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Wayne Wentzel

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, whwentz@aol.com

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USING PARENTS IN PREPARING THEIR CHILDREN
FOR CONFIRMATION AND FIRST COMMUNION

Wayne H. Wentzel

April 5, 1995

Concordia Seminary
St. Louis, Missouri

Advisor Arthur Bacon

18 May 1995
Date

Reader George Robbert

May 1, 1995
Date

Director, Doctor of Ministry
Program Arthur Bacon

18 May 1995
Date

USING PARENTS IN PREPARING THEIR CHILDREN
FOR CONFIRMATION AND FIRST COMMUNION

by

Wayne H. Wentzel

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ABSTRACT

The theme of this paper is the involvement of parents in the spiritual life of their children as they prepare for confirmation and first Communion. A problem exists in most churches where these very vital steps are left to the pastor and the church. Through a study of the Scriptures, the writings of Dr. Martin Luther, and the history of the Christian Church, the extent to which parents are to be involved in this process is determined, as well as the age at which the child is ready to begin. Several surveys were conducted at Faith Lutheran Church to determine attitudes regarding confirmation and first Communion. A program was developed to involve parents in both the pre-Communion and pre-confirmation readiness of their children. A series of lessons using Bernice McCarthy's 4MAT System was written and applied to the program. Involving parents in an individualized program for determining the readiness of their children for both first Communion and confirmation is found to be in accordance with Scriptures, the writings of Luther, the history of the church, and childhood learning theories. Such a program is outlined and recommended.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT iii

INTRODUCTION 1

Chapter

1. PARENTS, CONFIRMATION, AND FIRST COMMUNION 4

 The Role of Parents in the Religious
 Instruction of Their Children

 The Relationship of Confirmation to First
 Communion in the History of the Church

 Martin Luther's Definition of Faith

 Faith and the Reception of the Lord's Supper

 Luther and the Faith of Children

 The Age at Which a Child May Commune

2. THE BASIS FOR CONFIRMATION IN THE LUTHERAN CHURCH 46

 A Biblical Perspective

 An Historical Perspective

 A Rationale for Change

3. HELPING PARENTS READY THEIR CHILDREN FOR FIRST
 COMMUNION 59

 Goals and Objectives of the Study Guide

 A Study Guide for Parents in Teaching Holy
 Communion to Their Children

 Steps for Implementation of the Study Guide

4. A MODEL FOR CONFIRMATION INSTRUCTION 74

 A Survey of the Confirmation Attitudes of
 Faith Lutheran Church

 The Use of Parents and Pastor in the
 Confirmation Program at Faith
 Lutheran Church

A Description of the Confirmation Model
Used at Faith Lutheran Church

An Evaluation of the Program Used at
Faith Lutheran Church

5. A CURRICULUM MODEL FOR PARENT-BASED INSTRUCTION 103

The Aim of the Lesson Model

Individual Differences and the 4MAT System
of Instruction

6. CONCLUSION 116

Appendix

A. CONGREGATIONAL SURVEY 119

B. PARENTAL QUESTIONNAIRE 121

C. LESSONS FOR CONFIRMATION USING THE
4MAT SYSTEM 124

REFERENCE LIST 147

INTRODUCTION

Junior confirmation is one of the most significant events in the lives of the children of our church. It is a time of excitement and celebration for many of them. Most Lutherans have gone through the confirmation process and can remember at least part of the event. Unfortunately, it has lost much of what its original purpose was.

Confirmation is intended to be a time in a child's Christian life where he publicly confesses or "confirms" the faith which has been taught to him by parents, pastors and teachers. Part of that process is a statement vowing to remain faithful to Jesus Christ and His church until death. The child is deemed ready to follow Christ by his own will and choice, supposedly with less support needed from parents and sponsors.

Sadly, something else has happened. Confirmation for many has become a ritual that children go through because they have reached the right age for it. It does not always signify a turning point in their spiritual lives, nor a readiness to take steps toward spiritual growth and responsibility. Arthur Repp points out some of the dangers that are potential through the rite of confirmation as currently practiced in most Lutheran churches. Repp writes:

At the same time confirmation is most seriously burdened

by the danger and the reality of being untruthful. What is "untruthful" in our practice? Is the church untruthful when it requires a vow? Is it untruthful when it speaks of a renewal of the baptismal covenant? an acceptance into membership in the Lutheran Church or in a congregation? or when it practices the laying on of hands? (Repp 1964, 10)

Repp is reminding us of the fact that confirmation often does not do in fact what it promises to do in theory: to confirm the intent of the confirmand to conform his life to that of Jesus Christ and to practice in word and deed the faith he has been taught.

There are other serious concerns. Confirmation has been erroneously tied to the reception of Holy Communion in such a way that the child somehow becomes eligible to be called "communicant" rather than "baptized" member. It has been viewed by many as a graduation, the end of formal religious education, for now the child has all he needs to know for the reception of Holy Communion. It has become a vow often made at the insistence of parents rather than springing from the developing faith of the child. The current pattern of instruction has become remote to most of the children and they study catechetical materials that often do not relate to their lives. Parents have backed out of the program and have let the pastor or church staff handle the religious instruction of their children.

It is no small wonder that often we do not see the children in church once they have been confirmed. Some drop out of participation as soon as the first Sunday after confirmation. This behavior is disheartening and discouraging to parents,

elders and pastors alike.

It is the purpose of this project to address these and other issues of concern. The format of the paper is:

1. A presentation of a rationale for the separation of confirmation and first Communion through studying the history and biblical basis of both as they pertain to children.

2. A study of the writings of Martin Luther as they relate to the faith required for the worthy reception of Holy Communion and the age at which this might occur.

3. A sample instrument for parents to use to share the meaning of Holy Communion with their children and with the pastor's help to ascertain their child's readiness to receive the sacrament.

4. An outline of a program of instruction that involves parents directly in the teaching process so they can know and experience first-hand what their children are learning.

5. A formulation of a curriculum which takes the issues the children face in their every day lives and brings the Bible and catechism to the issue rather than forcing the issue into a traditional framework which often becomes tedious for child and teacher alike. This curriculum is designed to provide for individual differences of the children as well.

CHAPTER ONE
PARENTS, CONFIRMATION, AND FIRST COMMUNION

The Role of Parents in the Religious
Instruction of Their Children

Throughout my experience as a pastor in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, parents have played a limited role in the Christian education of their children. Whether through the Christian Day School or a program of weekday confirmation instruction, primary responsibility has been given to the pastor or other trained workers. The church has determined the curricula, the time of confirmation and the readiness for first reception of Holy Communion, without a significant degree of participation from the parents.

In this chapter we will explore the historical development of parental involvement in the instruction, confirmation and first Communion of their children. We will also examine the writings of Dr. Martin Luther regarding the relationship of faith to the taking of Holy Communion and his thoughts on the age at which a child might first commune. This examination is to help us determine when and how parents can be involved in the process.

Martin Luther certainly had a biblical base of support when at the heading of five of the six sections of the Six Chief Parts he wrote, "As the head of the family should teach them (it) in a simple way to his household" (Luther's Small Catechism [1986],

9, 13, 16, 21, 28).

As Luther read the scriptures, he saw the many instances of how instruction in the faith was conducted.

The Bible is clear that instruction in the faith is the responsibility of the parents. This responsibility goes all the way back to Adam, whom Paul Kretzmann calls "the priest in his own house" (Kretzmann 1934, 1). The book of Genesis implies that Adam was trying to teach his sons, Cain and Abel, the meaning of a sacrifice that would be acceptable to the Lord. From the time of Noah through Abraham there were inferences to religion being taught and practiced in the household. Noah, for example, would have been the only one available after the flood to transmit the blessing of God to his sons. Thus it was written, "Then God blessed Noah and his sons" (Genesis 9:1, New International Version [NIV] 1987, 10). Abraham, too, would have been the only one available to instruct Isaac in the ways of the covenant. The account of his willingness to sacrifice Isaac to the Lord is a poignant illustration of the closeness they shared as father and son (Genesis 22:1-18, NIV 1987, 25).

Having alerted Israel to the fact that he was about to teach them the laws and decrees of the God of their fathers, Moses commanded Israel to "teach them to your children and to their children after them" (Deuteronomy 4:9, NIV 1987, 230). In the sixth chapter of Deuteronomy, Moses added, "These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children" (Deuteronomy 6:7, 8, NIV 1987, 234). He made

it even more explicit in Deuteronomy 11:18,19, where he said, "Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up." Following the Exodus, each head of a household was considered responsible for the instruction of his children.

During the reigns of David and Solomon there arose what Kretzmann calls "a new appreciation of the duties of parents to their children and of the obligations of children with respect to their parents" (Kretzmann 1934, 4). This relationship is evident in the Psalms of David and the Proverbs of Solomon.

In Psalm 78:5,6, David wrote, "He decreed statutes for Jacob and established the law in Israel, which he commanded our forefathers to teach their children, so the next generation would know them, even the children yet to be born, and they in turn would tell their children." And we can assume Solomon was addressing parents when he said, "Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it" (Proverbs 22:6, NIV 1987, 812).

Such a command to teach children prescribed a duty incumbent upon parents. Isaiah spoke of fathers telling their children "about your [God's] faithfulness" (Isaiah 38:19, NIV 1987, 893). St. Paul wrote in Ephesians, "Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4, NIV 1987, 1456). Such training was

evident with Timothy, for Paul commended him for his "sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice" (II Timothy 1:5, NIV 1987, 1479). When Paul later reminded Timothy that "from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures" (II Timothy 3:15, NIV 1987, 1481), it appears likely that this childhood knowledge was imparted by Lois and Eunice. There is no evidence that Timothy received his childhood instruction anywhere else.

Solomon, too, suggested that teaching was done by the mother, even for one no less than the king. He recorded the sayings of King Lemuel by prefacing them with the words, "an oracle his mother taught him" (Proverbs 31:1, NIV 1987, 823). Arthur W. Klinck writes of biblical Christian mothers that "they brought their little children to the Lord by teaching them His Word" (Klink 1947, 132).

Klinck goes on to say, "Pious fathers, like Abraham, taught their whole households, including the small children, to 'keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment'" (Genesis 18:19, NIV 1987, 19). Klinck adds,

While in later times, and especially under influence of Hellenic customs, the boys of wealthy families were turned over to special teachers, among the earlier Israelites and perhaps among the poorer classes at all times the father took care of this duty himself. He taught his sons to read and write well enough to read the Law of God and to take their rightful place in the community. He carefully continued the religious instruction which he and his wife had begun in the boy's infancy. (Klink 1947, 133)

D. Edmond Hiebert writes of Bible times, "Hebrew education was mainly domestic The home was the first and most

effective agency for religious training" (Hiebert 1976, 759). Hiebert describes this instruction as "imparted primarily through conversation, example, and imitation; it utilized effectively the interest aroused by actual life-situations, such as the Passover, the redemption of the first-born, family rites, etc" (Hiebert 1976, 760).

Gradually, however, during the period of the later kings, tutors were employed. Some of these tutors were not of the Jewish culture or tradition. Religious education began to disintegrate during this period and an increase in idolatry was directly related to that disintegration as well as to the neglect of the training of children in home and school (Kretzmann 1934, 4).

During the century before Christ, Simon ben Shetah inaugurated what became known as synagogue schools. Paul Kretzmann describes their purpose as helping children "keep the commandments and the ordinances of Jehovah perfectly." Kretzmann goes on to say, "This religious training . . . began at home, the parents being responsible for the elementary instruction, and then continued through the infant school" (Kretzman 1934, 5).

This proved to be a period of brief revival of parental involvement, especially during the post-Exile leadership of Ezra. While synagogues became the formal assembly for the instruction of children, especially boys, "the home continued to be the basic seat of Jewish education" (Heim 1965, 437). Teaching was shared

by rabbis, priests, scribes and parents alike.

Looking more closely at the New Testament age, no incidence in the New Testament of Jesus or the disciples engaged in teaching children is found. As Harry Wendt noted several years ago during a Michigan District North and West Pastoral Conference presentation, "Jesus taught the adults and played with the children; today we have a tendency to teach the children and play with the adults" (Wendt [1978]). Even in our Lord's most well known encounter with children where He admonished His disciples to "let the little children come to me" (Mark 10:14-16, NIV 1987, 1258), the reference is to a blessing or placing of His hands on the children and not to instructing them in any way. Jesus no doubt grew up with the pattern established in the post-Exile period, sharing in the ritual and discussions of His family through its life and worship. Thus He would have seen the instruction by parents being given routinely among the children of His day and would not have interfered with what was the common practice of that day.

It is difficult to argue from silence. The fact that the New Testament does not explicitly address the issue of parents teaching children weakens the argument for this happening during the New Testament period. However, the post-Exile pattern, coupled with Old Testament tradition, was so firmly set that it is likely that this pattern was continued right on through the time of Christ. The biblical emphasis on parental involvement speaks clearly to us of the intent that God has for teaching

His Word to children. While we can certainly make use of religious schools for teaching the faith to our children today, the primary mandate and responsibility for such instruction is given to the parents.

The Old Testament and post-Exile pattern of teaching children continued into the early stages of the apostolic Christian Church. Some of the training was done in the family, others in what was becoming increasingly well-structured schools. In the early church, "fathers were to rear their children 'in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.' This teaching was to be accompanied by love, kindness, mutual respect, and disciplined moral conduct. Most instruction was informal" (Sanner 1978, 56). Children grew in the faith through informal tutelage in the home. This was done during the time immediately following dinner, when the children would gather around the father. He would read a portion of Scripture to them and then explain its meaning and practical application to them. He would share with them insights he had learned from his contact with an apostle or other Christians. Initially, the church was more interested in "transmission of life than with the transmission of facts" (Heim 1965, 438). The church leaders presented the broad brush strokes of the Christian faith, and the families filled in the details with in home teaching.

As more and more Jewish and Gentile converts responded to the message of Christianity, the necessity for training both children and adults in a more formal way became apparent. There

needed to be a progression from "kneebender" to "listener" to "the elect" (Sanner 1978, 56). Teaching responsibilities began to shift from those charismatically anointed for teaching to elected officers with specific training. Initially these officers consisted primarily of the bishops, however, it gradually was passed from presbyter, to deacon, and finally to minor cleric (Sanner 1978, 57).

Throughout this period and during this process, the responsibility for the training of children moved further and further from home and parental instruction. Doctrines of the church were becoming more rigid and complicated. False teachings were creeping everywhere into the church, and potential heresies needed to be combatted. Teachers had to be well trained in the faith. New Jewish and Gentile converts knew little about Christianity because it had not been passed on to them from their fathers. These new Christians required instruction beyond the supposed skill and knowledge of the average parent or lay person. The church "began to emphasize the importance of teaching children and youth the doctrines of the faith" (Dendy 1964, 12). The development of creeds demanded firm teaching. Long periods of instruction emerged, ranging from three months to three years. There was a need for highly educated apologists to interpret the Hellenistic way of thinking. It was necessary to help "safeguard the community of faith" (Taylor 1966, 22). What came to be as a result of this need for more doctrinally sound teaching was a term unique to Christian education: the catechumenate. This

term no doubt originated from the usage in Luke 1:4, ". . . the things you have been taught" (katachathas). St. Paul used this word when he admonished the one receiving instruction (katachoumenos) to share with the one giving instruction (katachounti) (Galatians 6:6, NIV 1987, 1448).

This catechumenate, made up of those receiving instruction in the faith, began with Baptism. It originated with adults desiring Baptism and was concerned with preparation for active church involvement. For an uncertain reason, this instruction was not carried out in the home. Paul Kretzmann writes, "The instruction of catechumens was ordinarily carried on in some part of the church-building, the usual place being the atrium, or forecourt Here the catechumens met regularly for the space of several years" (Kretzmann 1934, 9). While the instruction in the faith was limited primarily to adults, "what integrated the young Christians, who had been baptized as infants, into the life of the church, was the worship life of the congregation" (Hauschildt 1965, 410). As infant baptism became more prevalent, and in fact overtook adult conversions as the leading means of adding members to the church, the catechumenate collapsed. It was replaced by a more formal and systematized method of teaching, which proved to separate Christian education and training from the home even further.

By the Middle Ages, religious education had developed into a formal educational structure. What began as simple instruction became more authoritative. Visuals such as drama, sacraments,

architecture and mosaics were used to teach. Boys at the age of seven or eight began ministerial training under the direct supervision of the bishop. Mendicant teachers specialized in certain areas of study, and gradually came the development of vocational schools and eventually universities. The study of the faith became almost exclusively the role of the Church. The priest became "a channel through whom the supernatural could impinge upon the natural order" (Sanner 1978, p. 67). By the time of the pre-Reformation period, children were attending monastery, conventual, bishop's cathedral, and parish chantry schools. Virtually all of the teaching was done by professional workers such as nuns, monks and priests (Heim 1965, 438).

This pattern changed briefly during the early years of the Reformation. Martin Luther recognized clearly the place of the home in a complete program of religious education. He promoted simplicity of instruction when he translated the Bible into German and developed an elementary catechism of the Christian faith for use by parents. His Small Catechism, in fact, opened the door to parental involvement once more. In addition to the catechism, Luther supplied family devotional materials, hymns for home study, and celebrations of faith to enhance family learning (Sanner 1978, 72). He modified the style of instruction to include pictures, story-telling, dramatization, discussion and play. Luther, however, did not turn the religious instruction entirely over to the parents. His "Sermon on Keeping Children in School" in July, 1530, focused on the importance of schools

basing their training on the Word of God (Luther, Vol. 46 1967, 219). Luther incorporated religious instruction into the life of the congregation, emphasizing the knowledge of what he called the Six Chief Parts. "Luther's idea was that home, church and school should cooperate in the work of the catechumenate" (Hauschildt 1965, 411).

Heim adds a sad footnote to the educational pattern of the Reformation period. By the end of that century, formalism, memory and logical study was carried on almost exclusively by the church (Heim 1965, 438). The subject matter as well was more and more determined by the schools of the church. Unfortunately, the entire religious education of the child had become the church's responsibility. Parents were fading from the picture altogether.

In more recent times, including the 20th century, the pattern of religious education for children has remained school/church oriented. The complexity of educational philosophies which have affected religious instruction has kept the catechumen under a type of scholasticism because of the so-called "greater skill and learning" required of the teacher (Sanner 1978, 72). Only in most recent decades does there appear to be some movement back to the biblical model of parental involvement in the child's religious education. Karl Hauschildt summarizes what seems to be the rule rather than the exception: "A congregation carries out its responsibility to the children and young people who have been baptized . . . when it provides a

graded and adequate system of Christian education and enrolls -- if possible -- all of them in appropriate classes of instruction and training" (Hauschildt 1965, 411). The "Supplement to the Diploma of Vocation" which generally accompanies the call document a pastor receives contains the following as an obligation of the pastor:

To guard and promote faithfully the spiritual welfare of the members of this congregation, in particular to instruct the catechumens, both children and adults, in the Word of God and thus prepare them for communicant membership in the church.

There is no mention of the parents' role in this process either in Hauschildt's summary or in the call supplement. Today, as in most of the church's history, the responsibility for educating the children in preparation for "communicant membership" rests squarely on the shoulders of the pastor.

The Relationship of Confirmation to First Communion in the History of the Church

The catechumenate, the ancient forerunner of modern day confirmation instruction, was originally a technical expression for the training of candidates for the rite of Baptism. It was similar to the training Apollos had received as recorded in the Book of Acts. Included in Apollos' instruction was the proper teaching regarding Baptism. St. Luke writes:

He [Apollos] had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervor and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John. He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately. (Acts 18:25,26, NIV 1987, 1388)

There are several other references in the New Testament to the instruction of the catechumenate. They mention moral precepts and duties toward the church. St. Paul characterizes them when he states, "Finally, brothers, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living" (I Thessalonians 4:1, NIV 1987, 1470). No mention is made of instruction in relation to the reception of Holy Communion. Instruction was given for the sake of knowledge of the Christian faith, not as a precondition to taking the Lord's Supper.

This changed very quickly in the early church. Instruction and a subsequent rite of confirmation became a prerequisite to the rite of Baptism. Converts were instructed in the Christian faith to coincide with the celebration of Easter. On Easter Eve these catechecumens were baptized, and then "confirmed" with chrism, prayers, sign of the cross, and the laying on of hands (Repp 1964, 13). On Easter morning they were then permitted to participate in the celebration of Holy Communion for the first time. Instruction became a precondition to both Baptism and Holy Communion.

By the period of Irenaeus, "the preparation of the catechumen at that time consisted of instruction pertaining to the threefold baptismal confession," and also stressed "the incarnation and the redemptive work of Christ" (Kretzmann 1934, 8). According to Kretzmann, in the fully developed form of the catechumenate, three steps were distinguished -- to "grant the status of a Christian, to advance to the status of a catechumen,

to perform the rite of exorcism" (Kretzmann 1934, 8).

There is more evidence that during the Patristic Period of the Church this instruction was a prerequisite to the reception of Holy Communion. Kretzmann states, "For Baptism and the Lord's Supper, with the baptismal formula and the Lord's Prayer, belonged to the mysteries of the Church, and they were not revealed until the candidate for membership was sufficiently established in the truth" (Kretzmann 1934, 9). William Kennedy reiterates this point, saying, "Only those who were trained could share the church's mysteries (its sacraments)" (Kennedy 1966, 22).

The evolution of the rite of confirmation becomes apparent. What began as instruction for Baptism and the leading of a moral life gradually resulted in preparation for reception of both sacraments. Then followed a formal ritual called confirmation which became separate and distinct from Baptism. During the medieval times, confirmation emerged as "a complement to Baptism" (Repp 1964, 14). Through it the Holy Spirit was said to be bestowed and it became a necessary step to salvation. By the 12th century it was referred to as a sacrament in its own right, bestowing grace through the laying on of hands, conferred only by the bishop. It had become not only preparation for the sacraments, but their very equal. Such a "sacrament" Luther referred to as "monkey business" and "mumbo-jumbo" (Repp 1964, 15).

