Doctor of Ministry Major Applied Project

Concordia Seminary Scholarship

3-5-2002

Systemic Catechesis

Kevin Wyssmann
Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, kwyssmann@bethany-joco.org

SYSTEMIC CATECHESIS

KEVIN L. WYSSMANN

MARCH 5, 2002

Concordia Seminary

Saint Louis, Missouri

_____ —

Advisor - Dr. John Oberdeck

May 16, 2002
DATE

_____

Reader - Dr. David Peter

May 20, 2002
DATE

_____

Director, Doctor of Ministry Program -

Dr. David Peter

May 20, 2002
DATE

ABSTRACT

Systemic Catechesis is designed to merge several academic disciplines into a new catechetical model. Learning theories, systemic psychology, and a distinctive Lutheran approach to confirmation are combined in an effort to catechize whole family systems while specifically targeting junior high youth. This multifaceted program utilizes class time, home work, periodic evaluations, camps and retreats to maximize learning. The results of this project is a two-year curriculum that fully integrates educators, congregation, and the family into the catechetical process.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

THE FORCES AT PLAY AROUND CONFIRMATION

This Major Applied Project is designed to reveal the dynamics that are making confirmation an unprecedented challenge for today's pastors, and to respond with a model for ministry that reflects today's unique circumstances, that has been tested in the parish and provides for a family-focused approach to catechizing the youth of today.

At the most recent convention of the Pacific Southwest District of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, surveys were distributed to every delegate. Each was asked to identify the areas of the public ministry that they consistently found most rewarding (see appendices 1 & 2). The respondents indicated that ministering to individuals and preaching were at the top of most clergy's list. The caring and communication components of the public ministry are rewarding because they are done most frequently and often with the most proficiency. Pastors also tended to identify affirmatively with areas in which they have devoted a great deal of their preparatory education. Hours and academic credits were dedicated to working with the Biblical languages in order to rightly divide Law from Gospel so that pastors might proficiently proclaim God's Word. Seminaries rightly place a great deal of emphasis upon pastors being care-givers, good listeners and tender shepherds of the Lord's flock. As a result, many professional church workers also see themselves with at least above-average skills in the areas of preaching and ministering to the needs of individuals within the parish.

When the survey questions were inverted and pastors were asked to identify one or more areas of the public ministry in which they felt least equipped and less confident, "junior high confirmation ministry" consistently appeared toward the top of most of their lists.

Although I was unable to obtain information from Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, Indiana, Concordia Seminary in St. Louis provided information that tracks incoming students' undergraduate majors or minors. The 1989-1990 (pg.38) and 1999-2000 (pg.26) Faculty Journals of Concordia Seminary in St. Louis reflect a significant drop in the number of students entering into the seminary from one of the Synod's system of feeder schools.[1] In the early 1980's, system students averaged sixty-five to seventy percent of the incoming population. For the academic year of 1999-2000, system students represented only thirty-nine percent of the first-year students. Slightly more than one third of all incoming first-year seminaries had a major in either education or religion for the academic year 1998-1999.[2] Of that number, less than ten percent had a baccalaureate major in any area of education. In the 1999-2000 academic year, slightly more than ten percent has a bachelor's in education.[3] Given these figures, the majority of graduates from either of these two Seminaries has only the tools provided during their three years of formal preparation for the pastoral office to assist them in teaching in the congregational setting.

The core curriculum at St. Louis offers a few classes that specifically address the dynamics of catechizing junior high youth. In addition to the Confessions,

---

[1]Faculty Journal, Class I, 1998-1999 Master of Divinity Degree Program with Alternate Route Program Addendum. (Concordia Seminary, St. Louis), 20-21.

[2]Faculty Journal, Class I, 1998-1999, 20-21.

[3]Faculty Journal, Class I, 1999-2000 Master of Divinity Degree Program with Alternate Route Program Addendum. (Concordia Seminary, St. Louis), 20-21.

Systematic and Historical courses, both institutions require students to take a course in general education. The core course offered at St. Louis is P120 entitled, "Pastor as Educator."[4] Though St. Louis does offer an elective entitled "Confirmation in the Lutheran Church", none of the classes currently offered treat learning theories, family systems or teaching styles as they relate to confirmation in anything but a superficial manner. As a result, newly ordained clergy are sent to parishes equipped to do little more than mimic the style of teaching that was most prevalent throughout their educational experience: lecture learning.

The Department of Youth Ministry of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod conducted a study on confirmation and first communion practices. The authors of that study reported that ninety-two percent of those who responded to the survey employed the use of lecture and discussion in catechesis.[5] Fewer than one third of the respondents utilized alternative learning methods apart from audio-visual aids. In that same survey, ninety-four percent of responding congregations indicated that the pastor of their parish "is primarily responsible for the instruction."[6] It would seem that the absence of more detailed education courses at the seminary, the changing backgrounds of those entering the seminary, and the continued expectation by the vast majority of parishes that their pastor catechize their youth may be contributing factors in the frustrating contexts in which confirmation is being conducted in many congregations. The anticipation of leading children into a fuller understanding of God's plan of salvation can quickly

---

[4]P120 Pastor as Educator, The description of the course can be found in the 2000-2001 Concordia Seminary's Academic Catalog, St. Louis, 94.

[5]A Study of Youth Confirmation and First Communion in the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod (Department of Youth Ministry and the Board of Congregational Services) 1998, 12-13.

[6]Options for Youth Confirmation Instruction (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1998/1999 edition), 1.

become a source of increased anxiety for pastors without sufficient tools to succeed. The hunger for new tools and resources as well as insights and understandings is evidenced by the growing number of programs that are being produced, as well as the popularity of conferences on the subject. In October of 1994, Concordia Seminary offered a week-long sabbatical course entitled, "Sowing the Seed: Teaching & Learning in the Parish." Three years later, on the same campus, one of the largest attended Annual Theological Symposiums ever held on the campus of Concordia Seminary in St. Louis was dedicated to the topic of catechesis. Symposiums, conferences and resources are available, but few pastors are in a position to take advantage of them.

One of the most accessible mediums for acquiring catechetical resources is through the mail. A review of the three major Lutheran publishing houses in the United States indicates that there are well over a dozen distinctively different curriculums and resources. Most of the material offered by Concordia Publishing House is less than five years old: "My Journey in Faith" is a 1999 resource; "My Christian Faith" was first published in 1996; "Power Tools" was printed in 1994, and "Partners in Learning" was released in 2001. However, as Midwestern congregations continue to age, the market for these resources may begin to dwindle and the demand will logically shrink. Publishing houses that provide resources to congregations with confirmation ministries will be forced to find more profitable ways to provide publications that address the demographic trends and the theological perspectives that their constituents are trying to convey to the youth of our day. The end result will surely be fewer and older resources in the future.

When parents are asked about their impressions of confirmation, two very clear and connected opinions rise to the surface: an alarming number of adults did not have a pleasant experience with their own confirmation and many expect to hand their child over to the pastor with a "fix him" philosophy. Findings of the survey conducted at the Pacific Southwest District Convention reinforce these conclusions (see appendix 2). Adults, generally speaking, do not have glowing memories of their own confirmation.

They also perceive themselves to be too busy to be burdened with the task of cooperating with the catechesis of their children. Sixty-two percent of the laymen surveyed felt their confirmation experience was boring, and most would not be willing to go through it again.[7] A generation ago, confirmation mirrored the formal educational philosophies of the day. At times confirmation curriculums have placed emphasis upon feelings in an attempt to make catechesis "relevant," and at other times the stress has been on the facts with the anticipation that relevant applications will occur periodically throughout the parishioner's life. Workbooks, journals, and sermon notes have all been championed, but memorization has remained an important component of most catechetical approaches.

The theory behind rote memorization and the successful recall of what must be memorized suggests that the primary responsibility of catechesis is not necessarily the acquisition of understanding but the transferal of facts. It is assumed that the application of memorized facts will occur as a student matures and encounters later life experiences. Little emphasis is placed upon the presence or the development of conceptual thought, nor is the student's ability to assimilate what had been memorized through meaningful life applications at that moment in time considered essential to the process. For adults who experienced this form of confirmation, the thought of returning back to review their catechism instruction is a painful suggestion that is dismissed categorically with, "I've done that once and I'm not about to do that again!" Such negativity and open resentment has a profound impact upon their children, who see the whole process as something to be endured, tolerated and, like pulling wisdom teeth - never to be experienced again.

The second opinion that often comes to the surface when parents discuss confirmation is an attitude that has unmercifully burdened our public school systems and contributed to the decline in community support of them as well. Many adults today

---

[7]Kevin Wyssmann, "Survey" TMs [Pacific Southwest District of The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod Convention 23 June 2001, Los Angeles, CA.], Personal Papers.

behave as if it is society's responsibility to "fix" their children for them. We hire people to care for our children before and after school and employ others to teach them life skills that were once considered the exclusive responsibility of each family system. Skills that were once almost universally taught by parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles are now taught by third-party specialists, if they are taught at all.

The demand for specialists and the increasing dependency upon institutions, such as our public school system, to try to compensate for the degeneration of the nuclear family system has impacted communities of faith as well. For an increasing number of adults, the Church has become the place where we send children to get "fixed" spiritually. Unfortunately, churches generally do not offer a wide variety of specialized ministries to confirmation-aged youth. In many parishes, confirmation may be the only ministry offered to families with junior high youth. Therefore, confirmation becomes a specialized "skill" that technicians, called professional church workers, utilize in order to produce well-balanced teenagers. Growing societal and parental expectations are pressuring parishes to broaden the services it provides in and through its confirmation program.

Getting today's youth to the communion rail and into a deeper and more meaningful relationship with their Lord is becoming increasingly less important in the minds of many than fixing the social and emotional ills that are manifesting themselves in the lives of our youth today. Parents are led to believe congregations call or hire men and women to keep their children insulated from the evils in this world, serving as babysitters rather than educators, functioning as "free" therapists rather than equippers of the saints. These conflicting parental perceptions, dramatic changes in the family structure, unclear parish expectations, and prevailing misunderstandings about the nature and purpose of confirmation itself are contributing to increased frustration with one of the essential programs of our church: Confirmation.

Christ's Greenfield is a typical suburban parish situated in one of the fastest growing counties in the nation.[8] According to Chamber of Commerce records, in 1995 the population of Gilbert was 53,338. Five years later, the community has grown to 107,000 - a staggering one-hundred percent population gain.[9] Midwestern families from Lutheran communities resettle in the southwest, leaving behind their family structures and parish traditions. Living in gated communities isolated from even their next-door neighbors and detached from many of the traditionally defining events that keep communities connected leaves many families here in the Gilbert area hungry for meaningful relationships.

Families must find doctors, schools, and work that were once handed down from generation to generation. Somewhere in the long list of "things to do" as a family moves into a new community like Gilbert is to find a church home. And, like every other decision before them, the specific church and its particular denominational affiliation is an open question that is being answered more frequently in less traditional ways. According to Gallup, "Denominational switching has increased since the 1960's, a reflection of the wider range of options for Americans to choose among religious and quasi-religious communities. Gallup also reports in yet another study that fewer than half of U.S. adults (43%) say they have always been a member of their present denomination."[10]

---

[8]Bradley, Martin B., Norman M. Green, Dale E. Jones, Mac Lynn, Lou McNeil, *Churches and Church Membership in the United States, 1990* (The Glenmary Research Center, Atlanta, 1992), 97.

[9]Community Profile 2000 - Gilbert, Arizona. (Gilbert Economic Development Department, Gilbert, 2000), 2.

[10]George Gallup, Jr. and Sarah Jones. *100 Questions and Answers: Religion in American* (Princeton Religion Research Center, 1989), *xvi*.

Fewer than one third of Christ's Greenfield's membership has any Lutheran background at all (see appendix 3); approximately one third have a Roman Catholic heritage and the rest are a sampling of everything and nothing. Therefore, the majority of this congregation's members have virtually no understanding of what confirmation historically has meant to most Lutherans. Those who do have some understanding typically do not have many fond memories attached to that part of their own spiritual life.

The challenge of a parish composed of larger numbers of members who were not life-long Lutherans is that many do not understand the concept of confirmation. They do not automatically make the connection between their teenager and catechesis. What once was assumed, based upon a parent's own experience with confirmation, can no longer be expected today. A significant and growing disconnect exists between de-churched adults, their children, and the concept of confirmation. For the younger generation to be catechized in the Christian faith a great deal of communication and education must first be directed toward their parents. Parents are often as spiritually clueless as are their children. Failure to address the spiritual dysfunction that exists in many families today will only manifest further negative consequences. Confirmation resources will need to be developed that include an adult instructional component parallel and complementary to that of the junior high program. Without such additional materials, much of what is taught in class will be quickly unlearned and unraveled in the home. The need to instruct not just a single generation, but two generations simultaneously, has led to the effort of developing a broader-based systemic (family systems) approach to confirmation that will be examined more fully in subsequent chapters.

The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints constitutes almost thirteen percent of the population base in Maricopa County.[11] However, in Gilbert, and the

---

[11]Bradley, Green, Jones, Lynn and McNeil, 49.

communities surrounding it, that percentage exceeds well over fifty percent.[12] Families moving into neighborhoods around the parish are inundated with invitations to attend various Mormon functions. Detached from their home churches in the Midwest and nominally instructed in the saving faith makes new arrivals to Gilbert prime targets for Mormon proselytizing. Parents are suspicious about the overly-friendly presentations by their Mormon neighbors, but feel ill-equipped to advise their children in any significant way. Rather than working against Christians, this unique spiritual environment works to their advantage, catapulting people who otherwise were indifferent about their faith to begin to explore, along with their families, what the Church truly teaches. It is in this rapidly growing, ever-changing, pervasively Mormon community that a more aggressive bi-generational approach to confirmation seemed appropriate to develop - a confirmation program that acknowledges the need to simultaneously disciple confirmation students and their parents, as well as others who may be living in their households with them. It is this type of program which I will be calling a "systemic approach to catechesis" in subsequent chapters.

Every generation faces its own unique set of circumstances, conditions that cause catechesis to be an uphill battle. The Church must be reminded that it carries out the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20) in Satan's backyard. If turning another generation's faces toward the cross were a simple or single-faceted task, only the memorization of a few key passages and a number of profound Luther "What does this mean" quotes, would be suffice. Facing little or no resistance to discipling a new generation for Christ would then mean that either the forces of darkness were slumbering, or that we were not doing our work well enough to draw their attention or evoke their ire.

---

[12]Linking Congregations and Communities - Demographic Resources for TLCMS. Congregation Leaders, (The Lutheran Church Extension Fund, St. Louis, January 15, 1998), 9.

It is my endeavor to do confirmation so well that the Devil and his evil hoard will find their tasks doubly difficult and ultimately futile.

Confirmation remains a vital part of congregational life in most Lutheran congregations. Though frustrations persist and challenges are always present, tools are needed to address the call to catechize multiple generations simultaneously. The purpose of this project is to identify some of the frustrations, name a number of challenges, and provide a working model for confirmation ministry that is family-focused and multi-generational in scope. Chapter two will examine those things about the Lutheran approach to confirmation that are its strengths. Chapter three will provide an overview of the sociological, psychological and educational influences that might be employed to aid in the catechesis of today's youth. Chapter four will offer a synthesis of Lutheran theology and catechesis into a systemic model for confirmation instruction. Chapter five provides the resources to extend the learning process from the classroom to the home and back again. Chapter six will take a critical look at the systemic model under development and review in this major applied project. Chapter seven includes reflections upon and evaluations of the implications and broader applications of this systemic model of confirmation for those beyond this parish.

CHAPTER 2

A DISTINCTIVE, LUTHERAN APPROACH

Each generation clamors to make its mark on society and to claim its place in history. A new generation within the Church is seeking to make an impact as well. Some are clamoring for reforms in how we approach worship and how we conduct confirmation. Amidst the demand for catechetical changes, based on newer understandings of how people learn best, it is important that we remain clear on those things that are good about how Lutherans have conducted confirmation in the past. Approaches and sequences in which Biblical truths are learned that have proven themselves over time and across generations should be retained lest change be implemented for little more than change's sake.

A Historic Overview of Catechesis

The Reformers of the sixteenth century were faced with the need to educate both laity and clergy alike. "Large portions of Germany had only recently converted to Christianity,...as a rule these involved mass conversions and Baptisms with little to no instruction."[13] Though a three-pronged instructional process was already in place, abuses and neglect crippled its design. At the front line of the failed system was the duty assigned to parents in each Christian household. Tracts and books such as, "*La Somme le Roi* by Laurentius Gallus (1279), *Eyn speyghel des christen gelouben* by Ludolf of Goetingen (1472), *Der Seele Trost...*"[14] attempted to revive the religious and domestic

---

[13]Arand, Charles P., *That I Might Be His Own: An Overview of Luther's Catechisms* (St. Louis: Concordia Academic Press, 2000), 50.

[14]Reu, M., *Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism: A History of its Origins, Its Distribution and Its Use* (Chicago: Wartburg Publishing House, 1929), 1.

duties of Christian parents. "Two of the most common confessional manuals included the *Beichtbuchlein* (1478) by Johannes Wolff and *Mirror of a Christian Man* by Dietrich Kolde."[15] Surely some couples took their spiritual responsibilities seriously but most apparently did not. The 1528-1529 Church Visitations in Saxony affirmed that most adults could not repeat the three essential teachings of the faith: Ten Commandments, the Creed or the Lord's Prayer which the Reformers contended "contained exactly everything that a Christian needs to know"[16] Luther wrote, "The deplorable destitution which I recently observed during a visitation of the churches has impelled and constrained me to prepare this Catechism or Christian Doctrine in such a small and simple form. Alas, what manifold misery I beheld! The common people, especially in the villages, know nothing at all of Christian doctrine; and many pastors are quite unfit and incompetent to teach."[17] If Saxon parents had little or no knowledge of these three pillars of the faith and their priests were evaluated as "unfit", then could the children in those villages know much more?

The Clergy themselves were recognized as a second prong to catechesis that was championed by various Councils throughout the Middle Ages. "In the late Middle Ages, Archbishop John Peckham and the Lambeth Council of 1281 promulgated the *Ignorantia sacerdotum* (the ignorance of priests), which obligated 'priests to explain homiletically to their parishioners four times a year the basic topics of the catechism."[18] In addition to catechetical preaching, children as young as seven were required to come to

---

[15]Arand, That I May Be His Own: An Overview of Luther's Catechisms, pg.64

[16]Luther, Martin. "Liturgy and Hymns," Luther's Works, The American Edition, Vol.53, (Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, 1963), 64-65.

[17]Plass, Ewald M., "What Luther Says - A Practical In-Home Anthology for the Active Christian" [Second Edition] (Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, 1959), 117.

[18]Arand 2000, 60.

confession for examination and regularly to church so that the priests could see to their instruction in the faith. Despite the many mandates, few sermons were preached, and fewer parishes read from any of the catechetical materials that were provided to them. There are numerous reports of priests who never opened a book and could not recite the Ten Commandments themselves. "The persistence of complaints about both lay and clerical ignorance, which culminated with the sixteenth century Reform, may be evidence either that the bishops and other clergy worked inadequately on the church's teaching mission in the Middle Ages or that salvation and sound public morals do not come from teaching and preaching alone."[19] There is still considerable debate as to which medium was more effective: the sermon or the confessional.[20]

The third prong of catechetical instruction in the Middle Ages was the use of the Latin school system. Books were expensive, literacy rates were low (five to thirty percent)[21], and the content of these instructional manuals was inconsistent and at times anti-Biblical. In an age of orality one's memory was one's book. Instructors were left to rely largely upon what parishioners could hear and easily memorize. "Besides the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, the catalogue of mortal sins and the Ave Maria, the young had to memorize the seven charisms, the seven cardinal virtues, the seven sacraments, the seven

---

[19]Westerhoff, John H. III and O.C. Edwards, Jr., "A Faithful Church - Issues in the History of Catechesis" (Morehouse-Barlow Co., Inc. Wilton, Connecticut, 1981), 103.

[20]For a more thorough analysis of this issue, see Gottfried Krodel's work "Luther's Work on the Catechism in the Context of Late Medieval Catechetical Literature." *Concordia Journal 25* (October 1999): 364-404 and Paul Robinson's, "For the Salvation of Simple Christian People: Preaching the Faith in the Middle Ages." - an unpublished paper delivered at the Theological Symposium "Formation in the Faith: Catechesis for Tomorrow," held at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, May 6-7, 1996.

[21]Arand, That I Might Be His Own: An Overview of Luther's Catechisms. 82.

works of mercy, the eight Beatitudes, the twelve fruits of the Spirit, the Ten

Commandments of God, the crying sins, the alien sins, the five senses etc. As the

material increased, the possibility of inner appropriation decreased...."[22]

Luther's Catechism was birthed in the climate of catechetical chaos. It took

the German reformer thirteen years to complete the work. In 1520, for the purpose of

confession, Luther produced brief forms of the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the

Lord's Prayer. A personal prayer book followed in 1522, the Wittenberg Catechism in

1525, and a series of catechetical sermons series that began in 1528. For the "sake of

little Hans and Esla," the reformer managed to simplify the process by eliminating all the

auxiliary memory work material that had been handed down.[23]

"While he (Luther) gladly adopted the classical materials that he had inherited,

he adapted them into an evangelical framework that rested on a clear theological

foundation."[24] Luther insisted that the Ten Commandments, Apostles' Creed and the

Lord's Prayer contained all that was essential to know about the saving faith. He

purposefully arranged that which remained because he contended that the first

instructional goal is always to teach what a believer is to do and not to do - the Law (Ten

Commandments). Once a confirmand comes to the realization that he cannot by his own

power be saved, then the instructor must teach the Creed which directs the repentant heart

to the plan of salvation. Luther contended that the final step in catechesis was to teach

the person who has been enlightened by the Gospel how to pray. It took another three

years (1523) for questions concerning the Sacraments to be added to Luther's original

work. When finished, the work which was essentially Luther's fourth catechetical

---

[22]Reu, Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism, 5.

[23]Arand, That I May Be His Own: An Overview of Luther's Catechisms. 63.

[24]Arand, 129.

sermon series, was entitled, *"catechismus pradedicatus pro rudibus et simplicibus"* (for

the crude heathen, the uneducated masses). The reformer himself called it the *German*

Catechism but later it became known as Luther's Large Catechism. The *German*

Catechism intended for the "uneducated masses" along with the 1529 Small Catechism,

first published in chart form, were utilized as the reformers began an extensive visitation

of the churches to assess the conditions in the parishes and encourage the introduction of

the Reformation in those communities. "In style, German reformers were influenced by

the *Kindergragen* (Children's Interrogatory) of the Bohemian Brethren whose Czech

form dated back at least to 1502."[25] It was Luther's adaptation of the question and

answer format, his emphasis upon family, a three-stage learning process, and the

masterful use of the printing press that caused his catechism not only to rule the

marketplace and to become "in 1580 a part of the confessions of the Lutheran Church."[26]

To this day, though parishioners may have forgotten the exact words Luther used in the

explanation of an article of faith, some level of recognition and recall invariably rises the

moment they hear, "What does this mean?"

The Sequence of Chief Parts in Catechesis

Catechisms have come and gone since Martin Luther first introduced his

instructional work. Memorization has been supplemented with workbooks, diaries and

videos, but the sequence in which the chief parts are taught has remained largely

untouched and intact. Lutheran's distinctive theology of the cross rather than a theology

of glory, and the distinction of Law and Gospel continues to affect the way in which

---

[25]Westerhoff & Edwards, A Faithful Church - Issues in the History of Catechesis, 119.

[26]Arand, That I May Be His Own: An Overview of Luther's Catechisms. 75.

pastors teach the faith. "Luther was convinced that God addresses two kinds of sinful human beings with two different, and contradictory messages, Law and Gospel."[27] The conviction that all that we are as Christian people is defined by our Lord's death, resurrection, and the proper distinction of Law and Gospel remains foundational to a distinctive Lutheran approach to instructing young and old alike. However, since culture shifts and sways, it may be more beneficial to reflect upon the sequences in which the essential or chief parts of the catechism are taught rather than the content and core doctrines themselves.

