"Holistic ministry implies completion, totality, and, in a profound way, perfection."

Holistic Ministry: The Church’s Mission
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WHAT IS THE PRIMARY MISSION of the Church in the 1990's? Is it evangelism, as emphasized by numerous church growth advocates? Or is it Christian education, as practiced by the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod throughout its history? Or is it service, modeled after Jesus Christ Himself?

A case could be made for any of the three as a primary mission of the Church. If you are looking for three articles in this edition of ISSUES, one defending evangelism, another holding high Christian education, and a third espousing the virtues of service, at the expense of the others, you will be disappointed. Instead, the authors highlight the interrelationships among all three arms of the Church’s mission—service, evangelism, and education.

The article by Marty Schmidt tells of a young man who consciously chose first to develop a relationship with two Chinese friends who did not know Jesus Christ, and then to share the Gospel. What patience this brother in Christ showed as he said to his friends, “I will not attempt to force you to take it,” but invited them to “come and see what Jesus Christ meant to him.”

In writing on "The Primary Mission of the Church," Herman Eitzold reminds us that “Christian education from the cradle to the grave is as incumbent upon the New Testament church as it was upon Old Testament Israel. However, it cannot be something separate from the evangelistic call to come and worship Christ as Lord and Savior. Nor can it be done in isolation from service, which is basically the knowledge of God translated into a life of love and faithfulness to God's will.”

David Benke tells a heart-warming story about Keisha, who received the Bread of Life. Yet, he points out that the story does not focus on Keisha, but on the means of grace in a holistic ministry in which education, evangelism, and service are the primary mission of the Church.

Orville C. Walz, President
The People Principle

There is no reason Peter should have all the principles or Murphy all the tasks. I offer, therefore, a Lebanon theory: For a brief time congregational ministries may rise above pastoral leadership, but ultimately those ministries will depend on the level of a congregation’s professional staff. In planning a professional level it is necessary for pastors and staff to know themselves, to understand their people, and to assess accurately the needs of the community in which their fellowship of faith resides. In addition, good ministry will be shaped by the natural condition of the age in which a congregation serves God without being isolated to the world so that its witness is no longer distinct.

An holistic ministry would include witness—evangelism, mission work, helping people communicate the Gospel, nurture—Christian education and training for ministry, fellowship—relating to each other as a community of redeemed people, the body of Christ; celebration—worship and commemorating important events; service—caring for the hurting parts of the body and the world; stewardship—investing spiritual gifts, time, talent, and money to the glory of God. How these and other ministries are “shaped out,” however, depends upon people.

To state the obvious, the ministry of a congregation belongs to people ( Ephesians 4:15-16). Pastors, teachers, missionaries, administrators, the laity, are people. Just as all people are commit to some community-owned mission and serve all the people gifted by God and subject to human limitations.

In structuring ministry, therefore, the admonition remains relevant. “Know yourself!! Professional leader need believe themselves to build on their competencies and to communicate for their uniqueness.” Those who believe that God deliberately sends people to parishes will accept the spiritual gifts, talents, and resources of these people as indicative of the ministry God expects them to carry out. When leaders focus on people shape ministry, they attempt not to stretch or shrink them to fit a preconceived ministerial plan.

The implications of this theory are obvious. The professional staff is God’s gift to understand, recruit, train, support, and preclude failure among the laity. The ministry of each congregation will be as unique as the “manifestation of the Spirit” given to people for the common good (1 Corinthians 12:7). The “footprints of the Spirit’s presence” in the lives of individuals will produce unique ministry plans. One congregation may be strongly oriented to social ministry projects, while another focuses entirely on day school education, and a third emphasizes empowering worship services with professional music. Each congregation should first answer the question, “What has God done for us?” before tackling the question, “What can we do for God?” Look at yourself, your people, the place in which you gather for worship. Look at the world and the age in which you are doing ministry. Then be faithful! Congregations who are deliberately faithful, inclusive, and mission-oriented in their ministry can be honestly proud of what they do well and humbly unapologetic about what they do not do at all.

Peter, Murphy, Lobien—take them for what they are worth.

George P. Lobien, Pastor
The Lebanon Church of St. Andrews Silver Springs, Maryland

To do this, the congregation is involved in:
Teaching the faith, helping people to grow and mature in the faith (nurture)
Outreaching with the message of the Gospel, bringing Christ to people and people to Christ (evangelization)
Worship with another through fellowship, sharing in a spiritual, loving relationship with each other (fellowship)
Caring for the needs of others, giving to those in need and pursuing social, political, and economic justice for all people (services)
Honoring God through dynamic and creative worship, praising and thanking God in prayer, song, liturgy, and preaching (worship)

These five functions of ministry are the marks of the growing Church in the Book of Acts. These five functions of ministry are also the marks of the growing churches in our day. All five functions are essential. See why we do this.

Walter Schoedel, Pastor
Concordia Lutheran Church
Richwood, Missouri

High T.O.U.C.H. Ministry

The way a congregation does ministry today—seen in the way a family lives together—is seen in the way a congregation expresses what that congregation is, what it values, and how it relates to each other within the community in which it does ministry.

A real way to involve congregations to take the task in an effort to sharpen their vision for ministry. Place challenges for a theorem of the Scripture (Peter, Paul, John, and Jude) that stimulates a congregation to the Apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer.

Peter and John, and Jude, affirming that the Church exists for the purpose of reaching and touching people with Jesus Christ for healing and serving.

