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### The Use of Children's Liturgy in Teaching Worship to the Preliterate

Scott Lemmerman

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, [ir\\_lemmermans@csl.edu](mailto:ir_lemmermans@csl.edu)

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THE USE OF CHILDREN'S LITURGY IN TEACHING WORSHIP TO THE PRELITERATE

SCOTT A. LEMMERMAN

FEBRUARY 2006

Concordia Seminary  
Saint Louis, Missouri

\_\_\_\_\_  
Advisor Dr. James Brauer

7/17/06  
DATE

\_\_\_\_\_  
Reader Dr. Kent Bureson

8/8/06  
DATE

\_\_\_\_\_  
Director, Doctor of Ministry Program  
Dr. David Peter

8/8/06  
DATE

CONCORDIA SEMINARY

THE USE OF CHILDREN'S LITURGY  
IN TEACHING WORSHIP TO THE PRELITERATE

A MAJOR APPLIED PROJECT PAPER SUBMITTED  
TO THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY COMMITTEE  
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY DEPARTMENT

BY SCOTT A. LEMMERMANN  
CHANUTE, KANSAS

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter will acquaint the reader with 1) the need in the congregation that will be met by the project, 2) the purpose of the project, 3) a method to overcome human expectations and to focus instead on the divine design in spiritual formation, 4) the need for parental involvement in forming a child's faith and spiritual life, 5) insights on preliterate communication, and 6) a description of the process used to accomplish the goals of the project.

#### **The Need**

The need in Zion Lutheran Church, Chanute, Kansas, is for parents of preliterate children (ages 0-7, some not yet baptized), to access the grace of God through Word and Sacrament, as offered in the divine worship service, and to teach their children to do likewise. There is a noticeable lack of participation in divine worship by this part of the congregation. My task as their pastor is to reach both parents and children with Word and Sacrament ministry. I want to accomplish this without watering down doctrine or liturgy, and without creating a "satellite" divine worship service where I visit, in shut-in fashion, all these non-attending members. I want to move them to "use" the congregation's divine worship service as an access point to God's riches in Jesus and as a teaching place, and a "faith incubator."

The need is to use this connection between parent and child, as a means of enabling the faith development for parents and children.

The problem has compounded in two parts. First, many parents of preschool children have separated themselves from divine worship, and have become unfamiliar with corporate worship. Because it is quite foreign to them, they cannot teach their children. Second, society has taught parents to find an "expert" to train their children in skills the parents do not possess. In this way a person can step aside and leave it all to the expert. This works as long as an expert is available and prepared to take full responsibility for the problem. In this case, they imagine that the pastor is that expert. They expect him to be the sole provider for spiritual training since they do not have the necessary skills. All too often cooperative parental effort is nonexistent at any age, even with the youngest where it is most necessary. There is a consumer mentality regarding teaching a child. Consequently, resistance meets any move by the pastor to bring the parents into a cooperative teaching situation.

Parental patterns manifest themselves early in child raising, and these become foundational issues in faith formation at the youngest stage of a child's life. Church and parent could pose these questions about preparing a young child for worship:

- Should we wait for a catechism to be memorized and recited before we call for a more Christ-like behavior or do we have a responsibility to help the child live out the meaning of baptism daily from the day of his or her rebirth?
- Has the church's theological focus really targeted the home or is the home to be devoid of religious instruction?
- Has the church limited its focus with young children to one facet of education, namely, the school setting and ignored other ways of understanding, thinking and learning?



Similarly, various experts in Christian education raise key questions. John Westerhoff, for example, discusses a pattern in education that predominates today. He sees how we have taken children by their twelfth year away from their families and church and put them for more hours in school—even parochial school—than with those who have primary responsibility for shaping their values and religion.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, in school he calculates that they spend 90% of their time being enculturated and only 10% of their time in formal instruction.<sup>2</sup> Because facts without faith mean nothing, the goal of forming a faith and a life with God goes beyond instruction as information sharing. The goal is to establish a trusting relationship with God and a willingness to follow God's design for life. Time with the Word and Christian training should not occur entirely away from the home setting. Lutherans understand that hearing the Word is what the Holy Spirit uses to create and strengthen faith and to produce the fruits of faith. Thus, there is a need in the church to help each Christian parent be the one who takes the primary responsibility for training up a child also in matters of Christian faith and Christian life. Since public worship and Christian education of the church cannot provide it all, the project will explore how the home and the church's public worship can be linked for parents of preliterate children in order to teach them to worship and to educate their children.

### **The Purpose of the Project**

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<sup>1</sup> John H. Westerhoff, "Lutheran Schools and the Making of Christians," *Lutheran Education* 133 (1997): 7.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

The goal of this project is to teach the preliterate child to worship. To reach this goal it is necessary to assist and to reinvigorate spiritually delinquent baptized member parents so they can be nourished with Word and Sacrament. I believe adjusting an existing order of worship into a preliterate child's liturgy can do this. This would lead parents to engage regularly with the Word in the congregation's worship, as well as become the primary education provider for their children by assisting them with learning the actions, gestures and spoken words at church. I need to research the viability of offering a specific child's worship service that attracts members who are parents of preliterate children, and uses worship tools designed for parents of preliterate children. In this kind of service, no age group is ignored; all are united in the same worship.

#### The Divine Design for Spiritual Formation

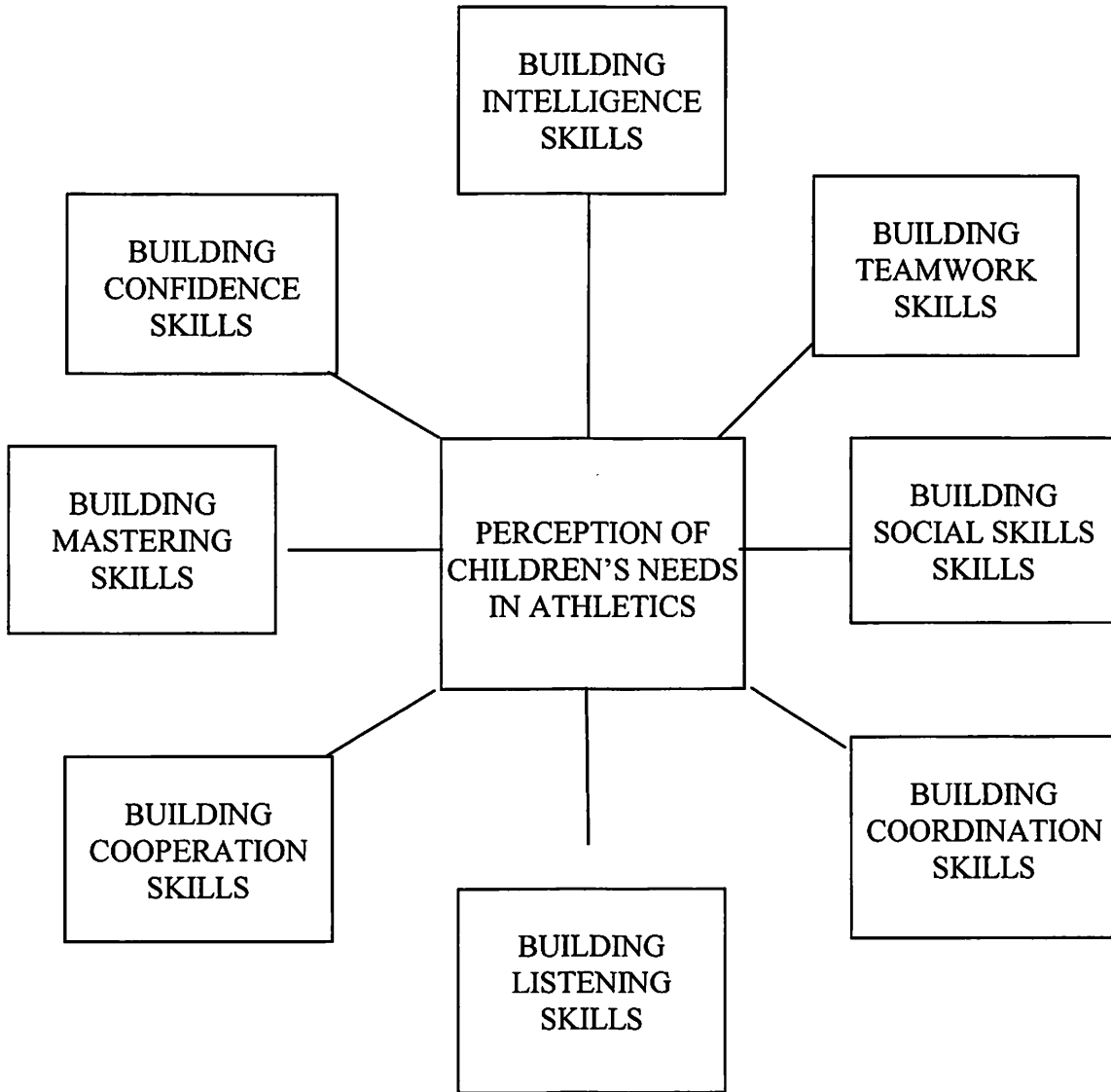
This project is an opportunity to employ an existing consumer mentality among parents, and to draw them into the faith formation process. The challenge in using "fire to fight fire," i.e., using a consumer mentality as a "hook" to the parents, is to not let the purpose of the project focus just on the drawing in of the parents. It must help them acquire the proper attitudes, knowledge and skills. Parents should not get the impression that things are done in the church just like they are done in the world. At the same time it must be recognized that few parents want to subscribe to a plan that makes them "do" something. My experience with today's parents is that they are willing to "do" very little. What is sought is not just a change in the venue for teaching, with no underlying connection to theology. The experience of parent and child at church is not meant to turn liturgy into just another program and worship into entertainment. There is also the possibility that congregation members will

not wish to change the worship service they attend for the sake of parents with young children, who represent a small percentage of the church membership. There needs to be a logical and natural connection between the parents, child, and the congregation at large.

Let me illustrate how this existing consumer' mentality can be practically applied to the project. In a consumer-driven marketplace, even education must be sold in a "packaged" format. Parents want to be wise consumers for the sake of their children's needs. So, when recreation departments and schools advertise an activity, they list or outline the particular need of the child in a certain age group or category, the range of development that needs to be met, and what needs to be done to attain that level. In this way parents know what they get through the program. ILLUSTRATION 1 and ILLUSTRATION 2 show how athletic and spiritual formation can revolve around an orbit of goals. Though I have provided results-oriented spiritual formation goals in ILLUSTRATION 2, I do not wish to reach out to parents this way. My purpose is merely to illustrate how these parental expectations can be superimposed on a Christian education activity. The need to use the expert has permeated the church, and countering this trend, I wanted to see what I was up against. I realize that to merely go against a trend is not going to succeed unless those who have unconsciously followed this path can see that what they are doing (or not doing) is against the true building up of their child's development. Too often I face parents who spend many hours with their child (in some group activity, be it non-athletic or athletic), and assume that they are actually spending time with their child. This is a common form of avoidance, and too seductive and comfortable to see objectively. One parent related her experience like this: "I am not going to spend my time with someone else's children—that's your job." The same mother told me

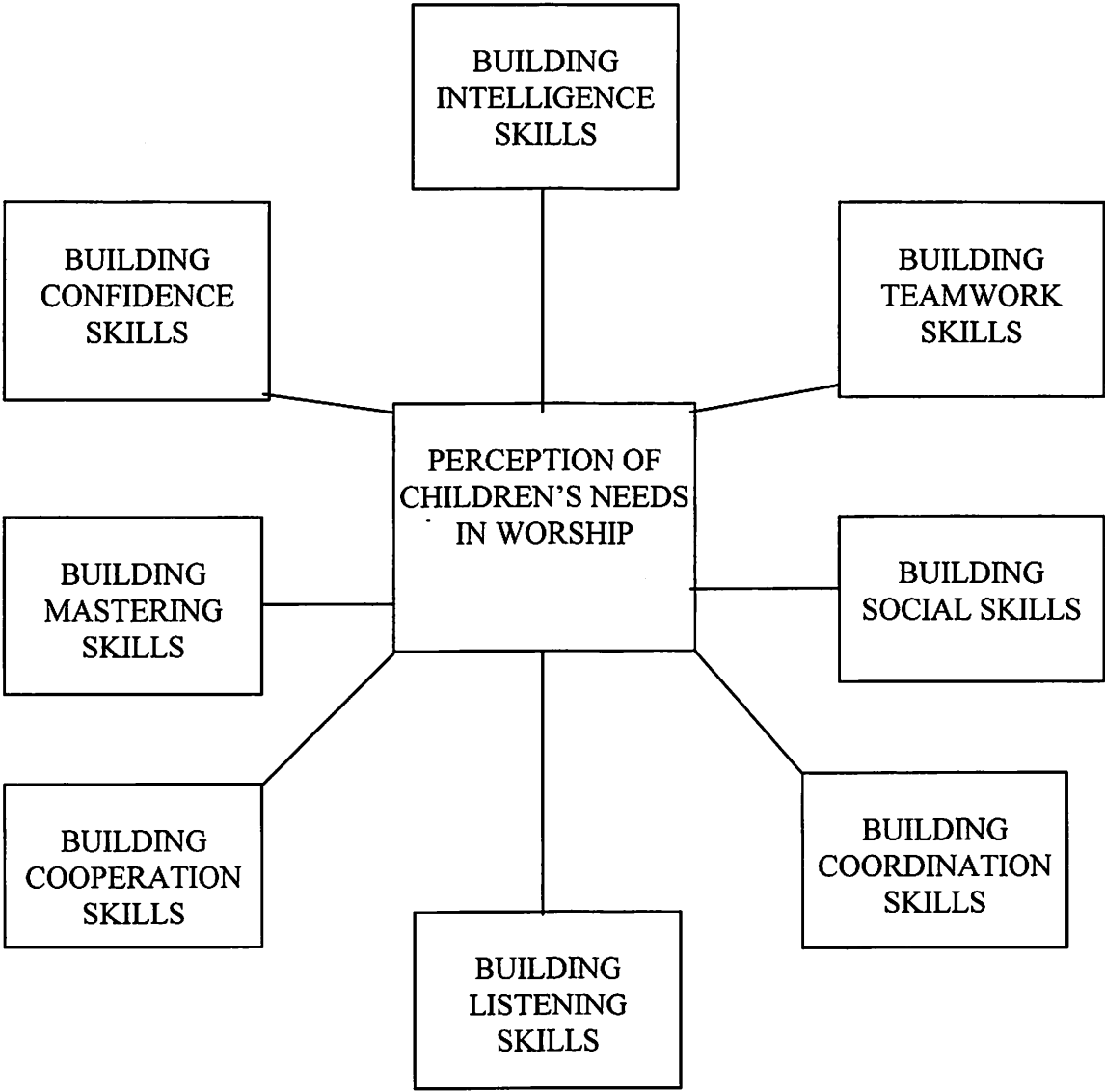
later when her youngest child was ready for confirmation, “Pastor, you are just not on our agenda.”

While ILLUSTRATION 1 has totally different goals than ILLUSTRATION 2, parents tend to think in these terms, that is, aspects of the desired program. For example, midweek,

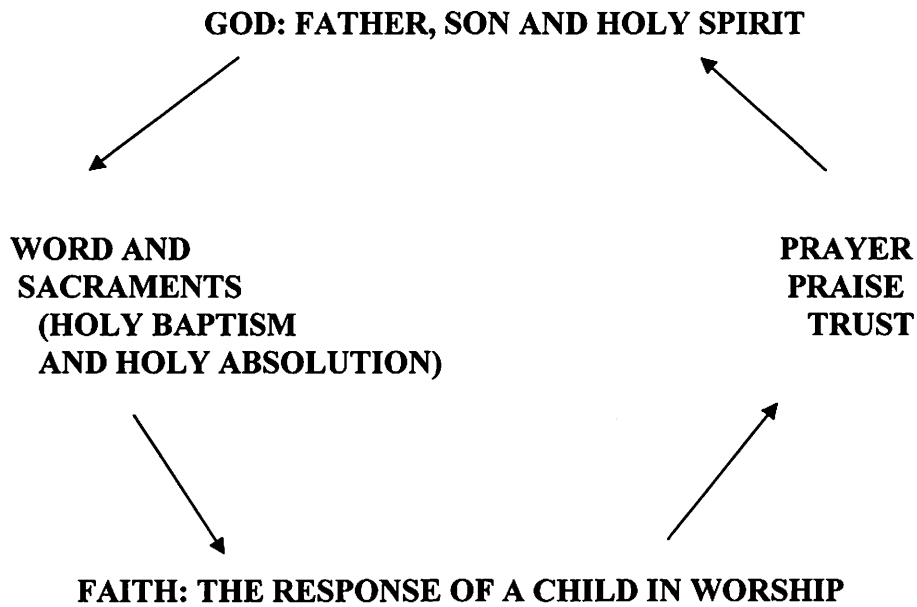


**ILLUSTRATION 1**

confirmation class, and Sunday school may be seen as an extension of school, society and culture. The parents may equate religious and spiritual education as part of being a good citizen of a free republic and that would make the development of spiritual foundations just one more program package to be sold to the parents. Notice that no spiritual needs are listed in ILLUSTRATION 2. It shows purely developmental needs. While these needs will certainly be met, they are secondary to the real needs of learning and growing in faith. In a child's



**ILLUSTRATION 2**

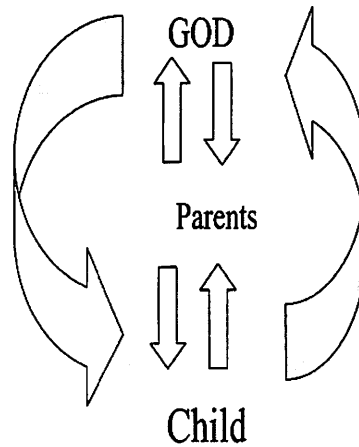


**ILLUSTRATION 3**

athletic program, parents focus on questions like these: Do they practice at home? Do they rely on the expert? Does this experience really bring families closer? Who benefits the most? Are there clear goals? With parents who have this marketplace mentality, it may be very difficult for a pastor or other minister of religion to break through this consumer oriented comparison. They are probably not thinking in terms of faith development but only of finding the right activities for their child to experience.