Teaching initially involves earning the right to teach. It has probably always been true that listeners are quick to dismiss an educator if the "hard teachings" are presented at the beginning of a class lecture. A glance at how the crowds reacted to Christ's "hard teaching" in John 6:60 would indicate that some truths are not simply difficult to teach but are literally impossible to understand apart from saving faith and the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit. Dennis Guernsey wrote, "...the battleground between the god of this world and the Lord of the Universe is the arena of the prevailing value system of God's people."[28] There is nothing more objectionable to modern man, nor more impossible for him to understand, than to teach the Biblical truth that we are all poor miserable sinners. By nature, we always resist most truth and especially God's truth about us. Nevertheless, it seems sequentially correct that confirmation instruction continues to insist on beginning the instructional process with the Law (The Ten Commandments) even at the risk of being dismissed as judgmental, legalistic and

---

[27]Kolb, Robert. "Teaching God's Children His Teaching" (Crown Publishing, Inc. Hutchinson, MN, 1992), 1.4.

[28]Guernsey, Dennis B. "A New Design for Family Ministry" (David C. Cook Publishing Co. Elgin, Illinois, 1982), 15.

politically insensitive by hearers who may not tarry long enough to hear the rest of the story. Luther wrote:

> "In order for a man to be saved, it is necessary for him to know
> three things. First, he must know what he ought to do and what he
> ought not to do. Second, when he sees that he has no power to
> do what he ought to do, he needs to know where to look, find,
> and receive the power that will enable him to live as he knows he
> ought to. Third, he needs to know how to look for this power
> and appropriate it for himself."[29]

Sin must first be exposed before grace can rightly be applied. "In another sense, the ordering reflected the heart of Luther's theology of the cross, namely, that God kills in order to make alive."[30] Instructors must be prepared for passionate reactions when the Law begins to do its best work Dying to sin is neither pleasant nor painless. Luther wrote, "the more holy and self-righteous a hypocrite is, the more vicious an enemy he is of the Gospel of Christ."[31]

The Law embodied in the Ten Commandments must first establish our need for a Savior. Without the Law that pierces the heart of a believer and sends all eyes searching about for a solution, the cross and the grave of Christ will seem little more than a sideshow in God's plan of salvation. The question for this generation is not how much Law can people stomach before they turn a deaf ear away from us. It is also not an issue of how educators can reframe the Law in order to avoid the politically incorrect pitfalls of

---

[29]Luther, Martin. "Brief Explanation of the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer, 1520," *Works of Martin Luther* (Philadelphia: A.J. Holman, 1915), II:354-55.

[30]Arand, That I May Be His Own: An Overview of Luther's Catechisms. 132.

[31]Luther's Works, *The American Edition, Lectures on Galatians,- 1535* Jaroslav Pelikan, Walter A. Hansen, and Helmut T. Lehmann (St. Louis: Concordia, and Philadelphia: Muhlenberg/Fortress, 1983), 126..

our day. The question that faces every instructor of the faith today is how can instructors best lead our youth and their parents to discover the universal need for the Savior? How can we get a new generation to look squarely into the mirror of God's righteous decrees without running frantically into the arms of any of a number of cults and false faiths? Robert Kolb insists that from an educator's perspective, the answer is found in two key words: "love" and "trust." "Believers may have to spend a great deal of time teaching the meaning of 'love' and 'trust' before they can begin to confess their faith in God to many who, outside the faith, have been raised on the mistrust side of the human equation."[32] This may be the key that pastors will have to initially employ, especially if God's Law is the first subject to be taught, in order to gain the right to teach them more.

The final answer to the question of how confirmation programs can effectively encourage today's youth to examine themselves in light of God's righteous demands can only be found in an appreciation of the tasks assigned to the third person of the Trinity. Through the Gospel, the Holy Spirit calls. It is He who enlightens the hearts of blinded souls. And it is He who sanctifies and keeps all believers in the one true faith unto life everlasting. This, Luther would say, "Is most certainly true." Tools and resources, tests and textbooks should be treated as instruments that may help or hinder the work of the Spirit among us. In a 1995 Search Institute study entitled, "Congregations at Crossroads," it was found that "Most (TLCMS) congregations have a culture that emphasizes knowing the right way to think about beliefs. We see this in an emphasis on teaching the core theological beliefs of the church at the expense of effectively challenging people to live their lives as expressions of their faith and beliefs."[33] Curriculum must seek to offer a balanced response to integrating right beliefs with right

---

[32]Kolb, _Teaching God's Children His Teaching_, 2.14.

[33]Benson, Peter L., Eugene C. Roehlkepartain, and I. Shelby Andress, "Congregations at Crossroads" (Search Institute, Minneapolis, MN, 1995), 31.

responses, always recognizing that the hope, peace and joy God intends for all people remains His gift given "by the power of the Holy Spirit" (Romans 15:13).

The Creed, namely the Apostles' Creed, does reflect the plan of salvation. For this reason, Luther insisted that it be taught after the Law has pierced the hearts of the catechumen. The Creed also articulates the God whom we confess and believe has done these wonderfully loving things for us. It might be argued that in a post-churched world, catechesis ought to begin with an introduction to God through a careful study of the Creed and then move into instruction regarding our Lord's will as expressed in the Ten Commandments. Luther's Small Catechism was born in an era that, although ignorant about even the essential elements of faith, nevertheless acknowledged the existence of the Trinity. However, the realization of how spiritually impoverished the churches of Luther's day were, the gross misunderstanding of Christian liberty, and the Antinomian controversy necessitated a broadening of the catechism's purposes.[34] A case might be made for such a expansion of the catechisms purposes today. In the face of an increasingly pluralistic world, that has little or no appreciation for the doctrine of the Trinity, a more careful examination of the sequences in which we teach the faith may be in order. However, the context in which I am presently doing ministry does not seem to call for a radical shift in the classical sequence of the chief parts of the catechism at this time. Evidenced by the type of questions that families consistently ask when trying to decide at what time they should begin confirmation for their children, there is an awareness, curiosity and concern about the emerging new faiths that are establishing a presence in their neighborhoods; nevertheless, they remain solidly convinced of their own faith in the one true God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

---

[34]For more on the controversy that centered around Philip Melanchthon and John Agricola refer to Timothy Wengert, *Law and Gospel: Philip Melanchthon's Debate with John Agricola of Eisleben over Poenitentia.* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1998), 219-224.

The Effect of Current Catechetical Practice

According to the Search Institute's 1995 study, "the things that come from

the Spirit of God" (1 Corinthians 2:14) are fairing better today among our people than

historical analysis has indicated that they were at the time of the Reformation.

Sixty-three percent of adults and fifty-three percent of the youth surveyed "answered at

least seven out of the 10 items correctly"[35] thereby demonstrating a statistically high

level of understanding about the catechetical Law-Gospel distinction that C.F.W. Walther

insisted epitomized the whole of what Holy Scripture teaches. There is no doubt that

significant progress has been made, largely due to use of Luther's Catechism as a device

intended "for opening up the Scripture and for integrating its message into the lives of our

hearers."[36]

The study results also reveal the alarming reality that despite the church's best

efforts, slightly less than one half of Lutherans today are incapable of drawing the

fundamental distinction between God's perfect demands and Christ's perfect sacrifice.

"...A sizable proportion of adults and youth seem unclear about this doctrine, despite its

historical emphasis."[37] " A Search Institute study, that extended beyond the confines of

Lutheranism alone, found that 46 percent of churchgoing teenagers and 67 percent of

churchgoing adults have trouble understanding salvation as a gift instead of something

earned."[38]

---

[35]Benson, Roehlkepartain, and Andress, Congregations at Crossroads. 7.

[36]Kolb, Teaching God's Children His Teaching, 1.13.

[37]Benson, Roehlkepartain, and Andress, Congregations at Crossroads , 7.

[38]Schultz, Thom and Joani, "Why Nobody Learns Much of Anything at Church: And How to Fix It" (Loveland, Colorado: Group, 1993), 50.

What has gone wrong? If sermons are rightly dividing Law from Gospel, parochial schools are diligent at their tasks, and parishes are using the historic sequence provided in Luther's Small Catechism, then why aren't our parishioners faring better on these essential doctrines of faith? If we can assume that no Lutheran is intentionally teaching that salvation is by works and that the old Adam, our unredeemed nature, always seeks to justify itself, then the solution must lie in the arena of learning. I would contend that the answer to what is wrong is centered not in a radical deviation in theology but a reflective evaluation of how we communicate our theology to a disinterested, detached and lost generation.

Another key to the problem that vexes the church in respect to how it goes about communicating the faith may be found later in the same study under the category of "Faith Experiences in the Home." "About one-fourth of Lutherans (24.8%) read or discuss the Bible or other devotional material in their home with friends or family at least once a week."[39] Very few parents spend more than a few minutes each week engaging their kids in meaningful conversation. "The average American today spends vastly more time in front of the television screen than in conversation with others...."[40] From research that has used beeper-prompted diary-sampling of young people's experiences and mapped how they spend their time comes the startling conclusion that the typical adolescent spends only about half an hour per day with his mother. "Yet that slim connection seems enormous in comparison to the average five minutes per day a youth spends with his father."[41] Based upon my pastoral experience, what spiritual

---

[39]Lutheran Brotherhood's Survey of Lutheran Beliefs & Practices, Summer 1998, 14.

[40]Rogness, Michael. *Preaching to a TV Generation: The Sermon in the Electronic Age* (Lima, Ohio: CSS Publishing Company, 1994), 17.

[41]Larson, Reed W., & Richard, Maryse H. *The Changing Life Space of Early Adolescence.* Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 18, 1989, 501-509.

conversation is taking place in the home is also largely being initiated by mothers and not fathers. So the youth of today fare only slightly better than their parents' generation thanks primarily to their mothers.

Deuteronomy 11:13-20 mandates that heads of households talk about the faith with their children from the moment they rise in the morning until they go to bed at night. From the moment that God revealed the part parents are to play in the spiritual formation of their households, it has continued to be the responsibility of the heads of each believing household to see that God's Law was used to decorate the home and adorn their heads. Discussing issues of the faith was considered an essential part of the Hebrew lifestyle in which families and particularly the fathers were central. It should therefore be of little surprise that the reluctance of parents to confess with their lips what they believe in their hearts within their own homes today is having a measurably negative effect on the ability to transfer the truths of Scripture to the next generation. The Patriarchs understood that good theology placed in correct sequence is no substitute for families sharing and applying those truths in their homes. Faith formation is best done with the Church and the family system working in concert: the congregation dispensing and managing the mysteries of God while the family unit works together to apply God's mysteries in its daily life. This devotional use of the Catechism in Christian homes is intended to "assist parents and teachers in carrying out the assignment from God to teach others, particularly children, whom God has entrusted to them (Deuteronomy 6:7, Ephesians 6:4)."[42]

---

[42]Kolb, _Teaching God's Children His Teaching_, 1.11.

Theological Presuppositions

In addition to embracing the deep and abiding truths contained in the six chief parts of the Catechism and honoring the sequences in which they were intentionally assembled, several other important theological presuppositions must be held in order to be an effective confirmation instructor. The first presupposition is that as a Christian educator and confirmation instructor, one must see each child from a theological perspective. One specific theological observation that must be made about each youth who is preparing to enter confirmation is that beneath the boxers and baggy pants is a creature of God that is fearfully and wonderfully made (Psalm 139:14). He or she is a living and breathing miracle of God's creative genius.

A second theological presupposition that must be made before the first student steps into the classroom or sits down for the first session of confirmation is that each and every adolescent is a child of the Fall. "If you have ten junior high students in your class, eight of them feel badly about themselves; five are sad or depressed; one is suicidal. Four of the young people in your class experience physical, sexual, or emotional violence or abuse. Two got drunk in the last year. Two have moved recently. Three of them are poor. Three face parents who no longer live together or do not get along."[43] From the moment of conception they were brought forth in sin (Psalm 51:5) and surrounded by a world saturated in iniquity. These children will not need to be taught how to resist God's Word and the work of the Holy Spirit - that part of them comes naturally (Romans 3:9-18).

The third theological perspective is that through Baptism these creatures of God have become children of God and heirs according to promise (Titus 3:5-7) who are to be nurtured to spiritual maturity (Ephesians 4:13). From the moment of each child's rebirth, parents and godparents are charged with the responsibility of seeing that he is

---

[43]Smith, Ken, "Six Models of Confirmation Ministry" (Chicago, Division of Congregational Ministries - The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 1993), 21.

"brought up in the true knowledge and worship of God, taught the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer...."[44] In addition, sponsors and parents agree to provide for a child's further instruction in the Christian faith so that he might come to the Sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood, live in communion with the Church and grow up to live a life that is worthy of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The "washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5) makes saints of sinners. God Himself has marked each one upon his forehead and upon his heart with the cross of Christ. Romans 5:8 indicates that before any positive response could be made toward God, Christ died for us. If God can love an emerging and spiritually maturing young adolescent while his hormones are raging and his acne in full bloom, can instructors of the faith do less?

The Beginning Point of Cathechesis

So, where does catechesis begin? According to A.L. Barry, "(Confirmation)... is about forming a Christian mind and heart in our people."[45] Therefore, catechesis begins at baptism. Parents begin catechizing their children from that moment forward. The process will not wait until the seventh or eighth grade. "Baptism, from the point of view of the family sociologist, becomes the act of identification which begins the process of socialization. A process that is finished only when the person is brought to maturity in Christ."[46] Cultivating the faith from the very first days of a child's life by his parents will do more to assist that child through the stormy years of high school than any single thing a catechetical program might provide. Luther wrote, "...doctrinal sermons in the

---

[44]Lutheran Worship: Holy Baptism. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1982), 200.

[45]Barry, A.L., "Cathechesis in the Lutheran Congregation" (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1996), 49.

[46]Guernsey, A New Design for Family Ministry, 13.

church do not edify young people. But quizzes at home, definitions of the Catechism, and questions concerning the confession of faith are of much greater benefit."[47] In a perfect sequence of events, the confirmation instructor's duty would be to affirm what the teenager already knows well: those three things his parents and godparents promised to teach before he reached confirmation classes - the Ten Commandments, Apostles' Creed and Lord's Prayer. But because we live in a far-from-perfect world, we cannot assume that these three truths have been taught the confirmands before class begins. Therefore, it is important that we retain the sequence set forth in Scripture, teaching first the Law and then the Gospel (The Ten Commandments followed by the Creed).

Considerations for Ordering the Chief Parts

The fourth theological perspective is that once Law and Gospel have been solidly taught only then is it appropriate to focus on teachings that treat the life of a believer in light of God's great love. Topics such as the Lord's Prayer, the Office of the Keys and the Sacraments fall into this category. Historically, the sequence has been to teach the Lord's Prayer followed by Baptism, Confession/Absolution, and then the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper - areas of sanctification that were added to the catechism some of "...which appeared in no edition of the Catechism during Luther's lifetime."[48] If I were to suggest any deviation in this area regarding the sequence in which these topics might be taught, I would contend that teaching the doctrine of Baptism might, according to our theology, be best presented before the Lord's Prayer.

---

[47]Plass, <u>What Luther Says - a Practical In-Home Anthology for the Active Christian</u>, 125.

[48]Plass, <u>What Luther Says - a Practical In-Home Anthology for the Active Christian</u> 119.

It is at Baptism that the believer receives the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38-39) and it is the Spirit that empowers our prayers. Apart from the presence of the Holy Spirit prayers falter because it is the place of the Holy Spirit to intercede on our behalf (Romans 8:26-27). The plan of salvation outlined in the Creeds, and specifically in the Nicene Creed, fails to speak of prayer; but it does of Baptism. The connection seems strongest between the teaching of the Creeds and a study of the Sacrament of Baptism than it does between the Creeds and the Lord's Prayer. If an instructor should desire to keep the sequence of Baptism-Confession-Absolution-Lord's Supper intact, then it might be reasonable to teach the "Our Father" last.

The popularity of media-driven expressions of Christianity places great emphasis upon the power of prayer and often ignores of the efficacy of the Sacraments. It would seem an appropriate response to non-sacramental prayer-based theologies to ensure that our first instructional step into the arena of sanctification is through the waters of our Baptism. It is in the covenant of Baptism that prayer takes on its intended purpose. According to Matthew 7:21, apart from the blood of Jesus Christ, crying "Lord, Lord" falls upon deaf ears. Contending with theologies that would elevate prayer to a primary sacrament, Lutherans might be well advised to teach of prayer in the context of an already established covenant relationship with God through Jesus Christ: Baptism.

Confirmation and Catechesis

There are two practical presuppositions that might be added to the several theological presuppositions that have already been discussed. The first practical presupposition is a clarification of words often used interchangeably: confirmation and catechesis. The second practical presupposition is the role of the family unit in any catechetical process.

Confirmation is a significant chapter in the journey of faith formation that is called catechesis. "Catechesis is the ongoing application of the Word of God to the lives of people...."[49] Catechesis is everything that family and church do in the disciple-making process from the baptismal font to the grave. Confirmation, on the other hand, is an episode that is frequently viewed as a rite of passage along faith's journey toward spiritual maturity: a graduation of sorts. Confirmation is, more importantly, an affirmation of our Baptismal grace that far too often has been represented as a series of hoops and hurdles that one must traverse in order to reach the Sacrament of the Altar. Rather than being an exploration of God's grace, it can look remarkably like a work of self-justification in the eyes of many confirmands. A student's simple questions can often reveal how confirmation can take on a tone of works righteousness in their mind's eye: "How many times must I go to church in order to be confirmed?" or "If I memorize all these things will I get to take communion?"

Confirmation starts to creep dangerously close to being viewed also by the laity as a work of righteousness, a sacrament of sorts that answers parishioners' questions that sound vaguely similar to those of the rich ruler in Luke 18 about how much one must do in order to be certain of salvation. Some ask, in so many words, how they can get by "by the skin of their teeth," and others feel pretty smug about their compliance with the letter of the Law. Confirmation dare neither cripple the uncertain nor validate the self-righteous. Most importantly, confirmation fails the Church when it is seen apart from the grace of Baptism and a life-long journey toward spiritual maturity.

> "One reason that frustration sometimes rises in what we often call
> Catechism is that we have redefined the task, specifically the length
> of the task. We regard Catechism as a set of words we must convey
> to children in the course of two or three years of meetings held once

---

[49]Barry, <u>Cathechesis in the Lutheran Congregation</u>, 1.

or twice a week, or to adults in twelve easy evening sessions. Luther was not so naive. He regarded the activity of catechism as a life-long process."[50]

Therefore, effort needs to be directed to tearing away the existing framework that perpetuates the idea that confirmation is an event rather than a contributing element in the process of catechesis. It must be seen as "one piece of that (life-long) process, involving a relationship between a catechist and a catechumen around Holy Scripture and the catechism resulting in faith formation."[51]

Confirmation should strike the same balance we insist upon in our theology. There must be an appreciation that apart from God's Scriptural self-revelation, we cannot begin to know His mind. A component of emerging spiritual maturity is the ability to draw the conclusion that nothing we can possibly achieve will make us worthy in the Lord's eyes. But in addition to a growing awareness of our spiritual depravity, there comes a deep and abiding reverence for the undeserved grace of God.

Confirmation should not be about grades; but growth. It should be about the discovery of the power of God to transform us into the likeness of His Son through His Word and Sacraments (2 Corinthians 3:18). It should be about helping "...baptized Christians identify with the life and mission of the Christian community."[52] Confirmation should be about freeing pastors to love today's youth as in Christ they are loved (1 John 3:16-20). It should be less about classroom management and more about teaching the faith in dynamically personal and persuasive ways.

---

[50]Kolb, Teaching God's Children His Teaching, 1.12.

[51] "A Study of Youth Confirmation and First Communion in the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod" (St. Louis, The Department of Youth Ministry, Board of Congregational Services, 1998), 18.

[52] "Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation" (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1986), 241.

Parents' Role in Catechesis

The second practical presupposition is that at the heart of any catechetical effort must be the family unit. The development of a child's faith is inseparably linked to the contribution that the child's family makes toward the process. Biblically, fathers play determinant roles in the spiritual lives of their children, especially male children. Paul specifically charges fathers with the responsibility for bringing their children "up in the training and instruction of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4). There are, of course, notable exceptions where the mother had an equal and, in some cases, greater impact upon the faith of the child. But typically the Bible lifts the role of the father as having the greatest influence in the spiritual development of his child.

Luther often championed the role of parents in the formation of faith. He said in the Large Catechism regarding his treatment of the Fourth Commandment that "it is his (the head of the household's) chief duty, on pain of losing divine grace, to bring up his children in the fear and knowledge of God."[53] The role of the father in bringing a child up in the knowledge and love of the Lord was affirmed by the Reformers.

Things have changed very little over the years from my pastoral perspective. Fathers continue to play a dynamic role in the spiritual lives of their children, especially their male children. "Fathers are the most emotionally powerful people in most men's lives."[54] Dads are also in the position of having the greater influence upon their children's spiritual life. "Much of a child's self-identity will be influenced by the father's

---

[53] Tappert, Theodore G., "The Book of Concord - Luther's Large Catechism" (Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1959), 388.

[54]Salminen, Bryan R., "No Ordinary Men" (St. Louis, Concordia Publishing House, 2000), 127.

words and treatment."[55] Despite all the research that reinforces the vital role fathers play in the development of their children, many remain "dead-beat dads" when it comes to matters of faith and life.

Often the task of bringing the "little ones" (Matthew 19:14), as Jesus calls them, to the cross is left in the lap of the mother. In more and more cases the whole process of faith development is being overlooked by both parents, thus creating a spiritual vacuum in today's homes. The absence of spiritual leadership in a family system creates a discouraging environment in which to nurture the emerging faith of a child. One of my presuppositions in systemic catechesis is that every parent will be challenged to contribute to the faith development of their child. Some will make intentionally negative contributions, some will passively aggress against any effort to be spiritually mobilized, and others will discover their God-given role and excel at being an example of righteousness for their children. Any instructor who ignores the impact that parents will make is denying the strong biological, relational, and spiritual links that exist between a child and his parents. Any effort to circumvent the family system in which a child is being raised will never do much more than treat superficial conditions, symptoms rather than the causes that permit the sins of the fathers to infect the second and third generations.

The cords that bind parents to their child are so strong that educators over the centuries have made every effort to mobilize parental support in teaching the faith. Books, tracts and resources have been produced to equip parents to do that which God intended them to do. Instructional materials were created to complement the efforts of their pastors or priests. Luther was no exception. He sought to acknowledge the important role parents play in the faith development of children. He elevated the role of

---

[55]Chapman, Gary, "Five Stages of a Functional Family" (Chicago, Northfield Publishing, 1997), 148.

heads of households to teach the faith. Below the title of each section of the Small Catechism words to this effect are printed, "As the Head of the Family Should Teach Them in a Simple Way to His Household."[56] The Reformers understood the divinely intended role of families and especially the head of a household in conveying the faith to the next generation. Every attempt that has been made over the years to teach youth outside the context of their family system - God's intended learning laboratory - has met with frustrations and failures.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have shown that the order in which the Catechism has been sequenced for instructional purposes is theologically sound and should remain largely undisturbed in the face of today's demands for change in how confirmation is being done. I have also explored the theological and practical presuppositions which form the basis of this major applied project. In the next chapter I will examine the psychological and educational theories that shape the systemic catechetical model that is now being used in this congregation.

---

[56]Luther's Small Catechism (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1986) 9, 13, 16, 21 & 28.

CHAPTER 3

RELATIONAL AND LEARNING THEORIES

Sociology and psychology are fields of study that deal with human behavior and how people react to a variety of social settings. Emerging from various studies and observations of peoples and personalities, researchers construct what are known as relational theories. These theories provide handles on ways in which social systems can more positively relate to one another, individuals might adjust behavior in order to be more productive members of society and, more recently, how people can maximize learning. In this chapter I will examine some of the relational and learning theories that may provide clues as to how the local parish might be better equipped to contribute to the faith formation of the Lord's next generation of disciples.