Aging and Ministry in Tomorrow’s Church

Psychographics, the trickling of consumer attitudes and behaviors, is big business. Baby Boomers, 77 million adults between the ages of 36 and 54, are monitored carefully because of their enormous impact on our society. The Church has been observing Boomers since the 1960’s. The Search Institute studied Boomers as adolescents, from which the Five crises of Parents emerged. Many Boomers left the Church as adolescents and are now returning with families to the Church, making them prime prospects for the Church’s ministry. George Gallup projects that Boomers may be the key to the Church’s survival if we respond to their church-shopping behaviors, minister spiritually, provide child care, offer leadership roles, recognize their moral dilemmas in the work place, and teach sex education for children. Kyle Schorrell’s research depicts Boomers as the new generation of churchgoers who provide an opportunity for the LCMS to open 500-500 mission stations per year during this decade.

One implication is that we have a second chance to minister to Boomers, just as we did in the 1960’s and 1970’s when we opened new mission stations to accommodate all the children. Many of us left teacher colleges before graduation in order to meet the teacher shortage in our schools. Now that the Boomers are adults, those eight-year-olds about 300-500 mission congregation per year could become a reality. One important questions involve human resources. Who is there to help lead the church in expanded ministries of open new mission and educating church members? Boomers do not have a lot of time, as their primary focus is the work world, financial, and family burdens. Yet, they volunteer 16 percent more times any other age group.

One implication is that God has given to the world a new gift during this particular historical period. In place of the two-thirds of all older adults age 65 plus who lived in the world for all ages today. In the United States, people age 65 and over outnumber the entire populations of Canada. People of this age offer fresh and think ten or more years younger than their chronological age. In fact, the longer a person lives, the greater their “statistical” life expectancy. A 26-year-old person can expect to live to age 63, while the 55-year-old can expect to live past 60.

Why are so many more people living longer than preceding generations? For what purpose? Can we say that God sees more older adults taking up the mantle of evangelist and service workers?

Today’s Church is beginning to awaken to the tidal wave of older adults in its midst as church professionals and lay people recognize the tremendous opportunities for transformation in the Church under God’s guidance. Our opportunities remain one of the world of Jericho. “We know the plans I have for you,” says the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” Therefore, it is important that leaders of the human family understand what older adults can share to the church’s challenge of multiplicity of kinds of ministries. Older adults today have countless opportunities to engage in holistic ministry. The challenge is to share the need for live life ministry and the personal responsibility to be stewards of God’s gifts, as opposed to resisting “Let the younger ones do the work.” Older adults can share the joy or as I am in retirement.”

Let’s consider these needs and opportunities for intergenerational ministry.

• Increasing numbers of American children are experiencing poverty in our own communities.

• At the end of this decade, half of all children will spend part of their childhood in single parent homes, living at or near the poverty level in our own communities.

• Most children will never know a time when their mothers did not work outside the home. Most Boomers struggle financially because of competition for jobs, the cost of housing, and low-paying jobs in the service sector.

• All children will belong to a minority group shortly after the turn of the century. New paradigms for reaching the community are working in some congregations. Children in our Lutheran schools are tremendous linkages to humor.

Tomorrow’s Church is in need of a new vision of ministry by and with older adults in today’s Church who can model behaviors for the Boomers in their later-life ministries in tomorrow’s Church.

You will know it already tomorrow’s Church when you hear:

“St. Peter’s is so fortunate to have so many older people.”

“When we get a chance to share my volunteer experiences?”

“We’re going to be there with the senior citizens."

“Please come on me to teach the seniors for Adult Basic Education, VBS, and SS.”

“Last year the New Practice Tank invited 28 new missions.”

“Older adults spearheaded the Murrays establishment of 500 new mission congregations.”

These are the kinds of vision and ministry behaviors that God gets excited about! Older people responding in their life-long calling through today’s ministry and beginning in an engaging life legacy to the Church of tomorrow.

The vitality of the Church may be determined by the vitality of its growing membership. There is no age limit on service and ministry in today’s and tomorrow’s Church.

Shirley Bergman, Director
Lutheran Institute on Aging
Concordia College-St. Paul
“Come and See”

Nearly two years later, though having thought little about going overseas, I was contemplating whether I should remain in my present major at a state university or begin training for the Lutheran teaching ministry. I was prayerfully looking for some hands-on teaching experience. It was then that my father wrote that a good friend whom he had met at the missions conference needed teachers to go to China for a summer to teach conversational English to Chinese English teachers. This opportunity was exactly what I was looking for.

Goals and Expectations

I had three goals as I approached the summer of 1987 in Beijing, China. First, I wanted to have a cross-cultural experience, knowing that God desires us to be global Christians. Second, I wanted to see if teaching was something for me. Third, I wanted to bring the good news about Jesus to my Chinese students.

Concerning this third aim, the philosophy of the organization (Educational Services Exchange with China) was that we should not aggressively share our faith in the classroom. Instead, we were to wait for the Chinese to ask questions as they watched us live our lives. Reaching out, then, would come not so much from the daily English classes but from the relationships that were so easily built with our students.

Several days before our teaching began, as our team of five teachers was returning from sightseeing at the Temple of Heaven, one of my students suddenly turned to us on the bus and asked, “Are you Christians?” Not knowing to what extent one should answer this question in a bus with our Chinese principal within earshot, I simply said, “Yes, we are.”

Yet, I did not forget her question. Ms. Zhang (or Susan as she would later be called) shared with me some of her personal struggles the following week in her journal-writing. In my response, I told her that I was excited to hear her questions about our beliefs and hoped that we could get together soon to discuss our ideas at length.

