

Kingdom Balance in the Light of the Great Commission

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The workshop “Revitalizing Parish Ministry” has been conducted in every WELS District. Near the conclusion of the workshop in Appleton last January, the pastors of the Appleton Circuit shared common concerns and began to encourage one another under the Spirit’s guidance along the way of ‘revitalization’. The pastors of four WELS church in Appleton with Lutheran Elementary Schools began meeting to talk about these common concerns. Discussions began in mid-February on the topic: “Kingdom Balance”. Fourteen meetings were held with composition progressing as the subject was pursued. The enclosed document is the result.

This study document is placed into your hands at our initiative and with the knowledge of District President Carl Voss. We have benefited by the study, discussion and composition of it. We expect to benefit such more as we bring this before our respective staffs of called workers, the elected leadership of our respective congregations and in those formats deemed wise within the congregation.

A world of ‘thanks’ is in order to Pastor Timothy Kant. His computer orientation and patient tenacity have been tapped extensively during these months. The copy in your hands is the eighth and final revision. It is our prayerful hope that this will “trigger your thinker” about the ministry of the Word carried on by you and your congregation. We encourage you to read and discuss the document in your congregation. In our view, small group discussions seem most advantageous. We are confident that the WELS administrators will find it of benefit for their perspective of ministry as well. Our congregations and synod face many challenges in the years to come. How will we meet those challenges?

Remember, please! This document is not an end in itself. As you pray, study the Word, grow in the Word and in your ministry of that Word, additions to this document will become apparent to you. Add them to your copy. Those who co-wrote and signed this document would also be pleased to receive your addition. White ‘masters’ for the document and its appendixes are enclosed along with a finished copy, which suggests color-coding for ease in reading and discussion reference.

We commend this to your prayerful study. May the insights we have gained from Scripture be yours also under the Spirit’s blessing. May you grow also in your ministry with the Word to Christ’s redeemed, especially in serving each of them in their specific need.

The Impetus for this Paper

Several pastors and teachers in the Appleton Circuit of the Fox River Valley Conference, Northern Wisconsin District, have been meeting to discuss the ministries and priorities of our congregations in light of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20) . This study document was written to refocus our attention on the work our Savior has given us to do, to evaluate our strengths and weaknesses, and to offer suggestions for improvement. As we evaluated our work in the light of the Great Commission, two concerns were foremost in our minds:

1. As individuals, congregations, and a synod, we are not making good use of the many opportunities our Lord provides to share the gospel with the unchurched. Outreach with the gospel is not receiving the emphasis that our Lord affords it in his Great Commission.
2. We are not doing very well at nurturing and equipping our members for lives of Christian service, nor are we doing very well at passing the Christian faith on to the next generation.

The full-time educational agencies, Lutheran Elementary Schools (LES), area Lutheran High Schools (LHS) and Wisconsin Lutheran College (WLC) are very expensive to operate. In Appleton over 50% of offerings are applied for the benefit of 15% of the membership. How can the hope to retain these schools into the 21st century be brought to a reality? The place of these schools must be brought into focus under the Great Commission in order for them to survive.

In 1990 the Northern Wisconsin District of the WELS included 81,637 baptized souls and 62,476 communicant members. Of these, only 43.8% were at worship on a given Sunday. Only 8.2% of communicant members were in teen or adult Bible Classes. Our District suffered back-door losses of 1436 (821 removed, 615 joined other churches) but gained only 968 new adult members (488 by profession of faith, 32 by adult baptism, 448 by adult confirmation). Offerings for Synod Mission support were \$38.66 per communicant, lowest in the WELS.

A review of confirmands and their faithfulness to the confession of the WELS indicates that it's time we reflect on "how" we share the Word with the next generation. Without judging hearts and basing faithfulness on identification with the confession of WELS and on the known use of the Means of Grace, the following proves interesting: Of those confirmed at Mount Olive in Appleton, Wisconsin, between 1966 and 1985, 49.7% remain faithful in the use of the Means of Grace through the WELS; 50.3% do not. A study by another WELS congregation indicated that 75% of its confirmands fell away from the church within 20 years.

Our congregations struggle with anemic worship attendance, Bible class attendance, and firstfruits offerings of time, talent and treasure for the Lord's work. We need to do a better job of helping our members grow through the Word of God toward spiritual maturity, rather than slipping into spiritual apathy, delinquency and unbelief. Service with the Gospel, as Jesus clearly stated in the Great Commission, is not being done; use of the Word in ways which we have decided are advantageous, but are not clearly directed by Christ, exhaust the resources of men and money.

To summarize, we are losing many members through the back door, and we are not adequately committing our time, talent and treasure to bring new people in the front door. The bottom line: Many people are dying in their sins and going to hell, and many others are struggling through life in spiritual blindness, ignorance and depression.

Let's Review What the Great Commission Is

What was God's purpose in sending Jesus Christ? God sent Jesus to seek lost sinners and provide salvation for them by dying on the cross; through faith in him they do not perish but receive forgiveness of sins and eternal life. (Luke 19:10; John 3:16-17)

In addition to saving us, what is God's purpose in calling us to faith in Jesus Christ? God is sending us to testify about Christ to all nations and thus make disciples of them, by using his word and Sacraments. Jesus equips us for this task by giving us the Holy Spirit and encourages us with his promise to be with us always. (Matthew 28:18-20; Luke 24:46-49; John 20:21; Acts 1:8)

How does the Great Commission apply to a Christian congregation? As men, women and children, united in faith and worship by the Word of God, the Christian congregation exists to make disciples throughout the world for time and for eternity, using the gospel to win the lost for Christ and using the gospel to nurture believers for lives of Christian service, all to the glory of God.

Our Lord's one command: "Make disciples..." requires a balance of outreach and nurture. We reach out with the gospel so that people are brought to faith. We also assume responsibility for assisting them with the Word to grow to maturity as disciples of Christ. The intended result is that they, too, will be actively involved in both reaching out to the lost and helping brothers and sisters to keep growing toward maturity. (Matthew 28:18-20; Ephesians 4:1-16; 1 Peter 2:2-12)

Let's Review What Christian Education Is

From the Bible, we learn

1. Christ commissioned all believers to proclaim Christ crucified, that is, the gospel to evangelize lost souls. (Matthew 28:18-20)
2. Christians are to continue in what they have learned and to keep growing spiritually. (2 Timothy 3:14-17)
3. Christians are to learn to set aside regular and proportionate gifts for the Lord's church. (1 Corinthians 16:1-2)