Since confirmation was said to complete Baptism, Luther

would have no part of it. He would later allow it only when assured it did not infringe on Baptism or was not regarded as a sacrament. He was primarily concerned with instruction, not confirmation. This instruction he regarded as a necessary preparation for receiving the Lord's Supper. Because of the church's history of connecting instruction with confirmation, the reception of the Lord's Supper also became tied to confirmation. Luther could be regarded as the father of instruction for confirmation, not of confirmation for the reception of Holy Communion. However, Luther's emphasis on instruction prior to Holy Communion became coupled with his emphasis on instruction prior to confirmation, and the two became merged into one event.

There was an interesting break in the pattern as Melancthon assumed leadership of the Lutheran movement following Luther's death. In October of 1548, Melancthon had recommended that "mature young people who wish to partake of the Lord's Supper be examined of their faith by the bishop or their pastor, . . . and be confirmed with the laying on of hands and Christian prayer" (Repp 1964, 48). However, in November of that same year, Melancthon was ready to have first Communion precede confirmation as a concession to the Romanists, and perhaps for the sake of those in the Reformed churches who did not practice confirmation as a rite. This "Romanizing" move was severely criticized by others in the Lutheran Church.

The formal connection of confirmation with reception of Holy Communion in the early Lutheran Church was primarily the

product of Martin Bucer. Influenced by Erasmus as well as Luther, Bucer associated the rite of confirmation with first Communion. "He wrote into his rite of confirmation a formal admission to the Lord's Supper" (Klos 1968, 60). Bucer's order for confirmation contained the following:

1. Renewal of the baptismal vow (Erasmus), following instruction and examination (both Luther and Erasmus).
2. Intercessory prayers and blessings of the congregation calling attention to the mighty acts of God (Luther).
3. Laying on of hands as an act of the church's blessing (a traditional practice but not to be understood sacramentally).
4. Admission to Holy Communion (Bucer).
5. Acceptance of the discipline of the congregation (Erasmus). (Klos 1968, 60)

A review of these five points shows why Klos calls Bucer "The Father of Lutheran Confirmation." The reader will see very little difference between Bucer's rite and that commonly used in churches today.

Included in Bucer's rite was the association between confirmation and first Communion. This association was a well accepted practice by 1545, overruling Melancthon's brief attempt to change it. The general synod at Stettin in 1545 resolved: "Those who are shown to know the catechism are to be confirmed before the altar with the laying on of hands and thereafter (postea) admitted to the Sacrament, which custom was begun among the apostles in Acts" (Repp 1964, 51). In the statutes of the Greiffenhagen synod of 1574 the association of confirmation with first Communion was reiterated. "They are to

examine the children in the catechism four times a year and prepare for the rite of confirmation. Nor shall they admit children to the Lord's Supper unless they are confirmed" (Repp 1964, 53).

Following the declaration of Greiffenhagen, confirmation and the reception of first Communion were separated for a brief time. Communion was not allowed prior to confirmation, but neither did it automatically follow. After confirmation, determination of readiness for Holy Communion was made by the parents and the local pastor. The Greifswalder Ministerium set the age of confirmation at fourteen for boys and twelve for girls but placed first Communion between the ages of fifteen and sixteen after prior instruction (Repp 1964, 54). This policy eliminated, for a time, the practice that Holy Communion followed confirmation as a direct result of instruction rather than personal readiness on the part of the believer. By contrast, Bucer's main focus in his confirmation rite was instruction and subsequent knowledge leading directly to taking Holy Communion.

Shortly after Luther's death, Martin Chemnitz emerged as another significant theologian in the Reformation church. He established a new rite which did not include reception of the Lord's Supper. Chemnitz stressed a personal confession of faith, which "would within a short period of time be picked up and exploited by the Pietists" (Klos 1968, 65). The Pietists viewed confirmation as a personal renewal and taught that Baptism was made full and complete when the young confirmand acknowledged his

personal faith. Unfortunately, their view contributed to confirmation being understood as a graduation from Christian education and Holy Communion became an end product of it. Because of the Pietists' focus on personal renewal, reception of the Lord's Supper became less the concern of the congregation and more a matter of feeling personally worthy to receive it. The worthiness became a matter to be declared publicly at confirmation, where the confirmand would declare his intent to participate in the sacrament faithfully.

Admission to Holy Communion as part of the rite of confirmation continued to be the predominant practice in the Lutheran Church through the Eighteenth Century period of Rationalism in Germany. Since this was the time that many Lutherans came to the United States, it became the norm for American Lutherans as well. This pattern has been changing in recent years. In a survey of 653 churches conducted by Frank Klos in 1960 it was found that confirmation was coupled with the authorization to participate in the Lord's Supper in approximately 75% of the cases (Klos 1968, 74). This means that about 25% of the churches were separating the two. This study included all Lutheran bodies. In Confirmation - First Communion Survey, done by the Board for Parish Services of the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod in 1987, it was revealed that out of 463 churches which responded to the survey 337 or 88 percent had children participating in their first Communion on Confirmation Day or during the first week following. This indicates that the

Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod today significantly trails the number among all Lutherans who were already separating confirmation from first communion in 1968 (The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod 1987, 7).

Some observations regarding the relationship between confirmation and first Communion can be made. One is that there is a clear lack of uniformity in the history of the Lutheran Church on this matter. While confirmation was rejected as a sacrament by the Lutherans, many Roman characteristics were retained, such as the laying on of hands. Some regarded confirmation as representing the right of admission to the Lord's Supper, others saw confirmation as a preliminary step requiring further instruction. One common thread was held throughout: instruction was vital, whether for confirmation, the reception of Holy Communion, or the combination of the two. This instruction was to be begun in the home and supplemented by the schools. Preconfirmation instruction was a matter of review or preparation for examination rather than a teaching of the basics. The pastor's responsibility was to assure the church that the parents had carried out their role in preparing the children for both confirmation and the sacrament. This model has been sadly lost in much of the Lutheran Church today, and the pastor is both the teacher and examiner.

Martin Luther's Definition of Faith

If we are going to consider separating the reception of Holy Communion from confirmation and if we are going to involve

parents in the decision to allow preconfirmation children to commune, it is necessary to examine whether that practice is in conformity with Lutheran teaching. Critical to that examination is a study of the definition of faith, especially as it relates to Lutheran theology and the understanding of the Lord's Supper. Martin Luther wrote extensively of faith and its meaning regarding Holy Communion. From his writings it is possible to glean a rather thorough definition of faith that can be applied to a child's readiness for the sacrament. Before looking at Luther's definition, it is informative to note Webster's Dictionary relating to faith:

1. Unquestioning belief.
2. Unquestioning belief in God, religion, etc.
3. Complete trust or confidence. (Webster 1967, 270)

These three meanings were selected because they relate most closely to the subject at hand. They are also a quite accurate description of Luther's definition of faith.

In his record of the "Proceedings at Augsburg," Luther wrote that "no person is righteous unless he believes in God." He continues: "Faith . . . is nothing else than believing what God promises and reveals" (Luther 1957, 31:270-1). This is most likely the definition of faith that many Christians would give. But there is more. Luther further states in "A Sermon on Preparing to Die" that the Christian is to "rely upon the holy sacrament which contains nothing but God's words, promises, and signs" (Luther 1969, 42:108). Relying comes significantly

closer to our understanding of saving faith than mere belief. Our church has maintained that merely to believe without trust is not sufficient, for as James says, "You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that--and shudder" (James 2:19, NIV 1987, 1503). The belief of which James speaks implies such knowledge, without trust. To rely, according to Webster, means "to trust; depend; have confidence." This concept is directly related to that which our theologians term "saving faith" (Pieper 1951, 2:446).

Luther himself states that knowing is not enough. He says in "The Blessed Sacrament of the Holy and True Body of Christ," ". . . it is not enough to know what the sacrament is and signifies You must also desire it and firmly believe it" (Luther 1960, 35:60). By implication, believing for Luther was more than the mere knowing kind of belief that James described as insufficient. Desire suggests a craving, a longing for, a dependency upon something. In his "Sermon on the Worthy Reception of the Sacrament," Luther spoke of the yearning of the "hungry, thirsty, and desirous soul," which longs to feed on the promises of God in the sacrament (Luther 1969, 42:171). This emphasis on faith as desire is also found in "The Defense and Explanation of All the Articles," where Luther referred to faith as having "a desire for divine grace" (Luther 1958, 44:13). Thus, faith includes the idea that once one knows about God's promise of grace, one is moved by the overwhelming power of the Holy Spirit to have this grace for himself. There is no

satisfaction merely to know that it is there.

In the "Treatise on Good Works," Luther spoke of people who in their suffering "hold on to a good, firm confidence in him" in contrast to those people who "know nothing at all of this kind of faith" (Luther 1966, 44:28). Webster calls confidence "firm belief; trust; reliance." So, in Luther's definition of faith, a certain progression is observed: from belief to reliance, from reliance to desire, from desire to confidence, and from confidence back to belief. The point is that for Luther, his general references to faith usually included saving trust, desire or confidence, and not merely knowledge. When he spoke of simple faith, he was using that term inclusive of all its related terms, and these terms are usually interchangeable.

Luther went on to say in the "Treatise on Good Works" that the essence of the first commandment was placing confidence, trust, and faith in God alone. He said, ". . . faith, this trust, this confidence . . ." truly fulfilled the commandment. This inward trust makes us true and living children of God and makes "all things free to a Christian" (Luther 1966, 44:36).

Luther went so far as to call faith "the highest work," because it ". . . stands fast by never doubting that God is so favorably disposed toward you that he overlooks such everyday failures and offenses" (Luther 1966, 44:37). Such an understanding of faith was not merely a work but "the lord and life of all works," as he said in "The Babylonian Captivity of the Church" (Luther 1959, 36:47). This faith was "initiated and

sanctified in the simple faith of his word" (Luther 1959, 36:57). Faith for Luther was not a good work in the sense that we often use the latter term, but rather was the work of God in us from which all works flow, and without which any work pleasing to God was impossible.

Luther, in "The Freedom of a Christian," described faith as having three powers. The first power was that it "justifies, frees and saves" (Luther 1957, 31:348). This was a description of the results of faith, rather than faith itself. However, the second power as described by Luther is quite revealing. Luther said "it honors him who it trusts" (Luther 1957, 31:350). This brings a new element to his definition of faith. This implies a high regard or great respect for the object of the faith. Luther said it "regards him [God] as truthful and righteous" (Luther 1957, 31:350). This means that not only does faith believe and trust God, it places a significant value on Him. It suggests obedience as a result of the faith, for how can one honor one when the wish also to obey is not present?

The third power or benefit of faith is even more revealing. Luther wrote, "It unites the soul with Christ as a bride is united to her bridegroom" (Luther 1957, 31:351). Now we have described by Luther a faith that involves a living relationship with the object and the giver of the faith. It perhaps is not unlike that of the faith a child places in his parent, although any attempt to make a human allegory pales in comparison to our relationship to Christ. For Luther, faith literally was that

relationship, in all of its richness and beauty. It was the sum and substance of it, and there was no relationship without it. The object of that relationship was Christ, Whom by faith, as Luther said, ". . . you accept and recognize as a gift, as a present that God has given you and that is your own" (Luther 1960, 35:119).

Perhaps the best general definition of faith Luther gives is found in the "Treatise on Good Works." In article seventeen in the first section of the work, Luther emphasizes that faith comes only from Jesus Christ. It must "spring up and flow from the blood and wounds and death of Christ." Your heart, in turn grows "sweet and disposed toward God." Faith arises from the Gospel of Christ so that Christ becomes "the rock from which men suck oil and honey" (Luther 1966, 44:38-39).

Luther's definitions of faith are at the same time simple and profound. They are simple in that they make clear that faith involves laying hold on Jesus Christ. They are profound in the many aspects which the holding of that faith entails, from simple trust to desire, honor, devotion, relationship and obedience. All of this means that when we hear a person say, "I have faith," we have not heard enough to know very much about that person's faith. If we are to examine the faith of a child in preparation for Holy Communion, for example, we must also examine how the faith that Luther describes is found in the child and how it enables the child to lay hold of the promises which God in His Word connects to this sacrament.

Faith and the Reception of the Lord's Supper

In his Small Catechism, Luther gives us a simple explanation of the relationship between faith and the Lord's Supper. He made it quite clear that the only real worthiness for the reception of the Lord's Supper was based on faith (Luther's Small Catechism [1986], 238). In determining whether it is a truly Lutheran practice to allow children to commune prior to confirmation, it is necessary to look at how Luther connects faith and the reception of the sacrament.

In his "Proceedings at Augsburg," Luther wrote, "I must now prove that a person going to the sacrament must believe that he will receive grace, and not doubt it, but have absolute confidence, otherwise he will do so to his condemnation" (Luther 1957, 31:271). Here again, Luther ties belief and confidence together, and he does so specifically as it relates to the sacrament. Therefore, to Luther it is not sufficient for the reception of the sacrament merely to know what it is. The recipient must have "absolute confidence" that he will receive the benefits God promised.

To emphasize further that such reception is not merely by intellect, Luther stated in "An Exposition of the Lord's Prayer," that when the bread of the sacrament is received, ". . . the souls of men will lay hold of it" (Luther 1969, 42:59). This soul, that Webster calls "the moral or emotional nature of man," is distinguished from mere bodily reception or intellectual knowledge. The Greek word *psuche* means "self, inner life, one's

inmost being" (Aland 1968, 201).

Man is thus incapable of proper reception of the Lord's Supper with his head only. Nor does the ability to expound on the nature and meaning of the sacrament make one worthy. The soul laying hold of the sacrament implies that the recipient grasps it with his inner, moral being, as a person would cling to life itself.

Luther goes on to support this emphasis that the reception of the sacrament is the work of the soul. In "A Sermon on the Ban," he described the fellowship of the sacrament as "inward, spiritual, and invisible," and that a man is incorporated into the fellowship of Christ "through faith, hope, and love." Thus, even if one is banned from the physical reception of the sacrament, he should "nevertheless not neglect to come to the sacrament spiritually; that is, he should heartily desire it and believe that he will partake of it spiritually" (Luther 1970, 39:22). It is worth noting here that Luther again ties believing and desiring together as components of faith.

The idea of faith in the sacrament without actually receiving the physical elements is worth pursuing. In "The Sacrament of Penance," Luther stated that "not the sacrament, but faith that believes the sacrament is what removes sin." He states in article thirteen that "we read of no one of whom God required anything but faith" (Luther 1960, 35:16). While this does not refer specifically to the reception of Holy Communion, the implication of faith alone as the quality that makes the

sacrament effective is there. He applied this understanding implicitly to Holy Communion when he wrote in "The Blessed Sacrament of the Body of Christ," ". . . the desire of faith is alone sufficient, as St. Augustine says, 'Why do you prepare stomach and teeth? Only believe, and you have already partaken of the sacrament'" (Luther 1960, 35:50). He called the holy sacrament "nothing else than a divine sign And to receive the sacrament is nothing else than to desire all this and firmly to believe that it is done" (Luther 1960, 35:60). We are led to believe that if the elements are denied us, we yet receive the benefits of the sacrament through our faith, which he again related to desire and belief.

Proper preparation for the sacrament is based on faith. This faith has as its object the specific words and promises of God which come through the sacrament. In his Small Catechism, Luther wrote that the individual is "truly worthy and well prepared who has faith in these words: 'Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins'" (Luther's Small Catechism [1986], 238). In the "Treatise on the New Testament," he wrote, "God has prepared for our faith a pasture, a table, and a feast; but faith is not fed except on the word of God alone" (Luther 1960, 35:110). St. Paul writes in I Corinthians 11:28,29: "A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself" (I Corinthians 11:28,29, NIV 1987, 1425). Worthy reception requires

a simple knowledge that through the eating and drinking Christ is received, and faith believes He is present. But faith is not to be identified with understanding. Understanding suggests the recipient of the sacrament knows how the body and blood of Christ are present in the sacrament. Faith merely accepts the fact they ~~Understand~~ understanding of the real presence of Christ is secondary to the assurance of forgiveness through the taking His body and blood in faith. Were the benefits of the sacrament to be offered only to those who truly understand what is taking place, few would qualify for worthy reception. Those eagerly desiring forgiveness are best prepared for Holy Communion. As Luther continued, "The mass demands and must have a hungry soul, which longs for the forgiveness of sins and divine favor" (Luther 1960, 35:110).

"In the entire gospel Christ made everything depend on faith he who sincerely desires the sacrament receives its benefit . . . so completely does everything depend on the faith of the penitent In whatever way the sacrament comes to us, it is God's sacrament and can be received in faith" (Luther 1958, 32:49-50). Thus does Luther summarize the reception of the Lord's Supper or any gift of God.

If we apply the definition of faith to the reception of the sacrament, as Luther obviously does, then we see a clear pattern developing. Intellectual understanding and knowledge, while important, are given second place to the heart and soul of the believer. When the believer's faith is understood as desire, as dependency, as trust in the living Word of Christ, then that

faith is sufficient for worthy reception of the sacrament. Examination of Luther's distinction between reception of the physical elements and reception by faith also suggests that a child as he hears and understands the promise that this is "given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins," though kept from receiving the bread and wine at Holy Communion, receives a blessing through the words of institution he has heard. (Luther's Small Catechism [1986], 238). If the child in fact can receive encouragement through faith which comes by hearing these words, without actually taking the elements into his body, what is there to prevent that child from physically receiving those elements as well?

Luther and the Faith of Children

We have examined faith in children as a prerequisite to their reception of the Lord's Supper. We have looked at what Martin Luther says about faith. But what does he say about the faith of children? Can they believe sufficiently? Can they properly discern the Lord's body in the sacrament? Do the writings of Luther condone or prohibit communing children prior to the age at which most churches currently confirm them?

In the "Explanation of the Small Catechism," question number 305 asks: "Who must not be given the Sacrament?" The answer given under point D. states: "Those who are unable to examine themselves, such as infants, people who have not received proper instruction, or the unconscious" (Luther's Small Catechism [1986], 240-1). This statement is surprisingly broad

considering that the church has traditionally communed children only age thirteen and over. There is a substantial difference between the age of infancy and the age of thirteen. According to Webster, an infant is defined as "a very young child; baby" (Webster 1967, 384).

Remembering that Luther said that "all things are free to a Christian through his faith" (Luther 1966, 44:36), and that faith is "nothing else than believing what God promises and reveals" (Luther 1957, 31:270-1), the question remains, "At what age is a child free to receive the sacrament because he is capable of believing and trusting God's promises and the revelation of Himself contained therein?"

Luther addressed the issue of children receiving Communion on at least two occasions. Writing in "The Babylonian Captivity of the Church," Luther argued that it is not reason but simple faith that is required in the sacrament.

. . . if I cannot fathom how the bread is the body of Christ, yet I will take my reason captive to the obedience of Christ, and clinging simply to his words, firmly believe not only that the body of Christ is in the bread, but that the bread is the body of Christ. (Luther 1959, 36:34)

He adds, "Does it not seem as though he desired to keep us in a simple faith, sufficient for us to believe that his blood was in the cup" (Luther 1959, 36:34)? He had previously pointed to the fact that it was a custom of the church at the time of Cyprian to "administer both kinds to the laity, even to the children" (Luther 1959, 36:25). He commented on this reference even further in "The Treatise on the New Testament." There he

wrote:

Do we not read of St. Cyprian, the holy martyr, that in Carthage where he was bishop he even had both elements given to the children, although - for reasons of its own - that has now ceased? Christ had the children come to him and would not allow anyone to hinder them (Mark 10:14). In like manner he withheld his blessings neither from the dumb nor the blind nor the lame. Why, then, should not his sacrament also be for those who heartily and in a Christian spirit desire it? (Luther 1960, 35:110-1)

I wish he had said more. He tantalized us with a bit of information, and almost endorsed the communion of children but fell a bit short. But neither did he condemn the practice, and in fact used it to support his argument regarding reception of both elements of the sacrament for the deaf and dumb.

On another occasion, Luther seemed to wipe out age distinctions regarding the mass. Where faith was present he called all persons "true priests . . . all women priestesses, be they young or old, master or servant, mistress or maid, learned or unlearned. Here there is no difference, unless faith be unequal" (Luther 1960, 35:101).

Part of the understanding of a child-like faith that Luther described was beautifully enhanced in "Fourteen Consolations." There he removed reason completely and replaced it with a simple trust of which even a small child was capable. He wrote that "since God was with us when we did not think so, or he did not seem to be with us, we should not doubt that he is always with us." He goes on to say:

Who cared for us during the many nights that we slept? Who cared for us while we worked, played,

or were busy with those many activities in which we gave little thought to ourselves? Even the miser, eager in his quest for riches, finds it necessary to lay aside his care during his questing and dealing -- then we would see, whether we want to or not, that our entire care is completely in God's hand alone and that only rarely are we left to our own care. (Luther 1969, 42:132)

This passage is cited because it brings to mind the child's prayer, "Now I lay me down to sleep; I pray the Lord my soul to keep; If I should die before I wake; I pray the Lord my soul to take." Many of us prayed this prayer as children. Many of us taught it to our children. It reflects the simple placing of one's life into the hands of a gracious Father who will watch over and care for us, even while we sleep. Luther's example cited above reflects that idea of faith, and is most certainly a faith of which a child is capable.

If we assume that Luther really set no age at which a child is capable of receiving the sacrament, and seeing that he really left the matter as an open question, what can we say with certainty after reflecting on his writings? We can say simply this: if it can be determined that the child is capable of trusting the promise of forgiveness that comes through the Word of Christ which accompanies the sacrament, then that child is worthy to receive the sacrament. The understanding of concepts such as the real presence, which Luther himself admitted difficulty in doing, should not be a significant criterion for receiving the sacrament. It is the child's ability to believe, that is, to rely, trust, desire and form a relationship with the Giver of the sacrament that determines his or her readiness to

commune. A child that can understand the concept of "Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so," may very well be able also to understand that by offering the bread and cup of the sacrament Jesus is promising to "wash away all that I've done wrong today," as the children's hymn suggests. To place before the child the hurdle of a deeper knowledge and understanding of all the ramifications of the sacrament seems unfair to the child. This is not to suggest that instruction and preparation are not necessary prior to receiving Holy Communion. Nor is it suggested that any baptized Christian should receive the Lord's Supper indiscriminately. It merely suggests that a child is capable of receiving suitable instruction in preparation for the Lord's Supper at an earlier age than is commonly done, and that having received such instruction, many younger children are likely to display sufficient readiness to receive it.