Marty Schmidt is a 1990 graduate of Concordia-Seward who accepted a call to teach at the Hong Kong International School.

Holistic Ministry in Beijing

Friendship Evangelism

On the following Friday, Susan, her close friend and fellow-student, Pan Ling, and I took a walk to the nearby Friendship Hotel. As we returned to school, Susan turned to me and asked, “Would you tell us about religion?” Inwardly my heart leaped for joy as I explained to them that God is personal, desiring relationships with His created people. To understand my life and my purposes, I said, you must understand that my life is founded upon the Word of God. I concluded by saying that while I am excited about my faith, I would not attempt to coerce them to believe.

The pattern of my summer was set. Susan and Pan served as my summer tour guides. The tours, however, were mainly an excuse for us to get to know each other. Susan, I discovered, was a 33-year-old mother, who longed for many things in her life—friendships and education being the deepest desires. She yearned to come to the States to pursue graduate work. Pan, a 28-year-old married woman, also longed for many things—personal relationships, and spiritual peace and joy in her life. Being a Buddhist, she at one time had considered living her life as a Buddhist nun in the mountains of China.

Our weekly tours took us all over the city of Beijing: the Forbidden City, the Summer Palaces, and, of course, the Great Wall. The most precious times, however, occurred as we sat in restaurants in the afternoon, sipping Cokes, and feeling free to share the events of our lives that summer. I chose to commit myself to our relationship first, and to the sharing of the Gospel with them second. This choice was a new and helpful distinction for me that summer, as I realized that I wanted to develop friendships with them and care for them, whether or not they too would confess the faith. While my ultimate goal was to come to faith, I was committed to a long-term written relationship to accomplish this goal. The relationship, I felt, would be the essential link.

Gradually over the course of the summer my relation-ships with these two young ladies grew. As they got to know me better, they also came to experience my faith. I did not often share with them directly through much of the summer. Instead, the Gospel message became soft, ever-present background music to all that we did and said together. They came to know me, and through our relationship they investigated my faith. Yet I do not say this with pride, because in coming to know me they came to know not only the “foreign expert,” as we were called, but also the person who had the same longings and hurts and fears that they had. It was not a particularly easy summer for me. My faith, then, did not promise a problem-free life. Through my weaknesses I prayed that God would somehow reach them with the Gospel.

Last Weeks in Beijing

The last weekend before classes ended, Susan and Pan invited a fellow teacher and me to a Sunday dinner at Pan’s apartment to celebrate our friendship. They wanted me to come over early in the morning, but I insisted that...
I go to church first at an English-speaking service in downtown Beijing. To help me find the apartment in the maze of residential Beijing, Pan accompanied me to church and then to her apartment. The service was very uplifting as we worshiped with brothers and sisters from around the world, singing Scripture songs and listening to the proclamation of the Word. The sermon gave me an excellent opportunity to explain to Pan God’s message in her heart.

The following day as Pan and I sipped our Colas at the Friendship Hotel, we had the chance to talk about the church service. She said that it had touched her deeply. The service was “not of this world,” she said. The following is my journal entry from that day, August 17:

Towards the beginning of the conversation she said something like, “I want to learn more about the Bible.” I said, “What about it?” And she said, “God. I want to know about God.” “Everything.” Then we talked for the next 45 minutes at a street corner, discussing various questions about God and the Bible. Oh, you are a great God! To tell about you is exciting. What joy is in my heart!

The remaining week and half of the summer took me sightseeing to various parts of China, yet it took me away from the very place I longed to be—with my two friends. The short time in Beijing between the two excursions was spent with Pan and Susan. Pan and I met in a quiet garden behind the Friendship Hotel, reading the Bible and talking. And then it was back to our sightseeing. While away from Beijing, I bought a small notebook and wrote thirty or forty pages for Pan about biblical truths of the Christian faith.

As exciting as I was about her spiritual growth, I decided that I would in no way coerce her into the faith, or prompt her to “pray the prayer” in order that she might make a decision for Christ. I was leaving very soon to go back to the United States; if Pan were to acknowledge faith, she would have to live with the potential dangers of being a Christian within a non-Christian and threatening regime.

Saying Goodbye

My last day in Beijing brought both relief and sadness. Relief that the anxiety of teaching in a foreign and potentially hostile environment was over. Sadness at thinking of those dear two friends, one on the brink of faith, were now to be so far, far away from me. Susan and I headed to a Western hotel lobby for a final afternoons of talking. To my surprise, she asked me to talk to her about the Gospel of John. The next two hours as we slowly read through John 1, I saw in her face the life and joy that I had seen in Pan’s. I sensed for the first time in her a spiritual breakthrough. To help me find the apartment in the maze of residential Beijing, Pan accompanied me to church and then to her apartment. The service was very uplifting as we worshiped with brothers and sisters from around the world, singing Scripture songs and listening to the proclamation of the Word. The sermon gave me an excellent opportunity to explain to Pan God’s message in her heart.

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Implementing Holistic Ministry in a Congregation

Keisha Adams bit her lower lip. She looked about nervously, then posed her question in the church hallway. She had just run in from the street.

"Uhh, I was wondering if maybe you all don't have some food here I could take along. Do you? See, there's nothing much for the baby in the house, and, uh, there's no money either." A young woman named Patti encouraged Keisha to talk through her whole story.

They prayed together. Patti disappeared for a bit, returning from St. Peter's upstairs food pantry with a shopping bag full of groceries for a family of seven, including half a dozen containers of infant formula.