Parents who have been raised in too strict a religious background may have no inclination or desire to allow their children the privilege of religious instruction. They may want no more religious education than an occasional Sunday school class. Thus, it is necessary to orient the project around theological principles, looking at spiritual formation

**TRINITARIAN MOVE:**  
 Father draws the person to Himself through the preaching of the Word; Holy Spirit works faith in Christ that is created through Baptism and is nourished by the Word, Absolution, and Holy Supper; person responds with faith and the fruits of faith.



**PARENT/CHILD RESPONSE:**  
 Parents assist in the faith formation by bringing the child to be baptized; pray and read scripture to/with them; the Holy Spirit uses the means to bring the child to faith and increases that faith and leads the child into godly living.

**ILLUSTRATION 4**

from the way God has chosen to interact with human beings. We need a theological diagram that can orient our thinking and be used to help others understand the divine pattern.

ILLUSTRATION 3 depicts how God works in forming spiritual life. It is the design we want to use for spiritual formation because it relies on how He promises to work in

creating faith and its fruits. God has chosen to work through means, His Word and Sacraments. This diagram emphasizes God's action and it shows how our reaction is dependent on Him. We need God's Word to bring about spiritual development. Instead of an anthropocentric center, ILLUSTRATION 3 focuses on a theocentric move that begins with God and His way of bringing people into relationship with Him. The Father sends the Son; the Son reveals the Father. The Son accomplishes salvation for all by His death and resurrection. Father and Son send the Holy Spirit who uses the Word of the Gospel to create and sustain faith. This flow shows that faith formation is a divine activity, God entering our lives through His word and His sacraments.

In ILLUSTRATION 4 we see the godly interaction between the parents and God, parents and child (ren), and God and child. God places parents as caretakers of the child. This is true of the physical and spiritual things at home. It is not required that the tools used by God (including parents, for the sake of the child) be in a faith relationship with God. He has the freedom in His governance to use anything and anyone in His creation to perform His will. We see this in the case of getting water from a rock (Numbers 20), using Balaam to prophesy Christ's coming (Numbers 24), using Cyrus to subdue nations (Isaiah 45), and passages that speak of His creative work when "The Mighty One, God, the LORD, speaks and summons the earth" (Psalm 50:1). Here we are prayerfully, intentionally, and for the sake both of child and parent, calling parents to deepen their relationship to the LORD, and assist their children in trusting God. We want them to trust God's promises and rely on the means He gives. The children are learning from their parents to worship the LORD, to



receive His gifts, and through the ritual of liturgy to interact with God. Faith comes through hearing the Word. Faith speaks to God in prayer and praises him for his mighty acts.

### The Need for Parental Involvement

ILLUSTRATION 4 sets aside any complicated theory of instruction that would require only a supposed "expert" (pastor) to accomplish this godly work. God can work through a parent. The home is where learning to trust God and live in His ways must really take place. In ILLUSTRATION 3 we see the specific, essential components necessary for the spiritual development of a child. These interactions are most effective when teacher and learner understand each other, as with a father or mother of a young child. Faith formation occurs already at an early age and has distinct phases in its development. This is underlined by Shirley Morgenthaler, a noted expert, who states, "[a]n understanding of the child's need to construct knowledge from experiences and repeated events should lend [parents] to become more astute and careful observers through the child's eyes."<sup>3</sup> Just how this divine pattern of faith formation fits with the development of a child is now emerging in Christian education literature. It brings together the insights of educational psychology and the task of Christian education of the young. In the view of early childhood psychologists and educators, the spirituality of children can be segmented roughly into three overlapping divisions: 1) *anthropomorphic*, 2) *mythical-literal* and 3) *abstract*. In the *anthropomorphic* division ideas about God are somewhat magical. This takes place from very early childhood [age 0] to about

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<sup>3</sup> Shirley K. Morgenthaler, ed. *Exploring Children's Spiritual Formation: Foundational Issues* (River Forest, IL: Pillars Press, 1999), 32.

6 or 7 years old.<sup>4</sup> During the anthropomorphic period a child has two themes or stages of faith development: A) undifferentiated faith (a pre-stage, from about 0-3) where all things are connected to them; and B) the intuitive-projective faith (stage one, from about 3-7) where things that are part of others' faith are received as the young child's faith. The next division, *mythical-literal faith* (from about ages 7-11), overlaps the anthropomorphic division and begins when there is movement from a magical God to a God that is real.<sup>5</sup> About age 11, a child still sees God as a concrete being, powerful and loving, but is beginning (in the third division which is at about age 12) to think of God more in the *abstract*.<sup>6</sup> It is helpful for parents and others who interact with children to recognize these overlapping divisions of a child's spiritual development.

Since the divisions follow progressive stages, the activities in support of each can be identified. At the first stage, the one most related to this project, the child hears and learns Bible stories and participates in prayers that grow from the events and characters in the stories. (It would be helpful if they were built on the topics in family devotions, when a parent leads, but that is not absolutely necessary.) A children's Bible with added devotional commentary could be an excellent tool.<sup>7</sup> Connecting a Bible story and prayer is a simple, but

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>7</sup> Concordia Publishing House, Augsburg-Fortress Press, and Northwestern Publishing House are just a few of many fine Christian devotional publishers that might supply such tools.

powerful, tool to help a child incorporate the knowledge of God. With this basic method, a parent can introduce the God who in Baptism bestowed faith to the child.

In the second stage, the child learns to understand on an even deeper level. Biblical concepts appear incrementally, deepening the storehouse of knowledge of God. At this level, additional knowledge can be offered to the child on Sundays. These can be seen as a series of "velcro moments"—moments where the child's and parents' past learning connect with new material. Detailed, small additions can be made to the pattern of knowledge about God that the child already carries. Family activities in this phase also bring the parent and child closer, serve the spiritual interests of both, and reinforce the knowledge gained on Sundays. This leads in a natural way to the third stage, where the parents add to and build on previous learning by discussing how one lives as a baptized child of God. It is natural because parents are the ones who truly minister to their children. No matter what congregations do in a programmed approach, the parents remain the primary agents for their children's spiritual growth and development (as God has declared in Deuteronomy 6 and other places). Seeing this unfolding as a sequence, we can recognize from a theological perspective how one is able to help a child build a relationship with God. Initially, God reaches out to a child in Baptism and the Holy Spirit creates faith in a child and fruits of faith in his or her life. God uses human agents, such as parents, to present His Word, to teach prayerful responses, and to lead them toward godly living.

### Insights on Preliteracy Communication Skills

Learning theorists can also help us grasp what is going on in the young learner. For example, insight regarding these stages is given in the work of Piaget who saw the

importance of language and communication among the preliterate.<sup>8</sup> At the Maisson des Petit l'Institut Rousseau in 1923 he constructed a method for observation of a six-year old to determine if a child's communication is simple, meant only to communicate thoughts. In "shadowing" a six-year-old for one month, his team identified several complex levels of communication among the preliterate. As the child grew and developed, social interaction and joint and corporate communication became less egocentric and more thought oriented. In differentiating between the preliterate and those whose language skills were more developed, Piaget hit upon at least five key points that would help in understanding the language-thought of a child:

- ego-centric logic is more intuitive, syncretistic and inductive
- no arguments are made in problem solving; conclusions are reached immediately
- personal schemas of analogy are made use of, along with memories of earlier reasoning, which control the present course of reasoning
- visual schemas play an important part and can take the place of proof in supporting the deduction that is made
- value judgments have far more influence on egocentric than on communicable thought.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Among the many educational and early childhood psychology works of Piaget there are several seminal works: *Judgment and Reasoning in the Child* (1948), *The Moral Judgment of the Child* (1948), *The Construction of Reality in the Child* (1954), and *The Origins of Intelligence in Children* (1952), *The Language and Thought of the Child*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Revised Ed. (1959); collaborating with B. Inhelder, *The Growth of Logical Thinking from Childhood to Adolescence* (1958), and *The Early Growth of Logic in the Child* (1964).

<sup>9</sup> Jean Piaget, *The Language and Thought of a Child* (New York: Meridian Books, 1955), 46-47.

On the other hand, the following points shape communicated intelligence, a move or development beyond the preliterate world:

- deductive and more connection between propositions
- greater emphasis is laid upon proof
- schemas of analogy tend to be eliminated and be replaced by proper deduction
- visual schemas are done away with, first as incommunicable, and later as useless for purposes of demonstration
- personal judgments of value are eliminated in favor of collective judgments of value.<sup>10</sup>

One of the insights these points offer the person dealing with preliterate children is that logic and reason are not dominating factors for them. What is especially helpful to them is the use of story and repetitive structure. In a divine worship service this allows children to be prepared and familiar with the service sequence. They can anticipate what comes next during worship and learn to use various moments in it. To engage in the mind of the preliterate is to abandon a highly erudite or even logic-oriented world for the world of play, make-believe and story. During a divine worship service this should be a world that emphasizes repetition and simplicity, almost to the point of making the sanctuary into a "playroom" as in a preschool, where images abound and stories predominate, intentionally involving and engaging children, who are still wrapped up in their ego-centric play and communication.

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 48.

Because it is neither merely imparting information nor entertaining, this structure would necessarily be designed to engage on the level of and challenge through the concept known as "dissonance." Dissonance is a concept that takes into account the individual child's level of learning and presents challenging learning opportunities. Morgenthaler reports on a Russian early childhood educator who saw the importance of the relationship between parent as expert teacher and the child as primary learner. The child's ability to learn is dramatically increased by the encouraging and gentle presence of an adult who cares about the child's learning—working within the "zone of proximal development."<sup>11</sup> This type of training centers on what is just beyond the child's present knowledge and what they can do independently, but not so difficult that the child reaches frustration. The focus is on the adult's role to provide multiple ways to gain a skill or concept. This teaching technique is known as "scaffolding." Not to be associated with a "ladder" method—a learning method providing only one learning path—the scaffolding method provides many access points to more understanding so a child can advance their abilities. For example, in order for a child's lifelong attitude and interest in reading to begin, the foundation must be laid in the first three years of life.<sup>12</sup> In fact, already during the third gestational month in the womb hearing and memory are beginning in the child.<sup>13</sup> Obviously, parents are a crucial component to the development of a child.

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<sup>11</sup> Shirley K. Morgenthaler, et al. *Children in Worship: Lessons from Research* (River Forest, IL: Pillars Press, 1999), 42.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

The primary insight that parents should gain is this: they must become a walking worship "kit" for their children. They are the tools for helping children see where worship intersects with their lives. We could provide interactions for them to participate in and with every time they hear God's name.<sup>14</sup>

### **The Process**

The need to assist parents of young children at Zion is clear. My project has the goal of helping these parents teach their children to worship God. I have identified a consumer mind set these parents have for finding learning experiences and the theological concepts that I need to use in order to solve the children's needs. These theological insights show the need for parental involvement; the child development research points to the same need to involve parents. No one else has enough interaction with the very young children to accomplish the task with them. What process will I have to accomplish this? Initially, I wanted to interview parents in the thirty families from my congregation that have children in the 0-7-age category. The interview employed a single page of questions to help ascertain the needs of the parents for teaching their children, their level of understanding toward liturgy and worship, and how the church can help them teach their children. Later, I wanted to interview my worship assistants and include them and their observations in any subsequent analysis and review of worship changes. They could be key in implementing these changes. Using some liturgy analysis tools I learned about in "Worship and Culture" class, I also wanted to review some

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<sup>14</sup> It is outside the realm of this study but would it not be helpful to build on this interaction for catechetical instruction, where "the head of the household" would instruct all the young in Jesus Christ?

non-Lutheran literature to see how this might contribute to making good worship choices, particularly those that suit children's needs. I wanted to experiment with a liturgical design that would serve preliterate children and help their parents grasp more fully what they can do to help their children join in worship. All this would help me lead parents to teach and form their children for worship. Above all I wanted to find links among children, parents, and worship (corporate and/or at home), using resources which help parents to teach children on their level.



## CHAPTER 2

### THE PERSPECTIVES OF THE PROJECT

To gain insights that will serve the project I will develop perspectives gained from a) biblical and theological foundations, b) confessional understandings, c) selected historical situations and d) a review of literature and resources for small children at worship. The point of this activity is to connect our theology of worship to children in worship.

#### **The Biblical and Theological Foundations**

Biblically and theologically, the Church's advancement of knowledge of young children has been through the agency of worship: at home, at school and at church. Within this paradigm, the essentials of the faith were taught and given to the young child. This was the point for primary advancement of knowledge of God and should remain so for young children. Soon after birth, parents sought the sacrament of Baptism and connected the child with the loving Father, through the Son, by the power of the Holy Spirit. Looking a little closer at the biblical underpinnings of worship, the child's central response is faith. John 4:23, 24 addresses this, where Jesus says, "True worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeks such to worship Him. God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." (NIV). This central response of faith is what is sought in this project, this work and my ministry to the young child. The use of the liturgy

for young children is to allow them to receive God's gifts so that they may "not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but [are] strengthened in [their] faith and [give] glory to God" (Rom. 4:20).

Within an early childhood development framework, the goal is to raise the child's level of awareness in receiving God's gifts for the growth of his or her faith. Not emphasizing good works or adding more law, I seek to bring about reliance on Christ. As Paul says to the Colossians in 2:16,17:

Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath Day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ.

The focal point of worship is the Holy Trinity and Christ as the Savior of the nations. The worship that is sought by God is faith in Jesus as savior. To guide children in this worship is calling them in faith to receive the forgiveness of sins Jesus has made available to them through Word and Sacrament ministry. My work is to witness that for Christ's sake we receive the remission of sins. I must do this on their level. Parents need to display this witnessing for their children as well.

To be able to access these messages and gifts, children should experience church, worship and the communion of saints on their level. It is important that, just as Old Testament prophets bore witness to Old Testament believers of the coming Messiah, we too encourage our children not only by example, but by continually recounting and remembering the saving acts of God on our behalf, through Jesus. We tell the stories of our faith. We place before them all of the symbols, words and pictures of the faith in a non-idolatrous way,

calling attention to the Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. The Lord says in Deuteronomy

11:18-21:

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, when you walk along the road, when you lie down, and when you get up. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates, so that your days and the days of your children may be many in the land that the LORD swore to give your forefathers, as many as the days that the heavens are above the earth.

Continually telling stories—very simple, concrete stories of how God in Christ is for us—will allow children to absorb the truth of God for them at their stage of development. Children hear and understand the stories in simplicity, without distracting objects or object lessons that do not appeal to the preliterate's level of understanding.

How can we put such stories before them and create an atmosphere of worship? How can we do this so that parent and child may learn together of God's grace? The purpose of the story telling is this: by the power of the Holy Spirit to develop faith and trust, which is true worship “in spirit and in truth”. The story telling will focus on what the Holy Trinity has done for us. It will encourage using the name of God to pray for everything we need and to give thanks for everything we receive. The story telling will lift up the cross of Christ as the great act of grace and mercy. It will invite prayer for forgiveness in the name of Jesus and prayer that says “thank you” for salvation. The story telling will reveal the mighty acts of God for his people and the obedience that flows from loving God. It will see the Lord with eyes of a child and call for the simple faith of a child. It will exhibit how to ask God for help and how to give God thanks. In this way the story telling will aid the preliterate child in a life of faith and at the same time model for the parent how to see, interpret and present the elements of

the Christian faith to that child. From faith of both child and parent will come proper sacrifices of prayer, thanksgiving, confession and obedience. Thus story telling will actively employ the divine design for formation that is depicted in ILLUSTRATION 3 of Chapter 1.

A second issue deals with the service. How can children's liturgy be used so it does not compromise confessional and biblical practice, or become ritual that is seen as a saving work? How do we teach proper worship to preliterate children? This is the project's greatest challenge, and I hope that it will be answered in a way that serves the church and brings the Gospel to a group of undernourished sheep within the fold. What is the best way to intentionally bring up a child in the way they should walk, and how should we order this education and advancement of knowledge? The primary agency has been the Sunday school, where the tenets of the faith have been taught for at least 100 years, moving education further away from home, where it should be done. Looking at this challenge, especially now, we in the Church must be grounded well in the Word before any such changes in the way of worship take place.

Early childhood experts who identified different stages of development in children, namely Piaget and Erikson, have valuable items to help us understand how worship relates to children, and how we as church can take the variables of worship and help build the faith of a child (see Chapter 1). One hour of formal instruction per week cannot contain the sole "program" that the child will learn. Too often this is a lesson only in law, where a well-meaning person teaches children that the goal of the Christian faith is to be good and listen to parents. The appropriation through faith of the forgiveness of sins is neglected or forgotten.

To paraphrase an early childhood educator, divine worship should be an educating ministry, not merely contain one<sup>15</sup>.

