

# Preschools and Day-Care Facilities

*By Glenn R. Barnes, Beverlee M. Haar, John R. Isch, Darvin H. Raddatz*

[New Ulm, Minnesota, March 1, 1986]

This document examines pre-schools and day-care facilities particularly as these agencies are found in the congregations of the WELS. Because the terms day-care and pre-school are used in a number of ways, the document begins by defining these terms. Following this is an examination of what Scripture says concerning early childhood education and the place of parents and church in this education. The document then summarizes three different surveys that gathered information on pre-schools in the Synod. The fourth section describes what research says about the effects of day-care and pre-schools on children. The final section summarizes the document with a series of observations.

## Definitions

There is considerable variety in the kinds of programs and facilities that provide care for children outside their homes. This variety causes some difficulty in defining and discussing such programs.

The State of Minnesota, for example, defines a Group-Day-Care Center as “any program that, for compensation or otherwise, provides day or night-care for six or more children at one time. The term includes, but is not limited to, programs for children known as nursery schools, day nurseries, child care centers, play groups, day care centers for school age children, after-school programs, infant day care centers, cooperative day care centers, and Head Start programs.” The only difference the state of Minnesota recognizes among early childhood programs is the age of the child enrolled: Infant—six weeks to fifteen months; Toddler—sixteen months to thirty months; Preschool—thirty-one months to five years; Primary—six years through eight years; Intermediate—nine years through twelve years. The licensing provided in Minnesota, therefore, is based on the number and ages of the children attending and not on a distinction of the kind of care provided these children.

The regulations and definitions will vary in other states and the literature on pre-schools/daycare provides no standard definitions. At present and in regard to the situation in the Synod, a distinction can be made among the various types of programs. There appear to be two rather broad categories of programs, each of which contains several sub-types. The two categories overlap to a certain extent, but they also generally have a fundamental difference.

The first grouping of programs for infants and young children are the day-care programs. These programs basically provide a care taking service for children. Children from birth to elementary school age are included in such programs. Regular day-care centers, before and after school child care, emergency drop-off childcare, and disabled child care are examples of such services. These services can be provided out of homes or in specially designed facilities. Children are in the facilities for varying lengths of time during the day. There may be and often are educational and socialization goals for these services, but they concentrate on providing child care for single parents and families where both parents work. Many states would generally certify these facilities as day-care rather than educational units and license their personnel as caretakers rather than teachers.

The second general grouping consists of early childhood education programs. These programs would include pre-schools, nursery schools, and pre-kindergarten programs. They would usually include children from age two through five. Their major purpose is to provide educational and socializing experiences for young children. The children are generally enrolled in these programs for a regular time each week. Parents might enroll their children in these agencies even if they were not working or were otherwise able to care for their children. The state would tend to regard these agencies as schools and regulate and license them accordingly.

In the Synod there seem to be two kinds of early childhood education programs. One kind exists in congregations that have a Lutheran elementary school. The pre-school here appears to be an extension of the elementary school. Although the exact relationship between the elementary school and the pre-school may not always be clear, in most cases the purpose of the pre-school is obvious, the age enrolled is distinct, and the facilities, teachers, and curriculum are shared with the elementary school.

The second type of pre-school is found in congregations which have no Lutheran elementary school. The number of these pre-schools is uncertain; they may have a purpose different from pre-schools in congregations with elementary schools; and their teachers, curriculum, and facilities may be more varied.

Because of these differences among the programs for pre-school children, the report which follows will use the following terms: *Day-care facilities* will refer to those programs whose primary purpose is to provide care for children at the convenience of parents. *School-connected pre-schools* are education programs for three- to five-year old children in congregations with Lutheran elementary schools and which would generally share facilities and be under a common administrator. These schools predominantly enroll four-year olds. *Separate pre-schools* are those programs of early childhood education operated by congregations that have no Lutheran elementary school.

These definitions and parameters may not be in agreement with legal definitions nor with the perceptions of persons in the general area of early childhood education.

### **Scripture and Early Childhood Education**

The involvement of a congregation in a pre-school program or a day-care facility is part of the liberty that Christ has given to his church in regard to the manner in which the church carries out its responsibility to “make disciples of all nations.” When a congregation exercises this liberty and uses sanctified reason in its decisions, it should be aware of principles that Scripture defines regarding the nurture and training of children.