The Age at Which a Child May Commune

At what age should a child be allowed to commune? The explanation to Luther's Small Catechism indicates that infants are too young to commune. Yet a survey of his writings reveals that he might very well allow for the communing of children at an age relatively younger than is the common practice in most Lutheran churches today. Should an age be established as the youngest possible age at which a child may commune?

In the Lutheran Church of the early post-Reformation period, children were communing at a relatively young age. The pastor provided a period of preconfirmation instruction that was

primarily intended to prepare a child for examination prior to Holy Communion. Arthur Repp indicates that it was necessary for the child to "have sufficient understanding and to be able to examine himself properly for his first Communion" (Repp 1964, 24). It is interesting to note that the initiative for this determination was made by the parents and sponsors who brought the child to the pastor or congregation for examination.

The age at which this examination was done varied from area to area. As Repp says, "According to German law, this was at age 12; according to Roman canon law, it could be interpreted variously as from 7 to 12" (Repp 1964, 56). Repp adds that this age was rarely higher than twelve, and often as low as ten. He stated that in Sweden in 1571 the Church Order stated that "no child younger than 9, or 8 at the least, should attend the Lord's Supper" (Repp 1964, 57). In Denmark, children were often admitted to Communion when they were only six or seven. The historical Lutheran Church regarded the age for first Communion as a flexible entity, and while it was tied to a period of public instruction, it was not always connected to the public confirmation rite at the age of thirteen or fourteen as is common in our churches today.

Repp contends that confirmation does not give the catechumen the right to partake of the Lord's Supper at all. The right to commune is the result of Baptism, where the child is given the privileges that go with being a child of God. Thus, "a child may partake of the Lord's Supper without being confirmed" (Repp

1964, 168).

Confusion over confirmation as the entry to the Lord's Supper has created problems for the church, not the least of which is the idea that confirmation means some sort of graduation into Christian adulthood, bringing with it the reception of the "adult" sacrament and an end to such "childish" practices as instruction in the Word of God.

Worthy participation must be based on the Scriptures, not on a man-made rite that has very little support from either the Scriptures or the writings of Martin Luther. In the Holy Scriptures, the requirements for reception of the Lord's Supper are modest in comparison to what is often practiced in the churches today. Repp indicates what the scriptural requirements are:

1. The communicant must be able to distinguish between the bread and wine in the Lord's Supper and the bread and wine of an ordinary meal;
2. the communicant must recognize the real presence of the body and blood of our Lord in the sacrament;
3. the communicant must know and accept in faith the purpose for which the sacrament has been instituted;
4. the communicant must recognize his sinfulness, be able to repent of those sins, and cling to the promises and merits of Christ for forgiveness;
5. by such faith, the communicant will forsake any other hope of forgiveness and trust in Christ alone;
6. this saving faith will create a desire to amend the sinful life and live in love with his neighbor. (Repp 1964, 168)

The real issue is: At what age can a child believe of his own volition to the extent cited above? Is six or seven too

young? Is thirteen or fourteen too long to wait? We must go back to the simple words of Luther in his Small Catechism: "the words 'for you' require all hearts to believe." The words we are to believe are these: "Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins" (Luther's Small Catechism [1986], 238).

Repp gave this advice in 1964:

Partaking of the Lord's Supper earlier than is now customary seems to be warranted by the social climate in which we live. Recognizing that the Lord's Supper is a means of grace established by God for the sole purpose of building up His church and for helping the individual to remain within His baptismal covenant, the church should be very loathe to oblige a baptized child to wait till he is 14 or 15 before he gets this additional help and protection offered by Christ.
(Repp 1964, 171)

The climate of the world has changed remarkably since the days of Luther, and even since Repp's book was written in 1964. The dangers of drugs and alcohol remain constant. The attitudes regarding premarital sex, particularly among children and early teens, are shocking. Questions of homosexuality, divorce, genetics and a humanistic public school system, among other things, present children today with challenges their parents rarely or never faced. Even in the early and middle elementary years, the child is bombarded with an alternative life style that young people of the 1950's did not see in high school.

Repp characterized the climate of 1964 as not "antireligious, but this is only because man is not concerned enough with religion even to oppose it" (Repp 1964, 171). Today, we could say the climate is antireligious. More than ever our children need to cling to something spiritual, and at an

earlier age than ever before. Repp adds, "It would seem that the church that has to compete with such naked materialism would use every means of grace at its disposal to safeguard its youth and would offer the Lord's Supper as early as possible as another means by which God confirms the individual's spiritual life" (Repp 1964, 171). If this was seen to be true in 1964, how much more so is it true today.

It would be very difficult to legislate a specific age at which a child is ready for Communion. If we assume that a child need not be thirteen or fourteen years old to understand sufficiently what the Lord's Supper means and to be able to grasp that meaning according to Luther's definition of faith, we must still have a concrete way of determining at what age the child might be ready.

First of all, it is a matter far too important to be left merely to the whim of the child or his parents. This has never been the practice of the Lutheran Church. Nor, as Repp suggests, is the fact that "the church has not been scrupulously careful in requiring neither more nor less than is scripturally warranted" a basis for "its forfeiture of this responsibility" (Repp 1964, 173). The community of believers must accept this responsibility as a part of its function as the Body of Christ. It must do so with the involvement and cooperation of both the parents and children.

The question that needs to be asked is: can this readiness for the reception of the Lord's Supper be based on the

child's age or his assumed accumulation of knowledge with any reliability, or with any assurance that the child is receiving the sacrament worthily? Frank Klos, for example, argues rather convincingly for communing children at the fifth grade. In an extensive study by the members of his Commission on Confirmation and First Communion, Klos explored the psychological growth processes of the child at each age level to determine the time when Communion would be a significant event in the child's life. This study was based on the assumption that "the age for first Communion . . . should be chosen on the basis of the children themselves" (Klos 1968, 119).

One of the conclusions of the commission was that the latter part of the fifth grade, at the age of ten or eleven, was the age at which children were generally capable of participating in a meaningful way. Klos writes:

Fifth-graders, now ten or eleven years old, have clearly defined for themselves what it means to be a member of social groups, including the church. They have been testing the limits of their participation and behavior. They are ready for deeper experiences and intelligent guidance. (Klos 1968, 120)

Klos quotes an interesting study of Arnold Gesell, Frances Ilg, and Louise Ames at the Yale Clinic of Child Development. Their book is entitled, Youth: The Years from Ten to Sixteen. Interesting characteristics of the ten year old child they describe include words like "frank, unself-conscious . . . free and easy give-and-take" (Klos 1968, 120). It is a time when the child identifies strongly with family, friends, school, and church. As further evidence for his position Klos cites Dr.

Vernon Anderson, dean of the College of Education at the University of Maryland:

This seems to be a most strategic time for Christian education to utilize the influence of the family and the active participation of the child in family life. He needs to see Christian faith and worship as a natural part of his family life. He is educationally amenable and responsive, hence this is an important age for dealing with basic facts about the Bible and for completing a general factual frame-work in understanding the Christian heritage. (Klos 1968, 121)

In A Report for Study from the Joint Commission on the Theology and Practice of Confirmation, the following were cited as "Characteristics of the Fifth-Grade Child:"

1. The child has reached the peak of childhood capacities;
2. the child is at a period of calm before the turbulence of adolescence;
3. the child is friendly, agreeable, amenable, cooperative, sincere, poised, un-selfconscious, easy-going, quick to admit his errors, and seems to have found himself as a child and is content;
4. the child is concerned with the specific and concrete and he is not yet ready to conceptualize or generalize;
5. the child is capable of appreciating the historic facts on which the Christian faith and the celebration of the Lord's Supper are based;
6. the child is more aware of what is wrong than what is right, and needs help in making ethical decisions;
7. the child is not as concerned about his status and is increasingly able to make contributions to group activities;
8. the child needs to see Christian faith and worship as a natural part of his family life;
9. the child can be helped to understand the meaning of Christian stewardship responsibilities. (Klos 1968, 203)

The commission headed by Klos reached the conclusion that

at this age level the child had reached what it called "the teachable moment." Generally this was the point at which the child was ready for a certain task which could be achieved with gratifying results. There is considerably more to report from this study, but suffice it to say there is ample educational evidence that a child is ready to receive Holy Communion at the age of ten.

One factor is disturbing about studies such as this: they are generalities, and do not deal with the specific differences within each child. If these characteristics were to fit each child, we would have a solid basis for proceeding with Communion at the age of 10 without exception. However, that procedure does not allow for individual differences, just as the current practice of "automatic" confirmation and first Communion at or near the completion of the eighth grade does not. By adopting a set age or year for first Communion, we run the risk of communing some too early and some too late.

Using the understanding and meaning of faith that Luther presents, and applying that to his teachings regarding faith and the sacraments, a means should be devised whereby each child is determined ready and worthy to receive the sacrament on his own merit, rather than at a specified age or grade in school. This method should involve the parents very deeply in the decision making process, both through instruction prior to the reception of Communion and the determination for readiness. Using the home as the impetus for the child's first Communion, with the help and

cooperation of the church, the following factors should be considered in determining a child's readiness to commune:

1. Does the child grasp the concept of a Creator God who loves him?
2. Can the child formulate a meaning for the word "promise" as it relates to God's promise in the sacrament?
3. Does the child demonstrate an understanding of what it means to rely on or trust such a promise?
4. Does the child, understanding the concept of "promise," demonstrate a knowledge of what the promise implies: that having recognized his own sin and need for forgiveness he can be sure that God will put his sin aside?
5. Does the child know and understand that this promise is made good by what Jesus said to His disciples at the Last Supper and by what He did for them the next day on the cross?
6. Does the child express a sincere and earnest desire to receive this promise through the reception of Holy Communion?
7. Does the child know that in some mysterious way, God brings that promise to him in the bread and wine of the sacrament?
8. Does the child understand that the bread and wine of Holy Communion are different from ordinary bread and wine because they bring Christ's presence to him through Christ's own words?
9. Does the child display the ability to know of a real, parental type relationship that God has given the child in Baptism, and that this relationship implies honor and obedience to God, his Heavenly Father?

These and similar questions need to be used to determine the child's readiness for Holy Communion, and not the child's age or grade in school. Chapter three contains a study guide for parents to use in teaching the basics of Holy Communion to their children as well as the goals and objectives of such teaching. Readiness is then placed squarely on the shoulders of the parents, and it is the parental opinion that is supported,

encouraged and confirmed by the congregation. After the parents feel the child is ready for the reception of Holy Communion, they may present their child to the Pastor and other members designated by the congregation for further examination or "confirmation" of the parents' opinion.

This process returns the instruction of children in the church to a more biblical pattern. It bases the reception of Holy Communion on scriptural principles. It reflects the teachings of Martin Luther on the meaning of faith and the use of the sacraments. This, after all, is what being a Lutheran means.

In the coming chapter we want to focus on the biblical and historical bases for confirmation in the Lutheran Church and suggest a rationale for changing what is currently being practiced.

CHAPTER TWO

THE BASIS FOR CONFIRMATION IN THE LUTHERAN CHURCH

A Biblical Perspective

Confirmation is not mentioned in the Bible. God does not command a Christian to be confirmed. However, there is a biblical basis for what takes place in confirmation. We can begin with a working definition of confirmation. Norman Schell offers a definition that is quite inclusive, and probably common among Lutherans. He writes, "Confirmation is . . . a public vow (a solemn promise to God) assuming personal responsibility for (confirming) the promises made for a person by their parents and Godparents at their Baptism" (Schell 1994, 152). While this is a common definition, it does pose the problem of whether confirmation somehow completes the child's Baptism. We note later in the chapter that Luther felt Baptism stands on its own and needs no completion.

The key element in confirmation is making a confession of one's personal faith, and not on a renewal of baptismal vows. The confirmand is reminded of the words of Jesus in Matthew 10:32, "Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven" (Lutheran Worship 1982, 205). There are several other references in the Scriptures to making such a confession. Confessing "your name" is a part of

the return of the people of Israel from sin as cited by King Solomon in his prayer of dedication (I Kings 8:33, NIV 1987, 438). St. John writes, "Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God" (I John 4:2, NIV 1987, 1520). St. Paul, in his letter to the Philippians, expresses the desire that "every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:11, NIV 1987, 1458).

The confirmand is also required to make a pledge before God. This too has biblical basis. The practice of making vows of allegiance or dedication to the Lord occurs frequently in the Bible. The Nazirites made vows of "separation to the Lord" during which time they were "consecrated to the Lord" (Numbers 6:2-8, NIV 1987, 177). Hannah made a similar vow to the Lord when she offered to give "to the Lord for all the days of his life" any son she might have (I Samuel 1:11, NIV 1987, 345). Even St. Paul had his hair cut off because of a vow he had taken (Acts 18:18, NIV 1987, 1379). Each of these vows represented some form of ritual or ceremony which included a physical sign of that vow such as cutting the hair. In some cases this vow was made on behalf of the child, in other cases it was made by the individual himself. The vow made was not unlike that made at confirmation in the sense that the confirmand does respond with a promise when asked "to conform your life to the divine Word" (Lutheran Worship [1982], 206).

The confirmand also receives the laying on of hands. In the

confirmation ceremony this ritual is connected with a blessing and invocation of the Holy Spirit. There are several different usages for the laying on of hands in the Scriptures. The two that relate most closely to what takes place in confirmation are the usages for ordination and for blessing. The Levites during the time of Moses were set apart for service to the Lord. They were brought before the Lord and hands were laid upon them (Numbers 8:10, NIV 1987, 181). When Moses appointed Joshua as his successor, he was commanded to "take Joshua son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay your hand on him (Numbers 27:18, NIV 1987, 211). In Deuteronomy 34:9 Moses relates that because of this ceremony Joshua was filled with the spirit of wisdom. In the book of Acts, men of faith and of the Holy Spirit were presented to the apostles, "who prayed and laid their hands on them" (Acts 6:6, NIV 1987, 1361). St. Paul reminds Timothy not to neglect the gift he had received through the laying on of hands (I Timothy 4:14; II Timothy 1:6, NIV 1987, 1477; 1479). There is certainly similarity between these instances in the Old and New Testaments and the laying on of hands in the rite of confirmation. The confirmand is set aside for the Lord in the rite of confirmation, and the prayer is given that the Spirit of God will rest upon him.

The use of the laying on of hands for bestowing a blessing is also similar. Jacob, in blessing Manasseh and Ephriam, laid his hands upon them and invoked God's blessing upon them that they "increase greatly upon the earth" (Genesis 48:14-16, NIV

1987, 65). In the New Testament, it is recorded that Jesus placed his hands on little children in order to bless them (Matthew 19:15; Mark 10:16, NIV 1987, 1225; 1258). The laying on of hands during the confirmation ceremony has a strong biblical basis. We must be careful, however, that we do not turn confirmation into a means of grace. The Spirit is present where the Word of God is correctly used, and that should be the focus. Asking the Spirit to influence and work in the lives of these children is not the same as using this ritual as a means of conversion and calling on Him to bring about such a conversion. Nor is the rite of confirmation to be seen as some kind of "born again" experience where for the first time the child commits his life to Jesus Christ. Rather, at confirmation the child is publicly confirming that faith which he or she has already received, beginning at Baptism.

There are some parts of the confirmation ritual that are not found explicitly in the Bible. While confessing the name of Jesus is a scriptural mandate, there is no incident in the Scriptures where a confession to the truth of Scriptures or other writings is found. There is no incident where a Christian is asked specifically to pledge faithfulness to word and sacrament. But while such a pledge is not commanded, it is certainly appropriate according to the Scriptures, for the Scriptures frequently cite the importance of our acknowledging their truthfulness.

While there is no command or mention of the word

"confirmation" in the Scriptures, it can be concluded that the practice is a biblical one. It also is in keeping with sound Christian doctrine and practice if it remains true to the Word of God in character and does not become a vain ritual with the purpose of pleasing men rather than God.

An Historical Perspective

In the early church, confirmation was closely related to baptism. Converts were first instructed in the Christian faith. On Easter Eve, they were baptized, and then "confirmed" with chrism, prayers, the sign of the cross, and the laying on of hands (Repp 1964, 13). At that point they were permitted to take their first Communion. In later centuries, Baptism and confirmation became distinct and separate rites. Most were baptized as infants and were confirmed and received Holy Communion after a period of instruction. This separation of Baptism from confirmation and Communion fostered the idea that confirmation was somehow a complement to Baptism, helping the catechumen to live a more committed Christian life.

In November of 1439, confirmation was designated a sacrament by papal decree at the Council of Florence. Confirmation was actually given a greater emphasis than Baptism. Any priest could baptize, but only the bishop could confirm and thus bestow the greater gift of the Holy Spirit (Klos 1968, 44).

Martin Luther and the reformers rejected confirmation as a sacrament. Some eliminated it as a practice all together because of its identification with Roman Catholicism. Luther denied that

confirmation completed Baptism. He believed that the whole Gospel of Jesus Christ was embodied in Baptism and that it was through Baptism rather than confirmation that an individual became a member of the church of Jesus Christ. Luther was more interested in instruction than confirmation. He emphasized the need for instruction for all Christians to be worthy of reception of the Lord's Supper. Although it was not Luther's intent, confirmation began to be associated more with Communion than with Baptism.

There were six major types of confirmation in the Lutheran Church: catechetical, hierarchical, sacramental, traditional, pietistic, and rationalistic (Repp 1964, 21). The first four began to appear in the sixteenth century and the latter two appeared in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. No particular type appears to have been dominant over the others.

The catechetical type arose from the emphasis on education and making a good confession of faith before receiving the Lord's Supper for the first time. Much of this instruction was done in the home through a method of questions and answers. Luther's Small Catechism, written for this instruction, became the basis for sermons and church-school classes as well. When a child seemed ready for the Lord's Supper, he was examined by the pastor. This was done either in the presence of the congregation or privately in the presence of parents and sponsors. If the pastor felt the child was ready, he was permitted to partake of the Lord's Supper. Sometimes several children were examined at

the same time, but there was no public confirmation ceremony. It was not until the nineteenth century that children were publicly examined and then communed as a group. After children were admitted to the Lord's Supper, they were still expected to continue their religious studies. The Lord's Supper was not viewed as a reward or graduation to instruction. Rather, Luther viewed instruction as a process for life.

The hierarchical type of confirmation was the product of Martin Bucer. "Hierarchical" refers "to the governing of a local congregation by its parish clergy and not to Roman Catholic administrative structure" (Klos 1968, 58). This type of confirmation included surrender to Christ by a confession of faith and a vow of obedience. Confirmands, as a result, submitted to the discipline of the church. Bucer felt that discipline was one of the marks of the true church (Klos 1968, 59). Submission to the authority of the church became a prerequisite to receiving the Lord's Supper. After instruction in the Christian faith, Bucer had baptized children take a vow of loyalty to Christ. At this time responsibility for instruction was beginning to shift from the home to the church. Bucer promoted a public rite of confirmation in which baptized children would be confirmed before the congregation and then receive the Lord's Supper.

He wrote into his rite of confirmation a formal admission to the Lord's Supper. This was the first time that the rites of confirmation and first Communion were actually merged into one ball of wax He made both confirmation and first Communion the twin goals of catechetical instruction. In so doing, he went far beyond

Luther's understanding that these are but way stations in a lifelong catechumate. (Klos 1968, 60)

In Lutheran churches today, the right to participate in the Lord's Supper is often viewed as the end of religious instruction and the primary reason for being confirmed. We cited Norman Schell's definition of confirmation earlier. Schell also gives a definition of confirmation instruction as follows:

Confirmation Instruction is. . .

. . . the academic religious education in preparation for the Rite of Confirmation.

. . . using the Word of God so the Holy Spirit can create a dynamic faith.

. . . developing usable Bible study skills and habits.

. . . developing a pattern of regular church participation.

. . . the responsibility of the parents, specifically the father. (Schell 1994, 152-3)

The third type of confirmation is the sacramental. This closely reflects the Roman Catholic view. Lutherans never viewed confirmation as a sacrament, but the work of the Holy Spirit was emphasized by some. The prayer of blessing spoken by the pastor over the confirmands included "receive ye the Holy Spirit" (Klos 1968, 61). The implication was given that confirmation supplements Baptism by adding a fuller presence of the Holy Spirit through laying on of hands and prayer. Confirmation was the event whereby a person more fully became a member of the church. Luther, on the other hand, taught that a person became a full member of the church through Baptism, not confirmation. The sacramental type of confirmation subtly attacked both the

doctrine of Baptism and the doctrine of the church. It was this added emphasis on the Holy Spirit and complete church membership that distinguished the sacramental type of confirmation from the others.

The traditional type of confirmation tried to retain the time-honored elements of the church's confirmation practices without the sacramental overtones. Instruction, examination, public confession of faith, and the prayers of the congregation for the confirmand were included while admission to Holy Communion was not. Children who had been instructed in the catechism were brought by their parents to the pastor for examination, and were then able to receive Holy Communion before they were confirmed. The decision to follow this practice was made by church leaders in convention at the German city of Celle in 1548 (Klos 1968, 64). When the children matured spiritually, they were again brought by their parents and sponsors to the pastor for examination. If the pastor was satisfied that the child was ready, a public confession of faith was made by the child in the presence of the congregation. This confession was called "confirmation."

In the sixteenth century, Martin Chemnitz developed a rite of confirmation that incorporated many different elements found in other models already mentioned. This rite included a remembrance of the confirmand's Baptism, a personal confession of faith, an examination in the catechism, an admonition to remain faithful to the baptismal covenant, and a public prayer of

intercession with the laying on of hands (Klos 1968, 65). Chemnitz's emphasis on personal confession was later utilized by the pietists as a part of their model.