Teaching the faith is not an incidental occurrence within the divine worship service. Teaching the faith, especially to young children, should be the objective of the divine service. Faith is the central response. Children should be able to find the hidden, incarnational<sup>16</sup> life while in the hallowed atmosphere of the divine worship service. The set-apartness of the worship encompasses them; they begin to realize that they are part of the Body of Christ, and to be taken seriously as a fellow child of God. In preparing the child for worship, we must show them this life and not only with words. Children need to see and hear the stories of the faith.

The center and heart of Christian worship are found in the communal life of the Body of Christ. Growth in the faith is nurtured by gifts in abundance given to the Body as a whole. Children of all growth stages are also growing in knowledge and wisdom, even the preliterate learner. Bringing together disparate disciplines to underscore the need of immersing young children in the communal, corporate life of the church, will show that children cannot be neglected during the most important, formative, foundational part of their lives, especially in corporate divine worship. This fits with the theological and biblical directives to teach young children in the divine worship service, as we can see in the practices of the church in the past.

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<sup>15</sup> Westerhoff, 7.

<sup>16</sup> While a child is a full member of the Body of Christ through faith from their Baptism, as he or she grows, they are made aware of their connection to the Body through worship and instruction. To be incarnational is to be included by faith into the Church as one of Christ's own, seeing the vertical and horizontal relationship to God and others.

The ancient church taught through the agency of the home, with the parents as primary educators. This connected families to the communal gathering of the faithful, even in the Old Testament. It was the parent who was in charge of the primary education of the child. Priest and parent were partners in the faith formation of the child. In the cycle of the three major festivals, the Sabbatical days and years, and the different types of instruction given to the people by God through His servants, we can imagine ways that the youngest believer could be included in the worship events.

Actually, the Old Testament reveals three concepts that overlap and complement one another and they can be seen throughout the scriptures. They provide central activities that parent and child do together. They fit well with story telling, materials the scriptures provide in abundance. In the language of their Hebrew origins they are:

- Rkz = *Remembrance*
- Rswm = *Teaching, Understanding*
- Hrwṭ = *Teaching, Relating*

*Remembrance* is more than suddenly realizing that a circumstance or relationship needs some attention. Throughout scripture, God is remembering His people and His promises to them. To “remember” in the Bible is not merely to recall, or bring to mind; it is to express concern for someone, to act with loving care for him or her. When God remembers His people, he does so “with favor” (Ne. 5:19; 13:31). *Understanding* what is being taught overlaps and becomes an element of remembrance. The parents are the active agents in teaching, using the skills of the priests and others tasked with raising up a nation of God-fearing people. Included in the major festivals were “teachable moments,” times when

children were not just given bit parts but were intentionally taught, such as in the Passover. In Exodus 12, the children are to become intentionally part of the ceremony; their parents answer their questions. "Moreover, when your children ask you, "What does this ceremony mean to you then tell them, 'It is the Passover sacrifice to the LORD, who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt and spared our homes when he struck down the Egyptians.'"

Too often, teaching is made to focus on behavior modification and discipline, or just one facet of discipline. It expects punishing with blows or some other physical or behavioral response to transgressing of rules. As God's redeemed children we are disciplined—just as a human father disciplines his child so that we might repent of our sins (cf. 2 Co 7:10) and grow in our Christian life (2 Pe 3:18; Heb. 12:7-11). Teaching and understanding go much deeper. We also move beyond *understanding* to *relating* faith to life, especially to little children's lives. Jesus continues to emphasize teaching the little children and even "borrows" a child to teach the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 18:1-11). His Word shapes the fellowship of the disciples. He breaks the will toward greatness in them and bids them *turn* (repent) *and become like children* in order to enter the *kingdom of heaven* (1-4). He identifies Himself with the childlike (*one such child*) and gives His disciples eyes to behold the Christ Himself in the *little ones* who need their help (5). No punishment is too great for those who *cause one of these little ones to sin* (6); no sacrifice is too costly to avoid harming these little ones (7-9). No one in the church dares to *despise one of these little ones*, whose angels are jealous guardians over him or her and have constant access to the *Father* (10-11). Perhaps in teaching the little children we need to "borrow" a picture of heaven—the Holy Church on earth—to appropriate for them a place to "play" and yet to worship as in the voice at the

Transfiguration had bid the disciples listen to Him (17: 5) who went the way of ministry to the little, the lost, and the guilty.

The biblical concepts of relating, understanding and remembrance are meant for repetition and participation, as well as for the deep grasp of the tenets of the faith. As a child develops he or she learns to differentiate him or herself from others, and become integrated in a healthy way into a larger community. At each stage of a child's development, the Holy Church is in the correct place with the proper tools to administer God's Word to them. The Church is the one organism that is uniquely designed to impart the essentials of life. This is not just a compartmentalized, marginalized and minimized way of behavior, but a total, committed way of living. The Bible illuminates this attitude toward training and instructing children. Throughout the Scriptures, teaching and remembering are together. The Hebrew vocables for these concepts uncover a rich understanding of the agency of the family in bringing up children. The emphasis is on encouraging the head of the household to teach or instruct their families. There is a reason for that. According to the experts<sup>17</sup> on early childhood development, these early-stages allow children to imprint into their minds people who can be trusted. Early in life children learn to seek the ones they have imprinted and from whom they will receive the most trustworthy information. Parents need to understand the impact of their postures, words, and behaviors as primary care givers. Including the pastor

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<sup>17</sup> Stanley N. Graven, "Things that Matter in the Lives of Children," in *Exploring Children's Spiritual Formation: Foundational Issues*, ed. Shirley K. Morganthaler (River Forest, IL: Pillars Press, 1999), 58.



and teacher as a support caregiver, the parent can use them as builders on the knowledge of faith.

The discipling of children begins almost from before birth. The young child is very inwardly directed and the parent can help form its identification of God. The use of images, icons, pictures and other visual paraphernalia of spiritual life are in keeping with the identification stage. What seems part of a normal life to the parent is normal to the child. A continued identification with images of the faith will help imprint in the child's mind the normality and importance of the symbols of life in Christ. The parents will image God to the child through their conduct, demeanor and behavior. In addition, a parent can use the concept of "parallel play" to have the child imitate and emulate what is going on around them. The child's sense of connection with an outside community is developing, and so the child will "parallel play" the worship service, doing what everyone else is doing.

As a child grows, he or she moves from the trust stage to the stage of learning about boundaries, and crises determine the action or reaction. Here a child begins to assert the "no" reflex and hides. Biblically this is the time to teach the child the fear of the Lord. This is where discipling in the use of barriers and bounds comes into play. Breaking a child's willfulness is at one end of a continuum (Eph. 6:4) and having no boundaries is at the other end of the continuum. Somewhere in the middle, a parent must find the place to draw the boundary, and help the child to slowly understand limits. Leading a child in worship as a parent is difficult; a worship service that takes into account this need for order and for having boundaries can help a parent in teaching the faith to a child. This particular stage can be managed well when and if the parent is familiar with the divine services and using some of

the resources of the hymnal. The psalms could be used to teach a child on several different levels, for example:

- Prayer: using a psalm or parts of a psalm, a parent can teach prayers to children with the appropriate gestures.
- Song: particularly in corporate worship using a part of a psalm (as in the introit) or by itself, either sung or chanted, perhaps with objects denoting what is happening in the psalm, such as sheep, birds, pictures of the stars, the moon, sun, etc.
- Instruction: using a psalm as part of a daily devotion, instruction or as the theme of the day in a particular week, using a calendar, a clock, watch, etc.
- Use of a book or other document that parallels the worship service, such as a hymnal, Bible, busy book with a religious or liturgical focus.

As the child develops further into the boundary stage, he or she needs to have the learned concepts be reinforced by the subject material. Even motions, postures, and actions that tend to pronounce our faith also send messages of boundaries and trespasses. This allows the child to develop a sense of autonomy, while, at the same time, seeing for themselves the limits.<sup>18</sup> Moving beyond the early childhood experiences of trust into autonomy, a child begins to develop memory. It is the beginning of a future collective remembrance, where the individual is slowly developing an identity with a larger group.<sup>19</sup> Here the parent is to guide the child in proper initiative and be schooled in this prerogative as the child moves around within the boundaries. Proverb 22:6 says that one should train a child in the way he should go. This should be more in terms of developing a deep memory that is acquired through

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Dwayne H. Mau, "Cultural Dynamics in Perspective," in *Exploring Children's Spiritual Formation: Foundational Issues*, ed. Shirley K. Morganthaler (River Forest, IL: Pillars Press, 1999), 159-178.

countless recalls. In worship, the collective memory is drawn from and used as much as possible. We can view it from different levels:

- within the immediate family
- within the worshiping community at a given worship event
- within a grade or age-grouping, especially in Christian education

If the child's need to be involved in a worship service is paramount, then both family and congregation must intentionally plan to include them. It was God's intention to include them in His praise and to silence them is prohibited.

The challenge, then, is to build a good working relationship between parent as spiritual leader of the family and pastors and teachers as the upholders and supporters of that spiritual leadership. It is important in the Church to recognize: a) that parents are not as committed to raising their children in cooperation with pastors and teachers, b) that worship is not carried out by parents on either a corporate or family level, and c) that congregations may or may not be seeing their roles as clearly as they have in the past. The need to bring "play" into worship may actually assist parents in the understanding that their child's behavior may not fit in with the quiescence of the worship service and the need for children to be quiet. When worship activities actually involve the child it will help connect the parents to their children. One other factor needs to be kept in mind: several parents have stated to me their anger toward the church in educating their children. My answer over time has become, "You are the parent; what would you do to change this?" The whole congregation needs to understand and be open to the chaos of children in worship, and the need of parents to participate in this chaos.

## The Confessional Understandings

Having stressed the importance of the young child's involvement in divine worship according to the scriptures, we move to the confessional underpinnings of worship useful for educating the young. The outward, visible things are the tools for developing the inward, spiritual things.

From the confessions we esteem highly true worship as more than pure outward signs but rather as "especially . . . inward communion of eternal blessings in the heart, as of the Holy Ghost, of faith, of the fear and love of God."<sup>20</sup> Fellowship is found through the "outward marks... recognized, namely, [in] the pure doctrine of the Gospel, and the administration of the Sacraments in accordance with the Gospel of Christ."<sup>21</sup> Following the teaching of the apostles and allowing for variation without causing offense, how can we design, configure or otherwise enable the young child to be a part of the divine worship service? Following a pattern of worship is good, right and salutary. We take our lead from those early apostles because we seek to understand their direction and guidance. The Apology speaks of Christians gathering at certain times and with particular rites: "They observed certain days, not because this observance was necessary for justification, but in order that the people might know at what time they should assemble. They observed also certain other rites

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<sup>20</sup> Apology VII -VIII. *Concordia Triglotta: The Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921), 5.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, VII-VIII, 6.

and orders of lessons whenever they assembled.”<sup>22</sup> If only what Luther said so long ago were true today:

For thank God, a child seven years old knows what the church is, namely, the holy believers and lambs who hear the voice of their Shepherd. For the children pray thus: I believe in one holy [catholic or] Christian church. This holiness does not consist in albs, tonsures, long gowns and other of their ceremonies devised by them beyond Holy Scripture, but in the Word of God and true faith.<sup>23</sup>

Thus, any liturgical service that has as its goal the outward actions of a service rather than the remission of sins or receiving righteousness that comes through faith is damnable and idolatrous. This righteousness does not depend on whether or not a congregation follows a worship service that comes directly from one recognized hymnal or another. What matters is receiving by faith the grace of God that comes through proclaiming Jesus’ salvific sacrificial act.

The point, then, of such a project as specifically targeting children for a liturgical worship service is, as said in our Confessions, so that:

...the common people might receive a sort of training. For the distinctions of times and the varieties of rites are of service of admonishing the common people... Paul writes to the Colossians, 2, 23, that traditions have a show of wisdom... [However] the semblance of wisdom and righteousness in such works deceives men... they imitate, for the most part, the outward exercises [of the saints]; their faith they do not imitate.<sup>24</sup>

Freedom to observe with children the Lord's day should never bind young consciences into thinking mere ceremony effects grace. Using a form of worship that enables younger Christians to worship in a way salutary for their age group would not violate the prime

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, VII-VIII, 39-41.

<sup>23</sup> *Triglotta*, Smalcald Articles, III, XII, 2-3.

directive of worship, that is, through faith to receive gifts freely from a loving God and Father.

The apostles violate traditions and are excused by Christ; for the example was to be shown the Pharisees that these services are unprofitable. Moreover, if our people neglect some traditions that are of little advantage, they are now sufficiently excused, when these are required as though they merit justification. For such an opinion with regard to traditions is impious [an error not to be endured].<sup>25</sup>

Therefore the children will be receiving gifts from God so that they may respond with faith, and in doing so, respond also with a "eucharistic sacrifice, which does not merit the remission of sins or reconciliation, in order that we may give thanks or return gratitude for the remission of sins that has been received, or for other benefits received."<sup>26</sup>

The thrust then is to make available a didactic, dynamic environment, which fosters the faith of the child in the most direct, meaningful and comprehensive way. In choosing appropriate hymns, songs, and psalms, factors of brevity, perspicuity and comprehension will be taken into account. Using a workbook that allows children to worship or to understand worship is also helpful. Innovation in completely new forms of worship will not necessarily be the determining factor. The key is what these forms, rites and ceremonies convey and teach.

After Luther's death, when his followers faced a possible split over what teachings various rites of worship conveyed, theologians carefully crafted articles for the *Formula of Concord* which set forth principles. Some of them addressed the content of worship when

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<sup>24</sup> *Triglotta*, Apology XV, 20, 22.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>26</sup> *Triglotta*, Apology, XXIV, 19.

God neither commanded a ceremony nor prohibited it. Since the church, not God, had created certain practices and ceremonies for the welfare of believers and for doing things in good order, they called these humanly-devised items *adiaphora* (“in-between things,” neither commanded nor forbidden). An example would be that Christians worship on Sunday; God never said believers had to worship on Sunday and never said they should not. The *Formula of Concord* accordingly states:

We unanimously believe, teach and confess that the ceremonies or church rites which are neither commanded nor forbidden in God’s Word, but have been instituted alone for the sake of propriety and good order, are in and of themselves no divine worship, nor even a part of it. Matt. 15, 9: *In vain they do worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.*<sup>27</sup>

The church is to preach the Gospel, baptize, eat and drink the Lord’s Supper and pray as Christ commanded. There is freedom, however, to decide if a prayer should come before or follow a reading from Scripture and which prayer might be used. The order of readings and prayers in a church rite was never commanded.

Since the worship of God is a spiritual act, that is, to trust completely in him and to do his will,<sup>28</sup> the church cannot ask worshipers to believe anything other than what God says. One should never compromise solid doctrine or salutary and helpful liturgy that bears God’s teaching. When the wrong teachings are conveyed, the weak can be driven from true worship. True worship involves what is rightly confessed, as the *Formula of Concord* says:

For in such a case it is no longer a question concerning *adiaphora*, but concerning the truth of the Gospel, concerning [preserving] Christian liberty, and concerning sanctioning open idolatry, as also concerning the prevention of offense to the

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<sup>27</sup> *Triglotta*, *Formula of Concord*, *Epitome*, X, 3.

<sup>28</sup> See *Triglotta*, *Apology*, XXIV, 27.

weak in the faith [how care should be taken lest idolatry be openly sanctioned and the weak in faith be offended]; in which we have nothing to concede, but should plainly confess and suffer on that account what God sends, and what He allows the enemies of His Word to inflict upon us<sup>29</sup>

When humanly devised ceremonies or liturgies convey the right teaching, there is freedom for congregations to employ them. This freedom would permit presenting a story about Jesus or stating a prayer in a simple way for children and their parents as long as it is faithful to the Scriptures.

The unity of the church does not depend on everyone employing the same *adaiphora* but on right doctrine and right use of the sacraments, as the Formula of Concord says:

We believe, teach, and confess also that no Church should condemn another because one has less or more external ceremonies not commanded by God than the other, if otherwise there is agreement among them in doctrine and all its articles, as also in the right use of the holy Sacraments, according to the well-known saying: *Dissonantia ieiunii non dissolvit consonantiam fidei*, Disagreement in fasting does not destroy agreement in faith.<sup>30</sup>

In Christian freedom and with an eye to the possible abuses that could come from such changes in the worship service, I look forward to the task of making Sunday worship have moments that will involve the pre-literate child and traditions that are easily grasped by them. The fathers of the Lutheran church grappled with similar issues. They spoke about the freedom they had to employ traditions handed down to them and wanted to use them to clearly express the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The following quotation from the Augsburg Confession states rather directly why they retained certain patterns of worship:

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<sup>29</sup> *Triglotta*, Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, X, 6.

<sup>30</sup> *Triglotta*, Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, X, 7.



Nevertheless, very many traditions are kept on our part, which conduce to good order in the Church, as the Order of Lessons in the Mass and the chief holy days. But, at the same time, men are warned that such observances do not justify before God, and that in such things it should not be made sin if they be omitted without offense. Such liberty in human rites was not unknown to the Fathers. For in the East they kept Easter at another time than at Rome, and when, on account of this diversity, the Romans accused the Eastern Church of schism, they were admonished by others that such usages need not be alike everywhere. And Irenaeus says: *Diversity concerning fasting does not destroy the harmony of faith*; as also Pope Gregory intimates in Dist. XII, that such diversity does not violate the unity of the Church. And in the *Tripartite History*, Book 9, many examples of dissimilar rites are gathered, and the following statement is made: *It was not the mind of the Apostles to enact rules concerning holy days, but to preach godliness and a holy life [to teach faith and love].*<sup>31</sup>

With our confessional fathers as guide, we continue to teach, relate, and call to understand and remember, so that the next generations may grow in faith. Their freedom is our freedom; their concern about clearly lifting up Jesus Christ is our concern.