### **The Responsibility of Parents**

The gift of parenthood creates between parents and their offspring a supple bond that is filled with the potential for ministry to God. The strength of the bond may be discerned in the phenomenon that even abusive behavior by a parent tends to cement the child’s dependency on the parent. The gift of parenthood is preeminently the gift of a relationship. This is particularly important to the child for it is the child’s very first relationship, as well as the medium and the model of a host of future relationships as the child’s world expands. For the child the intimacy of the relationship is originally nurtured by months of total dependency in the womb, sustained by the nursing and caring that follows birth, and further fostered in the child’s consciousness by a continuing pattern of pleasuring or comforting activities that are sensitive to the child’s need and responses. For Christian parents the value they place on the relationship is generally ensured because they sense their child to be the issue of intimate conjugal love and a divine gift. The strength of the bond is initially exercised by weeks of maternal discomfort and a shared expectancy which even adoptive parents experience; it is further strengthened by months of insistently expressed dependency followed by childhood’s ingratiating expressions of satisfaction and happiness. The continuous acts of bonding by which God establishes the strength and the sensitivity of the child-parent relationship create and mark it as a precious and inestimable gift.

God’s gifts to men imply a grateful and responsible stewardship. The remarkable uniqueness of the gift of a child-parent relationship implies for the parents a primary responsibility for the personal, social, and spiritual development of their children. Unquestionably, the primary responsibility for the Christian nurture of children lies with parents (Dt 4:9; Dt 6:6-7; Dt 11:19; Isa 38:19; Pr 3:1; Eph 6:4; Col 3:21; 2 Ti 3:14-15). Although these passages are not restricted to parents, Scripture is clear when it assigns to parents the first privilege for the training of their children.

God created man and woman and empowers them to be the agents of his continuing creation. The gift of participating in God's creative activity is to find its natural extension in the parents' participation in the nurture of children. God the Father himself is the pattern here. This model Father has not left himself without witness among any of his creatures but earnestly seeks them through undeserved kindnesses and muted judgments. The agents of the Father's continuing creation, fathers and mothers, will also feel the responsibility to bear witness of the Father to their children. They will exercise the responsibility to nurture their offspring to become loving and obedient children of God. They will recognize their children also as gifts of God intended for the service of his world and will train them in the attitudes and behaviors that support their God-intended role. Parents do not see their children as standing in competition with the world and parents will not permit academic competitiveness to replace their God-given responsibility to create trusting children of God and willing servants of society.

### **The Teaching Responsibility of the Church**

Scripture also places a teaching responsibility on the church, a teaching which includes children (Dt 31:13; Joshua 8:34-35; 1 Sa 1:23; 2 Ki 11:21,12:2; Ps 78:5-6; Pr 22:6; Mt 28:19-20; Jn 21:15; Ac 20:28; 1 Co 13:28). Teaching, particularly the teaching of children, is a very direct means by which the church can nurture the saints within the church and reach out to those who do not yet believe. Congregations within the Synod have historically exercised this responsibility through educational agencies such as Lutheran elementary schools, Sunday schools, and vacation Bible schools.

The church is a gathering of disciples and its fundamental task is discipling. Whatever the church does, it does with a sense of responsibility to its mission of discipling. It supports the mission of God by strengthening the bonds of love within the fellowship through loving service and mutual edification. It supports the mission of God by seeking to win the unconverted for fellowship with Christ through direct Christian witness and responsible, loving community life that provides supporting testimony for the Gospel. In the determination of its ministering priorities the church, like the individual, is guided by the Spirit who is sought in prayer and through the Spirit-given Word. Through the Word the church recognizes that its greatest gift and possession is the Word of the cross and then the human resources which the Spirit has provided to communicate the Word. Through the Word and the Spirit the church learns not to dissipate its energies in social action programs which are unrelated to the exercise of discipleship or the act of discipling.