These first four types of confirmation were used variously throughout the Lutheran churches throughout the sixteenth century. There was very little uniformity. Some congregations had confirmation; others did not. Some stressed one type or another. At this point in history there was not a consistent model of confirmation. All patterns assumed Christian instruction of some type before Communion. The home was considered the primary place of instruction. The sponsors were obligated to admonish and encourage the parents to nurture their children in the Christian faith. Instruction in the home was supplemented by the church school or through catechetical sermons. The pastor reviewed the instruction of the home in preparation for whatever rite might be observed. Confirmation was associated with both sacraments except in the traditional type. The age of the confirmands taking Holy Communion varied. Age was not an important criterion. The child's readiness was more important than his age.

The fifth type of confirmation emerged with the rise of Pietism in the Lutheran Church in the seventeenth century. Confirmation began to be seen as an act of renewal. Instruction focused more on subjective acceptance of Christ as personal Lord and Savior and less on the objective facts of the Christian faith.

Klos writes:

Catechetical training was redesigned to prepare the young person for a momentous conversion experience. At confirmation the young person would publicly declare his surrender to Christ. In addition, he would renew the baptismal covenant by vowing to keep his part of the covenant with God, as long as he lived. (Klos 1968, 67)

The pietistic view regarded Baptism more as a covenant between God and man than as a means of regeneration. Infant baptism had to be completed by a conversion experience. Baptism was completed not by adding more of the Holy Spirit but by making the baptismal vow personal. The confession of faith in confirmation up to this time had been generally regarded as the confession of the faith of the Christian Church. This confession was evidence of the confirmand's understanding of this faith. The pietists changed this to a personal confession of faith. The role of the pastor increased so he could be certain that the confirmands were really Christians. Catechetical forms of instruction were replaced with application of Scripture to real life situations through open discussion.

The sixth type of confirmation was the rationalistic view. While pietists emphasized personal experience and emotion, the rationalists emphasized intellect. The confirmand was to be able to understand and explain the Christian faith. Examinations became academic exercises. Confirmation became the formal completion of the baptismal vow. It was often seen as superior to Baptism, especially infant baptism, because understanding was so important. From the rationalistic influence, confirmation became a kind of graduation ceremony. It coincided with the end

of the school year and graduation from elementary school. The ceremony became more ornate. Confirmands were dressed up and marched in procession into the church. The giving of gifts and the gathering of families for celebration became part of the custom. It was during this period of rationalism that confirmation became firmly established among the Lutheran churches in Germany. It became associated with civic and economic privilege. "Unless a person was confirmed, he was not permitted to leave the parish, go to work, join a guild, attend a state school or go off to boarding school" (Repp 1964, 81). Confirmation became an economic and social necessity.

A Rationale for Change

Some aspects of the rite of confirmation have a biblical basis. However the form that the rite takes is not found in the Bible at all. A study of the biblical texts and Reformation history reveals a wide variety of practices. The Lutheran Church has been free in the past to adjust these practices to the social conditions of the times and the needs of the people. While many Lutherans assume that the practice of confirmation they follow is a part of their Reformation heritage, that simply is not the case. Lutherans have always been flexible and willing to make the ritual serve the people rather than the people serve the ritual. With that rationale in mind, it is a very "Lutheran" thing to take the best practices from the history of confirmation and adapt them to current needs. It is also appropriate to use new and innovative methods to present the ancient and changeless

teachings of the Christian Gospel. The confirmation program must be adapted to the life style and circumstances of today's students.

A study of the history of confirmation reveals that many of the practices currently in vogue evolved through the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Focuses changed continually from Baptism to Holy Communion, from personal faith to means of grace, and from style to ceremony. In the process it has been viewed by some as only a ritual, without the depth of spiritual meaning it could have. Confirmation has come to signify the achievement of a level at which the confirmand is labeled "communicant" and can receive offering envelopes, take Communion and be linked with other adults who have finished the course. The completion of this process is viewed as an end rather than as a beginning of Christian growth.

It is necessary to go back into the history of confirmation and its relationship to the sacraments, particularly Holy Communion, and glean from that history those practices which were a part of the vision of Martin Luther when he wrote his Small Catechism. This is especially true as they relate to the involvement of parents in the process and the use of a more individualized set of criteria for determining readiness for Holy Communion. The materials and program description in the following chapters are designed to meet that end.

CHAPTER THREE

HELPING PARENTS READY THEIR CHILDREN FOR FIRST COMMUNION

As we seek to involve the parents more deeply in the religious instruction of their children, a significant element in that process is having the parents play a role in determining the readiness of their children for the reception of Holy Communion. We have already determined that there is no biblical prohibition for having the children wait as long as they usually do in the Lutheran Church. There is also no biblical basis for connecting the reception of first Communion with confirmation. The history of the Lutheran Church, in fact, suggests that this practice was added after the Reformation period. The biblical pattern that evolved during the Reformation period, namely having parents and professional teachers share the responsibility of training and instructing their children, was an ideal which Luther appeared to have sought.

It is the purpose of this chapter to develop a series of simple lessons through which the parents can be actively involved in the teaching of their children in preparation for Holy Communion. This process is to be independent of the rite of confirmation, while on the other hand, form the beginning process of involving parents in the entire pre-confirmation Christian education program.

Goals and Objectives of the Study Guide

In the development of a manual of instruction to assist parents in preparing their children for receiving Holy Communion, the following objectives are to be attained:

1. The child will be able to grasp the concept of a loving God;
2. the child will be able to demonstrate an understanding of the meaning of the word "promise" as it applies to what God offers in Holy Communion;
3. the child will demonstrate the ability to rely or trust such a promise;
4. the child will be able to show a recognition of his own sinfulness and the need for forgiveness;
5. the child will understand that this need for forgiveness was satisfied for us when Jesus died on the cross;
6. the child will see that this forgiveness by Jesus is given through the receiving of Holy Communion;
7. the child will be aware that this forgiveness is offered through the eating and drinking of the bread and wine;
8. the child will know that through the eating and drinking of bread and wine in Holy Communion, the body and blood of Jesus are received;
9. the child will understand that Holy Communion offers not only the forgiveness that Jesus earned on the cross, but also the strength to live a life of obedience to Him.

A Study Guide for Parents in Teaching Holy Communion to Their Children

The following is a guide for parents to use with their children in teaching them about Holy Communion and helping them prepare to receive it. It is written to be used with children beginning at approximately the fifth grade level. By the use of

the Bible and simple illustrations and questions, the child can be helped to know and understand the meaning and purpose of Holy Communion. The pastor is available to the parents to assist them with any difficulties they might encounter as they progress through the material.

LESSON NUMBER ONE

Read Genesis 2:7. God took a material (clay) and formed the first person. Because He made this person with His own hands, God felt a strong sense of love and care for him. God became a very dear friend to this person He called "Adam." God even made Adam in His own image, which means that Adam was like God in that he did no wrong, nor did he want to do wrong. God loved Adam so much that He would often come and talk with him and take walks in the Garden of Eden with him. God and Adam were truly best friends.

A. Compare Genesis 2:7 with Genesis 1:24. How was Adam created differently from the other creatures?

B. We would like you to experience making something. Find some of the following materials: clay, paper, crayons, paints, mud, wood, etc. Do the very best you can to make something of which you can be proud, perhaps an image of an animal you would like as a pet. After you have made the object think about how you feel about it. How would you react if someone came along and deliberately destroyed it?

C. Read Genesis 3:1-15. What happened to the people God

had made? How were they changed after this happened? How do you think God felt about them after this happened to them? How do you think God felt about the one who tempted them to do it? Do you think God still loved the people He had made?

LESSON NUMBER TWO

Sometimes we do mean things to our friends. They try to be nice to us, but we hurt them. Sometimes our friends do bad things to us. They tell lies about us or believe the lies others tell. God's friend listened to the devil's lies about God. Adam believed the devil rather than God.

A. Read Genesis 3:1-15 again. Did you ever believe a lie that someone told you? How did you feel after you found out it was a lie?

B. Read Genesis 3:10 once more. What did Adam do after he believed the lie about God? Do you ever hide from your mother, father, teachers or friends when you do something bad? Do you think Adam felt the way you might have felt?

C. Write a brief paragraph describing the feelings of someone who is hiding from someone else because the person hiding has hurt the one looking for him. You may pretend you are Adam, or you might remember a time when you hid because you didn't want the person you had hurt to find you.

LESSON NUMBER THREE

Have your parents ever said, "If you clean your room, I promise you can go to the movie?" A promise is something you say

to someone that you really intend to keep. If you believed the promise your parents made, cleaned your room, and then your mother said, "I'm sorry but you can't go to the movie," you would probably be very upset. When Adam believed the devil's lie about God, Adam sinned. Adam believed that God had lied. When we do bad things, we deserve to be punished. Adam deserved to die. He could no longer live with God forever in the Garden of Eden. But God was still a friend to Adam. As God pronounced a curse on Satan for deceiving Adam, God also made Adam a promise: "I will send someone to die for your sins, someone who will be punished for you. He will make it possible for you to be united with me once more."

God told the devil that the devil's "seed," which we believe to be sin, would always be an enemy of the woman's "seed," which is Jesus. The devil would bruise the heel of the woman's seed, namely Jesus, but that Jesus would crush the head of the devil and take away his power by dying on the cross and rising from the dead. Sin would then be punished, and Adam and his children would be one with God again. Even though we will some day die, God will raise us from the dead as He raised Jesus, and we will live forever with God in heaven.

A. Read Genesis 3:15 once more. To whom is God speaking? Why is He angry?

B. God made a promise to Adam that Adam would have a Savior, and He makes the same promise to us. How does that make you feel about God? How does that make you feel about the devil

and sin? Do you have someone stronger than they are?

C. Describe a time when the devil tempted you to do wrong and you listened to him. What does God invite you to do about that? How does God's promise apply to you when you listen to the devil? Do you lose His promise?

LESSON NUMBER FOUR

God intended to keep His promise of a Savior. He commanded the people to offer animals such as lambs as a sacrifice to Him. This would be a way for them to remember His promise. The blood of the animal would remind them of the blood that would be shed by Jesus when He died on the cross. The blood of the animal, which the animal needed for life, would be a sign of the blood of Jesus that gives us eternal life. Many years after Adam lived and died, God's people celebrated life, remembering how God had saved them from death through the blood of a lamb.

A. Read Exodus 12. The blood remembered in this celebration was always a reminder to the people that God had made a promise and that promise would be kept. Have you ever made a promise to someone? Did you ever break such a promise?

B. How can we be sure that God will keep His promise to us?

C. What did God do to prove He would keep His promise?

LESSON NUMBER FIVE

We know that Jesus, the "seed" of the woman mentioned in Genesis 3, did come. We celebrate His coming at Christmas time. He was not only the "seed" of the woman, He was God's very own

Son. Because He was God, He could live as God had wanted us to live. He did not sin, but always went about doing good. He healed people, He made them close to God again by forgiving their sins, and He taught them about God. He was keeping God's promise to us by living the way we were supposed to live. But He made the leaders of the people of His day very angry. Those leaders were worried about their own jobs and positions rather than what God wanted. So they planned to kill Jesus. Jesus knew they would do this. In fact, it was God's plan that His blood would bring life to all who had died because of the lie of the devil that Adam had believed.

A. Read John 7:31-32 and John 10:33. Why did the leaders of the people want to get rid of Jesus? Were they jealous of Him?

B. Do you ever get jealous of others? What does that make you feel like doing to them?

C. How might thinking about Jesus help keep you from hurting those of whom you are jealous?

LESSON NUMBER SIX

The night before He died, Jesus and twelve of His followers gathered to celebrate how God had saved His people through the blood of a lamb. That night, however, Jesus did something his followers had never heard or seen. As He passed a loaf of bread around for them to eat, He told them that this was His body, given for them. Then, as He passed a cup of wine around for them to drink, He told them that this was His blood, shed for them.

He was showing them a new celebration of life and forgiveness. It would be His body, dying on the cross the next day, and His blood, coming from His own veins, that would now make God's promise of life and forgiveness theirs. Whenever they celebrated life in this way, they were now to remember His death on the cross, His crushing the head of the devil, His blood as that of "the Lamb of God, that takes away the sin of the world." This meant that when He would die on the cross, God's promise to Adam was kept, and people could be friends with God again.

A. Read Matthew 6:17-30. What kind of celebrations do you have in your life? What kinds of things do you remember as you celebrate?

B. Read John 1:29. How is Jesus the "Lamb of God?"

C. What are some things we celebrate about Jesus?

LESSON NUMBER SEVEN

Today, God's people still get together to celebrate the life and forgiveness that Jesus gave. One of the ways we celebrate it in our church is by taking Holy Communion. In Holy Communion, we hear Jesus' words read to us by the pastor. These are the very words of promise that Jesus said to His followers on the night before He died. When the pastor says, "Take, eat, this is my body given for you," and "Take, drink, this is my blood shed for you," it is as if Jesus were speaking to us Himself, making His promise to you with the very words of God. When these words are spoken, God is promising that He has forgiven all people for believing the lie of the devil that Adam believed. God is no

longer angry with us. He is our friend again. Jesus gives us His body and blood in the Holy Communion to prove that God's promise is true.

We don't really know how the bread and wine come to be His body and blood. The bread and wine don't change. They still taste like bread and wine and they still look like bread and wine. But in a strange and wonderful way, they also bring the real body and blood of Jesus to us, to eat and to drink. Through Jesus' own words, the bread and wine bring the promise of God's love and forgiveness to us as well. When you take Holy Communion, that promise is given to you. Your parents and other people may break their promises to you sometimes, but God will never break His.

A. When your mother or someone else you know bakes cookies, that person often uses eggs. Do you know what an egg tastes like? Can you taste the egg in the cookies? Do the cookies look like eggs?

B. There are eggs in the cookies. You can't taste them, nor can you see them. Yet the eggs are present. Jesus' body and blood are present in the bread and wine. You can't taste them, nor can you see them. The bread and wine do not change into His body and blood. He simply promises that His body and blood are really there. Do you believe His promise?

LESSON NUMBER EIGHT

When we have done wrong we feel badly. We know we are God's children, yet God feels far away because we fear we have hurt and

angered Him and we think He might not want us as friends any longer. That makes us hurt inside. This pain we feel is because we know we have hurt God and we are sorry. We remember God's words that remind us that we are not supposed to do bad things. We wish we hadn't done wrong, and wish we could stop. We wish we had something to make that bad feeling go away.

God has food for us to take away that pain. In Holy Communion, God promises that no matter what you have done, He sees your hurt and wants to take it away. He is glad that you have a hunger to feel better, and He says that when you take the body and blood of Jesus, that hunger will go away because you are filled with God's love and forgiveness. You take Holy Communion because you are hungry to hear His promise once more, and you wish to take that promise into your own body by eating and drinking the bread and wine.

A. Have you ever felt hungry? Have you ever gone without food for a long time, so long that your stomach begins to hurt?

B. How does your stomach feel after you eat? Does eating make the pain go away? Do you feel full and satisfied?

C. How is eating food when you are hungry like taking Holy Communion when you have sinned and feel apart from God?

LESSON NUMBER NINE

When you haven't eaten for a long time you get hungry. You also get weak. You don't have the strength to run and play, to do your school work, or to help your mother or father around the house. You can't do the things you want to do nor the things you

are supposed to do. But when you eat, your body is fed and the strength and energy come back.

When you feel weak and apart from God because you have done something wrong, it's hard to do the work He wants you to do. You get angry at others very quickly. You sass back to your parents. You treat your brothers and sisters in mean ways. You don't do as well in school. Then it is also easier to be tempted to do something wrong. It's because you are hungry and weak. When you take God's food in Holy Communion, you get your strength back. You know that God loves and forgives you. You know that you are full. The pain of not feeling like a friend of God goes away. You don't feel apart from God any more, because He has told you that He is as near to you as the bread and wine. You don't have to be as angry, as sassy, as mean or as lonely. You can do better in school because your hurt is gone. You will still make mistakes. You will still forget sometimes how much God loves you and that you are His child. But you will remember Jesus, and how He gave His body for you on the cross, and how His blood took away the bad things you do. Remembering Him will make you want to do better. Because He took away your hurt, you won't want to hurt others. In fact, you will want to help them get rid of the hurts they have. You will want to tell them about the wonderful God who fills you with His love and forgiveness.

A. Think of a time when you have felt weak and tired. Do you remember being mean or sassy at that time? Did you lose your patience easily? Did you grumble and complain more?

B. How did you feel differently after you had a chance to rest? Did that help you treat others better?

C. How do you feel Holy Communion can help you treat others better? Can you find rest by knowing that God loves and forgives you?

LESSON NUMBER TEN

Holy Communion is a wonderful gift from God. When God made you, He also loved you very much. He saw you as someone special. In His word He commanded your parents to bring you to Baptism. In Baptism He gave you His first promise. He called you His child. He promised to be with you as a father. You became part of His family. He is proud of His creation and wants you to live as His child.

As you get older, God knows how hard it becomes to live as His child. He knows how many times the devil tells lies to God's children, just as he did to Adam. God knows it is hard to say "no" to those lies. He knows you need help.

He offers to bring you His promise in another way. Every time you take Holy Communion, you are reminded of His promise. You are His. You are loved and forgiven. You belong to the family of God. He will help you live as He wants His children to live. Learn to take the Holy Communion with joy. Treat it as you would the most precious gift you have ever received. That is what it is!

A. If you have a copy of your Baptism certificate, read through it with your mother or father. What does it say about

your relationship with God?

B. How do Baptism and Holy Communion go together? What do they both do for you?

C. What did God promise you in Baptism? What does He promise you in Holy Communion?

D. Do you feel you are ready for Holy Communion? Why? Why not? What do you now expect to receive from God when you take Holy Communion?

Steps for Implementation of the Study Guide

1. Implementation begins with a general awareness of the program. A presentation is made to the Board of Elders which includes a review of the development of the currently practiced connection between Holy Communion and confirmation. The consent and support of the Board of Elders is sought and received before any further implementation is done. This process includes:

- a. a review of the history of confirmation and first Communion;
- b. a review of the objectives for the study guide;
- c. a reading and explanation of the study guide itself;
- d. a clear definition of the role of the elders in the implementation of the process.

2. A general education plan for the congregation is developed and presented. This is to include a sketch of the history of confirmation and first Communion with a rationale for the current practice. The reasons for the desired change are given with a statement of the advantages for such a change as drawn from chapters one and two of this project.

3. Parents with children in grades three through five are targeted for participation in the use of the study guide. They are to be given a specific mailing explaining the program in detail, as well as a follow-up phone call to discuss with them personally their interest in the program and to answer any questions they might have.

4. A time is set to meet with those parents who are interested in the program. The purpose of this meeting is to review in greater detail the aspects of preparing their children for early reception of Holy Communion and the advantages of doing so.

5. Two class periods are set for the purpose of reviewing with the parents the essence of what Luther's Small Catechism teaches about Holy Communion. This time will also be used to read through the study guide with the parents and answer any questions they might have regarding it. The parents are also provided a timeline to follow in reading through the study guide with their children and helping them do the related projects. Generally, it is recommended that the lessons in the study guide be done one per week. This enables adequate time for reflection as well as completion of projects outlined. The pastor is available to both parents and children to help them through any particular problems they might encounter.

6. After the parents feel their child has a sufficient understanding of Holy Communion and has met the objectives of the study guide, parents and child meet with the pastor in the

presence of the family's elder to review and discuss those objectives. The pastor examines the child as to his knowledge of Holy Communion and his understanding of it as a means of grace.

7. If it is determined by the pastor, elder and parent that the child is not yet ready to receive Holy Communion, an alternative plan is considered by which the child may at a later date continue the process. This plan may include further review of the study guide or the setting of another date for examining the child.

8. If it is determined that the child is ready to receive Holy Communion, the Board of Elders is given a recommendation to that effect, and upon approval of that board, the child is welcomed at subsequent celebrations of Holy Communion.

It is understood that this procedure is followed voluntarily by parents and children. There is to be no pressure from the pastor, elder or parent for the child to participate. There is to be no stigma attached to the child who wishes to wait or is determined not to be ready for Holy Communion. This is not to be seen as a bench mark for determining the spiritual level of a family, nor is it to be used for any sort of evaluation of the child's spiritual progress. If the child is determined not to be ready for Holy Communion, reasons for that determination are to be kept in strictest confidence by the pastor and elder.

CHAPTER FOUR

A MODEL FOR CONFIRMATION INSTRUCTION

A Survey of the Confirmation Attitudes of Faith Lutheran Church

On March 7, 1993, a survey was distributed to the members of Faith Lutheran Church, Grand Blanc, Michigan (See appendix A). The purpose of this survey was to determine the attitude of the congregation toward confirmation, the parental involvement in instruction of pre-confirmation children, and the perceived overall effectiveness of the confirmation program with which the members of Faith were familiar. Four-hundred-ninety worshipers were present on the day the survey was taken. One-hundred-ninety returned the survey form, 138 of which had experienced some type of junior confirmation instruction.

The general results of the survey indicated that confirmation was a quite positive experience for most of the respondents. Seventy-nine percent remembered confirmation to be a spiritually meaningful experience. That percentage did not vary significantly among different age groups. Seventy-seven percent felt they remembered much of what they had learned during confirmation instruction. Seventy-seven percent indicated that they usually enjoyed confirmation classes. This is a significantly high percentage. Marvin Bergman, in his study of

Lutheran confirmation, reports that over 62 percent of the pastors he surveyed regarding problems and challenges of youth confirmation indicated that lack of learner interest in confirmation classes was a problem (Bergman 1981, 8).

The survey of Faith Lutheran Church indicated another surprising finding: only 16 percent felt they should have been confirmed at a younger age. Bergman's survey indicated that almost 50 percent of the pastors felt determining the appropriate age for the rite of confirmation was a problem (Bergman 1981, 9).