"Thanks" cried Keisha. "I mean it--thank you!" With a whirl and a skip, the eleven-year-old child was gone, skipping down the block, her green eyes flashing.

That Sunday Keisha decided to attend church. First to say thanks one more time—to God. During the worship service, as is the weekly custom at St. Peter's Lutheran in Brooklyn, I asked for special prayer requests from the people—for help, for thanks, for guidance, for jobs, and the like. Keisha bit her lip again, then piped up from way in the back, "I'd like to thank God for food in our house. And also to pray for my mom. She's not too well." After the prayers, during the passing of the peace, Andre and Twila, members of the Youth Group, gave Keisha a hug and invited her to their meeting on Tuesday evening.

She soon became a regular sight in church—on Tuesday, on Sunday; in fact, she brightened just about every day. "My dream," she testified to the youth and clergy, their leader, "is to be a doctor. And I am going to make it." Her spark and verve were infectious. But she wasn't content to come on down the block to church alone. Over the next three months, she began to bring her brothers, her sister, her mother, her aunts, her cousins and her neighbors to Sunday service, until several rows of worshipers could be identified as Keisha's clan!

As relationships grew and deepened among church members and Keisha's family, it became apparent that Mrs. Adams was battling a serious drug problem, even through the advanced stages of pregnancy. She came to worship, seeking forgiveness and strength and the good counsel of the Word through new friends, but a battle is a battle. The battle against addiction is fiercely waged. There were ups and downs, bright victories and dark losses.

One afternoon several neighborhood kids burst into my office shouting breathlessly, "Did you hear what happened today? With Keisha and her mom?"

"No, I didn't," I replied hesitantly, concerned that there might have been a fight over drug use. "What's up?"

"Well, you know how Keisha's always lettin' on that she wants to be a doctor, right? So her mom calls her into the bedroom and says, 'Honey, I think it's time,' and guess what? Keisha delivered the baby, right there at home!"

The thought of Keisha, the eleven-year-old obstetrician, bringing her own sister into the world, swept me away. While visiting the family, I was struck by how Mrs. Adams was changing. She sincerely wanted the baby baptized, and added, "You know, Keisha's not baptized either." So classes began for the whole family, including Keisha. And on Easter Sunday, in all their finest, mother and two daughters stepped up to the altar. And Keisha and her baby sister Olivia entered the Kingdom of God in the waters of Holy Baptism. Andre, the Youth Group president, held the baby, his God-daughter.

Several months later, Mrs. Adams left home for a long-term drug rehabilitation program. As we worked through her grief at leaving the children, she said, "Listen, I never could have taken this step if it weren't for the Lord. And now I know my children are really taken care of, too, even as bad as I'm going to miss them. They have a church that cares. And God just is not going to let them go."

Over the summer, plans were made for our evening Vacation Bible School, we asked for volunteers to teach and assist in working with 100+ kids from the streets of Brooklyn. No less than a half dozen of Keisha's clan—relatives and friends—stepped forward. They came up the block in parade every night, 20 or more adults and little ones, laughing and singing the songs of their Lord, joyous at the opportunity to serve, to be a part of the Body of Christ.

Engaged not in tearing down or hanging out, but in building up for the sake of the One who had claimed them.

As for Keisha, she has a new project those days. At the ripe old age of twelve she bounces over to church every Tuesday night to tutor eight- and nine-year-olds in reading and arithmetic—and in prayer. Keisha came for food. She received the Bread of Life.

Walking in Newness of Life

I have been privileged to be Pastor of St. Peter's Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Cypress Hills/East New York section of Brooklyn, New York, for the past fifteen years. Keisha is a friend of mine. Coming to know her and others I have been amazed by the power of God working through Word and Sacraments in the lives of
This story is about the dignity and joy of God's people living out their baptismal identity.

The Body of Christ Walks and Talks

At the same time, however, I would add that the joy of being part of the fellowship of saints at St. Peter's is that the Body of Christ is not just an abstract concept but an active presence, lived out in the daily lives of the believers. For example, the congregation is active in community service, volunteering at local charities, and participating in local events, which brings the group closer together and strengthens their faith.

Holistic Ministry Cannot Be compartmentalized

This, to me, is "holistic" ministry. It flows like the waters of a living, bubbling stream. It cannot be easily compartmentalized. The spots where "service," "evangelism," "education," and "worship" start in and leave off cannot be pinpointed. Who is responsible for teaching the "baptismal theology" of Keisha? When did she begin receiving "service" and begin giving the same? What segments of the church's life and the lives of her family at St. Peter's can be designated as "educational ministry"? While every church is engaged in ministries in all of these areas, and while there are doubtless pro grammatic components called "evangelism," "education," "service," and "worship," it is my experience that to place rigid boundaries around each area is an artificiality in fact. It is an activity very much of this age and American culture and not of God. In truth, when Keisha received the service of that initial bag of groceries she was also receiving an educational Christian lesson concerning God's love in action, an evangelistic invitation to the banquet feast of the King, and a worshipful involvement in praise to the Giver of all gifts. In this way, the church, the Body of Christ, and the ministries belong to Him.

In my pastoral life through these years I have often entered the desire to quantify, to particularize, and to compartmentalize the church's work in order to experience the glorious riches of the mystery of Christ in us, and the less the desire to celebrate what is essentially and totally God's gracious activity in bringing salvation and life.

Promised by Jesus, the Father has sent the Spirit "in My Name." He will teach you all things, guide you into all truth, are acts of spiritual discernment. The Body walks and talks and walks and talks under the direction of Christ, the Head, through God's Word and promise, bonds, flesh, and supporting ligaments grow and multiply as God wills them.