The gifts and responsibilities of God-fearing parents and the church are interrelated. Their responsibilities overlap as compatibly as the shared responsibilities of a husband and wife. The church and the parents determine their respective functions on the basis of how best their God-given gifts for nurturing can be exercised. The Lord may distribute the gifts that contribute to Christian nurture differing in different ages or in different places. At one time and place he may give parents a rich measure of the gifts that contribute to Christian nurture, and the church, in comparison, may be a less effective agency of nurture. Such a situation may have existed in the early years of the Synod as the Synod struggled with the difficulties of pastor shortages and itinerant missionaries. In such circumstances, the home may of necessity carry the sole responsibility of Christian nurture. In other times and places, the church may be a stronger agency of Christian nurture. Such might have been the case of the "aliens" spoken of in Dt 31:12,13. Neither parents nor the church will be jealous for what they regard as their own prerogatives. Their first and mutual interest will be for the spiritual welfare of the children. This interest in the children's welfare will determine how best their common responsibilities can be shared or delegated.

### **The Responsibility of the Church for Charity**

The church also has a responsibility for the physical and temporal welfare of people. The description of the Jerusalem congregation after Pentecost and Paul's words of encouragement regarding the collection for the

churches in Jerusalem illustrate this concern. Today such a concern for the temporal welfare of others may include more than food and clothing for those in need. Circumstances in society today may result in some families needing a place where their children can be provided with a safe, healthful, and educationally beneficial environment. A congregation may, for example, establish a day-care facility as a means of providing such a needed service.

### **Applications**

These three principles—the primary parental responsibility, the teaching function of the church, and the privilege of the church to exercise its collective love for those in need—should be considered and kept in balance in any decision the congregation makes regarding a pre-school or a day-care facility.

One concern in this balance is that a congregation's decision does not detract from or give the impression of detracting from the responsibility of parents for the Christian education of their children. A congregation, regardless of its programs of Christian education for children, must actively seek to encourage and support parents in their God-given duty for Christian education in the home. This congregational responsibility to parents should grow in importance particularly when the congregation becomes more involved in the education of children. There is an ever-present danger that a congregation, when it sees the growing materialism and indifference to spiritual matters among some parents in the congregation, will rush in with Christian education programs to fill in the gaps in the child's education. As the congregation increases these efforts in the Christian education of children, it may implicitly and unintentionally encourage parents to neglect even more their responsibilities. Then, as the congregation sees this new evidence of neglect, it redoubles its programs of Christian education, and the vicious circle begins again. Such a downward spiral can be halted when the congregation includes, along with its programs of Christian education, programs and support groups for parental education.

A second concern in this balance is the resources of the congregation and how these resources are allocated. A pre-school or a day-care facility is less expensive than a Lutheran elementary school. For some congregations this may be an economical choice for an agency of Christian education beyond the Sunday school and vacation Bible school. A pre-school or a daycare facility may also have a mission emphasis which is needed or lacking in a particular congregation. In this sense, therefore, a pre-school or a day-care facility may contribute to a wholesome balance in a congregation's work.

A third concern is that any program established by a congregation must be in keeping with its task of proclaiming the Gospel and caring for those in need. This concern regarding the purpose of the pre-school or day-care facility and how this purpose supports the function of a congregation should have a critical role in the congregation's decision to establish a pre-school or day-care facility. The surveys of 1983 and January 1985 which asked the respondents for the reasons for the establishment of the pre-school underscore the importance of this concern. Although many of the reasons given clearly support the educational mission, or support function of the congregation. There are other reasons that imply motives for the establishment of a pre-school which are, at the least, peripheral to the function of the congregation. For example, a number of reasons adduced for a pre-school were related to parental "push" or pressure. This can be a valid reason if the desires of parents for a pre-school are in harmony with their own responsibilities and the function of the congregation. Other reasons for pre-schools, such as the availability of teachers and facilities, competition from other pre-schools, or even to prepare the child for school, indicate, however, that the decision to establish a pre-school did not necessarily follow from a discussion of the purpose of a congregation.

Pre-schools and day-care facilities are new, at least among the congregations of the Synod. Newness is not bad, but newness in the programs and activities of the congregation necessitates an examination of the function and purpose of a congregation. Any program that is introduced must be predicated on such an examination.

## Pre-school Education In the WELS

Little or no information regarding day-care facilities in the congregations of the Synod exists. (The BPE January 1985 survey indicated that one congregation called their facility a day-care center.) There have been three surveys of pre-school education in the Synod since 1983. The data shown below is based on the following surveys: Barnes, G. and J. Isch. "A Survey of WELS Congregations Concerning Pre-School Programs." DMLC, March 1983, Board for Parish Education. "Pre-School/Day-care Survey Results." January 1985, Board for Parish Education. "WELS Congregations With Pre-Schools." Fall, 1985.

