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ENRICHING FAMILIES IN THE PARISH
THROUGH THE USE OF MUSICAL DRAMA

REV. WALLACE M. BECKER

FEBRUARY, 2001

Concordia Seminary
Saint Louis, Missouri

Advisor: Dr. Dean W. Nadasdy

6/18/01

DATE

Reader: Dr. David J. Peter

05/16/01

DATE

Director, Doctor of Ministry Program
Dr. David J. Peter

05/16/01

DATE

CONCORDIA SEMINARY
SAINT LOUIS, MISSOURI

ENRICHING FAMILIES IN THE PARISH
THROUGH THE USE OF MUSICAL DRAMA

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

BY

REV. WALLACE M. BECKER

SPRINGFIELD, MISSOURI

FEBRUARY, 2001

To Alvina, my wife,

To Jeremy and Andy, my sons.

Our family has been a blessing from God.

The musical dramas that we have shared
have been wonderful family experiences.

They have given me great joy.

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ABSTRACT

Healthy families are important for the health of the congregation. Many churches see the need to focus energy on strengthening families.

Musical drama based on the life of Jesus has its roots in the liturgy.

The musical dramas presented at Zion Lutheran, Litchfield, Illinois, involved families and provided opportunities for their enrichment.

By developing and implementing a plan for musical drama to enrich families at Redeemer Lutheran, Springfield, Missouri, the author sought to strengthen these families, providing opportunities to build positive assets or building blocks into their lives. Participants who filled out surveys confirmed growth in positive assets.

Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture references are taken from *The New International Version* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984).

INTRODUCTION

The family that we grow up in helps to shape who we are, what we value, and how we see the world. That certainly is true for me. I grew up in a Christian family where closeness was valued, and structure and discipline were maintained. Both of my parents were German Lutherans, and I have been a member of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod my entire life. We went to church every Sunday as a family. My mom played the organ, and my dad was involved in the leadership of the congregation. At church and at home, music was a big part of our lives.

I don't mean to imply that my family was made up of accomplished musicians. We lived on a farm in Southeast Saskatchewan, Canada, and neither of my parents had a high school education. My sisters and I attended a one-room school about four miles away that went up to eighth grade. And yet my mom had learned to read music and could play the organ, the accordion, and the guitar, and my dad played the violin. We would often sing together as family gathered around the pump organ in our living room, and the songs we would most often sing were Gospel songs and hymns from the hymnal. At second and third grade already, my mom was teaching me to sing the harmony tenor lines.

Because worship was so important to our family and we were in church every Sunday, I learned to sing the liturgy even before I could read. I may not have had all the words correct, but I loved to sing, and church was a place to sing. At home I would sometimes play "church" with my little brother. We would sing, sometimes songs that we made up ourselves, sometimes songs that we remembered from church (at least as well as

we could remember them) and he would have to listen to my “sermon.” When he got tired of that, I would just fill in the pews (chairs) with some teddy bears.

My four older sisters learned to play the old pump organ in our living room. I believe my mom taught them how to play. I can remember them practicing and how I would interrupt them and bother them, like a typical naughty little brother. I believe I was in second grade when I began to take lessons on the accordion. I remember that it was someone like a traveling salesman who came to the farm once a month to give me lessons. He sold us the accordion and a set of 78-rpm records along with the sheet music. The records took me through each piece teaching me the musical notation and the music theory.

When my older sisters finished the eighth grade at our local school, they continued their education by correspondence classes for a year or two and then went to Edmonton, Alberta, to Concordia Lutheran High School and College, to continue their education. This was a boarding high school and when, a few years later, there were job openings for a maintenance man and a women’s dorm counselor, my parents applied for the jobs.

We left the farm when I was nine, and we moved to the city. But music continued to be an important part of our family experience. We joined a church and became involved with its choirs. As part of the children’s choir I got to sing a solo in one of the Christmas services. In sixth grade I asked my mom to teach me how to play her guitar. As she taught me the chords, we would often play and sing together. Sometimes we would go to a nursing home, and we would play and sing for the residents there.

In junior high school I learned to play the trumpet and was part of the Junior High Band. We didn't have a band in high school, but I did continue to play my trumpet for weddings and church services occasionally. Also in junior high I began to take piano lessons. These lessons continued through high school. In high school I was involved in some sports like basketball and soccer, but choir was far more important to me. My parents came to a few basketball games, but they were always there to hear the choir when we sang our concerts.

In college I joined a contemporary Christian singing group called "Maker's Dozen" and learned to play the bass. One summer between college years I joined with three of my friends to form a group that sang Christian contemporary music in concerts on the weekends. We were also invited to sing in a number of worship services.

Music has become a very important part of my life, an expression of my faith in Jesus, an outpouring of my love for him. This experience of music began in my family. Music was an experience that my family often shared together. It drew us closer together. Because most of the time it was Christian music that we shared and experienced, it not only brought us closer to each other, it also brought us closer to God, helping us to grow in our relationship with Jesus. It made us a stronger, healthier family.

CHAPTER ONE

FAMILY CENTERED MINISTRY IN THE CHURCH

Introduction

When God created Adam and Eve, He created a family. When He established marriage in Genesis, chapter two – “for this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh,” – He also established the family. Throughout the Old Testament, the importance of family is emphasized. Genealogies trace the ancestry of families and show their connectedness. The family of Abraham is separated out to be blessed by God and to be a blessing to the world. The family of Jacob is chosen by God to be His people. David, the great king of Israel, comes from a branch of that family, the family of Judah. From the family of David the Messiah is born.

In Bible times and still today, the family is the basic unit and building block of society. We are born into a family. Even orphans or unwanted babies are placed into a home and almost always adopted into a family. Families today may take on many different configurations. There are traditional families, divorced families, blended families, single parent families, extended families, boomerang families, and empty nest families. These families, as different as they may be, are the foundation of our society. When families are strong and healthy, our society will be strong and healthy. As families struggle and are torn apart, our society is weakened also.

Families are also the basic unit or building block of the church. It is interesting to observe the account of the church’s growth in the Book of Acts. When a certain

individual became a Christian, often his or her whole household was baptized and became part of the church. It is no coincidence that the church is called the family or the household of God.

Although people often come into the church as individuals without the rest of their family, and it is a personal faith and relationship with Jesus that brings salvation, we still remain connected to our family. Often it is through a family member that a person is introduced to Jesus and the church. As we are sent out to be witnesses to Jesus and His love, the most obvious place that that begins is with our family. When Jesus drives out the unclean spirit from the demon possessed man in the Gentile territory of the Gerasenes in Mark 5, Jesus sends the man home to his people to tell them all that the Lord in His mercy has done for him.

As God places us into families He gives us a responsibility toward each other. Children are to honor and obey their parents. Parents – fathers and mothers – are to discipline their children in love and raise them in the fear and admonition of the Lord. That means they are to live and express their own faith in Jesus so that their children will also know Jesus and grow in a faith relationship with Him. With these charges given to the family, especially to parents, it is evident that God desires the family to be a primary place where faith is formed and nurtured.

The church, the family of God, has also been given the charge and commission by Jesus to make disciples. Faith formation and faith nurturing take place in the church as the church uses the means of grace, the Word and the Sacraments. As we baptize and teach according to Jesus' own command, disciples are created and nurtured. As we

celebrate the Lord's Supper we are forgiven and strengthened in our faith, and we proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.

Parents have been called by God to provide a family setting where faith in Jesus is formed and nurtured. The church also has been called by God to make disciples, to be a place where faith is formed and nurtured. Because this is true, the family and the church need to work together to help and support each other in the work that God has given each to do.

Yet sometimes it seems that we are in competition with each other. The church schedule can be full of meetings and activities every night of the week and all weekend long as well. These may be great faith enriching programs. There is something for everyone, but all at different times, and not much for the family to be involved with together. Instead of strengthening the family, the church has often been insensitive to the family's needs and may even contribute to pulling the family apart.

Families, on the other hand, who want to be strong and healthy, can focus so much on the time they spend together, to the exclusion of time spent in worship or in worthwhile and God-pleasing activities in their church. Families sometimes feel pressure to sacrifice their family time for the sake of the church or to neglect church involvement for the sake of their family. There seems to be a choice that must be made between one and the other, and such a choice is not easy to make.

But such a choice should not be required. Since the family is the building block of the church, and since both the family and the church have been given the responsibility of

passing on the faith, family and church should be working together. As the church helps to strengthen its families, it will become stronger.

Churches that are becoming more concerned about families and strengthening the family unit are beginning to ask questions about the way they do ministry. Should the ministry of the church be church-centered and family-supported, or family-centered and church-supported? In other words, should the church be the lighthouse supported by all the families coming together to be involved in its ministry? Or should the church be the fueling station, the equipping place, to help families do their ministry of being beacons of light in their own communities, schools, places of work, and extended families?¹ Many churches are re-evaluating their programs, their focus of energy, their mission statements, their vision of future ministry. They desire an atmosphere and environment that is “family-friendly.” They seek to strengthen families and in this way accomplish the mission that God has given His church. They do not see church and family in competition but in partnership, working together to provide faith formation and faith nurturing opportunities. It should not have to be a choice between one and the other – either the church or the family – but rather it must be a combination of both – the church and the family working together.

God has established both the church and the family. Although their areas of concern overlap, each has unique responsibilities and opportunities when it comes to faith development. It has been said that “as the family goes, so goes the nation.” It is equally

¹ Ben Freudenburg and Rick Lawrence, *The Family Friendly Church* (Loveland, Colorado: Vital Ministry, Group, 1998), 98.

true that strong, spiritually healthy families make a strong, healthy church. Churches need to re-evaluate their priorities just as people and families do. They need to ask, “What are we doing to strengthen and nurture faith in our families? What are we doing that pulls families apart? What can we do better? What do we need to change? What new attitudes do we need to adopt in order to transform the programs we have? What do we need to add? What do we need to drop? How much time will it take to do it? What are the resources at our disposal to help us accomplish this?”

The Family is God’s Design

In Genesis 1 God established the family when He created Adam and Eve. In Genesis 2 we are told that it was not good for the man to be alone so God took one of Adam’s ribs and formed a woman and brought her to him. Adam and Eve were created for relationship: first with God, and then also with each other. As husband and wife they formed the first family. God instituted marriage and family when He said, “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.”² And Jesus reconfirmed God’s desire to bless marriage and family, when He quoted this passage as recorded in Matthew and added, “So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate.”³

² Genesis 2:24

³ Matthew 19:6

God blessed Adam and Eve with children, with a family, but the sin that separated them from God also brought separation and strife between family members.⁴ One can just imagine the discussion Adam and Eve had after leaving the Garden of Eden. You can almost hear Eve asking Adam why he had blamed her for the whole thing. The problem of sin and separation only gets worse as we read on in the Genesis account. Brother kills brother.⁵ The world becomes so bad God destroys it with a flood. But in His grace and mercy He spares a family – the family of Noah.⁶ The waters of the flood did not blot out the sinful nature of mankind for, after the flood, Noah himself gets drunk and ends up cursing one of his grandsons.⁷ As the population grows again, the sinfulness of people shows itself in their pride and arrogance. God confuses their languages and scatters the families.⁸

But, in His grace, He chose Abraham and promised him a family that would bring blessing to the nations and families of the earth.⁹ The rest of the Old Testament is this family's story. It tells how God loved them and rescued them and established them as a people, how He blessed them with the land of promise. It tells how they rebelled against God and spurned His love as wayward children. It tells how God called His children back

⁴ Genesis 3:1-20.

⁵ Genesis 4:1-8.

⁶ Genesis 6:5-8.

⁷ Genesis 9:18-27.

⁸ Genesis 11:1-9.

⁹ Genesis 12:1-3.

and disciplined them in love and patience. It tells how they became more interested in rules and rituals than in relationship.

The New Testament shows how the promise to Abraham came true in Jesus. The Son of God according to His divine nature, and a descendant of Abraham according to His human nature, Jesus is Abraham's blessing, not just for Abraham's family, but also for all the families of the world. Through faith in Jesus we become children of Abraham, part of God's family.¹⁰ In the book of Acts we hear of the Gospel coming to whole families. Whole households are saved and added to the company of believers.¹¹ Christians met in homes – in private households. A few families, maybe about twenty or thirty people, gathered together for worship and study of God's Word. Their mission was to their own household, including their children, their extended family and their servants, and also to those next door. "The early church did not exist as an independent body *beside* the private households; it exclusively existed *in* them."¹²

One of the images that began to be used to describe the church was "the family of God." Paul, in his first letter to Timothy, insists that leaders in the church must first prove themselves as capable leaders in their own families.¹³ Peter Lampe paraphrases the passage: "Who proves to be qualified at home in the leadership of their own household is

¹⁰ Romans 4.

¹¹ Acts 10:24-48; 16:13-15, 29-34.

¹² Peter Lampe, "The Family of New Testament Times," *Church and Society*, November-December, 1993, 32.

¹³ 1 Timothy 3:4-5,12.

also capable of taking over church offices on the higher level of the local church.”¹⁴ He goes on to explain: “In other words, the private household was not only the material framework of the early church, the only real estate structure available for the church, it was also an ideational framework furnishing categories for the formulation of theology, ecclesiology and ethics.”¹⁵

The family was established by God to be a “grace place,” a place where His love and concern for the members of the family could be shared with each other within the family. Though sin has ruined the perfect plan that God had for families, He has not abandoned families to get through on their own. His love and forgiveness are still real. His Spirit is still at work to bring wholeness and restoration to people as well as to families. As the Spirit, working through Word and Sacraments, creates faith in people’s lives, that faith is to be lived out in their lives within this world, within their families especially. Moses instructs parents to provide an atmosphere in the family where the faith of all family members is lived out each day with each other. In Deuteronomy 6, parents are instructed to speak about God’s Word with their children and live out their faith as an everyday, natural life experience.¹⁶ In Ephesians, fathers are instructed not to “exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.”¹⁷

Mothers and grandparents were also responsible for the Christian nurture of children as

¹⁴ Lampe, 30.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Deuteronomy 6:4-9.

¹⁷ Ephesians 6:4.

shown in other scriptural references.¹⁸ “Both father and mother were responsible for this task. And their private household was by far the main source from which children got Christian instruction.”¹⁹

This instruction is not just a bedtime prayer or mealtime grace. This must be integrated faith lived out in the lives of the parents so that the children know the reality of Jesus and His love also in their lives, and grow in their own faith in Jesus and in their relationship with God.

Parents need to discuss their faith with their children, pray with them and encourage their children in love to do what is right, not hesitating to say “no” when necessary. And always, parents will want to be for their children a model of the Heavenly Father’s love in Christ Jesus our Lord.²⁰

The Lutheran Confessions place a strong emphasis on family as instituted by God. Parents are to instruct their children and nurture them in the faith. They have been given this mandate from the Lord. Children are to obey and honor their parents who have been given their position of authority by God Himself. In *The Apology of the Augsburg Confession*, Article 16, we read: “The Gospel does not destroy the state or the family but rather approves them, and it commands us to obey them as divine ordinances not only from fear of punishment but also ‘for the sake of conscience’ (Rom. 13:5).”²¹

¹⁸ 1 Timothy 5:10; 2 Timothy 1:5; 3:15; Titus 2:3-4.

¹⁹ Lampe, 29.

²⁰ A. L. Barry, *What About Christian Families* (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, 1996), 3.

²¹ Theodore G. Tappert, *The Book of Concord* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), 223.

Families are important places, very natural places, where faith is formed and nurtured. “Faith nurture happens best in the family.”²² A husband and wife commit themselves to each other in marriage. They make a covenant with each other to love and honor, respect and cherish each other for the rest of their lives. As Christians, this commitment means living out their faith in the everyday interactions of their lives together. It means repentance not only to God, but also to each other. It means forgiving as God in Christ has forgiven. It means encouraging each other with the positive word of promise in the Gospel and the challenge to keep growing in grace and in the knowledge of their Lord Jesus Christ.

If one of the spouses is not a Christian, the other still has the challenge and the opportunity to live out his/her faith in this particular family environment. God’s Spirit works as His Word is shared. That Word of life is shared in our speaking it but it is also sometimes shared more powerfully in our living it. Living out our faith with Christ-like attitudes, compassion, and forgiveness gives opportunity for the Holy Spirit to work in the heart of another. Peter gives some encouragement for such a situation in his first letter.²³ Besides being ready to forgive, it is necessary to admit our own failures and ask forgiveness of our family members as well as from God our Father.

When a child is born into a family, God gives the responsibility for that child to the parents. They are responsible for the physical, emotional, and spiritual care of the

²² Kurt Bickel, *Funtastic Family Nights* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1998), 5.

²³ 1 Peter 3:1-7.

child. Because they are the first to be given responsibility for their child, they have the primary responsibility for nurturing faith in their child.

The parents can begin to pray for their child as soon as they find out that they are to be parents. They can share this news with their pastor so that he, too, can be praying for them, and plans can be made for the baptism of their child. When the child is born, arrangements should be made as soon as possible for the baptism. In baptism, God promises grace and every blessing as the Spirit creates faith through water and the Word, and the child is added to the family of God. Although the Holy Spirit creates faith in this little one, it is the parents' responsibility to bring the child for baptism. It is also their promise and ongoing responsibility to nurture the faith created through baptism. Sponsors are chosen to help the parents with this responsibility. They promise to assist the parents in the spiritual care of the child. It is not enough to know about Jesus. The child needs to grow up knowing Jesus in a personal, intimate relationship of faith. That faith is nurtured by the parents as they actively live out their own faith each day within the context of their family and the church. The faithful family is the first spiritual center that the child will experience.²⁴ Children learn what they live. Relationships with parents and siblings are primary and critical.²⁵ Experiencing God's forgiveness and love through one's parents and being able to share that same love and forgiveness with one's parents is so important for nurturing faith. "You are [your child's] first and most important model of a Christian.

²⁴ Marjorie J. Thompson, *Family, the Forming Center* (Nashville: Upper room books, 1989), 17.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 21.

How you live your own faith affects her much more profoundly than anything else you could possibly say or do.”²⁶

Although the family “is primarily responsible for nurturing the faith,”²⁷ parents will use the opportunities that the church provides to help them nurture the faith of their children. Often churches send out cradle roll materials to help parents in the earliest years of childhood. The material might include tips about child development through the first three years and what the new parent might expect. It also should include some Bible stories and suggestions to help parents share their faith with their young child. Reading Bible story books, looking at the pictures together, singing songs about Jesus and His love, praying together at various times of the day or in various situations, are ways that parents can share their faith and nurture the faith of the very young.

Sunday school programs begin in most churches at age two or three. Parents help to nurture their children’s faith by bringing them to educational programs provided by the church. Much can be taught through the church’s ministry, but so much is caught from the parents’ attitude and actions. It is important for parents to feel the need to grow in their own faith and express that faith in how they live. It does not help the child’s faith when the child is dropped off and the parents do not participate. Parents need to participate in the educational programs and worship with their children as much as possible. Discussion of the material studied and learned, or of the message of the pastor’s

²⁶ Nancy Marrocco, *Homemade Christians* (Ottawa, Canada: Novalis, St. Paul University, 1995), 58.

²⁷ Bickel, 8.

sermon, by the whole family in an age-appropriate manner, is an important way of nurturing faith in the family.

God has entrusted children to the care of their parents. “Parents serve as God’s representative.”²⁸ He gives parents a very important responsibility. They are not just to help their children grow up to lead productive lives in this world. Parents have the awesome responsibility of preparing their children also for the life to come. Martin Luther writes in *The Large Catechism* that

Parents should consider that they owe obedience to God, and that, above all, they should earnestly and faithfully discharge the duties of their office, not only to provide for the material support of their children, servants, subjects, etc., but also especially to bring them up to the praise and honor of God.²⁹

Parents are responsible for faith formation in the sense that they are the ones to bring their children to the Lord, to His sacrament of acceptance in Holy Baptism. Parents are the ones responsible for their children’s continued growth and nurture in the faith. Parents are to help their children grow up to know Jesus as Lord and Savior, Brother and Friend, so that they will live a life that reflects their faith and trust in Jesus and their knowledge of His Word. Luther, in *The Small Catechism*, emphasizes that the responsibility of teaching and nurturing the faith belongs with the parents. The six chief parts begin with the instruction: “In plain form in which the head of the family shall

²⁸ Tappert, *Large Catechism*, 379.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 388.

teach it to his household.” The section on prayer reads: “How the head of the family shall teach his household to say morning and evening prayers.”³⁰

Parents who are concerned about sharing their faith with their children will want their family to be a safe place and a grace place. Parents will want their homes to be safe places where all family members can feel secure and safe in the love and care of God and of each other. Parents will want their homes to be places where God’s grace and forgiveness are the basis of relationship and communication. Parents will provide direction and guidance for their children so that they learn to live out their faith in obedience to God’s Word. This begins in the context of the family.

Dolores Curran and Nick Stinnett have done separate studies on the traits of healthy families. Stinnett’s six main qualities of strong families are listed and expounded upon in a number of books on family ministry.³¹ Family “members are (1) committed to the family; (2) spend time together; (3) have good family communication; (4) express appreciation to each other; (5) have a spiritual commitment; and (6) are able to solve problems in a crisis.”³²

Another study done by Eugene C. Roehlkepartain with Search Institute identifies forty developmental assets that help young people grow up healthy, caring and responsible. Strong, healthy families have a greater percentage of these building blocks of

³⁰ Ibid., 342, 344, 346, 348, 351, 352.

³¹ These books include: Charles M. Sell, *Family Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981); Jim Larson, *A Church Guide For Strengthening Families* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1984); Royce Money, *Building Stronger Families* (Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books, 1984).

³² Sell, 132.

healthy development present in their family experience. On the other hand, in dysfunctional, unhealthy families, these building blocks, or assets, are either missing completely or present but largely undeveloped.

These forty developmental assets are grouped into eight categories, four of which are external, and four internal.

External assets are positive experiences that surround youth with the support, empowerment, boundaries and expectations, and opportunities for constructive use of time they need to guide them to make healthy choices. These experiences and opportunities should be provided by each of many socializing systems in a community, including families, schools, congregations, youth organizations, and neighbors.³³

Internal assets involve the internal strengths, commitments, and values young people need to guide their choices, priorities, and decisions. They are grouped into the categories of commitment to learning, positive values, social competencies, and positive identity.³⁴

The Search Institute studies show that healthy, strong families have more assets present. Yet “their presence does not eliminate problems, but it could significantly reduce problems and increase positive behaviors among youth if more youth experienced more assets... the more the better.”³⁵

The study also concedes that these assets are not the only things that families need to thrive.

Healthy development is influenced by many other factors as well, including economics, cultural norms, temperament, genetics, and traumas. Thus, while asset

³³ Eugene C. Roehlkepartain, *Building Assets in Congregations: A Practical Guide for Helping Youth Grow Up Healthy* (Minneapolis: Search Institute, 1998), 36.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 41.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 6.

building is an essential strategy, it shouldn't be seen as a cure-all that will magically transform the lives of all youth.³⁶

Parents should work to develop or build these assets for their families. "Recent research shows that only 8 percent of youth have 31 or more of the 40 assets... The average young person experiences only about half of the assets."³⁷

What do these assets look like? They are really common sense things that most families can build but often do not. One group of external assets centers on the support that family members receive. This support needs to come from family members, positive communication between parents and children, positive relationships with three or more other adults outside the family, caring neighbors, and caring and encouraging schools with parents involved in helping their children succeed in school.

Another group of external assets involves empowerment. Children and young people believe that they are valued by their families and communities. They have a useful role to fulfill, and they have the opportunity to serve others in their family or community in an intentional way at least one hour per week. They need to feel safe at home, at school and in their community.

External assets include boundaries and expectations. Families need to have clear rules and consequences with parents knowing where their children are. Schools should provide clear rules and consequences. Neighbors can help by taking responsibility for monitoring young people's behavior. Parents and other adults need to model positive

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

responsible behavior. Positive peer influence takes place when children have friends who model responsible behavior. Parents and teachers should have high but not unrealistic expectations of their children, encouraging them to do well.

The fourth group of external assets centers on constructive use of time. Creative activities are important, and young people should be spending several hours a week in music, theater, or some other art expression. It is good when children have the opportunity to spend time in sports, clubs, or organizations at school or in the community. Time should be spent each week involved in activities with their church or religious community. And time should be spent together as family at home.

Internal assets include several that are clustered around commitment to learning. It is good when our children are motivated to do well in school, when they are actively engaged in learning, and when they care about their school. Older children should be doing some homework every school day. Children should read for pleasure several hours per week.

Another group of internal assets involves the positive values that parents instill in their children. These values are caring, equality and social justice, integrity, honesty, responsibility, and restraint. Our children need to learn the value of helping other people, of promoting equality and reducing hunger and poverty. They need to act on convictions and stand up for their beliefs, to tell the truth even when it isn't easy. They need to accept and take personal responsibility for their actions and decisions. They need to believe in and practice abstinence in the areas of alcohol, drugs, and sex.

Social competencies form another grouping of internal assets. It is good for children to learn to plan ahead and make choices. They should grow in empathy, sensitivity, and friendship skills. They should learn about people of different cultural, racial, and ethnic backgrounds and feel at ease with them. Resisting negative peer pressure, avoiding dangerous situations, and learning to resolve conflict nonviolently are important social skills for our children to learn.

The final group of internal assets centers on positive identity. Developing a good self-esteem, a sense of purpose, and an optimistic view of the future, with a feeling that one has some control over what happens to him/her, are important assets. These help our children to build a positive identity.

These forty assets, as they apply to different age groups of children and youth, are listed in more detail in Appendix 1. Also listed there are some things that committees and groups within the church can do to help build these developmental assets in the families of the congregation.

God instituted the family as a place for faith and love to grow, but the family needs help in today's world. God has also established the church. God has given the church His Word and Sacraments, His means of grace, and commissioned His church to make disciples of all nations through this ministry of Word and Sacraments. This ministry is to individual members of the congregation or community, and to people as they live within a family. The church can do much in its ministry to families. Using Word and Sacrament ministry, it can help to provide "building blocks of healthy development"

that are important for children and young people to “grow up healthy, caring, and responsible.”³⁸

The Church Was Established By God

When did God establish His church? That is a question often debated. Some say that Pentecost is the birthday of the Christian Church. Others would say that the true church dates back to Adam and Eve since they were already part of God’s Kingdom of Grace through faith in God and in His promise to send a savior. Some would equate the church of the Old Testament with the family of Abraham and the nation of Israel. But the nation included many apostate Israelites who had rejected their faith and turned their backs on the promises of God. Technically these would not be counted as part of the church. Only those who had faith in God, and thus were the true children of Abraham, were members of the church.

In the same way, the church today is not a building or a denomination, but all the people who have faith in Jesus. Local congregations are groups of Christians in a certain area, gathered together to be fed and equipped by God’s Word, then sent out to be the church where they live and work and play. In establishing His Church, Jesus mandated a number of things. As Christ’s Church, we are to preach the Gospel; we are to make disciples by baptizing and teaching; we are to share in the Sacrament of His body and blood in remembrance of Him; we are to be His witnesses.

³⁸ Ibid., 202.

Our Lutheran Confessions teach in *The Apology of the Augsburg Confession* that

The church is not merely an association of outward ties and rites like other civic governments, however, but it is mainly an association of faith and of the Holy Spirit in men's hearts. To make it recognizable, this association has outward marks, the pure teaching of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments in harmony with the Gospel of Christ.³⁹

We also confess that the true church is found wherever the Word of God is taught in its truth and purity and the Sacraments administered according to the institution of Christ. The Word and the Sacraments, the means of grace, are tools to carry out the work our Lord has given the church to do. As the Word of God is preached and taught, and as the Sacraments are administered, the Holy Spirit is at work, creating and nurturing faith in people through these means of grace.

The church is very much concerned with faith formation and faith nurturing. That is what the church is all about, helping people grow in faith and love. Pastors are given to the church to help prepare all God's people for their works of service.⁴⁰ They are to equip the saints to share God's Word and live God's Word as witnesses. The Sacraments have been given to the church. Pastors are to administer Baptism according to Christ's command so that the gift of faith may be given through the working of the Holy Spirit. Pastors are to administer the Lord's Supper so that believing hearts may receive the Lord's forgiveness, be strengthened in their faith, and be drawn closer to their Lord. Pastors are to preach and teach the whole Word of God, Law and Gospel, to bring about repentance and forgiveness and confidence in faith.

³⁹ Tappert, *The Apology of the Augsburg Confession*, Article 7 & 8, The Church, 169.

⁴⁰ Ephesians 4:11-13.

We come into the church as individuals on the basis of our own faith in Christ. We cannot be saved by the faith of our parents or grandparents. Each person must believe for himself. And so the church grows, one person at a time. Because of this, the ministry of the church is often individualistic instead of family-focused. We can forget that we are all part of a family, touched by the family in which we grew up, and influencing the family in which we now live by what we do and say. By ministering to the family the church can better reach each individual within that family. The church must be concerned about the family, for family life is critical in spiritual formation. The church needs to encourage practices that reflect Christian life and faith.⁴¹

The Church Is the Family of God

The Scriptures employ a number of word pictures to describe the church and help us understand our purpose and privilege as part of the church. As the church, we are the “body of Christ,”⁴² with many parts fitting and functioning together. We are the “temple of God,”⁴³ built of living stones, with Christ being the cornerstone, and the Word of God being the foundation. We are a “living plant,”⁴⁴ like branches connected to Jesus, the vine. We are the sheep of the Good Shepherd.⁴⁵ And we are a “family,” the “household of

⁴¹ Thompson, 35.

⁴² 1 Corinthians 12:12ff.

⁴³ 2 Corinthians 6:16; 1 Peter 2:5; Ephesians 2:19-22.

⁴⁴ John 15:5.

⁴⁵ John 10

faith,⁴⁶ the family of God the Father and Jesus is our brother.

In talking about the church, a number of family references are made. God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is our Father, too, and we are encouraged to pray with confidence and boldness to “Our Father, who art in heaven,”⁴⁷ even to address Him as “Abba” (daddy).⁴⁸ As children of the heavenly Father,⁴⁹ we are all brothers and sisters in Christ. We belong to God’s household.⁵⁰ We look forward to going home to heaven where we will celebrate the marriage feast of the Lamb.⁵¹ But we will not be guests at this marriage celebration. As the church, we will celebrate as the bride of Christ.⁵²

Since the Scripture uses the analogy of family to talk about the church, the church might consider adopting this pattern or form when it comes to church polity and church administration. This would help the leadership as well as the general membership to be more family-sensitive in its planning and administration of church programs. Steve Thomas shares a family model for the church in his book; *Your Church Can be Family Friendly*. In a church that follows a family model, the leadership acknowledges that God is the head of the family and that Christ is the eldest brother. The pastor and elders serve

⁴⁶ Ephesians 2:19-22; 1 Timothy 3:15.

⁴⁷ Matthew 6:9, Luke 11:2.

⁴⁸ Romans 8:15-17; Galatians 4:6,7.

⁴⁹ John 1:12,13; Romans 8:16; 1 John 3:1,2.

⁵⁰ Ephesians 2:19; 1 Timothy 3:15.

⁵¹ Revelation 19:7.

⁵² Revelation 19:7,8; Ephesians 5:25-33.

as “older brothers” and other professional workers as well as ministry leaders are “brothers with special skills.”⁵³

More and more churches today are moving to a pattern and form that comes from the business world. The corporate model has a board of directors and CEO. Decisions are handed down from the top and are often based primarily on fiscal responsibility. This model views the pastor and other called workers as staff to hire and fire. The whole thing has become very impersonal. There is little or no closeness. That is not the model of the early church.

Thomas lists some other models used by churches in their organization. The military model pictures a strict chain of command from the top down. The pastor or respected leader in the congregation gives the orders. The sports model involves the pastor as head coach who sometimes gets in and plays the game, too. He is responsible to train the members to be team players and he encourages them in their ministries. The democratic model gives everyone a voice.⁵⁴

Of all the models he describes, the family model seems to carry the most scriptural weight. Paul Schrieber, in an article written for the *Concordia Journal*, sees the family model as the Scriptural model for the church:

This means that the basic model for running the church is not found in business corporations or in politics. Rather, it is located first and foremost in the orders instituted by God: the estate of holy matrimony, the family. Here is where men learn to subordinate themselves to women, women to men, children to parents, even men to other men, and everyone yielding their wills and bodies under Christ. Luther’s

⁵³ Steve Thomas, *Your Church Can Be Family Friendly* (Joplin, Missouri: College Press Publishing Co., 1996), 47-51.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 41-56.

“Table of Duties” in the Catechism provides a good checklist for helping people find their niche amid decaying orders.

St. Paul provides something more than just a checklist of moral qualifications required of pastors. He sees family and church as analogous, good order in home, good order in church: “one who cares for his own house well, having his children in subordination with all reverence, for if a man does not know how to care for his house, how can he care for the church of God?” (1 Tim. 3:4-5). Administration of the church is learned in the home. The reason that Paul placed such focus on marriage and family is that this is the place people learn to work together in love. No love of brother, no love of God (1 John 4).⁵⁵

Just like families can become dysfunctional, so churches, whether they operate with a family model or not, can become dysfunctional. Because the church is the “family of God” it would be good for the church to look at Stinnett’s six traits of healthy families⁵⁶ and apply them to itself. As the family of God, the members of a congregation need to be committed to their Lord and to each other. The members should be committed to the called workers and the called workers committed to the members. Spending time together is important, not just for worship and meetings and the business of the church, but in fellowship events and social gatherings. Good communication is essential between the leadership and the people and among those who lead. Affirmation is so important in the family of God, expressing appreciation for one another to each other, affirming one another in the gifts that God has given and that are being used for the good of the family. Everyone should seek to be growing spiritually and should be encouraging those around them to be growing in God’s Word. Churches need to learn positive, Biblical patterns of

⁵⁵ Paul L. Schrieber, “Power and Orders in the Church “according to the Gospel”: In Search of the Lutheran Ethos,” *Concordia Journal* 26 (January 2000): 19-20.

⁵⁶ Dr. Nick & Nancy Stinnett, Joe & Alice Beam, *Fantastic Families: 6 Proven Steps to Building a Strong Family* (West Monroe, Louisiana: Howard Publishing Co., Inc., 1999), 10.

conflict resolution, so that when disagreements arise, they are able to resolve their differences and solve their problems in a peaceful way, turning crises into opportunities. By seeking to grow in the six qualities of healthy families, the church would become healthier and stronger as well.

Church and Family Working Together

There are some in the church today who believe that because God has given the Word and Sacraments to the church, the church alone has responsibility to provide for faith formation and faith growth. When we talk about helping families to be places of faith formation and nurture, these people object with the argument that this is the work of the church, not the family, because the church has been entrusted with the means of grace.

Then there are some who say that the church should equip the parents to do the educating of their own children, that confirmation classes and Sunday school are no longer necessary. Since Jesus played with children and taught adults, we should not spin our wheels doing the opposite. We should be putting all our energy into the teaching and training of adults who will teach and train their own children within the context of their own families. There is the danger here of the family becoming the all-important focus and factor in making all decisions. Some speak of this as the idolatry of the family in our society. Family takes priority even over faith and faith development. Richard Olson and Joe Leonard, Jr., sound such a warning: "Beware of making one's own family one's god.

Do not let the family be your highest or only focus of loyalty, and do not let it be your ultimate security.”⁵⁷

Some families have gone so far as to separate themselves from the established church, forming their own home church. Claiming to be the church in their own home, some even administer and celebrate the sacraments within the context of their own family.

Unfortunately there is an unhealthy competition sometimes between the church and the family. Again Olson gives us some reassurance:

The responsibilities are not the same but are complementary. Families are for reproduction, for sex, for mutual guidance, for sustaining people in their need for intimacy. Churches are places where there is intimacy of a different kind, where we bond in mission, where we consciously and corporately keep in touch with transcendence and eschatological hope, and where our family and other relationships are tested with reality checks and serious encounters with the Word. Sometimes the church compensates for bad family life. Sometimes family life compensates for inadequate church experience. Sometimes church and family reinforce each other in healthy, productive, and faithful ways.⁵⁸

We can get a better Lutheran, confessional perspective on the roles and responsibilities of the church and the family from Schrieber’s article in the *Concordia Journal*. As he addresses how we see ourselves in relation to the structures of the world, he says, “The Confessions provide such a perspective that is expressed in terms of three orders, the triumvirate of priests, princes, and parents.”⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Richard P. Olson and Joe H. Leonard, Jr., *A New Day For Family Ministry* (New York: The Alban Institute, 1996), 61.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Schrieber, 5.

The Confessions discuss the place and identity of the church in relation to the other members of the triplex macrostructure that God has established as foundational for the human enterprise. The three distinct domains or stations are the ecclesiastical, the political, and the home-economic estates. These interrelated orders serve as fixed points around which swirl the ever-changing, multiple expressions of human existence. God ordained these institutions to give structure to all existence.⁶⁰

There is, however, a distinction between God's right hand and left hand kingdoms as He rules and governs through these three institutions.

The common denominator is that God rules over all, but in different ways. He governs the political and family estates by force of law and bodily penalties. He brings His gracious rule into the lives and hearts of people through the Gospel. He instituted the ecclesiastical estate to bring His gracious rule according to the Gospel into the world through the administration of the Word and Sacraments.⁶¹

Church and family need to work together, with the mandate that God has given to each, with the tools that God provides, with the blessing promised by our Lord. As families are the building blocks of society, so they are the fundamental units within a congregation. Christian families have the advantage of bringing the Gospel into their homes. One way the church carries out its mission is by equipping parents and children to live out their faith in their families.

Frank Dunn, an Episcopal priest, writes in his book, *Building Faith in Families*:

Church life and family life have to be interwoven. Both have to reflect clearly the Gospel message if the individual is to grow in the knowledge and love of God. Both have to share consonant values if our children are to have a consistent image of the "full stature of Christ."⁶²

⁶⁰ Ibid., 6.

⁶¹ Ibid., 7.

⁶² Frank G. Dunn, *Building Faith in Families* (Wilton, Connecticut: Morehouse-Barlow, 1986), 88.

Later in his book he writes, “There is no way to build faith in families if that faith is not linked inseparably with the life of the church.”⁶³

Since both institutions have been given the responsibility for faith formation and nurturing, the church will do well to equip families for this task. The church can find ways to help couples strengthen their marriages, to help parents acquire better parenting skills, to help fathers take the lead in home devotions and spiritual nurturing, to help children learn the fundamentals of God’s Word, and to help all family members improve their communication skills.

The church’s responsibility for faith formation and nurturing of singles can take on a sense of family as single people find a family connection within the congregation. One way is to connect them to support circles, “a group of people in the congregation who have committed themselves to look out for a person when his or her family is no longer around to do it.”⁶⁴

Families will also help themselves as they support the church and its ministry. Family members should seek to find a healthy balance between family activities and individual activities that also include church and ministry participation. Finding a church activity that the whole family can participate in together can help to strengthen the family. Being involved in different church activities all at the same time can be another way for the family to be involved and supportive of the church and its ministry.

⁶³ Ibid., 208.

⁶⁴ Joe H. Leonard, Jr., “Strengthening Families in a Changing World,” *Church and Society* November-December 1993, 15.

Churches, sensitive to the needs of families, can program their ministries with families in mind. They can provide activities and events and ministry opportunities that are geared for entire family involvement. They can encourage families to get involved in a mission project as a family. They can provide training and education in helping parents nurture faith. They can provide opportunities, through the church's traditional ministry, for parents to be involved in the nurturing of their children at church activities. They can bring single people, or people without a close nuclear family, together with other singles, or other families, to form a type of surrogate family.

For churches and families to work together in ministry, most churches will need to change their way of thinking about ministry. A new paradigm is needed: a shift from church-centered, family-supported ministry, to home-centered, church-supported ministry.⁶⁵

The Attitude of the Leaders

One of the first things that should be done is to examine the attitudes of the leaders and decision-makers of the congregation. If attitudes among this group are positive about family ministry and supportive toward the strengthening of the family, needed changes in direction and programs will take place more easily. If this group is negative to change or not supportive of family ministry, it would be time well spent to win this group over first, before making any major changes.