Let me illustrate. About eight years ago Anita, one of our adult Sunday school teachers, a woman whose Christian service was exemplary, moved to Cypress Hills in a far country—update New York. As her house was sold, she prayed that if it were God's will, Christians might be the purchasers; and, because that if God so willed, they might become part of the fellowship at St. Peter's.

The Easter after Anita left the neighborhood, two women dressed in white arrived at the Festival Easter Holy Communion. Both were from the island nation of Barbados. One, Jinella, was the new owner of Anita's house. The other, Ainsley, had just moved in the U.S. and was waiting for her husband, Gerald. When I told the ladies about Anita's prayer, they gave one another a knowing look, as though there were something going on behind the scenes.

Soon after, Gerald arrived from Barbados and began attending Sunday morning worship services. He began asking questions about the faith and to inquire earnestly about spiritual matters. Shortly he asked if he could be prepared to receive the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, at the age of fifty. And so he did.

Nehemiah House

At this time the people of St. Peter's were involved with other Christian and Lutheran congregations in a major initiative to rebuild the community through low-cost, owner-occupied, single-family housing. Rising from the ashes of destroyed inner-city neighborhoods, this initiative was called the Nehemiah Plan, after the biblical prophet who rebuilt the temple walls of Jerusalem 2500 years ago. In a meeting held in St. Peter's basement, leaders of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod decided to allow the Synod to become the first denomination to publicly commit an interest-free construction loan of one million dollars toward the Nehemiah Plan. Thus it was born.

At the same time, Gerald and Ainsley began to envision a dream come true—home ownership in the United States. The couple made a downpayment for a New Hampshire home. When construction began, his was one of the first homes built. We did celebrate then, the people of St. Peter's and Gerald and Ainsley. And as it has really a neighborhood blessing, an inner-city blessing, a reclaiming of scarred land now healed. Gerald and Ainsley made sure secure in a brand new home in a brand new neighborhood, were not content with their blessings in the bank. They put them to use. Soon Gerald came to church with new friends, bringing them along from the Habitat for Humanity, standing outside Nehemiahland. One Sunday he introduced us during worship to a woman named Marlene from the South American country of Guyana. She said, "I like it here. This church reminds me of home." And my family will be back. And we will take three rows." No one could understand that last sentence, until Marlene began to bring the extended clan known as the Bascom family into St. Peter's. She had, in the years following, lived in New York and returned her home to Nehemiah in 1986. She received application number 4563. Since city planners made land available for only 2000 Nehemiah homes, her application seemed like a long-shot at best. But she determined to wait, and to wait upon the Lord.

From the beginning of 1990, Ann prayed and saved and read the Word and prepared her heart in a special way. In November, four years after it had been received, application #4563 was accepted. In January, 1991, Ann and her family will move into a new home. For her, it has been entirely a spiritual experience. "The Sunday after we move in, Pastor," she told me, "I want to tell everyone at St. Peter's what God has done for me. I want to invite you all to come to my home for a blessing. I have a story to tell you."

Gerald has become an elder at St. Peter's. He teaches the truths of God's salvation to friends and neighbors invited to his family group at his house. He and Ainsley have hosted hundreds of guests, many of them Lutheran, from around the country and around the world. The two have both been on a path to Gerald's decision to see what God has accomplished through His people laboring together in the Nehemiah Plan. And Gerald couldn't be more pleased. "The door is always open, that people might praise the God who has helped me," states Gerald.

"Mights" Become "Dids"

Now what is this story all about? A series of responses risky for some Lutherans might be "answered prayer," "social ministry through housing," "testimony in worship," or "cross-cultural evangelistic outreach." My response is that this story is about the dignity and joy of God's people living out their baptismal identity. It is about a celebration of grace and the hope of glory, which is Christ Jesus.

The women might not have come to church were it not for the invitation of the church. The men might not have remodeled their house. For New Yorkers it were not for the opportunity of owning a Nehemiah home. He might not have been baptized had the church not been complete. The women might not have become part of St. Peter's were it a cold and loveless atmosphere. Ann might not have waited were it not for an intensification of her commitment to the Lord. The Nehemiah Plan might not have come about without Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod participation. Consider all the human interactions which
might or might not have come to pass, from Anthea, Imedla, and Ainsley down through the greetings of the fellowship of believers to new worship attendees, to meetings with the New York mayor and bishops and builders, to mailed applications and the innermost intentions of the heart made manifest. All "mights." None done deeds.

Yet all of these "mights" became "disks." It is a mystery. Yet it has all come to pass, through the service and social change, evangelism, education and worship community gathered in Brooklyn, New York. Yet the true mystery at the heart of the mystery remains the grace of a loving God manifested to fallible, mortal human beings in word and the Word. So the Body of Christ walks and talks, communicating in word and deed that "newsness of life."

Growing Up Into Him Who is the Head

"Holistic" ministry implies completion, totality, and, in a profound way, perfection. All Christians possess a fundamental and thoroughly penetrating perfection is the righteousness of Christ. By grace through faith believers are perfectly righteous in Christ. This is at the center of the most precious Lutheran article of faith, the doctrine of justification.

What is the result of Christ's righteousness? It is nothing less than the "whole measure of the fullness of Christ," who taught, proclaimed, fed, forgave, healed, confronted and challenged. He does until this very day through local assemblies of believers made whole and unified by God's grace through the daily, baptismal rebirth in confession, repentance, absolution and walking in newsness of life.