The most common subjects taught in pre-schools in both the 1983 and 1985 survey appear to be Word of God, music, art, motor development, sensory development and language development.

There does appear to be an increase in the number of pre-schools. Between 1983 and 1985 there were eight additional pre-schools. However, by the fall of 1985, there were 66 pre-schools in connection with a Lutheran elementary school, an increase of ten in the span of only a few months. If the nine congregations that operated preschools in January 1985 still do so, the total number of pre-schools in the Synod must be at least 75, an actual increase of 18 since March 1983.

Although the table indicates only a modest increase between 1983 and 1985 in the enrollment in pre-schools, the 1985 report does not include the nine congregations that have no Lutheran elementary schools. If these pre-schools are included in the enrollment, the total enrollment is slightly more than 900. This is a 17% increase in enrollment.

Most pre-schools are in the three states of Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Illinois. The number of pre-schools in Michigan, California, and Arizona has increased, however.

### PRE-SCHOOLS IN WELS

	<b>1983</b>	<b>1985</b>	<b>1985</b>
<b>Number of pre-schools</b>	57	65	66*
<b>Enrollment</b>	772	NA	798
<b>Mean</b>	14.3	NA	12.1
<b>Median</b>	12.0	NA	10.0
<b>Range</b>	2-58	NA	1-38
<b>Pre-schools: Minn, Wis, Ill</b>	84%	NA	73%
<b>Pre-schools with Luth. Elem. Schools</b>	91%	86%	100%
<b>Plan to open or study preschool</b>	55	43	
<b>Number of Teachers</b>	61	89	
<b>Certified</b>	39	37	
<b>Licensed</b>	15	26	
<b>Neither of unknown</b>	7	26	
<b>Teacher remuneration</b>	52%	82%	
<b>Pre-school in church building</b>	19%	25%	
<b>Thirty—thirty-six week session</b>	57%	57%	
<b>Half-days per week</b>	2	2	
<b>Four-year olds enrolled</b>	84%	94%	
<b>Three-year olds enrolled</b>	19%	26%	

*\* 1985 report included only schools with Lutheran elementary schools.*

Most pre-schools at present in the Synod continue to be a downward extension of a Lutheran elementary school. A small but increasing number have been established in congregations without a Lutheran elementary

school. There is no indication in the surveys whether any of these pre-schools will expand to a Lutheran elementary school.

In 1983 there were 55 congregations which were planning to open a preschool or were studying the matter. In 1985 there were 43 congregations which were planning or studying a preschool and 49 which were anticipating a study of pre-schools. The data do not indicate how many of those 55 congregations actually opened a pre-school but as many as eighteen could have begun a pre-school as a result of their study. Apparently a number of those congregations are still studying the pre-school or have decided not to begin one at this time. If some duplications are eliminated from the two surveys, there are still approximately 100 congregations which are studying a pre-school or which are planning to study a pre-school. The next five years could show a considerable increase in the number of pre-schools.

The number of teachers in pre-schools has increased in proportion to the number of preschools. Although the number of teachers has increased, the number of synodically certified teachers has not. There are more teachers who hold state licenses of some kind. There continues to be a large number of teachers, however, who are neither licensed nor synodically certified. The 1983 survey indicated that slightly more than half the pre-school teachers were called by the congregation. There is no data to indicate if this percentage has changed.

More teachers of pre-schools are receiving a salary but inasmuch as most pre-schools are connected to a Lutheran elementary school these salaries may be for teaching other grades in connection with the pre-school.

Generally, pre-schools enroll four-year olds only but WELS pre-schools have included a few three-year olds and quite a few five-year olds. In 1985 there were fewer five-year olds but more three-year olds enrolled.

The survey report in 1983 described the pre-school situation in the Synod as "ambiguous." There is still some ambiguity but there are some conclusions or trends that can be seen:

1. Although most congregations in the Synod still have not considered a pre-school, a considerable number have. Slightly better than 10% of the congregations of the Synod have considered a pre-school; four percent have started one.
2. There has been a larger growth in the number of pre-schools and in the enrollment in pre-schools in the Synod than there has been in number and enrollment of Lutheran elementary schools.
3. The pattern of pre-schools has remained quite constant. Four-year olds generally attend for 30-36 weeks per year with two sessions per week. The curriculum includes a variety of learning experiences.
4. The training, certification, and licensing requirements and attainments of pre-school teachers continues to show wide variations. No apparent standard exists.
5. Although the majority of pre-schools are in the Midwest, growth in the South and Southwest appears likely.
6. A small but increasing number of pre-schools are being established in congregations which do not have Lutheran elementary schools.
7. The reasons for the establishment of pre-schools continue to vary. They are not "babysitting" agencies, but there is no identifiable core of reasons for pre-schools.