4. Christian parents are to teach God's Word to their children. (Deuteronomy 6:6-7; Ephesians 6:4)
5. Christians are to help each other grow and mature in the faith through public worship and lifelong study of the Word of God. (Colossians 3:12-17; Hebrews 10:23-25)
6. Christians are to encourage and equip each other for the application of their faith in lives of Christian service, for the Lord, his church, and his world. (Ephesians 4:11-13)
7. Christians are to recruit and train candidates for the full-time ministry so that the Word of God is proclaimed faithfully and effectively. (2 Timothy 2:2)
8. Every Christian has authority from Christ to use the Keys and is a minister with a ministry, or service, to perform (Universal Priesthood of Believers). For the sake of order and growth in discipleship (Matthew 28:20x) God also established the public ministry. In our day this consists primarily of two offices: pastor and teacher. These called workers use the Keys publicly and administer the means of grace on behalf of the congregation in keeping with their respective calling. They use the Word to train Christians for works of service. (Ephesians 4:11-12; 2 Timothy 3:17)
9. In the widest sense, the term "Christian Education" refers to outreach and nurture with God's Word. When the Word of God is shared in parent-led home devotions, the pastor's sermon, pastoral counseling, evangelism outreach, youth and adult Bible Classes, Confirmation Class, SS, VBS, LES, LHS, etc., the command to "make disciples" is being carried out. All these contribute to "making disciples" because the Word of God is studied in all of them. Wherever the Word of God is shared, "Christian Education" is being conducted. (Romans 1:16; 2 Timothy 3:14-17)

To Carry Out These Biblical Purposes, We Have Chosen To..

1. Conduct organized study of God's Word beyond the family circle, e.g.. Bible Classes, Adult Instruction Class.
2. Conduct programs to equip God's people for works of service by offering training in evangelism, stewardship growth, leadership, visitation, and various other areas of ministry.
3. Conduct part-time programs of Christian Education to assist parents in teaching God's Word to their children: Sunday School, Saturday School, Pre-School, Confirmation Class, Vacation Bible School, Pioneers, Parenting Classes, etc.
4. Establish and maintain full-time educational agencies (LES/LHS) to assist parents in the Christian training of their children. Although we have no biblical directive to teach the 3R's not even from a Christian perspective, we have found it advantageous to share insights from God's Word along with the secular subject matter. The world in which we live considers mastery of the 3R's, along with trade skills, health programs, participation in extra-curricular activities, etc. to be essential for a wholesome educational experience and for a productive adult life in society.

We have established some full-time educational programs solely to train pastors and teachers to communicate God's Word and to serve as leaders in their congregations and classroom. For this purpose the WELS presently maintains: three Prep Schools, Dr. Martin Luther College, Northwestern College and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. We have also established full-time programs to offer to our people a general education under a Christian influence: pre-school, Lutheran Elementary School, Lutheran High School and Wisconsin Lutheran College.

What Benefits Result From Our Christian Education System?

To a greater or lesser degree the Sunday School, Vacation Bible School, Lutheran Elementary School, Lutheran High School, and other full or part-time educational agencies:

- A. Use God's Word with its message of sin and grace, through which the Holy Spirit works to create and strengthen saving faith.
- B. Use God's Word with its message of sin and grace, which provides opportunity to build Christian character, shape Christian attitudes, and motivate right behavior out of love and reverence for Christ.

- C. Encourage active spiritual life for parents and children.
- D. Make WELS congregations attractive for WELS transfers and may attract prospects.
- E. Provide building space for many church functions.
- F. Offer many opportunities for getting members involved in ministry/church work.
- G. Bring together the families in the congregation/LHS federation, enhancing Christian fellowship among them.
- H. Give children an opportunity to participate in beautifying the worship service with their singing.
- I. Allow teachers in full-time education programs to serve the congregation in additional capacities: organist, choir director, youth leader, evangelism, etc.
- J. Allow teachers/staff to recruit young people for full-time work in the church as pastors and teachers.
- K. Give students information about our Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod and its work (Our Church: Its Life and Mission textbook, formerly You and Your Synod).
- L. Provide opportunity for students to enjoy fellowship with a Christian peer group.
- M. Shield children in formative years from the adverse influences in the world like humanism, the new age movement, etc.
- N. Provide opportunity for the teacher to practice Christian discipline, applying Law and Gospel in given situations.
- O. Equip God's people for works of service. This will result in continuous blessings to His Church.
 1. Strengthening of faith.
 2. Growth in grace and knowledge in the full life Christ promises through question and answer and discussions.
 3. Provides adults with the Holy Spirit's influence.
 4. Trained workers are available for service (ministry) in the congregation.

Troubling Matters About Mission, Ministry, and Education in the WELS

Misconceptions that need to be corrected

The responsibility for sharing the Gospel with the lost in our community, to teach the next generation, and to bring spiritual admonition belongs to the pastor and the called workers of the congregation. Rather, the Lord Jesus instituted ministry as service to him and for the purpose of making disciples in this world. The means of that ministry is the gospel, proclaimed in the Word and administered in the sacraments. This ministry belongs to every Christian as part of the universal priesthood of believers. Every believer is a minister (servant) and is endowed by the Spirit with some spiritual gift to use in the Lord's service and for the can good. This one ministry of the gospel in Word and sacraments is also the charge of the Lord Jesus Christ to his church, the gathering of believers who have this cannon mission. The church exercises this ministry publicly in a variety of offices of ministry (pastor, teacher, minister of education, etc.), all conferred by the call of the church. In all its offices, the public ministry is humble service and also responsible leadership. Christ sends those in the public ministry to his church as "gifts" to build it up and to equip his people for works of service (ministry). (Matthew 28:18-20; 1 Peter 2:9; John 20:21-23; 1 Corinthians 12:4-7; Acts 20:28; Acts 13:1-3; Ephesians 4:11-13)

The stewardship of the gifts that God has given to each believer is to be a personal matter that first takes care of personal needs and wants, then considers the perceived needs of the church. Rather, Scripture teaches us to give first priority to the Kingdom of God in the use of our time, talents and monetary resources. In love for God our Savior we bring regular, firstfruits offerings in proportion to the income with which God has blessed us. Love compels us to give him the first and the best, not the leftovers. (Exodus 23:19; Matthew 6:33; Luke 12:13-21; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2)

The SS/LES/LHS is looked upon by some almost as a means of grace. Example: All that is needed for your child's salvation is that he be baptized, attend SS/LES/LHS, and be confirmed. This viewpoint confuses the "means" (school) with the "end" (children growing toward spiritual maturity). A related misconception is confusing the "means of instruction" (school) with the means of grace (Word and Sacrament). In other words,

looking upon the educational agency itself, rather than the Word of God used in the education process, as the tool through which the Holy Spirit works in the human heart. Rather, the Word of God, not the educational agency, is the effective means through which the Holy Spirit strengthens young people in their Christian faith and equips them for a life of service to God and man. Whether the agency is full-time or part-time is not essential. Use of the Word is essential.