A Historical Overview of the Family System

A great deal of research has gone into the study of family systems. More and more effort is being dedicated to the evaluation of how the nuclear, biological, and extended family structures function. Fifty years ago the dominant relationship in the United States was a married couple with around two biologically related children living together in a three-bedroom ranch-style house somewhere in middle America. The media utilized such popular programming as *Father Knows Best* and *Leave it to Beaver* to reinforce culturally appropriate family values. Couples like *Ozzie and Harriet* sent a clear message to families across the nation as to what the all-American family was intended to look like. Some have argued that the media painted an overly simplistic picture of what family life was really like. But one thing is certain, such telecasts did champion high and lofty ideals that articulated clear gender roles and positive family values.

At the center of the '50's family were several well-defined standards. Husbands were heralded as the breadwinners and moms were the caregivers. Gender job

descriptions were easily recognized: men controlled the tool box and women managed the kitchen. Extended family structures served to reinforce gender roles, educational curricula perpetuated social stereotypes, and churches enjoyed the benefits of a homogeneous climate in which to do ministry. Shared experiences such as the family garden, school events, bake sales and church socials promoted family cohesion. "Life was centered around three big influences: family, school, and church."[57] Small towns flourished as "mom and pop" businesses sprung up everywhere. On the surface, families seemed healthy, society seemed healthy, and congregational ministries flourished. "The ideal was [to grow up] with two parents, surrounded by an extended family and a community - a healthy community support system - that supports and cares for each other and supports and cares for the child."[58]

Current Trends Impacting the Family System

Much has happened since the 1950's. The nuclear family, as it once was known, has undergone some dramatic changes. "About one-third of all children today live apart from their fathers. Before today's children reach age 18, some studies forecast that more than half will spend some part of their childhood living apart from their fathers."[59] These are sobering predictions. "The old breadwinner husband and homemaker wife system (of the '50's) is breaking down."[60] Blended and single families

---

[57]McIntosh, Gary L., *Three Generations*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Fleming H. Revell, 1995), 36.

[58]*Families First: A Report of the National Commission on America's Urban Families,* by John Aschcroft, chairman, (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1993), 10.

[59]*Families First: A Report of the National Commission on America's Urban Families,* 1993, 9.

[60]McIntosh 1995, 80.

outnumber biological families three-to-one. Two-income families are now a standard. Couples are so busy making ends meet that things like meals together, school events and church attendance have suffered. "Along with the rising labor force participation of wives, twenty-eight percent of married-couple families with children by 1990 had both spouses working year-round full-time, and thirty percent had a husband working full-time and a wife working part-time....leaving twenty-one percent as 'traditional' families with a husband working year-round full-time and a wife not working."[61] Chores once traditionally assigned to a specific gender are now distributed in non-conventional ways, many of those duties being done by contracted technicians rather than by members of the nuclear or extended family structure.

We are a highly mobile society. In a one year period between March 1992 and March 1993, "16.8 percent of the population"[62] changed addresses. As surprising as it might seem, these numbers are down from the mid-1980's when more than twenty percent of the American population was on the move.[63] Where once families remained in a single home for most of their married lives, few today live in a single home for more than a handful of years. Extended family structures have been stretched from one end of the nation to the other. The greater Phoenix area in many respects reflects a nomadic society with a transient mentality. People are more reluctant to build long-term relationships and, in exchange, see the world around them from a purely consumeristic viewpoint. "Value" is no longer connected to issues of loyalty but to the immediate impact that can be made. "Worth" is defined by what it produces rather than what it

---

[61]Lugailia, Terry, chariman *Households, Families, and Children: A 30-Year Perspective,* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1992), 53.

[62]Hansen, Kristin A., chariman *Population Profile of the United States,* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1995), 14.

[63]Hansen 1995, 14.

promises. These redefinitions of what is to be valued and the net worth of a product or institution has directly impacted the church and its instructional programs. Sociological shifts, such as these, cannot be ignored as the church looks for clues as to how it might better catechize today's confirmands.

One result of the sociological shifts that have been mentioned is that parents are simply not available to help with homework. Weekends, once protected by restrictions known in some states as blue laws, have become workdays. Conversely, weekdays have become the weekends for more and more workers. Eight-hour work days have lengthened by two or more hours a day making forty-hour work weeks are a thing of the past. "In 1970, the average American work week was thirty-seven hours. Today, the work week has mushroomed to fifty-two hours."[64] What little discretionary time today's parents have at their disposal is either spent sleeping or catching up with the needs of the household. Though church is something most acknowledge that they should do, ministries can be perceived as only contributing to the problem of fracturing the family structure even more, rather than serving to bring them together in meaningful ways.

Lacking many of the historic social networks that had supported family systems in the past, Americans have become less trusting and more fearful. Doors once left unlocked are now dead bolted. Security systems monitor almost every aspect of our lives. Codes are required to access our computers and open our cars. Front porches have been replaced with backyard patios, home entertainment systems have become acceptable alternatives for avoiding more traditional forms of social interaction, and CNN has replaced a mid-morning trip to the coffee shop or the beauty parlor for the latest news. We have turned our homes into refuges and filled them with technologies that promise to keep us safe. As a result, we no longer know our next-door neighbors or our mailman.

---

[64]Freudenburg, Ben and Rick Lawrence, *The Family Friendly Church* (Loveland, Co: Group, 1998), 51.

Limiting our knowledge of the world around us by becoming dependent upon what we see on TV has contributed to our suspicion that everything outside our front door, including our neighbor next door, is dangerous. The weight of the false information we are continually being fed has further conditioned us to mistrust everything we read. Truth has become relative and absolute truths are to be absolutely rejected. Therefore, any organization that champions absolutes, including the church, is at best suspicious and, at its worst, ignorant and unenlightened.

"The proportion of children living with two parents has decreased in each decade since 1960. This decline was accounted for by the increasing number of children living with one parent."[65] There is an ever-increasing risk that before a child reaches eighteen he will experience multiple adults serving in a variety of parenting roles. The insecurity that divorce breeds in the life of today's youth often manifests itself in expressions of rage or anger. Sometimes these hostilities are focused outward. Often anger is internalized, generating self-destructive behavior, disorders and even death. Youth are shuffled between households: a few days here and the rest there, weekends with mom and vacations with dad, and holidays with friends in order to avoid being asked to deal with their parents' emotional issues. Youth who would be faithful in worship, Bible study and confirmation are subject to the whims of the courts. Every other weekend must be spent at Dad's and, as an expression of power directed against his estranged wife, he flatly refuses to see that the catechumens get to church. Mom tries to compensate for her emotionally unavailable husband by becoming dangerously enmeshed in the lives of her children. Single parents are driven to go back to school while working long hours in order to provide for their families; thus making it impossible for them to be there for their kids. These relational forces provide additional clues that must be

---

[65]Lugaila, Terry. *Households, Families, and Children: A 30 Year Perspective* (Washington D.C: Government Printing Office), 1992, 36.

recognized as real and substantive in order to construct effective strategies to disciple the youth of today.

Family System Changes and the Learning Process

As an instructor in the faith, one must acknowledge that he is, like Dorothy in the Wizard of Oz, no longer in Kansas! We are no longer living in the 1950's, and family life is becoming increasingly more complex. Dr. Barry wrote this, "It would be very sad if our Synod did nothing more than wring its hands in despair at the incredible challenges that lie before us in terms of catechesis."[66] If confirmation is to continue to be a vital, life-changing force in our churches, then it must recognize these forces and build programs that recognize these emerging issues rather than deny their existence or minimize their impact.

In addition to the relational forces that prey upon today's youth, another significant influence is the way in which our children are being educated. The field of education is trying to keep pace with the growing body of knowledge that is surfacing from extensive studies of how the brain works. As educators better understand the dynamics of reasoning, thought, and human comprehension, the ways in which we approach instruction will change as well.

Historically, there have always been those in the church who have been leery of applying specific learning innovations to catechesis. Nevertheless, even if religious educators continue to resist educational advances and ignore the research that is being done, we must at least acknowledge that today's youth are being taught to learn in ways that reflect that ever-changing body of knowledge and that were never imagined possible fifty years ago.

---

[66]Barry, Alvin L. Catechesis in the Lutheran Congregation. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1996), 4.

Educational theorists such as Edward Thorndike, the father of behaviorism, and B.F. Skinner, spokesperson for operant conditioning, pioneered and popularized what some have affectionately labeled the "drill and grill" approach to learning. Skinner was convinced, "...that operant conditioning can even be used to teach thinking...foster creativity...and to encourage perseverance..."[67] Rote memorization (drill) and constant reinforcement (grill) have been proven effective learning tools and remain as components of many current theories and instructional methodologies today. Repetition effectively imprints or stamps facts into a student's short-term memory. But when used as the sole instructional tool, unless the information put to memory is regularly rehearsed for some time after it was initially memorized, the "drill and grill" method has proven to be less effective when long-term recall was being evaluated.

The assumption behind behaviorism is that students are capable of making immediate generalizations that will pay dividends later in life. Jean Piaget's research argues that pupils younger than twelve may not be capable of such generalizations.[68] However, memorization, the key component of the educational behaviorist's philosophy, remains a useful tool if it is combined with current methodologies that are designed to target clearer long-term recall and an appropriate generalization of that data in the daily life of the learner.

The Changing Family System and Catechesis

In light of the current challenges that are facing today's families and the need to continue to make disciples in this nation, here are a dozen questions that should be answered before we engage today's youth in catechesis:

---

[67]Biehler, Robert F., "Psychology Applied to Teaching, 3rd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1978), 242.

[68]Biehler 1978, 466.

(1) How can a confirmation program be designed in order to help cultivate productive, motivated members of society and the church who can successfully navigate through relational boundaries and cultural contexts while serving their Lord faithfully?

(2) Can a program be designed to aid our youth in becoming knowledgeable, responsible and caring members of the church and of their community?

(3) How much responsibility must the catechetical process bear in enculturating a new generation into the community of faith?

(4) How can we best help each youth envision the way(s) in which God has specifically equipped them for their intended vocation - secular or sacred?

(5) How can we transform the drive to make a living into a passion to carry out the Great Commission?

(6) What can be done to renew the next generation's appreciation for professional church work vocations?

(7) How can the latest educational theories, tools, and methodologies be best utilized in promoting the spiritual maturation of our youth?

(8) What teaching methods and tools are best suited to accomplish the goals that might emerge from asking questions such as these?

(9) Can we be more productive tools of the Holy Spirit by understanding

better how people learn through the available research regarding how the brain has been fearfully and wonderfully made?

(10) Is rote memorization still the best tool, or are there other equally valuable approaches to teaching the faith that are not only effective but fun?

(11) Are instructors (pastors, teachers and directors of Christian education) ready to go beyond talking about what's wrong about confirmation and learn how to become more effective communicators?

(12) Are the students ready to learn?

There are those who insist that the Christian educator's only concern is to get the word out accurately and correctly in order to satisfy the human side of the divine equation that is directed to making disciples of all nations. Though one dare not try to hold the Spirit hostage to the latest and greatest teaching methods, nevertheless, to do less than our best in the face of so much information about how people learn would be at the very least lazy, and at the worst irresponsible. "Effective teaching is accomplished through - not despite - the needs and the characteristics of our students...it requires the skill of knowing how students learn the materials best."[69]

Knowing how youth learn and being aware of what inhibits learning are as vital to the religious educator as that information is to the public school teacher. For most junior high youth, physical changes, maturational age, stress, fatigue, lethargy, particular sins, guilt, family support, and a growing disinterest in learning for learning's sake all

---

[69]Klaus, Issler and Ronald Habermas. *How We Learn: A Christian Teacher's Guide to Educational Psychology.* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994), 55.

play important roles in the success or failure of a teenager in confirmation. What and how they think are equally critical in how catechists learn. For many catechumens these years are a time of awkward awakening to the energies, wonderings and questions that accompany spiritual development. The church must challenge itself to "...provide the religious and cultural framework in which our youth can express and explore their broad questions about life and themselves."[70]

Linda Cambell in an article entitled "Variations on a Theme: How Teachers Interpret MI Theory"[71], cites Howard Gardner's research on eight distinct types of intelligence: (1) Linguistic, (2) Logic-Mathematical, (3) Spatial, (4) Bodily Kinesthetic, (5) Musical, (6) Interpersonal, (7) Intra-Personal and (8) Naturalist. In each of the eight intelligences, current researchers such as Harvey Silber, Richard Strong and Matthew Perini in an article entitled *Integrating Learning Styles and Multiple Intelligences*[72] indicate that there are four different styles of learning: Mastery, Understanding, Interpersonal and Self-Expressive for a total of thirty-two distinct educational variables. The key to understanding what this data might mean to the parish and its confirmation program is that most theorists and many school programs are shifting toward learner-centered curricula. Educators realize that, when it comes to learning, it is not the material that is unique but it is the student who is unique. Changing our focus away from what is being taught to who is being taught would take the burden off of what curriculum

---

[70]*Promoting Social and Emotional Learning: Guidelines for Educators.* (Alexandria: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. 1997), 40.

[71]Linda Cambell, "Variations on a Theme: How Teachers Interpret MI Theory." *Educational Leadership: Teaching for Multiple Intelligences* 55, no.1 September 1997, 12.

[72]Silver, Harvey, Richard Strong, and Matthew Perini. "Integrating Learning Styles and Multiple Intelligences," *Educational Leadership: Teaching for Multiple Intelligences,* September 1997, Vol. 55, No.1, 24.

is used and place the emphasis upon how to best make the curriculum work for the individual learner.

How the classroom itself is organized and in what fashion the components of the curriculum are sequenced also contributes to learning. In *Promoting Social and Emotional Learning*, the authors encourage a free and open interaction and dialogue between the instructor and the students, the elevation of classroom standards regarding behavior and achievement insisting upon the development of critical thinking, cooperative and constructive group problem-solving activities, the promotion of equity, fairness and respect. "To the extent that students attach academic skills to feelings and actions that are a part of their everyday world, they are more likely to use those skills in real life."[73] Though these things might seem obvious, most pastors and parish educators do not invest a great deal of time in establishing an environment that is conducive to learning. When the youth walk in the door the very room should announce, "Get ready, we're going to learn some incredible things about God and ourselves today!" Learning requires the engagement of all aspects of what makes us human. It requires integrating the subject matter with cognition, emotion and behavior. "Perhaps the best way to begin is once again to emphasize the fact that our Synod needs to reorient itself around a more holistic view of catechesis."[74]

Research is also pointing to the need to provide developing teens with a flood of information. However, the flood of information that streams across mediums such as the Internet, "provides no time for reflection, interaction, or three-dimensional visual development."[75] The electronic age refuses to allow the eye to relax and the brain to

---

[73]*Promoting Social and Emotional Learning: Guidelines for Educators.* (Alexandria: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. 1997), 61.

[74]Barry 1996, 47.

[75]Eric Jensen *Teaching with the Brain in Mind.* (Alexandria: Association for

process information. Sensory overstimulation is proving to be counterproductive to sustained learning. Lasting learning has to be given time to "imprint" and make an impact which may take as much as "six hours to solidify."[76] It appears that new learning in some ways contaminates the memory process. The mind needs creative time after the introduction of new information has been provided to make sense of it all. To put it plainly, "You can either have our learners' attention or they can be making meaning, but never both at the same time."[77] Allowing from a few minutes to up to six hours may be necessary for the brain to process, absorb and create the neural pathways necessary to retrieve the information accurately.

Research has also discovered that the "single best way to grow a better brain is through challenging problem solving.... This creates new dendritic connections that allow us to make even more neural connections."[78] Youth who begin confirmation too early will not have developed the brain physiology required to comprehend complex abstractions. The brain must be allowed to develop to the point that both hemispheres as well as the connecting tissue between them, known as the corpus callosum, have been bridged together. By the time most youth are beginning confirmation, "the major bridge between the left and right hemispheres of the brain, the corpus collosum, is sufficiently matured."[79] This partially explains why hurrying a child through confirmation before he is developmentally ready will produce very few positive results.

The brain is most effectively engaged when a process of discovery is involved. To engage in a program that demands conceptual thought processes that are prerequisites for problem solving learning before a student's brain has developed to that

---

Supervision and Curriculum Development. 1998), 22.

[76]Jensen 1998, 25.
[77]Jensen 1998, 46.
[78]Jensen, 1998, 35.
[79]Jensen 1998, 35.

point will only frustrate the learner as well as the educator. To arbitrarily expect that when children reach the seventh grade they should be able to handle the abstract truths of faith can be a dangerous assumption. On the other hand, to deny students, who are developmentally ready, the opportunity to be challenged with the six chief parts of the faith simply because they are not yet seventh graders may be equally disastrous.

Children mature at their own pace. Some fifth graders will be truly ready to learn the Catechism and some who are well into high school may just be beginning to build the physiological bridges necessary between the hemispheres of their brain to engage in conceptual thought. A learner-based approach to confirmation will allow for variables in maturation and will acknowledge that catechesis should begin when the learner is ready, not just when the teacher or the parents are ready.

How often do we have to hear adults say, "I got nothing out of my confirmation," to realize that what most are really saying is that they were not ready to learn. A student's readiness to learn should never be a matter of the instructor's or the parent's convenience but a moment in time when the learner begin to ask soul-searching and life-defining questions regarding God and his place in His creation. This stage of development may begin fairly early or it may develop later in life, but it is ideally only in the framework of a student's readiness that confirmation can be most effective.

Answers must follow questions, not questions answers. Catechesis has assumed, up until this time, that the learner need not be asking questions yet. As long as we provide all the answers now, the questions will follow. Questions only follow answers once the brain has sufficiently matured. To provide answers in the hopes that appropriate questions might follow at a later point is not supported by the evidence of available research. It is simply not how people learn. First comes the questions, the hunger and readiness to know, and then the answers take on meaning and relevance to the learner. Parents who lament the lifestyle of their high school youth by wondering out loud why they failed to learn what they were taught in confirmation are not willing to

confront the possibility that the content provided was never learned because the answers came at them before the questions came from them. Ronald Goldman draws some radical conclusions from his studies. He believes that teaching religious doctrine too soon in the developmental process, before a child has entered the formal operational stage of understanding, actually "inoculates the child against religion."[80] Before his opinions are dismissed, at least one point is worth some further thought. Is it possible that in our haste to pressure teenagers to conform to a grade-based catechetical curriculum rather than a developmental readiness-based program that we have inadvertently done more harm than good? Is it possible that we have inadvertently turned an exploration of God's grace into an exercise of Divine demands: demands that hint of requirements that must be met before a person can be admitted into a full and authentic relationship with the Lord?

Tokens, gimmicks and rewards are tools that have been used to try to inspire youth to learn. Rewards and punishments have been long thought to promote learning too. Buttons, stickers, certificates and the like have been proven ineffective. Research is showing that the brain crafts its own system of rewards that are called "opiates."[81] These opiates are typically used by the body to regulate stress and pain. But it has also been discovered that the brain produces these opiates to create a "natural high" when the process of learning is enjoyable. Catechumens are not tape recorders or laundry baskets in which we stuff as much information in as possible and call it done. Youth have their limits based upon their particular learning style, emotions (rapid responses), feelings (delayed responses) and motivations that need to be taken into serious consideration if learning is to take place in more than a haphazard fashion.

---

[80]Jack L. Seymour and Donald E. Miller, *Contemporary Approached Christian Education.* (Nashville: Abingdon Press. 1982), 79.

[81]Jensen 1998, 65.

Research also shows that the most effective methods of achieving significant recall is through "associations."[82] Providing as many neural associations for recall as possible assists the student in being able to access the material from a variety of vantage points, resulting in the retrieval of more information more accurately and more often. The development of linkage between existing chunks of information already in the brain is not unlike the construction of web sites that link to additional information throughout the worldwide web. The more extensive the links, the easier it is for the youth to access the necessary information on demand.

It is appropriate now to ask, "Does everyone have to learn the six chief parts of the catechism in the same way?" Research would suggest "No" and points out that people learn in a variety of ways. Therefore, it stands to reason that a successful confirmation program would provide a variety of ways in which a child could learn the six chief parts. Modules on each of the six parts might be provided that give the learner and his parents an opportunity to manage the subject matter in a way that best complements the child's learning style. One family might choose to write and perform a skit on the third commandment, another might collaborate in creating a pop-up book about the three-fold office of the Savior, and a third family unit might design a newspaper ad for Easter that would convey the doctrine of the resurrection to the unchurched community around them. In the process of completing a selected model parents have a chance to share their faith with their child in non-threatening ways, the subject is taught, linkage between existing and new information is achieved, and learning happens.

Another question that is worth some thought is this: "Can confirmation instruction adjust to the way God made people?" Most instructors teach in the style that they prefer to learn. Few educators ever reflect long enough on the process of learning to ask themselves if everyone around them learns in the way that they do. Marlene LeFever

---

[82]Jensen 1998, 102.

in a book entitled, *Learning Styles: Reaching Everyone God Gave You to Teach*, identifies four distinct learning styles that exit among people today. From her perspective, God has made imaginative learners, analytical learners, common sense learners and dynamic learners. The imaginative learner asks, "Why do I need this information?"[83] They are easily recognized by the sheer number of questions they will ask about a subject. They are empathetic people who enjoy monopolizing conversation.

The analytic learner, which constitutes a full thirty percent of the population, asks, "What do I need to know?"[84] These people tend to be thorough and industrious. Due to their demand for exactness, they are often perceived as being picky, stuffy and overly critical.

The common sense learner asks, "How do these truths actually work?" LeFever says that common sense learners think logically. They pride themselves on making otherwise meaningless information serve a practical purpose. Because these type of learners "...live in the here and now,"[85] they seek immediate application of new knowledge. Information that cannot be readily applied is considered unimportant. Material tagged irrelevant is simply not retained. This type of learner really wants to know about the nuts and bolts of his relationship to God and His people more than about the theoretical or philosophical elements of the faith.

The dynamic learner asks, "How will I ever use what I have been asked to learn?"[86] LeFever indicates that intuition is an important aspect of a dynamic learner's style. Though these types can appear to be egotistical and overbearing, they have the creative resources to be flexible and dynamic in making education applicable. Dynamic

---

[83]Marlene D. LeFever, *Learning Styles: Reaching Everyone God Gave You to Teach.* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook Publishing Co. 1995), 41-42.

[84]LeFever 1995, 50.
[85]LeFever 1995, 57.
[86]LeFever 1995, 61.

learners will find a way to use the information provided them, sometimes in ways the teacher never dreamed possible or appropriate. A dynamic learner is comfortable with not fully understanding the mysteries of God. They can more easily tolerate any ambiguity that would drive any of the other three learning styles crazy.

In addition to the four identified learning styles in LeFever's book, she also suggests that there are a number of "modalities." A modality is a preferred way in which a particular student with a specific learning style prefers to receive information that he is expected to assimilate or later recall. Some students are auditory learners enjoying lectures and oral presentations. Other learners resonate better visually or by touch (tactile/kinesthetic). These various modalities, are in essence, sensory channels through which information is received and processed. No doubt every learner uses a wide variety of sensory channels or modalities, but each person has a preference, a channel that they prefer and seems to work best for them. Students who prefer to use modalities other than auditory are at a decided disadvantage within a classroom where an educator relies solely on his ability to lecture. "In any classroom, youth group, or congregation, you'll find a kaleidoscope of individuals with different learning styles."[87] Therefore, it is one of the grandest forms of arrogance to insist that just because I am talking, everyone in the room is learning.

Charles Winquist defines the church as "a pilgrim people seeking meaning."[88] For him, life experiences motivate the Christian to seek understanding. Children with limited experiences would therefore have an equally limited bank of questions for which they are in search of answers. Delaying the start of the confirmation program until a teenager has had some life experiences would surely provide a broader bank of questions that might demand answers. In this context, the educator is responsible for guiding the

---

[87]Schultz 1993, 110.