### **Research on the Effects of Pre-schools and Day-care Facilities**

Numerous Studies have been conducted of the effects of day care and pre-school experiences on the development of children. A major difficulty in drawing conclusions from this research is that there is great variety among the various kinds of day-care facilities and pre-schools and among the kinds of children these agencies serve.

Some literature, such as that by Raymond and Dorothy Moore, is highly critical of agencies outside the home which provide child care or education to young children. The research the Moores cite indicates that the home provides the most healthy environment for the social and intellectual development of young children.

Other research, such as the Perry Pre-school Project, suggests that there can be major benefits of pre-school education for certain kinds of children. Knowing which research to believe in these disparate claims is difficult.

Studies of day-care services tend to show there are little or no deleterious effects on the development of children who attend day-care facilities as compared with those children who are cared for at home. Children in day-care centers do not differ in their dependency or attachment to parents nor does such care disrupt the child's emotional bond with his mother. For children of low socio-economic families some positive effects of day-care have been found. A reasonable conclusion regarding the effects of day-care is that most children, particularly middle-class, intact family children are neither harmed nor helped in their development when they are placed in a day-care facility. This assumes of course, that the children are placed in day-care facilities which have adequate facilities and equipment with well-trained personnel. The advantage of day-care accrues mostly to the parents who are able to continue to work. Such economic advantages to a family are certainly important and can, in time assist the child also, but the day-care itself is generally neutral in its effects.

Studies of the effects of pre-schools and early childhood education are more numerous than studies of day-care. Most of the early studies of pre-schools, particularly the many studies of the various Head Start Programs, showed disappointing results. Compensatory pre-school programs often produced dramatic increases in young children's ability to handle cognitive or academic tasks but these gains disappeared in the primary grades. In effect, children who attended preschools were at the same level as children who had not attended preschools by the time both groups reached the third grade. Even these temporary gains were not seen in all pre-school programs. The programs that produced these gains were the ones that were highly structured (academic) and which closely involved the parents in the programs. The compensatory programs enrolled children who were at high risk of failing in school, thus the "wash out" in primary grades was particularly disappointing because these children were again failing in school.

Recent re-analysis of compensatory programs and the widely publicized results of the Perry Pre-school Project have modified these pessimistic conclusions regarding the effects of preschool experiences. The Perry project was a longitudinal research that monitored the progress of children over a span of twenty years. The schools enrolled three-and four-year olds who were classified as educable mentally retarded. Half the children were enrolled in a pre-school, half were not. The pre-schools involved in the project had curriculums which emphasized cognitive learning experiences. Another important feature of the Perry project was a strong program of parental involvement and cooperation. The children who were enrolled in the pre-school showed early gains in academic achievement and these gains persisted or increased during the years of elementary school. Similar gains were found in social adjustment and emotional maturity. The impact of this type of pre-school program also carried over into adulthood: there were lower juvenile delinquency and adult crime rates, less welfare dependency, less teenage pregnancy, and increased rates of job-holding and job-training. The Perry Pre-school Project was a success story in early childhood education for children who typically do not succeed in school.

Despite such successes an important qualification about studies such as the Perry Project has to be made. These programs enrolled children who were at serious risk in schools. The children came from families which because of adverse economic circumstances, the absence of a parent, or an impoverished language environment were unable to provide the healthy social and intellectual stimulation which children need for normal development. These programs were designed to compensate for an inadequate family situation and they were successful, in part, because they provided and assisted the family in providing a healthy environment for the child's development.

Those who wish to encourage a wider use of pre-school education should be cautious about using the positive results of compensatory education programs in their arguments. Many parents apparently believe that pre-schools will assist all children by giving them an advantage when these children enter a regular school. Such a claim cannot be made on the basis of the compensatory education studies. Children from middle-class homes that have the resources and the environment which stimulate and support normal development may benefit from a preschool but it is problematical whether these benefits are long-lasting. If a child from such a

home, for example, attends pre-school, he likely will be ahead of his non-pre-school classmate in kindergarten. These differences however will probably disappear as both children progress through school. There are studies that do show that children can be taught skills at a younger age than is traditional in present school practice. Five-year olds, for example, can be taught to read, and in some cases this early start confers long-lasting advantages. In other cases, these early advantages disappear.