### **The Historical Insights**

Until approximately a decade ago, the most information regarding the design and use of a liturgy specifically for early childhood worshipers was found primarily in the Roman Catholic Church. Stemming from the Vatican II council, reforms within this denomination focused on an early childhood introduction of the church within its educational system. One could argue this was merely expanding on their school chapel services, seeking to connect an otherwise non-attending group of people to a divine worship service. That may have been the case in the decade following the council, or it may have been part of the movement to make their liturgy more relevant in fast changing times. It seems to have become more of a

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<sup>31</sup> *Triglotta*, Augsburg Confession, XXVI, 40-45.

mainstream event, an incorporation of younger children in the mass and intended to bring an even earlier age group into reception of the Lord's Supper. Soon all sorts of worship helps, liturgical guides and lectionaries were being developed and produced with the intention of reaching a primarily younger group. Since this movement has spread into Reformed circles and most recently in our circles, through our early childhood educator's studies of children's development, such questions have even been raised about including children in our worship. I have not seen a substantial work by a Lutheran theologian on the subject of children's liturgy. Aspects of it are treated in some of the periodicals on homiletics. Now and then you may hear about this at a professional conference, when children's sermons are discussed, but there does not seem to be any serious attempts to intentionally engage the topic of worship and the young learner.<sup>32</sup> While this challenge is not new to any pastor, it may be perhaps novel to suggest that the liturgy should be targeted to a specific age group except perhaps at youth gatherings and similar situations. Those who say this approach would necessarily "water down" the liturgy call into question all the worship services done specifically for the aged, the infirm, the mentally retarded, and other so-called special groups.

Children, especially the preliterate, (from 0-7 years old), are sometimes the most neglected. Deemed by some arbitrary forces as too disruptive for regular worship, these children spend the vast majority of their worship time in the back, being distracted with toys, candy and other things, behind people they cannot see over, listening to words they may not

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<sup>32</sup> I repeat, our early childhood educators are discussing this, but it has not yet seemed to reach the levels of serious theological study at our synodical seminaries. This is not a plea for this to begin or even to take our seminary educators to task. This is a professional field

even understand. The message this sends is that they are not important enough to be spoken to directly, they are in the way when it comes to noise and silence, and they are not really members of the holy Church until they are much older. This is a dangerous thought, and carried to its conclusion, it may give the impression that children cannot be believers until a certain age, when they can invite Jesus into their hearts or at the time of confirmation they make a public profession of their faith. It seems that this attitude is entrenched, especially among the third and fourth generations of Lutherans. While the grandparents are still in charge of the church, the second generation is content to allow the church to remain the same. Parents with young children are not part of the regularly attending people, preferring to attend only for the comfort of the Easter/Christmas routine.

Before Vatican II, what was the Church's view of children in worship? From the New Testament Church to approximately 1962 (the year Vatican II began), was there any reference to children in worship? Was this sort of information part of the body of literature regarding church liturgy? At this point, there is not a definitive salient mention of child oriented liturgy made from the New Testament Church to Vatican II. Children learned primarily about the Church and its ceremonies and liturgies from their parents, then from professionals tasked with their instruction, and finally through participation in and with a divine service. At the same time, there were movements within the Church that reflected the need to translate the understanding of what was happening in the divine service and make it evident to worshipers that God was serving them. Movement from high medieval worship to a Lutheran mass was

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question, one where pastors must decide what they want to do regarding their early childhood parishioners.

done with great care. Luther's German mass began with his preface on the value of a vernacular worship service in German "on account of the simple and the young who are to be and must be exercising daily and educated in the Scriptures and God's Word."<sup>33</sup>

My original plan was to find the appropriate Lutheran sources, and adapt them for use in the context of Zion Lutheran Church, Chanute, Kansas. I discovered that while there are some helpful resources, most of them are looking at this issue from outside the Lutheran context. My goal then is to examine this issue of children's liturgical material from the unique viewpoint of Lutheranism.

### **The Review of Literature and Resources**

The corpus of children's liturgical sources is found primarily within the Roman Catholic Church. Many of them are listed here:

Desmond, Archbishop of Dublin. *Lectionary for Masses with Children: Year A*. Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1989.

Fabbro, Gail. *Developing Children's Liturgy: A Step-by-Step Guide*. San Jose, CA: Resource Publications, Inc., 1999.

Pottebaum, Gerard A., ed. *A Child Shall Lead Them: A Guide to Celebrating the Word with Children*. Loveland, OR: Treehaus Communications, Inc., 1992.

Rezy, Carol. *Liturgies for Little Ones: 38 Celebrations for Grades One to Three*. Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1978.

Thompson, Katie. *The Complete Children's Liturgy Book: Liturgies of the Word for Years A, B, C*. Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1996.

These are specifically designed for intentional worship with young children.

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<sup>33</sup> Luther Reed, *The Lutheran Liturgy: A Study of the Common Liturgy of the Lutheran Church in America* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1947), 77.

Thompson's book is a journey through the three-year lectionary series, and the guides used are helpful in arranging the liturgy for worship. While the children follow a somewhat scaled down version of liturgy, the form of mass is still there, and it follows a very structured approach. For example, Thompson's theme for Good Shepherd Sunday (Easter 4) for the three-year series emphasizes Jesus as shepherd in all three gospel readings, contains an order, an introduction, the sign of the cross, the candle lighting, the confession, the Gloria, the gospel acclamation, the gospel, the discussion (with some sort of appropriate visual aid), activity (which includes use of a visual aid, such as a handout or cutout), creed and the closing prayer.<sup>34</sup> In the theme for the day and the introduction, the leader tells what the theme for the day means and includes the children in the story and the activities. The major elements from the service of the word are there (excluding absolution and the Lord's Supper, and all the sacerdotal acts by the priests). The education of the young in the life of the church is there. This would be a Catholic version of "children's church" (where the children leave worship to participate together in a separate activity).

In Rezy's book, already 25 years old, the same format is followed, but more secular events are added (e.g. Mother's Day, Ending of school, Father's Day, etc.).<sup>35</sup> Her theme is more focused on being part of the worship service. For example, "Feed My Sheep" has its theme from the gospel for the day, John 21. It contains two paraphrased readings, several petitions in the prayer of the church (but spoken by the priest), and the preparation of gifts.

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<sup>34</sup> Katie Thompson, *The Complete Children's Liturgy Book: Liturgies of the Word for Years A, B, C* (Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1996), 48, 166, 266.

<sup>35</sup> Carol Rezy, *Liturgies for Little Ones: 38 Celebrations for Grades One to Three* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1978), 140.

This includes the production of cardboard sheep presented with the priest's vestments and the communion elements and water, with this responsory to accompany them:

We first bring up some sheep. The sheep have our names on them to show that we are part of the sheep... part of the flock... part of the church. We also take up one of Father's vestments. He is one of the leaders of the church that Jesus founded, along with the bishops and the pope. These people lead us and teach us about Jesus. We now bring up the bread, water and wine. These will be changed into Jesus, the one who started the church.<sup>36</sup>

The lectionary series by Desmond is even more adapted to the child. It replaces the more difficult texts with easier ones. It allows for the telling of the story rather than reading from scripture. This involves a narrator who sets the stage for the reading, one of the principals from the reading who speaks what is in scripture, and another person who asks the questions we would ask if we were able to interrupt. For example, from Good Shepherd Sunday, this is the preparation for the Gospel of John 10:1-10:

Questioner: I want to know more about sheep and shepherds in the time of Jesus. You know about these things. Tell us about the sheep and the shepherds in those days.

Storyteller: The main thing was to protect the sheep. You could not have the sheep running about all over the place. It was too dangerous. The sheep had to be watched and minded during the day and then penned in at night.<sup>37</sup>

This question and answer period may go on for about five minutes prior to the actual reading of the gospel, which is not a paraphrase, such as in Rezy. The higher liturgical elements seem to have returned or been retained. This resource had a 1989 publication date

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<sup>36</sup> Desmond, Archbishop of Dublin. *Lectionary for Masses with Children: Year A*. (Mystic, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 1989), 140.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 64-65.

so it stands somewhere between the Rezy and Thompson publications. However, they all help the child understand a bit better what is going on during an essential part of the service.

The next group of sources comes from the Reformed tradition. The intent is to make the story plain and, in many cases, to move children away from the main worship service.

Berryman, Jerome W. *Teaching Godly Play: The Sunday Morning Handbook*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995.

Caldwell, Elizabeth Francis. *Come Unto Me: Rethinking the Sacraments for Children*. Cleveland: United Church Press, 1996.

Daley-Harris, Shannon. *National Observance of Children's Sabbaths 2000*. Washington, DC: Children's Defense Fund, 2000.

Lou, Sue, et al. *Get Ready! Get Set! Worship! A Resource for Including Children in Worship for Pastors, Educators, Parents, Sessions and Committees*. Louisville, KY: Geneva Press, 1992.

Searle, Barbara Schmich. "Children in the Worshipping Community". In *The Ministries of Christian Worship*. Ed. by Robert E. Webber. Vol. 7. The Complete Library of Christian Worship, 91-133.

Stewart, Sonja and Jerome Berryman. *Young Children and Worship*. Louisville: Westminster and John Knox Press, 1997.

These are helpful but their approach to sacraments and worship stems from law rather than gospel and there appears to be an almost detached or separate worship service occurring that mirrors a "children's church" worship service and preparation.

The Lutheran sources are from our early childhood professionals, including the following:

*Children Are Members*. St. Louis: Department of Child Ministry, The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, 1998.

Christian, Judith A. *Hallelujah! Hooray!: Worship Notebook 1 For Kids*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2000.

*Celebration Puzzle Pieces: Worship Notebook 2 for Kids.* St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2000.

Hummel, Ruth. *My Church Book.* St. Louis: Child of Nazareth School, 1981.

Morgenthaler, Shirley K., et al. *Children in Worship: Lessons from Research.* River Forest, IL: Pillars Press, 1999.

Morgenthaler, Shirley K. *Exploring Children's Spiritual Formation: Foundational Issues.* River Forest, IL: Pillars Press, 1999.

Schmieding, Susie. *Toddlin' to Jesus.* St. Louis: Department of Child Ministry, The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, 1998.

*Worshiping with Children: Tips on Worshiping with Your Child in Church.* St. Louis: Department of Child Ministry, The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, 1998.

While these engage with the developmental aspects of leading children in worship, including the use of all sorts of tools in teaching the faith, only Morgenthaler's *Children in Worship: Lessons from Research* looks at many factors of worship from a child's perspective. Most interesting in her book is the research by the late Peter Becker, which analyzes and rates for importance the intentions, planning, and worship activities among congregations of the ELCA, the LCMS, and the WELS. It is a very sobering look at what was happening in some select Lutheran congregations. It clarified my understating of why Lutherans are not in the forefront of liturgical studies in the area of early childhood education (or other ages in the primary and early secondary educational age groups for that matter). Within our own congregation there is a need for the parents and children to grasp more firmly the Sacraments and move beyond an "ordinance" understanding of them, where people "get" their child baptized, and they "get" communion. The Department of Child Ministry of the LCMS is doing laudable work in opening up the church to little children, but unless a congregation



grasps the importance of this vital work, the next generation of LCMS congregations will not have a means to include the youngest and most vulnerable members. They may be left out of the mission of presenting God's gifts to His people.

In *Children in Worship*, the surveys keyed several factors that bear consideration. In the category of "importance of the Children's Perspective to Respondent by Denomination," of the fifty-eight LCMS congregations asked if considering the child's perspective was important in planning corporate worship, 2 (3.4%) said "no," 6 (10.3%) said "slightly," 32 (55.2%) said "somewhat," and 18 (31 %) said "very" important.<sup>38</sup> Fifty-eight of an estimated six thousand congregations may not seem a thorough and fair polling for a survey, but a look at the names of those congregations helps in understanding the direction of this survey. The researchers found a good cross-section of our mostly rural, mostly small- to medium-sized congregations. Two other Lutheran synods were asked the same questions, and their representation was somewhat similar. What is telling among these numbers is that congregations which planned with an eye to the children being among the worshipers had a corresponding preschool or early childhood center.<sup>39</sup>

There is one resource that was designed to help bring children into the worship events

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<sup>38</sup> Shirley K. Morgenthaler, et al. *Children in Worship: Lessons from Research* (River Forest, IL: Pillars Press, 1999), 41.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 41. I am finding that even in the Reformed publications, the movement is more towards a Lutheran understanding of the sacraments. While holding their "ordinance" stance, they seem to appreciate the transcendent aspects and almost come out of their discussions sounding like Morgenthaler and Schmieding. This is especially true of Caldwell's *Come Unto Me*. Hopefully, when some deeper research and development is done in children's liturgy within the Lutheran Church, we can influence the wider Church to worship around a better understanding of the sacramental aspects.

around them. Ruth Hummel's *My Church Book* resource has been around for over 20 years but has not become widely known. It would have escaped my detection completely, if not for a much closer resource—my wife, Jean. Jean was a special education, Montessori, preschool Lutheran schoolteacher for about 20 years. Her supervisor, Hummel, developed this publication at the former Child of Nazareth School, St. Louis, MO, one of a handful of Lutheran Montessori preschools. It was first produced in 1981, and it is purposely very difficult and time-consuming to make. It is a “quiet book” for a Lutheran Montessori preschool curriculum and is actually a kit designed for parent-child interaction, to be used both at home and in corporate worship. Here is a description of it:

*My Church Book* has an activity for the young child to do on each page. Through these activities, his attention is directed to the church, its furnishings, to a part of the service, to an action of the pastor, or to an appropriate response of the worshiper. Thus it serves neither to distract the young child nor to merely keep him busy, but to encourage his active participation in the worship of the congregation.<sup>40</sup>

In great detail, Hummel prepares a child for corporate, divine worship. Her kit explains the preparation of this resource, and includes exercises and projects designed to allow for interaction to take place between parent and child, and a depth of knowledge of the faith to be added. While my goal is to fill the need at Zion, Chanute, I am aware that many of our congregations are facing the same dilemma of diminished attendance in divine worship and a lack of participation in the congregational life in general. Continuing in the project's

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<sup>40</sup> Ruth Hummel, *My Church Book*, (St. Louis: Child of Nazareth School, 1981), title page.

design, execution and analysis, I see the need for a parallel tool on the level of the preliterate in helping them to participate in worship, in assisting their parents teach them worship, and in developing a congregation's understanding of Jesus' charge to baptize *and teach all nations*, including the young child.

This chapter has explored the biblical foundation of worship as faith, how faith may be built through teaching, (remembering, understanding and relation) in story, song and prayer and how Lutherans are free to use long-established traditions of the church or to make adaptations of liturgy when the doctrine and practice are right. Recent developments in liturgy for children have led to new practices and resources, some of which provide ideas and techniques that can be helpful for teaching children to worship. *My Church Book*, a homemade tool for helping children engage with the Sunday service, seems especially promising. As the child plays with it, there are opportunities to remember and reflect and ways for parents to teach meanings and activities that help a child participate in the service. The preliterate child can be connected to the worship and to its theological meaning. There are ways to employ the divine design. Parent and child can be assisted in the process of forming a faith and living it.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE PROJECT DEVELOPED

#### **The Study Design**

The procedure was in three parts. First, I designed survey tools: one that allowed me to understand a parent's grasp of the importance of worshipping with a child, understand a parent's grasp of what worship is and its importance in their lives, and help them to see that their role is teaching what the divine worship service brings to them so they in turn can teach their child and one that would allow me to access the worship assistants' knowledge and awareness of the importance of worship for all the congregation, including young children. Secondly, I examined and explored the deeper theological foundations of worship. Thirdly, I looked at practical ways to lead the congregation into a deeper worship life by using the tools we have. This meant that I adapted the service in ways that would better serve the preliterate children and the parents that were struggling to help them grow in faith. When this Major Applied Project was first formulated, the survey interview with the worship assistants was not seen as important an element as the first survey interview with the parents. I wanted to prevent what was popular from being seen as better in worship and what felt good from being treated as best. While I have primarily concentrated upon the survey interview with the parents, I still maintain that a survey with those who work with worship and children as both vocation and avocation would be quite useful. However, since my purpose was to look at

issues of parental involvement, I have not undertaken the second survey yet, but I do plan to employ it in the future.

### **The Research Tools and Methodology**

After initial experimentation with different types of questions for such a survey, I eventually selected seven yes or no questions, and seven narrative questions with an overlapping of two or three questions. I wanted to allow the parents to establish early how important it was to worship with their children and I wanted to know if they knew how to use the liturgy. I also wanted to know if the worship service was helping their family. I focused on their home life, asking if they could connect worship at church with worship at home. The next few questions moved into devotional and worship life at home. I asked them about how much their children were aware of spiritual life and truth. I then refocused them toward serving how in a proactive way they could reconnect learning both at home and in church, and then asked if it would help them to have some things explained during worship to further their child's spiritual growth. I ended each survey with a generic question designed to allow them to speak to an issue or ask a question connected to this project or not connected to this project. This tool was something I developed in consultation with my advisor, who helped me sharpen it and refocus it, so that I had a definite direction and focus. The built-in ambiguity would allow parents to explore a direction they wanted. I could have arranged for a follow-up survey to press the issue of connecting home worship with congregational worship but I did not want to go too far from my intention of discovering what they understood and how important worship was in the lives of all family members. One survey would be enough to draw some conclusions.