[88]Seymour and Miller 1982, 131.

learner toward a Biblical understanding of his life's experiences. In this type of interpretive environment, catechesis would be structured around faith-stories, personal and cultural experiences, and accounts of faith put into practice in mission and ministry. The practical downside to this approach is the likelihood that once teenagers get their driver's license and a job they will become too preoccupied to seek answers to their emerging questions from their parish pastor. Most would have little exposure to the clergy in their parish beyond what they see on Sunday morning. In the absence of a healthy relationship with their pastor, I would foresee youth feeling more comfortable turning to their peers or the Internet for answers to their life-experience questions.

Activities in confirmation that engage the whole learner and acknowledge the power of senses, emotion, styles and modalities will have lasting impact upon the learner. Religious educators need to be enthusiastic about what they teach. Parties and rituals, cheers, chants and songs should be developed along the way to celebrate learning. Opportunities should be provided for youth to recall what has been taught in a variety of ways throughout the week with positive results.

Parents need to be given the training and challenge to be a blessing to their children in significantly spiritual ways. Most adults need to rediscover how to play with their children. They need to be given permission to be kids themselves. They need to be given purposeful and intentional reasons to be parents again. They also need to be given sound Biblical concepts that convey defining values that are constructed in a way that permits parents to be formative influences on their children. Teenagers want to be heard, but they also want to be advised about the rapidly-changing environment in which they live. Conversely, parents want to share, guide and shelter their children from the shadow areas that they wandered through when they were teenagers. The church stands in a unique position to build the bridges that both parents and teenagers desperately want, but are unable to develop on their own.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have shown that there are a number of ways Christian educators can utilize the various relational and educational theories that address the forces that inhibit learning and the tools that promote it. I have also indicated that the keys to the twelve questions asked earlier in this chapter are to break free from a single style of teaching, keep confirmation learner-based, and celebrate the unique ways in which people of all levels of intelligence learn. Working together, family systems, congregational leaders, and church workers will be able to construct a holistic curriculum that offers the greatest possibility of opening the whole child to the whole Word of God.

CHAPTER 4

TOWARD A SYSTEMIC CONFIRMATION MODEL

"Catechesis...is a pastoral ministry of the Word, the energy or activity of
God which continuously converts and nurtures those whom God has
chosen to witness to the Gospel of Salvation. The aim of catechesis is to
make God's saving activity of liberating/reconciling Word known,
living, conscious, and active in the personal and corporate lives of God's
baptized people. Catechesis, therefore, is a process, a course to be run
(which is the original Latin meaning of *curriculum*)."[89]

In order to make God's saving activity conscious, active and personal,
catechesis should begin with a question: "What is already known or felt about the topic
to be studied?" Every student has some personal and conscious knowledge that will be
used to evaluate any Scriptural truth they are asked to examine in greater detail. The
knowledge that predates any formal instruction on a given subject is called "prior
knowledge."

Prior knowledge is usually based upon things that have already been learned at
home, at school, from peers, Sunday School or by simple inference. Prior knowledge is
significantly different than understanding, in that prior knowledge is comfortable with
gaps in understanding and often openly resists the infusion of additional information that
might demand unlearning what has already been established in a student's memory. The
Cognitive Theories of Acquisition suggest that learners are capable of functioning quite
well without complete data or thorough understanding. Students take what information is
available and simply see "sensible solutions within the limits of their knowledge."[90] The
natural ability to function well without comprehensive understandings allows students to

---

[89]O.C. Edwards, Jr., *A Faithful Church: Issues in the History of Catechesis.*
(Wilton, Conneticut: Morehouse-Barlow Co., Inc. 1981), 298.

[90]Lauren Resnick, *Toward a Cognitive Theory of Instruction*, 25.

organize and structure whatever information is available into a working model of reality even if the data provided is incomplete or even completely false.

Engaging Parents in Catechesis

Many parish parents are working with frighteningly little Biblical knowledge that, when carefully inspected, looks more like the mongrel down the street than the "purebred parishioner" that pastors purpose to produce. Most adults are also resistant and unwilling to reframe their thinking. They remain distant from Bible studies and detached from personal devotions. These marginally catechized adults are bringing their children to confirmation class. Frequently, the information studied in class openly contradicts the information being taught and lived out in the home. Unless the parents are working with their instructor at some intentional level, the youth are put into an educational and social double-bind. They are placed in a dilemma where they must determine who is telling them the truth: the pastor or their parents. To embrace one is to deny the other. Few in their early teens, who are just beginning confirmation, are in any position, emotionally or spiritually, to forsake their family and follow Jesus. The end result is that either the student's parents or the church will be discredited in the learner's eyes.

The key to crafting any model of confirmation ministry is the acknowledgment of the power and importance of the family system. The systemic model that I have developed and am evaluating in this major applied project introduces this key concept through a formal letter of introduction to parents regarding the type of catechesis that will be employed on behalf of their child (see appendix 4). The letter stresses the importance of parental participation and the role that the family is expected to play in the catechetical process. A two-part orientation program is mandated; and both students and their parents are required to attend together. For the families that have been at Christ's Greenfield for the past five years have already heard about the type of program we offer, this letter will probably come as no surprise. But for those who are new to our

parish or are shopping for a program, this letter begins to introduce the concepts upon which the whole catechetical model is constructed.

Orientations in the Systemic Model for Cathechesis

A two-session orientation is conducted immediately prior to the start of confirmation in the Fall. Each segment of the orientation is designed to last approximately one hour. Each parent and every child receives a packet when they arrive (see appendix 5). The objectives of these orientations are to begin to get parents and students acquainted with each other, the parish staff, and to clearly lay out the demands of the program. The philosophy of the program and the individual components of an evening's class are presented. Expectations, class schedule and related materials are distributed. Time is also set aside to try their hand at specific parts of the program that extend learning beyond the classroom, such as *Family Times* which will be discussed later in greater detail.

The program assumes that there is room to grow in the corporate discipleship of each family. Expectations are designed to encourage students and their families to demonstrate progress in areas of sanctification that can be measured, such as worship attendance, Bible study and the amount of time the family spends discussing issues of faith. Records are kept in all these key areas with the purpose of being able to chart a student's growth from the time the student and his family entered confirmation until the time the child is ready to be confirmed. The only way to fail in this area of the systemic model is to be doing no better in worship or Bible study in the last quarter of the second year of instruction than you were doing by the end of the first quarter of the first year of instruction.

Parish Service Hours in the Systemic Model for Cathechesis

Parish Service Hours (PSH) have been implemented to aid students in discovering that they are not the Church of tomorrow but the Church of today. By applying themselves at least thirty-five hours each year to build up the Body of Christ and give glory to God through works of service, youth begin to realize that there is something they can do and that something can make a difference in their lives and in the lives of those around them (see appendix 7). Often times parents will guide their youth toward projects that the family can do together, creating another opportunity for the family system to rediscover itself through the ministry of the church. Too often congregational programs unintentionally contribute to the deterioration of the family by providing programming that inhibits family interaction, provides alternatives to building shared memories through shared experiences, and gives families one more excuse not to communicate on a meaningful and in a sustained manner. A systemic approach to confirmation intentionally tries to bring the family closer by providing shared experiences and guided opportunities for sustained and meaningful communication.

Parent Volunteers in the Systemic Model for Cathechesis

Parent volunteers are recruited from among the attending guardians to assist in a variety of important program functions. Volunteers are recruited to keep attendance records and provide quarterly reports to the student and the Board of Elders. Parents serve as *Focus Time* and *Break Out* leaders. Other volunteers are needed to arrange pre-test group study sessions. These are typically held during the two weeks prior to a test as informal and optional events to review the pretest. Usually these gatherings are organized at the youth's favorite fast-food restaurant so that food, fellowship and study can be successfully combined. Parents and youth alike gather to brush up on their understandings, quiz one another, and generate additional questions for clarification in class prior to the test.

Adults are also used as surrogate moms and dads when the student's real guardians are absolutely not able to clear their schedules and attend class with their child. These proxy parents support the student in class and provide an essential link between what is happening in the classroom and what is happening at home. The goal is that every youth has his parents or a parent with him each class evening. When adults, through this ministry of presence, make confirmation a priority the youth willingly do the same. A side benefit of this facet of the program is that the presence of so many adults at confirmation has effectively eliminated inappropriate classroom behavior. What teenagers are willing to try when only one adult is present they will never dream of trying when adults outnumber students and those adults are their parents.

Fees Associated with the Systemic Model for Cathechesis

A fee is charged each year to cover all the supplies each student will need for the subjects being covered. During orientation each year every youth receives a paperback N.I.V. Bible. The year the books of the Bible are discussed they also receive a copy of Haley's Bible Handbook. In the year the Six Chief Parts are scheduled to be studied, each student receives a hardbound copy of Luther's Small Catechism. The fee also helps defray the costs of the *Beginnings Retreat* for first-year students and the *Come Away Retreat* for second-year students, both of which will be discussed in the next chapter.

An Overview of the Use of Class Time in the Systemic Model

A sample of the actual weekly lesson plan is provided in the orientation packet. The student study sheet is designed to maximize an hour and a half of teaching time each week. The various components are broken down in this way: *Focus Time* - 10 minutes, *Class Discussion Part #1* - 20 minutes, *Partner Power* - 8 minutes, *Reflection Time* - 7 minutes, *Break Out* - 20 minutes, *Class Discussion Part #2* - 20 minutes and

Announcements - 5 minutes (see appendix 8). Enough material is offered in each of these areas in any given evening's session to take twice as much time as is allotted. An instructor must be well-organized in order to keep the program moving along. Educators must avoid the temptation to get stuck in the lecture components of the program (*Class Discussion*) and find themselves not having enough time to challenge students with other learning styles that are provided throughout this program.

Focus Time is specifically designed to draw out of each student the prior knowledge he has on the subject to be discussed later by the leader. This curriculum assumes that they already know something about the subject to be discussed. The first few minutes of a class is designed to assess what is known so that appropriate linkage can be created between existing and new knowledge. I assume that each student enters confirmation with a set of robust and resistant beliefs that may complement or compete with what is being taught in class.

Groups of no more than four, including the adult volunteer leader, are assigned and sent off to discuss the *Focus Time* questions. These adults are instructed to in no way challenge an answer or attempt to correct obvious misinformation. They are to ask, listen, record and when they are finished, report any significant findings to the instructor. It then becomes the responsibility of the instructor to determine what sort of "confrontations between the old conceptions and the new ones may be needed for the new ones to take hold."[91]

When all groups have reassembled, prayer and any brief housekeeping chores are addressed. Each session has at least one theme verse. The verse is introduced and *Class Discussion Part #1* begins. Subject content is introduced, and prior knowledge is addressed in a general and purposefully non-threatening way. For the lecture learner, *Class Discussion* components will prove to be most satisfying. This gives those who

---

[91]Resnick, 27.

enjoy taking notes and listening to the educators' insights, opportunity to feel they have gotten something out of the evening. It is important to move steadily through the first lecture section and into *Partner Power*.

Partner Power is designed for diads: teams of two and no more than three youth working together to discover deeper insights about the subject that was introduced in the prior *Class Discussion. Partner Power* is a time for excited chatter. Students are now given direct control over their learning. The instructor must keep the diads on task by frequently reminding them of the time that is left to finish this portion of the lesson plan. Some small group will not be able to finish the project in the allotted time. Students should be encouraged to find time during the week to go back and finish this section. In addition, specific time at the end of the quarter will be provided when questions from this section pop up on the *PreTest* and again on the *Test*.

The midway point of a class is marked by a section called *Reflection Time*. Students have had time to talk, time to listen, and time to share with each other, *Reflection Time* is designed specifically to allow the confirmands an structured opportunity to process what they have experienced up to this point in the class and to make the appropriate linkage between their existing knowledge base and the new information that have just been supplied. Typically, open sentences are used to promote a journaling of sorts about what is happening inside the student's head and heart. It is advisable that, as the students think and write, the instructor move freely about the room, stopping in front of students and randomly asking permission to read a portion of what they are writing. This level of sharing is powerful and insightful. It gives the instructor an opportunity to peer inside the mind and heart of each student. Parents are encouraged to review what has been written with their kids when they return home. These few moments provide the educator with a unique opportunity to minister, affirm and counsel youth. It is important that a teacher respect each student's privacy and protect their

thoughts and insights. Doing so will sow seeds of trust and respect that will pay dividends one-hundred fold as students continue down faith's journey.

The conclusion of the *Reflection Time* exercise is ideal for a section called *Break Out*. *Break Out* is twenty minutes of tactile learning. Wild and wacky events are staged in order to help those who learn by doing to better understand the primary concept in the evening's discussion. Directions and materials are prepared in advance for the volunteer leaders. Groups of five to seven youth and no more than two adults are sent off to make practical sense of the subject that is under consideration. It is in *Break Outs* that the widest variety of learning styles can be addressed. The groups can easily end up having so much fun that time gets away from them. Instructors must advise the adult facilitators to strive to stay on task and to work within the time frame that has been allotted for the exercise. Some of the deepest insights are discovered through these seemingly simple games and exercises.

The second *Class Discussion* section is designed to bring all the pieces of the learning process together and, if appropriate, introduce additional material on the designated topic. The section begins with the theme verse. By this time the verse has been used in several ways and said several times. The goal for this is to make memorization happen without ever calling it "memory work." The instructor is encouraged to use the fullest extent of his creativity to help the students imprint these words of Scripture effectively in their memory. Songs, chants, fill-in-the-blanks, and word associations are all useful tools in making memory happen spontaneously.

Twenty minutes is again allotted to *Class Discussion Part #2*. The instructor should spend only enough time as is necessary to cover the few areas that need to be discussed and leave as much time as possible to encourage the youth to ask questions that the confirmation experiences should generate within them. *Class Discussion Part #2* is an excellent time to orally test what changes may have occurred in the student's thinking as they worked through the various parts of the learning process up to this point. It is

here that the instructor can evaluate to what extent there has been knowledge restructuring. Often this section takes the shape of a subtle form of pop quiz in which the instructor uses questions to see if the students are able to assimilate the information correctly. This is also an excellent time to utilize the experiences of the adults sitting around the room by openly engaging them in the discussion. Parent's stories, struggles and questions enrich the corporate systemic experience that this catechetical program is designed to address while testing how well the adults have assimilating the information as well.

The evening ends with announcements and a final prayer. It is at this time that what has been learned is designed to be taken into the home for further discussion and reinforcement throughout the course of the coming week. The various components of this program that extend the learning beyond the classroom are covered more fully in the next chapter.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have outlined the various components of the systemic model for confirmation that is under development for this Major Applied Project and is being utilized at Christ's Greenfield. I have provided the rationale behind each piece of the process and offered details regarding the role of parent volunteers. The program that is being utilized attempts to achieve the aim of catechesis by offering a program that is designed to provide a "living, conscious, and active" tool intended to enhance the "personal and corporate lives of God's baptized people."[92] In this next chapter, I will demonstrate how learning is expanded beyond the classroom and into the homes of each student in several specific ways throughout the week.

---

[92]Edwards, 298.

CHAPTER 5

EXTENDING THE LEARNING

The time spent with students during a weekly confirmation lesson is relatively

insignificant when weighed against the time each youth will spend with family and

friends. Greater still is the amount of time studies consistently report that people spend

glued to the television set. "The average adult in America watches television four to five

hours a day, more on weekends."[93] It is not unusual to hear reports from today's youth

that they spend even more hours a day on the Internet, on the phone, or watching their

favorite programs on television than their parents do. "In a lifetime the average American

spends the equivalent of 13 years and four months watching television, far more time

than in working, conversing with friends and family, physical activity, education, or

reading."[94] Few confirmation programs dare attempt to engage today's youth in learning

activities that could compete with the various messages and social agendas that the

various media are communicating today. In this chapter, I will be discussing the various

ways in which the systemic model developed in this congregation attempts to extend the

learning process beyond the context of the traditional classroom setting and into the

culture of the student throughout the rest of the week.

Challenges That Face Extending Learning Beyond the Classroom

Extending the catechetical experience beyond the classroom is not a new or novel

idea. However, many attempts have been derailed by families who view any extension

---

[93]Rogness 1994, 17.

[94]Rogness 1994, 17.

of the catechetical experience as just more homework and an unnecessary intrusion upon other family commitments. Parents are quick to point out how busy they are. School homework, extracurricular activities, and usual household routines are placed in competition with today's confirmation programs. It is not uncommon to hear comments that contend that additional work attached to confirmation is considerably less important than other demands made upon a student's week. From a theological perspective, it is apparent that the first commandment is at the very center of a family's struggle to accommodate any catechetical process. Whether they verbalize it or not, the question always boils down to which is more important: "seeking first the Kingdom of God" or "all these things (Matthew 6:33)?" Often, the family system has already concluded that the things of God are truly not as important as all the things of this world that compete for the student's time and attention.

In order to multiple the opportunities to learn the truths being taught regarding the essential doctrines of Scripture, the family system must first be willing to realign itself in ways that complement the claims made upon believers in the first commandment. Two options present themselves to the educator who wants to address these first commandment concerns: One option would be to design a program that openly competes for a "fair share" of a student's time placing hefty consequences upon those who refuse to comply. A second option would be to construct a program that acknowledges preexistent demands upon the family that conflict with the first commandment and works to move the whole family structure from wherever they currently are to a more conscious and committed reflection of Christian discipleship.

Though seldom premeditated, most confirmation programs force students and their families into points of tension between a love of the world and a love for the Lord. Though the struggle to be in the world and not of the world is for every believer a daily battle, it is unfortunate, although not all together surprising, when the struggle against the forces of darkness pits one Christian against another. Jesus himself, taught his disciples

that His coming would produce conflict especially within family systems: "For I have come to turn 'a man against his father, a daughter against her mother...(Matthew 10:34-39)." Conflicts rise over issues of church and Sunday School attendance, memory work, and scheduling.

Each point of tension drives home the harsh realities that a battle is being waged for the soul of a child and each member of that child's family. As it was in the case of Peter's efforts to discourage Jesus from going to Jerusalem, sometimes well-meaning, God-fearing family members find themselves unwittingly being used as tools of Satan. It is all too evident that there are ultimately no spiritual "fence straddlers" who can indefinitely maintain a "both/and" indifference to the things of this world and the Kingdom of God. Either we are for Him or we are working against our Lord. Programs that ignore the systemic conflict that naturally occurs in families when God, through His Word, begins to challenge their allegiances, puts the student in an impossible double-bind. A double-bind occurs when a person is forced to declare their allegiance. This frequently happens to children caught in the grips of custody battles. But it also happens in the minds of our youth who sit quietly listening to the material in confirmation class. Like the scene played out in today's courts, few confirmands are emotionally ready or economically independent enough at that point in their life to forsake their families: mother, father, sisters or brothers in order to "carry his cross (Luke 14:25-27)." It is therefore imperative that whenever possible, programs work with rather than against the whole family to better insure the spiritual development of the student and possibly the spiritual growth of the whole family.

For some families only minor conflicts may arise and only slight modifications in lifestyle will be necessary in order to embrace a confirmation program. But for a growing number of households in which one or more of the parents are de-churched, unchurched, or openly hostile to the church, major shifts in lifestyles may be required. Families that are unable or unwilling to make that turn back to the Lord (repentance) will invariably

find a presenting issue or a good excuse to drop out of confirmation, transfer to a neighboring parish that demands less of them, or simply give up on church altogether. For the families that do stay and embrace the struggle to grow in the grace of the Lord, a number of auxiliary components have been developed to this systemic model that makes it unique.

Classroom Participation

The first unique component of this systemic model that extends the learning process actually begins in the classroom and is based upon class attendance. Most, if not all, existing confirmation programs expect student participation. This particular systemic model takes that expectation one step further by requiring parental participation as well. At least one parent or a god parent are expected to attend confirmation each week with the student.

Several things are accomplished by making parental participation a requirement. The first and probably most obvious benefit deals with classroom discipline. A tremendous amount of unproductive time can be spent in a given week on classroom management. Students who are being coerced into attending confirmation have been known to act out in ways that effectively mitigate against anyone in the class learning much of anything. Having each child's parent, parents or god parents in attendance allows the teacher to spend more productive time teaching. No parent wants to see his child being incorrigible or disrespectful, especially in the presence of so many other parental eyewitnesses. Simply acknowledging the unacceptable behavior typically results in an immediate change of attitude on the part of the student. It also almost always guarantees that a sustained conversation on the subject will arise when the parent and child can be alone, reducing the negative impact that shame and public disgrace evoke, and thus eliminating the inappropriate behavior all together.

Having parents present also provides a second set of ears. Junior High students' attention spans are not known for endurance. However, parents who are motivated because they know that within a few short weeks they will be required to take the same tests as their children, listen with incredible intensity. Not only do they want to do well on the test but they particularly want to do as well if not better than their children and the other parents setting around them. Having that second set of ears also insures that further discussions on the subjects handled in class will result in positive reinforcement of the material throughout the weeks to come in the student's home. Because the parents are, for the most part, passive participants in the lecture learning components of the program, they can busy themselves taking copious notes that many younger Junior High youth have yet to master, clarifying points that the teacher may need to reinforce, and discussing among themselves what is being taught in class.

Parents may at times feel ill-equipped to deal with today's Junior High youth, but they truly are the "specialists" in their field. They have spent their lifetime learning how to communicate with their children; no one does it better than they do. Having the parents involved in each evening's class, indirectly enables them to communicate the truths of Scripture to their children in the ways that they have mastered over the years. This makes it possible to mainstream a learning or developmentally delayed student without requiring additional staff or specialized curriculum. By providing the material and tools to the parent, every student can and should excel to the glory of God and the good of all His people.

Another benefit of parental participation is the peer bonding that forms out of the process. Adults who could previously only recognize each other as fellow members setting in the pews around them, begin to build relationships through their shared confirmation experiences. Adults, who were initially strangers, begin to open up to each other by discussing common parenting issues. Working together on various confirmation

task forces and projects, these adults form lasting relationships that carry on into other areas of life and ministry.

Not every parent will participate in the program in the optimum ways designed. There are a number of circumstances that preclude parental involvement. The growing number of single parent families is one situation that can make it extremely difficult for even the most well-intentioned parent to fully participate. There will always be any number of other real or perceived situations that cause a parent to be uninvolved. In these cases this program has trained a group of parents who have been through this confirmation program already and a growing number of elders who offer themselves as "proxy parents" in the event that a student's parents or god parents are unavailable or unwilling to participate. A proxy parent's task is to pray for the student he is assigned, work alongside of him during the weekly class time, and serve as the link to maintain lines of communications with the student's family throughout the program. This proxy parenting program has proved to be an invaluable resource to the student who is ready to begin confirmation but whose family is not. Proxy parents not only provides a solution for situations where one or more of the parents are openly resisting the program but it also provides a workable option for the parent who is willing but unable to clear current schedule conflicts.

Family Times

The second unique component of this systemic models attempt to extend the learning process beyond the classroom involves homework. Teachers assign homework, not because they are mean-spirited, but to foster the retention of a subject matter and further the mastery of academic skills. Because confirmation is as much about what is to be learned as it is about how it is to be lived, it seems appropriate that confirmation include some form of homework. The extended learning component of this systemic model is called *Family Time* (see appendix 9). Each unit is designed to take one

significant area of teaching during the class time together and extend it into the family system sometime during the following week. Each *Family Time* is intentionally crafted to be interactive, allowing the student to be the teacher while the family system plays the role of student. Some of the components are centered around family discussions and others around routine field trips that attempt to encourage the family to critique the world around it from a Biblical perspective.

Each *Family Time* is constructed to require as little as fifteen minutes of family effort. However, enough material is provided that a family could be engaged in meaningful Christ-centered discussion for as much as an hour if they should so choose. For households that have never experienced family devotions, never prayed together, or discussed issues of faith and life with one another from a particularly Biblical perspective, this is an introduction and a paradigm for reintroducing devotions back into the family system. *Family Times* become launching pads for parents to clarify their own faith and communicate morals and values to their children in the context of what has occurred previously in class.