What does it mean to engage in "holistic ministry" in a Christian congregation? It means that "we will in all things grow up into Him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From Him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part makes its proper contribution." (Ephesians 4:16)

Keisha, Patti, Twila, Andre, Clara, Mrs. Adams, Olivia, Anita, Imedla, Ainsley, Gerald, Marlene, Ann, the kids in the Youth Group, the children in VIS, the families from across the block, the Adams family, the Bacon family, the Holder family, the people of St. Peter's, the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod leaders, East Brooklyn congregation leaders, and I are "the whole body." But we have been made whole in Christ Jesus. We are joined and held together. And we are about something. It is not a hard thing. It is not impossible to observe. It leads in many directions. It has infinite possibilities. It is mysterious, because it is of God. What we are about is this: all we are doing is our work. We are growing up into Him who is the Head.

Herman A. Etzold

The Primary Mission of the Church

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mandments" (Psalm 78:1-8). Through this process Isra-
eld remembered the God of the covenant, the God of prom-
ises to the nation, His covenant with His people, His great
loving-kindness, and their part in the covenant relationship
namely, "to keep His commandments."
But Israel forgot again and again and rebelled. Re-
petently God was compelled to use stronger measures to
effect the continual covenants, famine, defeat in battle, the
sting of serpents, and the like. When the Israelites remembered and sought God ear-
nestly, God heard them, and the hand of God was prepared
them. Finally, because of rebellion against God and refusal
to turn from evil, God allowed the barbarous Assyrians to
carry the ten tribes off into captivity, never to return. He gave Judah into the hands of godless Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. He fulfilled His promise that the Messiah would come from the tribe of Judah by allowing the Jews to return after their captivity and by preserving the faithful remnant. With the birth of the Savior in Bethlehem of Judaea a new era of salvation history was ushered in.

It may be debated whether the transmission of the
covenant promises and the call to repentance by the Old Testa-
ment prophets and seers was education or evan-
gelism (witness). One could say it was either. One could say the same about the responsibility of the Old Testa-
ment parent to tell the next generation what God has
done. The purpose, whether we call it witness or educa-
tion, was that the children and the children's children of genera-
tions would "know the Lord" and that they would "set their hope in God." True, proselytes were won for the worship and service of Yahweh. But one does not find in the Old Testament extended efforts to
give up to convert the nations for Israel's God. Rather,
one finds a deep concern for safeguarding Israel against being turned from the worship of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to embrace the idolatry and shameful practices of the surrounding nations. The quintessence of the covenant was to preserve the identity of God's people, to keep them from the detra-
tions of Israel kept pulling the nation in the direction of worshiping other gods, and of forgetting the steadfast love of God through immorality, hypocrisy, and religious falsehoods, and who gave them Canaan for their inheritance. Their history was one of failure to fear and love the gracious God of Israel who entered a
covenant relationship with them, of unfaithfulness to Yahweh's will, and of doing what was desirable to their
own hearts.

In this Old Testament setting, teaching, or education,
abundantly received prominent emphasis. The knowl-
edge of the Lord, which implied a living relationship of
faith, love, and trust, was basic in the education of Israel.
To do the Lord's will was basic in Israel's testi-
money to the heathen. When King David was
announced by the prophet Nathan for his murderous, adul-
terous, seditious affair with Bathsheba, the damage done
was immense. It is said (2 Samuel 12:14 NIV) that you have
made the enemies of the Lord to smite you with utter
contempt (2 Samuel 12:14 NIV). To fail in keeping the
covenant is to be sent off into the world. The world-
wide evangelistic event was prefigured as something in
the future when the glory of the Lord would rise upon
Israel as the Messiah (Isaiah 60:11-12). The service of God's Old Testament people was
prescribed by revelation in the moral, political, and
religious sphere. The whole of God's plan in the
setting of this was sustained by keeping continuously mindful of all
that God did for Israel and of the promises made in the
covenant relationship. Not only were they to keep these
in mind at all times, but they were to impress them on
their children and others by speaking of them on all
occasions and by their own response of fear, love, and true
acknowledgment of God. It needs to be observed here that the chosen people
of God in Old Testament times were not saved by their
worship, service, or witnessing activities. Like their
counterparts in the New Testament, they were saved by
God's grace which they received by faith. In His
loving-kindness, God blessed them due to their unware-
ness with many acts of miraculous deliverance. The covenant
embraced and sealed their salvation by the mercy of God. Faithful obedience and humble
gratitude were now to be expressed in faithfulness and obedienceto the covenant Lord.

New Testament Perspectives
The New Testament records the fulfillment of the Old
Testament promises. The Seed in which all the nations
would be blessed was born—Mary, Jesus, the Savior, was
born. He was the Son of the Most High, the Lord of the
Son of a lowly virgin. He ascended the throne of his
fathers, David, reigning over the house of Jacob forever.
And His Kingdom will never be destroyed, nor His
kingdom come to an end. The New Testament promised
that, if the nation is faithful and obedient to God, God will prosper and protect and make it great. The promise of the New
Covenant is that whoever believes in Jesus as the Son
of God and the promised Deliverer will have eternal life in
His Kingdom. The focus shifts from being the chosen
nation among the nations to being the Church, called
out from all the nations of the earth to be the eternal
people of Christ, the Son of David.

While the Old Covenant people were commanded to
enter the land of Canaan and drive out the heathen and
possess it, and as the chosen nation from which the
Christ would be born, the New Covenant people are
commended to "go and make disciples of all na-

tions" (Matthew 28:19-20). Teaching and evangelizing actually
have the identical aim, namely, "to make disciples of all nations." When teaching,
or education, losses that aim, it cease to be the aim of the Church, whether that is
on the level of the Sunday school or the univer-
sity classroom.