The ministry of a congregation cannot function effectively without a full-time education program (LES/LHS). Rather, the Word of God is effective to create and strengthen faith also in part-time Christian education programs such as: Sunday School, Vacation Bible School, and parent-led home study. (Isaiah 55:11; Rom 1:16)

The responsibility for teaching my children belongs primarily to the church. Rather, God assigned this responsibility primarily to parents; the church in love carries out its solemn obligation to assist them. The degree of assistance is a matter of Christian judgment, not a directive of the Lord. (Deuteronomy 6:6-7; Ephesians 6:4)

“Confirmation” equals “graduation”. Generations ago the Lutheran Church fostered the teaching of the young only and treated Bible study by adults as a matter of personal private choice. The idea that the learning process stops at age eighteen was generally accepted until after World War II. In the minds of many, formal Bible Study ended at confirmation. The rite of confirmation recognizes the youth as spiritually prepared to receive the Lord’s Supper. It marks a new beginning for them in receiving from the Savior his blessed assurance of forgiving grace in his wonderful meal. The current customs surrounding confirmation tend to contribute to the idea that in the Church it is a graduation of sorts. The graduation from the LES/LHS, and then, too, from Wisconsin Lutheran College, all of which provide curricular study of the Scriptures, also may contribute to this misconception. Even graduates from our worker training colleges show adoption of this concept. Many attend no Bible Classes, and some indicate that they will attend if they “haven’t had that before”.

Rather, the biblical encouragements: “Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish each other with all wisdom” (Colossians 3:16) and “Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18) recognize no “graduation” from Bible study until entrance into eternal glory.

The Great Commission requires us to teach children the 3R’s from a Christian perspective in addition to teaching God’s Word. Rather, we have no charge from God to teach the 3R’s, even from a Christian perspective (Matthew 28:18-20; John 21:15).

The term “Christian Education” is a synonym for the Lutheran Elementary School and the Lutheran High School. Strictly speaking, the term “Christian Education” refers just to outreach and nurture with God’s Word. This is done in the LES and LHS. It is also done in parent-led home devotions, the pastor’s sermon, pastoral counseling, evangelism outreach, stewardship program, youth and adult Bible Classes, Confirmation Class, Sunday School, Vacation Bible School, etc. All these contribute to “making disciples” because they use the Word of God.

To treat the term “Christian Education” as synonymous with the LES and LHS implies two things, both of which are untrue: 1) That everything in the LES/LHS is called “Christian Education”. Here is a failure to distinguish between what is primary, instruction in the Word of God, and what is secondary, teaching the 3R’s from a Christian perspective. There is nothing distinctively “Christian” about reading, writing, arithmetic or basketball. 2) That only full-time programs like the LES/LHS are truly “Christian Education”. This ignores the fact that nurture in God’s Word is done in many ways that have no connection with the LES/LHS, such as home devotions, Sunday School, etc. All these are also “Christian Education”. Thus, a parent who chooses to send his child to Sunday School instead of the Lutheran Elementary School is not against “Christian Education”. He has merely chosen a different format. The person who vocally opposes construction of a new gymnasium for the LES, or opposes offering shop and home economics classes at the LHS is not opposed to “Christian Education.” He has merely offered constructive criticism for one part of an education program. A person can be correctly labeled “against Christian Education” only if he proposes that we neglect or cease reaching out to and nurturing souls with God’s Word.

Concerns

1. The materialism which pervades our society affects WELS Christians, too. The norm in the community beckons us to conform. Whether we have recognized it or not, the drives, tugs and pulls for things of life here on earth presents a struggle against idolatry. Jesus said: “You cannot serve God and Money” (Luke 16:13; cf. 1 Timothy 6:6-10).

The Lord Jesus spoke of it in no uncertain terms: “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me...What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his own soul?” (Matthew 16:24,26). He also used clear illustrations and explained them: “Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants...is the man who hears the Word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, snaking it unfruitful” (Matthew 13:7,22). The apostles, faithful in teaching all Christ commanded, directed admonition to this idolatrous love of things material: “Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him” (1 John 2:15).

The doctrines of materialism are presented in flashy print, in eye-catching video and in ear-teasing, humorous audio advertisements, along with mottoes like: “You deserve it” and “You gotta look out for #1.” Has the recurring admonition: “Do your own thing!” instilled in our people a growing thirst for more? These materialistic pronouncements have also instilled an aversion to pulpit instruction and reference to scriptural teachings and principles regarding the management of life and material bounty. The claim of the past decade has been: Preaching on money management is socially unacceptable.

When the new Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary for the 1990’s appears, will its definition of “contentment” be true to our times: “the satisfaction of striving for more and more”? The child of God receives as gratefully and happily the scriptural instruction about our life as Christians (stewardship) as he does the message of forgiving grace in the risen Christ. The living Savior and Redeemer inspires us to arrange our priorities HIS WAY: “Seek first God’s kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things (material needs) will be added to you as well” (Matthew 6:33).

More pointedly, are the messengers of God among us intimidated by the adverse attitudes mentioned earlier that they avoid the subject of idolatrous materialism and its corrosive effects spiritually upon the people of God? The Lord arouses to careful introspection all who walk as his people, especially his messengers when he states: “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God” (Luke 9:62)

2. Over the past five years (1985-1990), congregation offerings for home purposes went up by 33.9 percent. Offerings for benevolent agencies, area Lutheran high schools and other church related agencies went up by 25.1 percent. Synod mission offerings (SMO) increased by a mere 10.6 percent. The average increase over the past five years has been only 2.0 percent. SMO increases have fallen considerably short of inflation. Why did offerings for local purposes increase by over 3 times as much as the offerings for the WELS during that period?

This inability to meet inflationary pressures has forced our synod to make cuts in mission outreach and worker training. Our congregations also wrestle with deficits and promising programs of ministry never get started. In the Appleton area during the past five years, one new congregation was organized, two congregations redecorated their church and one installed a new pipe organ. All these projects are honorable. God’s people may choose to honor Christ by accomplishing them. Let no one among us sit in judgment over God’s people’s choices to honor him.

Perhaps the people of the WELS are more ready at this time to give for projects they can see. It’s obvious that the giving for purposes ‘at home’ received larger increases than the WELS programs. The words of the Lord Christ to the church of Ephesus (Revelation 2:1-7) make us stop and think, especially verse 4: “I hold

this against you, you have forsaken your first love". In genuine repentance may we who treasure the gospel of forgiving peace give first priority to sharing it with those who do not have or know it.

3. Is parochialism our difficulty? Have we concluded, without regard for the Great Commission, that taking care of ourselves is of first importance? Has our emphasis on education led many of God's people to conclude that operating our LES/LHS constitutes the ultimate under the Great Commission? If we hold these misconceptions, then reaching out to the unchurched in our community or through the WELS to points around the USA and the world becomes second in priority to that work which we carry on in our local church and school.