Family Times also provide a non-threatening environment for the nominally involved members of the household to be exposed to the central truths of Scripture. There is far less intimidation when teaching comes through the uncatechized's children rather than from the pastor or even the believing spouse.

Periodic Written and Oral Evaluations

The third component of this systemic model that extends the learning beyond the classroom addresses periodic evaluations. Just the mention of an impending test conjures up all kinds of manifestations of anxiety among many people. And yet, well-written tests have proven to be effective tools in determining the quality of learning that an individual has achieved. Confirmation programs require some form of evaluation in order to assess at what level learning has taken place. Both written and oral examinations have been

utilized over the years. In this systemic model, three tests are administered in the course of a year. The first two tests cover approximately ten weeks of study each. The final test is a comprehensive review that seeks to evaluate the extent that learning has taken place over the course of the whole year.

Each test is preceded by a pretest that is handed out two weeks prior to the scheduled date of that exam. The pretest covers all the material that will be tested including all assigned memory work. *Family Times* are suspended the day the pretests are issued in order to encourage families to direct their energies to preparing for the test. One week prior to the test, confirmation parents host a dinner. All parents and students are invited to attend. Supper is served while the pretest is openly discussed. Individuals share what they believe to be the correct answers, knowledge is pooled, and everyone is given the opportunity to make sure they have accurate understandings before test time.

Each test is available at noon on the day the review is scheduled. At least one parent is required to be present in order for the exam to be taken. Though parents and students may sit side by side, they may not collaborate on the test expect on the final section that is designated *Parent/Student Participation* (see appendix 6). By requiring at least one parent to take the test with the student, the teacher can draw some clear understandings about how the information is being processed by individuals within a specific family system.

In order to take some of the pressure off of the testing procedure, the family is given up to one week to take the test from noon of the day it is available until noon of the following week. If the family should need to take the test during other than business hours, they are encouraged to make the appropriate arrangements in advance. Second-year students are given less than a week's grace period to take the test in order to insure that they are graded in time for their oral examinations with the Board of Elders.

No letter grade or number missed appears on the test anywhere. The teacher simply uses a highlighter to indicate which responses he believes are incorrect. When the

tests are returned, families are to set down together, review the highlighted items and make their collaborative correction accordingly. By removing the stigma of a letter grade along with the pass/fail paradigm, parents and students are freed to express what they know or think they know thus giving the teacher a more accurate understanding of what is being learned by the student as well as the family system itself.

Oral examinations are provided the week after each test. Second-year students meet with the Board of Elders. First-year students are assigned to the staff. In groups of three to four students, questions are asked that are germane to the subject matter on their most recent test with specific emphasis upon areas that learning seemed to be lacking. Reviews of their class, church, and Sunday School attendance are provided. Reports on their Parish Service Hours as well as concerns parents might have about the program are discussed. The tests are then returned to the students with their parent's test attached. The family is given one week following the oral examinations to make any changes or corrections to the student's test. Once the corrected tests are returned, the staff reviews what has been done. If the work on the test is satisfactory the material is returned to the students as a resource for the final exam. If additional work seems appropriate, a consultation is set up with the family and specific work is recommended to insure that a more appropriate level of learning has been acquired by the student. The final Second-year comprehensive oral examination that covers two years of curriculum is preceded by a retreat that has been specifically designed to tutor each student in preparation for it. More will be said about retreats in a latter paragraph.

Parish Service Hours

The fourth unique component of this systemic model that has been added in order to extend the learning process addresses *Parish Service Hours* (PSH). Churches are not as accessible to youth as many might think themselves to be. Outside of the established youth group expression of church life, few congregations make allowances for youth to

be involved in any other sustained or meaningful way. Churches are largely adult worlds that appear to be inhospitable and even irrelevant to many of today's youth. *Parish Service Hours*, or PSH's, have been incorporated to further extend the learning from the classroom into the corporate life of the church (see appendix 7). A total of seventy PSH's are required over the course of this two-year systemic program. Families are encouraged to work together to accomplish the required hours but family members participation can not be credited toward the total hours that are required of the student.

The presence of PSH's elevates the parish's sensitivity to the congregation's youth. Virtually every Board and Committee contends for a share of the available hours each student must work. Ministries once inaccessible to youth involvement but in need of the volunteer base that this systemic model generates, become eager to extend invitations for students to participate in specific ministry projects. PSH's have the potential of making parishes more family friendly. In turn, PSH's assist junior high youth in discovering ministries that do make an impact and are relevant and meaningful to them. PSH's contribute to altering the prevailing consumerists mindset that is willing to take whatever the church has to offer but equally reluctant to give anything of themselves back in the furtherance of its ministry. By requiring confirmands to contribute back a set number of PSH's in two years, they begin to make some essential linkage between who they are personally as a child of God within the context of the family of God.

Retreats and Camps

The fifth unique component of this systemic model that addresses the extenuation of the learning process beyond the classroom is the various retreats and camps that are built into this program. There is a time and a place for getting away from familiar surroundings, for journeying into the mountains, and for making pilgrimages to distant lands. Jesus, Himself, paused at times throughout his busy ministry, in order to pray, reflect and to be refreshed. Four retreats are offered confirmands in this systemic

approach during the course of the time students are in confirmation. The first retreat is titled, *Beginnings* (see appendix 10). This get-away is specifically designed for first-year confirmation students and their families. It is a 24-hour camping event that provides the first significant opportunity for the youth and their parents to become familiar with one another and with the staff. Bible studies, games and cook outs under the stars provide a powerful way to break down barriers and build bridges to further learning. For most of the youth, it is the first time they will have ever seen their pastor outside the pulpit. Properly orchestrated, this retreat introduces the notion that pastors are people too who can and want to be approached by today's youth.

The mid-year retreat is a three-day event offered to all confirmands. Students leave on a Thursday afternoon, attends classes Friday morning at Concordia University in Irvine, California, participate in church work vocation presentations on campus and becoming familiar with a variety of church-related careers. For students who may be unable to attend this annual retreat, an Internet option is provided. Students that elect the Internet option will produce a seven page paper that highlights two of the Concordia system Universities and specifically reflects an understanding of two church work career options that are available on the campuses.

The third retreat is designed for second-year students. It is held several weeks prior to the Elder's final comprehensive oral examination of catechumens. This three-day intensive retreat is called, *Come Away* (see appendix 11). Time is spent in reflecting upon the confirmation experience, the questions that will be asked of them in the oral examinations, and the promises that they will be asked to make at their confirmation. Each student works through a study book, builds a spirituality plan for the next year, and selects his confirmation verse.

A representative from each of the four years of confirmation that have gone before the current class is invited to attend as a mentor and junior counselor. Several elders, various parent volunteers and the staff also attend. The result of the students work is

presented to the Board of Elders at their final oral examination and is used by their assigned elders to monitor their faith walk throughout the year that follows their confirmation.

The final retreat is an annual five-day camp held in Colorado. Junior high youth from across the state of Arizona are brought together for a week-long learning and living experience. Various themes and topics are presented by the staff of the represented congregations. Youth are encouraged to make specific life applications of what they are learning in confirmation not only for the week while they are away at camp but also for their relationships back home.

Worship and Bible Study

The sixth and final component designed to extend the learning beyond the classroom deals with weekly worship and Bible study. The core of most confirmation programs is the classroom and the backbone of most youth ministries are the "fun and games" events that are designed to entertain today's youth with the hopes of keeping them connected to the parish. This systemic model of confirmation seeks to shift the emphasis of youth ministry away from entertainment and make worship the center and backbone of youth ministry within the parish. On Sunday evenings at 6:00 p.m. a worship service is offered that is for youth and lead by youth called *LYF* (pronounced: Life for L.utheran Y.outh F.ellowship) *LINE*. The subject for each Sunday evening is directly linked to the topics taught during confirmation during the prior week (see appendix 12). Dramas, music and message are crafted to extend the learning in the classroom into the fabric of the worship experience thus extending the learning to another level beyond the classroom.

Recent efforts have begun to incorporate the catechetical experience into Sunday morning Bible class. A fifteen to twenty minute supplemental discussion guide is being

constructed to connect the classroom experience with the Sunday morning educational experience thus reinforcing in another context what was taught earlier in the week.

Conclusion

In the span of a seven days, a confirmand will spend approximately five hours in some form of catechesis. Over half of the total time spent in a week on a given subject will be outside the classroom: fifteen minutes to an hour doing the *Family Time*, twenty minutes in Sunday School discussing the supplemental guide, and an hour at *LYF LINE* on Sunday night. This, of course, does not account for the time spent in preparation for tests, attendance at retreats, and unstructured conversations that takes place at home or at school. These auxiliary activities significantly increase the likelihood that learning can be sustained and extended far beyond the confines of a classroom or a given curriculum.

In the next chapter, I will utilize the twelve questions presented in chapter three to evaluate the systemic model for catechesis currently under review in this major applied project. End-of-the-year parental evaluations and focus groups will be employed to assess strengths and weaknesses of this program.

CHAPTER 6

AN EVALUATION OF SYSTEMIC CATECHESIS

Twelve questions were discussed in chapter three of this paper. If confirmation was to be restructured, these questions might offer helpful direction and guidelines for further attempts to improve the way in which faith formation is being conducted in Lutheran parishes. In this chapter, those dozen questions will be used to provided the substance of a critical analysis of systemic catechesis under development and review for this major applied project.

A questionnaire was handed out to all the parents currently involved in this program (see appendix #13). Staff involved in the program and who work with various portions of this catechetical model were also given the same questionnaire in order to provide the widest possible range of evaluation. Thirty-five questionnaire were distributed to parents and two to staff members. Thirty-three respondents returned their questionnaires: two were returned by staff and thirty-one were returned by parents. The balance of this chapter reflects a summary of their comments.

Cultivating Productive, Motivated Members

The first concern raised in the questions that appear in chapter three of this major applied project is the ability of the systemic model to effectively cultivate productive and motivated members of both the society in which we live and the community of faith to which we belong. The question respondents were asked to consider was: Is the current program under development and evaluation designed to cultivate productive, motivated members of society? No less than Thirty-one of the thirty-three respondents answered "Yes" to the first four questions of this survey. Positive comments included the way in which Parish Service hours encourage involvement on the part of the whole family, the

variety of activities that make relevant connections between faith and citizenship, the ways in which the program instills biblical-based moral values, and the intentional ways in which specific current events are addressed throughout the program.

Several people commented on how demanding the program currently is and how different this program is from the ways in which they experienced confirmation in their younger days. One respondent made an excellent suggestion that a portion of the total Parish Service hours required of a student might be dedicated specifically to community service activities, thereby making even more intentional the cultivation of productive and motivated members of the society in which we live.

Two questionnaires were returned with negative responses to the first four questions. Both respondents indicated that they could not identify any specific ways in which the program under review and development for this major applied project actually targeted the confirmation youth's awareness of their place and purpose in society. One response in particular thought that the program fostered a legalistic approach to motivation citing that systemic catechesis fell short on "grace and caring."

Raising A New Generation for Christ

The second concern addressed in the original twelve questions in chapter three of this project is the ability of the systemic catechesis program (currently under review and development) to enculturate a new generation into the community of faith. The specific question read: Is the current program under development and evaluation designed to cultivate productive, motivated members of the church? Once again, thirty-one of the thirty-three respondents answered "Yes" to question five of the survey. Comments cited for their positive response included the emphasis that this program places upon building stronger families, clearer moral values, the straight-forward approach to dealing with difficult or controversial issues, the length of the program, and the intentional ways in

which the larger corporate church culture seeks to involve the confirmation youth in its various ministries through the use of Parish Service hours.

One respondent who answered "Yes" suggested that the program might be more effective in enculturating a new generation if it were to offer a section on the history of the Lutheran church and its significance in the history of Christianity. Mid-October of each year, students are given several resources to explore this subject. Copies of "The Story of Martin Luther" by Elaine Hagenmueller and "The Adventures of Martin Luther" by Carolyn Bergt are made available. In addition to these resources, a number of Luther web pages are also supplied to the students. Quarterly reviews include evaluation of the students' ability to identify key components of their heritage. Nevertheless, it would be helpful if a section of the program could be dedicated exclusively to the study and appreciation of the Lutheran contribution to Christianity then and now.

The two respondents who consistently expressed negative feelings about the program on the questionnaire also said that this systemic catechetical model generated feelings of "I have to" rather than "I want to" from students. The same respondents stated the structure of the program also emphasized a legalistic motivation rather than one centered on grace and caring. They also opined that the program could do more to provide learning that relates more closely to the issues that the youth are facing daily.

Clarifying Christians in Vocation

The third concern expressed through the twelve questions of chapter three in this major applied project is its ability to assist students in clarifying their search for their intended vocation. Twenty-five participants in the questionnaire answered "Yes" to the question: Is the current program under development and evaluation structured to help today's youth clarify their search for their intended vocation? Twenty-nine respondents answered "Yes" to question eight as well: Does the current program under development and evaluation successfully attempt to introduce today's youth to professional church

work vocations? Twenty-six responses to the two questions on vocation cited the annual church worker vocation retreat to Concordia University in Irvine, California. A number of second-year parents also recalled the spiritual gifts inventory tool that was used a year ago and the work that was done both in class and at home to help students begin to become aware of how God bestows gifts on us in unique ways so that we can better carry out our life's vocation to His glory and the good of all people. Four respondents circled both "Yes" and "No" to the question reading vocational clarification indicating that they wished more attention would be given to a wider range of vocational options rather than an emphasis upon church work vocations.

There were three surveys that were returned that indicated that they did not believe that the program under review and development for this major applied project successfully aided students in clarifying their intended vocation. Of the three, only one of those who felt the program failed in this area made a comment explaining his answer. That person was apparently unaware that the gifts inventory and the two retreats to Concordia University in Irvine were included for the specific reason of addressing issues of vocation. This single respondent felt vocations had not been addressed at all.

Fostering An Evangelistic Mindset

The fourth concern under evaluation as it applies to systemic catechesis is the ability of this model for confirmation to inspire the youth of today to develop a passion of the lost. The question that was asked was: Does the current program under development and evaluation strive to inspire the youth of today to carry out our Lord's Great Commission to make disciples of all nations? On this matter, the questionnaires were unanimously agreed. Without exception, everyone felt the program currently under review and development sought to encourage students to carry the message of salvation out into their world. Parents cited an eagerness on the part of confirmands to discuss their faith with their friends. One youth began a Christian club in her school this year as

a direct result of the encouragement she received through the program and from her family. Other participants thought that the ideas and references that students are given through the class better equip them to deal with the variety of situation they face daily. The Sunday evening youth service, called LYF Line was also cited as an effective way that the youth have of inviting their friends to worship with them.

A number of positive suggestions were also generated from question seven on the Great Commission. Their suggestions can best be summarized in a desire to see that through the confirmation experience, youth be given a more intentional exposure to world mission as well as to various witnessing strategies.

Learning Theories And Systemic Catechesis

The fifth concern that forms the basis for the critical analysis of the systemic model for catechesis under development in this major applied project is the ability of this program to effectively employ the latest educational theories, tools, and methodologies in promoting the spiritual maturation of our youth. Question nine asked: Does the current program under development and evaluation intentionally incorporate the latest educational theories, tools, and methodologies in promoting the spiritual maturity of our youth? Only three respondents felt they did not have enough knowledge to give a fair critique to question nine, citing little or no knowledge of current theories, tools, or methodologies.

Of the respondents who did feel they could offer a fair evaluation, Ninety-one percent of the questionnaires returned indicated that they believed that the latest theories, tools, and methodologies were reflected in this systemic model for catechesis. Some respondents cited the various learning environments such as the use of group discussions, discovery diads in the Partner Times, hands-on learning in the Break Out sections, and the use of a variety of multi-media resources. One parent identified the intentional ways

in which multiple intelligences were not only recognized but incorporated in the learning environment.

The single negative observation that was made on a questionnaire was that the use of the various learning approaches did not seem to be extremely time effective. It would seem that any learning environment that is learner-centered rather than teacher-centered will appear to be less efficient or time-effective. Only a sustained comparative analysis of teacher-centered approaches and a learner-centered approaches will provide the data necessary to determine if there is any significance correlation between a student's retention and the amount of time that may be appropriate in order to achieve a sustained application of what a student was intended to have learned.

Systemic Catechesis And A Reverence for Life

The sixth concern raised in the twelve questions being used to provide a critical analysis of systemic catechesis is the program's ability to evoke a sense of reverence for life and awe for how we are fearfully and wonderfully made. Question number ten read: Is the current program under development and evaluation offer productive tools whereby the Holy Spirit can better aid today's youth to understand how fearfully and wonderfully they have been made. This survey question produced one response of "somewhat" and thirty-two affirmative answers. Prayer, an emphasis on how much God loves them, and the programs ability to place Biblical stories into the language and life of today's youth were cited as reasons for the respondents' positive perception of the program's ability to effectively address this concern within a catechetical context.

Most parents currently participating in this systemic model for catechesis recall that their confirmation experience relied heavily on rote memorization. Question eleven on the questionnaire sought to draw a comparison between the parent's confirmation experience and the one currently under development and review for this major applied project.

Another respondent indicated "No" to the question regarding the place and importance of relying heavily upon rote memorization in the catechetical process. The answer given, however, did not seem to speak to the issue under consideration in question eleven. The desire of the respondent was to find a way to express a hope that more one on one learning, more personal and basic beliefs discussions, and even more tutorial and individualized learning be incorporated in the systemic model currently under development and review for this major applied project.

Memorization And Systemic Catechesis

Question eleven tried to treat the concern over the proper role of memorization in the catechetical process. The question read: Is the current program under development and evaluation more effective in promoting learning and understanding than simple rote memorization? Thirty-two participants in the questionnaire responded to this question with "Yes." It was connected to this single concern that some of the most emphatic answers were given. Three respondents underlined the word "Yes" numerous times and wrote in the word "Absolutely" or "Definitely!" Parents much preferred the ways in which systemic catechesis seeks to reinforce learning in a variety of ways throughout the week.

Some questionnaires reflected personal experiences in other confirmation programs. Some adults shared that they have learned more through the systemic model than they ever did in their own confirmation program. One parent compared the program an older child had went through with the systemic model that her younger child is experiencing in this parish currently. He shared that the older child was able to say what they wanted him to say but he didn't understand what it meant. Another respondent indicated that the curriculum is interesting and interactive making learning a joy.

Systemic Catechesis And The Instructor's Readiness to Teach

There is more to teaching than a well-written curriculum. Instructors must be ready to teach. The seventh concern addressed in this critical analysis of systemic catechesis is the instructors themselves. Currently the class is taught on a rotational basis by the Pastor, a Vicar, and a Director of Christian Education Intern. The Intern and the Vicar had no association with systemic catechesis prior to being assigned to this parish. Parents were asked to evaluate the readiness of the instructors to effectively communicate the truths of our faith through this systemic model. The question presented to them was: Are the instructors connected to this program under development and evaluation effectively able to communicate the truths of our faith?

All respondents answered "Yes" when asked if the instructors could effectively communicate the truths of faith through this systemic program. Several participants commented positively on the way in which the program was designed to establish rapport with students as well as with their parents. Others expressed appreciation for the way in which the ideas and concepts were presented and how the material was laid out on the worksheets.

Systemic Catechesis And The Learner's Motivation To Learn

The final concern addressed in the questions presented in chapter three of this major applied project is the ability of systemic catechesis to effectively motivate the student to want to learn. The hope is that confirmation would begin the process of developing life-long learners and students of the Word. The answers generated from item thirteen of the questionnaire were some of the most enlightening. The question read: Are the students involved in this program under development and evaluation effectively motivated to learn through the way in which the program is organized? Six respondents answered the question "No" while twenty-seven answered it "Yes."

Of the six who said that the program did not effectively motivate a student to learn come comments citing reasons such as a need for more organization in the program, smaller class sizes, shorter time spans taught on a more aggressive time line, and less material to be covered in a given class time. One participant in the questionnaire shared that confirmation has not been a positive experience for his child. Another respondent circled both "Yes" and "No" placing the responsibility for motivation to learn upon the student and not upon the program.

Seventy-eight percent of all those who responded to the questionnaire believed that systemic catechesis as it is being developed and reviewed for this major applied project does indeed motivate students to learn. Most that explained their answer to question thirteen cited the comprehensive nature of the program: the Focus Times, Break Outs, Camp outs, and group activities that reinforced learning in a fun way. Others mentioned the way in which some many facets of the program are intentionally integrated. One respondent particularly mentioned the evaluation and testing process that included pretest, tests, oral reviews, and how each student is nurtured through the evaluation tools to communicate their faith openly and courageously. One participant in the questionnaire testified to the evidence the respondent had seen of "incredible spiritual growth" among the students involved in the program. A number of parents reinforced the evidence of spiritual growth with stories of what they had been experiencing in their home through their involvement in this systemic model of catechesis.

A number of positive suggestions and comments were also generated by the final question regarding student motivation. One parent, who answered "Yes," reflected "(they) don't have much choice if they are to be confirmed." As difficult as it is to hear such disparaging comments, it remains true that, for some, Confirmation is, even in a systemic model, a legalistic obligation and a hurdle that must be endured in order to be confirmed. Despite intentional attempts to design a program that is built upon the readiness of a student to explore his relationship with his Lord by freeing him to

determine when it is right for him to begin a deep and reflective study of his faith, many continue to insist on hurrying their child through confirmation. There are some who still see confirmation as little more than an obligation. And there are others who feel an irresistible pressure to conform in order to be confirmed.

As long as the old sinful nature survives, man will always resist the Spirit's efforts to draw him toward discipleship and spiritual maturity. No program will ever be able to silence the sinful tendencies that by nature draw mankind away from their Lord and His Word. Some parents persist in their perceptions that confirmation should approached more as a hobby or an avocation than a essential part of a person's spiritual development. Below the surface of comments that attack a program for being too time consuming reflect the struggle of families trying to reconcile current priorities with expressed core values. No program could be easy enough and every program is far too demanding for those who refuse to reflect upon where they really are spiritually and where God would have them to be.

It is the philosophical commitment to respect the readiness of a student to begin confirmation that provides not only the greatest degree of control for the learner and his family, but it also generates the most difficulty for the teacher. Students may begin the program as early as the fifth grade, though most choose to wait until their sixth or seventh grade. It is not unusual for students to begin this systemic program in the eighth grade but there are some who start confirmation well into their high school years. Covering any subject from that many developmental perspectives in a single class period is a monumental undertaking for the instructor. What would be appropriate class content for a freshman in high school on a subject such as the sixth commandment that treats marriage and sexuality would generally be considered inappropriate for a fifth or sixth grader. Striking a balance between introducing content that is developmentally premature too soon and failure to address age appropriate content too late will be an ongoing struggle for any instructor who seeks to structure confirmation around the readiness of the

student. Younger catechumens may not be sexually aware while older, more mature students may already be considering lifestyle choices without the benefit of God's Word to instruct and counsel them. A recognition of the readiness of the learner appears to be one of the largest issues facing not only a systemic approach to catechesis, but any approach to catechesis that seeks to put the learner first.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have reviewed the critical questions presented in chapter three of this major applied project. Through the use of a questionnaire, parents and staff provided critical analysis of systemic catechesis. The results of the information generated from the questionnaire was explored and discussed. In the final chapter of this project, I will look beyond the parish setting in which systemic catechesis is being. Chapter seven will explore ways in which the concepts, findings, and the resources produced for systemic catechesis might be used to benefit faith development among youth in a variety of other settings.

CHAPTER 7

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

The first and possibly greatest implication of a program that recognizes a family systems approach to catechesis is that more than a single generation is exposed at the same time to the same subjects through Word of God. Parents and confirmation students are listening to the same presentations in class, discussing the same issues in Focus and Break Out times, and are sharing perspectives on the same topics at home during the week. Involving the whole family in the confirmation process enhances the learning of those who have already been confirmed and prepares those not yet old enough for confirmation for that moment when they too will search the Scriptures in the same way as their older brothers and sisters are doing today. The end result can only be more thoroughly equipped disciples, more Biblically grounded individuals, and more Scripturally aware families.