I wanted data from both short-answer and narrative statements. I wanted to look at the results and see how many would fall in certain places and also to see how individuals would answer, based upon *hearing* the survey. (The survey was done over the telephone.) The narrative questions allowed some philosophical musings which helped me grasp why a certain question was answered yes or no. It also allowed me to dialogue when a parent needed to defend a particular answer or to ask for a clarification of the question.

### **The Implementation of the Project**

I conducted the phone surveys in May and June of 2003. The first interview took place May 12, 2003 and the final interview took place June 7, 2003. (Initially I wanted to begin the survey as soon as possible in the early winter months of late 2002/early 2003. Since I needed to finish other portions of the MAP and to develop an acceptable survey instrument, I did not administer it until late May and early June of 2003.) Originally more extensive, the survey was pared to twelve questions regarding the parents' understanding of worship, the importance of their children's faith, the parents' role in teaching the faith, and the connection between corporate and family worship. Out of more than 500 baptized members, I could identify 30 family units and 43 preliterate children for this survey and research.

I was able to interview almost all of the respondents over the phone as one or both parents visited with me to answer the questions. Typically this contact was at night when the children had been put to bed. The majority of those interviewed were women; only two men answered the questions about their children.

I had written each household in the group of thirty (see Appendix B, page 85) and stated the nature of the survey and the duration. When I began following up, the majority remembered that the document had been sent them and were willing to answer the questions. It was too impractical for both parents to be available simultaneously so I allowed one parent to answer for the family group. The person answering usually was the Lutheran in the relationship. In cases where the parents were cohabiting, the man was usually not coming to worship.

### **The Worship Adjustments**

My adjustments to congregational worship of the congregation for the sake of the preliterate children went through these stages: the exploration stage, the descriptive stage, and the prescriptive stage.

#### The Exploration Stage

I found that corporate worship specifically designed for young children was done mostly during the sporadic and unevenly offered Sunday School openings and at VBS. When children were included, it would be something like a Christmas service where children either recited or read portions of scripture that were not explained to them, or perhaps during a service where the Sunday school sang a hymn or song. In such cases, the adults probably benefited more than the children did. In speaking with the worship leaders, I found that they expended lots of energy to get children to perform something that they did not really understand. It made sense for children to attend worship regularly but for the ones whose parents did not attend the meaning was undoubtedly lost. When I explored this with parents,

I found that they did not always grasp why they did things or, even though explanations were given, they did not recall the connection or grasp what was going on. That led me to think in terms of refreshing their memories by telling them what the liturgy meant (hence the direction of Question 11 in Appendix A). It caused me in the Descriptive Stage to examine again what the liturgy does mean.

At first I intended to interrupt the worship service with descriptions of what the various parts of the liturgy mean, from where they come, what need they addressed, and their continuing impact on us today. This became a cumbersome task, as it became a one-sided conversation where people who had no interest in the origins of the word “Kyrie” and the history behind its use in the liturgy. While some of the people liked to hear again why the liturgy is such a dynamic tool which the Lord uses to serve us, the vast majority did not want to take the worship service into “overtime.” It caused me to think in terms of concise descriptives that could be used in the liturgy to describe it without being overly long for the attention spans of most children. This brought me to the prescriptive stage.

### The Prescriptive Stage

I found that including some brief descriptive bits in the liturgical responses can help establish in the mind of the worshipers what we do, and why we do it. Most of these snippets are descriptions of remembrance—God’s and ours. It was helpful to have the worshipers speak parts of the liturgy like the confession, collect and other places normally spoken by the pastor. Connecting these parts of worship with their description also reminds adults why we seek a liturgy that continually points to God’s actions toward us. Over time I reflected on the placement of these descriptive elements and began to consider how to guide children to grasp



more of the meaning. Two comments from worshipers and other observers kept surfacing: Why were certain elements excised and why were other ones changed? I removed some elements from the liturgy since they might not be understood as well as other parts. I retained the invocation, confession, absolution, Kyrie, Collect, sermon, creed, prayers, Lord's Prayer, Words of Institution, Agnus Dei, post-communion collect, and benediction. I adapted certain elements, used fewer Latinized words and, in some cases, did not attempt to explain everything. Simply put, I tried to make it understandable from the parents' viewpoint. I tried to maintain the same order without too much variation, as children retain better those things that follow the same predictable pattern and have minor variations. Some things I wanted to emphasize more, others less. So I included a description of the invocation (remembering our Baptism daily) along with making the sign of the cross. Confession was where I spelled out that sin is not just the bad we do or say or think, but the bad that corrupted the good within us. In absolving I presented it as the good news, asking the worshiper if the good news was good news for them so that they could appropriate the Gospel that God offers. Instead of just reading the Bible, I told the Bible story and related how this connected with the sermon. The creed provided a way to teach the structure of the Apostles' Creed to the very young. One person asked me why I did not attempt to make the Lord's Prayer more understandable to the young child. I explained that most of what we learn about our faith we learn in divine worship, but many of these children do not worship because their parents do not worship. There is a greater incidence of children knowing the Lord's Prayer than the Apostles' Creed—either from grandparents or elsewhere—and so, rather than adapting the Lord's Prayer (which has an alternative translation in *LW*), I wanted to do the adjusting with an eye that ahead in

life, particularly if the child goes to our midweek confirmation class, they would learn all of the above and other chief parts of the Small Catechism. I arranged the creed into the three parts and made it at once Trinitarian so the child would hear immediately that we worship a three-in-one God, and these are the names of the persons of God. I also added the fact that while God the Father made the world, it also means He continues to protect both it and the worshiper. (When children grow up and find out that a law exists on the books that could have allowed their demise [*Roe vs. Wade*], they need to know that God is still in charge even when sinful people devise all sorts of mischief for harming the world.) The Second Article includes the salvific history of Jesus focusing on the Incarnation and Vicarious Satisfaction. I thought about adding a sentence which stated that Jesus, both God and human, can be everywhere and that he is present in the elements which communicants receive. I wrestled with this but decided not to include it on the reasoning that this was to help acclimate them to the fact that we have a public summary of beliefs that tell others to whom we belong. In the Third Article statement I wanted to emphasize there is a Person who leads us to be believers, and that fellowship extends from this life to the next. More analysis and reflection will be necessary as we pass through changes in seasons, events, and festivals that will allow us to highlight certain things within the liturgy that helps us understand what it means for us. Using the Seven Factors in Planning Worship was helpful in arriving at what variations could be made. In selecting the course of adaptation, the tension and balance between the sacrificial and sacramental helped in deciding what to change or not to change in the liturgy. Because children learn by imitation and gesture, after some experimentation we encouraged more gestures. I have noticed that worshipers who have also attended the traditional worship

services have begun to cross themselves. Either it is coincidence or I am becoming aware myself of worship gestures and postures. This is yet a project that continues to cycle and hopefully more voices will join in the conversation, especially the parents.

The main move in the direction of serving young children was developing the type of liturgy that would be most helpful at the young child's developmental learning stage. Keeping in mind the Biblical, confessional and historical material, and the literature about children in worship, I made adjustments to the liturgical service at Zion, Chanute. The details of the service required several factors of exploration: the comprehension level of the child at a certain age; the parents and their level of awareness; and the liturgy as found in *Lutheran Worship* (1982). I took several steps in preparing the children's liturgy. First, I reviewed the structure of the liturgy (beginning on page 158). Second, I translated it to a language understandable to a preliterate, used descriptions a parent could comprehend, and thought in terms of focus, brevity, and ease of understanding. Third, I reviewed the accompanying gestures and movements that would help reinforce the liturgy to children. I wanted to be simple in teaching the parents when to sit, to stand, to make the sign of the cross, etc. I desired to be as demonstrative as necessary to indicate actions and events. I wanted to illustrate the theme for the day, the color for the day, and other items helpful for both parent and child. It is important to link the sermon and the Bible story told during worship (see ILLUSTRATION 5). This story is presented in a way a young child can understand, involving a literal understanding of things outside of themselves. For instance, if an object lesson at this stage in a child's development, especially the object used (such as the blanket used to signify the comfort from the Holy Spirit), will confuse him or her then the

## **EXPLANATION OF CHILDREN'S LITURGY**

**BIBLE STORY:** from the readings for the Fifth Sunday after Pentecost, Series C. Zechariah 12: 7-10; Galatians 3:23-29; Luke 9:18-24. The theme is God's mercy poured out on His people, in sending at the right time the sin-bearer, the Christ, who will suffer in His Passion and into whom we have been baptized. The focus will be on Paul's statement that having been baptized into Jesus, we are clothed in Jesus' righteousness.

**SERMON:** Clothes Exchange. I use a wipe board, my alb, our "triumphant Jesus" cross statue in the chancel, and the baptismal font. While I speak to the children who are gathered at the baptismal font, I prepare my wipe board for a picture. I talk about how Paul wrote in his letter to the Galatians about how when we are baptized we are clothed with Jesus. I start with the baptismal font, and remind them why we have it in the entryway into the sanctuary, and not in the chancel area. Baptism is like a front door into God's family, and as we pass it every week coming into church, we are reminded that through baptism, we have entered into God's family, His kingdom of forgiveness. Next, I write on the wipe board a picture of Jesus on the cross and talk about how he took his goodness and righteousness and put them on us. Zion has a triumphant Jesus cross statue mounted on the chancel wall, and I point to it to get the children thinking in terms of His dazzling clothes. I draw on the wipe board Jesus without all of His beautiful robes, and how the robes are given to us in Baptism. Then I put down the wipe board, indicate the white alb I am wearing, and tell them this is like wearing Jesus' robe, and each of us wear it.

### **ILLUSTRATION 5**

child's developmental reasoning may reach the conclusion, "The Holy Spirit is a quilt." They need to be told the Bible readings that engage the sermon in story form. The complete liturgy in which this would occur is given in Appendix D.

My hope in using multiple resources in the context of a modified worship service targeting young children and their parents is that both child and adult may receive a deeper grasp of God's love for them in Jesus for the edification of their faith. I realize that I do not

manipulate them, turn faith into a process, or in any way cause them to turn faith into a work, but allow the Holy Spirit to create saving faith through Baptism, and through the Word to help them to grow stronger in their faith.

In viewing the service in detail and the adjustments, we retained the structure of the liturgy and used the same or similar language throughout. Because of the usefulness of repetitive language gestures and postures, I would face the congregation for most of the service, including times when normally I would face the altar. In the invocation I would link the sign of the holy cross with Baptism, by facing the children and their parents and making the sign, as we said the invocation together. This reinforces the connection between Baptism and daily life, and allows the gesture of making the sign of the cross to be integrated into the beginning of the service, along with their speaking the invocation. Repetition in word and gesture seals in their mind the importance of remembrance of the act. Having their parents help them with making the sign and saying the words allows for understanding the act in its importance. Performing this act elsewhere, perhaps in the morning at breakfast or at night before bedtime moves into relating the continued importance of this act. Thus, we move the children into the divine service where they are actively participating. This is also preparation for them as they grow in their faith. In the confession of sins, I started the practice of kneeling in front of the congregation so that they see in a real way that we enter God's house as persons not on his equal, but as those seeking mercy and forgiveness. We do not have kneelers, but it can be a teachable moment for the children. The confession is a simple, straightforward prayer, being mindful of our fallen condition. We have used this in about every children's service. The absolution is punctuated by great joy in the resounding, "Good

News! Good News!” Unfortunately, even adults can become jaundiced about this pronouncement from God, so I purposely placed this loud proclamation at the beginning. I added the question “Do you believe this?” after a long wrestling with the possibility of confusion occurring (“Am I forgiven or what?”). I settled on using it on the ground that belief in the Christ is what saves, and helping them with their faith formation in worship is my point. I included the Kyrie at the conclusion of this to help them transition to the praise hymn, which would normally be the Gloria. Here, the structure is maintained and a wonderful children’s song reflecting this theology of the hymn of praise would be utilized in worship in an appropriate way.

The collect proved more challenging as it was simplified from the collects found in *Lutheran Worship*. I tried to get the essence of the prayer and make it as simple as possible, for both child and parent. The readings from scripture could be read, but often, I would tell the story of the lesson, especially as it related to the sermon about to be preached. The sermon hymn would be selected for its connection to the Sunday of the church year and its connection to the story and sermon. I found quite a corpus of children’s songs appropriate for worship. I also added text to familiar children’s songs to emphasize the message or the Sacraments. Several liturgical hymns, such as the one chosen for this paper, were from *Lutheran Worship*, and were excellent in their simple repetitive message. The sermon was retelling the story and putting us in the picture. Often I would preach this as close as possible in proximity to the children, or move them to an appropriate place in the sanctuary (see ILLUSTRATION 5 above). In the past, I would ask the children to come forward, sit on display for grandma or grandpa, and the children would sort of hear something but often be

distracted. In the way I do worship according to this liturgy now, I simply walk among the congregation, maybe even engaging a child in a question. They do not have to get up and make their way to the front. I would go to them and talk to them. At the end of the sermon I could employ another option. I could call for them to make the sign of the cross with me as I say, “In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”

The creed was based on the Apostles’ Creed, and included the Trinitarian beginning to bring to remembrance the monotheistic direction of the creed. Children pick up on inconsistencies, and makes for them the connection between the God we confess and the God into whose name we are baptized. I wanted them to understand God’s continued care of his creation, so I added “and takes care of it and me.” I wanted to emphasize the vicarious atonement, so I placed into the second article distillation the importance of Jesus taking our place. In the third article distillation I wanted to see the connection between being a church and gathering together as believers. My hope is that some discussion ensues as to where believers gather. This would take place because children who in the intuitive-projective stage will want to clarify what mommy and daddy believe, as part of their belief structure. Because preliterate believers are yet in a more magical stage of understanding, the resurrection of the body may not make sense to them, but living forever in heaven does.

In the prayer section, they respond to simple prayers with “hear our prayer,” and this helps them to understand that they are talking directly to God. The Lord’s Prayer is kept in the same language, and this I did intentionally, because while we may use a distilled and simplified version of the Apostles’ Creed, most children will use the Lord’s Prayer on a regular basis, more than the creed. The words of institution are maintained as they are

because of their simplicity. And children in the latter stages of preliteracy are more literal in their understanding. This straightforward use of the Verba will help them to understand that when Jesus says it is his body and blood given for their forgiveness, they will take his words as true. The distribution hymn will be repetitive and focus on the vicarious atonement, helping the children to hear the good news of Jesus' death for them also. The thanksgiving prayer will finish the order of Holy Communion, and a simplified Benediction will conclude the service. It is scaled down, simplified and abbreviated, but the service maintains its structure, and retains the important elements, and reinforces them throughout the service.

Thus, my project shifted from an original idea of simply making adjustments to the service. The survey process helped me see just how difficult it was for parents of preliterate children to assist their young ones in worshipping. The exploration of learning theory revealed the process and stages of faith development. The theological study showed how story, remembering and participation are linked and how Lutherans have a freedom both to use ancient practices and to adapt to the needs of people. By applying these insights and experimenting I was able then to develop an approach to designing a service that assisted both the preliterate child and the parent of the child.



## CHAPTER 4

### THE PROJECT EVALUATED

This chapter presents the survey items, the one-answer questions and the opened-ended questions, and provides an analysis of the responses that participants gave.

#### **The Survey Items**

Question 1 (Simple Answer Question): Is worshipping with your children important to you?

Question 2 (Narrative Question): What are your children's needs as far as worship?

Question 3 (Simple Answer Question): Do you know how to use the liturgy?

Question 4 (Narrative Question): What sort of worship experience do you expect for you and your children?

Question 5 (Simple Answer Question):

A) Is the worship service helping your child?

B) Is it helping you?

Question 5c (Narrative Question): How would you modify it [the worship service] to allow you and your children to worship?

Question 6 (Narrative Question): How could you continue the theme of the service for the week?

Question 7 (Simple Answer Question): Do you follow an order of worship at home?

Question 8 (Narrative Question): How do you relate/teach God to your children at home?

Question 9 (Narrative Question): How well do your children know certain spiritual truths, and how would you like to see them explained to your children in worship?

Question 10 (Simple Answer Question):

- A) Do you ask your children if they understand what went on during worship?
- B) Do they ask you about it?
- C) Do you understand?

Question 11 (Simple Answer Question):

- A) Would it help you to have the worship service explained every once in a while?
- B) Would you like this done during a worship service?

Question 12 (Simple Answer Question): Are there issues you wish to address at this time not spoken of but which are very important to you?

Question 12 (Narrative Question): What are these issues you wish to address which are very important to you?<sup>41</sup>

### Target Group Characteristics

In our original target survey group, twenty-one of the thirty couples are married and the children live in this type of household relationship. Five of these twenty-one are blended

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<sup>41</sup> See APPENDIX C for an analysis of data in light of the project hypothesis.

families, with one or more of the older children part of another household. Of the remaining nine, four are single adults living by themselves, (one is sharing the child with an ex-spouse) and five are cohabiting with someone and the preliterate child is part of the household. In one case, the cohabitants' two children are preliterate twin boys.