To be sure, the WELS ministry and mission depends upon healthy, vibrant congregations where the Spirit demonstrates his power to honor Christ. The congregations also depend upon the WELS for certain parish services, for worker training and for reaching out to the lost beyond our local outreach. The WELS trains workers for all pulpits and classrooms in the Synod, as well as for the work of reaching the lost in the USA and in our foreign mission fields. Until the heart-attitude and mindset adjust under the Spirit's blessing through the saving truth, the WELS and all our congregations will struggle.

We need to be alert to the fact that, according to the Savior's plan, giving the Gospel away to those who do not know it or have it is the sure way to keep what we treasure. Being content to keep the hone fires burning by retaining and sustaining an imbalance in offering distribution can result in losing the focus of the Great Commission. And the results of that are disastrous. But, then, God doesn't really need the WELS for His saving will to be done!

It's our privilege under grace to be counted worthy to have, hold and share His saving truth. Faithfulness in the trust of God to us, gratitude for a perfectly completed redemption in Christ, unending appreciation for the new life we have in the living Christ by grace, and love for Him who loved us first and most helps us to adjust our heart-attitude, to re-evaluate our mindset and to refocus our view of ministry so that our energies, talents, and resources are applied and expended upon that which is central to the charge of Christ to His Church, not on that which is peripheral.

Just as the talent of playing the piano may be lost except the privilege to use that gift be exercised, so also spiritual apathy results from narrowing the vision of Christ's Great Commission to my home church, her immediate environs and her cherished activities.

4a. We in the WELS hold a concept of education that is so passive and cognitive that our people learn the basic truths of Christianity very well but do not learn how to witness or how to encourage/ admonish each other. We do a good job in teaching the truths of God's Word. Our young people are re-active: they can snake the distinction between truth and error. But does our preaching and teaching fall short in applying biblical truth to life, where the rubber meets the road? Christians living in an unchristian world desperately need this kind of instruction. We must develop pro-active Christian education that prepares children and adults to influence the world around these with love, truth and joy.

b. Can it be said that our concept of Christian Education is academic only—a "religion" class of facts to be memorized and repeated back for a good grade? This can lead to religious boredom. This may explain why so many of our youth announce "I've had enough religion" and show it by their absence from worship, abstinence from the Lord's Supper, insensitivity to loving admonition and correction, and apathy generally regarding matters of the Kingdom.

c. There is a need to train children in evangelism skills and awaken them to opportunities for using those skills, especially when most of their friends are from their own church.

5a. The energies, time and talent applied in the full-time educational agencies (LES/LHS) leave little for the part-time agencies (SS/VBS) and outreach in general. Adults as well as all children, not just those in the full-time educational programs, have need for the influence of the Spirit through the Word and for the compassion of fellow Christians. With such disproportionate distribution of energies to the LES/LHS, the SS/VBS, adult Bible Classes and evangelism outreach seem to be of lesser importance.

b. Our part-time (SS/VBS) educational programs get little attention, especially in congregations with an elementary school. Children attending the SS/VBS ought to be of great concern to us since they are likely to be children from homes on the congregation's prospect list, that is, homes to be reached with the Gospel of Christ. Thus we deal with those whose parents are not committed Christians as an afterthought. With little emphasis upon the part-time agencies, a prime way to open doors to new households of the unchurched operates on the back burner and with consequent effect.

c. The heavy concentration of activity by the full-time education agencies in our congregations often creates a division between parents of students in the full-time programs and parents of students in the part-time programs, and between the students themselves.

d. There is little coordination between the LES, adult Bible Classes and the Sunday School. Such coordination is critically needed. How can we overcome the social breach except the coordination occur? This affects adults as well. The fact that LES children do not attend Sunday School, makes it unlikely that their parents will attend Sunday Bible Classes, etc.

6. Have we considered discipline a matter of importance in the Christian Church, to train all under our care for a productive life as Christians? The church, SS, LES, and family seem content to base discipline upon rules and obedience to rules, rather than teaching the clear biblical principles of discipleship and arousing individuals to responsibly apply these principles to life.

It is most important that we develop a Christian model: applying the Law and Gospel to problems and building mutual love/respect/admonition among fellow Christians, young and old. To say it in other words, our goal is not just to keep order so that learning can occur, but rather that teaching and modeling of Christian discipline—repentance, forgiveness and mutual love—occurs, training each person in Christian discipleship.

7a. Providing excellence in the full-time secular educational experience of our children seems to receive more emphasis than proclaiming the Gospel to the unbeliever in our community or in the domestic and foreign mission fields. There also seems to be more emphasis on excellence in academics than on the art of teaching Christianity or personal ministry to children.

b. We laud excellence in education; so does our country. Encouragements to improve are common. Statistics from across the nation are staggering, with the upper Midwest included with the "best" of the lot. Calls for improvement in the process of education are sure to continue.

It is unwise to allow our educational agencies to compare unfavorably with educational statistics in our country or area. After all, if something is worth doing, it is worth doing well. And so to strive for an excellent education experience for the young in itself is appropriate. Our school buildings are designed with educational excellence in mind. Education in the 3R's extends beyond the classroom: a trip to Mexico City for members of the Spanish Class, summer band trips around the country for the musicians, diversity in physical education courses (bowling, golf, volleyball electives) to prepare our youth for healthy adult activity, and a salary increase is offered to those teachers who acquire advanced degrees. Efforts to provide excellence in education are presented among us as valid because we offer it all in the Christian atmosphere of the LES or LHS. It is

considered appropriate, also, to appeal for greater monetary support to improve the course offerings at our schools.

c. Jesus Christ did not give his Church a charge to teach the 3R's. Teaching then in a Christian setting is a choice we Christians have made. In fact, a stronger case can be made from Scripture for church operated soup kitchens, food pantries, and clothing outlets than for teaching the 3R's.

Our Lutheran schools, elementary, PPM, LHS are blessings to be appreciated. However, excellence in the 3R's is not essential to the purpose and essence of the church and can become a distraction from it. (Matthew 28:19-20; John 4:27-38; 10:16; Acts 1:8)

8a. Instead of assisting parents to give Christian training to their children, we have often been replacing parents, thus encouraging the:, to abdicate their God-given role. The more we try to "make up" for missing or unspiritual parenting, the farther we move from. God's wise plan for teaching children his truths. We need to serve those parents in their spiritual needs (family ministry, cf. Concern #12), enlisting them to grow through the Word so that they measure up to their responsibilities as Christians and as Christian parents.

b. Some parents misuse the blessing of a Christian education system by abdicating their responsibility for the spiritual training of their children, comfortable that the SS/LES/LHS will handle it for them.

That doesn't work. If the Christian faith and way of life taught in school are not reinforced at home, the spiritual benefit will most likely be lost. Under God's plan the role of the parents is the "key" to training the child for faithful adult life as a child of God. Parents need to understand and must be equipped to carry out their God-given responsibility. They cannot be replaced.