The question still remains therefore whether early instruction for all children from normal backgrounds is prudent and beneficial. Some contend that long-term gains of early childhood education are not realized because primary grade teachers and the curriculum in these grades fail to build on what the child has already learned. Others claim that although children can be trained to perform tasks at an earlier age than they would normally learn these tasks, given a supportive and healthy environment, such advance training produces few, if any, long-term advantages.

Studies in early childhood education thus produce different conclusions regarding the substantial or long-term benefits of pre-school education for children whose home situations are normal and healthy. To further complicate the issue, some developmental psychologists claim that a formal, structured, and highly academic education can be harmful to young children, particularly those who are immature. Some of this research on the detrimental effects of preschools is controversial and much of it is rejected by advocates of early childhood education. The choice of a pre-school education, therefore requires an extra measure of care and concern by Christian parents.

In considering preschool education for their child, the first concern of parents should be the welfare of the child. Parents should carefully evaluate the maturity and development of the child. In doing this they may profitably use public or private screening programs. Prior to entry into school, whether a pre-school or a kindergarten program, parents should engage the child in informal and natural learning activities. By doing this, parents will ease the transition from home to school. If parents do enroll the child in a pre-school, they should carefully monitor the child's development. The ambiguity of research in early childhood education requires an active involvement and interest on the part of parents.

### **Concluding Observations**

This document emphasizes the importance of parents and the family in the Christian nurture of children. Parenthood is a good gift from God who desires to make his people happy and who knows what best ministers to human happiness. In the reception of the gift parents are being blessed; in the exercise of their gift they may be sure they will also be strengthened and blessed by the Father who loves to answer prayers in behalf of his children. Though the magnitude and complexity of the parenting task have been described here as somewhat mystifying and even overwhelming, Christian parents approach their task of child nurture with holy joy and with a sense of privilege.

The gift of parenthood is the gift of a very special relationship. Since the small child is capable of cherishing and profiting by only a limited number of relationships, the child's relationship with his parents is the critical first key to unlock for the small child the mysteries of God, man, and the world. This first relationship will be the window through which the child will be able to put in perspective the larger world and wider human associations that will daily open up to him. Christian parents will also use their relationship with their children to lead them into a loving, trusting relationship with their heavenly Father. Already in achieving this last task parents are giving their children a perspective on life that deserves to be called wisdom and is the beginning of all knowledge. Even in the earliest months of a child's life the parent-child relationship deserves to be a highly regarded medium for the kind of learning that little children are capable of and may benefit from enormously.

The most important and yet the hardest of the Christian and human arts that a child must learn are first, how to be loved and secondly, how to love. Both of these arts can be learned early and the learning proceeds best when an atmosphere of love—for the child, for each other, and for God—surrounds the child. When the

nurture of the child is not accompanied by love and consequently joy and contentment in ministering to the child, the child's development in the arts of love is likely to be inhibited. Whether the home alone or the home in combination with the church can best offer this environment depends upon circumstances in the home and the church.

When a congregation considers its responsibility for the Christian nurture of children, it should first seek ways in which it can help parents meet these responsibilities. Under the patterns and structures that are typical of our society, many parents, particularly male parents, have had less than the desirable amount of experience with young children. The church may be able to assist them by helping to develop the basic understanding attitudes, activities, and skills necessary for child nurture. The Christian fellowship that God gives the church can be an excellent instrument to improve parents' understanding and practice of child nurture. The church can provide such assistance to parents through regular organizations and through support groups for particular groups of parents. After these responsibilities for helping parents have been met, the congregation may then also consider the need for formal agencies such as a pre-school or a day-care facility.