Of the thirty families identified from our congregation for this survey, nineteen responded. Among the eleven that were either not contacted or were not responsive, four had literally no connection with the congregation, and of those four, two could not be reached. (One is in a protective shelter and her child is now in foster care, and I have no contact with either the mother or the ex-husband. The other parent is in the process of losing his child to her birth mother.) The two others, single parents, are not involved with the church and are in the process of moving. (Coincidentally, both of them are related—the father with a preliterate son is the uncle of the mother with a preliterate son.) Of the other seven families not responding, one was cohabiting, had no phone number and was not reachable; two lived out of town and worshiped at Zion very seldom; one with two preliterate children (also one in high school and one in college) was in the middle of several all-consuming legal, physical and psychological situations; and the remaining three either could not or would not respond.

One statistic that may have a large bearing on this project is the religious background of the parents. Of all the couples, married and cohabiting, only seven were couples where both partners are Lutheran or have a Lutheran background. The rest are spouses or cohabitants whose partner is not a Lutheran and at least eight of these have not identified themselves with any church whatsoever. Of the nineteen families responding—two were single mothers not cohabiting, two were mothers who were cohabiting. Fifteen families had

more than one child, two families had three boys, two families were older parents with young children, and five families had only one preliterate child. Eight cases involved a Lutheran parent who had married a non-Lutheran—most with no church background. In two cases a Lutheran had married someone who was already a Lutheran. In five cases a parent had married a non-Lutheran who was later catechized and became a member. Both of those cohabiting were raised Lutheran but live with a non-Lutheran partner. Of the two single parents, one was divorced from a Lutheran, and the other was divorced from a non-Christian (Latter Day Saint). In reviewing these statistics, it is clear why some parents find it hard to think of themselves as expert teachers in the faith.

### Simple Answer Analysis

Question 1 asked, “Is worshiping with your children important to you?” The parents’ answers to this initial question could be deceiving. Of course, when parents are asked directly in any questioning method or conversation whether or not they will think that worshiping with their child is important they will say yes. Doing anything with their child is important. To say no is tantamount to saying—in their minds—that they are not Christian. It is not the direction of this paper or project to “weed out” the weak in faith, but to get all these parents to realize that they are the ones pastors seek to help in raising their children in the faith. The importance of this question is to establish from the beginning the importance of the connection between faith, worship and parenting. I will say that almost all of those asked that particular question answered immediately and without hesitation.

Question 3 asked, “Do you know how to use the liturgy?” Nineteen said yes. I had several responses, such as, “what do you mean?” To this question I responded, “Do you

know how to use the materials presented to you during a divine worship service, such as hymnals, handouts, bulletins, etc.?" Often, though not as often as I had hoped, they would move beyond first order thinking, i.e., the printed materials, and get to the substantive, i.e., God's gifts for them. Procedural thinking is helpful, such as, ease of use, understandable liturgy, repetitive word gestures, etc. This offers a wonderful opportunity to explore this further in a "teaching liturgy to children" class, such as advocated and practiced now by Berryman, et al.

Question 5 looked at three separate but connected issues. The first asked, "Is the worship service helping your child?" Twelve said yes; four said no; two said it didn't apply to them (they were not attending); and one split the answer between her two children: the infant enjoyed the service and sang during the hymns; the seven-year-old sat and reads from his Bible. This was a subjective and somewhat speculative area, one that I purposely left ambiguous. Of those who saw worship as helpful for their children, most of their talk was about getting them used to it, sitting quietly, etc. Of those answering no, it was because of the child's age and inability to sit quietly.

The second issue, a follow-up to the first, asked, "Is it (worship) helping you?" Sixteen said yes; one said it did not apply to them; two said no. This question about worship helping the parent was then expanded to "what is helping you?" Most said they could hear and most said they could take something out of it. I realized that a question such as this one can be terribly subjective and more in the realm of the emotional. Nevertheless it did bring to light how most parents were assessing their attendance at divine worship.

The third issue of question 5 is discussed later in the narrative answer section below.

Asking about home devotions seems to overlap the above worship questions because there seems to be a disconnect between what goes on in the way of Sunday worship and what happens during the rest of the week. Unfortunately, there seems to be no intentional understanding of using the interaction with God for anything more than a better feeling about one's self.

Question 7 asked, "Do you follow an order of worship at home?" Two said yes; seventeen said no. Of those who said yes, there was usually a reference to something like *Happy Times* or *Portals of Prayer*. Of those who said no, eleven had a set time for prayers, usually at a meal or at bedtime. Six let those times just happen--usually, though, the times were seldom. At least one parent said that the child said his or her own prayers at bedtime. Even if the parent didn't take the lead there was some sort of ritual. The episodic and unintentional use of materials cannot be the replacement for regular and intentional devotional and worship time, yet I must be grateful for each person who does some form of worship or devotion with their children, regardless of frequency. The use of devotional materials, especially ones directly targeting the young child, could help immensely in establishing a time and a method that would connect parent with child. The child often dictates the moment and activity by inviting the parent, "Daddy, will you read my Bible book? It's bedtime." So this activity and this time can become intentional, slowly introduced over time.

In Question 10, three questions were asked, A) "Do you ask your children if they understand what went on during worship?" Eleven said yes; seven said no; one said it did not apply. Asking a child if they understand what went on during a divine worship service is

another intentional action taken by the parent, and from the responses—eleven saying yes, and seven saying no—it could be seen as an encouraging sign that some meaningful work at comprehension and faith-building may be taking place. A follow-up question was "how often do you ask?" Some parents who responded said things like, "they really don't say much," and "I really don't ask that much."

B) "Do they ask you about it?" Ten said yes; eight said no; one said it did not apply. The answers were very similar to part A. This was helpful since I often have no indication that any communication between parent and child regarding worship is taking place.

C) "Do you understand (what went on during worship)?" Sixteen said yes; three said it did not apply. What the parents understand for themselves about what went on is similar to the response to the question whether they know how to use the liturgy. More than eighty percent said they did understand what was going on. This seems to indicate that cognition .. and comprehension are taking place.

Question 11, a two-part question, began, "Would it help you to have the worship service explained every once in a while?" Fourteen said yes; four said no; one said it did not apply. Of those who gave an affirmative reply quite a few took that to mean both an understanding of the parts of worship and their meaning and the reason for paraments, vestments, themes, etc. For some of them, liturgy was a mystery to be endured. For others, liturgy was like therapy, a familiar help to an age-old need. The four who said no to this question, understood the service already, and they did not really see a need to pursue this description of the worship service, even though it might help their child. They did not wish to "interrupt" worship with such things.

The follow-up question was, “Would you like this done during a worship service?” Twelve said yes; six said no; one said it did not apply. The reason for the drop in affirmatives here was that some of the parents responding affirmatively to the first question did not want to take time from worship to do this. They wanted to put the descriptions in the bulletin for those who would read it. It was possible they thought explanations to young children would prolong the service. Many parents did not seem to care to pursue explanations.

Question 12 was asked essentially as a lead-in to possible further issues regarding a parent's understanding of divine worship in the lives of their children. Only four parents answered this one. It will be examined in detail later in the narrative section.

#### Narrative Answer Analysis

In the narrative group of questions I looked for more thought provoking answers than in the first group of simple yes-no answers.

Question 2 asked, “What are your children's needs in worship?” This produced quite a gold mine. One parent responded that her children needed more signs, gestures, more participation, designed to include and tie worship to several ages; other parents wanted their children to learn to participate—one specifically to sing; several parents simply wanted their children to learn to sit during worship; several parents wanted to work towards understanding and comprehension; several parents wanted to see a more simplified version of the liturgy, following the same order and structure of the divine service; one said it did not really apply and had no response to this, even after follow up; one parent said she wanted her child to be



comfortable. Despite these suggestions many seemed to think that it was not the business of the church or the pastor to change the liturgy.

What children's needs were during worship was the great question asked and yet unanswered. Most parents wanted clarification, to which I would immediately ask, "What do you perceive that your child needs to receive from divine worship?" When they realized the deliberate ambiguity of the question, they all went on separate paths to answer. The divergence followed two very different paths: 1) the parents wanted to experience a different sort of liturgy that would increase comprehension and worship capabilities for their children and 2) the parents wanted their children to learn to sit and watch and be quiet. The fact that they all thought the liturgy should not fundamentally change seemed to make my work easier, yet it gave me pause. Why? They saw the possibility of following the same order of worship with which they were familiar, while scaling down or back the necessary level of comprehension for their child's sake. This gave me hope and yet challenged me.

Question 4—"What sort of worship experience do you expect for you and your children?" " One parent said she wanted to be able to focus on one thing in worship; one parent said she wanted to raise her level of awareness for her spiritual life; at least four parents replied that they wanted a concise and not too deep service; another parent replied that she would like varied worship experiences; one parent wanted a "user-friendly" bulletin for her and a children's bulletin for her children (we have one for ages 0-6 and one for ages 7-12); one wanted the service to remain status quo; one wanted a service to include a theme for the day; one parent stated that the pastor should focus on the children and then he will get the parents; one parent said she wanted to learn together with her child the spiritual truths (she

was a convert, in her 40's and this child was an adopted girl from Thailand); one wanted more practical connections to life; and one said that it did not apply to her.

While this question was similar to Question 2, it approached worship from a different angle. Whereas 2 asked about their perceived needs of the child in worship, Question 4 fine-tunes the “consumer's” actual look at their aspirations and wishes of worship as a commodity to be used. (This actually allowed them to look down the "sights" of the "gun" rather than looking down the “barrel” of question 2. They could aim better because they had been given lenses to see what they needed or wanted to see.) This was a very good look at philosophical understandings of laypeople in divine worship. To hear that some wanted to raise their level of awareness for their spiritual life, to have people speak about their deep longings for worship to penetrate, gave me so much hope both for them and their children. I was especially moved by the mom in her 40s (who is a wonderful witness for the Savior) who wanted to learn more about deep spiritual truths with her daughter who was adopted from Thailand. It told me more than anything that this area of worship with the preliterate was one worthy of exploration.

The last part to Question 5 was “How would you modify it [the worship service] to allow you and your children to worship?” Two parents said they would like a briefer, more focused service; two parents wanted a children's service; one wanted to continue the simplified children's music, an introduction of the service, and a time when I would preach in the congregation (not behind the pulpit); one parent wanted more participation with children during worship; two wanted the physical environment to be more conducive for worship with

children; and five did not want or did not see a need for change or modification; two replied that it did not apply to them, as they were not in attendance that much.

This question involved even more fine-tuning. (Using the gun analogy again, now they could aim and I could allow them to look at their "ammunition.") They had practical suggestions to modify the worship service that would not be hard to do. The liturgy could include some of the elements listed, but any sort of change would also need to be reviewed carefully. This was a most interesting development as it allowed me to see where they truly imagined improvements.

Question 6—"How could you continue the theme of the service for the week?"

At least four parents said that they used the Sunday school lessons to augment the themes—although they did not follow any sort of planned devotion. Most relegated this to an episodic and situational use in home worship.. This question really stumped most of them because they honestly did not seem to see a connection from Sunday worship to daily life. Four parents saw a connection between the Sunday school lesson—Concordia Publishing House's lectionary-based Bible story curriculum—and the divine worship service. This was an excellent development, and I applauded the parents' awareness of this. It was another hopeful moment in the survey.

Question 8—"How do you relate/teach God to your children at home?" Most responded that this was not done during a certain time period, or at a set time, but that this was mostly, as with Question 6 above, episodic and situational—in other words, unintentional. One mother said that worship for children needed more signs, gestures, more participation, designed to include and tie worship to several ages. This question was

designed to complement Question 7, regarding home devotions. However, the whole concept of God in their house seemed to unsettle most of the parents. It dawned on me that they might not have wanted to continue such a theme in their house, as though it was not a place for the Almighty to be found. It was as though the thought that God would be found in any place but a church was foreign. Having a continuous theme of God throughout the week seemed odd. I almost blurted out a few times, "You pray at home, right? So why would God just flit in and out for only a moment?" Some of the parents thought devotions were a good thing and wanted to link Sunday morning with Monday morning. To be fair, most of these parents were part of a work force that rarely interacts with their children until late afternoons and evenings, when both child and parent have many activities that take them away from home. To attempt to change these schedule patterns would involve comfort zone restructuring that they may not tolerate. This is a dilemma.

Question 9 was two-part: 1—"How well do your children know certain spiritual truths" and 2—"How would you like to see them explained to your children in worship?" One parent said that her older child was grasping them and that for her younger child she would like them explained on a child's level--telling the Bible story, rather than reading it, preaching in story, etc. One parent replied that she thought this was better addressed in Sunday school. One was content with the way it was being addressed now. Seven did not have an answer for either question. One was specific about the progress each child was showing, e.g., reads bible, knows about prayers and sits through worship. One said that her children knew simple stories from the bible. One parent said he handled most of the spiritual "stuff" at home and did not need to augment, supplement or complement it.

Most parents indicated that they could read and understand their Bible and simple Bible stories. I hoped to get some idea of what they were really teaching their kids at home since giving a "moral" upbringing may easily distort spiritual truths. One father, responding to the last part of the question, reminded me that moral education was the point of his child's instruction and he could take care of that home. However, the parents who had been reading to their children, teaching them simple Bible stories, and then asking questions, obviously saw the need to bring their child up in the fear and knowledge of the Lord. For me this was a positive discovery and helped me to see even more from a child's point of view.

Question 12's narrative answers were helpful to me as a pastor and yielded something for this project. The question was "Are there issues you wish to address at this time, items not spoken of but which are very important to you?" Although this was a simple yes-no question, four parents were ready to discuss it further. Two suggested that we have a "frequently asked question box" for parents to inquire about things their children were thinking about but for which they have no good answers. Another parent wanted to have time to learn more about the Bible—like a Bible study. One wanted me to address the fellowship issue, since she was not a Lutheran, and did not understand why a pastor did not automatically commune every Christian who came to our worship service—something always addressed in the adult confirmation class.

The issues that arose from this question may not have involved divine worship directly, but they had implications for those who wish to join in worship: fellowship, Bible Study and instruction in the doctrines of the church in general, and the teachings and practices of Lutheranism and the Missouri Synod in particular. Most of the above answers

involved a commitment to learn, to be involved with a continuous, regular, intentional study of the doctrine and practice of the church. One person promised such a commitment but has yet to enter the church to carry out that commitment.<sup>42</sup>

While on the surface this looks bleak, I also realize that there are many opportunities for ministry here. Even if I cannot impact home worship and devotions, I certainly want to help enhance Sunday worship, particularly in regard to the preliterate child. We will look at

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<sup>42</sup> Not necessarily a part of the results of the survey, but definitely impacting the work at hand, are the data and analysis of the home dynamics that affect the preliterate (see Appendix C). In reviewing the responses of parents of the preliterate, three dynamics emerged: A) Almost one-third of those surveyed were either single or cohabiting with an unmarried partner. B) One-third of the families responding had children from at least one other marriage outside a Lutheran background. C) And two-thirds of those couples in the second dynamic (B) were ones where only one spouse was Lutheran.

In the first dynamic group the parent (usually but not always a woman) was single by divorce, and had to work and do all the essential non-work, family and extracurricular activities by herself. This meant that worship might be low on her family priorities, especially when the children were gone part time with the other parent and might not attend worship, or at least worship in a place with which they were familiar. The other side of this dynamic was the influence the other spouse had on the children, especially when this person was the non-attending or non-Lutheran partner. Perhaps that person insisted that the children go to their church or synagogue, which would take the child farther away from Christ-centered worship. It was a highly stressed learning situation. The next problem group was the blended family and how the child in flux shaped the whole family and their actions. This was especially true if the family members were from different church backgrounds. For them what usually dictated contact with Christianity was the closest house of worship. Attempting to involve the whole family was helpful, but only if the other family members understood the necessity of it. The last group was the large percentage who had children from at least one other marriage that had no Lutheran background. This group has been growing rapidly. With only one couple I have married in ten years of ministry were both Lutheran and in that case the wife was in the process of joining the church. I realize that this is the shape of the congregation I serve but I also know that most of the ones who were involved in this study were non-attending Christians, if they came to church at all. Most of the spouses attending were the wives, who had to fend for themselves and their children. I am deducing that outside of Sunday morning there was not much of a devotional life for a preliterate child. This has implications for worship, fellowship, and education issues.

that in the summary and conclusions. To teach the child involves discovering options that can enhance instruction and understanding.

### **The Analysis in Light of Faith Development**

With this plethora of information I saw that the parents were not doing any significant faith formation with their preliterate children. There needs to be both faith development at home and intentional instruction during worship. I thought perhaps the best action would be to use the *Church Book* in conjunction with the children's worship service. This was where I was most stymied—how to help the parents become their children's faith formulators. While studying Jerome Berryman's *Teaching Godly Play* and his *Young Children and Worship*, I did not believe it was possible to offer another activity at church that the parents would see as important enough to attend. I remember thinking that this activity would only work on a Sunday morning, probably between services, during our Bible study/Sunday school period. That would mean my adult Bible class and the preschool Sunday school class would end. It would not work simply because it was such a challenging and novel idea. Imagine, a pastor teaching the preschool class. However, Berryman has successfully used such a program. I envision a Montessori-based worship instruction period for the preliterate at Zion. It could work at Zion if I were to undertake it. Practically speaking, I see that integrating the worship service in conjunction with the *Church Book* would not necessarily be impossible. As it turns out, the book follows a logical pattern, whereby the child begins a journey (on a felt page) that takes him or her to the church. The book then sets up a series of situations that show the interior of a church, the furniture, and the pastor, including his vestments. I would connect here with pointing out before worship what is going on, why the different colors, what will

happen during worship, and how they can “follow” this in the *Church Book*. This also helps set the parents up for teaching their child where they are in words and gestures. As the preliterate child needs to have experiences that are predictable and repetitive, this approach of using the *Church Book* as part of worship would help integrate what is happening in divine worship and perhaps lead to the child continuing the repetition at home.