⁶⁵ Freudenburg , 98.

It is so important that the leaders of the congregation see family relationships and family growth as a high priority. If the pastor is a work-a-holic, always at church, attending a meeting, counseling people with broken families and relationships, visiting and caring for the members of his congregational family, and never at home with his own family, it will be hard to sell the importance of family to the rest of the congregation. Pastors need to lead by example. They need to invest time and energy into their own family first. They need to make sure that their own family is a place where faith formation and faith nurturing takes place. A pastor's first priority is to his wife and to his children,⁶⁶ then to the flock over which the Lord has placed him as overseer.⁶⁷ It may take some changes in scheduling and priorities but they will be worth the effort both for the pastor's family as well as for the congregation. The pastor should have some evenings available for his family, for his children's special school events. He should not feel that he has to schedule congregational needs above his family's schedule. He should not feel that he has to attend every meeting. Sometimes meeting with the chairperson prior to the committee meeting will be all that is necessary. His time off should be guarded and used wisely for his own recreation and time with the family and not eaten up by urgent church related crises. He should support the effort of his elders also to be family conscious and seek their support and encouragement in his desire to have healthy families among the leadership.

⁶⁶ 1 Timothy 3:4-5;12.

⁶⁷ Acts 20:28.

Elders, Church Councils and Boards of Directors also need to catch the vision of what it means to have a family-friendly church. It might start by encouragement for all of them to be aware of their own family's needs. Retreats and workshops are sometimes planned to help them do their respective ministry jobs. An event of this type could be planned to help them in their family roles as well. When the leaders see the need and have the desire to grow in this area with their own families, they will be much more supportive of this type of ministry emphasis reaching out to the entire congregation.

Church Programs

Does that mean that a church needs to add a lot of programs to be family oriented or supportive to families? That is probably not where most churches should start. Churches that wish to be “family-friendly” certainly need to evaluate what they are doing in programs, schedules, activities and personnel. But they may not need to begin with a major house cleaning and renovation. “Family ministry is not something you *add* to your regular church program. It must be integrated throughout all that the church does, and this will mean that you expand and improve on the existing programs.”⁶⁸

Before making any changes, evaluate what you are doing as a church already. How could some minor adjustment make the present program more family-friendly? The church's structure and programs often set the family agenda.⁶⁹ Be sensitive to family needs as scheduling and programming take place. Try to use the programs that are

⁶⁸ Money, 101.

⁶⁹ Freudenburg, 45.

already in place to encourage and develop the positive assets that families need to be strong and healthy.

The major event that is part of every church's program is the weekend worship time. Is this an experience that the whole family participates in together, or does this event fragment the family? Do parents drop off their children for Sunday school and then attend worship by themselves (the children rarely, if ever, attending worship with their parents as a family)? What can be done, possibly with scheduling, to encourage families to worship together? When families do worship together, is the worship experience something that reaches everyone in the family or is it geared just for older children and adults?

Many churches have begun including a children's message in the worship time. Children are invited to come forward for a special story or object lesson shared by the pastor or another individual in the congregation. This should be planned well so that it is geared to the level of the children. It should be something that is special for them and that they enjoy. Sometimes including a song that the children know well can draw the younger ones into the worship and help them feel that they are a part of God's family, that they do belong.

The music that is chosen for worship might reflect a variety of styles. A family or group of families, on a rotating basis, might help in the picking of the music, or at least their favorite hymn or song. Family members with special musical ability can help in the accompanying of the music or in sharing special music. Occasionally a song can be used that would be appropriate for the children to accompany with rhythm instruments.

Involvement of children and families, working together in the planning of worship or in the music, provides an excellent opportunity for the family to develop some external assets in the “constructive use of time.”

The sermon should relate to people of all age groups. Keep the children in mind. Use illustrations that have application for a variety of types of families.

The Lord’s Supper can be a family event if those who are not yet confirmed are also encouraged to come forward to receive a blessing from the pastor. Children get to anticipate the mystery as they share in this experience with their parents.

Whole families can be enlisted to serve in helping with the details of the worship service. Family members can serve together as greeters, ushers, readers, or worship helpers. Prayers might include special prayers for specific families, mentioning each family member by name.

The church should not try to make all these changes at once. The pastor and elders might pick one or two things that will make the main worship service more family-friendly and work to initiate them. Sometimes a special worship service, like Christmas Eve, lends itself especially to be planned around the family.

Another program that most churches already have is the Sunday school/education hour. In most churches this is a time when families are divided into every age grouping imaginable. Congregations should ask themselves what they could do to make this experience more family-friendly. Teachers might ask for room mothers and fathers to help with attendance and classroom supervision. Classes offered to adults might include some parenting or marriage enrichment classes.

Summer time is a good time in some churches to try new things. The Education Committee might try an intergenerational class for a month or two, or as an optional class, during the summer. This type of class brings children, parents, grandparents, singles, people of all ages, together in one setting to learn and grow in God's Word together. A number of resources are available for teaching such a class.⁷⁰ If it is successful, the committee might decide to offer such a class during the year in the regular Sunday school schedule.

The Sunday school could offer a class for children under normal Sunday school age that is more than just babysitting. This class should be staffed by a responsible adult. It would allow parents of very young children to participate in the adult Bible classes that are offered.

The traditional Sunday school picnic is a great way to bring families together for fun and fellowship. Many churches still hold an annual Sunday school picnic. It might include things that will bring the generations together. Churches that do not hold such an event might consider sponsoring an old fashioned Sunday school picnic. Churches that do, might use this event to encourage families. They could consider holding a similar type of event quarterly, with variations to accommodate weather and facilities available.

Another program that most churches already have in place is their confirmation instruction. This may include only the seventh and eighth grade students. But in many

⁷⁰ Besides Bickel's and Larson's books, also consider Ron Brusius and Margaret Noettl, *Family Evening Activity Devotions* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1980), Group, *Family-Friendly Ideas Your Church Can Do* (Loveland, Colorado: Group, 1998), and Susan K. Perry, *Sharing Family Time* (Appleton, Wisconsin: Aid Association for Lutherans, 1998).

churches it includes younger grades as well. Some churches hold these classes on Wednesday or another weekday. Others schedule them for Saturday morning. Is there a way to make these classes more family-friendly? Could the whole family be involved with additional classes for high school youth and adults, and baby-sitting for the very young? On a weeknight the whole event could begin with a light supper with families eating together as families. Family devotions could be modeled and led with each family having some discussion and prayer as a family. Parents could be involved in the educational experience of their children by volunteering to be helpers in the classroom, or by being trained to help with individualized instruction.

One of the reasons that Martin Luther wrote his Small Catechism was to provide a tool for parents to teach their children the basic truths of God's Word in the home setting. Too often parents have abdicated that responsibility and have assumed that the church will provide all the religious education necessary for their children. Anything the church can do to bring the parents back into the process of catechesis would be a good thing. Parents often need a refresher in their own catechetical instruction. Encouraging parents to be part of the learning experience with their children, either by classroom participation or by at home assignments, could help strengthen the family.

Children with non-supportive parents should not be penalized if their parents choose not to participate. These children might be given adult mentors as surrogate parents who will help and support them through this special learning and faith nurturing part of their lives. High school youth could also be enlisted as mentors or tutors to work

with the Junior High or younger students providing caring relationships that help to build faith.

Many churches have a choir and a music program. How can this ministry be more family-friendly? By providing child-care, both husband and wife could participate. If choir is held at the same time as another event, such as mid-week school, that involves younger and middle grade children, the family can all be at church even if in different activities. High school students can be encouraged to join choir with their parents. Several musical activities could be held all at the same time (like adult choir, handbells, youth singing group, children's choir, baby-sitting).

All churches have meetings. This might be the area of greatest challenge when it comes to being family-friendly. Often churches will schedule meetings for every night of the week without consideration that many committed members of that congregation may have to attend several meetings during the week. "Is the kingdom built on the burned out shells of overworked laity? Official boards and committees ought to be encouraged to take a serious look at what we are doing in the parish: to laity, to families, to marriages, to the mission of the church."⁷¹ Family members cannot be gone every night of the week and still have time together as a family. Is it possible to schedule all meetings on one night of the week, freeing up the other nights for families to be involved in family activities? This would also help people prevent becoming over-committed. They would have to check their priorities and choose to be involved in only one committee or board at

⁷¹ Dunn, 164.

a time. Youth groups, women's groups, men's clubs, service organizations, and mission societies could also take one of these meeting nights each month so that the family is not splintered up further by these important activities and organizations. Having meetings on a set night each week can also keep a church's pastor and professional staff from being burned out with too many meetings.

Churches should not begin with the overwhelming task of revamping the whole program of their congregation to make it family-friendly. They can start with what they are already doing. They should evaluate the effect each program has on the family. Where they can make minor changes and improvements, these should be done to provide for a more family-friendly program. Where major changes need to be made, greater care and planning will help to introduce the change and provide for greater acceptance. The attitude of the leaders will be crucial for this kind of shift in vision and program.

Church Programs That Oppose the Family

As the programs already in place are being modified and adapted to make them more family-friendly, the leaders within the church should ask if there are any programs that are actually hurtful or antagonistic to the family. If Sunday evening seems to be a traditional family time in the community, the church might want to make a commitment not to schedule church events on that night, or to schedule only family oriented events on that night. If some events have been scheduled on this night in the past, they should be dropped or rescheduled at a different time that does not interfere with this family time.

There are very few programs within the church where the very nature of the program would be considered anti-family. But programs might become antagonistic to the family in other ways. Programs that require huge time commitments over a long period can take away from healthy family time. A multitude of meetings that go late into the night does not promote healthy family relationships. Programs that constantly split up family members and do not encourage or provide intergenerational or family member interaction might be re-examined and changed.

It is possible that a church will not need to drop any of its programs as it seeks to be more family-friendly, as long as it is willing to make some changes to accommodate greater sensitivity to the needs of families.

Adding Family Friendly Programs

Many churches look for new programs or better ways to do things. As a new program is considered, it should be evaluated on the basis of its support and help for the family. If it is not a program specifically oriented toward family ministry, is it one that is needed within the congregation? If it is, can it be adapted to become a supportive ministry to families, and placed in a schedule that remains family conscious? Can it help to provide the building blocks or assets that encourage healthy development of family members within their family?

If the congregation wanted to begin a mid-week, in-depth Bible study for adults such as Crossways, or Bethel, or Life Light, how could it proceed in a family-friendly way? These courses are excellent Bible studies and needed in our churches. We need to

be teaching the Word, especially to our adults, so that they will be better equipped to be teachers to their children in their homes. But these classes are geared for adults, not for intergenerational, family units. They could be adapted, however, to include whole families, maybe in small cluster groups or home Bible study groups. The classes might be scheduled on a night that is set aside for instructional purposes, that already has classes for junior confirmation, youth, and children. Babysitting might already be provided. Some minor scheduling changes might bring all the educational programs into one evening's activities. Although these courses were written for a two-hour time period in a mid-week setting, they can be adapted to a Sunday morning Bible class session. It may take a gifted teacher or an extended period of instruction beyond the normal length of the course, but it can be done.

Stephen Ministry, training lay people to be caregivers, is not specifically a family oriented or family-friendly program. It is a ministry, though, that is very helpful and important to the church as well as to the community. During the extensive training, a variety of topics are covered that will help the person to become a caring, listening, loving caregiver. These skills in communication, showing empathy and giving loving care to another, are skills that can be used in the home to build healthier family relationships. Stephen Ministers should be encouraged to practice these skills with their family members. As people are trained and commissioned to be Stephen Ministers, each one is assigned a care-receiver who may have a specific need for a caregiver and has requested a Stephen Minister. As help is given to the care-receiver, it is important to remember that this person is part of a family. Although the Stephen Minister is assigned

only to the individual, there may be some family needs that could be addressed. Getting to know the family situation can shed light on the care-receiver's situation. Meetings between caregivers and care-receivers are held in strictest confidence. However if a special need is expressed for the individual or for the family, and the care-receiver approves, this need can be shared with the pastor, elder or other agency that can bring some additional help to the individual or family.

As the church considers evangelism, how can it involve the whole family? It might consider providing babysitting for the very young while encouraging older children to go along on calls. It could send out callers as family units, especially when families with children need to be called on.

Family Connection, a ministry of Lutheran Family Association, which is part of the Department of Family Ministry, Congregational Services, the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, has assembled a huge three ring binder resource for congregations entitled, *Family Ministry Tool Kit*. The cover letter states, “This is a compendium of several hundred ideas and activities to enhance your ministry with families.” The book is divided into several areas: Worship Services; Prayer; Christian Education; School After Care and PTL; Activities for Your Family; Activities for Several Families; Workshops, Retreats and Festivals; Mentoring; and Year of the Family.⁷² This is an excellent resource for congregations desiring to add new programs or adapt their present programs to be more sensitive to the families’ needs.

⁷² *Family Ministry Tool Kit*, (St. Louis: Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, 1999).

Some churches have developed a special drama ministry. One church in Minnesota does an annual “outdoor living passion drama” for its community. The church has assembled a production guide and video to help other churches, wishing to begin this type of ministry, to get started. Their stated purpose is “to share Jesus Christ with our community.”⁷³

Other churches have developed extensive music programs. How special these programs could be if they were family focused and provided an opportunity for families to be involved together as a family! How encouraging it would be to families if these programs intentionally sought to build developmental assets for the families that participated!

Churches might even combine music and drama to form a family-based, healthy asset-oriented, ministry. Choosing a musical drama that involves children and adults in a positive way, people can be encouraged to participate with their whole family. Immanuel Lutheran Church in St. Charles, Missouri, involves people of all ages in its annual presentation of the *Boar’s Head Christmas Festival*.

A number of Christmas, Easter, or Life of Christ musicals would be appropriate for involving families in musical drama. A listing of some musical dramas is provided in Appendix 2. Babysitting could be provided with special activities for the younger children. Children in kindergarten to second grade could be in babysitting part of the time and learning the songs that they will sing part of the time.

⁷³ *Passion Drama: Production Guide for the Living Passion Drama*, (Alexandria, Minnesota: Zion Lutheran Church).

A guideline to encourage family participation might be to encourage children under high school age to participate, but only if at least one of their parents is involved. Parents and other adults who do not wish to sing or act can help with behind-the-scenes jobs like building sets, gathering and taking care of props, working with costumes, publicity and public relations, greeting the audience, serving as ushers, etc.

Practices could be scheduled for a two and a half to three hour block of time on Sunday afternoons with music sectional practices for the first half, plenary music practice for the second half, with refreshments and socializing, involving everybody, in between. After the music has been learned, acting, staging, and choreography can be added to the same basic schedule leading up to the performance dates. Extra rehearsals during the week leading up to dress rehearsal might begin with a pot-luck meal, or carry in meal, to provide for further fellowship that involves the whole family.

A positive ministry experience of this nature, which involves the whole family, can be an excellent time of faith nurturing for everyone. Many of the forty developmental assets from Search Institute can be encouraged and built up in the young people and families that participate.

Christian Family, The Church in That Place

The church is people, the people of God who have faith in Jesus. The church gathers together around Word and Sacrament. But the people are not just the church when they are gathered together in a building to hear God's Word and receive His blessings. They are also the church as they scatter to their communities, homes, schools

and places of employment. They continue to be the church as they carry the message of Christ's love for the world to their world.

A Christian family is the church in that place. They are to be church to each other, sharing God's love and forgiveness and encouragement with each other each day. They do not take the place of the gathering of God's people for corporate worship. In corporate worship they come as families to be fed and nourished on God's Word and in the Lord's Supper. Family does not replace that, and they should not try to be a church unto themselves. Families need other families for support and encouragement. But between times of corporate worship, God continues to touch us with His love as He reaches out to us through a brother or sister, a son or daughter, a husband or wife, a parent or grandparent.

Some authors speak of the family as the "domestic church,"⁷⁴ as opposed to the "gathered church."

The home, the domestic church, is the first place a child learns the basics of Christianity. 2 Timothy 3:15 is an account of a mother and grandmother teaching the faith to an infant; Timothy. The church must join with the family in teaching the faith, rather than the family solely relying on the church to impart spiritual principles to their children. In order for this to be done, a fair amount of re-education needs to occur. Families need to be identified as the primary church, and families need to be equipped and gently guided in sharing their faith within the home."⁷⁵

As the church helps its families to be strong and healthy, families will become the safe places and grace places they were meant to be. The church and the family, working

⁷⁴ Thompson, 119.

⁷⁵ Kathy Jackson, "The Home, The Domestic Church," A Resource Provided by LEA-TEAM, Fall, 1998, 2.

together, will both become places where faith in Jesus is formed and where that faith in Jesus is nurtured.

CHAPTER TWO

MUSICAL DRAMA IN THE CHURCH

Introduction

Every year Education Committees in congregations across our nation struggle with the issue of who is available and willing to direct the annual Christmas pageant. It is an important decision because “this tradition goes back as far as anyone can remember,” and “Christmas just wouldn’t be the same if the children didn’t put on their program.” Most of us can remember something about the Christmas programs in which we participated in our own childhood. We might even still remember the verse we recited, or we might remember singing a solo or reciting a special part. And certainly we have attended a program more recently, possibly including a star or angel from our own family.

One might not think of a group of kindergarten children all dressed up as angels with tinsel halos falling in their eyes, singing “Away in a Manger,” as musical drama, but that is the category in which it belongs.

The pageantry of the nativity play is very old, going back to the eleventh century when a dialog between the visiting shepherds and others at the stable was added to the introit for Christmas Day. Although this was acted out by the clergy and choir members, the involvement of children in telling the story today is a tradition worth keeping and worth doing our best to excel in.

But it is unfortunate that in most churches the privilege of re-enacting the nativity or other segments from the life of Jesus is left exclusively to the children. When does one

get too old to be in the pageant? Why can't adults continue to share their faith and the good news about Jesus' love through the medium of musical drama? Is there a place for musical drama, which involves adults or, better yet, which involves the whole families, in the church today?

Musical drama for the church is broader in scope and reaches much farther back into history than the annual Christmas pageant. Christian musical drama has grown out of the liturgy of the church as the church gathers in worship to relive the life of Jesus. The people of the Middle Ages, besides acting out the legends of saints and heroes, presented the various segments of the life of Jesus through their Nativity, Passion, and Easter plays. After the Reformation, Bach, Handel and others presented the drama of Jesus' life through the masterful art of their musical composition. Passion plays and other re-enactments of the life of Jesus continue to be presented today. Even the "secular world" gets involved with productions like "Godspell" and "Jesus Christ, Superstar." Composers write new music with dramatic scripts that present the life of Christ, or other Christian themes, for use in congregation or community. There are more and more opportunities today, not just for children, but for adults and families as well, to be involved with musical drama in the local congregation. There are opportunities for congregations to strengthen the faith and enrich the lives of the people and families with which they work through the use of musical drama.

The Roots of Musical Drama in the Early Christian Church

Where did it all begin? One can go back to the Old Testament. The children of Israel were commanded to celebrate the Passover each year in order to remember and give thanks to God for His salvation event, the freedom of Israel from slavery to Egypt. The meal was prepared as it had been on that first night. The drama unfolded as the script was followed, recounting the events of the first Passover where the angel of death killed the first-born of Egypt while God protected the families in the homes where the doorposts had been painted with the blood of the Passover lamb. The meal included the singing of hymns and the chanting of prayers.

When Jesus celebrated this Passover meal with His disciples, He changed the script. He was the true Lamb of God whose blood brings salvation, freedom from sin, to all who believe. He gave new meaning to the props that were a part of the old meal, saying, as He gave them the bread, “Take eat, this is my body,” and as He blessed the cup of wine and passed it to them, “Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.”¹ He said, “Do this, in remembrance of me,”² and the church has continued to celebrate the Lord’s Supper to this day.

In the liturgy, the words and music present the story. We, the congregation, are the participants, not in something that is make-believe, but in the only reality that really

¹ Matthew 26:26-28.

² 1 Corinthians 11:23-26.

matters – the living out of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus for us, and our own dying to sin and rising to eternal life through faith in Him.

In the liturgy, we are presented with different parts of the life of Jesus. We sing the song of the angels, praising His incarnation. We sing of the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world remembering His sacrifice for our sins. We sing of the feast of victory, His victory over sin and death, and we join with saints and angels in heaven to sing our “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of power and might.”

As the liturgy is played out week to week within the context of the church year, the congregation relives the life of Jesus. We begin in Advent, awaiting Jesus’ coming. We celebrate His birth at Christmas, the visit of the wise men at Epiphany and His glory throughout the Epiphany season. We travel with Him during Lent on the way of suffering and sorrows all the way to the cross. We give our attention especially to the suffering and death of Jesus on Passion Sunday and Good Friday. Easter Sunday and the season that follows find us rejoicing in Christ’s resurrection and ascension. Then we have the rest of the year to grow in Christ through the Spirit of Pentecost.

The liturgy is certainly dramatic, and some writers have used the term “drama” to speak of the liturgy itself. But in his book, *The Drama of the Medieval Church*, Karl Young defines drama as “a story presented in action, in which the speakers or actors impersonate the characters concerned.”³ The worshipper does not ordinarily impersonate the characters of the Biblical text, and so, using that definition, we would not refer to the

³ Karl Young, *The Drama of the Medieval Church*, 2 Vols. (Oxford, 1933), Vol.I, 80.

liturgy as drama. But it is out of this liturgical setting of the early church that musical drama for the church has grown.

A description of the worship ceremonies of the church in Jerusalem during the fourth century is found in *Peregrinatio Etheriae*. It shows

How an entire dramatic program could easily evolve from the realistic framework depicted, and from the manifest desire of clerics and people to recall and re-create the notable scenes in the life of Jesus Christ; there was a common wish to relive in spirit the events recounted by the Evangelists.⁴

In the fourth century the general population of the congregation participated in these re-enactments. By the seventh century these ceremonies had found their way to Europe, but they were carried out primarily by the church professionals.

Musical Drama in the Middle Ages

By medieval times in Europe, short pieces of drama were included in worship to supplement the readings and other parts of the liturgy. These amplifications of parts of the liturgy to introduce or explain or give further teaching and insight were called tropes. “Tropos was a musical term for a short cadence or melisma added to a syllabic melody. Later it referred to a purely textual addition to a chant or a new composition combining a new text with a new melody.”⁵

⁴ Richard B. Donovan, *The Liturgical Drama in Medieval Spain*, (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1958), 7.

⁵ Sandro Sticca, *The Latin Passion Play: Its Origins and Development*, (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1970), 19.

Many believe that the beginning point of religious drama is in the trope. These amplifications developed into musical dramatic additions to the liturgy. So, for example, on Easter morning “not only would a responsory be sung which told of the coming of the three Marys to the tomb, but shortly afterwards these same three characters would be seen and heard making their way to the ‘Sepulchre’, there to be confronted by an angelic questioner.”⁶

The Mass of Christmas Day included a group of singing shepherds, preceding the Introit, worshipping the baby in His mother’s arms at the manger, then singing in the choir. During Epiphany the three kings made their way from Herod’s palace to the manger following the star, carrying their gifts. Often there were rubrics for costumes, dramatic movements and gestures, solos, and impersonations.

One Easter trope, “Quem quaeritis in sepulchro”, which was sung antiphonally, was given rubrics in the tenth century that showed dramatic impersonation and action. “It was an addition to the liturgical service of the Mass of Easter. When the single dialogue is assigned to Marys and angels, with rubrics for action, the trope becomes a play, the ‘Visitatio Sepulchri.’”⁷

Because the drama of the life of Jesus became a part of the liturgy of the church, the liturgy might be called the cradle that carried the development of musical drama for

⁶ William L. Smoldon, *The Music of the Medieval Church Dramas*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1980), 10.

⁷ Sticca, 39.

the church. “For more than five hundred years drama and liturgy were interwoven in a venture of unique artistic and religious proportions.”⁸

This dramatic aspect of the liturgy carried over into the Lutheran Reformation. In 1526 Martin Luther presented his German Mass to his congregation in Wittenberg. The parts of the service, including the scripture lessons, were chanted or sung. Although not necessarily acted out, the lessons were treated as a script with different people taking the various parts. “For the Gospel Luther borrowed a feature from the traditional tone for the chanting of the passion. In the latter it was customary to have the parts of the evangelist, of Christ, and of all other persons sung by different clerics and on different reciting notes.”⁹

Along with the acting out of parts of Jesus’ life, which developed within the context of the liturgy, during the Middle Ages whole plays were written and acted out on the Nativity, the Passion and the Resurrection.

Some of the texts of Passion plays that have been discovered in the Western Church go back to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. It was once thought that two monastic texts coming from the monastery of Benediktbeuren were the oldest, but an older Latin Passion play from the twelfth century was discovered at Montecassino. These Passion plays have their beginnings in the tropes, but they have developed into full-length plays.

⁸ Smoldon, 10.

⁹ Ulrich S. Leupold, ed., *Luther’s Works*, Volume 53, *Liturgy and Hymns*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1965), 59.

Resurrection plays developed in the same way. The “Visit to the Sepulchre” grew out of the Easter Introit trope. It developed in three stages.

In surveying the numerous texts of the “Visitatio Sepulchre” it is convenient to recognize three marked stages in the growth of the play: one in which the dialogue is conducted by the Marys and the angel, a second in which are added the apostles, Peter and John, and a third which provided a role for the risen Christ.¹⁰

These plays, which were attached to the liturgy, are called “dramatic offices” while those which developed further and, “through literary sophistication and amplitude, seem alien to Church worship” are called “ludi.”¹¹

The use of music within drama is shown in another play from the Easter season called “The Journey to Emmaus,” which comes from the fourteenth century. The play has three parts, or scenes. In the first, Christ catches up to Cleophas and the other disciple on the road and they converse together as in the Gospel account of Luke 24:13f. The second part is sung by a chorus and describes the three coming to Emmaus and the two disciples persuading Jesus to stay with them. The chorus introduces the third scene, which takes place in the house and is pantomimed by the three. Jesus vanishes and then reappears to show “evidences of His return to the flesh. The disciples sing a Resurrection antiphon, and the performance closes with the ‘Magnificat’ and a liturgical prayer.”¹²

The first Nativity plays were actually patterned after the Resurrection plays. Like the Easter plays, the Nativity plays grew out of the tropes associated with the Christmas

¹⁰ Young, Vol I, 239.

¹¹ Ibid., 411.

¹² Ibid., 454.

liturgy, the shepherds singing the antiphonal responses as they worshipped at the manger. “That the indebtedness is upon the part of the Christmas trope is indicated sufficiently by the fact that the earliest extant texts of it, from the eleventh century, are decidedly later than the earliest texts of the Easter trope.”¹³

The texts of these plays were almost always taken directly from the Scriptures, but there were embellishments that were added, such as Mary’s lament and weeping at the foot of the cross when Jesus dies and then being comforted by the disciple, John. In the Nativity play that portrays the coming of the Magi, the number of Magi is established as three from the fifth century on, at least in the Western church, and by the twelfth century the three names, Melchior, Casper, and Balthasar are familiar and accepted.¹⁴

The scripts of the plays were sometimes carried to other monasteries and used in surrounding villages as a means of spreading the Gospel. “The development of ‘mystery’ and Passion Plays is probably a typical German development. Most of such originated in Southern Germany as Easter Plays. In the fourteenth century, the first Passion Play entirely in German was written. Southern France had a similar development in the fourteenth and Northern France in the fifteenth century.”¹⁵

¹³ Ibid., Vol II, 5.

¹⁴ Ibid., 31.

¹⁵ Raymond Tiffit Fuller, *The World's Stage, Oberammergau, 1934*, (New York: Robert M. McBride & Company, 1934), 5.

These Passion Plays continued into the time of the Reformation. Some have continued in the same community for centuries and several communities in the United States are well-known for their ongoing productions of the Passion Play.

The Passion Play of Oberammergau

The Bavarian village of Oberammergau has had a long tradition of presenting the Passion Play every ten years with few exceptions since 1634.

Oberammergau is located on the trade route between Italy and the East, and the rest of Europe. The town became known for the woodcarvings that were produced and sold there. In 1330, a monastery was founded at Ettal, an hour's walk from Oberammergau. The monks were welcomed by the people. They fostered the arts and shared their agricultural knowledge and the economy of the area grew. "The records attest that Oberammergau dwellers became notable for music, songs and dancing; loved colorful dress and decorated houses; won wide fame as carvers and sculptors – which notableness still persists."¹⁶ The village also had an interest in folk plays and religious drama.

Although parts of the text that were used date back to the fifteenth century, the first Passion Play in Oberammergau was presented in 1634 in "fulfillment of a vow made at a time of extreme suffering."¹⁷

¹⁶ Ibid., 4.

¹⁷ J. A. Daisenberger, *The Passion-Play at Oberammergau*, (Diessen Vor Munchen: Jos. C. Huber, 1930), 9.

The Thirty Years War (1618-1648) was taking its toll, but now the Plague was claiming even greater numbers than the war had taken. Although the Plague had devastated nearby towns, the watchfulness of the leaders of Oberammergau in keeping outsiders out of town was successful in sparing the town of the Plague, that is, until 1633. A townsman named Kaspar Schisler, who had been working in a nearby town, sneaked into Oberammergau to see his family. He carried with him the dreaded disease and after his death eighty-four people also died. The community of just over six hundred was devastated and the leaders gathered before the altar of the church and vowed that from then on the town would present the Passion Tragedy every ten years. "Immediately thereupon the deaths from the pest ceased and from that hour 'not another citizen has died of the pest.' In the following year (1634), pursuant of the vow, the Passion Play was presented for the first time."¹⁸

The monks at Ettal would have been a helpful resource to the people of Oberammergau. Their access to earlier scripts provided material for the writing of the first text used in their Passion Play. This text went through some revisions from decade to decade. It was presented in 1644, 1654, 1664, 1674 and 1680. After that it was most often presented at the end of each decade.

Because of a royal edict forbidding all stage productions on Biblical themes, the play was not presented in 1770. The edict may have been a result of some groups not using truly Biblical narrative or not agreeing with the official religious views of the time.

¹⁸ Dr. Franz X. Bogenrieder, *Oberammergau And Its Passion Play 1930*, (Munich: Knorr & Hirth, G.m.b.H., 1929), 61.

By 1780 a revised script was approved, and Oberammergau was given permission to present its play.

In 1810 Father Weiss produced the text that has been used into the twentieth century with only a few minor revisions.

The notable music, only lately a feature of the play, was the creation of a gifted local schoolmaster named Dedler in 1810. This music, of both chorus and orchestra, was not printed (and has not yet been printed except in small part), and Dedler's manuscript scores being destroyed by fire shortly afterward, it had to be reconstructed by him in toto before the next decade.¹⁹

The Passion Play presented in 1930 was scheduled for thirty-three performances between May and September; although if the theater was not large enough for the audience, it was to be presented again the next day. The play began at 8 a.m. and continued until 6 p.m. with a two-hour break at midday. The cast included fifty-five characters, the orchestra had fifty instruments, and the choir had forty-seven singers.²⁰ The play was presented four years later in 1934 to commemorate the three hundredth year of the Passion Play. For the most part, the cast was the same as four years earlier.²¹

The tradition has continued to this day. Last year many people traveled to southern Germany to witness the Passion Play at Oberammergau and relive the sufferings of Jesus as presented in this dramatic production.

¹⁹ Fuller, 8.

²⁰ Daisenberger, 5-8.

²¹ Fuller, 45.

The Development of Oratorios

While the Passion Plays were developing as something separate from the liturgy of the church, with the emphasis on the dramatic acting out of the story of Christ's suffering and the music being somewhat of a secondary concern, other forms of musical drama were developing with an emphasis on the music which carried the dramatic effects. These forms continued to be associated more closely with the liturgy of the church.

The chanting of the scripture readings in the worship service is a very old tradition, and during Holy Week the accounts from the Gospels of Jesus' Passion were chanted. In medieval times a different voice took the part of the evangelist, the part of Christ, and that of the crowd. "In Holy Week these recitations of the Passion story in Latin were appointed as follows: Palm Sunday, St. Matthew, Chapters 26 and 27; Tuesday, St. Mark, Chapters 14 and 15; Wednesday, St. Luke, Chapters 22 and 23; and Good Friday, St. John, Chapters 18 and 19."²²

At first traditional plainsong was used for the chanting. Then settings were composed in several parts for a chorus to sing the crowd scenes. "This type of setting is known as the Dramatic or Liturgical Passion."²³

This practice continued into the period of the Reformation and beyond. With the Lutheran Reformation and Martin Luther's translation of the Bible into German, composers of Passion music used Luther's translation for their text. They were concerned

²² Paul Steinitz, *Bach's Passions*, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1978), 2.

²³ *Ibid.*

about making the music such that it did not take away from the words of Scripture, which could still be heard and understood. The words of Scripture were considered to be the most important thing.

Another development in the seventeenth century became known as the Oratorio or Oratorio Passion. It included a sectional structure, dividing the story into two or three acts. It added the instruments of the orchestra to the soloists and chorus to play the parts of some of the voices and to accompany the solo voices. “The oratorio is named from the Oratory, or mission hall, in Rome, where from 1571 to 1594 sacred musical performances were held.”²⁴

The oratorio developed in Italy along with opera at the beginning of the seventeenth century.

It was created by the application of theatrical musical techniques to a sacred story. ...The first oratorio merged the forms and techniques of secular entertainment (three acts, continuo—accompanied monody—recitative, choruses and dances) with the circumstances of a devotional exercise.²⁵

Church authorities were often suspicious of this form of musical drama and, where they were able to control it, placed restrictions on such performances. Some restrictions in Rome included a ban on actresses, and so all female roles were played by men. When operas were banned during Lent, oratorios were sometimes still allowed. Professional actors and musicians would be able to find employment by participating in oratorios during Lent when they could not perform secular operas. For many in the

²⁴ Ibid., 3.

²⁵ Donald Burrows, *Handel: Messiah*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991) 1.

church it was offensive to consider the role of Christ being played by an actor. Changes were made to make the oratorio more acceptable. “Where any doubt about propriety or ecclesiastical approval was anticipated, oratorio could be distanced from its operatic origins by adopting a concert style without theatrical movement, and sometimes without special costumes or scenery.”²⁶

One composer during this period was Heinrich Schütz (1585-1672). He composed Oratorio Passions for St. Luke, St. John, and St. Matthew, and a fourth called “The Seven Last Words.”

This concise and beautiful piece sets the story in a composite version, drawn from all four Gospels, for chorus, five voices, various instruments and continuo. Four of the soloists provide Evangelists of varied timbre and pitch, and the fifth, tenor 2, sings the part of Jesus.²⁷

This Passion Oratorio, and those being composed at the end of the seventeenth century and beginning of the eighteenth influenced the Passion music of Johann Sebastian Bach.

The Passion Music of J. S. Bach

J. S. Bach wrote five Passions. Two have survived, and fragments of a third, the “St. Mark’s Passion,” have been found. The other two have not been found. “St John’s Passion” was first performed in 1724 and the “St. Matthew’s Passion” in 1729 (although there is some argument for an earlier date of 1727).²⁸

²⁶ Ibid., 2.

²⁷ Steinitz, 6.

²⁸ Ibid., 102-3.

Bach did not write for the theater but for his local congregation in Leipzig. These Passion Oratorios were written for the worship service, to be used in a liturgical setting. His Passions were not written to replace the simpler Passions used on Palm Sunday or Good Friday morning, but to complement them. Bach's Passions were written for the Good Friday Vespers service, which was a simpler service intended to focus on the preaching of God's Word.

Bach's Passions, therefore, were written specifically for this preaching service, and thus they are more expansive and rhetorical than the quasi-plainsong Passions, with the details of the Passion story being highlighted, commented on, and applied to the listening congregation in recitatives, arias, and chorales. They are indeed sermons in sound.²⁹

The Passions were written in two halves so that, between the two halves, a Good Friday sermon could be preached.

The words of the Passions were taken from the Scripture plus commentary on the Scripture. Chorales were used to give the congregation time to reflect and meditate on the events of the Passion. "Bach used these chorales not simply to give variety in a long and complicated setting of the Passion. They are there to draw the congregation into the drama so that they become participants rather than simply spectators."³⁰

The story told in the Passions ends with the death and burial of Jesus. After all, these were written for use at Good Friday Vespers. But the hope of the resurrection is not lost either. Bach ends the "St. John's Passion" with a chorale that is "a confident

²⁹ Robin A. Leaver, *J. S. Bach as Preacher: His Passions and Music in Worship*, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1978), 19.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 23.

statement of the resurrection life in which the believer will eternally praise the Savior.”³¹ He ends the “St. Matthew’s Passion” with a dance movement that carries the underlying mood of quiet hope “and the repeated ‘rest well’ looks forward to the reawakening of the Resurrection.”³²

Bach had written these Passions for use on Good Friday in his own local congregation in Leipzig. It was not until one hundred years later, when his Passions were revived, that they were prepared for public performance in the concert hall. It was Felix Mendelssohn who re-introduced the “St. Matthew’s Passion” in 1829, one hundred years after its first performance. The “St. John’s Passion” “had to wait even longer, until 1833, a hundred and nine years after it was originally heard.”³³ These Passions are performed and enjoyed still today, and many major cities have Bach Societies that promote the music of J. S. Bach.

Handel and His Oratorio: “Messiah”

Another dramatic musical masterpiece was written in the eighteenth century. “Messiah” was composed in England by George Frideric Handel. But unlike Bach who wrote his Passions for the liturgical setting of the worship service in the local congregation, Handel wrote this oratorio for the English concert theater.

³¹ Ibid., 35.

³² Ibid.

³³ Steinitz, 103.

Handel grew up in the German Lutheran Church, which had adapted the Italian oratorio form, with its recitative and aria, to religious texts. Moving to Hamburg in 1704, he would have become familiar with the Passions presented during Holy Week.

In these Passions the German church came closest to Italian oratorio, though they were never staged theatrically and were usually performed within a clear devotional or liturgical framework. It was this non-theatrical presentation that allowed a solo singer to take on the words of Christ in the biblical Passion narrative.³⁴

During his time in Italy from 1706 to 1710, Handel had direct contact with Italian oratorio and he wrote and performed several of these while he was there. Around 1716 he wrote “Brockes Passion” to be performed in Germany. “His experience of this passion-oratorio genre stood Handel in good stead when he came to set the Passion narrative in Part Two of ‘Messiah.’”³⁵

When Handel came to England, his career at first revolved around Italian opera, writing and performing on the public stage. He wrote his first English oratorio, “Esther,” which was later expanded in 1732 to a three-act piece comparable to the length of a normal opera. Oratorio remained on the periphery for Handel until 1738 when he wrote two more oratorios – “Saul” and “Israel in Egypt.”³⁶

In 1741 he was invited to produce a season at Dublin. It was during that summer that Handel composed the “Messiah” in little over three weeks time in August and September.

³⁴ Burrows, 2-3.

³⁵ Ibid., 3.

³⁶ Ibid., 4-6.

The text of the oratorio was compiled by Charles Jennens, a friend of Handel who also wrote libretti (texts) for others of the composer's large vocal works. The words come entirely from the Bible, both Old and New Testaments, though quite often liberties are taken with the text. The King James Version is the basis for all the passages used except those from the Psalms, where an older version in the Book of Common Prayer was followed.³⁷

The text describes the promise of a Messiah and the promise fulfilled in the birth, life and ministry, suffering, death and resurrection of the Messiah. Handel set the libretto to music without consultation with Jennens and took it with him to Ireland.

Handel had a successful season in Dublin but did not perform the "Messiah" until the spring of 1742, and then it was done as a charity performance. This was such a success that a repeat performance, this time not for charity, was presented.

With some controversy, "Messiah" was presented in London for the first time on March 23, 1743. The controversy was concerning whether oratorio was an act of worship that should be performed in a playhouse by actors, or whether it was entertainment that should be allowed to profane the name of God. Despite the controversy, "Messiah" was presented with much success.