Parish Implications

In more and more cases, grandparents are being asked to step in and lend parents a hand by working with their grandchildren that are beginning their catechetical instruction. The implications of being able to connect that which is commonly understood to be the most churched generation of our nation to the newest generation in our society are no less than profound. The values and morals that defined our nation through some of its greatest calamities and crisis now have a way of finding their way back into the mainstream thinking of our nations. Convictions regarding the sanctity of life, family, respect, and allegiance to causes greater than themselves can now be championed once again among our children by today's grandparents who are being summoned to help out with confirmation by parents that are too busy, in some case, to bother.

A systemic approach to confirmation has also provided a way of raising up leaders among adults in the congregation. Capable men and women who may feel unprepared to assume leadership responsibility in a parish now have an opportunity to spend two years in God's Word in order to be more fully equipped to do works of service. The end results are a larger number of adults who are able to identify their gifts and recognize their need to use those gifts to build up the Body of Christ. Establishing the expectation that students will give back to the Church a set number of parish service hours each year, reminds adults that they too are called to contribute to the good of God's Kingdom as well. Many adults step up initially in order to assist their youth in completely their required hours of service only to later realize the value and importance of volunteering themselves.

The third parish implication of the systemic model of catechesis is the relationships that are built among parents and families that participate in the program. Life-long bonds are formed as parents work together to lead the various parts of the program, attend the scheduled events, and find opportunity to share similar life experiences. The process of watching youth grow in the Lord, struggling through difficult moral dilemmas together, and learning to appreciate the unique and wonderful way God works through His Word creates a closeness among those who participate that no other program offers in such an intentional way.

Another implication of a systems approach to confirmation is the way in which the program is constructed to shift the responsibility for catechesis back toward a collaborative center: a redefined equilibrium. Parents begin to see themselves, if not mutually at least partially more responsible for the spiritual development of their children, than they may have otherwise. The Church remains an indispensable part of the catechetical equation while encouraging the development of a partnership between boards within the parish, staff and the families involved in the program. Redistributing the burden of catechesis onto the shoulders of everyone involved lightens the load that has

historically been placed upon the parish staff, and specifically the pastor. Helping parents realize the vital and, at times, pivotal role that they play in confirmation, is without a doubt the single greatest benefit to the instructor, freeing him to teach and parents to reinforce and apply those teachings in their daily walk with the Lord.

Parents who are otherwise oblivious to the spiritual changes that begin to take place in the lives of their children in junior high, are given the opportunity to witness those transformations taking place first hand. Physiological changes seldom go unnoticed. Parents know something is happening when the shoes they bought last week no longer fit and the pants they bought for their children the week before are now three inches too short. Spiritual changes are not necessarily as easily recognized, especially if parents do not know that they should be looking for an emerging spiritual development or what they should be looking even if they are aware.

Encouraging whole families to be involved in confirmation gives parents the tools they need to recognize change, whether it is good or bad, when it begins to occur. It allows mothers and fathers a chance to see their child in close proximity to other children that are approximately the same age. They naturally begin to compare and contrast what they are seeing in their son or daughter with the behavior they are witnessing in those around them. This process either proves to be a source of encouragement or an avenue for concern which then can be reflected back to the instructor who can then make any necessary changes in his ministry to the individual student that may address the parents' concern or reinforce the good work that God is doing in that child's life. In this way it is more difficult for a confirmation student to disappear in the crowd or get lost along the way. It provides the platform from which parents can recognize and celebrate the ways in which God is at work in their life and in the life of the child.

A final implication of the systemic approach to confirmation is the way in which it heightens the awareness of the whole parish. Boards and committees in need of assistance begin to think about asking confirmation students to help. When confirmation

students are asked to participate whole families are mobilized. Awareness about the various ministries in the Church is expanded. And youth are permitted to experience facets of parish life normally reserved for adults. The end result is confirmed young adults who not only know that they should be actively involved in the life of the congregation, but already on the day of their confirmation, have a written action plan detailing how they intend to make positive contributions to the glory of God and the advancement of His Kingdom in the year to come.

Implications Beyond the Parish

As one looks beyond the context of the specific parish that begins to utilize some expression of a systems approach to confirmation, there are implication for the circuit, the district, and possibly the Synodical contexts within which that congregation exists. Parishes of every size are looking for ways to improve upon the catechetical experience. Whether the curriculum developed in this parish is used elsewhere is of little importance compared to the impact that the philosophy upon which it rests could contribute to the denomination's approach to catechesis.

Instructing pastors and confirmation instructors on how to lead parents and parish leaders to see the value in a systemic approach to catechesis is the essential first step. Once the philosophy has been implemented in practical and measurable ways, steps then can be taken to expand the systemic approach and to begin to redistribute the weight of responsibility for catechetics within the parish. It has taken our congregations generations to get to where we are today, it will take more than a few weeks or even a few years to develop a healthier catechetical partnership within our parishes.

Circuits that are able to come together and implement a family-focused approach in every parish at the same time will have a greater impact than any single parish could possibly make. It may be impossible to agree on a specific curriculum and in reality it is not necessary. Virtually any material should be able to work within the context of a

systemic philosophy. Circuits may wish to discuss the variety of books and resources that will be used and help each parish find ways to utilize those resources to their fullest possible advantage within a given parish.

Circuits working together will make it easier for every parish to work through the transitions that accompany this type of change in how the church does catechetics. Parishioners will not be able to jump as easily from congregation to congregation trying to avoid personal and parental involvement. Objections are more easily managed when "everyone is doing it." Pastors and elders will also be able to find validation and support in knowing that the circuit is committed to a systemic approach and dedicated to seeing it fully implemented in every parish.

District workshops and pastoral conferences and conventions can provided additional resources to the membership within that region and to Synod itself. Classes at our Synodical schools and in our Seminaries should demonstrate how to apply the variety of available resources produces by our publishing house, learning theories, and para-church resources to a systemic model of confirmation that compliments our confessional heritage. Church workers, present and future, should be taught to think systemically when challenged to do family ministry within the parish.

The single greatest limitation of a developing a systemic approach to confirmation that incorporates the widest range of learning approaches is the absence of a wide range of contributing authors with strengths in writing to specific learning styles. Collaborative efforts expand the limits of a single person's ability to be creative and enhance the value of the resource that is produced. The advent of the Internet makes it possible to produce a web site where systems thinkers, pastors, educators, and theologians can share an ever-widening array of resources that can be down-loaded for parish use. Skits, dramas, songs, graphics, and worksheets could be produced by the collaborative efforts of talented and creative people across Synod. The same concept that is currently being used in the area of creative worship could as easily be applied to the area of catechesis. Recognized

writers and theologians could be commissioned by the Board of Parish Services to write specific components of the curriculum. Videos and multi-media resources could be made available to congregations that might subscribe to the site. A network could be developed that would allow pastors within Synod to communicate with each other regarding specific topics that will be covered or concerns they may have about implementing a systems approach to confirmation within their parish.

Conclusion

I have found this major applied project and the course work that has lead up to it a real sources of joy. It has challenged my way of thinking about confirmation. It has forced me to think outside the box in creative ways. It has given me the opportunity to start to fine tune my approach to confirmation within the parish. Redistributing the weight of responsibility for confirmation has freed me to use my available energies to more positive and helpful expression of my calling to shepherd today's youth and their families. I look forward to teaching confirmation. I walk away from the evening energized rather than exhausted. And I feel that I have discovered a way to mobilize more and more partners in my ministry for the sake of the Gospel.

Appendix 1

MINISTRY SURVEY
by Pastor K. Wyssmann
Christ's Greenfield Lutheran Church
Gilbert, Arizona

Check which category best describes you:

❏ PROFESSIONAL CHURCH WORKER   ❏ LAY PERSON

Perspectives on Ministries

Rank in order of degree the amount of personal satisfaction you believe church workers receive from the following areas of ministry. [1] = Highest and [5] = Lowest degree of personal satisfaction.

CATEGORY #1		CATEGORY #2	
_____	Administration	_____	Congregational Meetings
_____	Confirmation	_____	Funerals
_____	Counseling	_____	Hospital & Shut-In Care
_____	Leading Bible Study	_____	Youth events
_____	Preaching	_____	Weddings

List two aspects of the ministry that your pastor (*or if its you*) enjoy the most:

#1.

#2.

List two aspects of the ministry that your pastor (*or if its you*) find least enjoyable:

#1.

#2.

When you reflect upon your own confirmation experience, which of the following choices describes your perception of that time in your life (you may choose one or more):

❏ It was spiritually rewarding.
❏ I would never go through it again.
❏ It was boring.
❏ It happened at just the right time in my life.

If you could change one thing about the way confirmation was done when you experienced it, what one thing would you change?

If you could change one thing about the way confirmation is being done today, what one thing would you change?

Appendix 1

Choose only <u>one</u> answer to the following sentence fragments that you believe bests completes the sentence:

1. Confirmation is...
   - ❏ A program designed to prepare youth for membership in the congregation.
   - ❏ A rite of passage into adult membership.
   - ❏ A review and renewal of one's baptismal vows.
   - ❏ A course intended to prepare youth to take communion.

2. Confirmation is...
   - ❏ Primarily the responsibility of the pastor(s).
   - ❏ Primarily the responsibility of the parent(s).
   - ❏ Primarily the responsibility of godparent(s).
   - ❏ Primarily the responsibility of the student(s).

3. Confirmation is...
   - ❏ A body of information that must be mastered.
   - ❏ An emerging self-awareness of God and His grace.
   - ❏ A personal acceptance of Jesus as Lord and Savior.
   - ❏ A program to foster unity of doctrine and practice in the Church.

4. Confirmation is...
   - ❏ A chance for the pastor(s) to develop a shepherding relationship with today's youth.
   - ❏ A chance for parent(s) to fulfill the commitments they made at their children's baptism.
   - ❏ A chance for students to develop strong Christ-centered peer relationships.
   - ❏ A chance for congregations to prepare the next generation for service in the church.

5. Confirmation is...
   - ❏ Too short.
   - ❏ Too long.
   - ❏ Too much too soon.
   - ❏ Too little too late.

Appendix 2

MINISTRY SURVEY RESULTS

Surveys distributed:	100
Surveys returned:	56
Surveys returned by professional church workers:	40
Surveys returned by lay persons:	16

Percentage of professional church workers that
        expressed a less satisfaction
        (4 or 5) with confirmation: 72% (26)

Percentage of respondents who identified confirmation
        as one of the two areas of ministry that they
        or their pastor found least enjoyable: 75% (56)

Percentage of respondents who rated their own
        confirmation experience as either boring or
        expressed resistance in repeating it: 66% (37)

The most commonly reoccurring comment respondents
        would make about their own confirmation
        experience: *more personal interaction*   29% (16)

The most commonly reoccurring comment respondents
        made about the way they see confirmation
        being done today: *involve parents more*   32% (18)
                                  change the age   21% (12)

Percentages of respondents who answered the five
        multiple choice questions in a specific
        way:

Question #1:   *Confirmation is....*
        9% (5)   A program designed to prepare youth for member-
                           ship in the congregation.
        2% (1)   A rite of passage into adult membership
        75% (42)   A review and renewal of one's baptismal vows.
        14% (8)   A course intended to prepare youth to take
                           communion.

Question #2   *Confirmation is...*
        41% (23)   Primarily the responsibility of the pastor(s)
        48% (27)   Primarily the responsibility of the parent(s)
        4% (2)   Primarily the responsibility of the godparent(s)
        7% (4)   Primarily the responsibility of the student(s)

Appendix 2

Question #3   *Confirmation is...*

    2% (1)   A body of information that must be mastered.

    64% (36)   An emerging self-awareness of God and His grace

    18% (10)   A personal acceptance of Jesus as Lord and Savior.

    16% (9)   A program to foster unity of doctrine and practice in the Church.

Question #4   *Confirmation is...*

    13% (7)   A chance for the pastor(s) to develop a shepherding relationship with today's youth.

    66% (37)   A chance for parent(s) to fulfill the commitments they made at their children's baptism.

    16% (9)   A chance for students to develop strong Christ-centered peer relationships

    5% (3)   A chance for congregations to prepare the next generation for service in the church.

Question #5   *Confirmation is...*

    46% (26)   Too short.

    23% (13)   Too long.

    23% (13)   Too much too soon.

    7% (4)   Too little too late

Appendix 3

Christ's Greenfield Lutheran Church

of Gilbert, Arizona

✠

An evaluation of the faith
heritage of its current
membership

Communicant Membership as of February 1, 2001:	909
Number of Household units	245
Number of adults who claimed a specific faith heritage when applying for membership in the parish:	827
Number of adults who claimed no faith heritage prior to joining the parish:	82
Number of Catholics who have joined the church:	265
Number of TLCMS members who joined the church:	298
Number of members of other Lutheran church who joined the church:	147
Number of Protestants who have joined the church:	117
Percentage of the current membership who had no Lutheran background prior to joining this parish:	51%
Percentage of the current membership who had no Christian background or heritage prior to joining this parish:	9%
Percentage of non-TLCMS Lutherans who have joined this parish:	16%

Appendix 4

Grace and peace to you from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

Is it my imagination or are the summers flying by faster each year? I pray that you have made the most of the past several months. Now, in anticipation of this Fall, it is time to talk

Confirmation!

Hey Parents!
This year we will be offering an extensive study on the six chief teachings of the Christian faith. If you have worked with me in the past, you are aware just how important a part parents play in the success of the catechumenant. Please make plans to attend each class with your child. If you absolutely cannot attend with your child please visit with me **before** enrolling in the program this Fall.

Class Time:
In response to suggestions provided over the summer, classes will be held this year on

Tuesday
evenings from 6:00 p.m. until 8:00 p.m.

Let me reiterate just how important it is that you make every effort to attend class with your child. Though it may seem "extreme" at first, parents in the past have expressed a great deal of personal satisfaction with the approach once they see how it all works. It is my personal prayer that you find participation to be a blessing that impacts your whole family. From a purely practical standpoint, your attendance virtually eliminates unproductive time in class disciplining disruptive students, insures that what is being taught is being reinforced at home, and noticeably improves the spiritual life of everyone in your family system.

Make sure your child comes equipped each evening with

❑ a notebook, ❑ highlighter and ❑ pencil.
❑ Catechism, ❑ Bible

A $**15.00** Resource Fee will be collected the evening of the first phase of the Orientation. This Fee will cover the cost of providing Catechisms (work books) for each youth.

About the Orientations
They will be held in the Sanctuary

Tuesday,
August **22**nd **& 29**th, at **6:00** p.m.

Over the course of the two evenings we will cover:

Appendix 4

(1) The <u>year's schedule</u>,

(2) <u>Class expectations</u>,

(3) Required <u>Major Events</u> for the year,

(4) <u>Parish Service Hours</u>, and

(5) Organize "related ministries" such as the <u>Acolyting Schedule</u>.

Two of the most important class expectations you might like to know ahead of time are:

(1)   Active participation in worship,

(2)   Regular involvement in Sunday School.

Reluctance or refusal to embrace class expectations **will** impact a child's readiness to be confirmed.

Join Me in Prayer!

Prepare yourself for an active and exciting program! I anticipate a large class this year.

Please begin to pray for God's presence and power in nurturing our youth in the love and admonition of the Lord.

Ask our Father and Master to bless us as we seek to be strong and consistent witnesses to His love among our teens.

Beseech Him to enable us as parents and teachers to provide a firm foundation of faith upon which the youth can build.

And...See you on the ...**22nd** !

Appendix 5

CONFIRMATION ORIENTATION AGENDA
Part #1
August 14 , 2001

1. Prayer   Pastor Wyssmann
2. Welcome   Pastor Wyssmann
3. Open Boundary Breaker   DCE intern Anneke Hudson
4. Focus Times   Pastor Wyssmann
5. Did You Know   Pastor Wyssmann
6. Family Times   Pastor Wyssmann
7. Five Expectations   Pastor Wyssmann
8. Parental Helpers   Connie Gerdes

   * *Acolyte* Coordinators
   * Parish Service Hours (*PSH*) Team
   * *LYF* Sunday School Assistants
   * *Attendance* Keepers
   * *Focus Time* Discussion Leaders
   * *Break Out* Discussion Leaders
   * *Major Events* Team
   * *On the Go* Chaperons
   * *Fellowship* Team
   * Pretest *Get-together* Coordinators

9. Closing Boundary Breaker   Vicar Daniel Hudson
10. Prayer   Pastor Wyssmann

Appendix 5

Five Expectations

1. CLASS ATTENDANCE

❖ Each student is responsible for making it to class each week. Schedule conflicts must be cleared through pastor in writing at least one week prior to the anticipated absence. Sicknesses will be excused if reported by phone at least 30 minutes prior to the start of class.

❖ Parents or their appointed representatives are considered a fundamental part of the way this program is structured. At least one adult (parent/guardian/representative) should be present each week.

❖ Snacks are not permitted in the new Learning Center. Please discard all food items in the trash before entering the building.

❖ Punctuality (e.g. being on time) is especially important this year. The "Focus Time" is design to prepare each child to learn. By having the youth check their prior knowledge base we can best determine how to achieve the stated goals for the evening's class. Being late will make learning more difficult and the catechetical process more frustrating to the student.

❖ Each student must bring their Bible, Catechism, and a pencil to class each and every week.

❖ Tests are normally taken on the scheduled day. However, a six (6) day grace period is permitted first-year students and their families. Second-year students are only allotted a four (4) day grace period in order to review their tests and submit a report to the Board of Elders for their oral examinations with them the following Tuesday. Extensions beyond those indicated above must be cleared by Pastor. No test can be taken without a parent/guardian/representative present and participating in the testing.

2. WORSHIP ATTENDANCE

❖ The Sabbath rolls around once a week not every-so-often. Worship attendance is foundational to the life of a believer. Absenteeism will have negative consequences for the student preparation for being confirmed.

❖ Active participation through acolyting, assisting in worship, ushering, and the like are expected.

Note: Patterns of worship that contradict the Word of God will directly affect a student's recommendation for readiness to be confirmed.

Appendix 5

3. BIBLE STUDY

❖ The study of God's Word is the source of wisdom and knowledge.

❖ Active and positive involvement in Sunday School, Small Group Bible Studies, as well as completion of your assigned confirmation homework entitled "Family Time" is expected.

<u>Note</u>: Patterns of participation that imply a disinterest in the pursuit of wisdom will directly affect a student's recommendation for readiness to be confirmed.

4. EVENT ATTENDANCE

❖ Monthly Junior High Youth events will be organized in order to encourage the building up of positive relationships within the group.

❖ The MAJOR EVENTS are designed to deepen Christian friendships while strengthening spiritual development in a controlled (laboratory) setting. Unless otherwise noted, each event should be considered mandatory and not optional.

❖ Retreats, gatherings, and trips are as much a part of confirmation as is the academic elements of Tuesday night.

<u>Note</u>: Failure to participate will impede the development of a student's readiness to be confirmed.

5. PARISH SERVICE HOURS

❖ Thirty-five (35) PSH are required of every student during the scheduled year of confirmation.

❖ These hours can be satisfied by volunteering to acolyte (1 hr./time), ushering (1.5 hr/time), helping with special congregational events or by designing project(s) that use your special spiritual gifts to the glory of God and the building up of the Body (Church) of Christ. Hours earned above and the 35 required may be carried over into the second year of confirmation to meet that year's requirements.

❖ In order to receive credit for the hours completed, each student must submit a monthly report of PSH completed during that month. Forms will be provided through the front office. An adult supervising the hours must sign the form that is to be submitted. Only submittals that are signed and dated will be accepted.

Appendix 5

Confirmation Orientation Agenda Part #2

August 21, 2001

1. Prayer		Vicar Daniel Hudson
2. Welcome		Pastor Wyssmann
3. Opening Boundary Breaker		Vicar Daniel Hudson
4. Class & LYF LINE Schedule		Pastor Wyssmann

5. Parental Helpers Sign-Up

* Acolyte Coordinators	Pastor Wyssmann
* Parish Service Hours Team	Vicar Hudson
* LYF Sunday School Assistants	DCE Hudson
* Attendance Keepers	Pastor Wyssmann
* "Focus Time" Discussion Leaders	Vicar Hudson
* "Break Out" Discussion Leaders	DCE Hudson
* "Major Events" Team	Pastor Wyssmann
* "On the Go" Chaperons	Vicar Hudson
* Fellowship Team	DCE Hudson
* Pretest Get-together Coordinators	Pastor Wyssmann

6. Break Out		DCE Hudson
7. Major Events		Pastor Wyssmann

* The Catechumenant	August 26th @ 9:00 am
* The Beginnings Retreat	September 28-29th
* The CCU-Irvine Trip	January 10-12th
* The Come Away Retreat	May 3-5th

8. Parish Service Hours (PSH)		Vicar Hudson
9 Prayer		Pastor Wyssmann

Appendix 5

MAJOR program EVENTS

FALL 2001

The Catechumenant — The Rite of Beginning

Parents, sponsors, and youth are to be present at the 9:00 a.m. service on Sunday,

August 26th

At the appointed time in the service, youth who are beginning confirmation for the first time or who are entering their second year, will be asked to come forward. Parents and sponsors will be asked to accompany them. Together we shall pray for the Lord's Spirit as confirmation begins, celebrate the promises made at each youth's baptism, and dedicate ourselves to seek first the Kingdom of God and all its righteousness.

Beginnings Retreat

Friday (September 28th) at 5:30 p.m. through Saturday (September 29th) at 6:00 p.m. This over-night experience is intended to build positive peer relationships among catechumens. The cost is being underwritten by the Youth budget. The $17.00 fee will help defray the cost. When there are two or more members of a single household attending, the second student will be asked to pay half the total fee ($8.50). Parents are encouraged to attend. The cost to adults will be the same as that for catechumens ($17.00).

Reformation Sunday

Our congregation will not be hosting this year's Valley-wide Reformation celebration (October 28 @ 3:00 p.m.). The Eve of All Saints Day (October 31st) marks the beginning of the Reformation and the birth of the Lutheran Church. On the Sunday closest to the 31st, Lutherans all over world gather to celebrate the unique and important part we play in the history and future of Christianity around the world. Confirmation youth are expected to participate or attend service which will be held at Risen Savior Lutheran Church in Sun Lakes this year. It is hoped that our youth will gain a fuller appreciation of our heritage while praising our Lord and King for His inspired and inerrant Word.

Thanksgiving (Eve/Day)

Wednesday (November 21 - 7 p.m.) OR Thursday (November 22 – 9:00 a.m.) Experience the range of worship expression in our parish is vital to forming the faith of every believer. Thanksgiving is a special time for our Church. Catechumens are required to attend services either on the Eve of Thanksgiving OR on Thanksgiving Day.

Appendix 5

WINTER 2001 - 2002

Advent

Wednesdays (November 28, December 5, 12 & 19 - 7:00 p.m.)
Advent is the season of anticipation for Christians everywhere. Believers who pray, "Come Lord Jesus..." will find Advent a powerful and necessary part of their spiritual growth throughout the year. Catechumens are required to attend at least one Advent service. Attendance above and beyond what is required may be credited to them as Parish Service Hours.

"Careers For Christ" Trip

Thursday (January 10 - 5 p.m.) through Saturday (January 12 - 8 p.m.)
From among catechumens the Lord raises up workers for the Kingdom. Some of those raised will be called by the Holy Spirit to become pastors, teachers, and dedicated lay leaders in tomorrow's parishes. That the Lord might begin to work among our youth and that our youth might be aware of all the wonderful possibilities that professional church work and Christ-centered college education can provide, this retreat has been established. Students choosing not to participate in this retreat must complete a five-page research report that covers the material that will be studied on the retreat. Details about the optional report will be provided upon request.