9. The end results of our Christian Education programs for the youth are not as good as we had hoped for. The majority do not remain active or faithful to our confession. At Mt. Olive in Appleton, Wisconsin, a study of young people confirmed 1966 - 1985 showed that only 49.70 have remained active members in WELS congregations. St. Matthew's in Appleton did a similar study with similar results.

A study by another WELS congregation indicated that within twenty years 75% of confirmands no longer confessed Christ with the WELS. Negative as this statement is, a positive result of the study was this: the congregation was spurred to look carefully at its ministries and how they were carrying out the work. They concluded that the educational system which worked effectively through time has worked its way out of adjustment. The system needed to be tuned and adapted to the changing circumstances in which it has to function. They resolved to conduct family ministry rather than youth ministry.

10. Attendance of all families, especially adults, at worship and Bible Classes is another concern. In 1990 in the Northern Wisconsin District of the WELS just 43.8% of our members attended worship on a given Sunday and only 8.2% of our confirmed members participated in teen or adult Bible Classes. If the family isn't spiritual, how can the church's mission be carried out?

11. God the Holy Spirit alone is responsible for positive results in our use of God's Word. But we know what God's saving will is; we grasp from the Scriptures that our place is to use what God has entrusted to us—his holy word, both Law and Gospel—to make disciples, that is, learners of Christ, of all people.

We know the Lord's desired outcome. We pray: "Thy kingdom come; thy will be done". However, are the objectives for all our educational efforts and for all of our ministry with the Word really clear?

If our objectives are clear and consistent with Christ's word and will, we will be more than just "re-active" to things of which we do not approve, but we will be pro-active to adjust our attitudes, procedures, policies and traditions to rid our ministry of that which serves as an impediment for achieving the desired objectives. Correspondingly, we will adopt new attitudes, procedures, and policies to enhance the prospect that God will touch the hearts of those we serve with the Word and accomplish his will in them and through them. Let's state our objectives clearly!

12. There is a need for family ministry. The truths of God's Word never change. Praise God that in his grace he has preserved his Word of Truth and even provides it in language which most people understand.

The circumstances to which we must apply God's Word are ever changing, sometimes more and sometimes less dramatically. How true that is over the past half century here in the USA. Instead of serving families of which 95% were the traditional nuclear family (husband, wife and children), we now serve families fractured by divorce, blended families, and single parent families of varying histories.

At one time the thrust of the church's ministry could be summarized by the statement: Instruct the child in God's truth, reach the family and God will bring blessing to all involved. Now the emphasis has shifted: Allow me entrance into the home to reach the parents; then, hopefully, I may have opportunity to instruct the young also.

As a consequence, the thrust of ministry to the family must be primary, with spiritual growth of adults a prime concern. Reaching them with the Word requires feeding them where they are at! Thus the public ministry must include instruction in parenting which takes into account the various family situations (traditional, blended, etc.) and individualized service with the Word requires dividing it to meet the specific need in each case, each tiered by its history.

The in-service training of called workers to grow in their knowledge, understanding and expertise to be more effective agents in relating to family needs must be recognized as necessary, worthy to be encouraged and a valid application of offerings to the Lord. We need to allocate much larger amounts in the budget for continuing education of workers: workshops in-house for the staff, guest lecturers, seminars, courses of study at schools of higher learning, etc. Such further training of called workers will not only improve their personal skills in Family Ministry but will also influence instruction of fellow Christians in pursuit of the charge to "equip God's people for works of service" (Ephesians 4:11-12).

So the need of our time is "Family Ministry"—to strengthen each for his role in life as a disciple of Christ and to reach all in the family with the marvelous, comforting truths so that all may grow in their life in Christ and enjoy "life to the full" (John 10:10) which Christ came into the world to win and which he still gives by the Spirit through the Word.

13. A need for ministry, attending the need for family ministry, is found in benevolent support. The Great Commission does not include benevolent support per se in stating the purpose, prime focus and essence of the Church's work. However, the words: "teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" guide us to those clear directives in the Scriptures to "love your neighbor as yourself": Matthew 19:19; 22:39; Luke 10:27; Romans 13:9,10; Galatians 6:7-10; Mark 9:41; James 1:27; 2:8-9, 14-17. Jesus honors our benevolent kindness to those in need by declaring that we have done it to him and lets us know that the fruits of our faith in Him as our Savior are the proof of our faith on Judgment Day (Matthew 25:31-46). "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after the orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world" (James 1:27). Thus, the Bible is replete with references to charity work, always subordinate to the work of the gospel.

Our government offers programs to help those in need (welfare), but qualifying for these benefits takes time and requires interim assistance of varying types (shelter, monetary, legal, social, etc.). Twenty years ago “Benevolence” was considered an “also-ran” concern of modest import. Now such benevolent support must accompany service to the family. Love calls for us to be “merciful, just as our Father is merciful” (Luke 6:36), and to respond with positive action, going beyond well wishes to address the needs we encounter as we strive to serve our neighbor in his spiritual need. (Matthew 25:34-40; James 1:27) [A sample “Benevolence Manual” for a congregation is available upon request from Mount Olive, Appleton.]

Priorities

In the light of the clear charge of Christ to his Church on earth, are our priorities out of balance as individuals, congregations, federations of congregations, and districts of the WELS?

1. The Word of saving truth (Law/Gospel) must be used among us at all age levels, not just the young and the elderly. Instructions in the Christian life is a never-ending need this side of glory. We sinner-saints can identify our personal need for the Word as we find the “sinner” in us taking exception to the Word faithfully taught or claiming we have no use for it, since we “had that before”.

Our fellow Christian shows to us his need for the Word of Truth (Law/Gospel) when he expresses similar sentiments, shows them by neglecting the Word at the house of worship, infrequently utilizing the Lord’s supper, or finding cause to be absent at organized Bible study, no matter how convenient the time schedule.

Instruction in the Word to train God’s people for works of service will go on when the heart-attitude and mindset of the sinner-saints no longer mix their priorities for their own daily life and give their spiritual needs, the Church’s work and their neighbor’s desperate need for the Word of Saving Truth the top slot. Not only will we find “rest for your soul” (Matthew 11:29), as Jesus promised, but we will search the Word to become equipped to share it with greater facility in our daily contacts and to grow in grace to use our talents and our financial resources responsibly day by day, as those “who no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.” (2 Corinthians 5:15).

2. The vision to see opportunities for ministry to families and individuals becomes blurred when the priorities are mixed. To think that we must continue on the same course of ministry—hatch (baptize), attach (confirm), match (marry) and dispatch (bury) -- to hold that teaching the young and comforting the elderly has been adequate to this point and seems sufficient for the future, betrays mixed priorities in the matter of performing ministry of the Word in Christ’s name.