As it turned out, the survey revealed some unexpected characteristics of parents and homes in which the preliterate children are nurtured. There was less faith formation going on there than I imagined. My approach to a children’s liturgy would have to aid parents in gaining essential concepts and techniques for nurturing the children. It would be necessary to discover what they would be willing to do in teaching their children the faith and in leading them toward a godly life. The repeated use of children’s liturgy and the *Church Book* would prepare both parent and child toward patterns for intentional faith formation at home by story telling, explaining, praying and ceremonies, like making the sign of the cross. Introducing the word of God into the child’s day provides the means of grace which the Holy Spirit can use. Making prayers that grow from the stories of God and around the events of the day gives expression to the young faith that trusts in God.



## CHAPTER 5

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

#### **The Contributions to Ministry**

Having assessed the need for an intentional worship service that addresses the spiritual formation of the preliterate child through an interview with those children's parents and having identified, at least in theory, a link to these parents that fits their consumer mentality, I continue with an action plan that takes into account the needs, the intentions and the context.

#### Implications and Context

The implications of the findings in Chapter 4 have cautioned me to think differently about how to teach the parents. As noted earlier, the vast majority of households do not have a "unified" front where both partners are Lutheran or even Christian. Starting an adult confirmation class is being pursued but the immediate need rests with building a solid faith foundation both in corporate worship and in the home. Author Jerome K. Berryman<sup>43</sup> has put together a faith and worship foundation through a class for both preliterate children and

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<sup>43</sup> Jerome K. Berryman, Director of the Saint Francis Center for Godly Play, Houston, TX, and Montessori educator, has developed a worship center, designed for preschool children. This is done in a separate place other than a sanctuary in order to teach parents and children how to worship with the congregation.

their parents. This is ideal but in the context of Zion Lutheran Church, Chanute, KS, Berryman's model is not practical for at least two reasons. First, the parents' time is already so stretched that additional activity would hardly be feasible. Second, while it would help the parents immensely to have such a wonderful class to help them teach their children the corporate aspects of divine worship, the parents would not necessarily see the importance of this. Where there is a spouse who does not understand or comprehend the sacraments, this activity would probably not be sufficiently supported.

In Chapter 2, I mused about finding some appropriate Lutheran resources, adapting them if necessary to Zion. While not specifically within either the list of items available from Lutheran publishers or something referenced by our Synod's Early Childhood Department, such a source has surfaced. *My Church Book* could help support the teaching of worship to both parents and their preliterate children. Because Zion has SONshine Preschool as a part of our mission, we do have an influx of preliterate children, often unchurched. There seems to be no intentional plan for bringing these families in to the congregation. At the same time, Sunday school attendance is small. Rather than attempt to solve this with a program approach, I suggest we use the resources that will most impact the parents and use the tool that can naturally open them up to hearing God's Word—divine worship.

For Zion, this would tap into a resource that recently became available: four women, who have stepped in to teach preschool Sunday school (3 to 5-year-olds), including their own children. These four dedicated mothers can open the doors of the church for these young children as they teach divine worship in the safety and context of the congregation. I say that they can help in worship because of the fact that while they are the teachers, they also are

sisters from the same family, whose husbands do not attend worship. They come together to worship with their ten children, and can use the *Church Book* in connection with the divine worship service as summarily described at the end of chapter 4. While this quiet book is designed for use in conjunction with divine worship, it can be used at home as part of learning and play. For the sake of Zion's young, we are attempting to teach and move into their homes. We hope this resource will help, and used with repetition and frequently, the child, who learns to "play" church, will become accustomed to being in church. The parent who learns more about what goes on during worship will become accustomed to connecting aspects of worship with daily life, perhaps moving a child's faith formation beyond prayers at mealtime to devotional time that engenders a deeper spiritual life for both parent and child.

#### Impact on Ministry at Large

I am not sure how Zion's changes will affect the church at large. Still, as I am a firm believer in systems theory, so I am sure there will be some sort of impact. As in the study of systems theory, one change in the system ultimately changes the entire system. I hope this will be a positive change. Ordinarily, any move to change or alter liturgical worship into what could loosely be called informal worship generates an emotional negative response. To say "new hymnal" or "new worship" to a group of Christians, regardless of denominational connections, is like throwing petroleum upon fire. However, if you take what is usual, ordinary and familiar in the worship service and from the perspective of parent or grandparent place it within the context of teaching a child or grandchild, you invite all age groups more easily into the instruction. This in turn builds foundationally upon old bedrock. If mom or grandma can sit with the preliterate child and sing "Jesus Loves Me," pray and

hear a sermon in the pattern or structure of Divine Service II, the level of change is not that great, but the impact upon the target generation will be more effective. The child will be helped at whatever stage of development to become familiar with the corporate worship service and to receive God's Word and the means of grace.

Since a discussion of this “new worship service” does not seem to be occurring within our synod yet, my expectation is that a new and original discussion will be taking place among greater minds than mine. I can envision a connection established between early childhood education professionals and theological professors, the higher education system and the seminaries. I can only see good coming from this because I am only able to offer this as a possible solution for one congregation, not as the answer for all of the circuits, districts, synods, or the Evangelical Lutheran Church. My hope is that the Lord Jesus uses this work to further build up the response of faith in Him from some children and their parents who seem so far away.

### **The Contributions to Personal and Professional Growth**

At the first meeting with the call committee after I had received the call to be pastor at Zion, I was told Zion wanted to grow and to build on her burgeoning preschool and continue growth and development with their youth programs, Sunday School and Midweek classes. I found that visiting the families helped me to understand what was really happening beyond what the calling committee could reveal. When I undertook this project to find out what the parents understood, the picture came into focus, and this helped me even more to see that much work needed the attention of the pastor and the congregation working together. The lens focused

specifically on the lack of a solid Lutheran, even Christian, foundation. This is where the foundation's core is cracked and cracking. This is where I wanted to bring healing, sealing and revealing of the means of Grace, the work of God to build up His church, and allow even dysfunctional systems and relationships to function and perhaps even to move away from unhealthy and destructive forces.

This project has caused me to both research and reflect upon the worship life of the corporate church and the individual believer. This has allowed me opportunities to look through the eyes of parents to see a foreign and yet familiar world to me. I discovered a world that seeks gratification in things that do not satisfy and only causes our satisfactions to go unabated. The parents' pursuit of elusive "rest" is handed down to their children and this restlessness breeds contempt for the calming peace available in Christian worship. It acts as a kind of spiritual speed bump in their materialistic lives.

This study caused me to look deeper at my own life and vocation. Instead of a frenzied searching for the magic bullet to "save" Zion, I think now in terms of how the "delivery" system can incorporate new and different ways of teaching, leading and preaching. It was a major move for me, but a healthy and creative one. I also realized that to change or diminish the divine worship service would perhaps take out of the service meaningful and helpful parts of the liturgy that actually deliver the means of grace. (I was also spending time in the historical liturgy of the Lutheran Church, an activity apart from research or the project, but still a worthwhile activity.)

An important outcome of this project was a need that Zion's Board of Elders wished to address: the calling of a second pastor, an associate, in order to help me

work more with the different age groups, among them the young children. While all of this is in flux, and needs additional work and study, I can see how this has opened unseen doors and windows and we as a congregation have grown spiritually.

This project has directly impacted me professionally in that it has attuned me more towards early childhood education, far from my previous nine years working primarily among geriatric and senior adult populations. I now look up and down when I greet people. I remember the people my age, not only as his or her son or daughter, but also as his or her dad or mom. This has also influenced my family counseling work, my advocacy work, and my work with local schools, SRS, and other agencies involving families. Educationally I have been exposed to such a rich corpus of liturgical knowledge, including especially Lutheran sources, with a good view of changes in liturgical forms and substance. I was able to adjust my lenses to see in a more critical way the movement to a more "vernacular" (in a child's eyes) way of doing worship for young children, and to know what sources were pertinent for discussion. My great hope is that the group at Concordia University, River Forest, will be able to extend and grow more in their study of faith formation of young children. This is a much-desired move.

### **The Recommendations**

I see a move to impact the way we work with children because I am finding that at Zion they are not being fed as well as they could and should be. Faith formation should take place all the time, but especially on Sundays. Integrating children's worship with a quiet book like *My Church Book* can help facilitate teaching the faith and forming young believers to become mature priests. Included for review is a copy of the type of children's worship that

takes place in the confines of Sunday morning divine corporate worship. Because this is a continuing project, it will always be subject to review and change if necessary. (This review would use the source alluded to in appendix E, the Seven Factors in Planning Worship, pages 88-89.) What this means is that we will apply the reviewing device to better shape the type of worship so that nothing is lost in the translation from what is presented in the hymnal, and what is encountered in the worship insert.

The work with the *Church Book* is also a work in progress. The early results are both gratifying and fascinating. The mothers working on them are telling me that they work on them without their child around. This was an unforeseen move, and I wanted to know what was behind it. They preferred them to be used in conjunction with worship—a very helpful observation, although I was hoping that they would prepare the book, a very laborious activity, with their child. Their reasoning was that the book's intense labor and the inability of the child to really help got in the way of manufacture as a cooperative activity. (Excerpts from the book are included in appendix F, pages 92-95.) Again, this comes as a practical suggestion and one I will have to live with, since I have no direct control over these people or their lives. In addition to the mothers working on the *Church Book*, half of our Wednesday afternoon quilting group has adopted the manufacturing of the *Church Book*. These are helpful and practical answers to the need for spiritual formation using the principles of early childhood development.

In Chapter 1 I discussed the development of faith in a child, and the need for a parent to be a prime facilitating factor. The undifferentiated faith (pre-stage) and the intuitive-projective faith (stage one) are the parts of their lives where children are most dependent

upon their parents. In stage one the child receives what are parts of others' faith, so here is where the instruction would take place. I stated on page 13 that the child would hear the stories of the faith, which means they need to hear the stories at home as well. I also assumed in my conclusion that divine worship would encompass all the learning necessary for the children to be more a part of divine worship. In order to link parental involvement and faith development with their children, parents need to interact with their children so that in a trusting relationship, in the safe confines of a set-aside room, the parents may teach their children the faith in the arena of play. To do this, I must teach the parents the faith in the same arena of play. What this means for parents is a willingness to be taught and understanding that while their child is at various stages of development, they need to include their child's spiritual nourishment as part of that. Along with the toys and picture books of their favorite stories should be books that open their child's eyes to their life in Christ. The parents should not drop off their children at Sunday School, but stay and learn as well about their faith. In other words, the parents have to let their faith develop also, and this is the hardest part. As noted in Chapter 4, faith development is not a move for results, but a move to engage both parents and children in a process, a process of faith formation. While these revelations came after the oral examination stage of the MAP, they came at the right time. Integration of these actions will be slow and gradual, as this will change our congregation significantly. The older generations need to see that faith development has changed, that we are not allowed large blocks of time with sixth through eighth graders anymore, and the faith formation taken for granted in their generation is no longer the same system (Saturday School for those old enough), nor applicable in the time frame, that is currently used (Wednesdays



typically being the “church night” in the past, now are practice and game nights for older elementary and junior high school students). The operative time is Sunday morning. I want to begin teaching the preliterate while they are developing through their growth stages. I want to apply apropos learning techniques through worship in attempt to reach them once they can be brought to church. I want to use learning strategies that will reach them while they are in the formative years, and hopefully stay with them into later years. I want to plant seeds in tender fertile soil.

I hope to be able to see the end of some activities that grow out of this project. I am confident that the quiet book, along with a corporate divine worship service targeting the children and their parents, will be helpful in bringing together the children in their different growth phases, the parents with their many and divergent activities and issues, and the congregational worship service and education system to help them all access the gifts from God through the means of grace for their lives.

## **APPENDIX A**

### **INTERVIEW APPARATUS--PARENTS**

1. Is worshipping with your children important to you?
2. What are your children's needs as far as worship?
3. Do you know how to use the liturgy?
4. What sort of worship experience do you expect for you and your child (ren)?
5. Is the worship service helping your child? Is it helping you? How would you modify it to allow you and your child(ren) to worship?
6. How could you continue the theme of the service for the week?
7. Do you follow an order of worship at home?
8. How do you relate God to your child(ren)at home?
9. How well do (es) your child (ren) know certain spiritual truths, and how would you like to see them explained to them?
10. Do you ask your child(ren) if they understand what went on during worship? Do they ask you about it? Do you wonder?
11. Would it help you to have the worship service explained every once in while?  
Would you like this done during a worship service?
12. Are there issues you wish to address at this time not spoken of but which are very important to you?

**APPENDIX B**

**PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT**  
(Copy of Correspondence)

**Zion Lutheran Church**  
1202 WEST MAIN STREET, CHANUTE, KANSAS 66720  
PHONE: 620/431-1341 REV. SCOTT A. LEMMERMANN  
[zion@apexcorp.com](mailto:zion@apexcorp.com)

December 6, 2002

Dear Parent(s) of Young Children:

God grant you His grace in Jesus Christ this Advent! May the blessings of our Lord Jesus Christ be your blessings now and always.

I write you as part of my doctoral research in preliterate children's worship. What I would like to do with you between January and February 2003 is interview each of you to help me both ascertain your needs and your child's needs in faith formation in regards to worship. This interview should take you no more than one hour, and I think we can do this quite quickly. I will be calling you to make appointment regarding this project in the near future. Please help me finish my research, and also help me in my ministering to you and your family.

If you wish to call me, my office number is 620/431-1341; my home number is 620/431-2318; my e-mail is [zion@apexcorp.com](mailto:zion@apexcorp.com). My facsimile number is 620/431-1935.

Thank you again for your assistance and direction.

God be with you and bless you,

Pastor Scott A. Lemmermann

SAL:lm

## **APPENDIX C**

### **MARITAL AND FAMILY STATUS OF TARGET GROUP**

In the following tables, all the possible number of families (30) accessible who have a child in the target age are grouped, by marital status (Table 1). When it was determined that only nineteen of the possible thirty would respond, the next move was to categorize the accessible number of families by partnering groups, by family type, by marital status, and by the legal status of the children in the household. First, we see the family types of these nineteen families by the denominational affiliation of the spouses, partners, and where there are single parents, their denominational affiliation, that are found among these nineteen responding (table 1, parts A and B). This gives me a clearer picture of whom I speak and with whom I am speaking. In table 2, family types (Table 2, part A), and marital status blended with the legal status of the children (Table 2, part B) allowed us to examine the dynamic of marital status and family type to see if those two mutually affected each other. While the vast majority are affected, this dynamic sees its fruition on Sunday morning, when all of the above variables are in play regarding worship. The more variables in play, the more the family is stressed in worshipping. One thing more about the tables: the most vulnerable group, the single parent, was the one most needing more assistance with their children, including transportation. While not part of the primary survey, it was something that came up usually in the area of general questions. The blended families were the next vulnerable group, and among them, none responding experienced problems with children needing to be shunted around to different churches, because the spouse usually was male, and non-involved in any church.

## APPENDIX D

### CHILDREN'S WORSHIP INSERT

August 3, 2003

(11:00 a.m.)

#### INVOCATION

(Please Stand)

Pastor: We remember our Baptism daily as we make the sign of the cross and say:

PEOPLE: IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER AND OF THE SON AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

#### CONFESSION OF SIN

Pastor: Dear Heavenly Father:

PEOPLE: WE ARE SINNERS, LORD. WE DO MORE THAN *JUST* SIN; WE ARE SINFUL AND DESERVE YOUR PUNISHMENT. HAVE MERCY ON US, WE PRAY, AND FOR JESUS' SAKE, BECAUSE OF HIS LIFE, DEATH AND RESURRECTION, FORGIVE US AND GIVE US THE HOLY SPIRIT SO WE CAN LIVE AS YOUR CHILDREN, UNTIL JESUS COMES TO END THE WORLD OR CALL US HOME. IN HIS NAME. AMEN.

#### ABSOLUTION OF SIN

Pastor: Good News! Good News! God has sent His One and Only Son Jesus to live for us, to suffer on the cross for us, to die in our place, and to rise again, never to die again. Because of this God forgives us, and has sent the Holy Spirit to come into us so that we live as God's people. For Jesus' sake, God forgives you completely. Do you believe this?

PEOPLE: YES.

Pastor: Then go in God's peace through Jesus and believe you are one of God's dearly loved children.

PEOPLE: AMEN. LORD HAVE MERCY; CHRIST HAVE MERCY; LORD, HAVE MERCY.

PRAISE SONG "Praise Him, Praise Him, All You Little Children"  
PRAISE HIM, PRAISE HIM, ALL YOU LITTLE CHILDREN,  
GOD IS LOVE, GOD IS LOVE.

PRAISE HIM, PRAISE HIM, ALL YOU LITTLE CHILDREN, GOD IS LOVE, GOD IS  
LOVE.

THANK HIM, THANK HIM, ALL YOU LITTLE CHILDREN, GOD IS LOVE, GOD IS  
LOVE. (REPEAT)

LOVE HIM, LOVE HIM ALL YOU LITTLE CHILDREN, GOD IS LOVE, GOD IS LOVE.  
(REPEAT)

PRAYER FOR TODAY

GRACIOUS FATHER, YOU BROUGHT YOUR KINGDOM OF FORGIVENESS AND  
POWER IN JESUS BY THE HOLY SPIRIT. HELP US TO TAKE YOUR KINGDOM TO  
OTHERS. AMEN.