SPRING 2002

Jubilate Tuesday

Tuesday (February 12 - 6:00 p.m.)
Rather than participating in the regular class schedule, confirmation students are required to help with the set-up, production, and clean up of this annual parish chili feed and show. Youth are encouraged to develop skits and use their God-given talents to make this evening a rip-roaring success.

Lent

Wednesdays (February 13, 20, 27 , March 6, 13, 20 at 7 p.m.)
The most penitential season of the year is Lent. Christians everywhere voluntarily do without during this season in order to more fully appreciate the suffering and death of our Savior. Catechumens discovering the importance of repentance and confession in their spiritual growth are required to attend no less than two (2) Lenten services in addition to Ash Wednesday (February 13th) and Good Friday (March 29th).

The "Come Away" Retreat

Friday (May 3 - 5:30 p.m.) through Sunday (May 5 - 6:00 p.m.)
In preparation for being confirmed, youth who have successfully completed two years of confirmation and have shown themselves to be faithful in worship and Bible study will "Come Away" in order to reflect and pray for God's blessing upon the vows they

Appendix 5

will take at their confirmation. Second-year students who intend on being confirmed on Pentecost Sunday (May 19th) must attend this retreat. Failure to attend this event will require that your confirmation be postponed until this final requirement can be satisfied completely. The estimated cost of this retreat will be $65.00 per person

SUMMER 2002

Junior High Camp

Set aside the tentative dates of Monday (July 8 - 6:00 a.m.) through Friday (July 12 - 7:00 p.m.) Confirmation students are strongly encouraged but not required to participate in this faith-shaping week of camp on the southeast slopes of the Rockies. The estimated cost is $225.00 per person.

Appendix #6

Quarterly Test - Parent/Student Section

Sec.#7. Parent/Student Interaction Activity

DISCERNING TODAY'S HEADLINES:

Look over each Headline article provided. Discuss which Commandments are involved in the issue and what positive Biblical action is being taken or should be taken to improve the situation.

HEADLINE #1: WHATEVER IT TAKES - Family Builders fill needs unmet by burdened CPS

The Arizona Republic / Monday, November 16, 1998 / page A.1

"CPS (Child Protective Services) had been under attack since *The Arizona Republic* reported in the summer of 1997 that 5,955 reports of child abuse and neglect considered valid were not investigated...Since January, Family Builders has handled 3,215 calls that would have been ignored by overloaded caseworkers. The staff, made up of volunteers and professionals trained by CPS, offers help to children and their families, including counseling, substance-abuse programs, parenting classes and baby-sitting.

Commandments broken:

Positive Biblical action taken or that should be taken:

HEADLINE #2: TOBACCO FOES CALL FOR BRAKES ON DEAL

The Arizona Republic / Monday, November 16, 1998 / page A.7

"Last week the tobacco industry agreed to pay out $206 billion over the next 25 years to compensate states for the cost of treating sick smokers under the Medicaid public health system. It's the biggest civil liability settlement ever. The payout is in addition to $40 billion that the industry previously has agreed to pay to four states in our-of-court settlements."

Commandments broken:

Positive Biblical action taken or that should be taken:

Appendix 6

HEADLINE #3: LOVERS' BREACH OF CONTRACT: SHE GOT PREGNANT, HE SUES

The Arizona Republic / Sunday, November 22, 1998/ pg.A.25 "The West"

"A man sued his ex-girlfriend for getting pregnant.... His lawsuit says he and Kellie Rae Smith had an agreement that she would not get pregnant, but she 'intentionally stopped using birth control medication.' Smith denies there was an agreement or even an understanding, but said Peter Wallis knew she took birth control pills."

Commandments broken:

Positive Biblical action taken or that should be taken:

Appendix #7

Parish Service Hours

Ideas and opportunities to Serve

To qualify as **PSH's** each event must:

1. Use the various gifts the Lord has given you to His glory.

2. Build up or enrich the Body of Christ (His Church)

3. Be a public witness to your faith in Jesus Christ

✳ Adult Choir, ✳ Folding Bulletins, ✳ Filing, ✳ Pulling Weeds, ✳ Washing Windows, ✳ Joining the Folk Group Singers, ✳ Ushering, ✳ Wiping down tables and chairs, ✳ Acolyting, ✳ Making "Welcome" phone calls to visitors, ✳ Door-to-Door Invitation to come to our church, ✳ Food Drive, ✳ Handing out parish information material after services, Trimming Trees, ✳ Moping the Church floor, ✳ Putting out coffee and donuts, ✳ Planting flowers and maintaining them, ✳ Washing windows, ✳ Joining the Sunday School Choir, ✳ Helping with the Pig Roast, ✳ Sharpening Pew Pencils, ✳ Landscaping, ✳ Playing an instrument for worship, ✳ Organizing help for the homeless, ✳ Doing a fund raiser, ✳ Volunteer at Lutheran Social Services of the Southwest, ✳ Putting together a church athletic event, ✳ Clothing Drive, ✳ Rummage Sale, ✳ Volunteer at the Gilbert Senior Center, ✳ Setting up tables and chairs for special church events, ✳ Liturgical Dance, ✳ Reading a Scripture lesson at services, ✳ Passing out children's bulletins at services, ✳ Volunteering to help at the Reformation Service, ✳ Joining Liturgical Arts, ✳ Baking unleavened bread for special services, ✳ Helping set up for communion, ✳ Refilling altar candles, ✳ Making encouraging phone calls on shut-ins, ✳ Joining the Clown Ministry, ✳ Visiting nursing homes, ✳ Oil soaping church furniture, ✳ Repairing hymnals, ✳ Emptying trash cans, ✳ Dusting office furniture, ✳ Clean mini blinds, ✳ Sorting paperwork for the school, ✳ Organizing games at church camp outs, ✳ Cutting out shapes for the preschool, ✳ Reading books to younger school children at church, ✳ Collecting the "Who's Who" and filling out the

Appendix #7

prayer sheets, ✳ Becoming a Communion Assistants, ✳ Offering special prayers at services, ✳ Folding Newsletters, ✳ Doing School/Preschool bulletin boards, ✳ Copying for teachers, ✳ Sunday morning flower arrangements, ✳ Making meals for the sick, ✳ Baby-sitting for church families in their homes, ✳ Visiting the hospitalized, ✳ Joining a prayer chain, ✳ Changing light bulbs around the church

Appendix 7

Name _____ Hours _____

Parish Service Hours Report Form

Date	Description of the Total service given	Supervisor's Signature	Hours
_____	_____ _____ _____	_____	_____
_____	_____ _____ _____	_____	_____
_____	_____ _____ _____	_____	_____
_____	_____ _____ _____	_____	_____
_____	_____ _____ _____	_____	_____
_____	_____ _____ _____	_____	_____
_____	_____ _____ _____	_____	_____
_____	_____ _____	_____	_____

Junior Confirmation ◆ Christ's Greenfield Lutheran ◆ Gilbert, Arizona, ◆ 9/01/00

109

Appendix 8

Junior Confirmation Class	Six Chief Parts
Christ's Greenfield Lutheran Church	name
Gilbert, AZ	
By: Pastor Kevin Wyssmann	SCP-A.1

◆◆

FOCUS TIME

Adult facilitators, choose three or four youth, find a quite spot and discuss together the following questions:

10 minutes

(1) What does it mean to be a person of your word?
(2) Share a time when you gave your word to someone else?
(3) Were you faithful to your word?
(4) Share a time when you were very disappointed by someone's failure to keep their word.
(5) How has that disappointment effected your relationship with that person?
(6) God makes promises. Share a promise He has made to you.
(7) If you could ask God one question about the promises He has made, what would you ask?

ATTENDANCE_____

OPENING PRAYER _____
5 minutes

CLASS DISCUSSION Part #1

20 minutes *Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.* Psalm 119:105

God has given us His word. Share some of the promises He has made to you?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

Why is it important to put your words in writing, especially when making a promise?

_____

Why is it important for God to write down His word and promises?

_____

Partner Power! Working with a partner, look up the following verses. Complete each verse section given below.

John 5:39-40	"These are the _____ that _____ about me,...."
2 Timothy 3:15	"...the holy Scripture ...are able to make you _____ through faith in Christ Jesus."
John 17:17	"...Your word is _____."
John 14:6	"I am the way and the _____ and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."
Psalm 145:13	"The Lord is faithful to all His _____ ...."
2 Corinthians 1:20	"For no matter how many promises God has made, they are _____ in Christ."
John 20:31	"But these are written that you may _____ that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, and that by believing you may have _____ in His name."

How is a Christian to use God's written word and promises?

To become ❑ smart, ❑ holy, ❑ wise, ❑ careful unto salvation

Appendix 8

2 Timothy 3:15	To ☐ teach, ☐ rebuke, ☐ correct and ☐ train in righteousness
2 Timothy 3:16	To fight the good fight of faith against the ☐ folks, ☐ devil, ☐ gangs
Ephesians 6:10-13	Our spiritual weapon is a ☐ fly swatter, ☐ ball bat, ☐ sword which is
Ephesians 6:17	actually the word of God.

Class Discussion *cont.*

Your _____ is a _____ to my feet and a light for my path. Psalm 119:105

REFLECTION TIME

5 minutes

Spend a few moments. Think about what specific promises God has made to you in the following areas. Write down your thoughts about what life would be like without these specific promises.

Promises about prayer _____

Promises about sin _____

Promises about death _____

Promises about heaven _____

Promises about His presence _____

What would life be like without these promises? _____

Your word is a _____ to my feet and a _____ for my path. Psalm 119:105

BREAK OUT: "Covenants"

20 minutes

CLASS DISCUSSION Part #2

20 minutes *Your word _____ Psalm 119:105*

Bible terms you should know

Languages	Old Testament _____	New Testament _____

Translations	KJV	NIV	NCR	G.W.
	1611	1974	1992	1998

The Law   See Luther's Small Catechism pg. 51 question #7

In the Law God commands _____

...and condemns and punishes _____

The Prophets   Major _____   Minor _____

Testaments   Old _____   New _____

Appendix 8

The Gospels	See Luther's Small Catechism pg. 51 question #8

In the Gospel, the _____ _____ of our salvation in _____ _____, God

gives _____, _____, _____, and _____ to please Him

with good works.

The Epistles _____

The Apocalypse_____

Inspiration   2 Peter 1:21

The Bible is all about men speaking _____ God by the power
of the ____ _____.

Inerrant   Revelation 22:18-21

As God is without beginning or ending so His word, the Bible, is
without _____ or _____ too.

See: Luther's Small Catechism pg. 48, question #3

Catechisms   Large _____   Small _____

See Luther's Small Catechism pg.52

Announcements
Closing Prayer

5 minutes   *Your word is a lamp to my _____ and a light for my _____.* Psalm 119:105

Appendix 9

FAMILY TIME #1

Promises, Promises

1. **Each person in the family spend five minutes alone, think of promises you have made in your life, and come up with your own definition of a promise.**

    Students definition:

    Dad's definition:

    Mom's definition:

    Sibling's definition:

2. **What similarities or differences do you see in the definitions listed above?**

    Similarities:

    Differences:

3. **Hand each member of your family a blank sheet of paper. When everyone is ready, say "Go!" Everyone has 1 minute to write down as many promises that God has made to them as they can remember in the time allotted. Once the time has elapsed, jot down each person's answers:**

    Student's answers:

    Dad's answers:

    Mom's answers:

Appendix 9

Other Sibling's answers:

4.   **Of all the things God has promised to you, what one promise is most important to you today?**

Student's answer:

Dad's answer:

Mom's answer:

Other Sibling's answer:

5.   **Share a promise you have made to God that you are committed to keeping your whole life long.**

Student's promise:

Dad's promise:

Mom's promise:

Other Sibling's promise:

6.   **Ask one person in the family to end your *FAMILY TIME* together in prayer thanking God for being a Lord of promise for your family.**

Appendix #10

The "**BEGINNINGS**" Retreat!

for
1st Year Confirmation Students who...

* ...have completed the two-part Orientation program

* ...are beginning their first year of confirmation classes

* ...are fifth graders or older.

RETREAT DATES: ## September 28-29, 2001

LOCATION: Lake Roosevelt, Pintail Group Camp Ground
Roosevelt Lake, Arizona

COST: **$17.00** per person
2 meals & snacks
Lodging
Transportation
Program materials

WHAT TO BRING:

Bible!	Pencil or Pen
Sleeping Bag	Pillow
Toothpaste, deodorant, etc.	Tent (team up)
Warm weather clothes	Flash Light
Snacks for the way up	Camera
(*optional*)	(*optional*)

WHEN WE'LL LEAVE: **5:30** p.m.
Note: at least one parent is encouraged
to be present for the Pre-event
Devotional at Church Friday evening.

WHAT WILL WE BE DOING?
(1) Working on building positive peer relationship
(2) Identifying each student's spiritual goals
(3) Exploring the role of confirmation in spiritual growth
(4) Praying for the Lord's blessing in your life.
(5) Making positive Christian memories.

Appendix #11

The "COME AWAY" Retreat!

for
2nd Year Confirmation Students who have

*Completed all their course work

*Demonstrated faithfulness in worship and Bible Study

RETREAT DATES:	**MAY 3-5, 2002**
LOCATION:	Chapel Rock Prescott, Arizona
COST:	**$65.00** per person 5 meals & snacks Lodging Transportation Program materials

WHAT TO BRING:

Bible!	Pencil or Pen
Sleeping Bag	Pillow
Toothpaste, deodorant, etc.	Coat
Warm clothes	Cool Clothes
$5.00 for supper on our way home	
Snacks for the way up	Camera
(optional)	*(optional)*

WHEN WE'LL LEAVE:

5:30 p.m.

<u>Note</u>: at least one parent is encouraged to be present for the Pre-event Devotional at Church Friday evening.

WHAT WE'LL BE DOING:

(1) Working on your Oral Exam material
(2) Building a "spirituality" plan for the coming year.
(3) Reviewing your confirmation vows
(4) Praying for the Lord's blessing in your life.
(5) Making positive Christian memories.

Appendix #12

LyF Line Worship Schedule

Sep. 2000 - Feb 4. 2001

Christ's Greenfield Lutheran Church - Gilbert, AZ

DATE		PREACHER	TEAM #	TEXTS THEME	SKIT IDEAS
Sep.	10	Rehearsals & Planning]			
	17	Rehearsals & Planning			
	24	V. Lappe	#2	Ps.119:97-112, Heb.4:12-13, Mrk.4:1-8,13-20	
				God's Word	The Wheel of Fortune & The Power of w(W)ords
		PIG ROAST SERVICE @ 4:00 PM			*Youth Event*
Oct.	1	P. Wyssmann	#3	Ex.20:1-7, James 3:1-12, Mt.5:33-37	
				2nd Commandment	The mad scientist who develops new ways to swear.
	8	V. Lappe	#1	Lev.19:1-4, James 2:8-12, Mrk.4:21-25	
				True Holiness	The cape crusaders in vain try to stomp out evil so that true holiness might win the day.
	15	V. Lappe	#2	Lev.23:1-3, Col.3:12-17, Mt.12:1-8	
				3rd Commandment	A family of "church people" try to rest on Sunday but distraction keep them from their goal.
	22	P. Wyssmann	#3	Gen.9:1-7, Rom.12:14-21, Mt.26:47-56	
				5th Commandment	Bad breath boy is killing everyone he encounters
	29	**NO SERVICE**			
		REFORMATION - here at Christ's Greenfield			*Youth Event*
Nov.	5	V. Lappe	#1	Ps.51, Rom.6:1-14, Jn.3:1-8	
				7th Commandment	A kleptomaniac can't help herself, her hands have a mind of their own.
	12	P. Wyssmann	#2	Prov.11:10-13, Eph.4:22-5:2, Mrk. 14:3-9	
				8th Commandment	"Two-facedville" is a town where everyone says one thing to your face & another behind your back
	19	V. Lappe	#3	Micah 2:1-5, 1 Tim.6:6-10, Mt.15:17-20	
				9th & 10th Commandments	
					Ms. Polly Perfect presents a "better-than-thou" image but as soon as she opens her mouth, out comes all kinds of evil.
	26	P. Wyssmann	#1	Deut.26:1-11, Php.4:4-9, Jn.6:25-35	
				Thanksgiving	The "Gratefuls" and the "Hatefuls" spend Thanksgiving together at Burger King.
				Youth Event - District Youth Gathering (AM)	
Dec.	3	V. Lappe	#2	Ex.12:1-2,5-7,12-14, Heb.9:13-15, Jn.3:16-21	
				The Perfect Sacrifice	Christmas shopping for the perfect gift until finally the shoppers stumble upon Jesus.

Appendix #12

10	V. Lappe	#3	Acts 7:51-60, 1 Cor.2:11-16, Mt.23:37-39	
			The Work of the Holy Spirit	The story of the Little Red Hen and her wayward chicks.
17	P. Wyssmann	#1	Is.25:1-8, Rom.8:28-32, Mt.6:19-21	
			The Gift of God: Jesus	"Mall Boy" and the Greatest Christmas Eve!
24	**NO SERVICE CHRISTMAS EVE**			
31	V. Lappe	#2	Is.52:7-10, Heb.1:1-12, Jn.1:1-14	
			The Word made flesh	Taking out the trash of 2000 and making New Year's resolutions *Youth Event*

Jan.	7	P. Wyssmann	#3	Ps.72:1-7,10-14, Eph.3:1-12, Mt.2:1-12	
				The Gift of our life	The Story of Christmas from the star's perspective.
	14	V. Lappe	#1	Ps.37:1-8, Eph.4:3-6, Mt.19:16-26	
				Nicene Creed Art#1 -God	Making God in our own image: Three views of God - Puppy Dog God, Out-to-Lunch God, Wizard of Oz God
	21	P. Wyssmann	#2	Is.53:1-6, 1 Tim.2:1-6, Luke 2:25-35	
				Nicene Creed Art#2 -Jesus	"Jesus Cam" records various events and circumstances of every-day-life from our Savior's perspective.
	28	V. Lappe	#3	Ps.139:1-10, Rom.8:5-17, Jn.20:19-23	
				Nicene Creed Art#3 -Spirit	The Wind of the Spirit - utilizing fans of various sizes and conditions, compare the movement of the Holy Spirit with the Church. *Youth Event*

Feb.	4	P. Wyssmann	#1	Acts 5:12-16, 1 Cor.12:1-11, Mt.7:7-12	
				Nicene Creed Art#3 - Spiritual Gifts	The War of the Revivalists: Famous healers, evangelists, and preachers go at it in the ring with no holds barred.

Appendix #13

A Questionnaire on Systemic Catechesis
Systemic Catechesis
January 15, 2002

Based on twelve questions presented in
Pastor Kevin Wyssmann's
Major Applied Project

I. Is the current program under development and evaluation designed to cultivate productive, motivated members of society?   [Yes ? No]

Briefly explain your answer:

Responses: Yes – 31   No – 2

Positive
Comments

"Because parents and children are involved, there is an intergenerational share understanding of the material presented and its relationship to societal norms and mores."

"The curriculum covers a broad range of situations that may be used in every day lie – which gives the students the ability to know how to respond."

"Gives us right from wrong. A child can give another, and examples of right and wrong."

"The program makes the kids get involved which will make them good and productive members of society."

"All discussions within the program connect that well being of the community is essential to the well being of the church."

"There are issues brought out in the focus times that the kids deal with every day. We have discussed some 'worldly' topics this year.

"Beside communicating about church activities the program includes topics dealing with society and outside interests."

"I would encourage community service hours as well as parish service hours – to enable students to learn outreach out of church community."

"Any time someone is studying the Bible I think it helps them be productive motivated members of society."

"Practical applications to everyday life are used frequently."

"Confirmation students get involved in activities and realize they can be enjoyed."

"Excellent program"

"Especially as pertains to the 10 commandments, I believe the students did put into practice what they learned."

"I believe the program instills Biblical based moral values through family involvement and re-enforcement of those values."

"The class explains the bases of Christian beliefs and their applications to our lives."

"This program I believe gives a Christian base for all who attend."

"Helps them learn appropriate moral behavior."

Appendix #13

"The disciplines they are learning now will be useful the rest of their lives."
"It takes hard work and discipline to get through this class – these skills are
    needed to become productive members of society."
"It attempts to make a variety of activities reflect one concept to make religion
    relevant to their entire life."
"It gives them a good basis for general struggles in life."
"It teaches how to be good in public like Christ was amongst adversity."

Negative
Comments: "Not enough exposure to program yet to say yes. Doesn't seem to be
    highly motivational for students."
"Not specifically, but certainly an extension of what is learned would be to
    incorporate into social responsibilities."

2. Is the current program under development and evaluation designed to cultivate productive, motivated members of the church?   **[Yes ? No]**

Briefly explain your answer:

Responses: Yes – 32   No – 1

Positive
Comments: "Since this is being done for confirmands it is only being presented to a small
    group. The whole congregation could benefit from this program."
"Gets them involved, makes it fun, builds relationships, however, it is very
    demanding."
"It helps to make church a central part of their life."
"I like the idea of the parish service hours. It makes the youngsters feel more a
    'part' of the church."
"Yes if they are motivated and therefore they will put the Lord first!"
"Members of the church are also the parents of the children attending and
    therefore all that is taught only adds to all our Christian base."
"It explores the reasons why Christians are a community of believers."
"I think it helps to involve the young people at the church in many different
    activities, hopefully so that they will continue that relationship."
"Parish service hours are an excellent way to encourage the students to be
    involved and to meet other parishioners of every age."
"Parish service hours – excellent component!"
"Leads to a great 'faith walk.'"
"Members see confirmation students involved in activities."
"Program requires church attendance and participation in activities through
    parish service hours."
"It teaches them that he more they are involved with activities of the church the
    more it becomes 'home' to them."
"When we discuss things it is always wrapped up by bringing in your faith –
    how to apply your faith to that specific topic."
"The approach of this program allows students to put their faith into practice in
    the church."
"It emphasized the church is a crucial part of society."
"By including parents in the program we are learning who to be better
    Lutherans."

Appendix #13

"Parish Service Hours."
"Helps with bonding with the church and family."
"The program seems to get the children involved with the church and shows
       the good it does."
"A child can have a background of faith to respond to others who question."

Negative
Responses: "Seems to have a lot of basis in law and legalistic requirements, not long on
                grace and caring."

3. **Is the current program under development and evaluation designed to aid our youth in becoming responsible and caring members of the community?**   [Yes ? No]

Briefly explain your answer:

Responses: Yes – 32   No – 1

Positive
Responses: "If kids accept and live the Christian ethic and values being learned, and live
       it daily – how could they not be?"
"The children have reinforced to them on a weekly basis that God loves them
       so much. He died for their sins. They should share that with others."
"Shows the others of community, that teaching of Christ isn't harmful."
"By doing the community service hours it is showing what hey can do for their
       community."
"In studying the Bible, we learn the reason that the passages were included and
       how to apply them to daily life."
"We have discussed many issues that require a caring attitude (death, suicide,
       peer pressure)."
"They learn to look out for their friends – whether they go to church or not, and
       maybe they'll be that factor that brings someone to Christ."
"Again – would encourage more community outreach."
"The parish service hours work to make them responsible and caring."
"They are encouraged to interact in many different ways."
"Donating time to parish service hours."
"Yes. By nature, the program encourages youth to be honest, caring, and hard-
       working."
"Basically; the Golden Rule."
"The program addresses problems and issues facing youth. Hopefully, they will
       see the relevance of the church in their lives."
"With the interaction in and out of class the children learn how to love and care
       for one another and for themselves."
"If the Lord is first in their life then they will become responsible and caring
       members of the community."
"I would hope so. The more they become involved with the church hopefully
       this responsibility will help them become responsible members of the
       community."
"It gives them the opportunity to relate church and its place in their life and
       community."
"No only provides basic morals and values, but explains how and why."
"More emphasis could be made in how this relates to their everyday life."