Whatever the pressures from a section of London's religious community against "Messiah," they did not prevent Handel from completing his second subscription successfully with three performances of "Messiah," and one of "Samson," finishing on 31 March.³⁸

Handel continued to present "Messiah" each year at the close of his season, usually during Holy Week. He made some revisions and adaptations corresponding to the

³⁷ Roger A. Bullard, *Messiah, The Gospel According to Handel's Oratorio*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993), vii.

³⁸ Burrows, 29.

casts he was working with. “Handel finished his season at the same time every year with one or two performances of ‘Messiah’ (three in 1758-9), followed by an annual performance after Easter at the Foundling Hospital.”³⁹

Even with his failing eyesight after 1751 he continued to be involved with performances up to his death. “In 1759 Handel died between the ‘Messiah’ performance that closed his theatre season on 6 April and the Foundling Hospital performance on 3 May.”⁴⁰ The “Messiah” has continued to be sung and performed in concert halls, as well as in churches and chapels, to this day.

Bach wrote his Passions for use in the liturgical setting of the worship service during Holy Week. Handel wrote his oratorio for the concert hall but also to be presented during Holy Week as he finished his theatrical season. Bach kept to the liturgical constraints of Good Friday and did not include the resurrection, which would be celebrated in grand measures two days later. Handel and Jennens did not have the liturgy in mind but followed the three-act structure of the oratorio presenting the full account of Jesus’ life including His birth and resurrection. Neither composer produced a stage production that was to be acted out, but the drama of Jesus’ life and passion is experienced through their music and presentation in such a beautiful and magnificent way that one can truly call it musical drama at its best.

³⁹ Ibid., 38.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 39.

Musical Drama Today

Musical drama on the life of Jesus has continued to be written. In our own lifetime we have seen the production of two musical dramas on the life of Jesus coming from the theatrical stage that have met with great success. The production of “Godspell” (words and music written by Stephen Schwartz) and “Jesus Christ, Superstar” (words by Tim Rice and music by Andrew Lloyd Weber) were very successful but were met with much criticism from the church. Yet these plays continue to be produced by drama companies, school drama clubs, and even church groups (sometimes with revisions).

Concern has been raised about the rock style of music used in these musicals, claiming it is sacrilegious. Musical styles change. Christian rock music took time to be accepted, and there are still those who do not like it, but it is a style of music that is being used today to praise and worship God.

Concern has also been expressed over the liberties with the scriptural account taken in the scripts. Some have questioned the ending at the cross without mentioning or even implying the resurrection. This could be explained with the traditional Passion story of Good Friday ending with the crucifixion and burial, but considering the non-Christian source of these musicals, the motivation for their composition is suspect.

There are Christian sources for contemporary musical drama today providing excellent productions that can be used both in the church and on the stage. Christian publishers provide a seemingly endless list of musical productions, from short vignettes that can fit into the liturgical setting of the worship service, to full-length productions on various Biblical stories, including the life of Jesus (see Appendix 2).

There are musicals geared primarily for children, intended to be presented by children. There are others that are written for adults, with varying degree of musical difficulty, intended to be presented by adults. Some have been written specifically with families in mind, to include a cast of people of all ages. Some require experienced singers and actors; others can be done well by beginners and the inexperienced.

The market has been flooded in recent years with Christian musical dramas for children. We have had the Christmas nativity pageants for decades, and they continue to be a springboard for the development of other musical dramas for children in the congregational setting. Besides the Christmas nativity pageants with the traditional carols and reading of the Christmas story, new Christmas songs have been written, new settings of the familiar carols have been arranged, and the story is told in different, creative ways in order to tell the same beautiful story in a new, fresh way.

One Christmas musical may tell the story as the animals in the stable might have witnessed and interpreted it. Another may tell the story from the angels' point of view. One called "Baa Baa Bethlehem" tells the story from the point of view of the sheep on the hillside when the angels visited and sang of the Savior's birth.⁴¹ Another, called "The Perfect Gift," is about "three children caught up in the frenzy of buying at Christmas. As the story progresses, the children examine the meaning of Christ's birth, and discover that the gifts people give at Christmas are merely reflections of the Perfect Gift – God's own Son, given for all people."⁴²

⁴¹ Lynn Hodges, *Baa Baa Bethlehem*, (Nashville: The Benson Company, 1987).

⁴² Ellen Woods Bryce, *The Perfect Gift*, (Nashville: Van Ness Press, Inc., 1985), 2.

Along with these new Christmas musicals, there are children's musical dramas that tell the story of Easter. Others tell the stories of Old Testament characters such as Noah, Elijah,⁴³ the three men in the fiery furnace, and Daniel.⁴⁴ Many of the parables of Jesus are retold in modern settings or in make-believe settings, as, for example, the Prodigal Son is cast in an ant-colony with an earthworm and spiders taking on some of the roles.⁴⁵ Children's musical dramas have also been written to teach a moral lesson or to build faith in Jesus.

Some publishers have produced series of musicals for children, with a sequel coming out each year. This allows congregations and Christian schools to build on a general theme from year to year, often using some of the same props, stage settings, and characters. One series uses a singing songbook named "Psalty" to help children learn about singing praises to Jesus by teaching them the songs in his book.⁴⁶ Another series uses a computer named "Colby" that has been programmed to play and write church music to teach the children truths from God's Word.⁴⁷

There are Christian musicals written for teenagers, dealing with typical issues that face young people. Many of these musicals written for teens present a message that

⁴³ Larry Nestor, *God's Faithful Messenger*, A musical about the mission of the prophet Elijah, (Colorado Springs: Contemporary Drama Service, 1987).

⁴⁴ Grace Hawthorne, *It's Cool in the Furnace II*, (Waco: Word, 1984).

⁴⁵ Jimmy and Carol Owens, *Ants'hilvania*, (Canoga Park: Fairhill Music, 1981).

⁴⁶ Ernie Rettino & Debby Kerner, *Kids Praise*, (Costa Mesa: Maranatha Music, 1981).

⁴⁷ Peter & Hanneke Jacobs, *Make a Joyful Noise*, (Costa Mesa: Maranatha Music, 1985) and *Save Colby's Clubhouse!* (Costa Mesa: Maranatha Music, 1986).

speaks to people of all ages. These musicals are usually written in a Christian contemporary, Christian folk, or Christian rock style of music. One recent musical production presents the struggle of a youth group when two of its members are in a serious car accident and one of them dies. It shows the struggle of the parents, as well as the teens, as they come to grips with grief and as they try to see “The Big Picture” that God sees as He is at work in our lives even to use the bad things that happen to us for our good.⁴⁸

But musical drama is not just for children or youth. There is also a seemingly endless list of musical dramas available for adults. The classical settings of Bach, Handel, and others are still presented and enjoyed, both within the context of the congregation and also at the community concert hall. Other musical settings of the Passion, in traditional as well as in contemporary form, are available, and sung by church choirs during Holy Week, sometimes as part of the Good Friday worship service. Musical dramas that include the passion and the resurrection, as well as musicals on the whole life of Christ, have been written and published for use by adults.⁴⁹ Other Christian topics have been addressed through the musical drama setting including some musicals written especially for senior citizens.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Andy Stanley, *The Big Picture*, (Waco: Word, 1991).

⁴⁹ Jimmy & Carol Owens, *The Witness*, (Newbury Park, CA: Lexicon, 1978) & *The Victor*, (Waco: Word, 1984).

⁵⁰ Bob Woolley, *Saints Alive! A Musical for Senior Adults*, (Nashville: Triune Music, 1983).

The musical drama that can involve the whole family offers a unique opportunity for the church to provide a spiritual activity that can bring family members closer together. We live in a society that is tearing down the family, pulling the family in separate directions. Even the church contributes to this trend with segmented classes for people of all ages, fellowship groups based on age and/or gender, and a full calendar that pulls mom or dad or both parents away from the children for meetings and activities too many evenings each month.

When the church can provide an activity that involves the whole family, working together on a project or activity, encouraging each other, spending time together, the church can use that activity to strengthen the family unit and build up the family. A musical drama that can involve the whole family can accomplish these goals within the congregation.

Recently, a Christmas drama was written that could be used as a children's program but was specifically written to be "a Christmas Musical Drama for Children and Adults."⁵¹ It provides an opportunity for parents to be involved with their children and Sunday school teachers to present the story of Christmas. Two CDs are available to help with the production. One includes all the music with two sets of tracks, one with voices to use while learning the songs, and one without voices to be used in the presentation. The second CD includes the script, lyrics, music scores, leaders notes, and clip art. The purchase of these CDs gives copyright permission to print the scripts and service

⁵¹ Dean Nadasdy, *A Town Called Christmas: A Christmas Musical Drama for Children and Adults*, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2000).

bulletins. It is a fun musical drama for Christmas that can involve the whole family.

The production of a musical drama that involves the whole family may include some other goals, besides just involving families. A musical drama that presents the life of Christ,⁵² or the message of the Gospel in another setting, can provide an effective way for Christians to share their faith. As they learn their lines and the music of the play they can grow in their own faith and understanding of the Gospel. As they practice together they are witnessing to each other of the love of God. Members of the cast can invite their family, friends, neighbors, and co-workers to come and hear a message that might be difficult for them to share personally themselves. The words of the script and songs can give them the words and ideas to share even outside of the theatrical setting. After an experience of sharing the Gospel in the setting of musical drama, people can be strengthened and encouraged to share that message in their everyday lives.

Parents are also being an effective witness to their children as they work together in a musical production. Children can see that the things of the Lord – His Word, faith in Jesus – are important to their parents. Children learn by example. Many of the important things in life – like morals and faith – are not so easily taught but are rather caught by our children.

Musical drama provides a special opportunity to praise and worship our Lord. When it is musical drama that involves the family, all the members of the family have the

⁵² Jan Dargatz & Gary Rhodes, *The Promise*, (Waco: Word Music, 1989).

opportunity to worship their Lord together. It is important for children to see that worship is important to their parents.

Many times musical drama provides an opportunity for fellowship with other Christians that can bring Christian families and individuals closer together in the family of Christ. Within the context of the congregation, putting together a musical will help those families that are involved to get to know each other better. Families with children in the same age range may develop friendships that will last after the musical is over. Often working together on such a project will result in doing other things together as well.

Sometimes a musical drama can reach into the community for participation. New families in the community can be drawn in. Families from other congregations can get involved. Working together in a musical, families from different congregations can get to know each other better, making for better relationships between congregations and within the community.

Musical drama utilizes the gifts and talents of members of the Christian community beyond just gifts of music and acting ability. People with carpentry skills or artistic ability in perspective and artistic design are needed to build sets. Others are needed to work sound systems, operate the lights, sew costumes, and take care of other behind the scenes details. A person may not wish to sing, but can participate with the rest of his/her family by taking an acting role or helping behind the scenes.

People are needed to work with costumes. When the setting is in Biblical times, costumes are important to set the stage. There are books to help a costume committee

picture and plan for costumes of various people from Bible times.⁵³ Pattern companies provide patterns for the sewing of Biblical costumes. People will be needed to plan and sew the costumes that will be used.

People are also needed to set up and operate the lighting. Lighting effects can be very elaborate or very simply done. People with some lighting experience can add to the total production with their ability even though they may not be interested in singing or being on the stage in front of people.

The sound system also can be very simple if not much amplification is needed, or can be very complicated if most actors and soloists will need a microphone. Many of the musical dramas that have been published in recent years also include a sound track available from the publisher for use in the production. The use of a sound track eliminates the need for live accompaniment or orchestration. Some directors, however, might choose to use live music. This provides even more opportunity for people to get involved.

The more involved the production becomes, the greater the need for a director who is extremely organized and is skilled in working well with people. The director must help all the people involved in the production to work together. This person is often called upon to diffuse difficult personalities, and to organize and work with several different committees. One of the main tasks is to keep people focused on the ultimate goal of presenting the musical drama to the glory of God.

⁵³ Marion Logan Wright, *Biblical Costume: With Adaptions for Use in Plays* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1936).

Conclusion

Christian musical drama has a fascinating history but it also has a great potential as a ministry for the church today. People of all ages can get involved. Musical drama is not just for children and not just for use at Christmas. It is for everybody, and the topics and presentations are limitless.

Gifts and talents can be used for the glory of God and to help others come to faith and grow in that faith. The message of the Gospel can be shared in many different ways, ways that might reach someone who otherwise would not come to hear the message. The message of the Gospel is proclaimed also to those who are involved in presenting the musical drama, strengthening them in their own faith.

Churches, schools, and community groups should consider Christian musical drama as a project well worth the time, energy, commitment, and money. It provides a way for the church, especially, to help its members grow in their faith and to provide good developmental building blocks for families. Besides being a way to praise God and share His Word, it is fun, too.

CHAPTER THREE

MUSICAL DRAMA AT ZION LUTHERAN CHURCH, LITCHFIELD, ILLINOIS

Introduction

The musical drama ministry that began at Zion, Litchfield, was not originally intended to strengthen families. The first musicals that were done had several goals. These musicals provided a way for some of our members to use their gifts and abilities in music and drama in a church sponsored activity. Talents and abilities in music were quite evident within the congregation. Another avenue to use those abilities to give glory to God and to serve one another would be a good thing.

These musicals provided a way for people to grow in their faith. There were already many opportunities for spiritual growth through worship and Bible classes, but the musicals gave another, unique opportunity for growth. Because they were based on the life of Jesus, and drawn from the Scriptures, the script as well as the commentary found in the songs brought cast members and audiences into contact with God's Word in a way that they could visualize it happening in front of them.

The musical dramas provided opportunities for people to share their faith. Zion had an active evangelism program. Bible classes were offered to help members feel more at ease when talking to their friends about their faith. Here was another way for people to share what they believed.

The first musical dramas involved only adult participation. The desire and need for children and family involvement became more evident over the first few years. When a new musical drama was chosen for the fourth year, the goal of strengthening families

through this activity was a top priority. This musical would need to include children. Whole families would be encouraged to participate. The needs of families would need to be considered.

A brief account of the development of this program follows. A more detailed narrative history can be found in Appendix 3A.

A Brief History

During my first year of ministry at Zion Lutheran Church, Litchfield, Illinois, my wife, Alvina, and I, working through the proper channels, were given permission to begin a musical drama program. We enlisted the help of twenty-three other adults and began practicing the music and parts for a musical on the life of Jesus called *The Witness*.¹ The character of Peter tells the story of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, and how it affected the lives of the disciples. Through Peter's narration, the songs of the chorus, and the solos of other cast members, the Gospel message of what Jesus has done to save humanity is shared.

The musical was presented in the spring of 1989. Those who participated and those who came expressed a very positive evaluation of the experience and a desire to repeat the musical again the next year.

In the second year, the cast grew in numbers slightly, the number of performances was increased from two to three, and more publicity was done to invite the community

¹ Owens, *The Witness*.

and people from the surrounding area. Some changes were made to improve the production. Again, we were encouraged by the response of the audiences and the cast.

Our third year at Litchfield, we chose a different musical. *The Victor*² was a sequel to *The Witness* written by the same composers. It was also based on the life of Christ. After the production in the spring of 1991, the evaluations expressed a disappointment with *The Victor*. It did not have the same quality of music that we found in *The Witness* and the story line focused attention more on our victory over Satan and sin through our faith in Jesus than it did on Jesus' victory and what He accomplished for us. It was a musical with its emphasis on sanctification rather than justification. There is a place for that emphasis in a musical drama presentation, but we chose to look for a musical that would emphasize the Gospel message of what Jesus had done for us.

As we looked at new musical dramas for consideration for the next year's presentation, we also wanted a musical that would involve families. Our own boys were old enough to be involved, and we wanted them to share in this faith-enriching experience. We desired the same thing for other families, beginning with the families of those who had participated in the past three years. Many of these families had also expressed this desire. Some had also expressed a concern that this activity was taking time away from their family.

We found the musical we were looking for in *The Promise*.³ Much of the script is quoted directly from the Scriptures. The theme of God's grace in Christ – that we come

² Owens, *The Victor*.

³ Dargatz & Rhodes, *The Promise*.

to Christ through faith – is central. The words of the songs support this same message and the music that carries the words is moving. The added blessing of *The Promise* is that it included children, so whole families could participate.

It was also more challenging than the previous musicals we had done. The music was more difficult. It required more people in the cast. The staging was more elaborate, requiring additional people to help with the construction. Additional committees with support personnel were needed, especially in the areas of costumes and child-care. The blessing of these challenges was that family members who did not want to sing or act could find a place to serve and be involved along with the rest of their family.

We continued to present *The Promise* each year, building upon what we had done in the past, learning from our mistakes, making changes to improve upon what we had done the previous year, reaching out farther and farther from Litchfield both in our recruitment for the cast and chorus and in our audience participation. All the while, a major goal of the leadership was to provide a family-centered, faith enriching experience for people and their families.

In the summer of 1996 I accepted a call to Redeemer, Springfield, Missouri. That spring we presented the fifth production of *The Promise*, with over one hundred people in the cast and chorus and another forty people helping behind the scenes. The number of performances had grown to eight, presented over two consecutive weekends during Lent. Most performances were full to overflowing with more than four hundred in attendance at each presentation. The response of the audiences was very positive and encouraging.

Those who participated, from ushers to cast members to ladies who sewed costumes, expressed how they were enriched through the experience. Many shared how they had grown in their faith and their relationship with Jesus. Many expressed that this was a truly enriching experience for their families. They had seen their children grow in faith. Children heard their parents pray and saw them interacting in positive ways with other adults. The musical drama program had grown into a ministry of strengthening and enriching families through God's Word.

We encouraged the leadership of *The Promise* to continue providing this enriching ministry opportunity after we were gone. The organizational framework was in place. Gifted and talented people were available and wanting to continue their involvement. The leadership was in place to continue without us. They had some challenges and struggles, especially that first year, but they have continued to present *The Promise* each spring in Lent. This year marks the tenth year of *The Promise*. To celebrate, they have set aside one of the performances as an alumni reunion, inviting back all those who played major roles in the past ten years.

How Does One Choose a Musical Drama?

As listed in Appendix 2, there are a lot of musical dramas available from which to choose. There are children's musicals, high-school musicals, and musicals intended for adults to perform. There are musicals that tell the Christmas story, and some that tell the whole story of Jesus' life, death and resurrection. There are musicals that tell the story of

another Biblical person or one of the parables that Jesus taught. There are musicals that teach a Biblical truth or that encourage the living out of our faith.

In choosing a musical, one needs to consider the audience to be reached, the people available for the cast and chorus and their abilities, and the message that is to be presented. That message, and how it is presented, needs to be a primary concern for the director and those assisting the director in choosing a musical.

Because so many of the musicals that are available today come from publishers that are Reformed in their theology, it is important to review the script as well as the words of the songs to make sure that the message being presented is Scriptural and confessional. When the theme of a musical drama is within the area of sanctification, is the expression of our faith through acts of loving service motivated by the Law or the Gospel? If the theme of the musical centers around the life of Jesus, is His life presented as an example for us to follow, or as the perfect obedient life given for our atonement, so that through faith in Him we receive His forgiveness and His righteousness? If there are theological concerns with the content and message of the musical, are they fixable? Can they be edited easily? If major changes would need to be made, it might be better to find another musical.

The first musical drama performed at Litchfield, *The Witness*, was one that Alvina and I had participated in as part of the chorus a few years earlier. It presented the life of Jesus, as Peter might be retelling the story some years later. Jimmy and Carol Owens describe their musical in the Foreword:

“The Witness” was written for Christian singers to use as a tool in presenting the gospel. Many people who will not come and listen to it preached will listen to it

sung, a fact well recognized by those experienced in ministering through music. So, here is the story of Jesus, told and sung for you by Peter – “The Witness” – and the other men and women who knew The Master best.

These first disciples were no different from the men and women who have been following Jesus ever since; plain people, most of them, with jobs, families and responsibilities.

In “The Witness” we hear from Peter, the fisherman who made so many mistakes and yet became an apostle; from his wife, who suddenly discovers she’s married to a traveling man; Mary, the mother of Jesus, who shares the secret of finding favor with God; James and John, who begin to understand what the kingdom of God is really all about; their mother, who watches out for the welfare of her boys; and from the tormented Judas as he realizes that he has sold his own soul. We go with these people through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, and we learn with them how this Man’s life brought God’s salvation to the world.⁴

Already in the Foreword, a red flag goes up when Mary is described as “sharing the secret of finding favor with God.” When Peter introduces her, singing a lullaby to the baby, Jesus, he says, “I guess you could say she was the first New Testament believer, because she obeyed God and risked losing her reputation, her family, and the love of the man she was to marry. It took incredible faith and courage to do what she did.”⁵ It was not her obedience that made her “the first New Testament believer,” but her faith in God and His promises. Changing the line “because she obeyed God” to “because she trusted God” brings some clarity. God chose her because of His grace, not because of her obedience.

Later in the musical, Peter introduces Mary’s solo with these words: “If you want to know how to find favor with God you can’t find a better example than this lady. She

⁴ Owens, *The Witness*, 1.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 13.

knows the way.”⁶ We edited the line to read: “If you want to know how to respond to God’s grace and mercy...”

We had some concern about the song itself, and even considered leaving it out. Mary begins by asking questions: “How did I arrive? How did I come to be the one He chose to bless out of all the rest, why did He choose me?”⁷ Her answer in the chorus reflects what she told the servants at the wedding at Cana: “Whatever He says to you, do it.”⁸ By means of Peter’s introduction to the song we tried to place this in the context of a faithful response to God’s grace, and not the reason for God’s choosing of Mary.

The words of the song used in the upper room scene with the Last Supper include the words of Jesus: “This is My body broken for you, ...this is My blood poured out for you.”⁹ This song was used without any editing.

With these editorial changes we were able to use this musical. We asked the senior pastor, Rev. John Oberdeck, to read through the revised script to make sure we were not missing something. He provided doctrinal oversight and gave approval to the script with its revisions.

Two years later, when we considered *The Victor*, a sequel to *The Witness*, we again read through the script and the lyrics to compare them to Scripture and the

⁶ Ibid., 26.

⁷ Ibid., 27.

⁸ Ibid., 28.

⁹ Ibid., 63-4.

confessions. This musical begins with a song of praise to Jesus borrowing themes from Revelation and from the hymn, “Jesus, Jesus, We Adore You.”

In the narration that follows we are told of Jesus’ birth and death:

...crucified like a common criminal. While his family and friends grieved, his enemies, who had succeeded in having this innocent man killed, gloated over his execution, never dreaming that the life they thought they were taking was being freely given as an offering to pay for the sins of all mankind.¹⁰

The musical continues with Jesus’ Easter resurrection and victory over Satan. Then with the ascension, we are not left alone. Christ is still with us. He gives us his armor to fight against the forces of darkness. He gives us his strength to stand and to overcome temptation.

There was little editing that we did with this musical. We appreciated the quotes that were taken right from Scripture in the narrator’s parts. We did not use it a second year because we wanted something more like *The Witness*, retelling the whole story of Jesus’ life.

Looking for a musical for that fourth year, we read through and listened to more than a dozen musicals. Some were eliminated because the music was too difficult or not appropriate. Others were excluded because we did not like the method that was used to frame the life of Jesus, or present the story. Many were not considered because we did not agree with some of the basic theology, or the way Jesus’ words and actions were interpreted.

¹⁰ Owens, *The Victor*, 14.

When we read through and listened to *The Promise*, we were excited because it was true to the Scripture. When we saw it performed in Texas, we were encouraged by the way it interpreted the Biblical account. It presents Jesus as our Savior from sin and death. It is through faith in Him that we are forgiven and made righteous in God's sight. Further study of the script and lyrics uncovered only a minor concern that we edited.

At one point Grandpa, the modern day narrator who is telling the story of Jesus to his two grandchildren, explains why some people did not believe in Jesus or the things He was teaching. He says, "Jesus was preaching something that had never been preached before. He was preaching about a merciful God who wants to love each one of us personally. That was a brand new idea."¹¹ We didn't agree with that statement because the God who loves us in Jesus, His Son, is the same God Who has always loved us, and Who loved His people in the Old Testament in the same way. It wasn't a brand new idea that had never been preached before. But it was an idea about God that had been lost in Judaism. So we reworded Grandpa's lines: "Jesus was preaching something that the people didn't understand. He was preaching about a merciful God who wants to love each one of us personally. That was not how many of the people thought about God."

Over the years we added to the script, drawing additional material from the Scriptures. The commentary and reflective material found in the lyrics of the songs have also been taken directly from Scripture or reflect a theological and confessional understanding of Scripture.

¹¹ Dargatz & Rhodes, *The Promise*, 188.

The Promise: A Family-Centered Musical

When we began looking for a musical that fourth year, we also were looking for something that could involve the whole family. Our own two boys were old enough that they could participate. Jeremy had been involved in previous musicals as a sound technician, but we were interested in involving them, and other children, with the adults as actors and singers. Other adults in the previous musicals had suggested that we find a musical that could include children so that their whole family could be a part of this wonderful experience.

When we were introduced to *The Promise*, we quickly recognized that children played a large part in this musical production. Besides being part of the chorus, two children, serving as main characters, narrate the story with Grandpa. When we saw the performance in Texas, we were even more positive about how children, and whole families, could be a part of this musical.

Several things were done to make this musical family-centered and family-friendly. We added some new committees to help meet the needs of children and families. Several behind-the-scenes committees encouraged family members who were not interested in singing or acting to become involved.

This was the first year that we had a Baby-sitting Committee. Families with young children would not be excluded from this family experience, and young children could be a part of the whole experience through their involvement in the child-care service. We included children in Kindergarten and older in many of the chorus numbers and in some of the scenes. Those who were younger had structured activities together

with the baby-sitters. When older children (Kindergarten through fourth grade) were not on stage or in practice they had supervised activities with the baby-sitters. For some of the scheduled activities, such as devotions and refreshments, the children joined their parents to share that time together.

In recruiting and inviting people to be involved with *The Promise*, we encouraged whole families to participate. Some children were really excited about being in the musical. We required that at least one parent or older sibling participate with the child if the child was in eighth grade or younger. High school students could participate individually, but we still encouraged them to involve their parents and siblings.

We held practices on Sunday afternoons beginning in January. We practiced for two to three months, concluding with the performances a few weeks prior to Easter. This short-term commitment in the middle of winter was workable for most families. Sunday afternoons were already set aside by some families for family activities. They could participate in this event as a family unit.

Practices began and ended on time. People could count on promptness and were not just sitting around waiting for something to happen. They knew they could plan on other activities after the practice and that they would be able to get to those activities on time.

Being involved as a family did not mean that everyone in the family had to sing or act. Many committees needed help behind the scenes getting costumes ready, building sets, working sound and lights, ushering, and publicizing the performances. Parents, as well as children and siblings, offered to help on many of these committees.

The effect on the families was quite positive. We saw friendships develop between families, parents supporting each other with positive role models and encouragement for each other. High school age youth interacted positively with adults and with younger children. Family members worked together on an activity at church that intentionally reached out into the community.

Many families expressed their thanks for the opportunity to be involved in this activity as a family. They said that it brought them closer to their children (or their parents) to hear their children (parents) pray in the prayer time before performances. It helped them grow in their faith as they were able to share in this experience of Jesus' life and love together.

This had a positive impact on the congregation as well. There were some in the congregation who thought that our time and energy could be better spent on other activities, but the majority of the congregation supported the musical dramas as a ministry of the congregation. This was a way for the congregation to support and encourage its families. Families were enriched as they participated together in the production. Other families were also enriched as they came to the performances and shared in this experience of Jesus' life, death and resurrection for them.

Evaluating the Program

How does one measure the success of a program or ministry? We were pleased with the responses we were getting from the audience and cast members. We included surveys for audience members to fill out asking for suggestions to improve what we were

doing. These came back with very positive remarks. Some years we also surveyed the participants. These also came back with encouraging comments. Many people sent us thank you cards and letters expressing their feelings about their experience. Some of these can be found in Appendix 3C.

How does one measure the enrichment that is brought to families? Can the growth that takes place in a person's faith be measured? Can it be said that a family has grown stronger or is healthier because it was involved in a musical drama? These are hard, if not impossible, things to measure.

A survey of *The Promise* participants was conducted after the performances of Spring, 2000. The survey was based on twenty-five of the forty assets that Search Institute says are important for healthy families (see Appendix 1). Not all forty of these assets could be built or encouraged through a musical drama program, but we thought that twenty-five of them could. Even though this musical drama program did not specifically seek to build developmental assets in the participants, we believed that, because it is a family-oriented experience where whole families are encouraged to participate together, we would see positive results expressed on the surveys. Musical participants were invited to fill out the surveys and a representative sampling of seventeen forms were returned. These family members expressed positive growth in the twenty-five assets included on the survey. Results of the survey are summarized in Appendix 3D.

What were these twenty-five assets, and how did the musical drama experience contribute to growth in these assets? The participants were asked to respond to statements

representing each of the assets. They could strongly disagree, disagree, agree, strongly agree, or they could answer “uncertain.” Each statement was to be read in the context of “Because of our participation in this musical as a family ...”

In the list of forty assets, the first asset is “family support: family life provides high levels of love and support.” Number one on the survey stated, “Because of our participation in this musical as a family, the levels of love and support between our family members increased.” Fourteen of the surveys responded affirmative with “agree” or “strongly agree.” Only three expressed that they were “uncertain.”

In a musical drama, there are songs to learn, lines to memorize, cues to remember. Family members have opportunities to show love and support as they help each other learn lines and songs and remember cues. This happens at practice, as they help each other. It happens at home, in between practices, as they work together to learn the musical. Because the musical is about God’s love for us in Jesus, the message itself promotes an increase in the level of love and support they display toward each other.

The second asset is “positive family communication: parents and children communicate positively with each other.” Number two said, “Because of our participation in this musical as a family our family members communicate in more positive ways.” Twelve agreed or strongly agreed that they did, and five were uncertain.

Positive family communication includes asking for forgiveness and forgiving one another. This flows out of the grace and forgiveness we have from God through faith in Jesus and what He has done for us. Sharing in a musical drama that helps us grow in God’s grace should help families grow in their communication. Seeing positive

communication modeled between the director and the participants, and between other parents and their children, could help families communicate in more positive ways.

The third asset is “other adult resources: children receive support from non-parent adults.” Number three said, “Because of our participation in this musical as a family our children developed positive relationships with other Christian adults.” All seventeen responses were positive with agree or strongly agree.

In the musical drama setting, all cast and chorus members are working together on stage as well as off stage. Participants get to know each other quite well. Children get to know the adults and adults get to know the children. In many ways, it becomes one extended family and most interactions are positive.

The fourth asset is “caring neighborhood: children experience caring neighbors.” Number four said, “Because of our participation in this musical as a family our children experienced the care and support of other families.” All seventeen surveys responded positively with agree or strongly agree.

Children and adults interact in a positive way in the context of a musical drama program. Families also get to interact with one another. We found that many families continued to grow in their relationships with other families outside of the musical drama experience. Some took vacations together. Others went out for dinner together after practices. Many of these relationships have continued to the present.

Because the fifth and sixth assets are related to school climate and parental involvement at school we did not include these in the survey questions. The seventh asset is “community values children: children and youth feel that they are valued and

appreciated by their family and community.” Number five said, “Because of our participation in this musical as a family our children felt that they were valued and important.” All seventeen surveys agreed or strongly agreed with this statement.

Children played an important part in the musical drama. Besides the three main characters who were children – Jesus at the age of twelve, and the two grandchildren – children were involved in many of the scenes. They interact with Jesus when He blesses the children. They wave palm branches and walk along with Jesus as He enters on Palm Sunday. They are a part of the healing scene during one of the songs. They watch the crucifixion with the rest of the cast and they rejoice in the resurrection. High school youth also take many important roles. Their names are listed in the chorus and other roles that they play.

Asset eight is “children are given useful roles: children are included in family tasks and decisions and are given useful roles at home and in the community.” Number six on the survey said, “Because of our participation in this musical as a family our children and youth were given useful roles and responsibilities.” Sixteen responded that they agreed or strongly agreed. Only one survey response was uncertain.

The musical drama provided adults and children with important roles in singing and acting. We also encouraged families to involve their children when they took a turn at leading the devotions or providing for the refreshments. Children and youth often accompanied and helped their parents when they were working on the set or installing the lighting and sound equipment.

Asset nine is “service to others: children and parents serve others in the community.” Number seven said, “Because of our participation in this musical as a family we were given opportunities to serve others.” Sixteen agreed or strongly agreed, one was uncertain.

A musical drama that shares the Gospel message is prepared as a service to the congregation and the community. The whole project was viewed and often talked about as one way we could help others who would come to see the musical. We also had many opportunities to help each other. Responding to these opportunities to serve was encouraged with the motivation that Christ gave himself in service to us.

Asset ten is “safety: children feel safe at home, at school, and in the neighborhood.” Number eight said, “Because of our participation in this musical as a family we feel safer and more secure in our family and congregation.” Fourteen surveys answered that they agreed or strongly agreed, three were uncertain.

Getting to know other people and families from the congregation and the community can help a person to feel more at ease and comfortable in that setting. Those who worked with the baby-sitting were organized and showed genuine concern for the children in their care. Children were safe and well supervised, and parents could concentrate on learning their parts and participating in their roles without worrying about their children.

Assets eleven, twelve and thirteen deal with boundaries at home, in school, and in the neighborhood and were not included on the survey. Asset fourteen is “adult role models: parents and other adults model positive, responsible behavior.” Number nine

said. “Because of our participation in this musical as a family our children saw their parents and other adults model positive, responsible behavior.” Sixteen agreed or strongly agreed, but one was uncertain. The one that circled “uncertain” added a note: “Some were positive, unfortunately some were negative.”

Children observe how their parents and other adults interact with each other. They learn from observing these role models. A musical drama setting, with Christians working together to present a Christian witness through song and script, provides an excellent opportunity to model positive, responsible, Christ-like behaviors. Negative behavior may also be observed at times for all are still sinners dealing with the old Adam within us. Negative behavior needs to be confronted in love, so that repentance and forgiveness can take place. Children can learn and grow in these situations also.

Asset fifteen is “positive peer interactions: children interact with other children who model responsible behavior and they have opportunities to play and interact in safe, well-supervised settings.” Number ten said, “Because of our participation in this musical as a family our children were with other children who modeled responsible behavior.” Fifteen agreed or strongly agreed and two were uncertain. One uncertain response added, “Some were, some were not.”

The baby-sitting offered a safe, well-supervised environment for the children to play and interact with one another. Children also interacted with each other informally during refreshment time and before and after practices. They worked together on learning their lines and music and playing out their parts in the drama. Most of the time this was

very positive. When irresponsible behavior was displayed, it was handled in a loving way by those responsible, or turned over to the parent to deal with the matter.

Asset sixteen is “expectations for growth: parents and other adults encourage children to achieve and develop their unique talents.” Number eleven said, “Because of our participation in this musical as a family our children and youth were given encouragement and support.” All seventeen responded with agree or agree strongly.

Children as well as adults were encouraged to develop and use their talents and abilities in this musical drama. Singing and acting abilities were certainly encouraged and developed. One father who got involved with the musical asked if we had an acting part for a tree because he did not think he could do much except stand there. After a few years of working with the music and trying a few minor acting roles, he auditioned for and received the part of one of the disciples who had a small solo part along with his lines. He carried out the role quite well. Other skills and talents were also needed and encouraged in people as they were recognized.

Asset seventeen is “creative activities: children participate in music, arts, or drama several hours each week.” Number twelve said, “Because of our participation in this musical as a family we experienced a creative activity together.” All seventeen agreed or strongly agreed.

The great thing about fulfilling this asset for families through family-centered musical drama is that the children are involved in this creative music and drama activity for several hours each week together with the parents and the rest of the family. And it is

not just a creative activity, it is a creative activity that helps the spiritual growth and health of the children and their families.

Asset eighteen is “child programs: children spend one hour or more each week in extracurricular school or structured community programs.” Although the musical drama setting would provide for the development of this asset, it was not included specifically on the survey.

Asset nineteen is “religious community: family attends religious programs or services for at least one hour each week.” Number thirteen said, “Because of our participation in this musical as a family we experienced a spiritual activity together.” All seventeen responded with agree or strongly agree.

The musical drama practices and performances were never intended to take the place of worshipping together on Sunday morning where God’s blessings are received in Word and Sacrament. Rarely did families make a choice between Sunday morning worship and Sunday afternoon practice. In fact, worship attendance was encouraged because of the relationships developing between participants. Attendance at worship services was also encouraged as the chorus sang some of the musical numbers in some of the services preceding the performances. Along with time together in worship, the practices and performances served as additional time together in a spiritual activity.

Asset twenty is “positive, supervised time at home: children spend most evenings and weekends at home with parents in predictable and enjoyable routines.” Number fourteen said, “Because of our participation in this musical as a family we spent positive

time at home working together.” Only thirteen agreed or strongly agreed and four were uncertain.

Homework and practicing together at home was not specifically assigned but it was anticipated that families would use some time at home to work together to help each other learn lines and music. This probably did not happen a lot. But even if the musical provided an occasional opportunity for families to work together at home, singing the music together, or helping each other to learn lines, it provided a positive time for developing this asset.

Assets twenty-one through twenty-five involve commitment to learning and are centered on activities at school. These assets include “achievement motivation, school engagement, homework, bonding to school, and reading for pleasure.” Although commitment to learning is a big part of the setting in a musical drama, it is not centered in the school setting and so these assets were not included on the survey.

Asset twenty-six is “caring: children are encouraged to help other people.” Number fifteen said, “Because of our participation in this musical drama as a family we became more committed to the value of helping others.” Only twelve agreed or strongly agreed while five were uncertain.

As people are involved so closely with the caring and loving of Jesus, witnessed and expressed in a musical drama about His life, they should, themselves, become more committed to the value of caring and helping others. That does not always happen. But as the Holy Spirit works through the Word, even the Word that is part of a musical drama, He helps us to become more like Jesus.

Asset twenty-seven is “equality and social justice.” In some settings of a musical drama program this asset might be developed. It was not included in our survey.

Asset twenty-eight is “integrity: children begin to act on convictions and stand up for their beliefs.” Number sixteen said, “Because of our participation in this musical as a family we were encouraged in our convictions and were helped in expressing what we believe.” All seventeen responses were agree or strongly agree.

This asset especially was developed and encouraged through our musical drama. Several participants shared that it was hard for them to share their faith with their friends because they didn’t know what to say. Through the musical drama, they learned to talk about their faith more freely. It was easy to invite their friends to the performance. Together with the rest of the cast and chorus they could witness to their faith in Jesus. This opened the door to talking about their faith later with their friends.

One participant worked for a company that was owned and operated by people who were Jews. He occasionally would get into discussions about the differences between Christianity and Judaism. They were curious about his involvement in the musical and supported his participation. This gave him the opportunity to share his faith and, in talking about the plot of the musical, to witness to who Jesus is and what He has done for us.

Asset twenty-nine is “honesty.” Although this was certainly encouraged and developed indirectly through positive peer interaction, and supervision of caring adults, it was not included in the survey.

Asset thirty is “responsibility: children accept and take personal responsibility for age-appropriate tasks.” Number seventeen said, “Because of our participation in this musical as a family, family members were enabled to accept and take personal responsibility.” Fourteen agreed or strongly agreed, and three were uncertain.

There are many things to be done to carry out a musical drama successfully. Besides various duties and responsibilities that committees are seeking help with, each person is responsible for learning his/her part and remembering his/her cues. Working together with other family members everyone can learn to accept and take personal responsibility.

Asset thirty-one is “healthy lifestyle and sexual attitudes.” As with honesty, these values are encouraged through positive peer interaction and caring adults. This asset was not reflected in the survey.

Asset thirty-two is “planning and decision making: children and young people learn how to plan ahead and make decisions.” Number eighteen said, “Because of our participation in this musical as a family, family members developed skills in planning ahead and making choices.” Thirteen agreed or strongly agreed. Four were uncertain.

A musical drama involves a lot of planning ahead and organization. Although the director takes this responsibility initially, all the participants must also do some planning with their own schedules to make sure that dates are cleared on their calendars for practices and performances. A commitment was asked of each participant to try not to miss any practices, and definitely to be at all dress rehearsals and performances. This

required each person, every family, to plan ahead and to make appropriate choices when conflicts came up in the schedule.