The Lord Christ presents to each of us the wonderful privilege to continue his ministry to souls. He died for all. That ransom price was sufficient for all. The Gospel he thereby established is efficient to all who believe. When Jesus said: “As the Father has sent me, I am sending you,” he had more in mind than just telling others of the established fact God forgives sins! In his ministry “Jesus went through all the towns, ... preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness.” (Matthew 9:35)

How interesting that these words introduce Jesus’ discourse urging his people to “ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest field” (Matthew 9:38) because there are so few of them. Christ served the people where they were, when they needed it and in the per their circumstances required. In the context of God’s rich forgiving grace Christ established and won for all, he is sending us as the Father sent him.

So we, too, need to serve people where they are, when they need it and in the manner their circumstances require. We need to see the distinct need for the Word of Truth (Law/Gospel) among those who are ill affected by chemical, verbal, sexual or physical abuse. We need to minister aptly to those whose hearts

and lives are troubled as a result of fractured home life, in the throes of adjusting to blended family life, or in wonderment over the inherent lack in a single parent situation. (Family Ministry)

In-service training must be offered all called workers to bring them up to speed. Under God's blessing they will grow in their ability to apply the appropriate Word of God in each opportunity to minister. They in turn will be better able to "equip God's people for works of service" as the congregation continues its ministry to families.

Had the Lord Jesus restricted his great Commission by limiting our concerns to those of our cultural heritage or ethnic background or familial order, we might be content to do things as we have always done there. Staff ministry is receiving serious consideration among us of the WELS. Those with special gifts for service receive special theological training which enables them to use acquired gifts (social worker degree, special education teacher, counseling degrees, etc.) as "staff" of the calling congregation.

"We never did it that way before," dare not be construed as valid reason to exempt ourselves from ministry to people wherever they are at in their life under God, when they need it and in the manner appropriate to their need. As Jesus served, we have the honor, privilege and responsibility under grace to serve.

O Lord, grant us grace to see the need for ministry with the Word and arouse us to perform it for your honor and the spiritual welfare of precious souls redeemed by Christ.

3. The Church of Jesus Christ historically has been a leading influence in the field of education.

When Jesus taught his disciples, he was not unconcerned about their physical needs, but he certainly did not restrict the subject matter taught, nor did he go beyond the sphere of his purpose to show the world what God is like. He called on those who followed him to deny self and forego all things as they walk the way of true discipleship. Having drawn most of them away from their adult employment as professional fishermen, they hung on every syllable he taught. He made sure they knew the criterion for true discipleship. "if you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:31-32).

The child of God through faith in Christ wants to apply God's Word of truth to all the situations life in this world presents. He also wishes to share the appropriate truth with non-believers whom he meets. Hence, the Christian has a built-in yen to learn, not just for the sake of learning, but to be better equipped to serve in Christ's name as one who will "declare the praises of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9).

Christians excelled in art, architecture, music, languages, geography, geology and natural sciences. A Lutheran Christian has been designated as the first modern scientist.. Thomas Kepler's definition of the study of the natural sciences still stands as apt: "Thinking God's thoughts after him!"

In the western hemisphere Christians opened the first schools to teach the Word of God on the elementary level as well as the secondary and collegiate level.

The pioneering days are long since past. What is the church's role in education today? 'this question warrants consideration not only in the light of the great Commission, but also in the light of the impact of it in bringing to fruition the saving will of Jesus Christ.

The question of prioritization becomes very important when the program of general instruction in the 3R's requires such vast expenditures of manpower, energy and financial resources that the group sustaining the schools) find it outside their capability, or desire, to live the role of being sharers of the Truth (Law/Gospel) with those who do not have it or know it. The question of prioritization is worthy of consideration whether that lack of zeal in reaching non-believers is evident in the community surrounding the congregation, or if it is in the lack of support for outreach into the USA and around the world through the WELS.

Christ commissions us to share the Word by which we grow in Christian knowledge most certainly with non-believers, but also with fellow Christians. Efforts among Christians to teach the 3R's (with all that the term implies in our time) on the elementary, secondary or collegiate level along with teaching the Word must recognize that doing so is a matter of their choice. The former is the essence of the Great Commission; the latter

must be recognized as peripheral. Prioritization is necessary for us to remain faithful to the trust Christ gave us when his Spirit brought us under grace.

To educate for full-time service in the church, as WELS does in its six worker-training schools, holds a higher priority than does Wisconsin Lutheran College, for example: Whereas Wisconsin Lutheran College is permissible and its purpose is not to be condemned, the effort to establish and maintain that college is “peripheral” and not central under the Great Commission.

Isn't it wonderful that the Lord allows us the freedom to choose how we put the Word of God to use? He condescends to let us have our way with so many things in the Kingdom. We are permitted to choose our own constitutional order organizationally; to organize our worship sequences in keeping with our preferences; determine what the qualifications are for men to be recognized as having the gifts to serve as pastors of the flock; call administrators in the synodical offices in keeping with the recognized need and the synod's authorization; maintain schools of every level of education conceived by the minds of men, etc.! However, if any, some or all of these interfere with his will that “all men be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4), he expects our will to be conformed to his own. Thus we temper our habits, attitudes, practices and preferences regarding them and ride his wagon, not our own, to accomplish his will, and not our preference.

4. In the light of the Great Commission, are our money management priorities out of balance? With 50% or more of the church budget for elementary and secondary education and 10% for synod mission offering, are we neglecting mission outreach, local ministry, and training of future pastors and teachers?

The following graphs are based on tables of data from the annual WELS Statistical Reports. The tables are shown in Appendix B. Although the dollar amount of Synod Mission Offerings (SMO) has increased, the increase has not been large enough to keep up with inflation. From 1980 to 1989 the SMO increased from \$11,236,844 to \$15,572,362. However, if the change in SMO over that period is shown in constant 1980 dollars (\$11,236,844 ---> \$9,599,345), we see that because of inflation SMO (\$15,572,362) actually accomplished 14.5% less in 1989 than in 1980.

The first graph compares the decline in SMO as a percent of contributions for all purposes to the dollar increase in ECHO over the same period, for the synod at large. The second graph shows the same comparison for the six congregations of the Appleton Circuit: Bethany, Eternal Love, Mt. Olive, Riverview, St. Matthew and St. Paul. (Editor's note: graphs do not appear, as they were blurred in the original copy).

Are priorities out of balance, in the light of the Great Commission, in the Northern Wisconsin District, the Fox River Valley Conference, and the Appleton Circuit? The following graph compares SMO contributions as a percent of giving for all purposes on the synod, district, conference and circuit level. Out of total offerings for all purposes, the percent which goes for 3r10 has declined. Our district, conference and circuit lag behind the synod average in the percent going for 3J10, even though the economy of the Fox River Valley has been one of the bright spots in Wisconsin and the USA.