BIBLE STORY

HYMN "Jesus Loves Me"

JESUS LOVES ME, THIS I KNOW, FOR THE BIBLE TELLS ME SO.  
LITTLE. ONES TO HIM BELONG,. THEY ARE WEAK, BUT HE IS STRONG.

Refrain: YES, JESUS LOVES ME, YES, JESUS LOVES ME.  
YES, JESUS LOVES ME, THE BIBLE TELLS ME SO.

JESUS LOVES ME, HE WHO DIED, HEAVEN'S GATE TO OPEN WIDE;  
HE WILL WASH AWAY MY SIN, LET HIS LITTLE CHILD COME IN. Refrain.

SERMON "Into the Enemy's Camp" -Mark 6:7-13

CREED ,

I BELIEVE IN GOD, THE FATHER, SON, AND THE HOLY SPIRIT; I BELIEVE GOD  
THE FATHER MADE THE WORLD AND TAKES CARE FOR IT AND ME;

I BELIEVE GOD THE SON BECAME ALSO A MAN, TOOK MY PLACE IN LIFE AND  
ESPECIALLY ON THE CROSS WHEN HE SUFFERED FOR ME AND DIED FOR ME,  
AND ROSE FROM THE DEAD, AND WENT UP INTO HEAVEN, WHERE HE RULES  
AND WILL COME TO JUDGE ALL PEOPLE, LIVING AND DEAD;

I BELIEVE IN THE HOLY SPIRIT, THE HOLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH, THE GATHERING TOGETHER OF ALL BELIEVERS, THE FORGIVENESS OF SINS, AND THE EVERLASTING LIFE IN HEAVEN. AMEN.

PRAYERS (Congregation responds: "HEAR OUR PRAYER.")

OFFERING

LORD'S PRAYER

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

LAMB OF GOD, PURE AND SINLESS #208 (Hymn during distribution.)

LAMB OF GOD, PURE AND SINLESS, ONCE ON THE CROSS AN OFF'RING.  
PATIENT, MEEK, THOUGH GUILTLESS, FORSAKEN IN YOUR SUFF'RING  
YOU DIED OUR GUILT TO BANISH THAT NONE IN SIN NEED PERISH

(REPEAT TWICE)

1. GRANT US YOUR MERCY, O JESUS
2. GRANT US YOUR MERCY, O JESUS!
3. YOUR PEACE BE WITH US, O JESUS! AMEN.

THANKING GOD FOR JESUS' GIFT

BENEDICTION

## **APPENDIX E**

### **SEVEN FACTORS IN PLANNING WORSHIP**

*[Handout from Dr. James L. Brauer]*

#### **PRIMARY (Theological)**

##### **1. DIRECTION**

- A. Is the moment primarily for receiving God's gifts?
- B. Is it primarily for giving thanks for and asking for gifts?
- C. Is it primarily an expression of fellowship?

##### **2. TIME**

- A. What is the sequence of events?
- B. Is each element an appropriate size?
- C. Is there a proper balance between receiving God's gifts and giving thanks or calling on God?

#### **SECONDARY (Cultural)**

##### **3. LEVEL**

- A. How well can this element be used by a neophyte Christian?
- B. How rich in biblical content is this element for a mature Christian?

##### **4. MODE**

- A. Ear
  - 1. Is it sung or spoken?
  - 2. Is it by pastor, one member, sub-group, or by all?



B. Eye - What is the object that receives attention?

C. Body - What are the posture, gesture, and/or movement?

5. MOOD

A. What is the emotion experienced (e.g., awe, sorrow, joy, and meditation)?

B. What change is expected and how is it supported?

6. INTENSITY

A. What is the high point?

B. What helps the move to or the prolongation of the high point?

7. MUSIC

A. What contributes to a variety in melody, rhythm, harmony, timbre, and form?

B. How much is familiar and how much is new?

C. How well does it fit the text? (How well does the text say what God says?)

## **APPENDIX F**

### **EXCERPTS FROM HUMMEL'S *MY CHURCH BOOK***

#### **My Church Book**

A Kit containing patterns, directions, and hard-to-find materials for making a Quiet Book.

My Church Book has an activity for the young child to do on each page. Through these activities his attention is directed to the church, to its furnishings, to a part of the service, to an action of the pastor, or to an appropriate response of the worshiper. Thus it serves neither to distract the young child nor to merely keep him busy, but to encourage his active participation in the worship of the congregation.

Produced by: The Child of Nazareth School

Price: \$5.00

(A Lutheran Montessori School) 2 Seminary Terrace

St. Louis MO 63105

Copyright 1981, Ruth Hummel

#### **My Church Book**

#### **LIST OF BASIC SUPPLIES**

1. 2 3/4 yd of 36", or 2 1/2 yd of 45" unbleached muslin or any strong fabric in any solid color.
2. Any 2 bold Vogart or Artex markers. Black and red are suggested.
3. A fine black felt pen.
4. Assorted felt scraps, including flesh color. Iron-on felt can be used.
5. Various fabric(Fraying, and raveling of edges can be discouraged by pinking, zigzagging, stitching, or gluing.)
6. Interfacing, iron-on patches, and other heat-bonded materials.
7. Fabric glue.
8. Standard thread is satisfactory for sewing, which is recommended over gluing.

9. Two plastic milk jugs, gallon size.
10. Pre-cut Velcro fasteners, or strips of Velcro cut into 3/8" squares.
11. One foot of cord or string.
12. One 30" shoe lace.
13. Three 3/8" snaps.
14. Two hooks, and 10 or 12 eyes.
15. A 6" strip of 1/4" elastic.
16. Two buttons, W and Y4" ill diameter
17. Ten 3x5 index cards
18. A small pencil.
19. A 1" prong buckle, or a package of belting with a buckle.
20. Pictures of friends and relatives.
21. Carpet tape and double-stick tape.

#### GENERAL SUGGESTIONS

1. Any design can be changed' or modified to fit your church or worship service.
2. It is recommended that designs be attached with machine sewing, although hand-stitching or gluing will also serve.
3. Iron-on patches are useful for reinforcing pieces and for the smaller details of the design.

#### PROCEDURE

Cut fabric into 15 pieces each 18" x 12". Each of these pieces will be two pages, the left half the odd-numbered page and the right half the even-numbered page. Therefore, the designs will be assembled on the left sides and the verses will be lettered on the right sides.

Remember that 1/2" all around the fabric piece will be needed for seam allowance.

Study the materials needed and the assembly instructions for each odd-numbered page.

Choose the fabrics and colors you will use on each page. Gather or purchase all other items needed. Items marked with an asterisk (\*) are those items which have been included in the kit.

Assemble the odd-numbered pages first, following the directions given below.

### PAGE 1 (COVER) ASSEMBLY

GOING to Church

ACTIVITY -move the car from home to church, using Velcro fasteners.

MATERIALS-two Velcro fasteners.

Cut out all pieces, personalizing house or church to symbolize the ones the child knows. Secure street to page first, then other details. Sew or glue Velcro at X's and to back of car. Finish cover lettering when you reach the section titled "Lettering."

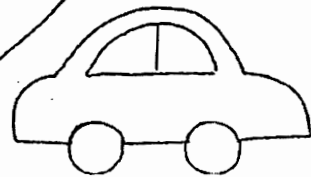
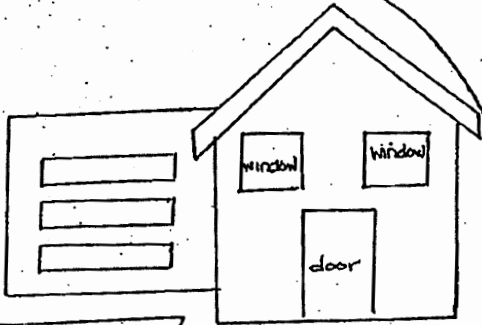
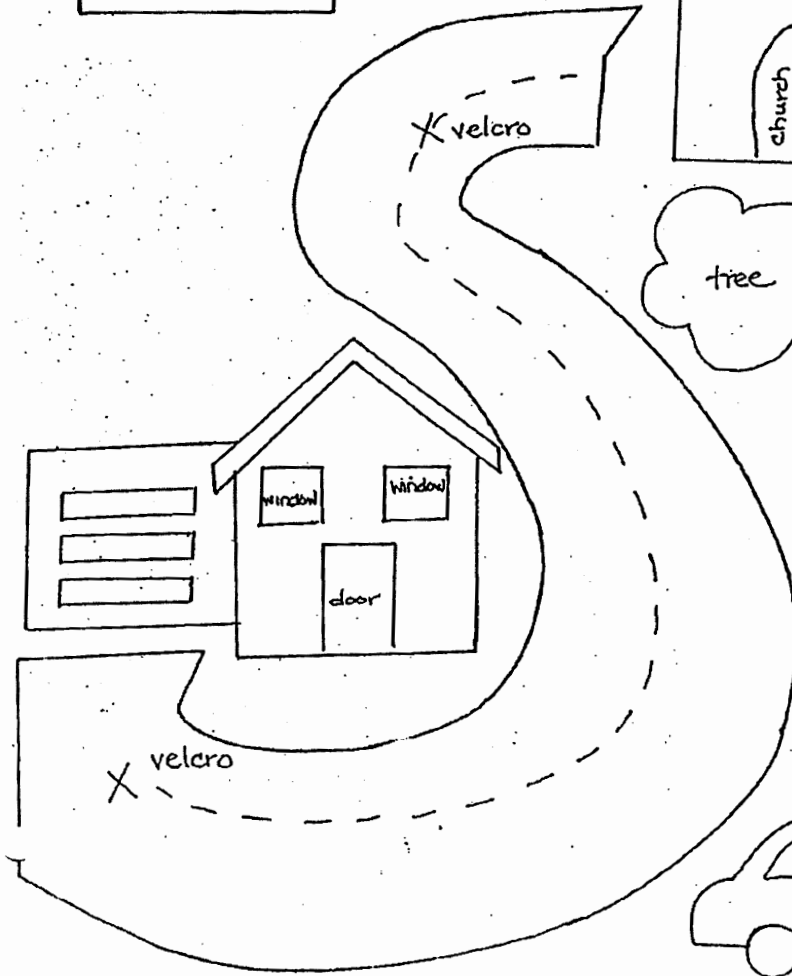
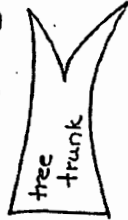
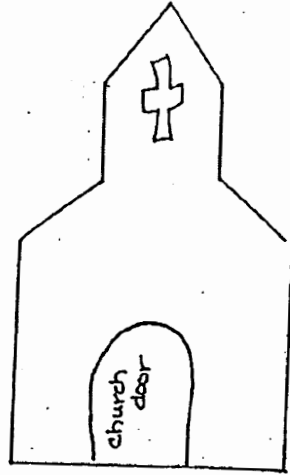
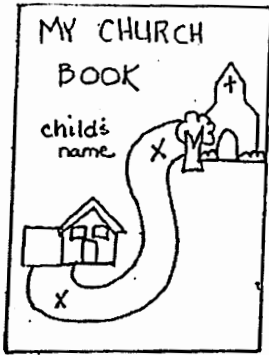
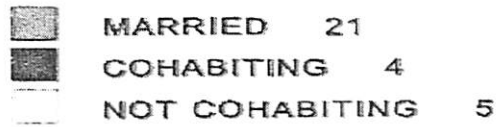
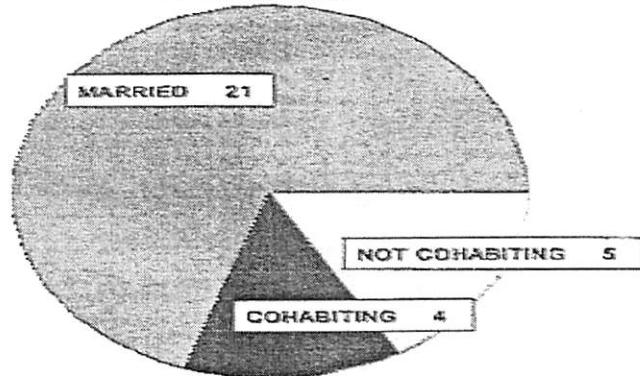


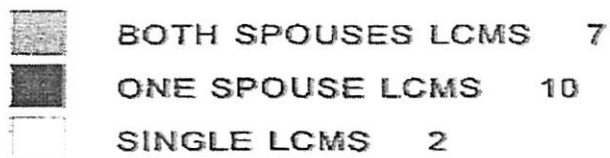
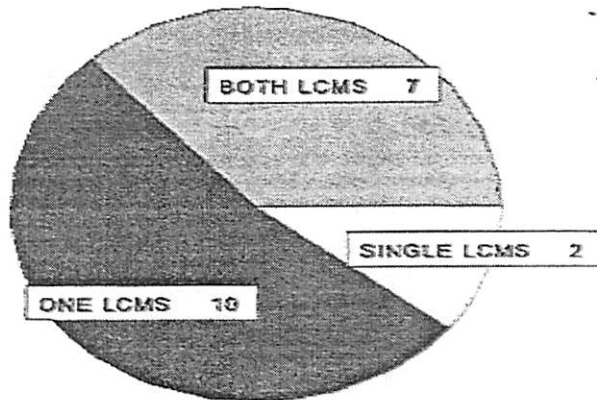
TABLE 1

MARITAL AND DENOMINATION STATUS OF TARGET GROUP

MARITAL STATUS OF TARGET GROUP  
OF 30 FAMILIES

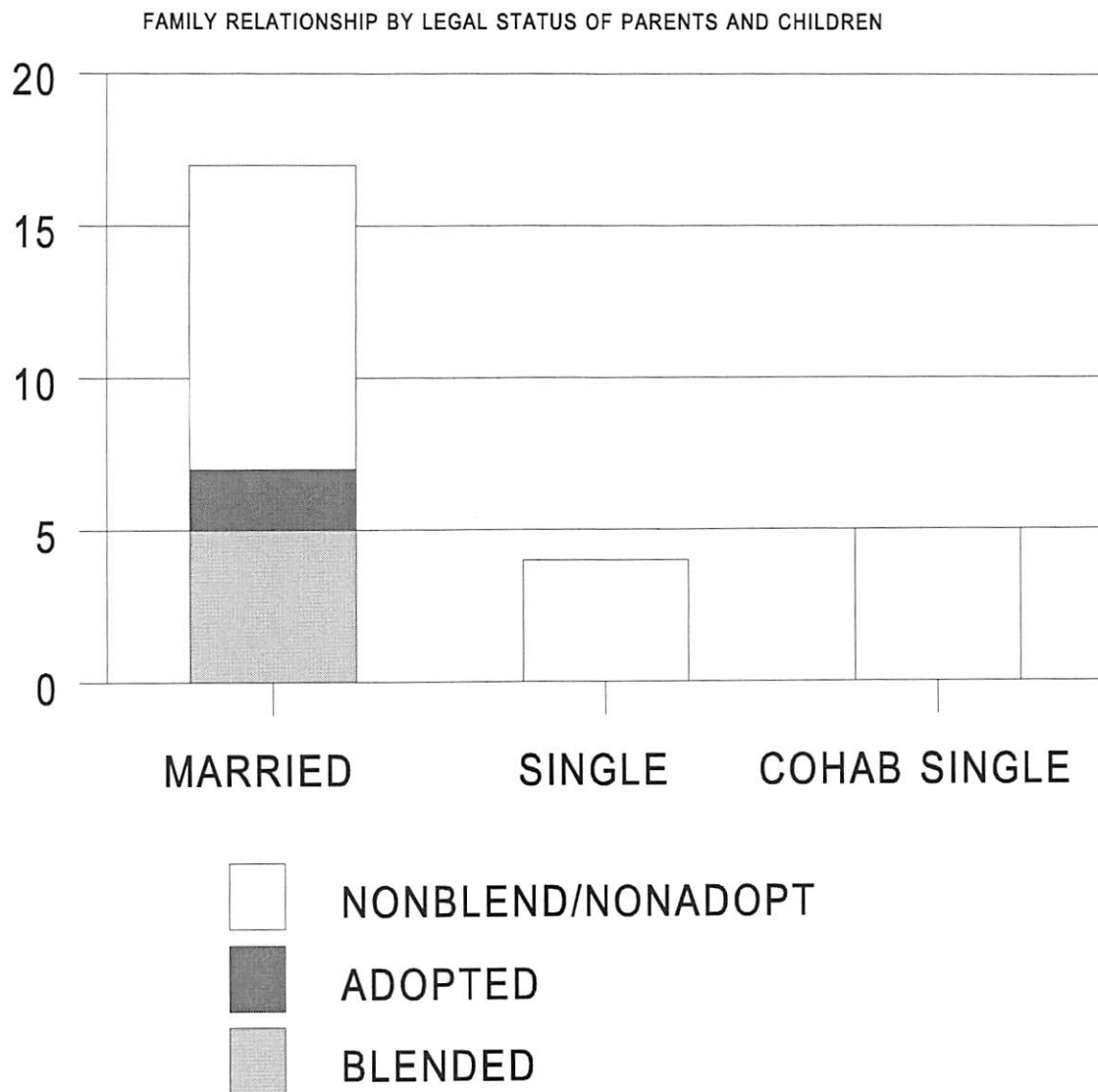


DENOMINATIONAL STATUS OF 19 RESPONDING HEADS OF FAMILIES



**TABLE 2**

**TARGET FAMILIES BY LEGAL STATUS OF PARENTS AND CHILDREN**



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