In this relationship between church and parents in the Christian nurture of children, there is the danger that one will come to dominate or usurp the other. This danger seems particularly apparent in early childhood education. Traditionally parents have had the exclusive care of very young children. As educational programs encroach upon these very young years, strong emotions can be aroused. Parents, teachers, and others become concerned that somewhere a line has to be drawn below which children should be cared for by parents at home. The issue of kindergarten was once fought on such a line now it is the three and four-year olds; tomorrow it will be the one-and two-year olds. Obviously, there is a point beyond which programs and schools cannot go. Each new encroachment toward this point, with younger and younger children, should be thoroughly considered and widely discussed. Including four-year olds should not make the inclusion of three-year olds inevitable.

Honest and concerned Christians will honestly differ in these discussions. Pre-schools and day-care facilities are an exercise of Christian liberty. But this very freedom carries with it responsibility and sensitivity. If congregations and the Synod embrace pre-schools and hold them as important as Lutheran elementary and secondary education, we may unlovingly be ignoring the concerns of those parents who believe that their young children belong at home. If congregations and the Synod automatically accept a downward extension of the Lutheran elementary school as a natural and wholesome expansion of Christian education, we may also lose the sensitivity we ought to have toward young children, some of whom may be better served by remaining at home. If such unthinking expansion is allowed to occur, the church may indeed have lost the perspective on the joint responsibility of parents and church for Christian nurture.

For the best results from a church's pre-school or day-care facility a clearly defined relationship between the church and the parents is essential. In a similar way and for the best results, it is essential that a clearly defined relationship exist between the church and the agency that offers its childcare services. The acceptance of joint responsibility, the establishment of the limits of responsibility for each, and a definition of the ways in which each will exercise their responsibility is crucial.

When a congregation that has an elementary school opens a pre-school, the change in the congregation's work of Christian education is probably not dramatic and the relationship between the congregation and the pre-school should be clear and straight-forward. The kindergarten teacher typically would become the pre-school teacher. She is probably the most qualified and is likely to have synodical certification. When the same teacher teaches kindergarten and pre-school there is likely to be good matriculation and curriculum continuity between the pre-school and the kindergarten. The kindergarten teacher becomes a "full-time" teacher in the school and is paid accordingly. The pre-school/kindergarten combination appears to be more educationally sound than a kindergarten/primary grade combination. The pre-school, as a number of the reasons for a pre-school in the 1985 survey indicated, serves as an "easy" entry into the elementary school of the congregation. Pre-schools are popular with parents and having enrolled the child in the preschool, the parent may find it convenient and satisfactory to continue the child's enrollment in the elementary school.

The pre-school in these cases should be operated as part of the Lutheran elementary school. The principal of the school should be responsible for the supervision of the pre-school and the expenses of the pre-school should generally be part of the school's budget.

The implications for a congregation that has an elementary school and establishes a preschool seem therefore, to be generally modest and wholesome. A school, teachers, curriculum already exist. The pre-school fits well into these existing arrangements, and the cost is relatively modest. Most importantly, there is an existing understanding of Christian education, there are professional Christian educators who understand the integration of Scripture with all of teaching, and there is or should be an understanding of the relationship of parents to the agencies of Christian education. Provided the congregation continues to support parents in their responsibilities over against their children, a pre-school can contribute to the work of the congregation.

In a congregation without an elementary school, a pre-school is likely to be, and should be, more of a major step. A pre-school can be a useful "move upward" from a Sunday school and a vacation Bible school. Informal information from such congregations indicate that the pre-school has considerable potential for mission work. A pre-school is, for unchurched parents, a nonthreatening agency for their children. Church may be unfamiliar to them and they may hesitate to enroll their children in a parochial school, but pre-schools are common and familiar. A pre-school thus provides an opportunity for regular contact with parents. The Christian education provided their children might also lead parents to become involved in the church and seek membership.

Congregations which have no Lutheran elementary school and which operate a pre-school should be especially clear as to the relationship between the pre-school and the congregation. The establishment of a pre-school should be by direct action of the congregation. The supervision and the operation of the pre-school should be the responsibility of the pastor or other minister and the appropriately elected board and the finances of the pre-school should be included, at least in part, in the congregation's budget.

The same basic considerations for the establishment and operation of a pre-school apply to a day-care facility. The congregation should take particular care in considering a day-care facility because its purpose is not primarily educational. As this report indicated, a day-care facility could be established as an opportunity to do mission work and as a means by which a congregation provides a service of charity to its members and the people of the community. If these purposes are valid for a particular congregation and the congregation has the necessary resources to balance this service with its other responsibilities, a decision to establish a day-care facility can be appropriate. The congregation, however, must clearly be in charge of and responsible for the operation of the day-care service. The facilities, the staff, the materials, and the acceptance of children should be under the policies and procedures established by the congregation. If charges are made of the parents, these charges ought to reflect an equitable balance between the congregation's financial commitment and the ability of the parents to pay.