Where the positive responses of the survey respondents began to drop was in response to questions about relationships. Only 66 percent felt confirmation was a positive time of building a relationship with their pastor, 66 percent felt it built positive relationships with other church members, and 56 percent thought it was a positive time for strengthening their relationship with their parents. Bergman's study validates the latter feeling. Ninety-two percent of the pastors he surveyed reported that lack of parental interest in confirmation instruction was a problem (Bergman 1981, 8). When asked what the primary reasons for attending confirmation classes were, the two most popular survey responses were, "It was the thing to do at my age," (98%) and "My parents made me go" (91%). Questions regarding the role of parents in the process seemed to indicate that parental involvement was viewed by the children as more enforcing than supporting. This perception was borne out by the fact that only

54 percent of the respondents said their parents were actively involved in their confirmation instruction, and only 57 percent indicated that their parents regularly helped them with confirmation lessons and memory work. On the other hand, only 34 percent wished their parents had been more supportive and involved. It appears that a large number of the confirmands felt their parents were not involved to a significant extent but an even larger number did not seem to be disturbed by that fact. Bergman's study indicates that pastors, in contrast, are deeply concerned that parents are not sufficiently involved.

The situation from the parents' point of view was different. Seventy-seven percent of those who responded as parents said they were actively involved in their children's confirmation instruction and 81 percent felt they would like to be even more involved. Willingness for greater involvement, however, did not necessarily reflect the desire of parents to assume responsibility. An item on the survey stated, "I believe that confirmation instruction is primarily the responsibility of: 1) the pastor 2) parents 3) the children 4) the church." Twenty-seven percent said this responsibility belonged to the pastor, 35 percent said it belonged to the parents, 12 percent to the children, and 32 percent to the church. While there was a willingness by the parents to be more involved, 67 percent wished primary responsibility for the program to remain with the pastor and the church. This indicates that the perception of what it means to be involved in the program differs among the points of

the view of the parents, pastor and children.

The survey results indicate several things. There is a receptivity to a new style of confirmation instruction which involves the parents to a greater degree. There is general satisfaction with confirmation instruction as a means of preparing children for more responsible church membership. While children do not necessarily see the need for greater parental involvement, the parents do. Yet the parents look to the pastor and the church to lead and motivate them in this endeavor. With this perception of the congregation's attitude toward confirmation in mind, a program of instruction involving the parents to a greater extent was devised for Faith Lutheran Church.

The Use of Parents and Pastor in the Confirmation Program at Faith Lutheran Church

The main goal of the confirmation program begun at Faith Lutheran Church in the fall of 1992 was to bring about a realization of Luther's statement at the beginning of five of the Six Chief Parts of the Small Catechism, "As the head of the family should teach them in a simple way to his household" (Luther's Small Catechism [1986], 9, 13, 16, 21, 28). The head of the family was defined as that person in the family who had assumed the responsibility for the spiritual nurturing of the child. This could be the father, mother, or in some cases a grandparent or other relative.

It was recognized that the traditional classroom setting for

confirmation instruction presented some major obstacles. Norman Schell cites some of these obstacles:

1. Classroom discipline is difficult--if not impossible--to maintain. Students arrive for Confirmation instruction with a negative attitude. They do not want to be there. The scheduling of classes is often right after a full day of regular school, or in direct conflict with Saturday "vacation" activities. To make matters worse, students know from experience that parents side with them when discipline is exercised by teachers.

2. Conventional classroom evaluation of student progress through Confirmation curriculum material is a lesson in parental confrontation. "How can you give that grade to my child? This is a matter of faith! How can you evaluate my child's faith?" Students know that "grades" in Confirmation instruction are meaningless.

3. How can a congregation place an attendance requirement on class participation that is meaningful? Any other activity of parents and students is more important than Confirmation instruction. Requiring an attendance percentage results in a wide variety of numbers games. What about that student who missed just one too many classes to squeeze in under the limit? Dare we also require regular attendance in worship and Sunday School as a part of the Confirmation instruction process?

4. Family, school, and recreation schedules have top priority. Confirmation instruction is what a student does if there is nothing else to do. School districts have become merciless in their scheduling of extra-curricular activities after school, evenings, and weekends.

5. The classroom environment prevents flexibility in accommodating individual student abilities, motivation, attention span, and attitude. The classroom teacher must teach to the majority, and hope that a workable median is found between the bored and overwhelmed students.

6. Available classroom curriculum materials often leave much to be desired. While every curriculum is strong in one or more areas, all have weaknesses. Even if we would dare to assume the theological correctness of any given curriculum, presentation methods, illustrations and examples do not reach all students.

7. The traditional classroom setting does not lend itself to memorizing. Few public schools require students to memorize. Students arrive at the age for Confirmation instruction with no experience with memory work, and no motivation to start. Add to that a parental attitude of non-involvement and you have an insurmountable problem.

While each of Schell's concerns are valid to some degree, it is almost impossible to address each one in a comprehensive program. It is possible, however, to address many of these concerns by involving parents more deeply in the instruction and learning process. With that as the primary motive for change, the following general goals for the program of Faith Lutheran Church were developed:

1. to bring the children to a better understanding of Christianity and the doctrines of the Lutheran Church;
2. to help the children, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to grow in their personal faith and relationship with God;
3. to help the children use their faith in everyday situations by facing and discussing issues that are current in their lives;
4. to show the children the value and effect of serving their church and community in meaningful ways;
5. to impress on the children that confirmation is not an end in itself, but part of the process of Christian growth;
6. to build positive relationships with fellow students, parents, pastor and teachers;
7. to involve parents as an essential part of the children's confirmation instruction.

Each family was reviewed by the pastor, confirmation coordinator, and director of Christian education. The person, or in some cases persons, most likely to be serving as the spiritual leader of the family was identified. The involvement and experience of the person or persons in Christian education was identified and evident spiritual gifts were considered. Regularity in worship attendance, general activity in the congregation, administrative experience and the gift to teach

were also considered. Those parents who were known to have the gift to teach were first identified. They had displayed this gift previously through teaching Sunday School, Weekday School or Vacation Bible School. It was to be determined by the director of Christian education that these individuals had a sufficient knowledge and understanding of Christian doctrine to teach at the eighth grade level. In some cases they had experience teaching in the public school system. Two teachers for every eight students were then recruited, with the understanding that they would team-teach for one half hour each week every Monday evening from September through April. Their responsibility during this time would be to present the more factual, academic material from the lesson prescribed for each week. They were to be given the opportunity to meet with the pastor for a half hour prior to each class period in order to address any questions or difficulties.

The second group of parents to be recruited was known as the record keepers. These persons were to be those who could be counted on to be available to meet with students each Monday evening prior to their lesson time to monitor their progress. The primary qualification for this responsibility was the ability to make the time commitment on a weekly basis. Each record keeper was to be assigned two children with whom the record keeper would meet for fifteen minutes. The responsibility of the record keepers was as follows:

1. to keep a record of each child's church and Sunday School attendance;
2. to listen to and record the accuracy of each child's

memory assignment;

3. to check each child's homework assignment;
4. to monitor and record each child's participation in youth, community and parish activities;
5. to complete a quarterly progress report on each child to be given to the pastor, the child's parents, and the child's elder;
6. to alert the pastor if any child is seriously falling behind in any one of these areas.

The third and final responsibility of parents in this program was to coordinate special projects. This involved primarily providing drivers for transporting the children to and from off-site locations where special projects were to take place. These projects included a visit to a local nursing home, an evening of service at the Genesee County Food Bank, and an evening of raking leaves or doing some other such service for a shut-in. Parents involved in this area of the program were expected to serve as chaperons during the event.

The role of the pastor in this program was designed to change significantly. The pastor moved from teacher to relator. The pastor was removed from responsibility for hearing memory work and checking assignments. Once the basic material for the lesson was presented during the first half hour of the lesson, the pastor gathered the entire class together for a discussion period. During this time questions brought up during the first half hour were to be answered and evaluated. The class was frequently divided into discussion groups to offer solutions to a particular issue. The pastor assumed the responsibility of

relating the material to the life of the child and allowing for the group to focus on how the lesson dealt with issues they faced at home or at school. This enabled the children to see the human, caring side of the pastor and not merely the academic, disciplining side.

A vital part of this confirmation program was played by the confirmation coordinator. This person was a lay volunteer with training and interest in Christian education. The confirmation coordinator met with the pastor on a regular basis to review progress of the students and the progress of the program in general. Prior to the beginning of the program, she was instrumental in identifying and recruiting parents to serve as record keepers and teachers. She was also responsible for providing spiritual growth opportunities for the children outside of the classroom and scheduling related activities. She met regularly with the record keepers to ensure that they understood what they are doing and are adequately monitoring the progress of each child.

A Description of the Confirmation Model
Used at Faith Lutheran Church

The following is a typical schedule followed each Monday evening during the confirmation instruction period:

- | | |
|-------------|--|
| 5:30 - 6:00 | The children are involved in either handbells, choir or drama. |
| 6:00 - 6:15 | The children meet with their record keepers. |
| 6:15 - 6:45 | The children, in groups of eight or less, meet with their parent-teachers. |

6:45 - 7:15 The entire class meets with the pastor.

The following was the proposed schedule of classes and events for the confirmation class of 1994-1995:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Lesson or Event</u>	<u>Memory Assignment</u>
8-22	7:00 pm Parent meeting	
9-12	Holy Communion	"What is the Sacrament of the Altar?" (<u>Small Catechism</u> , p. 227).
9-19	Holy Communion	"What is the benefit of such eating and drinking?" (<u>Small Catechism</u> , p.233).
9-26	Christian Response to AIDS	"Who, then, receives the Sacrament worthily?" (<u>Small Catechism</u> , p.238).
10-3	Christian Response to AIDS	I Corinthians 11:28-29 Romans 16:17
10-10	Christian Response to Ecology	Genesis 2:15 Genesis 1:29
10-17	Christian Response to Ecology	Psalms 8:4 Matthew 10:29-30
10-24	Service Project (Shutin Raking)	
10-31	No class	
11-7	Holy Baptism	The Nature of Baptism (<u>Small Catechism</u> , p.199).
11-14	Holy Baptism	The Blessings of Baptism (<u>Small Catechism</u> , p.204).
11-21	Christian Response to Decision Making	Meaning of the Third Article, Part I (<u>Small Catechism</u> , p. 144).
11-28	Christian Response to Decision Making	Meaning of the Third Article, Part II (<u>Small Catechism</u> , p. 144).
12-5	God and Creation	Meaning of the First Article, Part I (<u>Small Catechism</u> , p. 104).

12-12	Christmas Program Practice	
1-9	Christian Response to Genetics	Meaning of the First Article, Part II (<u>Small Catechism</u> , p. 104).
1-16	No class	
1-23	Christian Response to Genetics	Meaning of the First Article, Part III (<u>Small Catechism</u> , p. 104).
1-30	Christian Response to Evolution	Hebrews 11:3 Colossians 1:16
2-6	Christian Response to Evolution	Psalm 33:6 Psalm 19:1
2-13	The Person and Work of Jesus Christ	Meaning of the Second Article, Part I (<u>Small Catechism</u> , p. 115).
2-20	No class	
2-27	The Person and Work of Jesus Christ	Meaning of the Second Article, Part II (<u>Small Catechism</u> , p. 116).
3-6	Service Project - Genesee County Food Bank	
3-13	Christian Response to Abortion	Sixth Commandment and Meaning (<u>Small Catechism</u> , p. 79).
3-20	Christian Response to Abortion	Psalm 139:13 Isaiah 49:1
3-24,25	Confirmand Retreat Camp Mahn-Go-Tah-See	
3-27	Christian Response to Euthanasia	Fifth Commandment and Meaning (<u>Small Catechism</u> , p. 75).
4-3	Christian Response to Euthanasia	Genesis 9:6 Matthew 5:5,7,9
4-10	Service Project - Riverbend Nursing Home	
4-17	No class	

4-24	My Life with God As a Christian Witness	Acts 1:8 I Peter 3:15
5-1	My Life with God As a Christian Steward	II Corinthians 8:9 II Corinthians 9:7
5-5	5:00 Confirmation Rehearsal 5:45 Confirmation Pictures 6:30 Confirmation Banquet	
5-7	11:00 Confirmation Day Service	

The above schedule was implemented with several objectives in mind. Parents were involved in the process of presenting the first part of the lesson each week. Record keepers listened to memory work and checked on worship and classroom attendance. As the pastor, I was able to supervise this process and then complete the lesson with relationship building material. Each lesson was developed with the intent of bringing the issues faced by the children into a setting where they could be freely discussed in a biblical context. Lessons written with this purpose in mind are detailed in appendix C.

The first lesson the children studied was Holy Communion. The purpose for this was to help accomplish one of the major goals of the confirmation program: to separate first Communion from confirmation. Once the child completed these two classes and expressed the ability to take Communion in a meaningful way, he was eligible to receive it at a subsequent worship service. This practice was to serve for the time being until the program of communing children at an earlier age as outlined in chapter three can be implemented.

Incorporated into the confirmation program were three

special service projects. These projects were designed to fulfill the goal of community involvement and learning to live the faith. The first project was a simple example of doing a small chore for someone who because of age or illness could not do it himself. We chose fall raking because every child is capable of helping in some way and it is deeply appreciated by the recipients. It also served as a relationship builder between the children and older parishioners.

The second project involved a different level of ministry. Genesee County receives tons of donated canned and packaged items from merchants and wholesalers. These items come in bulk and often contain damaged or partially opened pieces. The children were asked to sort the usable from the unusable and box the items according to specific categories. This project gave the children a sense of working together with a community organization. They were offered the opportunity to identify with those less fortunate who avail themselves of the food bank.

The third project involved specific relationships with the elderly or infirm. The Riverbend Nursing Care Facility has a wide range of people with various needs and capabilities. The children were given the opportunity first to present a brief musical program to those residents who were able to come to the central dining area. After this presentation, the children were encouraged to walk through the halls and look for residents who were eager to talk to someone, especially a child. This was done to teach the children compassion and understanding for those who

find the "golden years" to be less than golden. They also experienced a sense of bonding as the residents described feelings of being lonely or misunderstood which are similar to those that some of the children experience. During the class period following the nursing home visit, the children were given the opportunity to react to their experiences and relate those parts of their visit which made an impact on them.

These three projects, while in no way definitive, offered the children at least a brief opportunity to encounter the real world of those less fortunate than they. It gave them the chance to be "Jesus with skin on" to those who need a touch of His hand and a reminder of His undying love for them. It allowed the children to meet the challenge of St. Paul that "as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers" (Galatians 6:10, NIV 1987, 1450).

On or about the last weekend in March, the children were taken on a confirmand retreat at Camp Mahn-Go-Tah-See near Hale, Michigan. This camp is owned and operated by the Michigan District of the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod and provides an excellent place for the children to reflect on their faith and their walk with Christ. During this time, relationships were built with pastor and counselors as well as with each other. A key element of the retreat was the writing of the Faith Statement. This is a summary of what Jesus Christ means to them and how each child plans to apply this to his life. These

statements were read to parents and family members at a program following the confirmation banquet. It gave the children the chance to present a personal witness to those close to them.

It is helpful in developing a rationale for writing the Faith Statement to look at faith from two perspectives, the biblical/doctrinal and the human. Lutheran Christians believe that faith is a gift of God first received by a child at Baptism. The children are given as a model the definition of faith used by the writer to the Hebrews when he says, "Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see" (Hebrews 11:1, NIV 1987, 1497). The children are also given a sample statement containing the significant elements of saving faith, such as outlined by Francis Pieper when he writes, "According to Scripture, saving faith is faith in the remission of sins for the sake of Christ's vicarious satisfaction, faith in the grace of God, who justifies the sinner without the deeds of the Law, by faith" (Pieper 1950, 1:81).

James Fowler looks at faith from the human perspective. He says that faith develops through six stages.

Stage 1--Intuitive-projective faith (early childhood): This is the fantasy-filled, imitative phase in which the child can be powerfully and permanently influenced by examples, moods, actions, and stories of the visible faith of related adults. The person thinks in terms of magical explanations of events.

Stage 2--Mythic-literal faith (ages 6-12): The developing ability of logical thinking helps the person sort out reality from make-believe.

Stage 3--Synthetic-conventional faith (ages 12 and beyond): With the ability for abstract thinking comes the need to integrate faith into a systematic whole. Developing self-identity causes the person to identify with others in a unity of belief,

with God perceived as an extension of interpersonal relationships and as a close personal friend.

Stage 4--Individuative-reflective faith (early adulthood and beyond): Self is separated from the group and a person's beliefs are critically reflected upon. A demythologizing of religious rituals occurs as the person seeks meaning in religious practices and assumes greater personal responsibility for his or her faith.

Stage 5--Conjunctive faith (midlife and beyond): As deeper self-awareness develops, the person becomes alive to paradox and open to other religions and people. It becomes axiomatic that truth is multi-dimensional, and the person seeks significant encounters with others.

Stage 6--Universalizing faith (midlife and beyond): Issues of love and justice become all important as a person is grounded in oneness with the power of being. As people are drawn to this stage by God, they learn to radically live the kingdom of God as a means of overcoming division, oppression, and brutality. (Fowler 1981, 122ff)

If most confirmands are typical in their faith development, then according to Fowler they would be somewhere around stage three. The writing of the Faith Statement by the children must be introduced in such a way as to allow them to integrate that stage into their statement. Putting Fowler's description into their words as well as incorporating the biblical and doctrinal definition, confirmands are given the following instructions for writing their Faith Statement:

1. Define in your statement what faith means as a way of relating to Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior from sin.
2. How have you arrived at this faith, even though you have never personally seen Christ, nor will you until you die?
3. Think of ways in which that faith can relate to your life as a whole, in other words, what kind of a person does that make you and how does that affect the way you live?
4. How does that faith unite you with the other members of your class, your pastor and teachers, and fellow members of Faith Lutheran Church?

5. How does your faith affect your general view of God and the way that view affects your approach to the end of your life?

6. How does your faith affect the way you feel about yourself as a person?

These guidelines were written to help the children prepare their Faith Statement in a way that was consistent with what they had learned in their instruction as well as with where they were in their cognitive development. If they are encouraged to use their ability for abstract thinking they will also be better equipped to understand those elements of the Christian faith that require such thinking, for example the Trinity, the two natures of Christ and Holy Communion.

Another element of involvement encouraged by the confirmation program of Faith Lutheran Church is youth group fellowship involvement. Faith Lutheran Church has a group called Junior Stillpoints which is made up of junior high school age children. This group discusses issues that confront the children in life and studies the Bible to address these issues. Faith also offers to this age group a recreational program called "Toozday Night." Here the children are able to have fun and build relationships in a Christian setting. Other programs offered them are "Riot Week," where the children go on a different recreational activity each day for an entire week, and the Fall Kick-Off Camp, an annual off-campus event designed to introduce the children to the youth group and its programs for the coming year.

The children were also asked to be involved in other parish

activities to strengthen their ties to the life of the congregation. They could serve as acolyte, help in the nursery, participate in the spring cleaning of the church, assist in decorating for Christmas, work on the Vacation Bible School Homecoming Parade float, and help with the Vacation Bible School program itself. From among the youth and parish activities mentioned, the children were to choose and attend at least twenty during the confirmation instructional period.

An Evaluation of the Program
Used at Faith Lutheran Church

In August of 1994, a survey was sent to thirty-four parents of children who had attended confirmation classes at Faith Lutheran Church from the fall of 1992 through the spring of 1994. These children, representing two classes, had participated in the new program for a full year. Seven of the survey forms were returned. While this is a rather disappointing return, those who submitted their responses were parents actively involved with the program. The results do indicate the satisfaction level that these parents had with the program. The survey included twelve questions, and each question included five boxes to be checked ranging from less effective to highly effective. The number one was given to mean less effective and the number five was given to mean highly effective. A copy of the survey is included in appendix B. The results of the survey were enlightening.

1. Rate the use of field trips and service projects. This area of the program was given two threes, three fours, and two

fives. One comment stated that, "It is a good idea to reinforce the importance of community service." Another stated, "Any 'hands on' experience in helping others is always effective." This area of the program was well received by the children. They enjoyed working at the food bank and contributing in a concrete way to needy people. Much care and concern for the elderly was observed during the nursing home visitation. Children spoke of having a new insight into the problems and challenges of aging. Raking for the shutins was greatly appreciated by those who received the benefits. Many offered to pay the children, and were impressed that the children were doing it simply as a part of a class project to help others. This is a highly effective part of the program and will continue to be used.

2. Rate the confirmand retreat. Since the parents did not attend this with their children, they could only rate it on the basis of what they heard from them and how they saw their children respond through the Faith Statement they had to write while there. This question brought a response of one three and six fives. The parents who responded felt the retreat was a highly effective way of developing the faith of their children. The only negative statement was the expression that "more discipline needs to be practiced to better use the time." There was no noticeable discipline problem with the children at these retreats. Generally they responded well to the study time and worked very hard at writing their Faith Statements. This part of the program will be left pretty well intact.

3. Rate the use of memory work and performance of assignments. This question brought responses of one three, four fours and two fives. One comment made indicated that the parent liked the emphasis on Bible verses but thought the students should work harder. Another felt the requirements needed better enforcement. Another stated, "The kids didn't enjoy this too much. They either did it well or not well at all." That statement has probably been true of memory work since it was first introduced. Bergman's survey of pastors revealed that 100 percent of the pastors surveyed felt motivating youth to memorize was often or sometimes a problem (Bergman 1981, 9). This is an area that needs revision. A way has to be found for the memory work to be reinforced. Much of it is learned by a quick glance prior to trying to repeat it to the record keeper. While the selection of verses and catechism passages is adequate, the method of monitoring and reporting progress back to the pastor and parents is currently inadequate. A standard form for having the children do their memory work is being considered. This would involve having the children fill in the blanks of printed memory verses that are partially complete. This would standardize the evaluation of the memory work and be easier for the pastor, parents and record keepers to monitor.

4. Rate the use of record keepers. This question brought responses of two threes, two fours and three fives. A positive comment from a parent was that this process increased parental involvement, was less threatening for the students and provided a

structured approach for hearing and recording memory. A very valid negative criticism was that not all the record keepers had the same requirements and this was sometimes confusing to the children. It was also noted that there needed to be a more factual basis for the data recorded. These are valid criticisms. The greatest advantage to the pastor of using this system other than involvement of the parents is that the pastor or parent/teacher does not have to use a significant amount of class time to listen to memory work. Standardizing the memory recording process as mentioned under number three will also help clarify the process.