Asset thirty-three is “interpersonal competence: children and youth interact with adults and other children and youth showing development of empathy, sensitivity, and friendship skills.” Number nineteen said, “Because of our participation in this musical as a family, family members developed empathy, sensitivity, and friendship skills.” Sixteen agreed or agreed strongly. One was uncertain.

Working together on a project like a musical drama with so many families and people involved provides many opportunities for making friends. There are also misunderstandings and hurt feelings, providing opportunities for showing empathy and sensitivity as a friend. When audition results are announced and someone doesn’t get the part he/she had hoped to get, a good friend can offer comfort and support. Events take place in our families and at school or work that bring us down. These feelings are a part of us when we come to practice. A good friend or family member can encourage us. These opportunities are abundant in the context of a musical drama program.

Asset thirty-four is “cultural competence.” In a different community with more diverse cultural, racial, and ethnic backgrounds represented, a musical drama could be an excellent tool for building this developmental asset. The culture is not diverse in Litchfield and so this asset was not included on the survey.

Asset thirty-five is “resistance skills: young people can resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations.” Number twenty said, “Because of our participation in this musical as a family our children developed skills in resisting negative peer pressure

and avoiding dangerous situations.” Thirteen agreed or strongly agreed. Four were uncertain.

The environment of a musical drama ministry provides the positive influence of adults and other young people who love Jesus and care about each other. The Word of God that is shared in the devotional times and that is the central content of the musical itself works to create and strengthen faith within the participants. Even though this asset may not have been intentionally developed within our young people and families, the setting provided opportunities for all of us to grow stronger in our faith and to trust in God’s help to resist temptations and negative pressures in our lives.

Asset thirty-six is “peaceful conflict resolution: children and youth seek to resolve conflicts nonviolently.” Number twenty-two said, “Because of our participation in this musical as a family our children observed how to resolve conflict in a more peaceful way.” Fourteen agreed or strongly agreed. Three were uncertain.

With a musical program that involves about 150 people, there are bound to be some conflicts. People do not always like the way the director is leading. Participants may not agree with each other or see things eye to eye. People bring their own family and work problems with them to practice and may be irritable because of something that happened earlier in the day or the week. Different personalities see things and work at things in different ways. There are going to be conflicts. When those conflicts are resolved in positive, Biblical ways, everyone benefits, especially children and young people who are watching and may even be involved. The leadership worked hard to

resolve any conflict that arose within the leadership team. They also made sure that any conflict between the participants was brought to a peaceful resolution.

Asset thirty-seven is “personal power: children and youth learn to manage frustrations and challenges in ways that have positive results for them and others.”

Number twenty-one said, “Because of our participation in this musical as a family, family members were encouraged to handle stressful situations in more positive ways.” Thirteen responded with agree or agree strongly. Four were uncertain.

Besides the stress that comes from conflict, there were frustrations and challenges for everyone as the deadline of dress rehearsal and performance dates came closer. Lines and lyrics had to be memorized. Staging cues needed to be learned. Children and adults alike felt the pressure. Then came the pressure of the performance itself, being on stage in front of all those people. We encouraged everyone to plan ahead and not be overwhelmed by the last minute details. Being a great organizer, Alvina, as director, did a lot to help people deal with these kinds of frustrations and challenges. The leadership after Alvina’s departure continued to help participants grow in this area.

Asset thirty-eight is “self-esteem: children and youth have a healthy self-esteem.” Number twenty-three said, “Because of our participation in this musical as a family, family members grew in self-esteem.” Sixteen agreed or strongly agreed. Only one was uncertain.

The most healthy self-esteem comes from knowing that God loves us and has chosen us to be his own children, redeeming us from sin, death and the devil, through the death and resurrection of Jesus our Lord. We are special to God. We are His valued

people, not because of who we are, but because God demonstrates how valuable we are by redeeming us by the blood of Christ. That was the message of the musical drama itself. It was the message that was shared and lived out at each practice and rehearsal. It was the message that the leaders tried to model, that we encouraged parents to model for their children.

Asset thirty-nine is “sense of purpose: children and youth have a sense that their lives have purpose.” Number twenty-four said, “Because of our participation in this musical as a family, family members felt a sense of purpose.” All seventeen agreed or strongly agreed.

Chosen by God to be his children, He places us into His body, the church. Just as our own bodies have many parts, each one important, all of them working together, so in the church we have different gifts of service to each other, each one important, all working together. This is also true in a similar way in a musical production. Each person, young or old, on stage or off, singing, acting, or ushering, is important to the total success of the musical. Each job, big or small, has a purpose in accomplishing the final outcome. We tried to help each person see the importance of what he/she was doing in the musical production. We also tried to help each person see that he/she was important to the Lord and the fulfillment of His mission for the church.

Asset forty is “positive view of personal future: children and youth are hopeful and positive about their personal future.” Number twenty-five said, “Because of our participation in this musical as a family our children have a more optimistic view about

their future.” Only eleven agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. Six were uncertain.

Having the assurance from God’s Word and promises that our future is secure, that when we die we will be with Jesus in heaven because of His love and grace for us received through the faith the Holy Spirit has created in us, should give us a very positive view of our personal future. Knowing that Jesus is with us each day, to love us and forgive us, and to give us the strength to follow him, should give us a positive view of our personal future. The setting of the musical drama ministry provided this message of hope and assurance to all who participated.

Several of these assets were provided directly and intentionally. The musical drama provided a creative activity in music and drama, and a spiritual activity, for families to participate in together. The setting offered an environment where most of the assets could be developed and encouraged in an indirect way.

Besides surveying participants’ evaluation of the growth of these developmental assets, we asked some open-ended questions. The responses to these questions can also be found in Appendix 3D. The responses were very positive. The musical drama experience had enriched their families in many ways.

Number twenty-six asked, “Has this experience enriched your family? If yes, how?” Sixteen responded with a yes and shared some of their reasons. Only one responded “not applicable.” A reason for this response was not given by the person. However, it may be that this person’s immediate family did not participate.

The responses reflect some of the developmental assets. Family members could work together on a common goal. Family members shared a positive, creative, spiritual activity together. Family members could work together in theater and serve God while doing it. It provided the family a way for witness and outreach to others. It was one project that involves the whole family. Many referred to the time spent together – drawing closer to each other in their families and drawing closer to God through the Scriptures – as being beneficial to their families.

Number twenty-seven asked, “What would you change to make this experience more family-friendly?” Most surveys said “nothing.” A few added a comment urging the leadership to continue encouraging family involvement and the participation of children.

Number twenty-eight asked, “Has this experience helped you and your family to grow in your faith? If yes, how?” Two surveys did not respond at all. The other fifteen all said “yes” and gave a variety of answers. These include several responses that said the Biblical text that was the basis for the script helped to strengthen their faith. Some referred to the opportunities to share their faith with others in this special way. Others commented that sharing this experience with their family and with other Christians helped their faith to grow.

Number twenty-nine asked a question about leadership. We believed that it was important to have the right people in leadership roles. From John Maxwell’s book, *Developing the Leader Within You*,¹² we took a list of leadership characteristics and

¹² John Maxwell, *Developing the Leader Within You* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1993).

asked participants to rate their importance for leadership roles in the musical drama ministry.

There were seven characteristics that we listed. A leader should be influential: creating positive change, energetic, resilient, and flexible, with a good reputation. A leader should be priority minded: prepared, a schedule keeper, organized, self-disciplined, self-controlled, and responsible. A leader should possess integrity: be honest, value driven, hungering for growth and personal faith development. A leader should be a problem solver: creative, able to see solutions and fix problems, with an absence of personal problems. A leader should have a positive attitude: with a good self-image and a sense of humor. A leader should be people sensitive: intuitive, with personal warmth and people skills. A leader should be vision minded: a dreamer, ministry minded, seeing the big picture for the group and ministry.

On the surveys, all seven characteristics were rated “somewhat valuable” or “extremely valuable.” One person added a comment stating they all were important, and that “true Christian love and commitment to sound Scripture representation is very important.” Another person shared that her family involvement led to all of the family members being involved in various leadership roles.

I know that I do not possess all these characteristics needed in a leader. I am thankful that many of the organizational skills that I lack are Alvina’s strong areas. Because of this, we are able to work well together as a team. We also try to surround ourselves with other leaders who have many of these leadership qualities.

The last question, number thirty, asked people to share personal experiences from their participation in the musical. These comments are shared in Appendix 3D.

Conclusion

The musical drama program at Zion, Litchfield, developed into a ministry that intentionally sought to be family-centered. It continued to be a ministry of the congregation with goals of sharing the Gospel and reaching out into the community. The goal of strengthening the faith of individuals and their families continues to be a priority. By providing a ministry activity that enriches and strengthens families by encouraging the development of developmental assets the church helps its families. Through the means of grace, especially the Word of God learned and shared in a musical drama, faith is strengthened and nurtured. Through this ministry, the church nurtures the faith of its members and reaches out into the community to share that faith with others. Through this ministry, the church enables families to be places where faith is nurtured and grows. Parents are encouraged and equipped in their task of raising their children in the Lord. Parents and children learn to help each other as together they grow in their faith.

CHAPTER FOUR

DEVELOPING A PLAN FOR MUSICAL DRAMA AT REDEEMER, SPRINGFIELD, MISSOURI

Introduction

What does it take to start a musical drama ministry in a church that has never done anything like that before? How can it be done so that it is a ministry that intentionally seeks to strengthen the family? Can it provide opportunities for families to develop the positive assets or building blocks identified by Search Institute that make for healthy families (see Appendix 1)?

The musical drama project at Zion Lutheran, Litchfield, Illinois, started small. As it grew we learned from our mistakes. We kept building on the past experiences and improving the plan in any way we could. We did not begin with the purpose of enriching families but we saw how this was happening, and families became a big priority in our purpose and planning.

The communities of Litchfield, Illinois, and Springfield, Missouri, are very different. What worked in a small, rural town might not work in a larger city. Besides, Branson, Missouri, with all its musical shows and theaters, is less than an hour from Springfield, and people are accustomed to go there for professional productions. *The Promise* was already in its second successful season at one of the theaters in Branson when I assumed the position as associate pastor at Redeemer Lutheran Church, Springfield.

Each congregation is different also. Although both churches had about the same size membership, Redeemer in Springfield was growing in membership at a faster rate. It

had many programs and activities in place. The youth were involved in some drama activities related to the worship services, which they planned and led a few times each year. The choir and music ministry was under the capable direction of a music director, who was not real excited about the possibility of losing people to a musical drama ministry, or fragmenting people between two major musical commitments. The expectation for me was to work with these programs and ministries, not to start new ones.

The Church's Desire to Support Families

In spite of that, there was a growing desire to see more help given to families. Some people in the congregation saw the need to support families so that the church could continue to grow and become stronger. They wanted to find ways that the church could help families develop the tools they need to be places where each person can grow in his/her faith and Christian walk.

A study program called "Faithful Christians, Faithful Congregations" had been conducted at Redeemer the spring before my arrival. It came out of the Search Institute in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The study included a series of events and surveys taken with our congregational members. When the study was concluded, a booklet was published entitled, *Voices of Faith: A Portrait of Congregational Life For Redeemer Lutheran Church.*¹ This was a "report on the faith, commitments, and perceptions of members of

¹ *Voices of Faith: A Portrait of Congregational Life for Redeemer Lutheran Church*, (Minneapolis: Search Institute, 1996).

Redeemer Lutheran Church, Springfield, Missouri.”² Some interesting needs were expressed through this booklet. In the area of “Support for Families” only 58% of adults surveyed said, “The congregation intentionally strengthens family life.”³ The percentage was higher, 66%, for those in ages 20 to 29, but it was lower for the youth responses, only 51%.⁴ Responding to the statement, asked of parents only, “The congregation helps parents learn how to nurture the faith of their children,” the percentages of agreement were even lower: 26% of all adults (60% for those ages 20 to 29).⁵

I began working with some of the members who were concerned about these expressed needs. We attended some workshops on how to make our congregation more family-friendly. We began to offer more Bible classes on Sunday morning to provide additional small group opportunities for our people. Several of our classes were geared toward the family. We organized several specific Bible study groups that were targeted at parents of children within a certain age group.

While some of these things were developing, I also began to talk with those leading adult education and family life ministries about the possibility of a family-based musical drama. We did more talking than planning at first, but the idea caught on, and after a few years it was time to begin doing some planning.

² Ibid., i.

³ Ibid.,34.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

We started by setting some goals for this new musical drama ministry. We wanted it to be family-centered. We wanted to answer the cry for help expressed in the *Faithful Christians, Faithful Congregations* report. One of our goals would be to intentionally strengthen family life. We would do this by providing, directly and indirectly, the opportunity of families to grow in some of the forty developmental assets identified by Search Institute as important for healthy, strong families (see Appendix 1). We also believed that we could strengthen family life by involving the extended family, several generations of some families.

Another goal would be to help parents learn how to nurture the faith of their children. We would accomplish this by encouraging and modeling good patterns and attitudes in the leadership of the musical and by choosing a musical drama whose theme and message would help parents learn to nurture the faith of their children. The musical drama setting itself would provide opportunities for parents and children to grow together in their faith.

A final goal was to involve some families who were on the fringe and not very active in our congregation. We would intentionally invite some families who were new to the congregation, and families who were not involved in the Sunday school and adult education programs on Sunday morning.

We had a vision of what this musical drama ministry could become. Now we needed to choose a musical drama.

Love Will Be Our Home

What musical could we do that would be family-centered, strengthen the families who participated as well as those in the audience, and model healthy ways for parents to nurture the faith of their children? *The Promise* was already being done professionally, two times a day, six days a week, just forty miles away in Branson. It would not work to try to do that musical at Redeemer. Besides, that would be too much of an undertaking for Redeemer's very first musical drama. There were other musical dramas on the life of Jesus, but that was not the direction we wanted to go this time. We kept looking, asking people who might know of a good musical if they had any suggestions.

Then, from two separate places at the same time, we received the suggestion of *Love Will Be Our Home*,⁶ a musical drama about the family. Alvina was in Seward, Nebraska, for two weeks, taking some classes at Concordia University in the Master of Science in Family Life Ministry program. One class she took was taught by Rev. Roger Sonnenberg from Our Savior Lutheran Church, Arcadia, California. He talked about the family-based musical drama that had been done in his congregation, how it had been a great experience for so many of the congregation's families and how they were going to be presenting it at their church's district convention the next year. Alvina wrote down the information: the name, the writer, the arranger, and the publisher.

About the same time, Alvina and I were talking with our school principal and his wife about our desire to do a family-based musical drama. They told us about a musical

⁶ Claire Cloninger, Nancy Gordon, & Gary Rhodes, *Love Will Be Our Home* (Waco, Texas: Word Music, 1991).

they had done in a previous congregation that had been a great experience for the families who participated, as well as for those who attended the performance. They had a copy of the music and script as well as a listening cassette, which they loaned to us. It was the same musical that Alvina had heard about in her class, *Love Will Be Our Home*.

Alvina and I listened and followed the script. We needed to ask some pointed questions about the script and lyrics. The message was very family-centered, encouraging families to be strong in God's Word, sharing some good patterns for parents who want to nurture the faith of their children. But what about the theological assumptions, the doctrinal foundation of the musical? Just because two other Lutheran churches had performed this musical and the leaders were recommending it does not mean that it is doctrinally correct as it is.

Published by Word Music, we could not just assume that it was written from our confessional Lutheran understanding of Scripture. How did the message of the musical divide Law and Gospel? Are we in a right relationship with God because of what we do – our decision, our efforts, our obedience – or because of God's grace, shown to us in Jesus Christ, received by faith in Christ alone? As we grow in our faith within the context of family – which is really an area of sanctification – is the emphasis placed on motivation from the Law and obedience, or motivation from the Gospel and response to God's grace?

We listened and read through the musical again with these questions in mind. We were satisfied that this was a well-written musical. The theological message was that families are God's design and that He is with us in our families to help us grow. He is

there in the hardships and difficult times, in the conflicts and separations, to strengthen us and bring us through as we trust Him. He has rescued us from sin through the blood of His Son, Jesus. Through faith in Him we are restored to His family and there is restoration and reconciliation made possible in our families.

There were a number of prayers included in the script and lyrics that did not need any revision. In one of the scenes, where family and friends are making tributes to the Andersons at their fortieth anniversary, we made a slight change. A neighbor lady was thanking the Andersons for their witness to her, the evidence of their faith in the way they prayed and lived their lives. She said she went home and cried and prayed her first prayer. We changed just a few lines in her script so that there would be no possible way to misunderstand what she said as decision theology: that she had chosen to believe in Jesus or was asking him to come into her heart and life.

The script and lyrics were a little weak in the area of means of grace. The message was clear that God would strengthen families in their difficult times. His Spirit would empower families to hold on through the dark times. No mention was made of Word and Sacraments as the means used by the Spirit to do this. We added a few lines to bring this emphasis out more clearly. When the Andersons are looking at pictures of their baby granddaughter, Amy, they comment on how much she has grown. Then they recall that it has been several months since seeing her at her baptism. When Kate encourages her brother, Bryon, who is separated from his wife, Beth, and their son, Neale, she says, “God can help you find your way back to each other. I know He can. ...He’ll strengthen

you.”⁷ Simply adding the words, “through His Word,” helps to identify the means that God uses to work in our lives. A few other simple edits like this created a better understanding of how God is there for us.

We listened to the cassette again and began to sing along. We were convinced that this was the right musical for us to present. It was family-focused with a message of hope and encouragement for families, as they trust in the Lord. The music was not too difficult and yet it was exciting and uplifting. We noticed that Gary Rhodes, who had arranged the music for *The Promise*, had also arranged the music for this musical.

I phoned the publisher, Word Music, to see if we could order the books and the sound track. I was informed that it was out of print and no longer available. I was given some names and phone numbers of dealers who specialized in out-of-print materials. Calling these numbers produced little results. I was also given the phone number for the copyright permissions office where I inquired about the cost for permission to copy the songbook that we had borrowed from our principal. That cost was expensive, and they would not be able to grant permission for two songs that had been used by permission from Steven Curtis Chapman and Sparrow Music.

About the same time, Alvina was looking for a piece of music for her choir at school. It also was out of print. One of the resources for locating out of print material that she learned of was High Country Music in Tennessee. This company serves as a clearing house and exchange program for churches, dealing especially in out-of-print music.

⁷ Ibid., 82.

Through its networking system churches can find music they are looking for that another church may have. The same churches can loan the music they are not currently using to other churches. High Country also accepts donations of music that churches no longer want. When High Country has the music that a church might be looking for, it sends this music out to the churches for the cost of shipping and handling. An annual membership fee is charged to churches wishing to take advantage of this service.

We contacted High Country to see if they had the music that Alvina needed for her choir. That particular piece was not in stock but a search would be made through their Internet network and we would be notified. If another church in the communication network had the music and responded, we would be able to borrow it.

We asked about the music for *Love Will Be Our Home*. Someone had just sent in a box with thirty books that were no longer needed at his/her church. High Country would ship those out to us for the cost of shipping. Also, an accompaniment compact disc was available that we could purchase. Additional copies of the book were located in Rhode Island, and we borrowed those copies and shipped them back after the production. We got permission from the publisher, paying the required charges, to copy the music on cassette for rehearsals.

Getting Started

Some organizational planning was done before the first practice: schedule was approved, families were recruited, and music was ordered. Alvina agreed to serve with

me as co-director. Many of the announcement sheets, the schedule, the program, and the evaluation can be found in Appendix 4.

Because this was something new for the congregation, the first musical drama ever attempted, we did not open it up to the general public, or even to the whole membership of our congregation. One of our goals was to strengthen families. We wanted whole families to be involved, to see this as a family project, something they could do together. We decided to recruit ten to twenty families of differing configurations, with a variety of ages. We also intentionally invited some extended family groupings to participate.

To keep this activity family-friendly, not wishing to add one more thing to an already busy family schedule, we considered practicing on Sunday morning during the education hour. Involving some families who were not involved in Sunday school or Bible class, we hoped they would develop some positive relationships with other church families. We also hoped they might develop some healthy Sunday morning patterns that would continue after the musical was over.

We invited some families who were actively involved in the Sunday morning education hour as well. We wanted their strong voices. We also wanted their positive example. We felt that they would be helped and strengthened in their families through this experience. Because we knew that they would be positive models of how parents nurture faith in their children, they would be a help and strength to the other families. We got some criticism for pulling adults and children out of their Sunday school classes to do a musical.

This wasn't for a lengthy time, though. We started practice in January and the musical was presented in April. We kept our main practices on Sunday morning, but as the musical drew closer, we needed several Sunday afternoon practices to pull it all together. Along with the learning of music and lines, we incorporated a devotional time into each practice to help our families grow together in God's Word.

We involved fifteen families with a total of thirty-nine people in the cast and chorus. A few non-singing/acting family members and friends helped with lights and sound. We had a couple practices for just the adults, allowing the ten children who were involved to return to their Sunday school classes for that Sunday morning.

The Plot

We held auditions for the solos and acting parts. The characters included a mailman who served as a narrator sometimes and bridged the space between some of the scenes. The other characters were George and Miriam Anderson and their family. George and Miriam (or Mimi) were getting ready to celebrate their fortieth wedding anniversary and they looked forward to the whole family being home for the occasion. Kate was their oldest daughter who was single and lived in Washington, D.C. Robin was their next daughter who was married to Gary. They had three children, the oldest of the grandkids: Rusty, Sean, and Lauren. George and Mimi's son, Bryan, and his wife, Beth, were having some relationship problems, and their son, Neale, was caught in the middle. Their youngest daughter, Rachel, was married to Stan, and they had a little baby girl, Amy. The rest of the chorus filled in as friends and neighbors as needed.

The songs and script center around the theme of growing up in a home where love is present, especially the love of Jesus. As the family prepares to come home for the anniversary celebration, they write letters to Mom and Dad, and to each other. These letters are delivered by the mailman. Each person is introduced as he or she is writing a letter and proceeds to speak the words of that letter. Each person writes home, but they also write to each other, and in the process we get a glimpse into this family. We see that they love each other, and that they love God and want to follow him. But we see that there are stresses in their lives, and that there are struggles to communicate and conflicts to resolve in relationships.

As each of the grown children make plans to come home with his/her own family, each life situation is shared with the audience through letters and songs. Each one is planning to come home, but Bryan is unsure because he and Beth are separated at the moment, trying to work out their conflicts. Older sister, Kate, writes to Bryan with some comfort from God's Word, encouraging him and Beth to trust in the Lord to see them through this. With the help and forgiveness they have in Christ Jesus, they can make it.

When the celebration does take place, Bryan and Beth arrive separately, and late. They are there, though, and a reunion takes place, not only of the Anderson family but also of Bryan and Beth, and their son, Neale. There are songs celebrating God's love and His gift of marriage and family, and Dad Anderson prays a prayer thanking God for all His blessings in Christ Jesus our Lord. Before the final song many of the family members offer a sentence prayer thanking the Lord for enabling them to love with God's love, for

His promises and His Word that has sustained them through the difficult times, and for the gift of families.

The Performance

We presented the musical only one time, on a Sunday afternoon. But we had publicized it well. The cast members had invited many people and the attendance in the church was very good.

The musical was presented in the main sanctuary. The new church sanctuary had been built with a large raised chancel area for the expressed purpose of allowing the flexibility to have plays, children's musicals, and other programs there.

Some from the cast built a simple set the week before, ready for our dress rehearsal on Saturday. The congregation had its worship services there on Sunday. Working around the set that took up most of the chancel, we encouraged the whole congregation to come back in the afternoon for the musical.

Everything went well. Both the audience and the cast were moved to tears as they experienced the feelings and emotions of people in conflict, and the healing touch of God's love and forgiveness. Many from the audience expressed disappointment that we were not giving a second performance, for they would have loved to bring a friend to see it a second time. Many of the cast members asked if we could present it again. Some of the musical numbers were sung by the cast later in the spring at the Mother/Daughter Banquet.

The offering taken at the musical was exactly enough to cover all of the expenses (see Appendix 4). We announced that anything left over after expenses would be put toward the purchase of our own traveling spotlight. We had rented two for this production from a local theatrical rental company. Although we did not have money left for that purpose, a member of the congregation approached me later and said she would like to donate whatever it would take to purchase two spotlights.

Many families were enriched through this musical drama experience, both those who participated in putting the musical together, and those who attended the performance. In an indirect way the whole congregation benefited as families within our church family were strengthened and enriched.

Enriching Our Families

Forty Developmental Assets from Search Institute

One of the things we intentionally wanted to do with our musical drama was to build and support some of the assets or building blocks of healthy families identified by Search Institute in its work with families (see Appendix 1). Of these forty assets that contribute to healthy families, we identified twenty-five that we felt could be encouraged and improved upon within our participant families, either directly or indirectly, through their participation in the musical. We consciously worked to provide opportunities for growth in some assets, while other assets we hoped would develop just from the experience of working on this project together as a family. At the end of the presentation we asked each participant to fill out a survey to help us identify how this experience

helped his/her family to grow in some of these developmental assets. Twenty-two evaluation forms were returned by thirty-nine participants. Some families filled out their evaluation together on one form. Responses to the questions were notably positive with the majority of feedback rating items with 4 (Agree) or 5 (Strongly Agree). The summary of the survey can be found in Appendix 4.

Asset one is “family support: I feel loved and supported in my family.” Number one on the survey said, “Because of our participation in this musical as a family the levels of love and support between family members increased.” Eighteen responded agree or strongly agree, four were uncertain.

The songs and the message of the musical encouraged a supportive, loving family environment. We encouraged the same in the practices. Although we began practicing with people sitting in their musical section and not as families, once we began to block the scenes, we encouraged families to be together. Extra activities, like a pot-luck dinner and a spaghetti dinner, brought families together. We encouraged families to work on music and parts together at home. Parents were encouraged to help their children learn their parts.

Asset two is “positive family communication: I can go to my parents for advice and support. We talk with each other often about many different things, including serious issues.” Number two said, “Because of our participation in this musical as a family our family members communicate in more positive ways.” Sixteen said they agreed or strongly agreed. Six said they were uncertain.

The characters in the drama modeled good communication. Alvina and I as leaders sought to model good communication. In our devotions we talked about communication and in our prayers we asked God to help us grow in this skill. The experience in the musical drama helped many of the families to grow in positive communication with one another.

Asset three is “other adult relationships: I know at least three adults (besides my parents) I can go to for advice and support.” Number three said, “Because of our participation in this musical as a family our children developed positive relationships with other Christian adults.” Everyone agreed or strongly agreed.

One real positive aspect of working in a Christian musical drama is the positive support one gets from getting to know other Christians. The positive encouragement that children receive from getting to know other adults is so important. We were able to provide that for the families that participated in the musical.

Asset four is “caring neighborhood: My neighbors give me support and encouragement. They care about me.” Number four said, “Because of our participation in this musical as a family our children experienced the care and support of other families.” Twenty-one agreed or strongly agreed. Only one was uncertain.

Although we were not working specifically with the geographic neighbors of our families, we provided the opportunity for families within our congregation, neighbors of a sort, to get to know each other better and to support one another in the task of raising their children and nurturing their faith.

Asset five is “caring school climate: My school is a caring, encouraging place to be.” Asset six is “parent involvement in schooling: My parents are actively involved in helping me succeed in school.” We did not try to influence the school climate or the parental involvement at school so we did not include these assets on the survey.

Asset seven is “community values children: I feel valued and appreciated by adults in my community.” Number five on the survey said, “Because of our participation in this musical as a family our children felt that they were valued and important.” Everyone agreed or strongly agreed.

Children were valued. They were important, not just to their parents but to the leadership and the other adults of the musical. They had special roles to act out in the play. Even if they did not play the role of a special character, there were important things that they were asked to do.

Asset eight is “children given useful roles: I’m given useful roles and meaningful things to do in my community.” Number six said, “Because of our participation in this musical as a family our children and youth were given useful roles and responsibilities.” Twenty-one agreed or strongly agreed. Only one was uncertain.

As stated above, even the children were given special parts and important responsibilities. They were excited to be included and carried out their responsibilities.

Asset nine is “service to others: I do an hour or more of community service each week.” Number seven said, “Because of our participation in this musical as a family we were given opportunities to serve others.” Everyone agreed or strongly agreed.

Presenting the musical to the congregation was in itself a service to the congregation and community. But even before the presentation, there were many opportunities to help each other within the musical cast. We also worked as a group to serve one of the Lent suppers on Wednesday evening before worship. Children helped. Whole families were involved.

Asset ten is “safety: I feel safe at home, at school, and in my neighborhood.” Number eight on the survey said, “Because of our participation in this musical as a family we feel safer and more secure in our family and congregation.” Nineteen agreed or strongly agreed. Three were uncertain.

We provided a place of physical safety for our families. We also made it safe for children and adults to express their faith, to ask for prayer for themselves and others, to pray out loud, and to be themselves.

Asset eleven is “family boundaries: My family has both clear rules and consequences for my behavior. They also monitor my whereabouts.” Asset twelve is “school boundaries: My school has clear rules and consequences for behavior.” Asset thirteen is “neighborhood boundaries: My neighbors take responsibility for monitoring my behavior.” Some aspects of setting boundaries and monitoring children’s behavior did take place in the course of the musical practices, but these were not included in the survey.

Asset fourteen is “adult role models: My parents and other adults in my life model positive, responsible behavior.” Number nine said, “Because of our participation in this

musical as a family our children saw their parents and other adults model positive, responsible behavior.” Twenty-one agreed or strongly agreed. Only one was uncertain.

Working side by side with their parents, children got to observe the attitudes and behavior of their parents. In the context of a Christian musical drama, this was mostly positive. Children could also observe the behavior of other adults. Because of the families who participated we were confident that the behavior modeled would be positive and responsible.

Asset fifteen is “positive peer interactions: My best friends model responsible behavior. They’re a good influence on me.” Number ten said, “Because of our participation in this musical as a family our children were with other children who modeled responsible behavior.” Everyone agreed or strongly agreed.

The children involved varied in age but there was a least one other child close in age for each child who participated. All the children interacted with each other. They were able to make some new friendships and strengthen existing friendships. They encouraged each other in positive healthy ways.

Asset sixteen is “expectations for growth: My parents and teachers encourage me to do well.” Number eleven said, “Because of our participation in this musical as a family our children and youth were given encouragement and support.” Twenty-one agreed or strongly agreed. Only one was uncertain.

All participants, including children, were encouraged to do well, to learn their part, sing their solo, say their lines. People who needed extra help were given extra

attention and support. Everyone was able to succeed and do an excellent job with their part.

Asset seventeen is “creative activities: I spend three or four hours each week in lessons or practice in music, theater, or other arts.” Number twelve said, “Because of our participation in this musical as a family we experienced a creative activity together.” Twenty-one agreed or strongly agreed. Only one was uncertain.

Some of these children and youth were already involved in practicing a musical instrument for band or handbell choir at school. This provided another creative activity and they could participate together with their parents and siblings.

Asset eighteen is “child programs: I spend three or more hours each week in school or community sports, clubs, or organizations.” A musical drama ministry could fit under this category but we did not include this asset on the survey.

Asset nineteen is “religious community: I spend one or more hours each week in religious services or spiritual activities.” Number thirteen said, “Because of our participation in this musical as a family we experienced a spiritual activity together.” Twenty-one agreed or strongly agreed. Only one was uncertain.

The musical practice was not meant to take the place of the worship service. Because it was held on Sunday mornings, our families had better church attendance during the months of our practices. They attended worship together receiving God’s blessings in Word and Sacrament. The practices and performance were an extra spiritual activity that families were able to participate in together.

Asset twenty is “positive, supervised time at home: I go out with friends with nothing special to do two or fewer nights each week.” Number fourteen said, “Because of our participation in this musical as a family we spent positive time at home working together.” Sixteen agreed or strongly agreed. Four were uncertain. Two disagreed.

Although we made no specific homework assignments, we did encourage families to work on lines and music at home, to help each other learn the parts and the music. Some families did this and benefited by building another asset of spending positive time together at home. Others lives were too busy already and it was impossible for them to add another assignment to an already full schedule.

Asset twenty-one is “achievement motivation: I want to do well in school.” Asset twenty-two is “school engagement: I like to learn new things.” Asset twenty-three is “homework: I do an hour or more of homework each school day.” Asset twenty-four is “bonding to school: I care about my school.” Asset twenty-five is “reading for pleasure: I spend three or more hours each week reading for pleasure.” Although commitment to learning was encouraged through the musical drama experience, these assets are centered around the school and so they were not included on the survey.

Asset twenty-six is “caring: I believe that it’s really important to help other people.” Number fifteen on the survey said, “Because of our participation in this musical as a family we became more committed to the value of helping others.” Fifteen agreed or strongly agreed. Five were uncertain. Two disagreed.

In the setting of the musical practices we were constantly working together, helping one another, giving encouragement and support. We did not give specific

instruction in the value of helping others but it was being modeled constantly by leaders and other adults.

Asset twenty-seven is “equality and social justice: I want to help promote equality and reduce world poverty and hunger.” This asset was not included in the survey.

Asset twenty-eight is “integrity: I act on my convictions and stand up for my beliefs.” Number sixteen on the survey said, “Because of our participation in this musical as a family we were encouraged in our convictions and were helped in expressing what we believe.” Seventeen agreed or strongly agreed. Five were uncertain.

Because the musical was about families, the expression of faith was not as explicit as in the musical on the life of Jesus. Yet we did express some strong convictions about families and how God desires to bless and strengthen families.

Asset twenty-nine is “honesty: I tell the truth – even when it’s not easy.” This important asset was certainly encouraged and taught in the context of the musical but it was not included on the survey.

Asset thirty is “responsibility: I take personal responsibility for my actions and decisions.” Number seventeen on the survey said, “ Because of our participation in this musical as a family, family members were enabled to accept and take personal responsibility.” Nineteen agreed or strongly agreed. Three were uncertain.

Families were expected to be at all the practices. When scheduling conflicts came up they had some hard choices to make. Sometimes people missed with no valid excuse. They had to work harder to catch up and it held back the rest of the group. With

gentleness but firmness we tried to hold people accountable to their commitments and recognize the consequences of their decisions.

Asset thirty-one is “healthy lifestyle and sexual attitudes: I believe that it’s important for me not to be sexually active or to use alcohol or other drugs.” Positive peer interactions and influence from other adults helps to build this asset, but we did not include it in the survey.

Asset thirty-two is “planning and decision making: I’m good at planning ahead and making decisions.” Number eighteen on the survey said, “Because of our participation in this musical as a family, family members developed skills in planning ahead and making choices.” Fifteen agreed or strongly agreed. Seven were uncertain.

Working on a musical production involves planning and scheduling. Families were required to clear their calendars for Sunday practices, and for the extra rehearsals, the dress rehearsals and the performance. By being organized as leaders, starting on time and ending promptly, giving clear announcements that were written out for people to take and keep close at hand at home, we tried to help everyone plan ahead and avoid conflicts in their schedules.

Asset thirty-three is “interpersonal competence: I’m good at making and keeping friends.” Number nineteen said, “Because of our participation in this musical as a family, family members developed empathy, sensitivity, and friendship skills.” Seventeen agreed or strongly agreed. Five were uncertain.

Working together in this musical children and adults alike had the opportunity to grow in their interpersonal skills. We encouraged each other and prayed for each other.

The plot of the musical itself modeled positive ways of caring for each other in the family. Many friendships were begun or strengthened as we worked together.

Asset thirty-four is “cultural competence: I know and feel comfortable around people of different cultural, racial, and/or ethnic backgrounds.” As important as this asset is, we did not have the occasion to develop it in this setting. It was not included on the survey.

Asset thirty-five is “resistance skills: I resist negative peer pressure and avoid dangerous situations.” Number twenty on the survey said, “Because of our participation in this musical as a family our children developed skills in resisting negative peer pressure and avoiding dangerous situations.” Twenty agreed or strongly agreed. Two were uncertain.

We did not directly teach for this asset, although our positive encouragement would have helped to build this asset. We provided positive peer interactions and positive support from adult.

Asset thirty-six is “peaceful conflict resolution: I try to resolve conflicts nonviolently.” Number twenty-two said, “Because of our participation in this musical as a family our children observed how to resolve conflict in a more peaceful way.” Twenty-one agreed or strongly agreed. Only one was uncertain.

Very few incidents of conflict were experienced during the course of the musical. There was a conflict over practice times during the education hour. This did not become an issue until we were well into the practice schedule. We took a little time to discuss it at one of the practices. The majority of the families wanted to continue with our scheduled

practices. A few felt torn away from existing educational commitments. A few couples were divided in their preference. After some input the directors decided to continue as scheduled. Conflicts between other people were resolved by talking it through. I don't recall any conflicts between the children.

Asset thirty-seven is "personal power: I feel that I have control over many things that happen to me." Number twenty-one said, "Because of our participation in this musical as a family, family members were encouraged to handle stressful situations in more positive ways." Fifteen agreed or strongly agreed. Seven were uncertain.

The stressful situations related to the musical came as we got closer to dress rehearsal and performance. We tried to handle this stress by encouraging each other and praying for each other. Other stress from time pressure and over commitment we did not address as we might have.

Asset thirty-eight is "self-esteem: I feel good about myself." Number twenty-three said, "Because of our participation in this musical as a family, family members grew in self-esteem." Seventeen agreed or strongly agreed. Four were uncertain. One disagreed.

Knowing God loves you no matter what, that He loved you in Jesus who died for you, that He has chosen you to be his child, this unconditional love is the basis for a good self-esteem. Self-esteem is built in children when they know their parents love them unconditionally. That love is expressed by others in the church, and within a musical drama ministry, and helps to build a positive self-esteem.

Asset thirty-nine is "sense of purpose: I believe that my life has a purpose." Number twenty-four said, "Because of our participation in this musical as a family,

family members felt a sense of purpose.” Seventeen agreed or strongly agreed. Four were uncertain and one disagreed.

Recognizing that as part of a family we are responsible to each other and for each other gives us a sense of purpose. Being a part of God’s family certainly gives us a sense of purpose for we are His children living in this world with His mission to carry out. As part of a musical drama, with an important part to play, one should also feel a sense of purpose.

Asset forty is “positive view of personal future: I feel positive about my future.” Number twenty-five said, “Because of our participation in this musical as a family our children have a more optimistic view about their future.” Twenty agreed or strongly agreed. Two were uncertain.

As Christians we have an optimistic view of the future. We know that Jesus has gone to prepare a place for us in heaven. Because He died in our place for our sin, because He rose again from the dead, we know that through faith in Him we will be with Him in heaven. We also know that until then, He is with us to forgive us and help us each day. We may not know what the future holds for us, but we know Jesus, and He holds the future. This is the encouragement that family members can give each other and that we were reminded of as we worked together on the musical. Jesus is with us to help us in our family situations, to give us an optimistic view, because we have His Word and His Spirit to help us.

Why work to develop these assets in our families? Because research done by Search Institute shows that a higher percentage of young people from families with no

assets or only a few assets engage in patterns of high-risk behavior. These patterns include use of illicit drugs, premarital sexual intercourse, violence, depression and suicide. A lower percentage of these young people show positive behaviors and attitudes such as helping friends or neighbors, succeeding in school, valuing diversity by getting to know people of other racial or ethnic groups, and maintaining good health.⁸

The studies also showed that families with a higher number of assets had a higher percentage of children and youth that showed more positive behaviors and attitudes and were not engaged in patterns of high-risk behavior.

These assets may seem like a lot of common sense ideas and yet the research showed that only eight percent of youth have thirty-one or more of these assets.⁹ That is why the church needs to focus energy to help families to build these assets.

Roehlkepartain gives five reasons why a congregation should help to build these assets:

1. They have a powerful influence in young people's lives.
2. Most young people – regardless of their background – experience too few of these assets, leaving them vulnerable and unprepared.
3. Because assets focus on relationships and character, congregations of all faiths have tremendous potential to build assets for youth in the congregation and the community.
4. Asset building is integral to the mission of congregations from all major faith traditions.
5. Most congregations do not live up to their asset-building potential.¹⁰

⁸ Roehlkepartain, *Building Assets*, 7.