The percent of total contributions that went for SMO has been declining for the past 20 years. In our Appleton Circuit in 1971, the percent of contributions going for SMO was way below the synod average (WELS average: 17.7% vs. Appleton: 10.8%). Although the WELS average for SMO has declined to 11.2% of total contributions, our Appleton Circuit is still trying to catch up. In 1990 just 9.1% of our offerings went for SMO.

These charts indicate that the Appleton Circuit is now closer to the WELS generally; not because the Appleton Circuit has increased so much, and praise God there is some improvement, but because the WELS generally has reduced so much toward our level of giving. Therefore, the Appleton Circuit and Northern Wisconsin District which were the “worst case” in the Synod in 1971 remain the “worst case” in 1990; but the whole Synod has been moving toward the “worst case”. Lord, help us! Forgive us and inspire us to mend our ways!

6. Are priorities out of balance, in the light of the Great Commission, in our congregations? For example, in 1990 four WELS congregations in Appleton, Wisconsin, (Mt. Olive, St. Matthew, St. Paul and Riverview) used 56% of budget dollars and 77% of called workers to serve primarily the 15% of their members who were students at their LES and Fox Valley Lutheran High School. At the same time 8% of their budgets went for Synod Mission support. Other congregations with an Lutheran Elementary School and holding membership in an Area Lutheran High School Federation would show similar figures. We meet the spiritual needs of these young people very well. Do we serve the other members adequately (training in parenting, family ministry, singles ministry, ministry to the elderly)?

Some Points to Ponder

Traditional practices can be of great blessing to the body of believers on earth. The Savior teaches us that such traditions, wholesome as they may be in themselves, can become something other than a blessing. Cf. Mark 7:511. The wholesome tradition of providing for the elderly through the Temple distributions allowed all the believers to remember the elderly and needy. But over the years, zeal in promoting offerings for the common treasury led people to ignore the clear directives of the Lord under the Fourth Commandment to care for, love and respect their own elderly. So, they nullified “the Word of God by your tradition,” as Jesus said. The practice of our WELS traditions, wholesome as they may be, can also become something other than a blessing if it leads people today to neglect or to ignore the clear directive of the Lord to seek and to save the lost. If so, then we, too, would be nullifying the Word of God by our tradition. Jesus’ warning is for us all: “Be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees” (Matthew 16:6). The condition we inherited has a religion all its own. That sinful nature was not converted when we were “born anew by water and the Spirit” (John 3). At our conversion God gave us new life in Christ, but the old Pharisaic sinful nature, with all of its tugs and pulls, will strive to becloud our minds just as it did those folks in Mark 7.

Many of the members of our churches are second, third, fourth or even fifth generation WELS members. These members have grown up in congregations where the custom for years has been that the pastor is the only one who should do anything that has to do with the Word of God. The pastor should carry out evangelism, be the Bible Class teacher, be the Stewardship Committee, and even make sure that the church buildings are kept clean. The members in the pew have not changed their attitudes about their responsibilities in their church as the demands placed on their called workers have changed. The requirements of internal congregation nurture presently occupy the time of the pastor so that there is little time to spend on outreach.

The average WELS member gives only 2.5 percent of his income to the church for the Lord’s work. In any generation, this statistic is a sad commentary. It does not begin to fund the many opportunities the Lord provides us in mission and ministry. Our members must be educated so that they know their responsibilities as members of the universal priesthood of believers. Christian Education is to be a cradle to grave process. It must not stop at confirmation or after high school. Without continuing education WELS members will retain the attitude that it is up to the pastor or someone else to carry out the church’s work. Some questions are in order, the answers to which need to be brought before the Lord in the search light of His Word and in devout petition.

1. Have we, by the degree of assistance given for the Christian training of children, replaced parents?
2. Have we, by this practice, encouraged parents to abdicate their God-given role in the Christian training of their children?
3. Have we, in this way, led parents and their children to think that this blessing is due them, that the love of Christ makes the church duty bound to provide it to the degree we are now providing it?

Have we been content to assist parents by teaching and training their children but not training the parents? That is, are we merely teaching the children but not instructing adults regarding parenting, meeting the specific needs of fractured, blended, or single parent families? Remember, the more we try to make up for a lack of parenting or unspiritual parenting, the farther we move from God’s wise plan for teaching children his truths.

Has the role of parenting the next generation become so all consuming that parents have lost sight of their role to be participants in sharing the Gospel with non-believers in our community and around the world?

Has the attitude of society and the influence of the confirmation-graduation syndrome led the membership of our congregations to think little of the role of pastors and teachers to serve as overseers, rightly dividing the Word of God to instruct, rebuke, correct and train in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16)?

1. Do the graduates of our education system perceive little need for continuing spiritual service by the pastor and congregation?
2. Has this led to the idea that the recruitment and training of pastors and teachers is of lesser importance and not worthy of generous support?

In our schools, are we consistent with the application of Law and Gospel in our Christian discipline? Or, are we content to inform students of the rules, call attention to their disobedience and insist they obey? What are the clear and distinctively Christian “desired outcomes” or “outcome-based objectives” for our Christian education programs? What do we want God to do in the minds, hearts, and lives of children and adults through our ministry of the Word?

How can we in the WELS develop a proper balance between being “reactive,” that is, discerning error and testifying against it, and being “pro-active”, that is, using the gospel and all our powers to influence the world around us with love, truth and joy?

The economy of our Fox River Valley area is one of the bright spots in Wisconsin and the USA. Do we give more gladly and more generously for visible projects like the purchase of an organ or a building project, than for mission support? Why? Is the problem parochialism?

How can we raise offerings from 2.5 to 5 percent of income, or higher? Our congregations and synod face deficits. Where do we fall short in educating our people about the biblical principles of stewardship?

1. Does my stewardship of time reflect the balance of priorities that Christ would have me follow? If not, what should I change to give priority time for outreach with the gospel?
2. Does my pastor give priority in his management of time to sharing the Word with people one-to-one and in group settings? Why? Why not? How can I use my time and talents to free up my pastor’s time so that he can spend more of his time and energy in sharing the Word with people?

How can our congregations enter fully upon the necessary Family Ministry and continue to provide all the services with the Word which we now enjoy, including the choice of teaching the 3R’s from a Christian perspective? How can a Benevolence Ministry, in keeping with biblical and wholesome guiding principles, be incorporated into the ongoing program of our congregations in their communities as the needs require and still continue to provide all the services with the Word that we now enjoy?

In view of Christ’s instruction about the purpose and essence of the Church’s work—the Great Commission with its specific emphasis on teaching the Word of God—does our drive for excellence in the LES/LHS distract us or detract from the mission Christ assigned to reach the lost and to nurture true discipleship? If so, what should we do about it?