5. How do you feel about splitting the class into two sections? Three of the respondents marked three, two marked four and two marked five. Comments included that it provided for better teaching, more individual help and kept the students' attention better. A concern was expressed about what this might do to class unity. The advantages of splitting the class far outweigh the disadvantages. Not only is student attention better, the parents who are teaching are able to keep better control. If a parent were given a class of eighteen or more students to teach, the results could be disastrous. As far as the concerns over class unity, this is achieved during the last half hour when the children meet as a group with the pastor. It would be impossible to involve the parents at the current level without splitting the class. This practice has worked very well.

6. How do you feel about parents acting as teachers? Two

responded with a three, five with a four and one with a five. The person who rated this as a five felt that if the teachers were capable and material suitable this system would work well. Another positive comment was that this provided the parents with an additional concept of what was going on with the program. Concerns were expressed that the parents be sufficiently knowledgeable about the materials used. This concern is valid. That is why care is taken in the selection of parents to teach. As indicated earlier, it is necessary that these teachers have shown an aptitude to teach and have demonstrated sufficient knowledge of the subject matter. This is determined through pre-class review with the pastor. While this may not be fool-proof, it has proved adequate.

7. Do you see this program increasing the understanding of what it means to work for the church? One parent responded with a two, another with a three, five with fours and one with a five. The one who rated it a two said, "I'm not sure this is getting through." The parent who rated it a five felt the program stressed service and thus improved the understanding of what church work involves. Bergman's survey of pastors indicated that 100 percent of them felt this area was very or somewhat important (Bergman 1981, 11). There probably is no certain way to measure this without directly observing the students on an every-day basis. While the program may not increase their actual involvement in church work, it most certainly has to increase their awareness of it. This can lead to greater involvement at a

later time in their lives.

8. How do you feel about the separation of confirmation from first Communion? This item was the most volatile of all. One parent did not even give a number rating, but simply stated, "I totally disagree with this program!" The remaining parents responded with two twos, one three, two fours and one five. One parent felt the first Communion was more meaningful to the children when it was connected with confirmation. Another felt that the children's interest in confirmation instruction waned because they were receiving Holy Communion so far in advance of their confirmation. This is one of the critical issues faced in this whole program. The tradition of combining the two is strong. Bergman's survey indicated that 100 percent of the pastors surveyed felt that a goal of confirmation instruction was to partake of Holy Communion in a meaningful way (Bergman 1981, 11). Of 316 individuals surveyed by Bergman, 268, or almost 85 percent partook of their first Communion after the rite of confirmation. It is obvious that the tradition of combining the two runs deeply, especially among those parents who have a life-long background in the Lutheran tradition and have learned from pastors who feel the same way. This area of the program is going to require a lot of education among the parishioners before a plan of communing children at fifth grade or earlier can be implemented.

9. Rank your child's attitude about attending instruction classes. This area was rated as generally quite good. Five of

the respondents rated it a four and two gave it a five. Bergman reported only 4 percent of the pastors saying disinterest in religion was never a problem (Bergman 1981, 8). One parent, who was also one of the teachers, indicated that more encouragement from the parents was needed to improve the attitude of the children. Other parents were heard to comment that the children liked this arrangement because it made the time go faster. That is indeed a distinct advantage to this program. Most of the children are attending a middle school where they move from room to room every hour. They are not accustomed to staying in one room with one teacher for a long period of time. The half hour with two different teachers in each class section provides them with variety, as does the move to the pastor's class for the second half hour.

10. Rate confirmation day as a meaningful spiritual experience. Not surprisingly, two parents indicated that it would have been more spiritual if it included first Communion. Most, however, rated it highly. Two rated it as a four and five as a five. One added a reservation. This parent stated, "I don't think they really realize this until they're much older." Another expressed an almost opposite view. "It seemed great but I'm not sure it was remembered for long." This has been an area of personal concern to me for a long time. In the three years I have been pastor of this church, fifty children have been confirmed. Of that number, eleven rarely or never worship or attend Holy Communion. Another thirteen are no longer active in

worship or in the church youth group on a regular basis. Only twenty-six of the fifty worship and commune regularly. Sadly, this is not an unusual statistic. Bergman records that in polling twenty-four congregations regarding the percentage of dropouts between confirmation and graduation from high school from 30 to 60 percent of the youth in almost 42 percent of the congregations had dropped out (Bergman 1981, 7).

The spiritual meaning of confirmation poses a serious question: are the children making a personal statement of faith or are they merely going through the motions for the sake of their parents or their peers? Might it not be more effective to make confirmation a personal, individual experience rather than feeling the necessity of being confirmed "with the group?" It is likely that as the program proceeds with a more individualized approach to the first reception of Holy Communion, the rite of confirmation might become more individualized as well. It remains to be seen if such individualization would reduce the dropout rate.

11. Rate the value of reading a Faith Statement at the confirmation banquet versus a public examination. The responses to this statement indicated a very positive acceptance of the reading of the Faith Statement in place of public examination. One parent indicated that the public examination "would not work today." Another indicated that faith is much more than the result of a test. Perhaps the best summary simply stated, "The faith statement comes from the heart, the public examination is

memorization out of fear." It is likely that some of these parents remembered their own public examination with very little fondness. Students in this program are given a choice between reading their Faith Statement and presenting an explanation of a faith shield they have drawn at the confirmand camp. Some feel more comfortable with an object in front of them without having to read from a printed page. This allows for some individual differences among the students while yet giving them the opportunity to share their faith in a meaningful way.

12. Rate the helpfulness of electives. During the first two years of the program, students were given a list of elective church activities from which they could choose. These electives included such activities as nursery duty, acolyting, church clean-up, various youth activities, helping with VBS, etc. This part of the program was dropped during the 1994-95 year because there was a lot of inequity in determining what counted as a suitable activity and what didn't. Participation in such electives is encouraged, but the record keepers no longer keep a list of what each child does.

Overall, the seven parents who evaluated the program appeared to be satisfied with it. While there were some reservations, particularly over the reception of first Communion in relation to confirmation, the general feeling was that the program was going well and was worth refining and continuing. As in any such program, refining is a key word. There will always be a certain amount of change necessary as the class size and

circumstances change. It must also be taken into account that each class will have its own unique personality, and what works for one class will not work for another. The program is designed to be flexible, and that must be a constant consideration.

The program as it has been used during the past two years has proven to have several advantages.

1. Parents are being required to accept a larger and more intimate role in the instruction of their children. Bergman asked pastors how they viewed the level of parental involvement in their confirmation programs. Only 4 percent rated the level of encouragement by parents to confirmands as high, only 17 percent rated the level of cooperation given by parents as high, and none rated the parents' support of the church's total ministry as high. Half of those surveyed used materials that called for parental participation with youth in home study and discussion, yet far less than half indicated they were getting such participation (Bergman 1981, 15). Using parents directly in the program is designed to correct this. They have a better sense of what is going on. They experience first hand the frustrations over children who do not come to class prepared, and are motivated to see to their own child's preparation.

2. The pastor, since he is not the full-time teacher, is under less pressure to be the disciplinarian. This enables him to show the children a lighter side of himself. He is less concerned over discipline and more involved in building a better relationship between the children and himself.

3. Class time is not consumed checking assignments and listening to memory work. The record keepers take this responsibility and a time is designated for it.

4. Children are provided with a wider variety of experiences. Not only do they have up to four different teachers, they are also encouraged to bring their faith out into the world. This enables them to become familiar with what it means to be a minister to those less fortunate than they.

There are also several disadvantages to this program that may need some correction.

1. There tends to be confusion during the record keeping period as record keepers seek the children they are to record, and those children sometimes seek activities elsewhere. There has to be a more concrete arrangement of where each child is to be and where the record keeper will be.

2. There are different standards among the record keepers. Some of them are very strict in what they expect of memory work, while others are fairly lenient. This problem was addressed earlier, and may be solved by some type of standardized memory work form.

3. There is some tendency among the record keepers to be unreliable. They will occasionally not show up, and another record keeper must assume their task. There must be better communication and organization among them to prevent this from happening.

4. The quality of teaching and discipline can present a

risky situation. While this has generally been good, there have been instances where even two parents have not been able to keep the class focused on the lesson. There must be continued improvement of the training of the parents for this program, and great care must be taken in the selection of those who teach.

5. The pastor is missing from the teaching of some of the vital factual material. This situation is currently being studied and it is likely that there will be more factual teaching on the part of the pastor in the future. The materials which will be used as described in the next chapter will focus on this.

Overall, the advantages outweigh the disadvantages. The program has so far had more successes than failures. Most important of all, the primary goal of involving the parents in the process of preparing their children for confirmation and the Christian life is taking place. No matter what else might need alteration, this focus will not be lost. Once the congregation moves to the next stage of having parents prepare their children for first Communion as well, the overall program will more closely reflect the biblical model which was copied by Martin Luther and which is the desired model to follow.

CHAPTER FIVE
A CURRICULUM MODEL FOR PARENT-
BASED INSTRUCTION

The Aim of the Lesson Model

The most important aim of teaching confirmation instruction, whether it is the pastor or a parent doing it, is to challenge them in their Christian faith and life in such a way that they are brought into a closer and more meaningful relationship with their Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. In order to do this, it is helpful to know and understand the individual differences among the students as well as taking into consideration general characteristics of adolescents.

Currently, most of the children receiving confirmation instruction are either thirteen or fourteen years of age. At this age, the children experience changes in cognitive development. Jean Piaget, a Swiss psychologist, identified four stages in this development. These stages represent differences in the way people think. James Garbarino lists and explains these stages as follows:

1. Sensorimotor stage--Ages 0-2. This stage is characterized by sensory perceptions. It involves many reflex type actions.

2. Preoperations stage--Ages 2-7. The child develops a language, but is not yet able to perform concrete operations. The child views everything in relation to self.

3. Concrete operations stage--Ages 7-11. The child can now think logically. He is able to group similar concepts together. He can classify objects and events and can put events and ideas in logical sequence.

4. Formal operations stage--Ages 12 and up. The child is now able to think in abstractions. He is capable of developing a theory and reasoning it out. Thought is no longer dependent on concrete content. (Garbarino 1985, 147-150)

The confirmand is in the formal operations stage. The child, being able to think abstractly, can conceptualize the idea of a God who can bring life to men and is able to be present in Word and Sacrament. It is important, however, that individual differences not be overlooked. Barbara Sommer writes, "The stages always occur in predictable order; however, the timing of the stages varies from individual to individual and by culture because of the genetic and environmental influences" (Sommer 1978, 58).

Gary Beck, in an unpublished major applied project on confirmation and discipleship, notes that these individual differences have many implications for confirmation instruction. Beck writes as follows:

1. The stages emphasize the need to consider each confirmand's level of understanding.

2. Emphasize discussion, simulations, and inductive and deductive Bible studies. Do not just lecture. Give students a chance to think things through.

3. Also include concrete learning experiences that involve activity.

4. Use a variety of teaching techniques--visual, auditory, movement, peer-teaching, "hands-on," and so forth. Different students learn best in different ways.

5. Vary the methods for confirmands to respond. Allow for written, pictorial, demonstration, or oral response to questions

and exercises.

These are excellent guidelines to follow in developing a pattern of instruction for confirmation age students. Without recognizing the differences in levels of learning among the students and adapting methods of teaching to those levels, much of what is taught will not become a part of their life-relationship with Christ.

Emotions also vary from child to child. Gesell, Ilg, and Ames studied Anglo middle-class youth. They noted behavioral trends during the adolescent years. Awareness of these trends is helpful in developing a teaching model for confirmation instruction. The following is a summary of the emotional make-up of a thirteen year old:

The 13 year old is often quiet and moody. The exuberance and enthusiasms so prevalent at 12 have definitely calmed down. The 13 year old usually has his emotions in good control. He feels more independent and acts more independently. Thirteen year olds worry a lot, are detailed in their criticism of parents, and are concerned about what others think of them. Their worry reflects an increasing sensitivity to inner personal concerns. Thirteen is a period of reflection and appraisal. Sensitivity to criticism is heightened. Thirteen is a time when sympathetic understanding is heightened.

When he's angry, 13 seems to be able to control himself better than formerly. He often doesn't get really furious and explode the way he used to. He's more likely to be annoyed or irritated than angry. . . .

. . . Expressions of affection do not come easily to 13. He is more standoffish. He seems to have pulled into himself. (Gesell 1956, 153, 155)

In regard to the fourteen year old, Gesell and his associates observed the following:

The emotional climate mellows with a reduction in shyness

and touchiness. The inward absorption of 13 established the groundwork for an integrated and balanced self-concept, and, as a result, 14 shows a better orientation to self and others. Fourteens are not ashamed to show how they feel. Some still cover up feelings, but on the whole they are open about emotions and like to have people know how they feel.

Fourteen tends to have moments of being awfully happy. It is his social life . . . which gives the 14 the greatest happiness. Happy moods far outstrip sad ones. Rather than being sad, he is apt to be annoyed or moody. But 14 is not likely to stay in these somber states for very long. . . .

. . . Fourteen is not one to keep things bottled up. He is less inhibited than at 13. Fourteen isn't quite the worrier he was at 13. (Gesell 1956, 190-191)

The study of Gesell and his associates is rather old. It was conducted in the mid 1950's. It is hard to determine whether these findings still hold true. There didn't appear to be a more recent study of a similar nature. The teacher training curriculum Teaching the Faith contains a brief analysis of the emotional make-up of the junior high school student. It reflects the observations of Gesell by describing students at that age as having frequent mood shifts, having needs for love and acceptance, as being preoccupied with self, and as being in the process of developing their self-concept (Teaching the Faith [1993], 6). Curriculum used for confirmation instruction must be sensitive to these characteristics of adolescents.

Another factor that must be considered when dealing with thirteen and fourteen year olds is their social level. They highly value being accepted by their peers. They will do things to seek this acceptance which adults frown upon. An aim of a lesson model for this age group must include the promotion and encouragement of positive peer influence. The children must

learn and be encouraged to build each other up in their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. In doing this, they may well have greater influence than the parent/teacher or the pastor.

It must also be remembered that at this age there is a growing interest in the opposite sex. Some may already be dating. Factors considering Christian dating, moral standards for dating, and even how to break up with a boy or girl must be considered as valid in a confirmation curriculum.

Thirteen and fourteen year olds are beginning to experience a growing need for independence, especially from parents and others in authority. This need is often interpreted by the teacher as a "discipline problem." It can result in students desiring to distance themselves from parents and pastor. Part of what influences this relationship is the fact that adolescents go through levels of moral orientation. If these levels are not recognized by the parents or the pastor, conflict in the classroom setting is likely. Gabarino cites a study by Lawrence Kohlberg which identifies three levels of moral orientation, each of which has two sequential stages.

Level I--Preconventional level. Children define good and bad in terms of physical consequences (punishment, reward, favors).

Stage 1--Obedience and punishment orientation. Moral decisions are subordinate to superior power or prestige. One seeks reward and avoids punishment. One conforms to rules to avoid punishment.

Stage 2--Instrumental/relativistic orientation. Acts defined as right are those which satisfy the self in some instrumental way (as opposed to satisfying one's conscience). One conforms to rules in order to obtain rewards or to have favors returned.

Level II---Conventional level. The emphasis is on conforming, as in the preconventional level, but also with maintaining, supporting and justifying the social order. While control of conduct remains external, motivation becomes largely internal; that is, behavior becomes less dependent upon external reward or punishment.

Stage 3--Good-boy orientation. The maintenance of good relations with others is of utmost importance. Intentions begin to play a role in moral judgment. One conforms to avoid disapproval or dislike by others.

Stage 4--Law-and-order orientation. Retaining good relationships is superseded by the need to do one's duty in maintaining the given social order. Obedience to authority is paramount. One conforms to avoid censure by legitimate authorities and resultant guilt.

Level III--Postconventional level. The control of conduct is internal. The standards to which one conforms are one's own and decisions to act reflect inner processes of thought and judgment. One develops his own autonomous, moral principles which have validity and applicability separate from his identification with other persons and groups.

Stage 5--Social contract, legalistic orientation. Morality reflects shared standards and rights for all. Law, a social contract serving the general good, influences moral judgement in a contractual sense rather than as something requiring blind obedience as in stage 4.

Stage 6--Universal/ethical principle orientation. Conduct and moral judgment are based on internal values irrespective of the actions of others. One conforms to avoid self-condemnation. (Garbarino 1985, 169-71)

In commenting on these stages, it should be noted that a person generally moves through these stages in a progressive manner without skipping a stage (Manaster 1977, 59). The person's situation in life determines the highest stage he will achieve. In a typical confirmation class, the stage of development reached will most certainly vary among the members of the class. Sommer suggests that most confirmands would be at the conventional level.

Combining Kohlberg's data with Piaget's stages of cognitive development, we can infer that adolescents are most likely to provide moral judgments at the conventional level with a mix of pre-conventional judgments and an occasional post-conventional decision. (Sommer 1978, 74)

An estimation of the classes I have observed in my confirmation teaching over the past eighteen years would indicate that many of the children are at stage three of development. They definitely show a pattern of conforming to the approval or disapproval of others, especially their peers.

Another factor that must be considered when working with adolescents is that they are beginning to question the beliefs and value systems of their parents, pastors and teachers. They begin developing their own ideas of what is right and wrong. They often resent being told what to do or not to do simply because the person in authority says, "Because I told you to." Louise Ames writes of early teens:

Many are no longer willing to rely entirely on their parents' teachings. They are trying to make up their own minds, trying to reconcile their parents' teachings about right and wrong with what their friends do, and with their own feelings about what is and is not appropriate. (Ames 1988, 149)

An important part of curriculum selection is taking into account these attitudes and not developing a program that merely forces the opinions of authority figures on the children.

The aim of the lesson model must include as an objective accepting the confirmands where they are. This will not be the same for each individual. Not only have some matured physically more than others, some are at different stages of mental and emotional development. Others, simply by virtue of inherited and

environmental interests and abilities, learn differently from others. This leads us to the discussion of a technique of instruction that has been designed to allow for these differences.

Individual Differences and the 4MAT System of Instruction

In 1987, Bernice McCarthy developed a theory of instruction called "The 4MAT System." This system was designed to recognize the individual differences among learners, both in terms of their abilities and in terms of their interests. McCarthy divided learners into four categories with the understanding that every lesson or unit of instruction should include a learning experience that would relate to learners from each category (McCarthy 1987).

The first learner McCarthy described is the Focus learner. She describes this learner as being imaginative and wanting a concrete experience in learning. The Focus learner wishes to create an experience and analyze that experience by asking "Why," or "Why not?" This learner focuses on values and meanings, wishing to sense, feel, experience and watch what is going on. McCarthy describes this person as one who perceives information concretely and processes it reflectively. This learner tries to integrate the experience with himself, valuing insightful thinking. He works for harmony and wants to be personally involved in the process of bringing that harmony about. He is interested in people and culture, meaning and clarity. He wants to absorb reality as much as possible. To illustrate this type

of learner, McCarthy draws on a hypothetical study of the stars. In such a study, this person would want to be in the stars, to be among them to observe and experience them as closely and with as much reality as possible.

The second type of learner McCarthy calls the Inform learner. This learner is analytic. This person wants to reflect on the observation and integrate the experience into facts and skills. This person focuses on information and learning through a combination of watching and thinking through the concepts presented. This person learns best when he can perceive information abstractly and process it reflectively. He needs to know what the experts think. He likes things in sequence and wants to see a sense of continuity in the learning process. He needs details which he can critique and thus likes to collect a lot of data. He is thorough and industrious in his approach to learning and enjoys the traditional classroom where a lot of information is received which he can analyze and process. He likes to listen to authority opinion and is very uncomfortable with subjective judgments. He expects certainty and intellectual competence from his teachers and likes to know that he has the facts at his disposal. In the example of studying the stars, the Inform learner wants to observe and reflect upon them. He wants to filter his feelings about the facts of starness that have been presented to him.

The third type of learner is the Connect learner. McCarthy describes this one as the common sense learner. This learner

wants to try it out, asking, "How does this work?" This person wants to take prepared materials or materials he has created and receive coaching toward developing theories and concepts of doing the project. The Connect learner likes to work with problem solving skills, preferring to learn by thinking something through, trying it out for himself, and then applying it. He perceives information abstractly, but then processes it actively, integrating it into theory and practice. He likes to test theories and apply common sense to them. He is a very pragmatic, down-to-earth problem solver. He does not like to be given pat answers, but likes to discover for himself. He is impatient with fuzzy thinking and wants material that gets to the point. He seeks a way to utilize the facts and get results from his findings. In the study of the stars, McCarthy describes him as one ready to study the stars.

The fourth type of learner is the Dynamic learner. This learner likes active experimentation. He likes to teach things to himself and asks, "What can this become? What can I make of this?" He analyzes his creations as to relevance and originality. He is fond of the self-discovery method of learning. He likes to come up with new creations, preferring to learn by doing, sensing and feeling. He perceives information concretely and processes it actively. He integrates experience and the application of that experience. He believes strongly in self discovery and is enthusiastic when he comes up with something new. He loves change and excels in flexibility,

without needing logical justification for an action. He is willing to take risks in learning and prefers to add something of himself in the process. He is rewarded when his discovery has an influence on knowledge in general or on an individual in particular. In studying the stars, the Dynamic learner would seek to find some use for the stars in his life, such as steering a ship by using their position.

McCarthy recognizes the difference in learners. A wise teacher at any level will do the same. As learners are confronted with a given lesson, they will respond differently. Each learner will seek something different from the lesson. If any one method of teaching is used, chances are that a large segment of the class is going to be disappointed or drop out of the process. It is important, therefore, that in presenting a program of instruction for both children and their parents, these individual differences are taken into consideration. I have developed a series of lessons based on issues the children will face in life. This series uses the 4-MAT method of addressing learners and is intended to be a part of a broader based set of materials for instruction. These lessons are found in appendix C.

Another excellent resource for seeking to address individual differences among the children is a new series published by Family Films entitled, "Power Tools." This series contains four teacher's manuals and video tapes which cover the Six Chief Parts of Luther's Small Catechism. According to the manual, "Power

Tools is designed to supplement materials you are currently using to teach 6th to 9th graders the basics of the Christian faith. You teach the facts. Then use power tools to help your youth apply the topic to their daily lives. Each session includes a variety of activities to keep your students actively involved in learning "(Power Tools [1994], 5). This set of materials is excellent for use by parents who are serving as teachers. It does not require a lot of knowledge or preparation. The manual is well laid out and is easy to follow. A reprintable student's work sheet is included with each lesson. I have begun to incorporate this material into our current structure and so far it is working well.