Appendix #13

Negative
Responses: "The legalistic requirements are counter-productive to positive motivation. It is
                   a struggle to keep the confirmand interested."

**4. Is the current program under development and evaluation designed to aid our youth in becoming
responsible and caring members of the church?   [Yes ? No]**

Briefly explain your answer:

Responses: Yes – 33   No – 0

Positive
Comments: "It enables them to get to know other church members in depth and know what
                      the church family is about."
                 "Using their time in programs and being with other age groups."
                 "But at this age the children need to be pushed a little into showing them
                      the correct way in all their life choices."
                 "Making going to church fun for the children also makes it more enjoyable
                      for me. Together we look forward to helping out and being here."
                 "Again we always wrap up by finding ways for God to help us in every
                      situation."
                 "Through activities."
                 "Donating time to parish service hours."
                 "More responsible in the church."
                 "Specifically by requiring completion of a set number of 'parish service hours'
                      throughout the course of the class."
                 "This program incorporates the children's time donated to church functions
                      and responsibilities to support the church in all ways."
                 "If they are caring members of the community this attitude will be exhibited a
                      all time."
                 "The more they become involved and understand all the aspects of the church -
                      the more they will become caring members."
                 "By understanding more and feeling a part of the church."
                 "By building relationships, youth are more likely to remain active."
                 "Very much!'
                 "I believe that it is the designs intent. So far the results are questionable."

**5. Does the current program under development and evaluation successfully seek the enculturation
of a new generation into the community of faith?   [Yes ? No]**

Briefly explain your answer

Responses: Yes – 30   No – 3

Positive
Comments: "Through friendships and relationships built."
                 "Very much!"
                 "By developing a better understanding and knowledge their faith should be
                      stronger."
                 "Once the children are confirmed hopefully they will continue to e an integral
                      part of the church. Keeping them involved and meeting new friends –
                      and continuing activities keep kids coming back."

Appendix #13

"So often after confirmation, young people drift away from church but most of
our young people stay involved."

"Their faith can only be strengthened by the enlightening of each class."

"The program does this to some extent. I would like to see more on the history
of the Lutheran church and its significance in the history of
Christianity."

"I think that it is well tailored to today's youth and problems that they face. It
also doesn't avoid all the 'difficult' or controversial issues that we all
are looking for answers to."

"Bring others to faith."

"Would be better with a permanent D.C.E. that could take more one on one."

"They have to work to seek answers within the Bible."

"Not overtly, but in the process of learning and being examined they are
brought into contact and communication with older members of the
church body."

"The design of the program, two years, certainly contributes to bringing both
youth and adults deeper into the church and understanding of faith."

"Each generation seems to be moving further away from the church. Including
children in all aspects keeps them close to their faith and God."

"By putting strong family and moral values in them at an early age."

"Absolutely. The children are exposed to and have learned about our church's
culture. It is a very sound experience."

Negative
Comments:

"More relating of what they are learning to their daily exposure would help
this. Focus groups very important here, to engage the kids to think
about it."

"We have very different situations at the Jr. high level, than at the high school
level. Some of these kids are still in grammar school, the situations
aren't always relevant to them. Sometimes I feel we discuss things
that are way over their heads."

"It is actually producing the feelings of 'have to' not 'want to.'"

6. **Does the current program under development and evaluation successfully seek to help today's
youth clarify their search for their intended vocation?** [Yes ? No]

Briefly explain your answer

Responses: Yes – 25   No - 8

Positive
Comments:

"The CUI trip is a great way for students to begin thinking about how they can
serve God 'professionally' whether in church work or not."

"(1) Discussion of spiritual gifts, (2) Trip to Concordia, "Careers for Christ.""

"Trip to Irvine, Ca, Concordia University."

"Trip to Concordia CA Irvine helps students to know what vocation
opportunities are available to them."

"Even though it does explain church jobs they emphasize the fact that we need
everyone in a community."

"Concordia trip is great."

"With help from a strong program such as this, I feel it gives them an

Appendix #13

opportunity to make choices."

"To help them keep their eyes open to what they may become."

"The weekend at Concordia was a great start in getting them to at least think of vocations."

"I think that the trips to Christ College, Irvine, might inspire some children to continue in church work for their vocations."

"Especially church work is encouraged!"

"The difference between churches and beliefs are brought up often with a reason behind why we as Lutherans believe as we do."

"Through the Irvine trip."

"Yes if interested in church work also helps to make better choices about work."

"Concordia trips really get them to think ahead."

"Only in so far as it makes them think and interact with others."

"Could do more locally – students could relate more to day-to-day surroundings if use local vocations which are not out-of-reach for students."

"Dedicated time is spent discussing the future and how God's blessings upon each can be used. Specifically, the trip to Concordia, Irvine helps to uncover the youth's interest in a church vocation."

"I think it can."

"If not a career in church vocation, it enables them to have useful godly tools to use in their career choice."

"Trip to Concordia, Irvine is very successful. My daughter is determined to have a church work career."

"It does start their thinking process. The trip to Irvine might get them thinking in that direction. Also having Vicar and a D.C.E. teach and interact gives them a hands on idea."

Negative
Comments: "The trip to Concordia University is good information, but not enough time is spent at the college to help search for this calling. The confirmation class should not be used to help search for vocation."

"It does give them some insight to themselves."

"Not sure it explores enough options."

"I circled both (Yes & No) because I believe that it gives much insight into a career in the church, but little information on other vocations. It does however give guidance on how to lead other jobs in a Christian way."

"Supplemented with the extra-curricular trips to CUI, retreats, etc. – my default perhaps."

"Has not been addressed."

7. **Does the current program under development and evaluation strive to inspire the youth of today to carry out our Lord's Great Commission to make disciples of all nations? [Yes ? No]**

Briefly explain your answer

Responses: Yes – 33   No -0

Positive
Comments: "I think the program equips the students with the knowledge to do so, but they are not trained to openly, lovingly express their faith through

Appendix #13

testimony or just casual conversation."

"By showing the teachings form Bible to direct us to be disciples."

"A child can show their faith and be able to lead others to faith."

"The more they learn about God and His love for us – hopefully they will be able to share this love in their daily life."

"It is being taught but they need to be reminded often as they mature and grow in their faith."

"We are all taught through this program how to spread God's word and share His peace through our actions and time."

"The Great Commission has been referred to but not enough. We should discuss all types of witnessing."

"Lead others to Christ."

"For some of them."

"I am not sure of the question."

"Through weekly discussion and continuing through L.Y.F. Line for High School age youth."

"They talk to their fellow students about their faith, proudly. They learn about other faiths from them and together they make their decisions."

"By bringing family and youth together to learn and spread God's word."

"Sort of. I'd like to see more emphasis on missions. Outreach on a regular bases. There is certainly exposure and my daughters feel confident enough in their faith walk to have started a Christian club at their school."

"This class definitely a great resource in equipping our youth with information. They get good ideas and references, a how to for certain situations."

"Through the many Bible stories."

"Need continuing classes or D.C.E. to help with Bible study class."

"Our kids are less reserved in discussing church with others than before."

"Encouragement."

"I think that it begins the training by reinforcing the youth to stand by their convictions, and in a small way to be able to disciple to others – I believe this comes in small steps to most of us."

"This is a common theme throughout the course, no matter the topic."

"Biblically based, sound teaching."

8. **Does the current program under development and evaluation successfully attempt to introduce today's youth to professional church work vocations?**   [Yes ? No]

Briefly explain your answer

Responses: Yes - 29   No - 4

Positive
Comments: "CUI trip - excellent!"

"CU Irvine trip."

"Trip to Concordia University"

"Trips to Concordia are helpful - plus examples given by pastor, vicar, and D.C.E. in their roles."

"Concordia"

"The involvement of vicars and DCE is a very good example."

"They become involved with the vicars and D.C.E. and look up to them and see

Appendix #13

how much they enjoy their work. It might inspire some youth."

"There is much more interest from our youth who consider going to Lutheran colleges than 10 or 15 years ago."

"By taking the children to the Lutheran college is always a great help in this area and again with their church involvement here on church grounds."

"Yes, trip to Concordia, Irvine, California."

'Teaching them to be responsible for parish hours and assignments."

"Through interaction with these people."

"Need more at local level - why send students out of state - use local professionals so students can see this work daily."

"Trip to Concordia."

'The trip to Concordia was very inspiring to my children."

'The Concordia trip was wonderful!'

"Again, Concordia Irvine trip."

"They are exposed to many church workers (pastor, vicar, D.C.E.) Also in serving at services they see the church from many different angles."

"The kids are involved with many different aspects of the church body."

"The different activities, i.e. field trips to CUI, youth congress do this."

"With the help of retreats and through interaction with D.C.E., vicar, and pastor."

"The yearly trip to Concordia introduces them in an enjoyable way into the different vocations available."

Negative
Comments: "Required trips are not a positive way to introduce this vocational line of work."

9. **Does the current program under development and evaluation intentionally incorporate the latest educational theories, tools, and methodologies in promoting the spiritual maturity of our youth?**   [Yes ? No]

Briefly explain your answer

Responses: Yes - 33   No - 0

Positive
Comments: " ?"

"A variety of presentations and learning modes."

"Very easy to understand for all age groups."

"Technology is apparent in the classroom. Music for youth is used to motivate."

"The focus, break out sessions seem to be especially effective."

"I think so. I am not an expert on teaching methodologies."

"Yes. It's been very helpful in raising a Jr. high age child."

"These will always be changed and improved."

"The more the students are actively involved - the more they will remember."

"I am truly amazed at all the Biblical information and doctrine shared with us all in this program!"

"I believe that is the intent although I do not know what the 'latest' are."

"In depth study of the Word."

"I don't know current stuff."

"I have no way of knowing if these are the latest. They do seem to be

Appendix #13

effective."

"Uses many different theories to reach different students."

"The group work, videos, etc. all help to teach addressing the situations today in our society, i.e.. suicide."

"I especially appreciate the multiple intelligences approach. I have one linguistic daughter and one body kinesthetic - both have grasped the material equally well."

"I like the different learning environments (group discussion, lecture, and hands on)."

"Very proactive."

"Of anything, I believe this is expertly devised to accommodate all the different learning styles."

"As far as my education can tell me."

"Several trips and together times."

"Uses a wide variety of approaches, not extremely time effective."

10. **Does the current program under development and evaluation offer productive tools whereby the Holy Spirit can better aid today's youth to understand how fearfully and wonderfully they have been made?**   [Yes ? No]

Briefly explain your answer

Responses: Yes - 32   No - 1

Positive
Comments: "Through Focus Time and especially Break-Out sessions."

"As long as they understand that they need to continue to have the Holy Spirit's help."

"Somewhat."

"Knowledge."

"Program uses the Bible to teach creation and conception and the importance of both."

"This idea of enabling the Holy Spirit is discussed with the children often therefore giving them the tools needed."

"Through the lessons."

"Prayer."

"Excellent in this. Again they are reminded weekly how much God loves them."

"Through activities, it makes it more 'normal' for them to come to church in today's society."

"By putting Biblical stories, lessons, and dilemmas into context and language for youth to comprehend and relate to."

"Reinforces fundamentals and provides opportunities for exploration of faith."

Negative
Comments: "I think it should go into the many ways to serve a little more. More one on one."

Appendix #13

11. Is the current program under development and evaluation more effectively in promoting learning and understanding than simple rote memorization?   [Yes ? No]

Briefly explain your answer

Responses: Yes - 32   No - 1

Positive
Comments: "They learn why they are studying things and what Bible passages mean."
"It is always more effective when it has a heart connection, and that is what
the program strives to make."
"They have reasons and explanations why things are as they are. They also
get some memorization which is great. It gives you a verse to apply
to your life."
"Definitely!"
"Definitely more than that. Intense study, exams, questions from elders and
staff, trips, all reinforce God's word."
"This class is a large improvement over older approaches to confirmation. Wish
my class had been like this. Should apply to adult classes too."
"I think doing the family time activities help the children to explain what they
have learned - and be allowed to express their ideas about their lives."
"Memorization doesn't hurt."
"I'm learning more now than when I took confirmation in 7th and 8th grade."
"Because material is talked about in class and reinforced by breakout and
Family times."
"There is a lot of information given which is great. I would like to see more
heart connection during the lecture portion."
"The curriculum is so interesting and interactive that you enjoy learning it and
want more."
"Parents have benefited from this program as well. We feel as if our
confirmation programs of long ago were very ineffective compared
to Pastor W's program."
"My other son took confirmation in a different church with rote memorization
and although he could say what they wanted him to say - he didn't
understand what it meant."
"Several different teaching methods are used to drive home the message and
allow for understanding."
"Memorization is fine and needs to e a part of the program but I like the
importance of what's in their heart and how they apply what they
learn according to God's word."
"Parent's role important to make it more effective, as are focus group
activities."
"But there is still memorization."
"Memorization means nothing without the understanding of what it is we are
memorizing."
"Through interaction and discussion."
"The repetitiveness of the information - a great learning tool."
"Absolutely. I wish my confirmation had been like this! It would have been a
more valuable experience."
"Although this class is extremely demanding and could maybe 'pull back' a bit
it is far less tedious than the method of memorization."

Appendix #13

"By far this is the programs strength. What good is 'just memorizing' when
you can't understand how to apply it in your daily life?"
"More Bible study based than just memorization."

Negative
Comments: "I think we should be learning more 'basic' things and get into more personal
learning/beliefs one on one. I realize this is difficult with 50
students."

12. **Are the instructors connected to this program under development and evaluation effectively
able to communicate the truths of our faith?   [Yes ? No]**

Briefly explain your answer

Responses: Yes - 33   No -0

Positive
Comments: "All instructors are well schooled in the truths of our faith."
"With the help of God!"
"I feel they give a good example, good explanations, and aren't afraid to say
I don't know or I struggled with that too."
"Yes. Pastor, vicar, D.C.E., etc. very effective communication to students and
adults."
"They are knowledgeable on the Bible, history and church doctrine."
"You are all very well trained and organized. Ideas are clear and worksheets
are easy to fallow."
"I've learned some things I didn't know."
"If the vicar doesn't know the pastor does."
"They do it in an interesting way - using many different ways to keep their
attention and keep them thinking."
"Vicar, D.C.E., and pastor work extremely well with the youth and find ways,
creative ways, to connect with the youth."
"Great rapport with students and parents."
"Program is organized as to what is expected."
"Again, I am very grateful for the instructors we have been given here at
Christ's Greenfield - their knowledge has been very enlightening."
"They are strong communicators."
"Vicar and D.C.E. have been very knowledgeable and pleasant to work with
very modern and relate to kids well."
"Most do an excellent job occasionally the vicars are a bit weak. Pastor is best,
in my opinion, D.C.E. and Vicars are OK, just not seasoned."
"Excellent instructors, easy to approach and talk to, relate very well to the
kids."
"I can't think of one question that was left unanswered."
"Most of the study has been a walk through the Old Testament and
fundamental Biblical history."
"Good training - need people that teach to have good Biblical knowledge."

Appendix #13

13. Are the students involved in this program under development and evaluation effectively motivated to learn through the way in which the program is organized? [Yes ? No]

Briefly explain your answer

Responses: Yes - 27   No - 6

Positive
Responses: "It attempts to meet the kids where they are developmentally and emotionally therefore they are motivated to stay connected and learn."

"I feel they get much more out of this style of teaching than through strait lecture."

"Very organized and well thought out program. Scheduled throughout the two years in a very positive way."

"I think the class last year which covered different topics engendered more active discussion than this year's Bible review even though the over view is interesting. Tying the lessons to real life topics is very effective."

"They are more involved with the activities. An old quote comes to mind: Tell me how to fish I eat for a day. Teach me how to fish and I eat for a lifetime. If I memorize I forget after awhile. If I do and participate I will remember for a lifetime."

"Yes and No. It depends on the student's drive to learn."

"I was taught many (many) years ago by memorization and although I remember the words - coming to these classes have helped me understand the meaning of all these words and why they are so important to my life and my life."

"A major portion of the learning is the responsibility of the youth. The tools are provided, but the youth in concert with their parents are encouraged to use the tools and complete the process."

"I have concern for a student with learning difficulties. But question #11 takes this into account. I like all the hands-on activities which helps them apply what they are learning to their everyday life."

"Somewhat still because they have to."

"I especially answer this using my own children and how they have responded - they actually bring up how they have learned what being a Christian is and their actions have changed on how they handled situations outside the church. It also has been very rewarding to see the children's enthusiasm learning God's word through fun activities and not only classroom learning. I thank God for all this!"

"Similar reason to question #9. Multiple entrances into a child's learning styles is a real benefit of this program."

"Don't have much choice if they are to be confirmed."

"I know that they specifically look forward to the 'Break Out' activities, and I'm often amazed at how they open up and profess their faith. I also have personally witnessed incredible spiritual growth in the students involved in the program."

"The different facets of the program (parish service hours, required services, attendance at church and Sunday school) are all well integrated and

Appendix #13

show the students (and parents) how a member of the church body behaves and believes."

"This is the best confirmation program I have ever seen and I believe the youth will come away with more knowledge and love for all phases of the church, faith and ministry and will take it into their adulthood."

"The evaluation process is especially effective because of the oral review. This is an effective way for the Pastor, staff and elders to nurture each student and communicate the importance of confirmation to them."

"Family times, reading the Bible, talking with parents and find some of their questions answered."

"When first introduced to this confirmation class, this style of class is extremely overwhelming and time consuming."

"Through focus times and break out groups, campouts, group activities."

"My only comment about the program is that we have to remember these are only 6th, 7th, and 8th graders and to keep lessons, tests, etc. age appropriate."

Negative
Comments: "It is difficult to motivate all the learn. The program is well organized. The program goes through the material rapidly and at times in to much detail. For some students there is some material that is tough to grasp - both in concept and facts. I understand the hope that all relevant material is covered, but without dedicated students working on material during the week it is tough to accomplish. Family times, in concept, is wonderful. but it would be helpful if more of the material covered in class was part of the weekly Family times. Break Out is a good idea to break the class time up but some Break Outs need to be reworked (i.e.. crisis intervention).

"It seems to be too long. I would like to see the same information taught in a more aggressive timeline."

"By and large this has not been a positive experience so far for my student."

"I think there is too much to go over, think they should go in depth on what we believe."

"I feel the class could be better organized, by having smaller class sizes, smaller groups, etc. Class is too large makes listening, learning, and keeping attention spans difficult."

Selected Bibliography

A Study of Youth Confirmation and First Communion in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. St. Louis, MO: Department of Youth Ministry and the Board of Congregational Services, 1998.

Arand, Charles P., *That I Might Be His Own: An Overview of Luther's Catechisms* (St. Louis: Concordia Academic Press, 2000.

Aschcroft, John. *Families First: A Report of the National Commission on America's Urban Families.* Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1993.

Barry, A.L. *Catechesis in the Lutheran Congregation.* St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1996.

Biehler, Robert F., *Psychology Applied to Teaching*, 3rd ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1978.

Benson, Peter L., Eugene C. Roehlkepartain, and I. Shelby Andress. *Congregations at Crossroads.* Minneapolis, MN.: Search Institute, 1995.

Bradley, Martin B., Norman M. Green, Dale E. Jones, Mac Lynn, and Lou McNeil. *Churches and Church Membership in the United States.* Atlanta, Ga.: The Glenmary Research Center, 1992.

Cambell, Linda. *Variations on a Theme: How Teachers Interpret MI Theory.* Educational Leadership. September, 1997.

Chapman, Gary. *Five Stages of a Functional Family.* Chicago, IL: Northfield Publishing. 1997.

Community Profile 2000. Gilbert, AZ: Gilbert Economic Development Department, 2000.

Concordia Seminary's 2000-20001 Academic Catalog. St. Louis, MO, 2001.

Edwards, O.C. Jr. *A Faithful Church: Issues in the History of Catechesis.* Wilton, CT: Morehouse-Barlow Co, 1981.

Faculty Journal, Class I, 1998-1999 Master of Divinity Degree Program with Alternate Route Program Addendum. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Seminary,   1998-1999.

Faculty Journal, Class I, 1999-2000 Master of Divinity Degree Program with Alternate Route Program Addendum. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Seminary, 1999-2000.

Freudenburg, Ben and Rick Lawrence. *The Family Friendly Church.* Loveland, CO: Group, 1998.

Gallup, George, Jr. and Sarah Jones. *100 Questions and Answers: Religion in America.* Princeton: Princeton Religion Research Center, 1989.

Guernsey, Dennis B. *A New Design for Family Ministry.* Elgin, IL: David C. Cook, 1982.

Hansen, Kristin A. *Population Profile of the United States.* Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1995.

Issler, Klaus and Ronald Habermas. *How We Learn: A Christian Teacher's Guide to Educational Psychology.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994.

Jensen, Eric. *Teaching with the Brain in Mind.* Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1998.

Kolb, Robert. *Teaching God's Children His Teaching.* Hutchinson, MN: Crown Publishing, 1992

Larson, Reed W., and Maryse H. Richards. *The Changing Life Space of Early Adolescents.* Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 18, 1989.

LeFever, Marlene D. *Learning Styles: Reaching Everyone God Gave You to Teach.* Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 1995.

Linking Congregations and Communities. St. Louis, MO: The Lutheran Church Extension Fund, 1998.

Lugaila, Terry. *Households, Families, and Children: A 30-Year Perspective.* Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1992.

Lutheran Worship: Holy Baptism. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1982.

Luther, Martin. *Brief Explanation of the Ten Commandments, the Creeds, and the Lord's Prayer, 1520,"* Works of Martin Luther, (Philadelphia: A.J. Holman), 1915.

Luther, Martin. *Lectures on Galatians - 1535.* translated by Jaroslav Pelikan. Luther's Works, The American Edition, Vol.26, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, 1963.

Luther, Martin. *The Large Catechism.* in The Book of Concord. translated by Theodore M. Tappert, Philadelphia, 1959.

McIntosh, Gary L. *Three Generations.* Grand Rapids, MI: Fleming H . Revell, 1995.

Melheim, Richard. *Total Family Sunday School.* Stillwater, Min.: Faith Inkubators, 1998.

Promoting Social and Emotional Learning: Guidelines for Educators. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1997.

Options for Youth Confirmation Instruction. St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1998.

Plass, Edward M. *What Luther Says: A Practical In-Home Anthology for the Active Christian.* [Second Edition] St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1959

Resnick, L.B. *Toward a Cognitive Theory of Instruction.* In S.G. Paris, G.M. Olson, & H.W. Stevenson (Eds), Learning and motivation in the classroom. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. 1983.

Reu, M. *Dr. Martin Luther's Small Catechism: A History of Its Origins, Its Distribution and Its Use.* Chicago: Wartburg Publishing House, 1929.

Rogness, Michael. *Preaching to a TV Generation: The Sermon in The Electronic Age.* Lima, Ohio: CSS Publishing Company, 1994.

Salminen, Bryan R. *No Ordinary Men.* St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publishing House. 2000.

Schultz, Thom and Joani. *Why Nobody Learns Much of Anything at Church and How to Fix It.* Loveland, Co.: Group. 1993.

Seymour, Jack L. and Donald E. Miller. *Contemporary Approaches to Christian Education.* Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1982.

Silver, Harvey, Richard Strong, and Matthew Perini. *Integrating Learning Styles and Mutiple Intelligences.* Educational Leadership. September 1997.

Smith, Ken. *Six Models of Confirmation Ministry.* Chicago, IL: Division of Congregational Ministries - The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 1993.

Survey of Lutheran Beliefs & Practices. Lutheran Brotherhood Insurance, 1998.

Tappert, Theodore G. *The Book of Concord - Luther's Large Catechism.* Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1959.

Wengert, Timothy. *Law and Gospel: Philip Melanchthon's Debate with John Agricola of Eisleben over Poenitentia.* Grand Rapids, MI.: Baker Books, 1998.

Westerhoff, John H.III and O.C. Edwards, Jr. *A Faithful Church: Issues in the History of Catechesis.* Wilton, CT: Morehouse-Barlow Co, 1981.