Do we, as a church, understand the spiritual and practical effects, of utilizing the energies and resources of our membership collectively in order to provide excellence in educating the young in the 3R’s? Has the total financial outlay for the LES/LHS become so large that the Christian’s focus has been diverted away from the constant, unending need to train full-time workers and to support them as they go in our name to “proclaim the Gospel to all nations” through the WELS?

Shall the practice of conducting LES/LHS, while at the same time we face diminishing support for outreach and WELS missions continue unadjusted? What steps should we take to correct the situation? Must the pursuit of excellence in teaching the 3R’s and curricula’s continue to be funded out of offerings given for the

Lord's work? What would be the effect upon enrollment and offerings if we were to institute member tuition so that the congregation can expand mission outreach and family ministry, asking parents to pay part of the cost of educating their children in our LES? Will a member who tithes be able to pay tuition and continue to tithe?

1. Are we nullifying among us the Savior's directive that "repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations"? (Luke 24:47)
2. Are we neglecting the primary will of our Savior to reach the lost with the Gospel in order to provide excellence in education?

How Can We, As Christians, Fulfill The Primary Charge of the Savior In His Great Commission And Retain The Blessings Of Our Christian Education System?

Increase mission consciousness so that our fellow Christians become so aware of and committed to worldwide and local outreach with the gospel that offering dollars are happily prioritized for that effort. We can increase mission consciousness by:

1. Including sermon applications to encourage personal evangelism and mission support when the text allows.
2. Offering courses regularly in friendship evangelism and how-to-witness skills, along with opportunities to practice them (e.g. event evangelism).
3. Including lessons or courses on missions, evangelism, etc. in youth and adult Bible Study curriculum.
4. Showing the Commission for Communication and Financial Support (CCFS) videotapes to the entire congregation each month at the close of the worship service.
5. Having missionaries ham on furlough come to preach and tell about their work. (Mission Festivals)

Involve members in ministry. Scripture teaches the universal priesthood of the believer. Every believer is a minister (servant), has authority to use the Keys, is endowed by the Holy Spirit with a spiritual gift (or gifts) which he is to use in the Lord's service and for the common good.

1. We must give emphasis to teaching this biblical truth at all levels of education, from Sunday School class for 3-4 year olds to adult Bible Classes.
2. We must provide opportunities for members of all ages and talents to get involved in ministry.

To achieve kingdom balance, we need to:

1. Adjust ratio of congregation budget categories so that a minimum of 18% (preferably 22%) of a congregation's total offerings goes for the Synod Mission Offering (SMO). The WELS General Board for Home Missions (GBHM) urges new mission congregations to set their SMO at 20-25% of their total budget. Or, adjust the division of offerings so that the following ratio is achieved (Cf. Appendix C): 20% for Synod Mission Offering (25%?); 5% for Benevolences (WLCFS, Institutional Ministries, WELS Benevolence Fund, LES Tuition Assistance Fund, etc.); 25% for Pastoral & Family Ministry, Administration and Adult education; 35% for Youth Education (25% for SS and LES; balance of LES funding would come from member tuition; includes 10% for LHS); 15% for Operations/Property/Maintenance/Repair/Debt Service.
2. Add staff (a) to adequately meet the spiritual needs of those not already in LES/LHS, (b) to expand our family ministry in order to equip parents for their role and raise spiritual levels among adults, and (c) to practice our prime purpose as Christians, to reach the unchurched in our community with the gospel.
3. Address the question of member tuition for the Lutheran Elementary School to aid in achieving the objectives listed above in #1 and #2.

We already have member tuition at every other level (pre-school, high school, prep school, college and seminary). We already ask members to pay the cost of books and supplies. When member tuition is instituted, it need not cover 100% of the cost for teacher salaries, supplies, utilities and buildings, since nurturing children with the Word is an integral part of our Christian educational programs.

If we charge tuition to members, it is vital that offerings not simply decrease to continue the equilibrium of bills and revenue. Member tuition for the LES must be linked to mission outreach and expansion into family ministry if our people are to support it. Total receipts (offerings + tuition) must increase to meet the objectives listed above in #1 and #2. We also need a strategy to get to homes inclined to ignore spiritual training of children (especially if tuition is used as an excuse for indifference).

A responsible tuition assistance program must also be established and sustained to provide a recourse for cases of genuine need. Assisting parents does not mean the church has to do it all. Put the responsibility for Christian education back where God puts it, on the shoulders of parents (Deuteronomy 6:6-7; Ephesians 6:4), with the church assisting the parents to fulfill their God-given role. There is a need to fine tune our ministries to include training in Christian parenting.

Develop a comprehensive program for adult spiritual growth that involves all confirmed members in a continuing study of God's Word. This is essential because there is an interrelationship between spiritual growth and everything else in the church: fruits of faith, children's Christian education, evangelism and witnessing, stewardship, congregational mood and mindset, and personal and congregational priorities.

Biblical truth and Lutheran theology help us understand that the "fruits of faith" are just that—the result of faith. The only way to address concerns in these areas of sanctification is with the means God has given us to build faith and grow toward maturity as Christians. God's Word, law and gospel, are the tools of Christian ministry. The law must expose sin. The gospel will not only assure the sinner that Jesus paid the price of those sins but will renew strength, restore joy and confirm the commitment of the Christian. God's will for the Christian's life will be a guide followed out of love and reverence for Christ by disciples who want to grow more and more like their Savior-Lord.

To achieve this goal we need to develop and implement a long-range strategy and program of adult spiritual growth. Commitment to such a priority implies that pastors, teachers, and lay leaders see this as the cornerstone of stewardship, evangelism, assimilation of new members, family life, and that time, effort, dollars and staffing are committed to this.

Jesus played with children and taught adults. We need to give a much higher priority to teaching adults than we have been to this point. [For a more thorough treatment of adult spiritual growth, read the section on Adult Christian Education from the Revitalizing Parish Ministry Seminars presented to the 12 Districts of the WELS in 1991.]

Conclusion

Our opinions and traditions in ministry must be re-examined, our priorities must be re-arranged, and our spiritual apathy must be replaced by that which the Spirit of God alone can deliver through the Word, if our Appleton churches and our beloved Synod are to become the viable instrument through which God continues to work. Only then can we become the Church Christ wants us to be in the 21st century.

God bless your continued study of the Word, lead you to growth in grace and knowledge in Christ Jesus, and make you a blessing to many by your service with the Word of saving truth.
To God alone be the glory!

SIGNED: Mount Olive St. Matthew St. Paul Riverview

Pastor T. Kant

Pastor D. Pagel

Pastor R. Waack

Pastor D. Belter

Pastor D. Schwartz

Pastor R. Heir.

Pastor M. Spaude

Principal J. Winkel

Pastor R. Pankow

Principal R. Fischer

Principal K. Petermann

Principal D. Needham

Appleton, Wisconsin - August 5, 1991