⁹ Ibid., 6.

¹⁰ Ibid., 5.

Though these five reasons given by Roehlkepartain may also motivate non-Christian groups to build assets in their member families, it is imperative that Christian congregations take the lead in supporting families in this way. They have the means of grace, the Word and the sacraments, through which God promises to work his changes in peoples' lives through the forgiveness of sins.

From the results of our survey, we felt that we had succeeded in helping a number of our families to build these positive assets into their family experience. We also realized that we needed to do more to provide ongoing opportunities for families to grow in this way.

We asked a few open-ended questions on the survey about how this experience enriched the families and the faith of those who participated. These responses are found in Appendix 4.

Conclusion

We felt that we had succeeded in reaching our goals. Although more could be done, we had provided a musical drama experience where many of the assets were built and encouraged. We presented a musical drama with a message that encouraged us and our families, as well as the families represented in the audience. We invited several extended families. One extended family did participate covering three generations. We involved several families that were on the fringe of activity. Their assimilation into the musical drama group helped them to feel more at home in the congregation as well. They continue to be involved.

As reflected in multiple comments, both on the evaluation form and stated personally, it was clear that this family ministry event deeply touched and moved individuals and families who were involved. The love of God in Jesus became just a bit more tangible and real to the *Love Will Be Our Home* families at Redeemer Lutheran Church, Springfield, Missouri. Fifteen rehearsals and countless hours brought those involved into a closer faith walk with our Lord and enlarged our family in Christ with deeper, more committed relationships. Our families were enriched through this musical drama experience.

CONCLUSION

Families are enriched as they spend time together in positive, meaningful activities. That was true in Martin Luther's family. "Creativity, excitement, and fun marked the Luther home. Music, art, and good conversation (including Martin's famous 'Table Talks') were celebrated, and on occasion the children performed a family musical."¹ It was true in my family, growing up. It has also been true for my wife and me, and our two sons, Jeremy and Andy.

One of those positive, meaningful activities for our present family was our involvement in musical drama. Our boys were too young to be involved in the drama productions when we first started. But they would still come with us when we practiced, and they knew the music and words as well as the kids who were in those first children's musicals. They looked forward to being in kindergarten, because that was the age cut-off for being in the musicals.

But even before they could participate with us, music was a big part of their lives. Music played a big role in my ministry with kids and youth, but it also was an important part of our relationship as a family at home. We would sing together, mostly Christian songs. As young children, our boys had quiet times when they would listen to Christian music on tapes. They would often go to sleep at night listening to their tapes. They grew up loving to sing, especially songs of praise to Jesus. That is still a very important part of their lives and their ministries.

¹ Dennis Rainey, *One Home at a Time*, (Colorado Springs: Focus on the Family Publishing, 1997), 182-3.

When Jeremy and Andy were old enough to be in the children's musicals that we directed as part of my ministry, it was a great experience that we could share together as a family. When Alvina directed children's musicals as part of her teaching responsibilities, I would sometimes help with sound or lights, and often one or both of the boys would be involved depending on the grade levels participating. When we began the musicals in Litchfield, both boys were too young to participate, as the cast was made up of adults, but Jeremy helped by running the sound system. It was a great joy to us to begin the musical production of *The Promise* because our own two sons could be a part of this experience as well. They continued to be in *The Promise* until they moved away to college. Andy actually got to participate in *The Promise* even after we moved to Springfield because he stayed behind in Southern Illinois to finish his Senior year in high school. The positive contact with this "musical family" gave him encouragement when we were apart during that year.

Through our experience together in many of these musical drama activities, our family was able to build and strengthen many of the forty developmental assets described by Search Institute. We have grown in our faith and in our Christian witness. Jeremy is involved in full-time ministry to youth and their families. Andy is in college preparing for full-time ministry in the church. Both continue to draw upon the assets that were part of our family experience as they seek to help youth and families grow to be healthy, caring, and responsible members of Christ's kingdom.

It is the Holy Spirit who makes us members of Christ's kingdom, creating and nurturing faith in us through the Word and sacraments. The church has the special

opportunity and responsibility to provide for the nurturing of that faith in her people and their families. As that Word is shared in many different ways, faith is nurtured, and many developmental assets are strengthened in our people's lives.

Asset building doesn't replace a focus on helping young people grow in faith and discipline; rather, it reinforces and shapes the "how" of nurturing faith. It also gives churches a concrete way to examine their ministries to ensure that they have the greatest impact in the real-world lives of children and youth.²

As we in the church are involved in the ministry of the Word, we have the opportunity to enrich the lives of people, to enrich the families with whom we work. We need to be seeking creative ways that we can share that Word of life, and so build some of these developmental assets in our families.

We can build assets and provide opportunities to enrich our families in many ways, with many different programs and activities. One very special way of sharing the Word and building assets is through music and musical drama. We have seen people and families grow and become stronger in their faith and in their commitment to Christ and to His church. We have also experienced it ourselves. We would encourage congregations to consider the opportunities available to them for enriching their families through musical drama.

² Jolene L. & Eugene C. Roehlkepartain, *Prescription for a Healthy Church*, (Loveland, Colorado: Group, 2000), 9.

APPENDIX 1

DEVELOPMENTAL ASSETS IDENTIFIED BY SEARCH INSTITUTE¹

40 Developmental Assets for Infants: Birth to Twelve Months

Search Institute *has identified a framework of forty developmental assets for infants from birth to age one that blends Search Institute's research on developmental assets for twelve- to eighteen-year-olds with the extensive literature on child development.*

ASSET TYPE	ASSET NAME AND DEFINITION
Support	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Family support: Family life provides high levels of love and support.2. Positive family communication: Parent(s) communicate with the infant in positive ways. Parent(s) respond immediately to the infant and respect the infant's needs.3. Other adult resources: Parent(s) receive support from three or more nonparent adults and ask for help when needed. The infant receives additional love and comfort from at least one nonparent adult.4. Caring Neighborhood: Infant experiences caring neighbors.5. Caring out-of-home climate: Infant is in caring, encouraging environments outside the home.6. Parent involvement in out-of-home situations: Parent(s) are actively involved in communicating the infant's needs to caretakers and in other situations or experiences outside the home.
Empowerment	<ol style="list-style-type: none">7. Children valued: The family places the infant at the center of family life. Other adults in the community value and appreciate infants.8. Child has role in family life: The family involves the infant in family life.9. Service to others: Parent(s) serve others in the community.10. Safety: Infant has a safe environment at home, in out-of-home settings, and in the neighborhood. This includes, but is not limited to, child proofing these environments as the infant begins to explore her or his environment.
Boundaries & Expectations	<ol style="list-style-type: none">11. Family boundaries: Parent(s) are aware of the infant's preferences and adapt the environment and schedule to best suit the infant's needs. Parent(s) begin limits as the infant becomes mobile.

¹ Used by permission from *Prescription for a Healthy Church* by Jolene and Eugene Roehlkepartain, copyright 2000, published by Group Publishing, Inc., PO Box 481, Loveland, CO 80539 www.grouppublishing.com.

- 12. **Out-of-home boundaries:** Child care and other out-of-home environments have clear rules and consequences for older infants while consistently providing all infants with appropriate stimulation and enough rest.
 - 13. **Neighborhood boundaries:** Neighbors take responsibility for monitoring the infant's behavior as the infant begins to play and interact outside the home.
 - 14. **Adult role models:** Parent(s) and other adults model positive, responsible behavior.
 - 15. **Positive peer observation:** Infant observes positive peer interactions of siblings and other children and has opportunities for beginning interactions with other children of various ages.
 - 16. **Expectations for growth:** Parent(s) are realistic in their expectations of development at this age. Parent(s) encourage development but do not push the infant beyond her or his own pace.
- Constructive Use of Time**
- 17. **Creative activities:** Parent(s) daily expose the infant to music, art, or other creative aspects of the environment.
 - 18. **Out-of-home activities:** Parent(s) expose the infant to limited but stimulating situations outside of the home. Family attends events with the infant's needs in mind.
 - 19. **Religious community:** Family attends religious activities or services on a regular basis while keeping the infant's needs in mind.
 - 20. **Positive, supervised time at home:** Parent(s) supervise the infant at all times and provide predictable and enjoyable routines at home.
- Commitment To Learning**
- 21. **Achievement expectation:** Family members are motivated to do well at work, school, and in the community, which serves as a beginning of modeling this motivation to the infant.
 - 22. **Engagement expectation:** The family models responsive and attentive attitudes at work, school, in the community, and at home.
 - 23. **Stimulating activity:** Parent(s) encourage the infant to explore and provide stimulating toys that match the infant's emerging skills. Parent(s) are sensitive to the infant's level of development, disposition, and tolerance for movement, sounds, and duration of activity.
 - 24. **Enjoyment of learning:** Parent(s) enjoy learning and begin to model this through their own learning activities.
 - 25. **Reading for pleasure:** Parent(s) read to the infant daily in enjoyable ways.
- Positive Values**
- 26. **Family values caring:** Parent(s) convey their beliefs about helping others by beginning to model their helping behaviors.
 - 27. **Family values equality and social justice:** Parent(s) place a high value on promoting social equality, religious tolerance, and reducing hunger and poverty, while modeling these beliefs.

- 28. **Family values integrity:** Parent(s) act on convictions and stand up for their beliefs and begin to communicate and model this in the family.
- 29. **Family values honesty:** Parent(s) tell the truth and convey their belief in honesty through their actions.
- 30. **Family values responsibility:** Parent(s) accept and take personal responsibility.
- 31. **Family values a healthy lifestyle and sexual attitudes:** Parent(s) love the infant, setting the foundation for the infant to develop healthy attitudes and beliefs about relationships. Parent(s) begin to model, monitor, and teach the importance of good health habits, such as providing good nutritional choices and adequate rest and playtime.

**Social
Competencies**

- 32. **Planning and decision-making observation:** Parent(s) make all safety and care decisions for the infant and begin to model these behaviors. Parent(s) allow the infant to make simple choices as the infant becomes more independently mobile.
- 33. **Interpersonal observation:** Parent(s) begin to model positive and constructive interactions with other people. Parent(s) accept and are responsive to the infant's expression of feelings, interpreting those expressions as cues to the infant's needs.
- 34. **Cultural observation:** Parent(s) have knowledge of and are comfortable with people of different cultural/racial/ethnic backgrounds and begin to model this to the infant.
- 35. **Resistance observation:** Parent(s) begin to model resistance skills through their own behaviors.
- 36. **Peaceful conflict resolution observation:** Parent(s) behave in acceptable, nonviolent ways and assist the infant in developing these skills when faced with challenging or frustrating circumstances by beginning to help the infant solve problems.

Positive Identity

- 37. **Family has personal power:** Parent(s) feel they have control over things that happen to them and model coping skills, demonstrating healthy ways to deal with frustrations and challenges. Parent(s) are responsive to the infant and the infant begins to learn that he or she can influence his or her immediate surroundings.
- 38. **Family models high self-esteem:** Parent(s) create an environment where the infant can develop positive self-esteem, giving the infant appropriate positive feedback and reinforcement about emerging skills and competencies.
- 39. **Family has a sense of purpose:** Parent(s) report that their lives have purpose and demonstrate these beliefs through their behaviors. Infant demonstrates curiosity in the world around her or him.
- 40. **Family has a positive view of the future:** Parent(s) are hopeful and positive about their personal future and work to provide a positive future for the infant.

40 Developmental Assets for Toddlers: Thirteen Months to Thirty-five Months

Search Institute has identified a framework of forty developmental assets for toddlers from thirteen months to thirty-five months that blends Search Institute's research on developmental assets for twelve- to eighteen-year-olds with the extensive literature on child development.

ASSET TYPE	ASSET NAME AND DEFINITION
Support	1. Family support: Family life provides high levels of love and support.
	2. Positive family communication: Parent(s) communicate with the toddler in positive ways. Parent(s) respond to the toddler's needs and respect those needs.
	3. Other adult resources: Parent(s) receive support from three or more nonparent adults and ask for help when needed. The toddler receives additional love and comfort from at least one nonparent adult.
	4. Caring Neighborhood: Toddler experiences caring neighbors.
	5. Caring out-of-home climate: Toddler is in caring, encouraging environments outside the home.
	6. Parent involvement in out-of-home situations: Parent(s) are actively involved in helping the toddler succeed in situations outside the home and communicate the toddler's developmental needs to caretakers outside the home.
Empowerment	7. Children valued: The family places the toddler at the center of family life and also recognizes the need for limit setting with the toddler. Other adults in the community value and appreciate toddlers.
	8. Child has role in family life: The family involves the toddler in family life.
	9. Service to others: Parent(s) serve others in the community.
	10. Safety: Toddler has a safe environment at home, in out-of-home settings, and in the neighborhood, which includes child proofing these environments.
Boundaries & Expectations	11. Family boundaries: Parent(s) are aware of the toddler's preferences and adapt the environment to best suit the toddler's needs. Parent(s) set age-appropriate limits for the toddler.
	12. Out-of-home boundaries: Child care and other out-of-home environments have clear rules and consequences, which protect the toddler, while consistently providing the toddler with appropriate stimulation and enough rest.
	13. Neighborhood boundaries: Neighbors take responsibility for supervising and monitoring the toddler's behavior as the toddler begins to play and interact outside the home.
	14. Adult role models: Parent(s) and other adults model positive, responsible behavior.

- 15. Positive peer observation:** Toddler observes positive peer interactions of siblings and other children and has opportunities for interactions with children of various ages.
- 16. Expectations for growth:** Parent(s) are realistic in their expectations of development at this age. Parent(s) encourage development but do not push the toddler beyond her or his own pace.
- Constructive Use of Time**
- 17. Creative activities:** Parent(s) daily expose the toddler to music, art, or other creative age-appropriate activities.
- 18. Out-of-home activities:** Parent(s) expose the toddler to limited but stimulating situations outside of the home. Family attends events with the toddler's needs in mind.
- 19. Religious community:** Family attends religious programs or services on a regular basis while keeping the toddler's needs in mind.
- 20. Positive, supervised time at home:** Parent(s) supervise the toddler at all times and provide predictable and enjoyable routines at home.
- Commitment To Learning**
- 21. Achievement expectation:** Family members are motivated to do well at work, school, and in the community and model this motivation to the toddler.
- 22. Engagement expectation:** The family models responsive and attentive attitudes at work, school, in the community, and at home.
- 23. Stimulating activity:** Parent(s) encourage the toddler to explore and they provide stimulating toys that match the toddler's emerging skills. Parent(s) are sensitive to the toddler's level of development and tolerance for movement, sounds, and duration of activity.
- 24. Enjoyment of learning:** Parent(s) enjoy learning, and demonstrate this through their own learning activities.
- 25. Reading for pleasure:** Parent(s) read to the toddler daily in ways that allow the toddler to participate in reading experiences, such as turning pages and identifying characters or animals in books.
- Positive Values**
- 26. Family values caring:** Parent(s) convey their beliefs about helping others through modeling their helping behaviors.
- 27. Family values equality and social justice:** Parent(s) place a high value on promoting social equality, religious tolerance, and reducing hunger and poverty, while modeling these beliefs.
- 28. Family values integrity:** Parent(s) act on convictions and stand up for their beliefs and communicate and model this in the family.
- 29. Family values honesty:** Parent(s) tell the truth and convey their belief in honesty through their actions.
- 30. Family values responsibility:** Parent(s) accept and take personal responsibility.

**Social
Competencies**

- 31. Family values a healthy lifestyle and sexual attitudes:** Parent(s) love the toddler, setting the foundation for the toddler to develop healthy attitudes and beliefs about relationships. Parent(s) model, monitor, and teach the importance of good health habits, such as providing good nutritional choices and adequate rest and playtime.
- 32. Planning and decision-making observation:** Parent(s) make all safety and care decisions for the toddler and then model these behaviors. Parent(s) allow the toddler to make simple choices as the toddler becomes more independently mobile.
- 33. Interpersonal observation:** Parent(s) model positive and constructive interactions with other people. Parent(s) accept and are responsive to the toddler's expression of feelings through actions and beginning language skills, interpreting those expressions as cues of the toddler's needs.
- 34. Cultural observation:** Parent(s) have knowledge of and are comfortable with people of different cultural/racial/ethnic backgrounds and model this to the toddler.
- 35. Resistance observation:** Parent(s) model resistance skills through their own behaviors.
- 36. Peaceful conflict resolution observation:** Parent(s) behave in acceptable, nonviolent ways and assist the toddler to develop these skills when faced with challenging or frustrating circumstances by helping the toddler learn to solve problems.

Positive Identity

- 37. Family has personal power:** Parent(s) feel they have control over things that happen to them and model coping skills, demonstrating healthy ways to deal with frustrations and challenges. Parent(s) are responsive to the toddler and the toddler begins to learn that he or she can influence his or her immediate surroundings.
- 38. Family models high self-esteem:** Parent(s) model high self-esteem and create an environment where the toddler can develop positive self-esteem, giving the toddler appropriate positive feedback and reinforcement about skills and competencies.
- 39. Family has a sense of purpose:** Parent(s) report that their lives have purpose and model these beliefs through their behaviors. The toddler demonstrates curiosity in and exploration of the world around her or him.
- 40. Family has a positive view of the future:** Parent(s) are hopeful and optimistic about their personal future and work to provide a positive future for the toddler.

40 Developmental Assets for Preschoolers: Ages Three to Five

Search Institute has identified a framework of forty developmental assets for children ages three to five that blends Search Institute's research on developmental assets for twelve- to eighteen-year-olds with the extensive literature on child development.

ASSET TYPE	ASSET NAME AND DEFINITION
Support	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Family support: Family life provides high levels of love and support. 2. Positive family communication: Parent(s) and child communicate positively. Child seeks out parent(s) for assistance with difficult tasks or situations. 3. Other adult resources: Child receives support from at least one non-parent adult. Parent(s) have support from individuals outside the home. 4. Caring Neighborhood: Child experiences caring neighbors. 5. Caring out-of-home climate: Child is in caring, encouraging environments outside the home. 6. Parent involvement in out-of-home situations: Parent(s) are actively involved in helping child succeed in situations outside the home.
Empowerment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Children valued: Parent(s) and other adults in the community value and appreciate children. 8. Children given useful roles: Parent(s) and other adults create ways the child can help out and gradually include the child in age-appropriate tasks. 9. Service to others: The family serves others in the community together. 10. Safety: Child has a safe environment at home, in out-of-home settings, and in the neighborhood.
Boundaries & Expectations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 11. Family boundaries: Family has clear rules and consequences. Family monitors the child and consistently demonstrates appropriate behavior through modeling and limit setting. 12. Out-of-home boundaries: Neighbors, child care, preschool, and community provide clear rules and consequences. 13. Neighborhood boundaries: Neighbors take responsibility for monitoring the child's behavior as the child plays and interacts outside the home. 14. Adult role models: Parent(s) and other adults model positive, responsible behavior. 15. Positive peer interaction: Child's interactions with other children are encouraged and promoted. Child is provided opportunities to play and interact with other children in a safe, well supervised setting.

- 16. Expectations for growth:** Adults have realistic expectations of development at this age. Parent(s), caregivers, and other adults encourage child to achieve and develop her or his unique talents.
- Constructive Use of Time**
- 17. Creative activities:** Child participates in music, art, or dramatic play on a daily basis.
- 18. Out-of-home activities:** Child interacts with children outside the family in stimulating situations. Family attends events with the child's needs in mind.
- 19. Religious community:** Family attends a religious program or service on a regular basis while keeping the child's needs in mind.
- 20. Positive, supervised time at home:** Child is supervised by an adult at all times. Child spends most evenings and weekends at home with parent(s) in predictable, fun, enjoyable routines.
- Commitment To Learning**
- 21. Achievement expectation:** Parent(s) and other adults convey and reinforce expectations to do well at work, school, in the community, and within the family.
- 22. Engagement expectation:** Parent(s) model responsive and attentive attitudes at work, school, in the community, and at home.
- 23. Stimulating activity:** Parent(s) and other adults encourage the child to explore and provide stimulating toys that match the child's emerging skills. Parent(s) and other adults are sensitive to the child's level of development.
- 24. Enjoyment of learning:** Parent(s) and other adults enjoy learning and engage the child in learning activities.
- 25. Reading for pleasure:** Child is read to by a caring adult for at least thirty minutes a day and is encouraged to participate.
- Positive Values**
- 26. Family values caring:** Child is encouraged to express sympathy for someone who is distressed and begins to develop a variety of helping behaviors.
- 27. Family values equality and social justice:** Parent(s) place a high value on promoting social equality, religious tolerance, and reducing hunger and poverty, while modeling these beliefs.
- 28. Family values integrity:** Parent(s) act on convictions and stand up for their beliefs and communicate and model this in the family.
- 29. Family values honesty:** Child learns the difference between truth and lying.
- 30. Family values responsibility:** Child learns that actions have an effect on other people.
- 31. Family values a healthy lifestyle and sexual attitudes:** Parent(s) and other adults model, monitor, and teach the importance of good health habits. Child begins to learn healthy sexual attitudes and beliefs as well as respect for others.

**Social
Competencies**

- 32. Planning and decision-making practice:** Child begins to make simple choices, solve simple problems, and develop simple plans at an age-appropriate level.
- 33. Interpersonal interactions:** Child plays and interacts with other children and adults. Child freely expresses feelings and learns to articulate feelings verbally. Parent(s) and other adults model and teach empathy.
- 34. Cultural interactions:** Child is positively exposed to information and people of different cultural/racial/ethnic backgrounds.
- 35. Resistance practice:** Child is taught to resist participating in behavior that is inappropriate or dangerous.
- 36. Peaceful conflict resolution practice:** Parent(s) and other adults model positive ways to resolve conflicts. Child is taught and begins to practice nonviolent, acceptable ways to deal with challenging and frustrating situations.

Positive Identity

- 37. Family has personal power:** Parent(s) feel they have control over things that happen to them and model coping skills, demonstrating healthy ways to deal with frustrations and challenges. Parent(s) are responsive to the child and the child begins to learn that he or she can influence his or her immediate surroundings.
- 38. Family models high self-esteem:** Parent(s) model high self-esteem and create an environment where the child can develop positive self-esteem, giving the child appropriate positive feedback and reinforcement about skills and competencies.
- 39. Family has a sense of purpose:** Parent(s) report that their lives have purpose and model these beliefs through their behaviors. The child demonstrates curiosity in and the exploration of the world around her or him.
- 40. Family has a positive view of the future:** Parent(s) are hopeful and positive about their personal future and work to provide a positive future for the child.

40 Developmental Assets for Elementary-Age: Ages Six to Eleven

Search Institute has identified a framework of forty developmental assets for children ages six to eleven that blends Search Institute's research on developmental assets for twelve- to eighteen-year-olds with the extensive literature on child development.

ASSET TYPE	ASSET NAME AND DEFINITION
Support	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Family support: Family life provides high levels of love and support.2. Positive family communication: Parent(s) and child communicate positively. Child is willing to seek parental advice and counsel.3. Other adult relationships: Child receives support from nonparent adults.4. Caring neighborhood: Child experiences caring neighbors.5. Caring school climate: School and other activities provide caring, encouraging environments.6. Parent involvement in schooling: Parent(s) are actively involved in helping child succeed in school.
Empowerment	<ol style="list-style-type: none">7. Community values children: Children feel that the family and the community values and appreciates children.8. Children given useful roles: Child is included in age-appropriate family tasks and decisions and is given useful roles at home and in the community.9. Service to others: Child and parent(s) serve others in community.10. Safety: Child is safe at home, at school, and in the neighborhood.
Boundaries & Expectations	<ol style="list-style-type: none">11. Family boundaries: Family has clear rules and consequences, and monitors the child's activities and whereabouts.12. School boundaries: School provides clear rules and consequences.13. Neighborhood boundaries: Neighbors take responsibility for monitoring the child's behavior.14. Adult role models: Parent(s) and other adults model positive, responsible behavior.15. Positive peer interaction: Child interacts with other children who model responsible behavior and has opportunities to play and interact in safe, well supervised settings.16. Expectations for growth: Adults have realistic expectations of development at this age. Parent(s), caregivers, and other adults encourage child to achieve and develop her or his unique talents.
Constructive Use of Time	<ol style="list-style-type: none">17. Creative activities: Child participates in music, art, or drama three or more hours each week through home and out-of-home activities.18. Child programs: Child spends one hour or more per week in extracurricular school or structured community programs.19. Religious community: Family attends religious programs or services for at least one hour once a week.

- 20. Positive, supervised time at home:** Child spends most evenings and weekends at home with parent(s) in predictable and enjoyable routines.
- Commitment To Learning**
- 21. Achievement motivation:** Child is motivated to do well in school.
- 22. School engagement:** Child is responsive, attentive and actively engaged in learning.
- 23. Homework:** Child is encouraged by parents and teachers to explore and engage in stimulating activities. Child does homework when it is assigned.
- 24. Bonding to school:** Child cares about her or his school.
- 25. Reading for pleasure:** Child and a caring adult read together for at least thirty minutes a day. Child also enjoys reading or looking at books or magazines without an adult's involvement.
- Positive Values**
- 26. Caring:** Child is encouraged to help other people.
- 27. Equality and social justice:** Child begins to show interest in making the community a better place.
- 28. Integrity:** Child begins to act on convictions and stand up for her or his beliefs.
- 29. Honesty:** Child begins to value honesty and act accordingly.
- 30. Responsibility:** Child begins to accept and take personal responsibility for age-appropriate tasks.
- 31. Healthy lifestyle and sexual attitudes:** Child begins to value good health habits. Child learns healthy sexual attitudes and beliefs as well as respect for others.
- Social Competencies**
- 32. Planning and decision making:** Child learns beginning skills of how to plan ahead and makes decisions at an appropriate developmental level.
- 33. Interpersonal competence:** Child interacts with adults and children and can make friends. Child expresses and articulates feelings in appropriate ways and empathizes with others.
- 34. Cultural competence:** Child has knowledge of and comfort with people of different cultural/racial/ethnic backgrounds.
- 35. Resistance skills:** Child begins to develop the ability to resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations.
- 36. Peaceful conflict resolution:** Child attempts to resolve conflicts nonviolently.
- Positive Identity**
- 37. Personal power:** Child begins to feel he or she has control over "things that happen to me." Child starts to manage frustrations and challenges in ways that have positive results for the child and others.
- 38. Self-esteem:** Child reports having high self-esteem.
- 39. Sense of purpose:** Child reports that "my life has a purpose" and actively engages her or his skills.
- 40. Positive view of personal future:** Child is hopeful and positive about her or his personal future.

**40 Developmental Assets for Youth:
Middle & High School – Ages Twelve to Eighteen**

Search Institute has identified the following building blocks of healthy development that help young people grow up healthy, caring, and responsible. Search Institute has surveyed almost one hundred thousand sixth- to twelfth-graders in 213 cities and towns across the country to measure their asset levels.

ASSET TYPE	ASSET NAME AND DEFINITION
Support	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Family support: Family life provides high levels of love and support. 2. Positive family communication: Young person and her or his parent(s) communicate positively, and young person is willing to seek parental advice and counsel. 3. Other adult relationships: Young person receives support from three or more nonparent adults. 4. Caring neighborhood: Young person experiences caring neighbors. 5. Caring school climate: School provides a caring, encouraging environments. 6. Parent involvement in schooling: Parent(s) are actively involved in helping young person succeed in school.
Empowerment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Community values youth: Young person perceives that adults in the community value youth. 8. Youth as resources: Young people are given useful roles in the community. 9. Service to others: Young person serves in the community one hour or more per week. 10. Safety: Young person feels safe at home, school, and in the neighborhood.
Boundaries & Expectations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 11. Family boundaries: Family has clear rules and consequences, and monitors the young person's whereabouts. 12. School boundaries: School provides clear rules and consequences. 13. Neighborhood boundaries: Neighbors take responsibility for monitoring young people's behavior. 14. Adult role models: Parent(s) and other adults model positive, responsible behavior. 15. Positive peer influence: Young person's best friends model responsible behavior. 16. High expectations: Both parent(s) and teachers encourage the young person to do well.
Constructive Use of Time	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 17. Creative activities: Young person spends three or more hours per week in lessons or practice in music, theater, or other arts. 18. Youth programs: Young person spends three or more hours per week in sports, clubs, or organizations at school and/or in community organizations.

- 19. Religious community:** Young person spends one or more hours per week in activities in a religious institution.
- 20. Time at home:** Young person is out with friends “with nothing special to do” two or fewer nights per week.
- Commitment To Learning**
- 21. Achievement motivation:** Young person is motivated to do well in school.
- 22. School engagement:** Young person is actively engaged in learning.
- 23. Homework:** Young person reports doing at least one hour of homework every school day.
- 24. Bonding to school:** Young person cares about her or his school.
- 25. Reading for pleasure:** Young person reads for pleasure three or more hours per week.
- Positive Values**
- 26. Caring:** Young person places high value on helping other people.
- 27. Equality and social justice:** Young person places high value on promoting equality and reducing hunger and poverty.
- 28. Integrity:** Young person acts on convictions and stands up for her or his beliefs.
- 29. Honesty:** Young person “tells the truth even when it is not easy.”
- 30. Responsibility:** Young person accepts and takes personal responsibility.
- 31. Restraint:** Young person believes it is important not to be sexually active or to use alcohol or other drugs.
- Social Competencies**
- 32. Planning and decision making:** Young person knows how to plan ahead and make choices.
- 33. Interpersonal competence:** Young person has empathy, sensitivity, and friendship skills.
- 34. Cultural competence:** Young person has knowledge of and comfort with people of different cultural/racial/ethnic backgrounds.
- 35. Resistance skills:** Young person can resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations.
- 36. Peaceful conflict resolution:** Young person seeks to resolve conflicts nonviolently.
- Positive Identity**
- 37. Personal power:** Young person feels he or she has control over “things that happen to me.”
- 38. Self-esteem:** Young person reports having high self-esteem.
- 39. Sense of purpose:** Young person reports that “my life has a purpose.”
- 40. Positive view of personal future:** Young person is optimistic about her or his personal future.

Asset-Building Ideas for All Adults

All adults have the ability and responsibility to build assets in children and youth. Young people benefit greatly when they have involved, caring adults in their lives. You don't need to invest a lot of time and energy to start building assets. You can start small.

Some ideas to get started:

- Learn more about asset building. Attend an asset-building training. Read materials on asset building. Surround yourself with asset building materials, such as posting the list of forty developmental assets.
- Learn the names of children and teenagers who live near you or who work in shops or community centers you frequent. Greet them by name.
- Model a positive, healthy lifestyle. Control and resolve anger issues in your life. Practice peaceful conflict resolution (asset #36). Be motivated to achieve (asset #21). Advocate and work for equality and social justice (asset #27).
- Support local efforts to provide safe spaces for young people to meet and congregate.
- Expect young people to behave responsibly. When they do not, tell them what you expect and how you would like them to act.
- Take time to play or talk with young people who live near you or work with you.
- Look at the list of forty developmental assets at least once a week and commit to at least one act of asset building every day.
- Support initiatives designed to expand opportunities for children and youth to participate in teams, clubs, and organizations.
- Build at least one sustained, caring relationship with a child or adolescent.
- Examine your attitudes about children and youth. See young people as resources rather than as problems.
- Thank people who work with children and youth, such as teachers, youth group leaders, social service providers, and clergy.
- Organize a "gently used" musical instrument drive to encourage people to donate musical instruments for young people who are not able to purchase their own.
- Look out for the children around you. Help keep them safe. Report dangerous and inappropriate behaviors to parents, school administrators, or law enforcement officials.
- Get involved in an organized volunteer effort with children and youth. You can find these through local schools, youth-serving organizations, congregations, parks and recreation, and other community-based organizations.
- Take time to nurture your own assets by spending time with supportive people, using your time constructively, and reflecting on your own values.

Asset-Building Ideas for Parents

The underlying shift for becoming an asset-building parent is to become proactive and engaged. It entails focusing your attention, energy, and resources on the things your children need to grow up healthy.

Here are a few ideas to get started in building assets:

- Post the list of forty developmental assets on your refrigerator door. Each day purposefully nurture at least one asset in each family member.
- Model – and talk about – the values and priorities you wish to pass on to your children.
- Limit television watching. Find other interesting and meaningful activities for children to do – some with you, some with their friends, some by themselves.
- Stay in contact with teachers about your children’s progress rather than waiting for report cards.
- Think of your children and teenagers as “practicing” adults. Teach them something practical, such as how to change a tire on the car, how to sort the laundry, or how to create a monthly budget.
- Regularly do things with your child, including projects around the house, recreational activities, and service projects. Let your children or teenagers choose which activities to do together as a family from time to time.
- Talk to your children about assets. Ask them for suggestions of ways to strengthen assets.
- Introduce your children to other neighborhood adults, and help them get acquainted.
- Take time to nurture your own assets. Spend time with supportive people. Use your time constructively. Reflect on your own values and commitments.
- Eat at least one meal together every day.
- Become active in your child’s education through school activities, monitoring homework, and having conversations about school and learning.
- Negotiate boundaries and consequences for the whole family.
- Develop a family mission statement that focuses on building assets. Then use it as a guide for family decisions and priorities.
- Choose a service project to do together, such as collecting cans for a food drive.
- Be a friend and asset builder for the friends of your children. Welcome them into your home.

Asset-Building Ideas for Children

No one is too young to build assets. Many children have a lot of ideas on how to build assets in new ways.

Here are ideas on how to get started as an asset builder:

- ❑ Say hi to people you know. Smile at them.
- ❑ Help others who need help. Be nice to other children and adults.
- ❑ Follow the rules that adults set. If you don't understand a rule, ask questions.
- ❑ Talk to an adult about your day. Do you have time to do all these things: learn? play? relax? be with family? be with other children? Do you like how you spend your time?
- ❑ Play with a younger child. Play what the child wants to play.
- ❑ Learn more about something your're curious about. Look at books. Ask adults about the subject. Find out if there are any projects you can do to learn more.
- ❑ Thank people when they do something nice for you.
- ❑ Be honest about your feelings. Use words to describe your feelings.
- ❑ Teach others skills you know but they don't. Can you stand on your head? whistle? tie shoes? do yo-yo stunts? make up jokes?
- ❑ Invite someone new to play with your friends.
- ❑ Look at books with another child. Read aloud if you know how, or tell a story by looking at the pictures.
- ❑ Go easy on yourself when you make mistakes. Mistakes aren't bad, and everyone makes mistakes. In fact, mistakes help you learn.
- ❑ Notice how others are acting around you. Does someone seem sad? happy? scared? Ask the person about how he or she is feeling.
- ❑ Volunteer to help someone do a chore or a task.
- ❑ Try new, safe activities – even if you're not sure you'll like them. Take a risk to do something new, then congratulate yourself after you've done so.
- ❑ When someone does something that hurts your feelings, tell that person. Explain why what we said hurt you.
- ❑ Give your family ideas on how to have more fun together.
- ❑ Do what you like to do. Practice and challenge yourself to learn more.
- ❑ Find out more about assets. Start building assets today.

Asset-Building Ideas for Youth

You can make a difference by building assets. Some teenagers have started by learning the names of more of their peers at school. Some have built assets by building relationships with younger children. Others have focused their efforts on making a difference in their school, congregation, or community.

Here are ideas on how to get started as an asset builder:

- Learn the names of your neighbors, including adults, children, and other teenagers. Ask one of your parents to introduce you to neighbors you don't know.
- Post the forty developmental assets in your room or in your locker. Choose a different asset each day and focus on building it in your friends.
- Sample a variety of experiences and activities in music, theater, art, and athletics, not only in your school but also in your community. Try not to specialize too early.
- Participate in at least one group, team, or sport; or find something creative that appeals to you, such as acting or making crafts.
- Get to know an adult you admire.
- Replace put-downs with affirmations. Make sure your teasing is supportive, not harsh.
- Become a walking dictionary and encyclopedia about asset building. Learn more about the research and the implications of the asset framework.
- Write a note to or call one of the main asset builders in your life. Thank her or him for making a difference in your life.
- Think of your best friends. Do they build you up or drag you down? How do they build assets in you? How do you build assets in them?
- Go out of your way to greet the neighbors that you know.
- Start a book club with friends and read just for fun.
- Focus on developing your resistance skills more (asset #35).
- Talk about the forty developmental assets with members of your family. Which assets do family members think are the strongest in your family?
- If you have a part-time job during the school year, limit your work schedule to 15 or fewer hours per week to allow time for schoolwork and other activities that are important to your overall development.
- Identify something each family member is good at and focus on that. If your mom is great at geography, turn to her when you're reading a map or needing help with a geography assignment. If your dad is a whiz at math, seek him out for making a savings plan or for help with a math problem.
- Talk with young people in your neighborhood about what's good about where you live. Discuss how the neighborhood could change for the better. Work together in making some simple, positive changes.
- Even if your family provides a warm, caring, supportive place to grow, also seek support through adults in schools, community organizations, and congregations.
- Examine the cocurricular activities you are in. Are you feeling challenged? Do you enjoy the activities? Do you feel you have enough time to do the activities, complete homework, and also have time for yourself, family, and friends? If not, consider making some changes.
- Seek out adult mentors and healthy role models.
- Become involved in a social issue that interests you, such as poverty, civil rights, hunger, child abuse and neglect, or discrimination.
- Get involved in the community doing volunteer community service. Look for service opportunities.
- Choose one way to build a relationship with a child, perhaps by baby-sitting, playing catch with a child in the neighborhood, or volunteering as a coaching assistant.
- Gather information about your future goals and dreams. Seek out people who can help make your dreams come true.

Integrating Asset Building into Worship

In most congregations young people are expected to participate in worship alongside adults. Indeed, worship services are the most consistent and visible times when the intergenerational community of faith gathers. These experiences can connect young people with the resources of their faith tradition, offering a sense of purpose, hope, and direction. In addition, worship services offer an opportunity to build community across generations, while also calling the community to action for children and youth. Here are a few specific ideas for integrating asset building into worship. Adapt and use them to fit within your faith tradition.

- Ask children and youth what they like and don't like about the worship service. Get their ideas for making it more interesting, meaningful, and relevant.
- Have a sermon series on asset building that ties it to the congregation's faith tradition and beliefs.
- Involve youth on a worship planning team.
- Involve young people as readers, lay liturgists, or other roles in worship appropriate for your faith tradition. In some traditions, it is also appropriate for young people to provide leadership for an entire worship service.
- Assign young people a regular responsibility in worship. This might include having them be responsible for collecting offering every week. Or a children's choir might be responsible for regularly providing music.
- Create and include inserts on asset building in the bulletins for several weeks.
- Ask young people to create banners or other visual aids to enhance the worship service.
- Ask young people to provide leadership through puppetry, clowning, drama, mime, liturgical dance, and other art forms appropriate to your faith tradition.
- Include at least one hymn in each service that is familiar to children and youth.
- Regularly feature children and youth choirs.
- Tie worship themes to youth and children's ministry activities such as service projects, and special trips.
- Evaluate the language and symbols in worship to discover whether they are meaningful to young people. To enhance communication, either adapt the worship or educate youth so they can participate more fully.
- Always include stories and examples relevant to young people in sermons and liturgies. Celebrate their successes, address their struggles and questions, and connect the faith tradition with their world.
- Include an "asset-building minute" during announcements or at other times during the service. Invite people to tell what they are doing to build assets, or give tips for how members of the congregation can build assets.
- Sponsor a children's Sabbath or a similar service focused on children.