The matter of tuition in the pre-school and charges for a day-care facility raise some difficult questions. On the one hand, a pre-school or a day-care facility which is supported entirely by payments from parents can raise questions regarding the congregation's commitment to the preschool or day-care facility, the effective control which the congregation has over an organization which operates under the name of the congregation, the basic purpose of the pre-school, daycare facility and whether ability to pay should be a criteria for enrollment. However, if a congregation decides that no tuition or charges should be made of parents, the congregation may, thereby, give the impression to parents that the pre-school or the day-care facility is the normal route for its members to follow. The congregation will also have to ask whether all the members will give joyfully for such a purpose. As the report noted, congregations should be concerned not to bind the consciences of their members regarding a pre-school or day-care facility. Some members may object to being asked to support a pre-school or a day-care facility. Congregations may arrive at some kind of compromise in this issue. Perhaps parents and the congregation could share the expenses of the day-care facility, or some kind of tuition assistance could be provided by the congregation for those parents unable to pay.

Congregations, whether they have an existing Lutheran elementary school or not must do more than merely tolerate or allow a pre-school or day-care facility to exist in the congregation. First, there must be careful consideration and discussion of the purpose and need for such an agency and how this agency can carry out the purpose of the congregation. If this discussion leads to the decision to establish such an agency, the congregation must stand ready to commit its resources and assume the responsibility for its operation and supervision. Any other procedure by which a pre-school or a day-care facility comes in through the back door or is established by a group within the congregation is disorderly and establishes a dangerous precedent.

Congregations and the Synod should also consider the extent to which they are involved in Lutheran education. Today it is possible for our Synod through its schools to guide the education of a child from age three to twenty-two. No one should disparage the education provided in the Lutheran schools of the Synod. Yet, there ought to be a point where congregations and the Synod examine its educational system to determine whether the education provided complements and supports the work of parents. Congregations and the Synod ought also to consider the extent to which this formal educational system encourages self-directed Christian education. Educational systems should have as one of their important goals to help Christians become life-long, independent students of the Scripture. The time and effort that goes into schools should be matched with comparable time and effort to educate, encourage, and support parents in meeting their responsibilities and helping all Christians grow in their lives of sanctification.

Kingdom work balance is not a new issue in the church. The report noted that a pre-school may be an economical choice for some congregations, particularly to the extent that the pre-school or the day-care facility has as one of its objectives a mission outreach. Pre-schools and day-care facilities are too recent, however, for any conclusions to be drawn about their potential for mission work. If a congregation has as one of its reasons for opening a pre-school/day-care facility this mission emphasis, the congregation will also have to monitor carefully the effectiveness of the pre-school/day-care facility to realize this purpose.

If a congregation establishes a pre-school, they also ought to institute a careful screening system for those children enrolled or they should make use of agencies which provide such services. This should be done so that parents of children who may not be ready for a pre-school experience can be counseled regarding the effects of the pre-school.

The information in this study provides some suggestions regarding the type of pre-school that would be appropriate in a typical congregation. Few, if any, congregations in the Synod have large numbers of disadvantaged children for whom compensatory-type pre-schools are indicated. Compensatory pre-schools in addition to being intensive and expensive are inappropriate for children who come from homes which provide a decent level of care and intellectual stimulation. Rather than stressing discipline, structure, and the abstract, symbolic aspects of academic learning, pre-schools will serve the constituency of the Synod better if they emphasize the concrete, experience-based nature of academic learning and appropriate social goals. Pre-schools should also have maximum flexibility in their programs so children of varying maturity and developmental levels can be accommodated. Pre-schools in the Synod should not attempt to overcome an inadequate home environment; they should rather seek to provide a smooth transition between home and school.

Just as the program in a pre-school should be structured and designed to meet the needs of the children, so also the teachers in pre-schools and those persons responsible for a day-care facility should be chosen carefully. In addition to meeting existing state requirements, the teachers in pre-schools should be Synodically certified at least on the kindergarten level. The issue of calling these persons in a regular way and their place in the public ministry should also be clarified.