recent years, Anne Matthews’s *Bright College Years: Inside the American Campus Today* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997). Because her point (and many others which she makes) is so easily transferred to all levels of education, I share it here: “No subject can survive a bad instructor, or an instructor who cannot remember what it is like to be a novice . . .” (p. 204).

It’s the second half of her statement that caught my eye. As we meet yet another batch of students, how many of us make the effort to recall what it was like to begin recognizing symbols for sound and meaning in written squiggles on a page? How many of us bring back to mind the challenges of representing unknown values in an equation with letters? How many of us take care to empathize with a child or adolescent who encounters the language and world of a play by Shakespeare for the first time? It’s hard work—for the teacher—because of the truism (at least in Biblical studies) that one can encounter a text for the first time only once. Yet to recapture both the struggle and the wonder is surely to better our chances of saying or doing the most helpful thing at the “teachable moment.” And to do that (along with much else, to be sure) is to boost the odds of “Aha!” dramatically.
Warren and Patty Hanson  
St. Paul, Minnesota

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