As the Church grew in numbers and the need for
organized help for the poor became more demanding,
decisions were selected to tend to this phase of the
work. The reason given by the leaders was that "it
would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the Word of God in order to wait
on tables" (Acts 6:1-7). Special
service was regarded as an important arm of the Church. It involved special emphasis, but not the
expense of curtailing the teaching and witnessing
functions. To substitute social action for teaching God's Word was losing sight. It is important, how-
ever, and should not be neglected, either. Nor should it become the domain of an "inferior" clergy. Stephen, one of the first deacons, in administering the
special service program, was certainly no less a theologian by any
measure.

The program of the apostolic church is described in these
words: "They devoted themselves to the apostles'
teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to
tenants (Acts 2:42). The context in which teaching,
evangelism, and service took place was worship.

The transforming power at work through the activities of
teaching, evangelizing, and service was worship. The Holy Spirit, who brought salvation by creating faith
in those who heard, saw, and experienced the Church at
work among them. Thus, in turn, were drawn into the
fellowship of Christ and became one in faith, hope,
and love with "the followers of the Way."

St. Paul is fond of referring to the new people of
God as the "Body of Christ." God's "Body of God" is the
model. It is useful in tracing the interaction of teaching,
witnessing, and service, and the relative importance of each activity to the whole work of the Church.

Actually, evangelism is the invitation to all to come
out of the world and to worship with the Church, the
Body of Christ. Old timers and new converts need this
invitation as much as those who have never known
believers. It is here that we meet Christ! Jesus said,
"Where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there am I with them" (Matthew 18:20). We are the Christ in the worshiping
community! Now does it not make sense for a
person who wants to be a member must under-
go a minimum of some hours of instruction before we allow him to break bread with us at the Lord's Supper or before he can be baptized, or even before we allow him to worship at a church service or take up the collection? What makes another one with us in the Body of Christ? Is it the intellec-
tual conclusion of selected religious topics in a
pastor's class? Is it not the miraculous change through baptism which produces a newness of God and the Savior from all sin? Commenting on the story of the
gatherer at Philippi (Acts 16:16-34), who wanted to know,
"What must I do to be saved?" C. F. W. Walther observed: "They did not say: 'We have to take
you through an extensive course of instruction and
experience with all the awesomeness all the pic-
tic of the Christian Creed. After that, we shall have
to put you on probation to see whether you can become an
approved Christian.' Nothing of the sort. The question
asked to be baptized because he knows that is the means
for receiving him in the kingdom of Christ; and they promptly administered Baptism to him."

The above point does not diminish the importance
of the "knowledge of Christ." A distinction must be made,
however, between an initial religious experience in
the sense of a relationship of fear, love, and trust as
the Bible uses the word. Intellectually, the devil also
knows God, and they shudder Knowing in the rela-
tional sense of faith and obedience is the creation
of the Holy Spirit in the heart of the redeemed through
the Word and Sacraments which the Church administers.
In the Old Testament "knowledge" referred to the con-
thought about an eternal Being or Principle transsends
man and the world, but recognition of and obedience
to one who acted purposefully in the created world. In
the New Testament, "it should be clear that the New Testament
is trying to express the unique character of the be-
iever's relation to Christ" with the concept of knowl-

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Christian education which is worthy of that label does more than dispense intellectual data. Used by the Holy Spirit, it brings the individual into a personal, living relationship of love, fear, love and trust with God of our salvation. Such education is to go forward from the cradle to the grave until the child of God enters into eternal rest.

Evangelism, Education, and Service—Three Essentials

We postulated that evangelism is basically the call to come and worship Christ in the Church, the Body of Christ. The implication is that whoever accepts Jesus Christ by faith as Lord and Savior is one with us in the Body of the Christian Church. When it happens, should that fact not be recognized with great joy and with thanksgiving to God? Should such a person be invited to serve according to the varying personal gifts with which God endows His people? Why should this new member of Christ’s body sit out a period of probation and full and faithful entrance requirements before being incorporated into the Body of Christ?

Christian education from the cradle to the grave is as incumbent upon the New Testament Church as it was upon Old Testament Israel. However, it cannot be something separate from the evangelistic call to come and worship Christ as Lord and Savior. Nor can it be done in isolation from service, which is basically the knowledge of God, his love and faithfulness to God’s will. Nor shall a slice of it be considered as a prerequisite for admission into the Body of Christ. As we show Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians, to advance anything as necessary to salvation, other than the free grace of God through our Lord Jesus Christ, is a dangerous confusion of Law and Gospel.

Having said all this, it must be granted that there are times and situations in which the Church places greatest emphasis on indoctrination (which, incidentally, is somewhat different from Christian education, “feeding,” or “nurturing.” At other times the Church awakens to a greater consciousness of her missionary responsibilities, and evangelism at home and abroad is fostered. Sometimes, too, in the intense preoccupation with orthodoxy, the Church fails in the responsibilities of love to the helpless, the hurting, and the needy. Then there may occur a renewal of the emphasis on Christian service and social action.

In the wholesome, healthy functioning of the Christian congregation, however, the three essential emphases of the Body of Christ—Evangelism, Education, Service—will operate continuously, simultaneously, and in tandem. Evangelism will go forward as a priority as the Church invites all who will listen to come and worship the Savior. Education will provide the essential training and spiritual nourishment to those who accept the invitation and are by faith incorporated into the Body of Christ. The new life in the Spirit will manifest itself in service to God, to each other, and to the sin-cursed world, in accordance with the gifts which God gives to the Body of Christ in general and to individuals in particular (1 Corinthians 12).