Barbara Beach and Rick Lawrence, in an article entitled, "Radical Ways to Do Confirmation," point out some of the thoughts that go into a program that recognizes individual differences. They suggest several ways to bring about positive results.

1. Make community building a primary goal. Help kids develop positive relationships with each other, their parents and their Lord and Savior.

2. Stress concrete essentials and don't try to cover too much. Ask the children questions they'd like answered. Tailor your confirmation program around those questions.

3. Get younger kids involved. Bring confirmation down to the younger ages by doing little units. Extend the program to five or six years.

4. Plan for confirmation retreats, camps and lock-ins. So much can be accomplished when you get kids away from their familiar environment.

5. Treat confirmation as a life-long process. Confirmation should be the starting point to a faith-filled life, not a

"graduation" process.

6. Replace traditional techniques with experiential learning. Use experiential learning rather than passive lectures or quizzes. Include servant events.

7. Tie in Bible learning to kids' everyday lives. Help kids to know about Jesus through experiential activities, to live the lesson through actual service, and to grow by creating a personal faith statement and developing a set of personal guidelines.

8. Make it a family affair. Anyone who is teaching any kind of confirmation or growth program who is not focusing on the parent is missing the point. (Beach 1992, 11-13)

Any program of change requires risk and courage. It is easy to stay with the status quo. It is easy to say that the old methods were good enough for my father and me and they will have to be good enough for my children. If Martin Luther had felt that way, we would all be Roman Catholics.

As parents are incorporated in the learning process, current and proven effective methods of learning must be incorporated. The person responsible for developing and directing the confirmation instruction program must be constantly seeking materials and concepts which meet the needs of the children. No approach to confirmation will succeed if the teacher is not in tune with the learners.

CONCLUSION

There are no quick cures for a program of instruction that is in danger of losing its relevancy. This is especially true when that program is perceived to have hundreds of years of history behind it. Changes come slowly. Steps to implement changes must be taken with great care and must be preceded by a good deal of education. The following are recommended as ways of implementing change in the confirmation program at Faith Lutheran Church:

1. The parents of confirmation and pre-confirmation children must be taught the history and traditions of confirmation from a biblical perspective. These lessons must include the related writing of Dr. Martin Luther as they speak to faith and the reception of Holy Communion. They must also include a study of the role of parents in the Christian education of their children and in the preparation of their children for receiving first Communion. By studying both confirmation and Communion, the parents can be led to see what the relationship between these two events is, and how they can in good conscience separate them from each other.

2. Parents of pre-confirmation children must continue to be encouraged and recruited to be involved in the confirmation instruction program. They must be led to see this as their

responsibility, not only from reading instances cited in the Bible, but also as recorded in the history of the Lutheran Church. In the process the pastor must provide means of determining those levels at which the parents are equipped to help with the program and provide training for them where they are not so equipped.

3. The pastor must seek to find materials that relate to the children not only in terms of where they are educationally, but also where they are socially and emotionally. These materials must relate to the spiritual and practical needs of the children so that they can apply what they learn to problems they encounter in their every day lives. The pastor and others involved in the educational ministry must be constantly exploring resource materials to determine what is available for instructing the children. Christian educators must be conscious of the fact that these materials will be used by parents as well as professional staff.

4. There must be a continual assessment of the needs and attitudes of both parents and children regarding the confirmation program. The pastor and professional staff cannot assume they are providing a program that is relevant unless they survey those who are affected by what is being taught and how it is taught. They must be ready to adapt and make changes as often as necessary.

5. The professional staff must explore the use of different formats for instruction. Periodic retreats with children and

parents should be considered as alternatives to the traditional classroom setting. Some children will learn better when they are away from an environment they consider to be academic. They may be able to concentrate more on their lessons if they are in a setting such as a camp that has an atmosphere that is conducive to freedom of thought and expression.

6. The instruction program for confirmation and first Communion must be seen as part of a larger process of Christian education. Educational experiences which build on pre-confirmation instruction must be provided for those already confirmed. A program must be developed that has a clear rationale for continuing the Christian education process through the later teens, young adulthood and beyond. Involving parents in the educational program of their children will help them see the need for their own continuing education. It will whet their appetite for learning more about what God's Word has to say to them amidst the struggles of their own lives.

Confirmation is worth keeping in the Lutheran Church. It has many fine features which are not only a part of our tradition, but are helpful for Christian growth as well. If instruction leading up to and following confirmation is biblical, meaningful and involves the parents helping their children, this rite can remain a significant step in the lives of our children. The church at large can only grow and benefit from it.

APPENDIX A

CONGREGATIONAL SURVEY

Dear Friends of Christian Education,

For my Doctor of Ministry Degree, I am doing a study of the practice of confirmation which is currently used in our church and in other Lutheran churches. To help me with this study, would you please fill out the following questionnaire:

1. What is your current age? _____
2. Were you confirmed at Faith Lutheran Church? _____
3. Do you remember how large your church was at the time of your confirmation?
 - a. _____ 100 - 500 members
 - b. _____ 500 - 1000 members
 - c. _____ over 1000 members
4. In what year were you confirmed? _____
5. Were you confirmed at or about the end of the 8th grade? _____
6. If you answered "yes" to #5, please complete the following:
 - a. I remember my confirmation to be a spiritually meaningful experience. _____ Yes _____ No
 - b. I remember much of what I learned from my confirmation instruction. _____ Yes _____ No
 - c. I feel I was too young to be received as a responsible church member when I was confirmed. _____ Yes _____ No
 - d. I feel I could have been confirmed at a younger age. _____ Yes _____ No
 - e. I usually enjoyed attending confirmation classes. _____ Yes _____ No
 - f. My confirmation instruction was a positive time of building a relationship with my pastor. _____ Yes _____ No
 - g. My confirmation instruction was a positive time of building a relationship with my fellow church members. _____ Yes _____ No
 - h. My confirmation instruction was a positive time of building a relationship with my parents. _____ Yes _____ No
 - i. I attended confirmation instruction because: (as many as apply)
 - 1) _____ it was the thing to do at my age
 - 2) _____ I wanted to learn more about God
 - 3) _____ my parents made me go
 - 4) _____ I liked the pastor

- 5) all of my friends went
 6) I attended a parochial school
- j. My parents were actively involved in my confirmation instruction. Yes No
- k. My parents regularly helped me with my confirmation lessons and memory work. Yes No
- l. I wish my parents would have been more supportive and involved. Yes No
- m. I have been actively involved in my children's confirmation instruction. Yes No
- n. I would like to be more involved in my child's confirmation instruction. Yes No
- o. My children's confirmation experience was similar to mine. Yes No
- p. My confirmation experience helped me become more involved in the work of my church. Yes No
- q. My confirmation experience helped me remain active in my church. Yes No
- r. My confirmation instruction involved too much memory work. Yes No
- s. I wish my confirmation instruction had required more memory work. Yes No
- t. The memory work I did in confirmation instruction still helps me in my daily life. Yes No
- u. I experienced a falling away time from my church for a while. Yes No
- v. My remembrance of instruction and confirmation is:
 1) positive
 2) neutral
 3) I remember very little
 4) negative
- w. I believe that confirmation instruction is primarily the responsibility of: (please check only one)
 1) the pastor
 2) parents
 3) the children
 4) the church
- x. I have continued to grow in my faith since my confirmation. Yes No
- y. I have continued to develop my knowledge of the Christian faith since confirmation. Yes No

Thank you for taking the time to fill out this survey. If you have additional comments, please feel free to add them below.

APPENDIX B
PARENTAL QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Parents,

During the past two years I have been working with the development of a new confirmation instruction format. This format focused on the use of parents in the instruction of the children. It also involved other changes in the program. As part of my Doctor of Ministry Degree, I am evaluating the program from your viewpoint. It would be very important and helpful to me if you would take a few minutes to fill out the following, and add your comments where you can.

Thank you for your help.

Pastor Wentzel

Please rate the following aspects of the confirmation class in which your child participated and with which you might have been involved:

(less effective highly effective)

- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Use of field trips and service projects
Comments: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. Confirmand retreat
Comments: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. Memory work, assignments and performance
Comments: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 4. Use of record keepers
Comments: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. Splitting class into
two sections
Comments: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. Parents as teachers,
Pastor as applicator
Comments: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. Understanding of working
for the church by the
child
Comments: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. Separation of
confirmation
from first Communion
Comments: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. Your child's attitude
about attending class
Comments: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. Confirmation Day as a
meaningful spiritual
experience
Comments: | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

11. Value of reading a
faith statement vs.
public examination
Comments:

1 2 3 4 5

12. Helpfulness of
electives (service
projects, etc.)
Comments:

1 2 3 4 5

APPENDIX C

EIGHT LESSONS FOR CONFIRMATION INSTRUCTION USING THE 4MAT SYSTEM

Lesson Number One: Baptism and the Christian Life

Theme: Our Heavenly Father reaches to us with His Word of promise through the washing of Holy Baptism. It's a promise by which we are to live throughout our lives.

Law/Gospel Emphasis: All people are conceived and born in sin. They would be lost apart from God's grace. In Baptism, God offers forgiveness and opens the door to eternal life.

Objectives:

1. To help the children know and understand what God offers in Baptism.
2. To help the children see how Baptism helps them in daily living.
3. To help clarify for the children misconceptions which arise regarding infant baptism.

Opening Prayer: Gracious Father, we are family, because of Your great love and mercy. You reached to us when we were lost. You called to us when we were afraid. You touched us with a life-giving water. Help us to remember that we are Your children that we might live as Your children as did our Brother, Jesus Christ. In His name. Amen.

Focus: (30 minutes, lay teachers)

Three men fall into three separate, deep wells. All three are finding it impossible to get out. Three rescue crews come to the aid of each. The first crew sends down a basket with some tools and instructions for wall climbing. The second crew lets down a rope that is four feet too short and encourages the trapped man to jump for the dangling rope. The third crew lets down one of its members with a sturdy rope. This man is harnessed to the rope and has equipment with him designed to bring the trapped man out of the well.

1. Which crew is most likely to succeed?
2. Which rescue effort requires the least amount of work on the part of the one trapped?
3. If you were in the well, which crew would you want

rescuing you?

4. Can you see any connection between this rescue and what God does in Baptism?
 - a. How much effort did you put into your Baptism?
 - b. How were you like the one trapped in a well?
 - c. What would happen to you spiritually if you had to help in saving yourself?

Imagine what it must be like for people who spend their entire lives "in the well." They have never been rescued and have no hope of ever being rescued.

1. How would such a person be feeling in time of serious illness?
2. Suppose it was a criminal who was to be executed in a few hours. How would that person feel?
3. How would Baptism provide a rescue for people like this?

Inform: (30 minutes, pastor)

We are going to divide you into three smaller groups. We would like you to read the following Bible verses about Baptism and answer the related questions.

1. Matthew 28:19-20. Whose idea was it to baptize? Who is to be baptized?
2. Mark 10:13-15. Should little children or even babies be baptized? See also Acts 2:38-39.
3. Matthew 18:6. Can little ones believe in Jesus? What is faith?
4. Acts 2:38. What good does baptism do? See also Acts 22:16, Mark 16:16 and Galatians 3:27.

Connect: (30 minutes, lay teachers)

1. Look at Mark 16:16 again. It is possible for someone who has not been baptized to go to heaven?
2. Suppose your parents brought you to Baptism in a Roman Catholic Church. Do you need to be re-baptized in order to join the Lutheran Church? See Ephesians 4:5.
3. A person comes into the pastor's office and inquires about membership in the church. The person tells the pastor that he was "baptized Methodist." What does that person mean? Is that a good way to describe your Baptism? Were you "baptized Lutheran"? What does Matthew 28:19-20 say about this?
4. Suppose you come upon an accident. A person is hurt very badly. The person tells you he/she is afraid of dying and has never been baptized. What would you do?
5. Pretend a member of your family just had a new baby. The family decides they want to have the baby baptized in church on a Sunday morning. They feel that since Aunt Mary is the oldest member of the family, she should be allowed to baptize the baby. Do you agree with this? Do you think the pastor or the church would allow Aunt Mary to do it? Do you think they should?

Vision: (30 minutes, pastor)

You are to complete at least two of the following assignments:

1. Ask the pastor to give you books or materials on the teachings of different churches regarding baptism. Look for those who do not believe in baptizing babies. Find out why, and offer reasons why you think they are right or wrong. Summarize your answers in a paragraph.

2. Make a display of your own Baptism. Find your certificate and other information or materials from it. Explain what these items mean to you. Add a brief paragraph of what your Baptism means to you.

3. Read the account of Jesus' baptism in Matthew 3:11-17. Write a paragraph describing what happened. Include how this baptism was like yours and how it was different.

4. Today many people use the expression "born again." Talk to at least four people from four different churches and ask them what that expression means to them. Include one Lutheran. You may call a church and ask the pastor to tell you. Ask your pastor to tell you how to do this. Write out the responses you receive and add your comments on what they mean.

Lesson Number Two: Holy Communion

Theme: Christ offers His body and blood in bread and wine to bring us forgiveness and help us walk the Christian life with Him and one another.

Law/Gospel Emphasis: Sin separates us from God. In our daily lives we feel that separation through our own sin and the sins of others. Through Holy Communion, Christ draws us near to remind us that we truly abide in Him and thus find peace with God.

Objectives:

1. To help the children know that Christ is truly present in the Sacrament.
2. To help them understand that Holy Communion brings them personal forgiveness and thus life and salvation.
3. To help the children use the gifts of the Sacrament to help them in their daily life as Christians.
4. To help them understand the value of receiving the Sacrament often.

Opening Prayer: Lord Jesus, we are about to enter into a wonderful mystery. We do not understand how you can come to us in bread and wine. We do not understand how your blood can cleanse us from sin. We ask that your Holy Spirit will bless us to receive what we are about to study in faith, so we may be strengthened to receive these mysterious blessings with joy and thanksgiving. In your holy name we pray. Amen.

Focus: (30 minutes, lay teachers)

Each child will be given a sample of the elements of Holy Communion. A small taste of the wine to be used will be offered as well as a wafer. The teacher will remind the child that he is NOT receiving Holy Communion, but merely getting the chance to experience the taste of the elements.

1. Have you tasted wine before? Did this wine that you will receive in Holy Communion taste differently?
2. How did the wafer taste? Does it taste like ordinary bread? Do you know how it is made? Do you know what materials it contains?
3. These elements are similar to those Jesus used when He offered His disciples the Lord's Supper for the first time. How do you think they felt when He told them it was His body and blood?
4. Imagine the food that you normally eat and the beverage you usually drink with that food. For what reasons do you usually eat or drink these things? Can you imagine eating or drinking something purely for spiritual reasons, food which has little or no effect on hunger or thirst as do potato chips or sodas?

5. Imagine now what would make you spiritually hungry. Your body feels fed, you are not thirsty. What are some things you could hunger and thirst for if you were lonely, or feeling guilty, or afraid? What might satisfy those hungers or thirsts?

In Holy Communion Jesus offers real food, yet it is not of the kind that makes much difference to the hungers and thirsts we feel in our body. Rather, it is given to satisfy the hungers and thirsts of the soul, mind and heart. Write a brief statement of what those hungers and thirsts are for you.

Inform: (30 minutes, pastor)

1. Jesus and His disciples were celebrating an ancient ceremony called the Feast of the Passover. Directions for this celebration are found in Exodus 12:1-11; 43-49.
 - a. In v. 13, God makes a covenant with the people. Do you know what a covenant is? On what was the covenant based?
 - b. Read Jeremiah 31:31-34. There God speaks of a new covenant. On what is this covenant based? (See v. 34b)
 - c. To which kind of covenant is Jesus referring when Jesus offers His disciples the bread and the cup of wine in Luke 22:19:20? Is He offering food for the body or for the soul? What, then, is He offering you when you take Holy Communion?
2. When the disciples were given the bread and the wine by Jesus, He told them they were receiving something else. What was that? (See Luke 22:19-20)
 - a. Comment on this little poem by Dr. Martin Luther:

That which the Word did make it;
That I believe, and take it.

- b. Can you now see what Jesus is offering you in Holy Communion?
 - c. Can you see why He is offering it to you?
3. When you eat good food you receive certain benefits. What are they?
4. When you eat good spiritual food, you also receive benefits. They are:
 - a. (forgiveness of sins)
 - b. (delivery from death and Satan)
 - c. (eternal life)

Connect: (30 minutes, lay teachers)

1. Your friend from school says, "You Lutherans sure have a funny way of taking Communion. How can you believe you are really eating and drinking the body and blood of Jesus? Sounds pretty gross to me." What do you say?
2. Your friend from another church invites you to worship.

While at the service, your friend is offered Communion which is taught by his/her church as a symbol of Christ's body and blood. You are offered to participate. Should you? Would you be taking the body and blood of Jesus even though that church teaches differently?

3. You have had a bad week. You got caught telling a couple of lies, you did something to hurt a friend and you screamed at your mother when she bugged you about getting your room clean. You are now in church, considering whether or not you should attend Holy Communion. What should you do?

4. Consider whether the following statements are true or not:

a. If I attend a church that teaches a Holy Communion different from what the Lutheran Church teaches, it doesn't matter as long as I know what I believe.

b. If someone attends who believes differently about Holy Communion from what we believe, that person still receives the body and blood of Jesus.

c. It would be all right to give a very small child Holy Communion as long as its parents believe.

d. As long as I believe that Jesus is my savior, I will go to heaven, even though I never take Holy Communion.

e. Because Holy Communion is such a precious gift from God, I should be careful that I don't take it too often.

Vision (30 minutes, pastor)

Select any two of the following as a project:

1. Do an interview with one of your parents or an older brother or sister about Holy Communion and what it means to them. Include at least five questions based on what you have learned in your class so far.

2. Write a dialogue with an imaginary friend who is having a hard time with some personal sins. In the dialogue, offer to the friend an explanation of how God's covenant through the Lord's Supper might help him/her.

3. Write an essay (half a page) on how you expect to use Holy Communion in your life. Include your reasons for taking it and what you expect to gain from it. Look at the thanksgiving prayers on pp. 30-1 in The Lutheran Hymnal to give you some ideas.

4. Make a banner that portrays what you believe about Holy Communion. Include statements of your faith as well as visual symbols that teach about what Holy Communion means to you.

Lesson Number Three: The Christian Response to Abortion

Theme: Abortion, except to save the life of the mother, is contrary to the Fifth Commandment and therefore is a sin.

Law/Gospel Emphasis: Abortion is wrong, yet we must minister with love and patience to those who are considering it. We must offer God's loving forgiveness to repentant hearts.

Objectives:

1. To help the children see why abortion is wrong according to the Word of God.
2. To share with the children ways in which abortion can be peacefully opposed.
3. To educate the children to alternative ways for birth control for married couples.
4. To instill in the children the determination to abstain from sexual relations until marriage.

Opening Prayer: Lord of Life, we thank you for the gift of life we have received through our faith in Jesus Christ. We also thank you for the gift of life you gave us through our parents. Help us to regard that life as sacred, and to use your Word to help others value the sanctity of life. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Focus: (10 minutes)

Pretend you are a student in a medical school. Your professor describes a situation as follows. The father had syphilis and the mother had tuberculosis. They had four children. The first was blind, the second died, the third was deaf and dumb, and the fourth had tuberculosis. What would you advise be done with the next pregnancy?

If you were to suggest that the pregnancy be terminated (abortion), you might be interested to know you just recommended the killing of Beethoven.

1. Who is to decide which life is worth living?
2. Who is to decide which baby is worth having?

Consider the following:

I am a 17-year-old student who has a cleft lip. I am about to have my third operation to correct it. I am capable of doing anything anyone else can do. I have not suffered "psychological problems." Some parents would have aborted me rather than allowing me to face these operations. All I can say is: have your baby. If you do not, you will regret it for the rest of your life. All I will end up with is a small facial scar. I am fully a human being. Have your baby. I'm living proof.

Inform: (20 minutes)

1. When does human life begin?
 - a. At the moment of conception, the tiny cell has 4 chromosomes, which is all it will ever have.

- b. At 3 1/2 weeks the embryo has the beginnings of eyes, spinal cord, nervous system, lungs, stomach, kidney and intestines. Its heart has been beating since the 18th day.
- c. At 6 1/2 weeks the embryo weighs 1/30 of an ounce, but has all the internal organs of the adult, along with mouth, tongue, buds for teeth, and reproductive organs.
- d. At 11 weeks the bones are forming, nerves and muscles are helping arms and legs move, and the mother feels kicks.
- e. At 18 weeks, the fetus is sucking its thumb.
- f. At the 28th week, the fetus is virtually complete.
- 2. At what point did the fetus become human?
- 3. The Bible speaks of human life even before birth.
 - a. Jeremiah 1:5 (Before I formed you in the womb....)
 - b. Luke 1:44 (...the baby in my womb leaped....)
 - c. Psalm 139:13 (...you knit me....)
 - d. Isaiah 44:2 (...who formed you in the womb....)
- 4. The Fifth Commandment prohibits taking human life except for self defense, capital punishment, and in some cases, war.
- 5. If an abortion has been committed, God promises forgiveness to a repentant and believing heart. See Isaiah 1:18. (Though your sins are like scarlet....)

Connect: (20 minutes)

- 1. Look up the Dictionary definition of choice. What are the bases for making a choice?
- 2. Respond to the argument: a woman has a right to do what she wants with her body.
- 3. What would you consider to be options for a pregnant woman to abortion?
- 4. What is the best way to prevent having to make such a decision?
- 5. Scientists, through in vitro fertilization, will be able to offer a choice of several fertilized eggs to parents. The parents will be able to choose the baby's sex, hair color, height, and other features. The remaining cells may be discarded. How do you feel about this? Is this a sin?
- 6. Doctors are using cells from aborted fetuses in the treatment of Parkinson's Disease. Do you think they should continue to do this?