Integrating Asset Building into Fellowship Activities

In addition to providing care in times of crisis, most congregations often have community-building, fellowship, or social activities. These may include refreshments after a worship service, midweek dinners, dances, and picnics. Some ways to make these activities have an asset-building emphasis include:

- ❑ Involve young people in planning and/or leading congregation-wide social activities.
- ❑ When providing refreshments, be sure they are appropriate for children. For example, serve juice as well as coffee.
- ❑ Plan games at picnics and other events that are appropriate for all ages, not just for children or for those who are physically fit.
- ❑ If an activity requires entertainment, ask young people to lead it.
- ❑ Have mixers that intentionally help generations mingle and get to know each other.
- ❑ Create clear boundaries and expectations of how you want children, youth, and adults to act in your church's social activities. Promote these boundaries and expectations, and give people support in enforcing them.
- ❑ For congregational meals create simple place mats with "talk trigger" questions written on them to help people get to know each other better.
- ❑ Develop new fellowship activities that are geared toward families, such as celebrating National Family Week. Many churches honor this week in November.
- ❑ Include children and youth in the cleanup. Young children can pick up and throw away used cups. Teenagers can wash down tabletops. Adults can work side by side with young people and wash dishes.
- ❑ Emphasize creative activities (asset #17) in some of your fellowship activities. Sponsor an all-church art festival for a month in which children, teenagers, and adults are given space to display their artwork. Invite everyone to your church's "gallery" opening.

Integrating Asset Building into Congregational Care

Most congregations have a strong emphasis on providing care and support for members, particularly in times of crisis. This care may be expressed by lay caregivers (deacons, elders, lay leaders) or by clergy through counseling or pastoral care. Often the people who provide this care think of their roles as primarily caring for adults. If a young person needs help or support, a youth worker is deployed for the job.

While it is certainly important for those who work directly with young people to provide support and care, it is also important that the congregation integrate young people into these systems of support. It becomes an important bridge to the larger community of faith, signaling to the young that the whole community cares for them and values them. Here are some steps to take:

- Train young people to be caregivers to others, children and adults as well as youth.
- If the congregation assigns caregivers to families, be sure they provide support to all members of families – including children and youth – not just adults.
- When caregivers visit homes, take time to talk with children and youth.
- Help caregivers remember and celebrate milestones in young people’s lives, such as birthdays, learning to drive, end of school year, and special holidays.
- Consider matching a caring adult with each child and teenager in your congregation. As new members join, continue finding an adult member who can be their assigned caregiver. Also consider having senior high youth and young adults be caregivers of younger children and younger teenagers.
- Set up prayer chains that are accessible for children and youth in addition to adults. Also include children and youth in praying for other members of your congregation.
- Start a peer-helping program. For example, offer a support group to help young people who are newcomers to adjust to your congregation.
- Encourage everyone to be a caregiver for children and youth, even those who aren’t in your church’s care program. Everyone can learn the names of young people around them and create a climate of caring by greeting them by name.
- Send notes or make a phone call to people whom you’re praying for so they know that someone is thinking and praying for them. Children and youth can make these cards and phone calls, too.
- Educate clergy, mentors, and others who provide counseling about asset building so they can integrate the framework into their roles.

Integrating Asset Building into Facilities Maintenance and Operations

At first glance it might seem like the operational functions of a congregation's facilities have little to do with asset building. But they can and do. Sometimes you only see the relationship when something goes wrong: The janitor gets upset that the youth room is messy. The congregation's board resists a plan to invite neighborhood youth to programs or activities in the building because "they might mess things up." Here are some steps to take:

- Design some facilities maintenance or building tasks as service projects for children and youth.
- On a regular basis, make facilities available for a youth "hangout" or a homework room.
- Set and communicate clear policies about how everyone in the congregation is expected to treat the facilities – and the consequences for not respecting those policies.
- Evaluate facilities to ensure they are accessible to children. For example, can younger children reach the water fountains?
- If you use volunteers to do cleanup after events or activities, include children and youth.
- Find ways for people who maintain your facility to have some interaction with members of your congregation. Too often janitors and facility managers work during the off hours and they don't get to know the children and youth, and young people don't get to know them.
- Have young people set up a meeting with your janitor to find out what they can do to make the janitor's job easier.
- Encourage your janitor to link up with other janitors from other churches to talk about creative solutions to problems and how to make the church facility a place that builds assets.
- With young people, notice what's working. Encourage young people to leave thank you notes on chalkboards or to send notes to the janitor, thanking her or him for work well-done.

Asset-Building Songs and Hymns

Music is an integral part of worship, youth group activities, children's education, and children's ministry. Music moves us, teaches us, and inspires us. Here is a sampling of asset-building songs and hymns.

Support Assets

- "How Happy Is Each Child of God," lyrics by Dwyn M. Mounger, song from Este's *Psalmes*.
- "Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us with Your Love," a Ghanaian folk melody translated and adapted by Tom Colvin, arranged by Jane Marshall.
- "Blest Be the Tie That Binds," lyrics by John Fawcett, composed by Johann Georg Nageli, arranged by Lowell Mason.
- "Jesus Loves Me!" lyrics by Anna Barlett Warner, composed by William Batchelder Bradbury.
- "Though I May Speak," lyrics by Hal Hopson, an English folk melody, harmonized by John Weaver.

Empowerment Assets

- "All Things Bright and Beautiful," lyrics by Cecil Frances Alexander, an English melody adapted by Martin Shaw.
- "Child of Blessing, Child of Promise," lyrics by Ronald Cole-Turner, composed by V. Earle Copes.
- "Called as Partners in Christ's Service," lyrics by Jane Parker Huber.
- "Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us," lyrics from Thrupp's *Hymns for the Young*, composed by William Batchelder Bradbury.
- "We Give Thee but Thine Own," lyrics by William Walsham How, composition from Mason and Webb's *Cantica Laudis*. (See verses 3 and 4.)

Boundaries & Expectations Assets

- "With Grateful Hearts Our Faith Professing," lyrics by Fred Kaan, composed by Clement Cottewill Scholefield.
- "Dearest Jesus, We Are Here," lyrics by Benjamin Schmolck and translated by Catherine Winkworth, composed by Johann Rudolph Ahle, harmonized by Johann Sebastian Bach.
- "O Lord of Every Shining Constellation," lyrics by Albert F. Bayly, composed by V. Earle Copes.
- "We Gather Together," lyrics translated by Theodore Baker from a Dutch hymn, harmonized by Edward Kremser from a Dutch folk song.
- "We Gather Here to Bid Farewell," lyrics by Margaret Clarkson, composition from *Musikalisches Handbuch*, harmonized by William Henry Monk.
- "We Are Your People," lyrics by Brian Wren, composed by John W. Wilson. (See verses 4 and 5.)

Constructive-Use-of-Time Assets

- “I Danced in the Morning,” lyrics by Sydney Carter, an American Shaker melody harmonized by Sydney Carter.
- “He Keeps Me Singing,” lyrics and composition by Luther B. Bridgers.
- “Come, Thou Almighty King,” lyrics from the *Collection of Hymns for Social Worship*, composed by Felice de Giardini.
- “Amazing Grace, How Sweet the Sound,” lyrics by John Newton, composition from *Virginia Harmony*, arranged by Edwin O. Excell.
- “God of the Ages, Whose Almighty Hand,” lyrics by Daniel Crane Roberts, composed by George William Warren.
- “All Glory, Laud, and Honor,” lyrics by Theodulph of Orleans, translated by John Mason Neale, composed by Melchior Teschner, arranged by William Henry Monk.
- “Jesus Christ Is Risen Today,” lyrics and composition from *Lyra Davidica*. Verse 4 lyrics by Charles Wesley. (See verses 2 and 4.)

Commitment-to-Learning Assets

- “Seek Ye First,” lyrics and composition by Karen Lafferty.
- “God of Grace and God of Glory,” lyrics by Harry Emerson Fosdick, composition by John Hughes.
- “Open My Eyes That I May See,” lyrics and composition by Clara H. Scott.
- “Take My Life,” lyrics by Frances Ridley Havergal, composition by H. A. Cesar Malan. (See verse 4.)
- “Savior, Teach Me Day by Day,” lyrics by Jane E. Leeson, composition from the Innocents, *Parish Choir*.
- “Earth and All Stars,” lyrics by Herbert Frederick Brokering, composition by David N. Johnson. (See verses 3 and 4.)
- “O Master, Let Me Walk with Thee,” lyrics by Washington Gladden, composition by Henry Percy Smith.

Positive-Value Assets

- “O for a World,” lyrics by Miriam Therese Winter, composition by Carl Gotthelf Glaser, arranged by Lowell Mason.
- “This Is My Father’s World,” lyrics by Maltbie Davenport Babcock, composition by Franklin L. Sheppard.
- “God, You Spin the Whirling Planets,” lyrics by Jane Parker Huber, composition by Franz Joseph Haydn.
- “God of the Sparrow,” lyrics by Jaroslav J. Vajda, composition by Carl F. Schalk.

Social-Competencies Assets

- “For the Beauty of the Earth,” lyrics by Folliott Sandford Pierpoint, composition by Conrad Kocher. (See verse 4.)
- “O God the Creator,” lyrics by Elizabeth Haile and Cecil Corbett, composition by Joy F. Patterson.
- “Help Us Accept Each Other,” lyrics by Fred Kaan, composition by Doreen Potter.
- “Here, O Lord, Your Servants Gather,” lyrics by Tokuo Yamaguchi, translated by Everett M. Stowe, composition by Isao Koizumi.
- “In Christ There Is No East or West,” lyrics by John Oxenham, composition by Alexander Robert Reinagle.
- “When Israel Was in Egypt’s Land,” an African-American spiritual, arranged by Melva W. Costen.
- “I’ve Got Peace Like a River,” an African-American spiritual.

Positive-Identity Assets

- “Let Us Talents and Tongues Employ,” lyrics by Fred Kaan, a Jamaican folk melody adapted by Doreen Potter.
- “Lord, When I Came Into This Life,” lyrics by Fred Kaan, an American folk melody arranged by Annabel Morris Buchanan.
- “Here I Am, Lord,” lyrics and composition by Daniel L. Schutte.
- “God of Our life,” lyrics by Hugh Thomson Kerr, composition by Charles Henry Purday, harmonized by John Weaver.
- “I’m Gonna Live So God Can Use Me,” an African-American spiritual arranged by Wendell Whalum.
- “Just as I Am, Without One Plea,” lyrics by Charlotte Elliott, composition by William Batchelder Bradbury.
- “My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less,” lyrics by Edward Mote, composition by William Batchelder Bradbury.

APPENDIX 2

MUSICAL DRAMA RESOURCES

Many published musicals are out of print after only a few years. One can check with the publishers to get their updated list of musical dramas available at this time. But many musical dramas, which are no longer available, are still excellent resources. One can check with the copyright department of that publisher to see about copyright permission. Or one can check with other bookstores and organizations that specialize in out-of-print material. One such organization, working with churches to help find and distribute out-of-print material is:

High Country Resources
110 Bill Jones Road
Jonesborough, TN 37659
Phone: 423-753-7980
Toll free fax: 888-753-8178
E-mail: high.county@xtn.net
Web site: www.highcountryresources.com

Children's Christmas Musicals

Baa, Baa, Bethlehem, Lynn Hodges and John E. Coates, The Benson Company, Nashville, TN, 1987.

The Brightest Star: A Christmas Musical for Children's Choirs, Robert J Hughes and Betty C. Hughes, Lorenz Publishing Company, Dayton, Ohio, 1984.

Carriers of the Light: A Children's Christmas Musical, Anna Laura Page and Jean Anne Shafferman, Alfred Publishing Company, Van Nuys, CA, 1997.

A Certain Small Shepherd: A Christmas Musical for Kids, Carol McMillen and David Culross, Sinspiration Music, Grand Rapids, MI, 1981.

Christmas Magic: A Musical for Young Children, Virginia Kolk Pedulla, Alfred Publishing Company, Van Nuys, CA, 1991.

Christmas Time: A Christmas Musical for Unison and Two-Part Voices, Buryl Red and Terry Kirkland, Kirkland House, Wingert-Jones Music, Inc., 1990.

Gather Around the Christmas Tree: A Little Christmas Cantata for Unison and Two-Part Choir, Dolores Hruby, Concordia Publishing Company, St. Louis, 1977.

Getting' Ready For the Miracle: A Christmas Musical for Young Voices, Linda Rebuck and Tom Fettke, Lillenas Publishing Company, Kansas City MO, 1986.

Good King Wenceslas: The King Who Knew the Joy of Giving, Kathie Hill and Ron W. Griffin, Ariose Music Group, Alexandria House, Alexandria, IN, 1986.

Jesus Lights the Way: A Children's Christmas Service, Cynthia A. Wheeler and Diane L. Gibson, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, MO, 1998.

Keep Christ in Christmas: a Christmas musical for Children's choirs, Robert J. Hughes and Betty C. Hughes, Lorenz Publishing Company, Dayton, Ohio, 1983.

The Night Before Christmas Caper: A Christmas Musical for Children, Janet McMahan-Wilson and Alan Billingsley, Daybreak Music, Wingert-Jones Music, Inc., Kansas City, MO, 1998.

One Small Child: A Christmas Musical, Lani Smith, Lorenz Publishing Company, Dayton, Ohio, 1974.

The Perfect Gift: A Christmas Musical for unison and two-part voices, Ellen Woods Bryce, Van Ness Press, Inc., Nashville, TN, 1985.

Shobi Shares a Miracle: A Musical Drama for Christmas, Trilby Jordan and Albert Zabel, Choristers Guild, Garland, TX, 1984.

Star of Wonder: A Children's Christmas Service, Terry Dittmer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, MO, 1998.

Sunshine and Snowflakes: 40 kids Singin' at Christmas, Clark Gassman, Lexicon Music, Waco, TX, 1973.

The Visitor: A Christmas Musical, Lani Smith, Lorenz Publishing Company, Dayton, Ohio, 1973.

Other Children's Musicals

Back at the Creekbank, Kathie Hill and Janet McMahan, The Benson Company, Nashville, TN, 1983.

The Bible Tells Me So Show: The Show That Tells You the Wonderful Promises in God's Word, Kathie Hill and Janet McMahan, Ariose Music Group, Inc., Alexandria, IN, 1985.

Camp Encouragement: A Christian Musical for Children of all Ages. Deb Shelby and Don Wharton, Third Firkin Music Company, Madison, TN, 1996.

Colby's Missing Memory. Peter and Hanneke Jacobs, Maranatha! Music, Word, Inc., Waco, TX, 1985.

Down by the Creek Bank, Dottie Rambo and Dave Huntsinger, The Benson Company, Nashville, TN, 1978.

A Family Recipe: A Children's Musical. Ruth Elaine Schram and Mark Cabaniss, Daybreak Music, Wingert-Jones Music, Inc., Kansas City, MO, 1998.

The 50th Annual Polk County Picnic: The Story of a Modern Day Prodigal Son, Janet McMahan-Wilson and Mark Cabaniss, Brentwood Music, Brentwood, TN, 1990.

It's Cool in the Furnace: A Junior Musical about Daniel, Nebuchadnezzar, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, Buryl Red and Grace Hawthorne, Word, Inc., Waco, TX, 1973.

It's Cool in the Furnace II: The Adventure Continues . . ., Larry Mayfield and Grace Hawthorne, Word, Inc., Waco, TX, 1984.

Kid's Praise!: An Explosion of Happiness! Ernie Rettino and Debby Kerner, Maranatha! Music, Waco TX, 1981.

Kid's Praise! 2: A Joyfulliest Noise. Ernie Rettino and Debby Kerner, Maranatha! Music, Word, Inc., Waco, TX, 1981

Kid's Praise! 3. Ernie Rettino and Debby Kerner, Maranatha! Music, Word, Inc., Waco, TX, 1982.

Kid's Praise! 4: Singational Servants! Ernie Rettino and Debby Kerner, Maranatha! Music, Word, Inc., Waco, TX, 1984.

Kid's Praise! 9: Famous Kids of the Bible, Kathie Hill and Clifford "Barny" Robertson, Maranatha! Music, Laguna Hills, CA, 1991.

Make A Joyful Noise! Introducing . . . Colby, Peter and Hanneke Jacobs, Maranatha! Music, Costa Mesa, CA, 1985.

The Music Machine: A Musical Adventure Teaching the Fruit of the Spirit To All Ages, Jimmy and Carol Owens, Birdwing Music, Canoga Park, CA, 1977.

Out of This World: A Children's Musical, Far beyond imagination, Bigger than your dreams, There's a place called Heaven, Like you've never seen. Rhett Parrish and Janet McMahan-Wilson, Brentwood Music, Brentwood, TN, 1988.

Save Colby's Clubhouse! Peter and Hanneke Jacobs, Maranatha! Music, Costa Mesa, CA, 1985.

Short Stops: A fun Baseball Musical for Kids, Paula Y. Flautt, Dan Keen and Alan Robertson, Meadowgreen Music Company, Nashville, TN, 1990.

The Story of Little Tree, William Lutz and Jahn Lutz, Garden Valley Music; Sparrow, Birdwing Music, Canoga Park, CA, 1984.

Youth Musicals

The Big Picture, Andy Stanley, Word Music, Waco, TX, 1991.

Celebrate the Spirit: A Christian Witness Musical, Marilyn Blume Seefeld, Crescendo Publications, Inc., Dallas TX, 1976.

God . . . So Loved: A Youth Musical, Esther Burroughs and Bob Burroughs, Singspiration, Inc., Grand Rapids, MI, 1972.

Hi Tops, Ernie Rettino, Debbie Kerner Rettino and C. Barny Robertson, Maranatha! Music, Costa Mesa, CA, 1986.

Just For You: A Loving Adventure with God . . . a Joyful Occasion with one Another, Kurt Kaiser, Word Inc., Waco, TX, 1979.

Just Reach Out: A Youth Choir Collection Featuring the Music of Petra. Robert Sterling, Word Music, Waco, TX, 1994.

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APPENDIX 3

THE MUSICAL DRAMA MINISTRY AT ZION LUTHERAN CHURCH, LITCHFIELD, ILLINOIS

APPENDIX 3A

THE HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

Introduction

My first call into the parish after graduation from seminary in 1988 was to Zion Lutheran Church in Litchfield, Illinois. I had served them during my internship or vicarage the year before and now I was being placed there as assistant pastor. My wife, Alvina, also received a call to teach in Zion's day school. Part of her responsibility was to put together a children's musical. We had a good deal of experience with children's musicals. Alvina had directed a number of musicals in the school where she taught while I was attending seminary. Prior to my going to seminary, I had served as a Director of Christian Education. Alvina and I worked together to direct a number of children's musicals at the church where I served in California.

It was during that first year as assistant pastor in Litchfield that we presented to the senior pastor and leadership of the congregation the idea of doing a musical drama based on the life of Jesus that would be for adults to participate in. Alvina and I had never directed a musical with just adults before. A few years earlier, we both had been able to participate in a musical drama with adults, based on the life of Jesus. This had been a very positive experience for both of us. We hoped that we might share this experience with our members at Zion, providing an opportunity for others to grow in their faith as they shared the story of Jesus through song and drama. Zion had never done anything like this before. So with some skepticism, we were granted permission to proceed.

The Witness

Picking a musical drama on the life of Jesus was not difficult. We had seen a few different musicals presented at one of the churches in the town where I served as Director of Christian Education in California. We were actually able to participate in the chorus one year, as this church presented its Easter musical. The musical drama presented that year was called *The Witness*.¹

¹ Owens, *The Witness*.

This musical presented the ministry of Jesus through the eyes of the disciple, Peter. Since Peter was telling the story of his experience with Jesus, he had all of the lines of the script. Other disciples and people involved with Jesus shared their part of the story through solos and duets in special songs. The music included some especially moving songs. It was written for a four-part chorus but was not too difficult.

The difficult task was going to be finding someone who would be willing to take the part of Peter and learn all his lines, who also would be talented enough to make it believable. As we talked about our plan to put together this musical drama, we discovered that the fifth and sixth grade teacher at our school had also participated in this musical when he was teaching in California. His church's choir had presented this musical, without the drama, for its Easter cantata one year, and he had been the narrator, taking the part of Peter. He had enjoyed the experience and really wished that they had done it with all the dramatic effects as well. When we talked about doing it at Litchfield, he was ready to volunteer for the part of Peter.

Another challenge was the recruitment of the chorus and cast. Because no one at Zion had been involved with anything like this before, they could not envision what we were trying to do. They also could not imagine who would come to see it presented when it was finished. We set the time for the performances on the last weekend in April. We scheduled a dress rehearsal for Friday evening, an evening performance for Saturday, and an afternoon performance on Sunday. We began practices in January, meeting every Saturday morning. When we scheduled the performances, people questioned why we would schedule more than one. They didn't think we would get enough people to come to even one. We placed the invitation to participate in the bulletin and newsletter, encouraging people to get involved. Although a few people responded to these notices, our best response came from personal invitations. We were pleased with the final cast and chorus numbering twenty-five people.

Alvina and I worked together to direct the musical. Alvina had had experience acting and directing in civic theater and college productions. We had also co-directed a number of children's musicals, one of them involving adults and children in the presentation.

We began by ordering the songbooks. We were also able to order an accompaniment cassette, which we used for practices and then also for the performances. We checked with the copyright office of the publisher and found that if we did not charge an admission fee, we were granted performance permission with the purchase of the songbooks.

Our first practices were spent learning the music. The chorus learned the songs and the story line and became familiar with the solo and duet parts. After a little over a month of practices we held auditions for the special parts. We encouraged a number of people, whom we felt would be good at the parts, to try out.

After learning the music, Alvina began to lead us in choreographing the presentation. We also delegated some of the responsibilities for costumes, props, and publicity. We trained people in the operation of the sound system and a simple lighting system. A few weeks before the performances a few of the men got together to assemble the stage platforms and paint the sets in the gymnasium.

The costs were kept to a minimum, as we did not have budgeted funds from the congregation. Wherever possible, cast members paid for materials and supplies and turned in their receipts after the performances. We did take a free will offering, and it did cover our expenses. We presented to the cast the idea of tithing our offering to a special mission project. They liked the idea, and we voted on a number of suggested projects to decide where ten percent of our offerings would go.

We advertised the musical in our bulletins and newsletters to invite our own congregational members to come. We invited the other churches in town and the Lutheran churches in our circuit. We encouraged the cast members to invite family, friends, neighbors, and co-workers. We opened up the dress rehearsal on Friday evening to those who were unable to attend on the weekend. We were pleased with the turn out on Saturday and Sunday. We could seat about five hundred people. Each performance brought between three hundred fifty and four hundred people.

We were even more pleased with the excitement and enthusiasm of the cast members as they were able to sing to the glory of God and share their faith in Jesus through this medium of musical drama. We prayed together before the performance, inviting anyone in the cast to offer a prayer if he/she wished. Although they were not used to praying spontaneously and openly in this fashion, some people did pray fervently from their hearts, asking God to bless us and help us remember the words and music and be able to sing and praise our Lord from our hearts. Others prayed for the people who came, for some that they had invited, for family members and friends who needed to be encouraged in the faith or who were not yet Christians at all.

The experience drew us all closer to each other. Friendships between families and individuals developed that continue to this day even though some have moved away to other parts of the country.

Afterward, over the next few months, there was an expression of hope and desire that we would be able to do the musical drama, or another one, again next year. We began to make plans for the spring of 1990, deciding to do *The Witness* a second time.

Once again we began practices in January. We began announcements in December, inviting people to participate. We also invited people from the community to come and be a part of the production. Many of the same cast and chorus members returned, and we had about thirty people on stage with a number of people volunteering to work behind the scenes with costumes, make-up, set, sound and lighting.

We set a date for the performances earlier than the year before. Late in April, we had to contend with farmers getting into their fields, graduations and proms. We liked the idea of doing it during Lent as part of our preparation for Easter. Our congregation still held confirmation on Palm Sunday so we backed up a couple weekends and scheduled the performances for the fourth weekend in March. We added a Friday evening performance, three in all for the weekend, and moved our last dress rehearsal to Thursday evening.

Because we had one less month to prepare we scheduled some additional practices, besides the Saturday morning practices, for Sunday afternoon or evening. With many of the same people from the previous year, the music was easier to learn and the new people were able to learn it quickly. Auditions were held after a month into

practices. Our fifth and sixth grade teacher once again was willing to play the part of Peter but all the other parts were open for auditions.

We built upon our experience from the previous year, making some improvements and changes in the choreography, the set and the stage platforms. We had some seed money left from the previous year so we were able to invest in some sound equipment. We borrowed lights from the local drama group in town. We expanded our committees and the involvement of additional people in the carrying out of the activities that needed to be done. We also expanded the scope of our publicity, even including a telephone interview with Rev. Mark Hawkinson at KFUE radio in St. Louis.

Again it was a very positive experience for those who participated, for our congregation, and for those who came to witness and experience the love of Jesus acted out before them. With the second year of presenting *The Witness*, a tradition had been started at Zion Lutheran Church, Litchfield, Illinois.

The Victor

The next year it was almost expected that we would do a musical in the spring. The question was, "which one shall we do?" We could do *The Witness* again for the third year. The message was excellent and the music carried the message well. Some of the previous cast members were ready to make *The Witness* part of the annual tradition.

Others, though, were ready to try something else, another musical. They most definitely wanted to do a musical on the life of Christ, but they were ready to learn a new musical. A few even did some checking on their own and suggested a title or two.

We knew that Jimmy and Carol Owens, the writers of *The Witness*, had written another musical called *The Victor*.² It also presented the life of Jesus, but it carried the theme further to apply it to our lives. Jesus was victorious in His death and resurrection. By faith in Jesus, we share in that victory. He empowers us to live lives of victory and when we die, we shall share in His glorious victory in heaven. Some of the themes were taken from the Book of Revelation, giving us encouragement and hope in times of struggle and hardship.

Once again we began practices after the first of the year, this time however, not until the first Sunday in February. We recruited and organized several committees to help with the production. People auditioned for speaking parts as well as singing parts. We asked two people from the community, outside our congregation, who were involved in music in the public schools, to help us with auditions. We also invited the general community to come and join us in the production of *The Victor*. We presented three performances on the last weekend in April, during the Easter season.

Once again the response of the participants and the audience was very positive. People heard the Gospel presented in a form that they were not used to hearing. Many in

² Owens, *The Victor*.

the audience expressed their thanks, what a blessing it was, an encouragement to them and their faith. The cast members also expressed how they grew in their faith, in their relationships with one another in the congregation, as well as with other Christians in the community. The tradition was growing.

The Promise: 1992

Although the experience with *The Victor* was very positive, we felt a little disappointed in the drama of the story line. Comparing it to *The Witness*, there were some things we liked better about just sticking with the life of Jesus. We were ready to go back to *The Witness*, or to try another musical drama. We began to look at what was available.

During these past three years, Alvina was also leading Christian children's musicals in the congregational school. The excitement and growth in faith that we saw in the adults we also witnessed in the children who participated in the musicals. We began to ask if something might not be available that would lend itself to the involvement of children, and thus, whole families, in a musical drama on the life of Jesus.

Mel Cordani, one of our members who was an active participant in the first musicals, traveled a lot with his work. In his free time while on the road, he would stop at Christian bookstores to look for and listen to musical dramas on the life of Jesus. On several occasions we were invited to his home to listen to and consider a musical that he had found. One of the musicals we listened to was called *The Promise*.³ It involved children. In fact the main characters who narrated the whole story of Jesus were a young boy and his sister, and their grandfather. The story line followed the life of Jesus from the prophecies of His birth, through the ascension, ending with Grandpa speaking the words of the Great Commission.

The script also called for someone to actually act out the part of Jesus. We hadn't done that before. In *The Witness*, Peter and the disciples were remembering their experience with Jesus. He was never present as a visible character although we visualized Him as the cast pretended to watch Him come by into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday and as we pictured Him dying in the distance at His crucifixion. In *The Victor* as well, we did not have a person act out the part of Jesus. It was remembered, visualized in our imaginations. If we decided to perform *The Promise*, we would have the tremendous challenge of having an actor play the role of Jesus. That would be a real challenge for us. What exciting possibilities we could imagine.

The music of *The Promise* was another consideration. It would be challenging to learn, but it was powerful and moving and fit so well with the words and the story line. We were drawn in just listening to the tape. Grandpa, with Lisa and Billy, the modern day people who narrated the story, were drawn back in time, into the life of Jesus and His disciples as Grandpa told the story. And so were we. We were drawn into the experience

³ Dargatz & Rhodes, *The Promise*.

along with the people who followed Jesus. Just listening to the tape was a great experience of the Gospel message and the love of Jesus.

But Mel had another surprise for us. He had found that the original group that recorded *The Promise* presented it each summer on Friday and Saturday evenings in a huge outdoor amphitheater in Glen Rose, Texas, just south of Fort Worth. He and his wife invited Alvina and me to go with them to see it. We arranged for a weekend in June and had a great time together, traveling down to Texas, doing some sightseeing in the Dallas/Fort Worth area, and attending *The Promise*. They used a cast and chorus of over one hundred people. Lots of children were included in many of the scenes. The staging was phenomenal. The special effects made us feel like we were right there in Bible times. A water mote separated the stage from the audience. It was used for Jesus' baptism. And when they used it for the Sea of Galilee, with Jesus calming the storm, it was so very realistic.

Live animals added to the authenticity of the whole production. Mary rode on a donkey to Bethlehem. The wise men came on camels. The shepherds had real sheep and they led them through the marketplace. A real dove landed on Jesus at His Baptism. The Roman Soldiers sat upon regal horses. Jesus entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday on a donkey. And when Jesus overturned the moneychangers' tables, there were cages of pigeons that broke open and the birds flew away.

The musical was definitely the highlight of the weekend. We talked about it all the way back to Litchfield. We discussed how we could do something of that caliber with our resources. We decided we couldn't. But we would try to do our best with what we had to work with. We began immediately to plan out a strategy for presenting *The Promise* the following spring.

The Director

Directors are individuals with keen eyes, sharp ears, an intuitive sensitivity, and a wide range of gifts to draw upon. . . . Directors are an amalgam; they synthesize ideas, inspiration, and intuitions into meaning and form. They come in all shapes and sizes. They are not limited by their age or gender. They do, however, have three things in common: they are all . . . intuitive, enthusiastic, and gregarious. Ideas come easily to them, they love their craft, and they enjoy being with people. These are the key elements of their personalities; . . . [They] are a bit daring, willing to step out in faith, and not afraid to appear a little mad.⁴

Alvina and I had co-directed the past three musicals. Although we continued to serve as co-directors, Alvina was willing to take greater responsibility for the leadership. She does have great organizational skills and works well with people. She had a lot of experience with drama in high school and college. She had directed a number of

⁴ James W. Rodgers & Wanda C. Rodgers, *Play Director's Survival Kit*, (West Nyack, New York: The Center For Applied Research in Education, 1995), 4-5.

children's musicals. With a good theological and Biblical foundation she desired to make the musical drama the best production it could be, a faith enriching experience that would be true to God's Word and bring glory to God.

She began with a goal of having at least fifty people in the chorus. She would also need people as actors and in off stage support positions. But before we started recruiting for cast and chorus, she needed to find help and support from others in key positions of leadership. A core committee was selected and given responsibility for helping her to organize and oversee all the work that would need to be done. This committee would need someone to direct the music, and sectional leaders to help each part learn the music. They would need several committees with committee chairpersons to take responsibility for specific parts of the production. The core committee began its work, recruiting the leaders and organizing the committees.

Recruitment

Theater is a team sport. It takes more than just talent to produce a successful production. In fact, you will probably end up with more people on the Production Staff – those who contribute as designers, technicians, heads of committees, assistants, and members of crews – than you will have actors on the stage. It is essential, therefore, that you find bright, organized, and committed people to assist on the production so you can concentrate your time and efforts on directing the play.⁵

Practices would need to begin in the fall, and we wanted to have at least fifty people in the chorus. So with excitement and some apprehension, throughout the summer months, we began to talk about *The Promise* and encourage people to consider being a part of the musical. The Core Committee also helped us to recruit and organize various committees to begin their specific duties and responsibilities.

As we invited people to participate, we encouraged them to get involved as whole families. High school youth were encouraged to involve their families but were allowed to participate as individuals if their families chose not to be involved. Children in eighth grade or younger, however, were encouraged to involve their whole families, and actually required to have at least one parent or older sibling in the production. Not all the family members had to sing or act or be on stage. There were many opportunities for participation behind the scenes with set, stage, costumes, publicity, etc. and many family members chose to work on one or more of these committees.

⁵ Ibid., 8.

Babysitting Committee

Babysitting would need to be provided so that whole families could participate. The youngest children, preschool and younger, would need babysitting for the entire time: practices, dress rehearsals, and performances. Older children, kindergarten through fourth grade, would need supervision when they were not involved on the stage. They would have some acting parts and sing on some of the songs, but there were many scenes that did not include them. During these scenes at practice and in the performances they would be in the care of the babysitters.

We recruited a mom and teenage son who were willing to head the babysitting committee. They in turn recruited a few other people to help them. They had games and activities for the children, stories and songs, even refreshments. They made it a very enjoyable time for the children.

Their work was especially important during the musical performances. They would have the older children cued for their entrances when it was time for them to join the rest of the chorus. And they were ready to pick up the children when they were not needed on stage. This proved to be a big help during the performances as well as in the practices leading up to the final production.

The committee did not have to be concerned about the older children. They would be included in the whole production and would be under the supervision of their own parents or another responsible adult.

Musical Director and Sectional Leaders

To help the chorus and soloists learn the music, “the most important individual, of course, is a Music Director, someone who can coach the singers.”⁶

One of the members of the Core Committee, a person with great musical background, agreed to direct the music. We recruited five sectional leaders to help the sections – sopranos, altos, tenors, basses, and children – to learn their parts.

The musical playbooks were ordered along with the accompaniment sound track on CD, and the practice tracks on cassette. We paid for copyright permission to copy the practice tracks so that each person would be able to practice on their own time with their voice’s part on tape. Permission to perform the musical was granted with the purchase of the books, provided we did not charge admission.

We did begin practices in October, at first setting aside every other Sunday afternoon from 3:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. Our first goal was to learn the music. Practices began promptly at three with a devotion. A committee helped with the scheduling of devotions.

After devotions we dismissed the youngest children to their babysitters and the rest to their sectional practices. Sectional leaders took their section through the songs

⁶ Ibid., 188.

assigned for that practice. Two or three songs were assigned for each practice. That next hour was spent working in our sections on the parts to these songs. The practice tracks were very helpful here in the sectional practice as well. Sectional leaders would help their section learn their part, playing it on the piano. But then they would also use the practice track so that the section could practice singing their part with the full musical accompaniment.

Besides the four traditional sections of soprano, alto, tenor, and bass, we also had a sectional for the children. They sang the soprano lines, but they did not sing on all the songs. A sectional leader was chosen to help lead the children through their parts. This worked well to separate them from the sopranos for the sectional practice and give them an identity of their own with a feeling of importance with something special to offer. We referred to them as the “Children of Promise.”

After an hour, working hard in our sectionals, we all gathered together for refreshments. Another committee worked to schedule and supervise the refreshments. After the refreshments, and keeping to a strict schedule, we gathered together for a plenary practice of the music we had worked on in sectionals. Our musical director led us through the pieces, working with entrances, dynamics, cut offs, enunciation, and other specifics of the music. We were impressed with the sound when we all came together. The music, especially with the words of praise to Jesus or words recounting His life of love, lifted our spirits and encouraged us.

We ended our practice time with a few announcements and a prayer. Many people stayed to help clean up and put things away.

Devotions Committee

This special committee took responsibility for scheduling people to lead devotions at the beginning of each rehearsal. They would remind the individual before their turn came up. Devotions lasted about ten to fifteen minutes and included a variety of styles and presentations. Some people chose to lead a mini Bible Study. Others chose to share a personal story or testimony of how God had touched their life in a special way. Some included a poem, or devotional reading that they had found and that had meant a lot to them. Often a song or two were included. Sometimes a song from the musical was sung and used for the basis of the devotion.

For the most part, the devotions were creative and spiritually meaningful. People had an opportunity to share their faith in a safe environment. People got to know each other, especially through some of the intimate sharing that took place in some of the devotions. Whole families got to work together to plan and present their devotion. It was a great way to begin our practice times.

Refreshment Committee

Families took turns providing the refreshments for our break time halfway through each practice. We did not require it but usually they brought some healthy choices like vegetables and fruit along with the chips and dips and soda. This became a very important part of our practice time. People developed relationships with each other as they visited during our break. Families began to bond with other families. Single people were drawn into relationships with others, getting to know other singles or included in family groupings. Everyone began to feel like they were a part of the musical family.

A committee helped with the scheduling of families to take their turn with refreshments. It was not a difficult job. Everyone willingly signed up for a turn. The committee would call to give a reminder the week before. They were available to help with the set up and clean up, but most families took care of those details themselves. The Refreshment Committee also helped to put together a potluck dinner before our first dress rehearsal. Family members who were peripheral, or not involved at all, were invited to come and join us for the meal and fellowship. We were all quite excited about how things were coming together.

Audition Committee

The most important phase in the entire production is the auditioning and casting process. That may sound like a broad generalization, but it is not. It is a fact. In countless productions, even on Broadway, strong casts have overcome weak scripts, or strong scripts have been ruined by miscast actors. Most professional directors agree that more than fifty (some claim as high as seventy to eighty) percent of their job is over when they complete the audition process and post their cast.⁷

While the chorus was working on the music, other committees were hard at work behind the scenes. Auditions would need to take place soon so that soloists could learn their music and be ready to sing with the chorus, and so that actors could be ready to learn their roles when we began with the choreography. Some special recruiting was done for a few of the more difficult parts. We needed a strong tenor for the resurrection angel because he would have a very important tenor solo at Jesus' resurrection. The part of Jesus could be done without a strong singing voice, but someone very talented, who could look the part, would be needed to fill some very big sandals.

We had some very talented people within our congregation, and we encouraged them to audition, but we also reached out beyond our congregation for participation in the chorus as well as for solos and acting parts. We invited people from the community, from other churches, from neighboring towns, and from the nearby Lutheran high school.

⁷ Ibid., 118.

For some of the smaller acting parts, and extras on the stage, we recruited family members who were not especially interested in singing but welcomed the opportunity to be involved as actors. One husband and father, who was hesitant to get involved, asked if we had a part for a tree. He thought he could do that. As he got involved with his family in the musical, he began to sing in the chorus and discovered that he had a pretty good voice. In a later production, he tried out for, and was cast in, a small solo part as one of the disciples. With some help and coaching from the musical director, he actually did a very good job with that solo in the musical.

The Audition Committee did not have an easy task when it came time for auditions. There were many talented people to choose from, and not enough parts for each person to receive one. People from the congregation, a few people from the community, and several students from the Lutheran high school came to audition. Alvina and I served on the committee along with our musical director. We also asked the music teacher and the band director from the local high school to serve on the committee. We wanted some musically trained people who could be somewhat unbiased with those who were trying out.

We held auditions on a Sunday afternoon, beginning right after lunch, and continuing through practice time. People signed in and waited for their turn. By this time they knew the musical well enough to know what parts were available. We also published a list of solos and acting parts ahead of time. As each person went through the audition, he/she could sing or read the part he/she was interested in. We also asked if those who auditioned would be open to considering other parts and if they were, would they read that part or sight-read that solo. Most of the people said we could use them wherever we felt we needed them or where we thought they would fit best. For many it was the first audition they had ever attempted. We tried to ease their nervousness and make them feel relaxed. Some came totally unprepared, not knowing what to expect. Others, it was very noticeable, had worked hard to prepare.

By the end of auditions that afternoon, we were tired, but we continued to deliberate as a committee and make our selections. Later that evening and over the next few days we contacted personally each person who had auditioned to thank them for making himself or herself available to us. We shared with them our decision for them: whether they had received the part they had tried out for, or another part, or no part at all. Some of these calls were not easy calls to make. People who received a part were excited and thankful. Most people who did not receive a part were disappointed but understanding. A few were relieved not to receive a special part and glad just to sing in the chorus.

The audition selection list was printed and distributed at our next rehearsal. Soloists began to plug into their parts in the music. Actors began to learn their lines. Now the costume committee would need to swing into high gear.

Costume Committee

Real magic exists in the area of costuming, and too many directors may not be fully aware of the subtle but powerful messages this design element transmits to an audience. . . . At the very least you need to recruit an individual who has a keen eye for color, line, and texture. It would also help if this individual has strong organizational skills and finds sewing machines user-friendly.⁸

The Costume Committee had already been working hard with the chorus members. Those who did not have a specific character, along with most of the disciples, would wear general tunic and robe costume. Many people already had these costumes from the previous musicals. But people who were first time participants had to borrow a costume from someone who had been in a musical before, or sew their own costume, or find someone who would sew it for them. The committee had several volunteers who did work on sewing costumes. This was the first year that we included children so families with children were responsible for sewing or securing costumes for their children as well.