And so the “arms” of the Body of Christ are not to be ministered to by us at will as if to say, “This year we educate; next year we get out and evangelize; and maybe the following year, if we get around to it, we’ll get involved in service.” The three go together. They serve one, overarching aim; namely, the salvation and edification of sinners. Therefore, as the Church grows numerically, structural provision should be made for staffing and organization which will allow the work of education to proceed without curtailment, as well as for assorting all opportunities for evangelism and for giving free rein to Christian love in service to God and man. The harmonious, wholesome functioning of the Church in these three areas is not the result of the pastor’s acumen or the teacher’s dedication to the art of teaching. It happens when the Church witnesses, teaches, loves, and keeps the door open wide to the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit which Martin Luther describes so magnificently in the explanation to the Third Article of the Apostles’ Creed.

I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Ghost has taught me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith; even as He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth, and keeps it with His own power daily and richly forgives all sins to me and all believers, and will at the Last Day raise me up and all the dead, and give unto me and all believers in Christ eternal life. This is most certainly true.

Footnotes


When you think of the word “curriculum,” what image comes to mind? Traditionally, education view curriculum as a resource utilized in a teacher’s daily and richly forgives all sins to me and all believers, and will at the Last Day raise me up and all the dead, and give unto me and all believers in Christ eternal life. This is most certainly true.

book reviews


In light of a growing emphasis on the development of faith and meeting the needs of people at their particular stage of faith, this book purports to meet these concerns. The author immediately catches the reader’s attention by suggesting some very practical and useful ideas about attending to the people at church. He reviews the skills and benefits of paying attention to people and discusses the various complexities of people, especially women and men. He is in the best of his abilities both to make the point and to give a very practical approach. He stresses the signif-

abundance of paying attention to members’ needs, family life, and the way one learns.

On the issue of faith, the author gives a clear, coherent, and practical definition of what he is trying to project. The following questions regarding faith are then addressed:

Where is faith? What is faith? Why do people have faith? Why does faith develop over time?

Alsdorf then addresses the three basic components of faith—the ability to think, feel and act. The focus is summed up in these words, “The way in which faith is understood has a profound effect on ministry practice” (p. 48).

Chapters three and four deal with stages of learning, including affective, behavioral, and cognitive, and then continue with a discussion of developmental stages. This becomes a rather heavy section of the book, intended more for the trained educator specifically interested in those stages.

Part two of this resource attempts to deal with different age levels and their faith issues. Chapter five is very insightful in looking at attitudes, practices and assumptions that adults in church have toward children. The remaining chapters focus on child, youth, and adult issues with each chapter exploring the developmental stages and the influences in the environment surrounding each level. Each chapter gives suggestions in working with people at each level in their worship, spiritual life, moral life, education, and community involvement.

This book will probably be most helpful to church workers as it is not looking for over-achievers in the “how-to” book, but rather for additional background, particularly in developmental issues, and some practical suggestions in working with people at various stages of faith. Many parts of this book are helpful, but each individual reader will need to “sift and sort” what one can use.

Debrett Aristen

DCE Intern

Lamb of God Lutheran Church

Humble, Texas
Continued from page 19


Using the survey approach, Merton Strommen has designed an excellent tool to assist pastors and youth leaders in conversing with youth regarding their concerns, values, and beliefs. The kit contains a thorough, written explanation of the entire program, an hour-long video which gives step-by-step instructions, survey and answer sheets, and a computer diskette for scoring purposes. The author proposes three objectives which will be accomplished through the use of the survey:

1. Understanding. We seek to see life from the other’s perspective;

2. A sense of partnership. In order for youth to feel comfortable and be able to speak honestly, a sense of trust and mutual regard must be cultivated;

3. A sense of hope. As youth share needs, fears, painful memories, or felt inadequacies, hope is awakened as the Gospel message is brought directly into their situation.

A profile is formed for each youth, based upon how he or she answers the 125 questions on the survey form. Items are organized into fifteen clusters, from which standardized scores have been developed. These scores are then plotted on a grid. The scale descriptions are broken into two categories, each of which has several subcategories:

Category I: Concerns
A. Family unity
B. Parental understanding
C. Lack of self-confidence
D. Personal faults
E. Classroom relationships
F. National issues
G. Relationship with God

Category II: Values and Beliefs
A. Religious participation
B. Moral responsibility
C. Meaningful life
D. Self-enhancement
E. Self-regard
F. Human relations
G. Awareness of God
H. Biblical concepts

Careful instructions are given for motivating youth and orientating parents prior to administration of the survey. After the survey is taken and scored, individual appointments are set up for one-to-one interpretation, with a heavy emphasis on the conversation model of interaction. Once the relationship between youth and pastor/leader is established, youth will often return to discuss spiritual issues, creating the opportunity for a “spiritual mentor” relationship.

In the educational realm, students are constantly evaluated to assess their academic strengths and weaknesses, often for the purpose of remediation. Strommen’s instrument is an excellent tool for assessing faith and moral development in young people. As church professionals, we are committed to making disciples; this survey allows us to converse one-on-one with those we are seeking to disciple, to discuss fears, misperceptions and questions surrounding faith and life. The assessment aspect of the tool shows us as Christian educators where our young people need further nurturing, encouragement, or knowledge. In essence, it assists us in being more effective disciples.

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