Vision: (10 minutes)

- 1. Suppose a friend of yours was pregnant. She was considering an abortion. What would you tell her? To whom might you take her to help her with her decision?
- 2. Roe vs. Wade was the decision by the Supreme Court of the United States in 1973 which legalized abortion. Look up this

decision in the library and report what this decision involved.

3. Create a poster that reflects God's view of life. Be positive. Show the value of life and why it is worth living.

Lesson Number Four: The Christian and Decision Making

Theme: The Christian is faced with many choices in life. How he knows and understands the Word of God will help him make those choices.

Law/Gospel Emphasis: God made a choice about us. He made us His children through Jesus Christ. When we listen to our old sinful nature, the choices we make are sinful. When we listen to the Word of God, His Holy Spirit enables us to make choices that are pleasing to Him.

Objectives:

1. To help the children know and understand the nature and purpose of God's choosing them.
2. To help them see how they can use the law of God as a guide in the choices they make.

Opening Prayer: Our God and Father, we thank you for choosing us. We would be lost without your love through Jesus Christ. Help us to know and understand that we are precious in your sight, to that we might seek to make decisions with the wisdom and power of your Holy Spirit. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Focus: (10 minutes)

Suppose that you owe your friend ten dollars. Your friend is really after you to pay the money back. You don't have it, and are not sure where you can get it. You walk into the locker room at school and see that someone's wallet has fallen out of his book bag. There is no one around. The wallet has more than ten dollars in it.

1. What choice will your heart tell you to make?
2. What choice does your faith in Jesus want you to make?
3. What are some hard choices you have had to make in your life?

Inform: (20 minutes)

1. God made an important choice about you. It began at your baptism.
 - a. In baptism, God changed you from foster child to heir.
 - 1) An heir has all of the rights and privileges of the Father.
 - 2) An heir takes on the responsibility of a natural child.
 - 3) See Luther's Catechism on the Blessings of Baptism. (p. 204 ff.)
 - b. Titus 3:5 (According to His mercy He saved us...)
2. God's choice is what brought you to faith.
 - a. I Peter 2:9 (But you are a chosen people....)
 - b. John 15:16 (You did not choose me....)

- c. Ephesians 1:4 (For He chose is in Him before the creation....)
 - d. Luther's explanation of the Third Article (But the Holy Ghost has called me by the Gospel...., p. 144)
3. God's choice of you enables you, through His Holy Spirit, to make choices for Him.
- a. Joshua 24:15 (Choose this day whom you will serve....)
 - b. Isaiah 7:15 (Refuse evil and choose good)
 - c. Luke 10:42 (Mary has chosen that good part...)

Connect: (20 minutes)

The Christian believes there is a God and makes decisions according to His word. People who do not believe in God often put themselves and their own interests in His place, and their decisions come out differently. Using Luther's Small Catechism and his explanation to the Ten Commandments, we can complete the following exercise to show how this is true.

1. God says in the First Commandment that (idolatry) is wrong, therefore I must not (put other things before God) but I must (fear, love, and trust) Him. People who do not follow God say that (selfish choices) are not necessarily wrong, but that a person might (choose what seems best) if that seems to (work out best for me and others). An example might be:
2. Following a similar pattern, use Commandments 4,5,6,& 7 and give examples of how selfish choices might be contrary to God's Word.

Vision: (10 minutes)

1. Look up the meaning of the word "autonomy." Think of ways in your life in which this word applies to you. Think of reasons why a Christian can never be completely "autonomous."
2. Write a prayer asking God to help you make choices in your life. Thank Him for choosing you.

Lesson Number Five: The Christian and Ecology

Theme: God has given us the responsibility to care for His creation. We are to treat the earth with the love and respect set forth in His Word.

Law/Gospel Emphasis: Man has not cared for the earth in a manner pleasing to God. By pollution and waste man has destroyed much of the beauty of creation. By God's grace we can turn from these ways and rebuild that which was sanctified by His redeeming love.

Objectives:

1. To help the children see the wonders of God's creation.
2. To help the children accept responsibility for caring for it.
3. To help the children seek ways to restore that which we have lost.

Opening Prayer: Father and Creator God, how we marvel at the wonders you have made. Even the most distant star and tiniest flower are beyond our understanding. Help us to appreciate the wonders of the universe, and especially our earth. Forgive our polluting ways and help us in our efforts to restore that which you have given. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Focus: (30 minutes)

Each year a tropical forest the size of Scotland is destroyed on the planet Earth. India has lost 85% of her original forests. Nearly 1/2 of the forests in developing countries have been cut down in this century, causing as many as one million species of plants and animals to be at or in danger of extinction. 77% of Americans have unsafe levels of lead in their bodies. Ten thousand people die each year from pesticide poisoning. The average American discards five pounds of trash a day.

1. Can you picture your earth when you are 50 years old? What do you think it will be like?
2. Imagine yourself to be a native American who died one hundred years ago. You come back today and make a tour of our county. What do you see that is different? How are you feeling about what you see?

Inform: (30 minutes)

There are different views of the environment that make a difference in how we view these problems and how they are explained to us.

1. A materialistic view
 - a. Nature is simply there. It is taken for granted. There is no Creator who holds us accountable.
 - b. Energy is unlimited. We will never run out. Human ingenuity will provide a solution to energy problems.

- c. Human technology can solve any problem.
 - d. The world's biggest problem is improper distribution. The world is rich. There is plenty for all. We must and can save ourselves if we learn to share the wealth.
2. A pantheistic view
- a. God is all and all is God.
 - b. Nature is a living organism. It is filled with one great soul or life force.
 - c. We see God in living species. Humans are one with nature and find God there.
3. The Christian view
- a. The world is the Creation of God
 - 1) Genesis 1:1 (In the beginning....); John 1:1-5 (Through Him were all things made....); Psalm 19:1 (The heavens declare....); Psalm 33:6 (By the word of the Lord were the heavens made....)
 - 2) The First Article of the Apostle's Creed (p. 105 ff)
 - 3) The Fourth Petition of the Lord's Prayer (p. 184 ff)
 - b. The world is His possession
 - 1) Psalm 24:1 (The earth is the Lord's....); Job 41:11 (Everything under heaven belongs to me.)
 - 2) Even we are not our own, I Corinthians 6:20 (...you were bought with a price.)
 - c. The world is sustained by God. Colossians 1:17 (...in Him all things hold together.)
 - d. The world is redeemed by God. Romans 8:22 (...the whole creation has been groaning....)

Connect: (30 minutes)

- 1. A man tells a pastor, "I don't need to go to church or read the Bible. I find God in nature, in the waters, trees and fields."
 - a. What does nature really show man about God?
 - b. Will the man find the grace of God in the trees and fields?
- 2. In the movie "Star Wars," Yoda the Zen master says, My ally is the Force. And a powerful ally it is. Life creates it and makes it grow. Its energy surrounds us and binds us....Feel the Force around you. Here...between you and me and the tree and that rock.
 - a. What view of the world does Yoda have?
 - b. What is wrong with his view?
- 3. God puts us in charge of His creation.
 - a. Read Genesis 1:28 (Be fruitful and increase....) and 2:15 (...and put him in the garden to take care of it...) What are three basic obligations God has given us?
 - 1) (fill it)

- 2) (rule over it)
 - 3) (work it and care for it)
- b. What is the duty of dominion? What is the Christian's way of accepting this responsibility?

Vision: (30 minutes) Do two of the following:

1 In the Old Testament, the law specified that the land should be given a time of rest. Read Exodus 23:10-11 (For six years you are to sow your fields...). Write a brief summary of what the advantages of this rest for the land would be.

2. In Leviticus 25:23ff, God established the law of jubilee. Describe this law and write how you would feel if this law were in effect today. How might we care for our land differently?

3. We are forgiven by God. We are redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ. We are bought back from sin. God's Word speaks of redemption for the creation as well as the creatures. How might we as Christians help to treat His world as part of His redemption? Illustrate this by writing a poem or making a poster containing a message of redemption for God's creation.

Lesson Number Six: The Christian Response to Euthanasia

Theme: The Christian needs to be prepared with a Christian response when a loved one is suffering and facing death.

Law/Gospel Emphasis: Issues of life and death are in the hands of God. Death and dying are results of sin, but God has conquered death through our Lord Jesus Christ and assures us of life eternal.

Objectives:

1. To help the children face the reality of suffering and death as a part of life.
2. To teach them that our living and dying are in the hands of God.
3. To direct them to the Word of God when they are faced with decisions of life and death.

Opening Prayer: O Lord and Giver of Life, we thank and praise you for our creation and the wonderful bodies you have given us. Help us to care for them and regard them as living temples. When our time of dying comes, help us to return them with peace to your care and keeping. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Focus: (10 minutes)

You have always been very close to your grandfather. He often baby-sat for you, took you to movies, and treated you with special little favors. Now your grandfather is very ill, and the doctor says he will die. The doctor meets with you and your family and offers you the following choices:

1. We can keep your grandfather alive on a respirator and feeding tube for an indefinite period of time. He will be in a lot of pain unless he is kept heavily sedated.
2. We can keep your grandfather on a feeding tube and try to keep him as comfortable as possible, but we will not be able to keep him both alert and comfortable.
3. We can disconnect the feeding tube and withdraw all medication. Your grandfather will die in about a week. There might be considerable pain.
4. We can give your grandfather an inter-venous injection which will cause his heart to stop. He will die in a matter of minutes.
5. We can provide a way to allow your grandfather, with your help, to take his own life. Consider each choice. Which one do you want to make? Which do you think God would want you to make?

Inform: (20 minutes)

1. What is euthanasia?
 - a. The word literally means "happy death," or "easy and painless death."

- b. Its dictionary meaning is "putting to death a person suffering from an incurable disease."
- c. A common phrase for euthanasia is "mercy killing."
- 2. There are really two types of euthanasia.
 - a. One type is active or positive. In this type, direct steps are taken to end the life of a person.
 - b. The other type is passive or negative. This refers to the discontinuing of extraordinary means of preserving life.
- 3. Human life from the Christian view is God's gift.
 - a. He created it. Genesis 1:26-27 (Let us make man...."); Genesis 2:7 (...the Lord God formed man...)
 - b. He sustains it. Psalm 30:3b (...you spared me....)
 - c. See Luther's explanation to the First Article of the Creed. (p. 144 ff)
 - d. He redeems it. Psalm 103:4 (...who redeems your life from the pit....); Romans 8:23 (...as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.)
 - e. See Luther's explanation of the Second Article of the Creed. (p. 115)
- 4. Issues of life and death are in His hands.
 - a. He makes a command to protect it. See the Fifth Commandment. (p. 75)
 - b. He takes personal control of life and death. I Samuel 2:6 (The Lord brings death....); Psalm 68:20 (...comes escape from death.)
 - c. He appoints the time of our death. Hebrews 9:27 (Just as a man is destined to die once,....)

Connect: (20 minutes)

- 1. The following Bible verses are statements about death.
 - a. Jesus: "Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends."
 - T-F 1) A person could choose euthanasia to spare his friends and family unnecessary grief.
 - T-F 2) A person may give up his life for a good cause.
 - b. St. Paul: "I have a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far."
 - T-F 1) It is all right to want to die.
 - T-F 2) It is all right to pray for death.
 - T-F 3) It is all right to want or pray for the death of someone else.
 - c. Jeremiah: "Wherever I banish them, all the survivors of this evil nation will prefer death to life, declares the Lord Almighty."
 - T-F 1) Preferring death is a punishment from God.
 - T-F 2) Preferring death to life is a result of evil

T-F 3) Banishment by God makes death a preferable choice.

T-F 4) People who choose active euthanasia cannot be Christians.

2. Summarize: What is the Christian response to death and dying?
 - a. (our lives are in God's hands)
 - b. (it is for God to determine the time and circumstances of our death)
 - c. (we live expecting eternal life after we die)

Vision: (10 minutes)

Respond to any one of the following:

1. Write a prayer asking God to take the life of a loved one who is suffering.

2. Write a living will. In this will make your wishes known regarding the following:

- a. Do you wish to be kept alive by extraordinary means?
- b. Do you wish to be kept fed and comfortable if you are going to die anyway?
- c. Do you wish to be brought back from clinical death if there is no hope for your recovery?
- d. To whom are you addressing these concerns, and who will be responsible for carrying them out?
- e. Include a statement of your Christian faith as it relates to your wishes.

3. Go the library and find out what the philosophy of any one of the following organizations is and report your findings to the class next week:

- a. Concern for Dying
- b. The Society for the Right to Die
- c. The American Euthanasia Foundation
- d. The Good Death Fellowship
- e. The Hemlock Society

Lesson Number Seven: The Christian Response to Genetic Engineering

Theme: Each of us is created uniquely. We each have a set of characteristics that no one else has. We are created in God's image and likeness.

Law/Gospel Emphasis: The curse of sin has resulted in defects in the bodies of people. Because of sin, we have not kept the perfect bodies God gave Adam and Eve. Christ came to redeem us from the curse of sin and promises us new bodies at the resurrection.

Objectives:

1. To help the children understand that their bodies are special creations of God.
2. To help them understand principles of genetics that might challenge their Christian faith, and help them answer those challenges.
3. To be aware of the resurrection when Christ will make all things new.

Focus: (10 minutes)

Suppose you could build a model of yourself. The only difference is that you could change anything you wanted to change. You could change hair and eye color, height, weight and the size of your nose. You could eliminate any tendencies toward illness or deformities you might have. You could be as smart as you wanted to be. You could build the "perfect you."

1. Would this be a good idea?
2. What would you most like to change?
3. What risks might you be taking by making these changes?
4. Do you think your parents would like the "new you" better?
5. Do you think God would approve? Would you be questioning His wisdom?

Inform: (20 minutes)

1. There are some terms and concepts that are helpful to know:
 - a. DNA - a molecule which determines the growth and development of an organism from fertilization to adulthood.
 - b. Chromosomes - rod-shaped envelopes of DNA which contain the genes. Every human has 46, receiving 23 from each parent.
 - c. Genes - segments of DNA that contain instructions to make proteins, the building blocks of life.
 - d. Genetic screening - applying tests to determine if genetic disorders which might cause disease or deformity are present.

- e. Genetic engineering - splicing the gene of one organism to another to create hybrid DNA.
 - f. Artificial insemination - causing the fertilization of an egg cell by other than natural means.
 - g. In vitro fertilization - producing a fertilized egg outside the body of either parent.
 - h. Surrogate parenthood - a substitute mother carrying the fertilized egg of another.
2. What does the Bible say about the creation and formation of life?
 - a. Genesis 1:1 (In the beginning God....); 1:31 (...and it was very good.)
 - b. Psalm 139:14 (...I am fearfully and wonderfully made.)
 - c. Isaiah 44:2 (...he who made you....)
 3. What does the Catechism say about creation and life? See the First Article and explanation. (p. 105)
 4. The Sixth Commandment might help us with decisions regarding bearing children artificially. (p. 79)
 5. Christ redeemed all life, both that which we consider beautiful and that which shows outwardly the effects of sin.
 - a. There is no difference among us in God's eyes. Deut. 10:17-18 (...who shows no partiality....); Romans 2:11 (For God does not show favoritism); Acts 10:34 (...God does not show favoritism....).
 - b. Christ came for all. Luke 19:10 (...to seek and to save....); Romans 5:8 (...while we were sinners....); Matthew 9:13 (...not to call the righteous, but sinners).
 6. In the Third Article of the Creed we confess "I believe in the resurrection of the body." (p. 144)
 - a. Paul describes this new body in I Corinthians 15.
 - b. What comfort does this give to one who is not "perfect" in this life?
 - c. Paul tells us what the new body will be like in Philippians 3:21. (...will transform our lowly bodies....)

Connect: (20 minutes)

1. Is it good for us to at times have to live with the results of sin in our lives as it affects our bodies?
2. What do you think would happen if everyone was genetically "perfect?"
3. Who might be eliminated from our society if genetically engineered people were all that were allowed?
4. What affect would that have on us, if we were fortunate enough to be allowed to live?
5. Think of someone who is physically or mentally impaired who has made an impact on your life or on society. Should he/she have been denied birth? How would he/she

- answer that question?
6. M. and L. have been unable to have a child after eleven years of marriage. M., the wife, could have a child, but L. is unable to be a father. M. hears about artificial insemination, convinces L. to allow it, and becomes pregnant. Later, L. speaks of the child as "not really mine."
 - a. Has M. broken her marriage vows?
 - b. Is this adultery? Is it right in God's eyes?
 - c. Suppose it was done in vitro. Would that make a difference?
 - d. How should the pastor respond if they come and talk to him? See the Catechism on Confession and Absolution (p. 213 ff)

Vision: (10 minutes)

Choose one of the following:

1. Interview one of your science teachers at school. Ask him/her about genetic engineering and how he/she feels about it. You might wish to develop an interview format ahead of time.
2. In 1978, Louise Brown was the first baby born through in vitro fertilization. Check the library for information on her and see what you can find out about the possible results in her life and that of her parents.
3. Look up DNA in your science book. Write a brief report on how it determines who or what we are.
4. Write a paragraph describing how wonderfully God has made you.

Lesson Number Eight: The Christian Response to Aids

Theme: We are to be prepared to deal with the issue of AIDS in view of God's Word and compassion for our fellow man.

Law/Gospel Emphasis: AIDS is the result of sin, even though some might contract it through no fault of their own. It is a part of the curse of death which comes through sin. God's healing forgiveness reaches to those who sin. He calls them to repentance and grace.

Objectives:

1. To educate the children to the nature, cause and prevention of AIDS.
2. To share with them God's Word in relation to disease and extending compassion to the afflicted.
3. To help put them in the picture with a person who has AIDS so they might react responsively and with the love of God.

Opening Prayer: Heavenly Father, we recognize that sin does destructive things in Your world. We admit that we are a part of that sin, by what we do, say, and refuse to do for others. Help us to fully understand Your forgiving grace, so we can compassionately pass it on to others. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Focus: (30 minutes, lay teachers)

I want you to all close your eyes for a moment. Pretend that I am a person dying of AIDS.

1. How are you feeling about me?
2. Do you want me to touch you?
3. Would you share your can of soda with me?
4. Would you sit next to me in class?
5. Would you invite me into your home?
6. Would you listen to me if I wanted to talk about my illness?

Inform: (30 minutes, pastor)

1. The medical definition of AIDS
 - a. AIDS is a disease of the immune system. The body has a group of defense weapons called phagocytes that eat invading viruses, bacteria, fungi, protozoa and other debris in the bloodstream. With other helper cells, they patrol the body looking for potentially harmful organisms. When such an organism is located, they alert fighting cells to attack and destroy the invader.
 - b. HIV attacks the helper cells, invading their structure and rendering them ineffective. They can no longer fight infections. When HIV is activated, it reproduces a thousand times faster than other viruses, and the helper cells are killed. The

- immune system cannot fight the diseases that follow.
- c. AIDS related symptoms
 - 1) persistent weariness
 - 2) chills and sweating
 - 3) weight loss
 - 4) chronic diarrhea
 - 5) dry cough
 - 6) white sore patches in mouth and throat
 - 7) pink or purple blotches on or under skin
 - d. AIDS related diseases
 - 1) Pneumocystis Carinii Pneumonia - A parasite that infects the lungs, causing a pneumonia that frequently results in death. This is the major cause of AIDS-related death.
 - 2) Kaposi's Sarcoma - a cancer starting in the walls of the small vessels. It begins with purple to brown colored blotches on the skin. It is usually not the primary cause of death, but a sign of the presence of the disease.
 - 3) Cytomegalovirus - a virus associated with AIDS that contributes to blindness, seizures, pneumonia, inflammation of the esophagus, and chronic diarrhea.
 - 4) Cryptosporidiosis - a parasite that attacks the person with AIDS and results in the inability to absorb nutrients from food, resulting in a chronic diarrhea that causes weight loss, dehydration, and malnutrition.
 - e. The spread of AIDS
 - 1) AIDS cannot be spread by touching, kissing, embracing, or sharing a common communion cup.
 - 2) AIDS is transmitted only when semen, vaginal secretions or blood of an infected person enters into the bloodstream of someone else.
 - 3) This transmission always occurs through sexual intercourse, inter-venous drug use or the transfusion of tainted blood.
 - 4) A condom is NOT a certain preventative. The AIDS virus is smaller than the natural holes in the latex.
 - 5) The ONLY sure ways to prevent getting AIDS are to refrain from using drugs and to remain faithful to one's spouse in marriage by abstaining from all other sexual contact.
2. Read the story of Jesus and the Leper in Mark 1:40-45.
 - a. The leper experienced social (rejection).
 - b. Jesus touched one regarded to be (unclean).
 - c. How might we regard one dying of AIDS?
 - d. Remember the attitude of Jesus toward the Leper.
 3. What does the Catechism say about God's caring for our body?
 - a. See the explanation to the Third Article of the

- Apostle's Creed. (p. 144 ff)
- b. See the explanation to the Fourth Petition, "Give us this day..." (p. 184 ff)
 - c. How might this relate to the Sixth Commandment? (p. 190 ff)
4. How are we to react to the care Jesus shows for us?

Connect: (20 minutes)

1. Should a person dying of AIDS be allowed to join the church?
2. How could such a person be able to receive Holy Baptism?
3. Would he/she be able to receive Holy Communion? What does the Catechism say about true worthiness? (p. 238)
4. Would you drink from the same common cup as a person with AIDS?
5. Is the person dying of AIDS being punished for his/her sin?
6. Answer question number five in light of the following Bible verses:
 - a. John 9:1-3 (the man born blind)
 - b. Romans 6:23 (the wages of sin...)
 - c. II Corinthians 5:21 (God made Him to be sin...)
 - d. I John 1:7 (The blood of Jesus Christ...)
 - e. I Peter 3:18 (For Christ died for sins once for all...)
7. Are we as Christians allowed to separate the sin from the sinner?

Vision: (10 minutes)

1. What are ways we can minister to people with AIDS?
2. What can the church do to help them?
3. What can you as an individual do?
4. Can you think of ways to help in the prevention of the spread of AIDS in your school?

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