Now that the parts had been assigned, the Costume Committee could proceed to design and fit the costumes to the characters. Many new costumes that we had not needed before were going to be needed for this production. We needed several costumes for Jesus: for His ministry, His passion and crucifixion, and His resurrection. We needed costumes for the shepherds and wise men, for the chief priests and the Pharisees, for the Roman soldiers, for Pontius Pilate and King Herod, for the demon-possessed man, the woman caught in adultery, Lazarus coming out of the tomb, and the angels. The committee was able to borrow some costumes from a neighboring church, but they worked hard to put together many costumes that would be owned by Zion.

The committee asked for help with the sewing of costumes. Some people who were not yet involved in the musical volunteered to help sew. Several brought their machines and worked together, having a great time, getting to know each other better.

Choreography

Many directors would agree that the most stressful rehearsal is the first day of blocking when they are scheduled to get actors up on their feet and start moving them about on the stage for the first time. . . . the beginning of this stage of the rehearsal process is like learning to walk all over again; you feel anxious and more than a little intimidated.⁹

The task of directing the acting, blocking the movement on stage, and developing the choreography on many of the songs went primarily to Alvina. She had gained

⁸ Ibid., 100.

⁹ Ibid., 150.

experience from directing the previous musicals and several children's musicals. She was prepared to take the lead role in the blocking and choreography. She did get some help, however, on the choreographing of a few of the songs from someone in the community who volunteered to help.

After the parts were assigned, Alvina began to work with the actors on some of their scenes, pulling singers/actors out of sectional practices as needed, calling in actors who were not part of the chorus in order to work on their scenes. By the time the music was learned and memorized, many of the scenes of the drama were in place as well.

Stage and Set Committee

Ideally you need a trained individual who will not only design but will also oversee the construction and rigging of the sets and the hanging and focusing of the lights. If you are fortunate enough to find someone who has the expertise and the time to handle all these tasks, make sure that you line up a number of other people to serve as technical assistants.¹⁰

The difficulty with blocking and choreography at this time in the practice schedule was that we did not have a stage to work on. The past three years, for our musical dramas, we had built a special stage on the side of the gymnasium with one-foot high platforms that were used in school plays and Christmas programs. Over the three years we had added to and rearranged the platforms, but for this musical drama we would need a much more elaborate set, one that would include a stable, the temple, Calvary and the tomb. We also needed more stage area than we had used before because the number of people in the cast and chorus had doubled. Fortunately, the performances had been scheduled for the end of May, and so we had plenty of time to build the stage and the set and get it just the way we wanted it.

With the growing need for a bigger stage, the Stage Crew and Building Committee did some brainstorming. Someone remembered that the city had a big five-foot high stage that they used every summer in the city park for their annual "Party in the Park" and the "Miss Litchfield pageant." If we could borrow that stage, which was sitting in storage until the end of June, and add our platform pieces to it, maybe we could have the size stage we would need. But that probably would not work at the side of the gym were we had done it before. We would need to set up the stage at one end of the gym. But what about the basketball hoop?

We did end up at the one end of the gym, using about one third of the gym for the stage area. That still left room for four hundred chairs and part of the bleachers for seating. The stage extended almost from side wall to side wall. There was room to walk between the stage and wall and the tomb was placed on one side, raised a little above

¹⁰ Ibid., 72.

floor level. The basketball hoop was removed and the backboard and structural frame served as supports for the temple pillars and the backdrop pieces.

When it came time to assemble the whole thing, we had a crew of guys with their power tools sawing supports and screwing platforms together. A few wives and children came to help but it was pretty much a guy-bonding time. Very soon the main stage was up and secure. Backdrops were fastened in place. Steps and ramps were built and added at the right places. The main structure was in place, but little jobs, small improvements, little changes here and there, took place right up until the performances.

With the backdrops in place, the artists in the group got to work. Wanting a general scene that could be used throughout the play was a challenge. With the temple pillars at center stage, Alvina designed a Sea of Galilee scene on the left side and a town scene (Bethlehem, Capernaum, Jerusalem) on the right side. Several people came to paint but one man in particular, with much artistic talent, accepted the task of finishing and fine-tuning the whole background scene. He also played the role of King Herod in the play. With his English accent, (he in fact was from England) he played his role superbly.

Sound crew

Sound has become an increasingly important design element. It includes not only the design of offstage music and sound effects; more recently it has also come to include the electronic enhancement of the spoken word. Stage microphones and body mikes have become an integral part of staging musicals, . . . Controlling both the level and quality of the human voice is a complicated science and requires the expertise of a competent sound technician. . . . Electronic feedback, static, and other 'buzzes' or 'hums' can distract attention and even destroy the overall quality of a production.¹¹

Once the stages were up and the scenery in place, the sound crew began working on setting up the microphones and speakers. We were already using much of this equipment for practices. The sound crew would set it up and take it down each week. Now they could set up permanently to get ready for the performances. Over the years we had tried to use some of the offering proceeds to purchase needed sound equipment. What we still needed at this time was either borrowed or rented. Extra wireless microphones were borrowed from other churches, and from the local public high school drama department. Extra speakers, cables, and a larger soundboard were rented.

Once the system was in place, it could be fine tuned over the next several practices to get the balances right and to eliminate any background noise and feedback. We wanted to make sure that the words could be heard. After all, the message of the Gospel was the whole reason we were doing this. We worked hard with the sound crew so that the chorus could hear their music on stage and get their notes and cues, but also so

¹¹ Ibid., 96.

that the message was not overpowered by the music. We wanted the audience to be able to hear and understand every word. We also had to practice exchanging wireless microphones because we still did not have enough for everyone who needed one. The microphones had to be passed off to the right person at the right time according to a set schedule.

Lighting Crew

Designing and executing stage lighting is a great deal more than just flipping a couple of switches and throwing some light on the stage. In fact, in recent years lighting has become the most powerful stage element. It not only illuminates actors, it also has the capacity to isolate space, set mood, shift attention, suggest time, season and locale, and establish and /or reinforce a play's tempo. When the equipment is sophisticated enough, it can even create the stage magic of special effects.¹²

The lighting crew was also busy those last few weeks before performance. We did not own any of our own lights. We were able to borrow floods and spots from the local drama group in town and from the drama club at the high school. (We gave them thank you honoraria after the performances to help them with their own projects.)

While the stage crew was busy setting up the stages, the lighting crew was working too, to suspend a steel pipe from the rafters of the gymnasium. The spots and floods were attached to the pipe and wired to the control panel at the back of the gym. The framework for the basketball backboard at that end of the gym was used as the lighting platform. Plywood was secured to the framework to provide a floor. The lighting bar controls were placed up there along with a traveling spotlight that we also borrowed from the high school drama club. Two people could easily handle the fairly simple lighting arrangements that we used.

Publicity Committee

“The point we want to emphasize here is that the audience is an equal part of the mix. All your work on a production is for nothing if you don't have an attentive group of people – perhaps a full house. Nothing is more exciting than playing to a full house. . . . Advertising is so important in theater – especially in amateur groups like schools and community theaters – because you don't do it everyday.”¹³

¹² Ibid., 92.

¹³ Ibid., 212.

Meanwhile, the Publicity Committee had been working hard. To comply with the copyright restrictions we could not charge an admission ticket for the performances without paying a royalty to the publisher. We could, however, offer free admission and receive a freewill offering. That is the procedure we had followed with previous musicals. We had never charged admission before. We always took a free-will offering, and that was enough to cover our expenses. We planned to do the same with *The Promise* but we didn't know how we could gauge or control the size of the audience. We had near to full audiences in previous years but we never had to turn anyone away because we had run out of room. Yet, because our attendance had been growing, we did not want to have the problem of turning people away.

The committee decided to proceed with reservation tickets. The tickets were free and did not assign any seat but did reserve a place within the section of four hundred chairs for the ticket holder. Reservations could be made by calling the church office. The church secretary was not in the production itself but did get involved with the Publicity Committee and so was willing to take reservation calls at the office. Tickets could be picked up at the office or one hour prior to the performance. When a performance was fully reserved, the bleachers and standing room were left for those who tried to come without a reservation.

The committee had posters printed and displayed them around town. Cast members from other churches and from out of town took posters to display in their churches and towns. Postcards were printed so that cast members could invite personally their family and friends through the mail. Articles were written for the area newspapers and our church's district newsletter, and pictures were included with these articles wherever possible.

Program Committee

What you need to know first about programs is that they are a giveaway and shouldn't cost much money to reproduce. That doesn't mean they should be flimsy or look cheap – not at all. . . . They are, after all, a reflection of your organization, a permanent memento of the production you have spent weeks working on.¹⁴

In the final week before the performances, the Program Committee printed the programs for the performances. We tried not to leave anyone out, but extra announcements of thanks at the musical performances had to be used to thank those who had been forgotten.

Ushers were recruited from the congregation and family members of the cast who were not involved on stage or behind the scenes. They were scheduled to help with the seating of people and the taking of the offering. People could be seated one hour before

¹⁴ Ibid., 228.

performance time. Seating was on a first come, first served basis. By twenty minutes before performance time, the auditorium was already quite full.

Makeup Committee

Applying makeup before a performance used to be an important ritual. Today the practice is not nearly as popular. Perhaps one of the reasons is because so many contemporary plays are seated in realism. . . . In larger auditoriums, and under intensified lighting, wearing makeup is often necessary. Without a foundation, actors look too pale and washed out, and without some highlighting, the features and expressions on actors' faces are difficult for audiences to read.¹⁵

The last week before the performances we had two dress rehearsals. The makeup people were on hand to help us get used to wearing makeup. Before each performance, the makeup committee was available again to help with the facial makeup. Most women used their own makeup and applied it themselves. Most men didn't want to have makeup, but that was not an option. The lights would completely wash out anyone without makeup. The men teased each other and gave the women on the Makeup Committee a hard time, but twenty minutes before performance time, we were all ready for the performance.

Performance Time

In our prayer time before the first performance, we made a few last minute announcements and reminders, but we spent most of the time praying. We invited anyone who wished to verbalize a prayer. Many expressed thanks to God for the opportunity to be involved with such a project as this. Some prayed for specific people who were in the audience, people they had invited or people they knew were hurting and needing the encouragement of God's love. Children also prayed, and many heard their parents pray. It was a time of focusing on the Lord, asking for His help in sharing the message of His love. We ended with one of the songs and then made our way to the back of the stage.

As the pastor of the congregation, I welcomed the people, and opened with a prayer. The room was full and I polled the audience to see where they had come from. Many were from Litchfield, but there were many from out of town, and even from out of state – several family members and friends of people in the musical who had come a long way to see their loved ones in this musical.

As I left the stage the lights dimmed, and the overture began. We did not use live music. We did not focus our energies into the development of a live orchestra. Instead we

¹⁵ Ibid., 106.

used the accompaniment compact disc that we ordered from the publisher and which we had used throughout our practice times.

The Plot of the Musical

Presenting the familiar story of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection in a way that will catch and hold the attention of the audience could be a challenge. The story must also remain true to the Scriptures. *The Promise* does both. The plot follows closely the Scriptural account, yet the setting begins in a present-day retelling of the story, and the musical arrangements carry the plot along or give pause for reflection on the events just transpired.

The overture begins in darkness, pulling together several melodies that will be used later. As the overture continues, the characters of Grandpa and his two grandchildren, Billy and Lisa, in modern day dress, come down the center aisle with the spotlight picking them up and following them to the stage. They are out for a walk in the meadow, Billy throwing some stones and Lisa picking a few flowers. As the overture ends we pick up their conversation. Billy and Lisa's mom is about to have a baby. They can hardly wait for their new brother or sister to arrive. As they talk about waiting, Grandpa tells them about a baby that was awaited for centuries. Of course he is talking about the Messiah, born as a baby in Bethlehem. He sings a song, "A Promise is a Promise," about promises from God, and as he does, four of the Old Testament prophets appear on stage and recite their prophetic words about the Messiah.

When the song ends, Billy and Lisa want Grandpa to tell them more about this Baby. As he does, the three of them are drawn back in time to witness, and sometimes interact with, the Biblical characters of the first century. During the song, "Magnify," based on Mary's song of praise, they meet Mary and Joseph on their way to Bethlehem. As the angels (and the rest of the chorus) sing "Glory to God," they see the shepherds and wise men who come to visit the Baby. They see little Yeshua working in His father's carpenter shop, and they hear them talk about their coming trip to Jerusalem and the temple. Joseph sings a song expressing his wonder and love for this child who came to them in such a special way.

Then they see John baptizing and preaching repentance. And Jesus comes to be baptized. After His baptism, Jesus is tempted by Satan. (We did not depict Satan on stage. We had his character speak his lines from off stage.)

The disciples, who had been fisherman, are introduced next, discussing their large catch of fish. Then in a song about the Kingdom of God coming, all the other disciples are introduced and welcomed by Jesus. At the end of the song the whole chorus enters and sets up the scene for the Sermon on the Mount. The children are a big part of this scene, coming in with adults as family groupings. Jesus speaks some of the beatitudes and interacts with some of the individuals and then welcomes the children into His arms. The crowd sings a song praising God, who is Jehovah, the great "I AM".

As the song is ending, a group of Pharisees make their way toward Jesus and confront Him concerning His involvement with the common people. He responds calmly, speaking of forgiveness and love for one another as brothers. They walk away proudly and with contempt, but one of them, who turns out to be Nicodemus, holds back, and when everyone is gone except Jesus, Nicodemus and Jesus continue with the dialog from John's Gospel, chapter three.

During this reenactment of the life of Jesus, Grandpa, Lisa and Billy have been on the side lines most of the time, just observing, only occasionally interacting with some of the Biblical characters, like Mary and Joseph on their way to Bethlehem.

The focus returns to these three modern day people at the side of the stage as they talk about the miracles of healing that Jesus did. This leads into a song of praise to Jesus who comes with power to heal "In the Name of the Lord." During the song a number of people come to Jesus and receive healing from His touch. Jesus raises Jairus' daughter, and finally, the woman who sings the solo parts of the song touches the robe of Jesus and is healed also.

As the song ends, the lights come up on the disciples discussing some of the things Jesus has been saying and doing. They wrestle with the kind of kingdom He has come to establish and whether He really is the Messiah. They discuss the feelings they had when Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, and, as they talk, the lights come up on the other side of the stage in a flash back to that actual event. Jesus talks with Mary and Martha comforting them with the assurance that He is the resurrection. Then He calls Lazarus forth from the dead. As Lazarus comes onto stage, wrapped in grave cloths, the music of the last song picks up again, and the chorus sings the final refrain: "Blessed is He who comes in the Name of the Lord."

This song ends Act I, and, during a brief intermission, the offering is taken. A few announcements are made, inviting the people to stay for refreshments after the performance and to attend our worship services if they do not have a church home. There is time for the people to stretch and visit and for the members of the cast to catch their breath and refocus for the second act.

Act II begins with Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. We would have loved to use a real donkey, but for space and safety, we chose not to. As the music begins, Jesus comes walking in from the back of the auditorium with some disciples, children, and other adults following after him, waving palm branches. The rest of the cast comes onto stage shouting and pointing to where Jesus is. The cast and chorus sing the song, "We Cry Hosanna, Lord."

As the song comes to its conclusion, Jesus has made His way to the temple. A few priests are there, and the moneychangers are calling out to the people to exchange their coins and buy their sacrifices. Jesus confronts them, turning over the tables of the moneychangers and driving them away. The priests confront Jesus with several questions: about His authority, about taxes, and about the greatest commandment. Jesus answers their questions, and they walk off frustrated and angry with Jesus. The lights go down on this scene and come up on Billy, Lisa, and Grandpa as they make the transition into the next scene.

In the upper room the disciples are waiting for Jesus, talking about how He has upset the Jewish leaders and that there are rumors about a plot to arrest Jesus. When Jesus comes in, Peter shares their concerns with Jesus, who says that one of them will betray him. Jesus conveys to Judas that He knows that he is the one. He goes on, as the song “Shalom” begins, to share the meal with them: the bread, which is His body and the wine, which is His blood. The disciples, singing on stage, are joined by the rest of the chorus singing from backstage.

When the song ends there is some discussion about Peter’s denial and about where Jesus is going and how the disciples can get there. This section is taken right out of John’s Gospel, chapter 14. As they leave to go to the garden to pray, they sing the chorus of “He is Jehovah.”

In the garden, while Jesus is praying, His disciples are sleeping. The soldiers come and arrest Jesus. Grandpa fills in some of the details as Jesus is praying and then is led away. As He is led from trial to trial, Peter denies three times that he knows Jesus. Billy cannot believe that Peter would do this. Before Herod, Jesus does not say a word. The soldiers put a purple robe on Jesus and lead Him back to Pilate. Pilate sings a song that dialogues with the crowd. The crowd screams back at Pilate, “Let Him be crucified, crucify him.” Pilate finally gives in, washes his hands of it all, and sends Jesus off to be crucified. The soldiers lead Him off stage, out a side entrance of the auditorium, and reenter from the back with Jesus carrying His cross as a solo verse of “Via Dolorosa” is sung. The soldiers bring Jesus up the center aisle, treating Him cruelly all the way to the top of the ramp leading to the stage. Here Jesus stumbles, and Grandpa rushes in to help. He is made to carry the cross the rest of the way. Grandpa and the children join the rest of the onlookers at the foot of the cross.

Jesus is placed on the cross and it is raised into place. The voices of two thieves are heard from off stage, and Jesus assures the one that he will be in paradise. He prays for forgiveness for those who put Him there. He cries out, “Father, why have You forsaken me?” Then He dies. This all takes place in the middle musical section of a song called “Cross of Calvary” sung by the disciple, John, and Jesus’ mother, Mary, standing at the foot of the cross. As the song concludes, the cast quietly leaves the stage, and Grandpa and the children return to the side of the stage where Grandpa narrates the next transition.

As Grandpa tells how Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus come to Pilate for permission to remove the body from the cross and place it in a tomb, the actors carry out these actions. The stone is rolled in front of the tomb and the guard is placed into position. Grandpa ends his narration with the statement that “something strange started happening very early Sunday morning.”¹⁶ This sets the stage for the resurrection scene.

As the angel begins to sing the story in the song “Arise,” the events of the resurrection begin to unfold. The chorus joins in with the singing from back stage as

¹⁶ Dargatz & Rhodes, 211.

Jesus appears to the women and to His disciples. By the end of the song the cast and chorus are all on stage, praising the risen Jesus.

Grandpa and the children talk about Jesus' many appearances to His disciples before He ascended into heaven, and Grandpa ends with the Great Commission from Matthew 28, spoken to everyone in the audience. As Grandpa, Billy, and Lisa leave the stage and walk down the center aisle, the cast and chorus sing the "Finale." Then the performance ends with a cast call that includes the choral ending of "A Promise is a Promise," the song that Grandpa sang at the beginning of the musical.

Striking Set

We did three performances and had nearly full audiences each time. Some people came back a second or third time, bringing other people with them, expressing the joy and excitement of experiencing the life of Jesus through this musical drama. We had an evening performance at 7:00 p.m. on Saturday. On Sunday we presented a 2:00 p.m. matinee and a 7:00 p.m. evening performance.

It was late, and we were exhausted after the final performance, but many of the cast and crew stayed late into the night to take down the set. With a lot of people, the work went quickly. We ordered pizza and enjoyed working together on one more part of the project. We were pleased with how everything had gone, glad that it was over and our lives could get back to "normal," yet sad that we would no longer be sharing the story of Jesus in this way, seeing each other and working together as we had for so long.

Over the next week, the main pieces of the set were put into storage, or returned to their rightful owners. This was no easy task as many people and businesses had donated props and parts of the set for our use. By the end of the week our church and school facilities were back to normal. But people talked about how their lives had been touched. Those that were in the musical, as well as congregational members and friends in the community who came to see the musical, talked about how seeing the story come to life had done so much to help them grow in their faith in Jesus and love for Jesus.

Evaluation

We asked each committee chairperson to give us a written report of what they had done, who was involved with their committee and who helped in various ways, when things needed to be completed, and how things could be done differently to improve the process next time. The steering committee also met to look over the reports and to add their own evaluation and recommendations for future musical drama productions.

Later, in July, we hosted a cast party at our home. All the people who were involved in any way, from ushering to acting, were invited along with their families. Each family brought some food to add to the celebration. Some games and activities were provided, but most people just visited. Many gathered around the television set to watch a

video of our production, to comment on the mistakes or blunders, and to enjoy reliving the experience once again.

During the summer months, many of the cast and chorus members asked about the plans for the next year. They were excited about participating again in the next musical production. Following some of the suggestions in the reports, we began to set down some plans for *The Promise* for the following year.

Finance Committee

Very early in the planning for the musical, the Steering Committee saw the need for a treasurer and a committee to help with the finances. We had some seed money left from the previous musical. This money had been placed in a special account for “Musical Ministry.” We asked one of the participants in the musical if she would serve as treasurer. She had a great financial background with lots of experience being involved in a successful family business in our community. Our school principal, who was also involved in the musical as part of the chorus, served as assistant to the treasurer.

The work of this committee was not too involved until the time of the performances. As the performances drew closer, and committees and individuals within the musical were making purchases for supplies and materials, receipts were turned in to the Finance Committee for reimbursement later, after the offerings were received. We had a budget of sorts, based on what we projected we might receive in the offerings. But most of the time, if a committee saw the need to make an expenditure, the finance committee or the director would give their approval.

At the three performances, the ushers gathered the offering at the intermission. This was placed in a safe place to be counted later. The finance committee arranged to count and deposit the offerings into the Musical Ministry account. The treasurer then proceeded to pay the bills.

Earlier, with previous musical dramas, we had encouraged the cast and chorus to tithe the offerings received to a mission project that would be chosen by majority vote of the musical participants. We did this also with the offerings we received for *The Promise*.

Reimbursement checks were written. Honoraria were given to community organizations that had loaned us sound and light equipment, to the ladies’ group of the church for helping to serve refreshments, and to the church general account for assistance with utility and building expenses. A detailed accounting list was drawn up to be shared with the musical participants, as well as with the congregational leadership and members. When all the expenses were paid, we still had some money left. This was set aside in the Musical Ministry account for the next musical drama.

The Promise: 1993

Although it involved a lot of time and hard work, with some hassles and frustrations, directing *The Promise* was a highlight of Alvina’s year and she gladly

accepted the position of director for the next year. I assisted as co-director, as I had time, and with a new Associate Pastor on staff I had a little more time. We were glad to welcome our new pastor and his family, not only to our congregation, but also as active participants in the musical drama. Their involvement provided many opportunities for them to get to know a large number of families within our congregation and community.

We had learned some things during the previous year and we applied some of that insight into the musical drama production the following year. We did not make a lot of major changes, but we did make a few minor changes in areas like set, script, and schedule. We wanted to make the experience more friendly and supportive to families. We wanted to keep the script and story line as close to Scripture as possible. We wanted the chorus, cast and crew, as well as the audience, to draw closer to Jesus and to grow stronger in their faith in him.

Some of the first changes we made were with the schedule. Sunday afternoon practices seemed to work the best for the most number of people, so we kept that part of the schedule. But we decided to move the performance dates to the middle of Lent, two weekends before Palm Sunday. We also decided not to begin practices until after the New Year. This shortened our practice schedule considerably, but we anticipated that most of the chorus from the previous year would return. They would already have an excellent grasp of the music and could help the new people in the chorus to learn their music.

Although practices would not begin until the first Sunday in January, work on the musical began in the fall. In October we had a planning meeting to begin recruiting chair-people and setting up committees. We were pleased that our musical director from the previous year had agreed to direct the music again. Many others who had served as leaders and committee members were excited about serving in those same areas again. A few people expressed a desire to serve in a different area or on a different committee. They had some ideas they wanted to share and we worked hard to fit them in where they desired to serve.

At the beginning of December, inserts were provided for church bulletins in our congregation, in the churches of the community, and in other communities where we had drawn participants in the last musical. A few people who had attended the performances expressed a desire to be notified when we began practices for the next musical. They were mailed a flier. The fliers announced the beginning of practices for "*The Promise: 1993.*" It listed audition times, practice times, and performance dates and times. It invited interested people, especially families, to join us and become a part of *The Promise*.

Practices began the first Sunday in January at 3:00 p.m. There was a feeling of excitement, as old friendships were rekindled and new friendships formed. The Babysitting Committee was ready to go. They had recruited a few more people to help and were very organized as they provided a safe and enjoyable setting for the little ones. Our Devotions Committee had the first devotion and recruited sign ups for the rest of the schedule. We had section leaders ready to go with the first songs to be learned or relearned. The Refreshment Committee provided the first practice's refreshments, and had a sign up sheet for future practices.

We waited until the third Sunday in January to hold auditions. Many people were already familiar with the music and acting parts, but this gave a couple weeks for new people to become familiar with the musical also, and we encouraged the new people, as well, to consider trying out for a part. Again we went outside of our congregation to fill spots on the audition panel. Because we had a few people from the nearby Lutheran high school participate the year before, we anticipated their involvement again this year. So we invited the drama director and the music director from the Lutheran high school to serve on the audition panel. We looked for their knowledgeable input into the audition process, and we hoped that they would be able to give some insight into any students from the high school who might audition. They proved to be a valuable part of the audition team.

The Costume Committee began work already in the autumn, repairing costumes and designing and sewing new ones. We did not need to borrow any costumes for this production. Chorus members were again responsible for their own costume. The committee helped by providing suitable fabrics and people who could sew. Committee members did sew the costumes for main characters and special acting parts. They researched books and pictures of first century dress, trying to provide costumes that were as authentic as possible.

The Costume Committee worked hard to get everything ready for the performances. But their job wasn't over then. During the performances they were busy behind the scenes, helping people into and out of their costumes, and making sure costumes were returned to the proper place for the next performance. They had to do some last minute alterations, fixing, or making adjustments to some of the costumes.

The stage and set crews modified the stage somewhat for this performance. Building off of the previous year's experience, they decided to go wall to wall with the stage. This would provide just a little more stage room. The crucifixion would take place to the right, still with only the cross of Jesus, the voices of the thieves coming from off stage. The temple would be on the left. The tomb would be in the center back of the stage.

We didn't have much time to assemble the stage and paint the sets. We were not able to set up the stages until after the school's basketball season was over. That gave us only a few weeks to set up and practice on the stages. The crews worked hard with some late hours, but we were ready.

Lighting was done as it had been the year before, but sound got a little help this year from a couple of professional Christian musicians. They brought their sound equipment and added it to ours. One of them served as our sound technician and headed up the sound crew. The other, who was a professional singer, sang an opening song, "The Cross He Carried," before the musical began. He would be a welcome soloist in *The Promise* over the next few years.

The publicity committee again worked hard to get the invitation out to churches and in newspapers. They placed posters wherever they could get them up in the communities. Local newspapers came and took pictures during dress rehearsal and provided a very favorable write up on the front page the week before the musical. Cast members were encouraged to use postcards to mail to friends and make personal

invitations. Once again, people were encouraged to reserve their free tickets by calling ahead for reservations.

Three dress rehearsals were held the weekend prior to the performances, on Saturday, Sunday, and Monday. Four performances, one more than the previous year, were scheduled for that third weekend in March, Friday, Saturday and Sunday evenings at 7:00 p.m. and Sunday afternoon at 3:00 p.m. It was a positive change to move the performances to March. Because it was during Lent, it fit in so beautifully with our Lenten journey to the cross, remembering the suffering and dying of our Savior and His great love for us. March was a better time for our community as well. We were not competing with graduation ceremonies or farmers in their fields as we had in May the year before.

This year we had more people in the chorus. We were actually able to have twelve disciples because we had more men who participated. Having the actual number of twelve disciples was not too important except in the upper room for the Last Supper. When the disciples were all together around the table, it was easy to count them. We did not have enough men the year before, and we were short a few disciples in that scene. Many people commented to us later how that was a distraction for them, not to have all the disciples there.

Only a few minor changes were made to the script. The choreography and blocking saw some major changes because of the new arrangement of the stage. The cross and crucifixion scene were to one side of the stage with the people looking on from the side, filling the rest of the stage. The tomb and the stone were at the back top level of the stage and took the center focus for the resurrection scene. Jesus did not come out of the tomb as we had seen Him do in some other musical drama performances. We enacted the resurrection in this way for a specific theological reason and we used it as a teaching moment with the cast and crew. Jesus was already gone from the tomb, raised from the dead, before the stone was rolled away. The stone could not keep Him in. The stone was rolled away not to let Him out, but to let the women and the disciples (and us) in, to see that the tomb is empty. He is risen as He said He would.

The other parts of the production – the ushers, the programs, the make up, the prayer time before performances – went much the same as the previous year. We did add a survey to the program to get an idea as to where people were from and how they heard about *The Promise*. We also asked for feedback and suggestions for improvement. These were quite helpful and provided some topics for discussion at our evaluation meeting later in April. Several suggestions were considered and put into place in the next production.

We held a cast party, including everyone and their families, later in June at our home. Already people were talking about next year, looking forward to being a part of the musical drama experience once again.

On our family vacation that summer we planned to go through Glen Rose, Texas, where we had seen *The Promise* performed in the outdoor amphitheater two years earlier. We invited members of the musical and their families to join us there that weekend and see *The Promise* together. We had several families arrange to meet up with us in Texas for the weekend. As we witnessed the musical production from the audience, it was hard

not to sing along. We were all encouraged about what we were doing in Litchfield and inspired with new ideas about how we could make our musical even better. It was a bonding time for the families that came as they shared that experience with their families. They also grew closer to the other families, and developed relationships, or strengthened them, relationships that continue to this day.

The Promise: 1994

As we planned the church calendar for 1993-94, we set the dates for the musical production of *The Promise*, again for the middle of Lent. We chose the second weekend in March, two weeks before Palm Sunday, and we planned on again presenting four performances. We changed the times for the Sunday performances to 2:00 and 5:00 p.m. These earlier times would provide the opportunity for families with children, both in the cast and in the audience, to be home earlier Sunday evening to get ready for school the next morning.

As in the previous years, Alvina and I served as directors, and we began the organizational recruiting and structuring well in advance. Again committee chairpersons were put into place and committees formed to begin working towards the next musical. We involved new people in some of the positions, especially when positions were open because someone wanted to serve in a different area or wanted a break from serving on a committee. Some people loved what they had been doing and wanted to continue serving on that committee. By the beginning of January we were ready to practice.

By this third year of *The Promise*, the participants were more familiar with the musical, and many people in the community had now seen the musical and were also familiar with the story and the characters. For this reason we decided to hold auditions on the first weekend of practice. Our first practice was scheduled for Sunday, January 9, at 3:00 p.m. The schedules had been posted with invitations to participate. Auditions would be Saturday, January 8, from 8:00 a.m. to noon. If more time was needed, we would continue auditions after practice on Sunday at 5:30 p.m. This did provide the opportunity for some people to make up their minds about auditioning after the first practice, and several people did.

Practices followed the same format as the previous year, meeting on Sunday afternoons, with a few extra practices scheduled for closer to performance dates. Only a few changes were made to the script and the set for this year's productions. Our goal was to do better what we had done the year before. Many solos and audition parts went to people who had not played that same part the year before. A few people did receive the same parts.

One change that we made was to add an additional song that was not in the original musical. When we had seen *The Promise* in Texas the previous summer, we noted that they had added a song with Jesus blessing the children, called "Closer Than A Heartbeat." We were able to locate the music and produced our own accompaniment tape so that we could include it in the musical. It was a good change as we included one more

piece of the story from the Gospels, and the interaction between Jesus and the children during the song was quite moving.

We did have some concern as to who would play the part of Jesus, and we began to work on this challenge early in the fall. Jesus is the central character of the musical, and we needed someone who not only looked the part and could act well, but someone who also had a deep faith and a strong sense of the presence of Jesus in his own life. The young man from the Lutheran high school, who had done an excellent job of portraying the character of Jesus the previous two years, had graduated and was attending college. We did ask if there was the possibility of his returning home to play the part of Jesus for the two weekends of dress rehearsals and performances, but that was not realistic. As we surveyed the possibilities from our own congregation and from the community, we were not finding anyone who fit the part or who was willing to devote the time and effort needed to fulfill this role.

Every two years our congregation was assigned a seminary student from Concordia Seminary in St. Louis to work with us in our congregation for two years, to gain practical experience in the workings of a congregation. They began by observing and being involved, as their time would permit. Later they would help with liturgy, preaching and teaching Bible Class and Sunday School.

Our student from seminary had participated in *The Promise* as one of the disciples during the past two years. He was now on vicarage doing his internship year, and we were assigned a new student at the end of September. A couple months after he had arrived and was beginning to feel at home in our congregation, we asked him if he would consider playing the part of Jesus in the musical. We gave him some time to consider whether he would have the time to devote to this and whether he was interested in this challenging opportunity. He decided to audition for the part and was cast in the role of Jesus. He played the role well, and I believe it was a good, faith-growing experience for him.

The people and families that were involved included a high percentage of those who had been involved before. But we did draw in many new people, several additional families from our congregation and from the community, as well as some of our own inactive members. Some got involved with the whole production as chorus members. Others volunteered to take one small acting part. Still others offered to help with things behind the scenes.

The excitement of past years' musicals continued to grow and be a part of the climate of this musical also. Evaluation forms were given out during performance weekend so that all the cast and crew members would have a chance to give their input to help make the musical even better. So many of the evaluations included thanks and appreciation for the opportunity for families (their own family in particular) to grow closer together, and for individuals to grow closer to their Lord. Many helpful suggestions were implemented in the next musical.

As the word about *The Promise* spread, our attendance at performances grew. We did a good job of publicity in our own community. The churches carried invitation inserts. The newspapers carried special articles and even came out with their photographers to take pictures at dress rehearsals. We paid for a few ads in some of the

papers. Cast members took posters to their churches and community businesses, and invited personally their family and friends. With all this publicity we were surprised and somewhat saddened to find that still many of our own members had not attended *The Promise*.

But through word of mouth and personal invitation, through articles in our church's district newsletter and the newsletters of several adjoining districts, we began to draw people from farther away. Some came a second or third year and brought a whole group from their church or community. We continued to poll the audience at the beginning of the performances to see where some of our guests were from. We also included a survey form in the programs of this year's performance asking how they had heard about *The Promise*, where they were from, and would they like to be notified of future performances. We invited constructive suggestions for improving the production. The vast majority responded by saying, "Keep it as it is," but some did make helpful suggestions that we did consider.

Evaluations from both the audiences and the cast and crew were studied closely and made available for reading at our cast party later in June. We again hosted the party at our home on four-acres in the country and invited everyone who was remotely involved with the musical together with their families. We met on a Sunday afternoon and had some great fellowship, food, and fun. Part of the activities included the opportunity to watch the video of the performance. Part of the talk and the evaluation that took place included discussion of what we might do differently next year. There always seemed to be that positive drive to make it better the next time.

The Promise: 1995

With committees mostly in place by the first of the year, we began with auditions after church on January 8, and practice beginning at 3:00 p.m. We arranged to have one of our section leaders direct the first practice so that our musical director could continue with auditions into the practice time if needed. We also planned to deliberate over the auditions into the evening, until all decisions were made.

When we set the dates for the performances, we decided to add an additional weekend to the schedule. All four performances had been packed the year before with four hundred plus at each performance. We continued to schedule during Lent and set aside the two weekends before Palm Sunday weekend. The first of those weekends would include a Saturday evening performance and two afternoon performances on Sunday at 2:00 and 5:00 p.m. The second weekend would have the same schedule with a fourth performance on Friday evening. Dress rehearsals were scheduled for the prior Sunday afternoon, and Monday and Thursday evenings. Sunday's dress rehearsal was followed by a potluck dinner for the whole production crew and their families.

We had a new publicity director this year, and she had some great ideas she wanted to try in addition to the things we had done in the past. She had buttons made that said, "Ask me about *The Promise*." These were collected at the end of the season to be used again next year. She helped to schedule the singing of small groups of the chorus in

neighboring churches, with an invitation to come to the musical. We had a large sign erected to the side of the highway on each side of town, visible as you were entering Litchfield, with the dates and times of the musical listed.

Our publicity director also worked hard to encourage the leaders of our community to support the musical. Our third dress rehearsal actually became a "Director's Dinner Theater," inviting all the pastors and their wives from the community to a dinner served by the cast members, followed by a special performance of *The Promise*. The cost of the dinner was covered by some businesses in town.

The script was expanded to add some additional lines of dialogue between Jesus and the Pharisees. A few things on the set were changed to allow for easier entrances and exits. Some of the songs were choreographed differently from previous years.

Again most of the performances had full attendance of four hundred or better. We continued to use the reserved ticket plan, and we encouraged larger groups to make their reservations for opening night. Surveys included in the programs gave us some excellent feedback, especially in the area of publicity. We asked how they heard about *The Promise* and what we could do to improve our publicity. We also asked what they thought was the best part of *The Promise* and how we could improve anything within the production. We gave them the opportunity to leave their name and address especially if they wanted us to contact them when practices began again in the new year or with performance dates and times.

Of the several hundred forms that we received back, most of them expressed that they had heard about *The Promise* through one form or another at their church, through the bulletin, a poster, the newsletter, or an announcement. A large number of people did not check the church column. Most of these heard about *The Promise* from a friend or relative. Others checked that they heard about the musical through a newspaper, a radio station, a poster, or a sign. Several heard about it through an article we submitted to the *Lutheran Witness*, our denominational journal.

We asked for suggestions to improve our publicity and the Publicity Committee took these to heart. About sixty of the over 350 who filled out the forms responded to this question. Some listed a specific newspaper or radio station that they would like to be included next year. Some of those newspapers and radio stations were already on our list but we did take note of those we had not contacted before. Several suggested that we use the TV stations. We did look into the possibility of working with our local cable network and were able to do some things the following year including airing a video of that year's performance.

One person suggested that we try having the musical outside of the church setting, "where people who would not go to a church or because it was Lutheran," would feel more comfortable coming. We had actually talked about that very thing. In some ways we were outgrowing our facility and had added additional performances in order to accommodate the large number of people who were coming. We had succeeded in drawing into the cast, chorus and crew a large number of people from the community, and some people were questioning whether the musical should become a community event instead of a congregational ministry. We wanted to be sensitive to the needs of

people, and we desired to reach out to the lost people who needed to hear (and see) the Gospel and be drawn to faith in Jesus.

We checked into some of the possibilities for us to consider. We brainstormed with different people who had been leaders in the musical productions in the past. We considered asking to use the local high school stage and auditorium but their own drama department was usually using this area around the same time we would need it. We thought about moving up to the Springfield, Illinois, area and utilizing the auditorium of one of the colleges in the area, but we didn't like the idea of leaving Litchfield and the support of the congregation and the town that we had enjoyed. As we talked about the possibilities, we also decided that we did not want to remove this from the setting of being the congregation's ministry. We would continue to invite the community to be a part of this experience, but we felt that for it to continue to be a ministry, and not become just a dramatic production, it needed to stay within the direction and oversight of the congregation.

The convenience of having our own facility to work with and to schedule, plus the major concerns about keeping this a ministry, led us to continue to hold the musical at our own facility and to consider it to be a ministry of our congregation. By holding the performance in the gymnasium of our school rather than in the sanctuary, we hoped to provide a place for people to come that would not be uncomfortable or threatening. Advertising in the local newspapers and on the secular radio stations we hoped to reach the unchurched and the non-Christian as well.

One person suggested that we hang banners across the main streets downtown. The community would do this for their special town events, but I had never seen it done for church sponsored activities. The closest we got to doing this was to put up large signs beside the highway at each side of town so that people coming into town from either direction would be able to see the signs.

One thing we had done this year for the first time was to send groups of chorus members to area churches to sing a couple songs from the musical as anthems in their Sunday morning worship. They did this in costume, and gave an invitation to come to the musical performances. This gave the people of these congregations an opportunity to hear some of the music and to see the Biblical characters. Several people commented on their surveys that this was a helpful way to publicize the musical and that we should do this at more churches if possible.

Most people who responded to the publicity question affirmed what we were already doing and simply said to keep up the good work. One person responded, "I think by turn out at showing it looks like you're doing well! Word of mouth is probably your biggest and best publicity."

We also asked people what they liked best about *The Promise*. From their responses we got an idea of how the message was reaching the people. Some people mentioned the costumes or music or staging or choreography. One person made the connection, saying that all these things "were excellent and provided a winsome setting

for the presentation of the Gospel.”¹⁷

Many people picked a scene or portion of the musical as their favorite. These included Jesus taking the girl and waking her from death, Christmas with a live baby Jesus, the healing miracles of Jesus, the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus and the children, the raising of Lazarus, the upper room, Grandpa carrying Jesus’ cross, the crucifixion, and the resurrection. One man who had come every year and was losing his eyesight said he was moved to tears every time he saw the scene where Jesus heals the blind man.

Some people picked a song that was their favorite. A number of people picked the song, “He is Jehovah” because of the Israeli folk dance the disciples do while singing it. Others said that the best part was the way we included the children and the participation of the young people. A number of people appreciated that it was all true to Scripture and that they could “see the Bible come to life,” or that it made them “feel so much closer to Jesus,” like “we were there with Jesus.”

The third question we asked was how we could improve *The Promise*. The majority of people who responded said it was great and didn’t need to change in any way. Some people did give some helpful suggestions. We, as directors, and the people we had helping us in leadership, looked seriously at these suggestions and implemented a number of them in the next year.

The two most voiced suggestions for improvement involved the seating capacity of the auditorium and the sound balance of voices and accompaniment music. The first issue could not be improved without moving to a larger auditorium. A number of people suggested moving. One person said, “I felt for something this great it should be held somewhere bigger.”¹⁸ Although we did consider some other options, we had decided to keep it in the school gym. We would have to work to solve the seating problem in some other way.

The problem was that even with reserved seating we still had people coming without tickets. We did not seat them until right before performance time and then we seated them in the bleachers. Many performances had standing room only, and not much room available even to stand. At our early Sunday afternoon performances we had to turn people away, but we did promise them a seat at the later performance if they returned.

Those people with tickets did not have a specific seat reserved for them and when people reserved their tickets they were encouraged to come early to get the best seating. Still we did have some people with tickets who came late and could only find a place to sit in the bleachers. The bleacher seating was not bad except that there are no backs on the seats and it becomes uncomfortable. It is not good seating for elderly people.

We did make some changes to help correct the situation. We added one more performance the next year making for a total of eight performances over two consecutive weekends. We encouraged larger groups to reserve seats for the Friday evening

¹⁷ Dr. Alan W. Janneke, pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church, Girard, Illinois.

¹⁸ Tim Stoddard, Charleston, Illinois.

performances. Although attendance at the Friday performances was good, we were not filling the auditorium on these nights. By promising to block larger sections for entire groups who reserved seats, and do group seating only on these Friday performances, we hoped to increase attendance on Friday and balance out the attendance later in the weekend. We tried this the next year and actually had some bus groups that scheduled for Friday evening. It did increase the Friday attendance but we continued to have the problem of overflowing attendance at later performances requiring us to turn some people away.

One suggestion that we adopted the next year was to ask parents to hold small children on their laps and provide for additional seating. We did this a few minutes prior to the performance if we had people waiting to get in. We also asked people who had seen the performance already that year, and were back for a second or third time, to consider giving up their seat to someone who had not seen it yet that year. Some people willingly sacrificed their seats.

We gave some additional training to the ushers, so that they could be sensitive to specific needs of people, helping the elderly to find suitable seating. We reserved a sizable section for wheelchair seating, close to the front, and filled it in with chairs only moments before the performance if it was not all needed for wheelchairs.

The situation with the sound system was one that we were constantly trying to improve. We worked hard to help the chorus and soloists enunciate the words. We emphasized that the words were the most important things, for they carried the message. We worked with the sound crew to get a good balance between instrumental accompaniment and the singing of the chorus and soloists. They also knew that the message of the songs was far more important than the beautiful instrumentation of the sound track. Yet it didn't always work the way we wanted it to. The chorus needed to hear the sound track through the monitors and sometimes we strained to hear the musical entrances. Turning up that volume sometimes resulted in feedback and sometimes overpowered the voices in the hearing of the audience.

In our evaluations with the sound crew we shared some of the constructive suggestions listed on the surveys. We also brought in a professional sound consultant the next year. He was a great help. He brought in some of his own equipment, which we rented as part of his consultation fee, to add to our sound system. This filled in parts of the system we were lacking and improved the overall sound. He also trained our sound crew to get the desired balance we wanted and to work with the soloists in microphone placement and usage. It was a good investment.

A few people suggested on their surveys that we include live animals, specifically sheep with the shepherds and a donkey for Mary and Joseph on their way to Bethlehem, which could be used again with Jesus coming into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. It was also suggested that a dove be used with Jesus in the Baptism scene. We had tried a few chickens in wooden cages on stage during the cleansing of the temple scene. We talked about how we could use sheep and a donkey, but the logistics and the safety of the audience kept us from doing much of anything with animals that next year. I understand that a few years later they did try to include a donkey, but they ended up having a real mess to clean up back stage.

A few suggestions dealt specifically with Jesus' baptism. Could we use a dove? Could we "get the Spirit and the Father in on the Jesus' Baptism?" How about "a voice on the loud speaker, 'This is my beloved Son...?'" One person suggested that Jesus baptism should be submersion. We had used this scene during practices as a teaching moment for the chorus and cast: that the word "to baptize" means to apply water, to wash, and has many more possibilities than just to immerse. I shared that the power and effectiveness of baptism is not in the amount of water used but in the words and promises of God connected to that water. We shared this with the chorus and cast, but within the context of the musical, could not think of a way to convey this to the audience, except to not use immersion at the baptism by John in the Jordan.

A couple of surveys suggested doing a different musical. We decided that, unless we came across a musical that did a better job of telling the story, we would stick with *The Promise* and just try to improve what we were doing with it.

One person suggested adding another song at the resurrection. We were familiar with the song and thought about adding it. We had added the song with Jesus and the children in this year's production. We decided not to add the song at this time, primarily because we did not want to add to the length of the performance. It already was two full hours in length.

A couple people suggested that we take the musical on the road, or move it up to Springfield, Illinois, to the Lutheran high school or another large congregation there. We gave some serious thought to these suggestions. It would be impossible to travel with the production with all the set and equipment that would need to be moved, but we did consider moving to another site with a larger seating capacity. For now we would stay in Litchfield, in our school auditorium.

A couple surveys asked that we hold the clapping to a minimum between scenes, maybe even reserving it for the end of the two acts. We debated about making a specific announcement asking that the audience reserve their applause for the end of the two acts. We decided not to. We would not encourage applause by pauses after songs or between scenes. The action flowed right on and did not lend itself to applause. But we also felt that there were times in the story that the audience was moved and wanted to respond with appropriate applause and we would not stop them from doing that.

One person said he wished the text followed the Scripture more closely, although he did not make any specific recommendations. This was a constant concern for us as directors, and each year we did make changes to the script to reflect more closely the actual words of Scripture. With the narrators being Grandpa and two grandkids from modern time, revisiting the Biblical story, and interacting with the Biblical characters, some dramatic liberties were taken, like Grandpa, instead of Simon of Cyrene, carrying Jesus' cross. We were encouraged by the many more comments that were made about how true to Scripture the plot and the script were. But we took this suggestion to heart because it was also our desire to follow the Scripture.

One person suggested that Jesus should not have been portrayed as nearly accepting temptation in the wilderness. Here is an example of how I believe we remained true to the Scriptures in our portrayal of the temptations. Jesus was truly tempted in every way as we are. The temptations were real, and we tried to show that in the temptation

scene. Yet He did not yield to the temptations. Using the Word of God, He withstood the devil's temptations and remained without sin.

There was one suggestion that we were not able to follow through on because we did not stay in Litchfield long enough to act upon it. It was, however, an excellent suggestion worthy of consideration. It is a question that other musical drama groups might ask themselves. The question was asked, "Has there been any project to maybe help another group in a surrounding community to also put together a program? Maybe a group understudy or something where the group could do their own program the following year."¹⁹

Among the many positive comments we received we were especially encouraged by these three. "I have attended every year and it is getting better every year. The acting and singing is terrific. 'Bravo!'"²⁰ "There's always room for improvement in our world of imperfection. However, I can't think of any way *The Promise* production here at Zion, Litchfield, could be better. We thoroughly enjoyed it. The entire Second Act was fantastic!!!"²¹ "This really was a worship experience! I didn't expect such total professionalism! We've been to the Passion play in Oberammergau, Germany. THIS performance touched our hearts in ways that one didn't! (Besides, THIS was in English!!) Keep this going!!"²²

The Promise: 1996

Preparations for this musical began as soon as the 1995 performance was ended. Committee chairmen wrote up their reports. We tried to meet with all of them to go over these reports and begin laying the groundwork for next year.

There was some concern expressed about the amount of time that I was spending with this musical ministry and so I stepped out of the role of co-director. Alvina continued to be the over-all-director of *The Promise*. It was good that I made that adjustment, it turned out, because in January our associate pastor accepted a call to another church and I was left as the sole pastor with a lot of work to do. I continued to be in the musical and to support Alvina in her role as director, but I was able to let go of many of the responsibilities of leadership and the time involved to organize such an undertaking.

We planned on beginning again in January, with auditions and first practice on Sunday, January 7. To get the word out, we did a mass mailing in December to all our members at Zion, to all previous musical participants, and to all the area churches. The

¹⁹ Pam Durbin, Taylorville Illinois.

²⁰ Earl Fuchs, Farmersville, Illinois.

²¹ Herb & Faith Mueller, Waterloo, Illinois.

²² Chuck & Bonnie Weiss, Wisconsin Rapids, Wisconsin.

letter presented an invitation to participate, encouraged people to audition for the singing solos and listed the available parts, introduced the audition panel and what would be expected at auditions, and included a practice and performance schedule. The same basic information was published in our local newspaper under the headline, "Zion Lutheran to bring back *The Promise*: auditions set." We really appreciated the support that our local newspapers gave to us.

The character of Grandpa was not up for audition. Mel Cordani had played this role from the beginning and in developing this character had done a superb job. Alvina and the rest of the audition panel decided that as long as Mel was able to continue in this role and willing to do it, the part would be his.

The role of Jesus was up again for auditions. Joel, our seminary student, was gone this year on vicarage, his one-year internship. We were assigned another first year seminary student in September, Keith Aschenbeck. We did not make any assumptions about his willingness or ability to play the role of Jesus or even that he would want to be or would be able to be involved with the musical. We invited him to participate and shared the possible ways that he might be involved.

We did have a few men audition for the role of Jesus, Keith being one of them. Although he did not present a strong singing voice, he did have a strong audition and the audition panel cast him in the part of Jesus. There had been two solos that Jesus had sung in previous years. "Closer than a Heartbeat" had been sung by Jesus as He blessed the children. This year it would be sung by an off stage soloist as Jesus interacted with the children. The song in the upper room, "Shalom," had begun with Jesus singing the first solo lines. This year it would be sung by the same soloist, off stage, as Jesus and the disciples share the last supper.

It took some coaching and extra help from the director, but Keith developed his role and did a great job with his lines and acting in the character of Jesus. He continued to play this role for several years, even during his vicarage year. His vicarage assignment was not far from Litchfield and his supervising pastor and vicarage congregation gave their approval for his involvement. Some of their congregation's members also became involved and many of their members came to the performances.

The auditions on that first Sunday in January were only for adult soloists and for the three children's parts of Billy and Lisa (the two grandchildren) and Jesus as a boy. The audition announcements included a statement that the other acting parts would be assigned by the director at a later date. Those who were interested in an acting part were encouraged to speak to the director and make their interest known to her. A listing of available acting positions was given out at the first practices. Chorus members, their family members, other friends from the congregation and community were encouraged to step forward and volunteer for an acting role.

At the first practice, three pages of notes from Alvina were handed out. She titled it: "Rules, Notes, and All That Important Stuff – ****WELCOME**** AND WHY WE DO THIS THING EVERY YEAR?" In the notes she introduced all the leaders and support committee chairpersons. These were in place and ready to go. She gave a schedule of the nine practices, two dress rehearsals, and eight performances and emphasized the importance of commitment to be at all of these. She shared a little bit about auditions and

encouraged those interested in an acting part to tell her of their interest and availability. She introduced Mel as Grandpa and said that the rest of the auditions would be announced next week. Other areas covered included: refreshments; devotions; costumes; publicity; child care; sectionals; set up and take down; extra help, where we could use other family members in special areas; and books and tapes, how to sign them out or purchase them.

Under publicity she informed the group that we would not allow cast members, or any others, to reserve specific seats in the auditorium. Doors would open an hour before performance and people would be encouraged to come early to get their seats. The year before we had run into some difficulty because cast members had saved all the best seats for their family and friends. People arriving early still had to sit near the back even though the front seats were empty because they had reserve signs on them.

We decided to charge a flat fee for babysitting of \$20.00 per child or \$25.00 per family. This would pay for materials for crafts and projects. We also paid the teen helpers a stipend for their help.

At the end of the handout she included a "Director's note," which shared her thoughts and feelings about why we were involved in such a project each year.

Let me share with you why I believe more than 100 people feel so strongly about joining together each year for this production.

God has generously given talents of musical, acting, and behind the scenes abilities to many folks. I personally do not think this is a mistake on His part. I believe He desires for us to use these talents to the best of our ability and in a way that brings glory of Him to others. This really is the crux of why we do this each year. We love to sing, act, and serve behind the scenes and we want to use these abilities to praise God and to tell others about Jesus and His saving love for us.

I believe God has richly blessed this ministry, Zion, Litchfield, families, and each of us as a direct result of it.

Every person in the cast receives so many blessings: rich fellowship, service to the Lord, family growth, church growth, faith growth, a chance to witness to all who come, personal satisfaction, listing only a few. We all feel that we are a small part of God working a wonderful act – within us, our families, and to all those He leads to come and see the production.

Isn't this just what we as God's Church are all about? Coming together to worship, be touched anew by the Lord and His Word, and then reaching out to others with the message of the Gospel. We are not merely a "Theater Group" but we are a vital Ministry, outreaching to the community and far beyond.

Last year alone *The Promise* was shown to more than 2600 people in 7 performances and brought people from Illinois, Missouri, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, Oklahoma, Michigan, Texas, Indiana, California and even Sweden. This makes me realize that in a very significant way Grandpa's words, which echo Jesus' words "Go ye into all the world, teaching all nations . . ." have become reality here in small town -- Litchfield.

This is all why I, and many of you, do this each year. I'm excited once again to make the small sacrifice of 9 Sunday afternoons and two weekends to be a part of all and more of these blessings. I'm glad you are joining us. I think you will be also blessed.

Thank you in advance for all your hard work,
Alvina Becker -- DIRECTOR²³

With the growth in the number of participants, and the experience from previous years, more acting roles were developed and assigned. The banner bearers and page that attended the wise men were played by three older children. In the scene before Jesus is baptized, John is preaching in the wilderness. An individual and a family grouping come forward to be baptized by him. We built an actual pond on the front part of the stage and John got into the water to perform the baptisms. We did not immerse, and we did not try to use a dove. Grandpa, in his narration of the story to Billy and Lisa after the scene, described the dove and what the voice from heaven said.

We continued to show the temptation scene with Jesus alone on stage. The voice of Satan was heard but we did not present him physically on stage. The production of *The Promise* in Texas had a person play the role of Satan on stage, not only in the temptation scene but throughout the play. He didn't have any additional lines but he would appear at key moments in the life of Jesus and with His disciples to show that the battle between Jesus and Satan did not end with the temptations. We appreciated that insight but were disturbed with the way that Satan would sometimes steal the show, drawing so much attention to himself. One could argue that that is exactly what he does. We debated about how to show Satan without applauding his character and decided to stay with the voice from off stage. Performances in later years with a new director did make the attempt to show the role of Satan with a character on stage.

We made some changes to the trial and crucifixion scenes. More lines were given to Pilate as he interacts with the crowd. Jesus is whipped on stage, and Pilate washes his hands of the whole thing as he begins his solo in dialogue with the crowd. We continued to have the crowd not only on stage, but also at the back of the auditorium, so that the shouts to crucify Jesus come from all around the audience. Jesus is taken out by the soldiers at the end of Pilate's solo and begins His walk to Calvary from the back of the auditorium, carrying His cross, while a soloist begins "Via Dolorosa."

By the time Jesus arrives at the stage and climbs to the hill of Calvary, two crosses with thieves on them are already in place. In the past we had the voices of the two thieves from off stage, with Jesus all by himself on a single cross on stage. We liked the addition of the two thieves on stage very much. It made the scene that much more authentic as Jesus speaks one of His words from the cross to the thief at His side.

A few of Jesus' words from the cross had been omitted in the original script. We were able to add the ones missing so that Jesus says all seven words as He hangs suffering on the cross.

²³ Alvina Becker's Director notes, January 7, 1996.

We actually did a re-write of the entire script. Much of the script we left as it was, but we added scenes or expanded lines to include more of the story. We used the actual words of scripture whenever possible.

The performances were held on the third and fourth weekends in March, in Zion's school auditorium, with overfull crowds at almost every performance. Alvina included a note from the director on the inside cover of the program welcoming the audience and explaining our ministry. She included some of the same thoughts from her director's notes at the beginning of practices, but included some additional explanation as to why we carry on this ministry.

On behalf of our entire cast and crew, I welcome you to today's performance of *The Promise*. For many of you perhaps this is your first time to view this production. I am thrilled you are here and sincerely pray that you will be touched in some small way by our music and message. To our old friends, those who have shared this Lenten and Easter experience with us before, we thank you heartily for your continued support. It means a lot to us to have you here again.

Let me share with you why I believe more than 100 people feel so strongly about joining together each year beginning in January to be involved in this ministry.

God has generously given talents of musical, acting, and behind the scenes abilities to many folks and we want to use these talents to the best of our ability and in a way that brings glory to Him and of Him to others. We all feel we are a small part of God working a wonderful act – within us, our families, and to all those He leads to come and see *The Promise*.

We are in our 8th year of presenting musicals on the Life of Christ, beginning 8 years ago with a cast of 25 (many of those same folks are still with us) and we are delighted to share with you today with a cast of over 100 and crew of approximately 50 representing 17 churches from Litchfield and communities as far away as Edwardsville, Collinsville and Alton.

All of our choral and solo work is live each performance. There are times you may not see the choir, but rest assured they are behind stage singing.

Last year alone *The Promise* was shown to more than 2600 people in 7 performances and brought people from Illinois, Missouri, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, Oklahoma, Michigan, Texas, Indiana, California and even Sweden.

This makes me realize that in a very significant way Grandpa's words, which echo Jesus' words from Matthew 28, "Go ye into all the world, teaching all nations" have become reality here in the small town of Litchfield.²⁴

The survey that we asked the participants in the musical to fill out helped us to see how this ministry had touched the lives and families of many people. One high school student from the Lutheran high school in Edwardsville wrote: "Due to my work, I am not sure if I am going to be able to be in *The Promise* next year. All the practices are a lot to

²⁴ Alvina Becker, Director of *The Promise*, 1996, as found in the welcome in the program for the performances given March 15, 16, 17, 22, 23, 24, 1996.

ask off. Maybe we could work something out. I've really enjoyed this experience. I'm going to try my best to be a part of *The Promise* next year. Everyone has made me feel very welcome. It's like a big family. I love it. I want to thank everyone who has worked so hard to make it possible for me to be a part of *The Promise*. It's been awesome. Thanks. Aimee²⁵

Another high school student wrote: "This has been one of the most inspiring things of my life. Thank you and I love you all."²⁶ A couple adults expressed how this was a way they could share their faith in a meaningful way. "*The Promise* is one way I feel comfortable about 'witnessing' to others my Christian beliefs. I invite them to come."²⁷ "I enjoy being part of *The Promise*. It makes my faith stronger and it is the one way I can really feel like I can witness."²⁸

Our music director shared this on his evaluation: "This is my calling. If we add live music – I would be happy to be involved with that..??"²⁹ His wife, Jan, had this to say: "This is the most meaningful experience that I have been in in my life and I think that my kids are learning things that they will have with them all of our lives! Thanks for your gift."³⁰

In another letter written to us a few years later, Jan included the following:

I hope that you and Alvina can feel good about starting the productions here. They have been a blessing to so many people with Thomacks near the top of the list! It has been such a wonderful experience overall (although there were times!!!) and I just can't find the words to express it all. Our lives are different because of it and we have wonderful memories that will live forever with all of us I hope. Thank you for caring and working and making it a reality. I hope you can do the same for your friends in Springfield.³¹

²⁵ Aimee Lochmann, Edwardsville, Illinois.

²⁶ Adron Buske, Litchfield, Illinois.

²⁷ Becky Helgen, Litchfield, Illinois.

²⁸ Marci Johnson, Litchfield, Illinois.

²⁹ Ernie Thomack, Litchfield, Illinois.

³⁰ Jan Thomack, Litchfield, Illinois.

³¹ Jan Thomack, letter written April 17, 2000.

The Promise: 1997 and Beyond

The production of *The Promise* in 1996 had its difficulties and challenges as productions did each year, but it ended with a high level of excitement and a feeling of accomplishment. There was also a sense of anticipation for continuing this ministry into future years. We learned from our mistakes and kept looking for ways to improve upon what we had done in the past.

In June of 1996 I received and accepted a call to serve Redeemer Lutheran Church in Springfield, Missouri, as associate pastor. We planned to make the move in August. Alvina and I did everything we could to pass on the leadership of this musical drama ministry so that it could continue without us.

Our cast party was set for Saturday, July 13, and the invitations included a note to all participants inviting them to our farewell Sunday worship and reception in August. The feelings at the cast party were mixed. There was sadness over our leaving, yet subdued excitement about future productions of *The Promise*. The most asked question was whether they could do it without us. And we assured them that they could and encouraged them to move ahead with plans for the next year.

Before we left, Alvina and I met with leaders within *The Promise* to help them regroup and organize. One of our day-school teachers, who with his family had been involved with the musical drama ministry since his arrival in our school, agreed to serve as director for this next year. When he was not able to fulfill that commitment, a team of three people, all previously involved with *The Promise*, stepped forward and served as co-directors. This did not work out very well, but they did get the cast and crew successfully through the production of *The Promise* in 1997.

Because of Alvina's organizational ability, she was able to pass along the committee reports from past years as reference materials and for guidance and direction for the leaders of committees for the next year. Besides meeting with many potential leaders, she drew up a three page list of things that she and I had done and when we had done them, and a listing of some of her own personal ideas or vision of what "*The Promise: 1997*" could be like. The leaders asked her to come back in January to serve on the audition panel, and she arranged her schedule to be able to do that.

The co-directing of the musical did not work very well and we heard from some people in the musical about the divisions and lack of unity among the leadership. Alvina wrote a letter to the leadership of *The Promise* to encourage them to pull together. After reminding them of their common dedication "to the promoting of Christian Fellowship, Family Fellowship, and strong Witnessing outreach to all involved and all who come to see it," she encouraged them to come together and work together:

"This comes to the crux of why I am writing to you. This is the year for you to all come together in UNITY! It is crucial to this Ministry that you are speaking from one vantage point; from one heart, from one SPIRIT. You are all very strong and capable leaders. That is exactly why you were asked to lead this large and important group.

But this is the time to UNITE. It is Not the time to be diverse; to be wrangling, to be forcing one's ideas or platforms; to be at odds; to be building coalitions; to have hurt feelings; to display power or might. This is the time to be HUMBLE and listen to the leading of OUR LORD JESUS. He wants you all as leaders to be UNITED in HIM and for the sole purpose of guiding His people in this IMPORTANT MINISTRY. This is an AWESOME task and responsibility for you to set aside all illusions of your greatness or grandeur; to set aside your dramatic or musical biases; to set aside past relationships with one another; to set aside your own personal pride and LITERALLY get on your hands and knees, both individually and collectively before the Lord and ask HIM to be your leader."³²

Zion, Litchfield, received their new pastor in December, 1996, and he gave his full support to the musical drama ministry. Although he was new to the congregation, and trying to focus on his total ministry to the congregation, he did what he could to bring order and unity to the leadership of *The Promise*. Over the next year, he helped this ministry to become more established with a constitution and by-laws, and election of officers. With his help and leadership *The Promise* ministry has continued to grow and develop to this present time. "*The Promise: 2001*" will be the tenth production year of *The Promise*, and the production staff is working hard to reach people who played major parts in previous productions to invite them back for the anniversary reunion performance.

³² Letters by Alvina Becker to "All the Leaders of *The Promise*," dated January 19, 1997 and June 13, 1997.

APPENDIX 3B

ORGANIZATIONAL AND PROMOTIONAL MATERIAL FOR "THE PROMISE" – 1996

Director's Notes, January, 1996

Rules, Notes, and All That Important Stuff

****WELCOME**** AND WHY DO WE DO THIS THING EVERY YEAR? (See Notes)

1. Introductions Meet someone new and talk to them

 Meet your 1996 committee heads

Overall Director - Alvina Becker

Music Director - Ernie Thomack

Set Designer - Roger Hyam

Light Technician - Kevin Brumm

Sound Technician - Kyle Johnson

House Committee - Udell & Lois Volentine

Audition Panel - Ernie Thomack

 Alvina Becker

 Jonathan Wiegert

 Becky Lindau

Child Care - Becky Helgen, Marci Johnson

 Brian Wolff

Set Up Technician - Kyle Johnson, Andy Becker

Make Up Technician - Renee Bergman

Publicity - Pat Titsworth

Refreshments/Devotions - Jan Thomack

Properties - Lisa Brumm, Ivy Gill, Bill

 Bergen, Sue Schneider

Costumes - Jane Dougherty, Nancy Hyam

 Joyce Williams, Anna Niemeyer

Take Down Crew Chair - Kevin Brum

Section Leaders -

 Soprano I - Ellen Henschen

 Soprano II - Theresa Behme

 Alto I - Amy Eskes

 Alto II - Andrea Gordon

 Tenor - Todd Bentz

 Bass - Bill Eskes

 Children's Chorus - (4-6) – Tim Bagby

 K-3 Chorus – Sharon Cordani

2. Commitment

As a family (children too) attendance, etc.

NO MORE THAN 3 MISSES

Schedule

(9 practices, 2 Dress, 8 Performances)

Jan. 7 Sun 3:00 - 5:30 p.m.

Jan. 14 Sun 3:00 - 5:30 p.m.

Jan. 21 Sun 3:00 - 5:30 p.m.

Jan. 28 Sun 3:00 - 5:30 p.m.

Feb. 4 Sun 3:00 - 6:00 p.m.

Feb. 11 Sun 3:00 - 6:00 p.m.

Feb. 18 Sun 3:00 - 6:00 p.m.

Feb. 25 Sun 3:00 - 6:00 p.m.

Mar. 3 Sun 3:00 - 6:00 p.m.

Mar. 10 Sun 3:00 - 6:00 p.m. DRESS

Mar. 11 Mon 6:00 - 9:00 p.m. DRESS

Mar. 15 Fri. 7:00 PERFORMANCE FOR GROUPS

Mar. 16 Sat 7:00 PERFORMANCE

Mar. 17 Sun 2:00 PERFORMANCE

5:00 PERFORMANCE

Mar. 22 Fri 7:00 PERFORMANCE

Mar. 23 Sat 7:00 PERFORMANCE

Mar. 24 Sun 2:00 PERFORMANCE

5:00 PERFORMANCE

Weekly Practice Schedule

- 3:00 - 3:05 - Devotions
- 3:05 - 4:00 - Sectionals, Acting and Solos
- 4:00 - 4:20 – Refreshments--4 SERVING LINES
- 4:20 - 5:20 - Mass Chorus Practice
- 5:20 - 5:30 - Announcements, Prayer

Children K-3 in 6 sections:

- He Is Jehovah
- In The Name of the Lord and Reprise
- We Cry Hosanna Lord
- Crucifixion Medley (all 4 songs)
- Cast Call

Children grades 4-older will be in the entire production and practices!

3. Auditions

- Pray for us and the decision making process
- Pray for yourself that the Lord will use you wherever
- List will be published next Sunday
- There will be extra practices for solos and actors
- Acting parts will be appointed.
- Let us know tonight if you are available and interested.
- Introduce Grandpa - Mel Cordani

4. Refreshments / Devotions

5. Costumes

- a. Bland colors
- b. NO plaids, florals, fancy trims, wild colors
- c. If you would like to sew for a new non-sewer, let Costume people know soon.
- d. We will assume you do NOT need a costume or help with a costume unless you sign up for assistance tonight.

6. Publicity

- a. Prayerfully ask the Lord who you should encourage to come.
- b. Start now to invite
- c. Small Traveling Publicity Group needed
- d. Help in putting up posters is always needed.
- e. NO RESERVED SEATING FOR ANYONE. DOORS WILL OPEN ONE HOUR BEFORE PERFORMANCES. ALL FRIENDS AND RELATIVES MUST COME EARLY FOR THEIR SEATS. CAST MEMBERS MAY NOT RESERVE FOR ANYONE.

7. Child Care

- a. program and guidelines
- b. fees and cooperation—Flat fee (pay tonight) of \$20.00 per child, or \$25.00 per family.
Pays for craft, teen helper

8. Sectionals

We are dividing Soprano and Alto into 2 groups each this year to maximize practice time of parts. It is so important to be on time and really work in these sectionals to learn parts

Children - K-3 - Sharon Cordani will teach these children the melody line during sectional practice

Children - 4-6 - Tim Bagby will teach these children the melody of all songs during sectional practices

Sectionals for ALL PROMISE CAST will directly follow DEVOTIONS

9. Set Up and Take Down

Please consider signing up for one week of set-up or take down. This consists of coming no later than 2:30 to set up chairs and equipment or staying after to help pick up everything and put back. Everyone picking up after themselves is really helpful and appreciated.

10. Extra Help - ushers, set up, tear down, building, make up etc. Do you have a spouse, relative, friend who can help? Let us know right away. We are sorely in need of helpers.

11. Books/Tapes

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

Let me share with you why I think more than 100 people feel so strongly about joining together each year for this production.

God has generously given talents of musical, acting and behind the scenes abilities to many folks. I personally do not think this is a mistake on His part. I believe He desires for us to use these talents to the best of our ability and in a way that brings glory of Him to others. This really is the crux of why we do this each year. We love to sing, act, and serve behind the scenes and we want to use these abilities to praise God and to tell others about Jesus and His saving love for us.

I believe God has richly blessed this ministry, Zion, Litchfield, families, and each of us as a direct result of it. Every person in the cast receives so many blessings; rich fellowship, service to the Lord, family growth, church growth, faith growth, a chance to witness to all who come, personal satisfaction, listing only a few. We all feel that we are a small part of God working a wonderful act—within us, our families, and to all those He leads to come and see the production.

Isn't this just what we as God's Church are all about? Coming together to worship, be touched anew by the Lord and His Word, and then reaching out to others with the message of the gospel. We are not merely a "Theater Group" but we are a vital Ministry, outreaching to the community and far beyond.

Last year alone The Promise was shown to more than 2600 people in 7 performances and brought people from Illinois, Missouri, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, Oklahoma, Michigan, Texas, Indiana, California, and even Sweden. This makes me realize that in a very significant way Grandpa's words which echo Jesus' words "Go ye into all world, teaching all nations..." have become reality here in small town, Litchfield.

This is all why I and many of you do this each year. I'm excited once again to make the small sacrifice of 9 Sun. Afternoons and 2 weekends to be a part of all and more of these blessings. I'm glad you are joining us. I think you will be also blessed.

Thank you in advance for all your hard work,
Alvina Becker-DIRECTOR

Promise Cast – Parts for Try-Outs
Singing Parts

Grandpa - Mel Cordani

Lisa

Billy

Prophet I (Jeremiah)

Prophet II (Isaiah)

Prophet III (Micah)

Prophet IV (Zechariah)

Mary

Joseph

Angel Gabriel

Jesus, as youth

Jesus, as adult

Peter

James

John

Andrew

Woman in the Market - "In the Name of the Lord"

Pilate

Woman on the Way of Sorrows

Angel at the Tomb - "Arise"

Acting Parts

Shepherds - (4-5)
Angels - (4-6)
Wisemen – (3)

John the Baptist
Voice of Satan

Philip
Nathaniel
Matthew
Thomas
James (son of Alphaeus)
Thaddeus
Simon (the Zealot)
Judas Iscariot

Pharisee #1
Pharisee #2
Pharisee #3
Nicodemus

Bartimaeus
Townsperson #1
Townsperson #2
Leper

Jairus
Jairus' daughter
Crippled boy

Woman in crowd
Young man with a demon

Martha
Mary (Martha's sister)
Lazarus

Moneychangers - (2-3)

Roman Soldiers - (4-6)

Maidens in the courtyard – (3)

King Herod

Thief #1
Thief #2 -

Three Women at the Tomb

Promise Cast –1996
Singing Parts

Grandpa – Mel Cordani

Lisa – Beth Cordani

Billy – Bryce Eskes

Prophet I (Jeremiah) – Wally Becker

Prophet II (Isaiah) – Ron Henschen

Prophet III (Micah) – Andy Becker

Prophet IV (Zechariah) – Eric Foiles

Mary – Ellen Henschen

Joseph – Todd Bentz

Angel Gabriel – Roy Waugh

Jesus, as youth – Andy Thomack

Jesus, as adult – Keith Aschenbeck

Peter – Tim Bagby

James – Adron Buske

John – Ernie Thomack

Andrew – Bill Eskes

Woman in the Market - "In the Name of the Lord" – Tammy Perez

Pilate – Wally Becker

Woman on the Way of Sorrows – Gail Spangler

Angel at the Tomb - "Arise" – Roy Waugh

Acting Parts

Shepherds - Eric Foiles, Jeremy Brum, Ben Spangler, Shay Westhoff, Ronnie Plasters

Angels - Megan Griffin, Stephanie Westhoff

Pages and Banner Bearers - Richard Waldrup, Jillian Hinz, Kasey Johnson

Wisemen - Mike Helgen, Drew Ponivas, Todd Neuhaus

Adult Jesus - Keith Aschenbeck

John the Baptist - Ron Henschen

Baptisms - Daniel Wolff; Kathy Bagby, Jessica Bagby, Jonathan Bagby

Voice of Satan - Ron Lovejoy

Philip - Ron Henschen

Nathaniel - Ron Lovejoy

Matthew - Bill Bergen

Thomas - Bob Allen

James (son of Alphaeus) - Andy Becker

Thaddeus - Steve Westhoff

Simon - Ronnie Lovejoy

Judas Iscariot - Tom Weiss

Beatitudes - poor in Spirit - Erin DeMoulin
 mourning - Maggie Knutson
 meek hearts - Connie Cui
 hungry/thirsty - Beth Haenel
 merciful - Micky Lovejoy

Pharisee #1 - Eric Foiles

Pharisee #2 - Dave Darte

Pharisee #3 - Todd Neuhaus

Nicodemus - Jim Wreath

Closer Than a Heartbeat – hand - Susan Bergen
 small group - Joey Perez, Allison Farrar, Jessica Nehrt,
 Chris Dagon, Blayne Eskes,
 hug - Tim Thomack
 flowers - Jessica Eskes

He Is Jehovah - Dance around Jesus - Jamie Wolff, Tiffany Jarman,
Sarah Corso, Rachel Cui, Michelle West
Blind Bartimaeus - Jim Wreath

Jairus - Mike Helgen

Jairus' daughter - Jennifer Cui

Cripple - Jeremy Brumm

Woman in the Crowd - Ceresa Waldrup

Woman Caught in Adultery - Aimee Lochman

Demoniac - Adron Buske

Martha - Terri Bentz

Mary (Martha's sister) - Rachel Favre

Lazarus - John Thull

Hosanna - tumblers - Stacy Bergen, Katy Gordon
Walk with Jesus - Susie Gartner, Kristy France, Theresa Behme, Jan Thomak
Tambourine Dancers - Emily Ostendorf, Sara Nail, Becky Cordani, Missy Griffin,
Wendy Heyen

Moneychangers - John Thull, Todd Neuhaus
Assigned Buyers - Denise & Erin DeMoulin, Gail & Ben Spangler, Sheryla,
Shay, & Stephanie Westhoff

Roman Soldiers - Dave Darte, Mike Helgen, Drew Ponivas, Jason Williams (Brad Saxby, one
night)

Maidens in the Courtyard - Amy Eskes, Sherry Dagon, Susan Griffin

King Herod - Roger Hyam

Crowd with Pilate - Gail Spangler, Roy Waugh, Jim Wreath, Eric Foiles, Beth Shaffer, Karen
Hinz, Amy Spangler, Linda Petrolina, Sharon Cordani, Denise DeMoulin, John Thull,
Todd Bentz, Vicki Shaffer, Sheryla Westhoff, Jeremy Brumm, Nadeem Shah,

Thief #1 - Andy Becker

Thief #2 - Todd Neuhaus

Three Women at the Tomb - Julie Heyen, Joyce Bergen, Rhonda Wolff

Special Acting Practices

- Feb. 4: 2:00 - 3:00 pm
Acting: Nicodemus & Jesus
John the Baptist - Baptisms
Lazarus Scene - Lazarus, Mary, Martha, Jesus
Singing: "Magnify" - Grandpa, Billy, Lisa, Mary, Joseph
"Little Yeshua" - Joseph, Yeshua
- 3:00 - 4:00 pm
"In the Name of the Lord" - all healings, Pharisees, woman, Jesus
"I See the Kingdom" - disciples on solos
- Feb. 11: 2:00 - 3:00 pm
Acting: "He is Jehovah" - disciples dance
Disciples at fire scene after "In the Name of the Lord"
Upper Room, "Shalom", Garden, Betrayal - 12 disciples, Jesus, Hosanna
dancers,
3 angels, "Glory"
Singing: "A Promise" - 4 prophets, Grandpa, Billy, Lisa
- 3:00 - 6:00 pm
Blocking of Act I
- 6:00 - 7:00 pm
Soldiers, Jesus, Herod, Pilate, two thieves
All soldier scenes, small crowd with Pilate
- Feb. 18: 2:00 - 3:00 pm
"Glory" - 3 angels, Mary, Joseph, Wisemen, Shepherds, page, banner bearer,
- 3:00 - 6:00 pm
Blocking of Act II
- 6:00 - 7:00 pm
Soldiers, Jesus, Herod, Pilate, moneychangers, assigned buyers, crowd with Jesus
in the temple, 2 thieves, Pharisees, Satan.
- Feb. 25: 2:00 - 2:45 pm
"Closer Than a Heartbeat" - All children, Jesus, Philip, Peter
- 2:45 pm
"Overture" & "A Promise is A Promise"
- 3:00 - 6:00 pm
All practice: Acts I & 11, NO BOOKS
- March 3: 2:00 - 2:45 pm
Acting practice as needed
- 2:45 pm
"Overture" & "A Promise is A Promise"
- 3:00 - 6:00 pm
All practice: Acts I & II, NO BOOKS

Letter to Community Churches

The Promise

Musical Pageant on the Life of Christ

Dear Pastor or Church Secretary:

For the past seven years Zion Lutheran-Litchfield, has been producing musical drama extravaganzas depicting the life of Christ. These professional productions feature quality soloists, sophisticated lighting and sound systems, a complicated multi-level stage set with a cast and crew of over 100 from our congregation, the community and the surrounding area. This year we are repeating "The Promise," our most ambitious undertaking yet. The climax of this contemporary, upbeat music, narrative, dialogue and drama is the resurrection of Jesus and our promise of eternal life—a timeless Easter message for believers and unbelievers alike.

We are adding another performance this year to alleviate the Standing Room Only problems encountered in the past. We will have performances on Friday and Saturday evenings March 15, 16, 22, and 23 at 7:00pm. and afternoon performances on March 17 and 24 at 2:00pm. and 5:00pm. The doors open one hour before the performance.

I have enclosed a poster, sample bulletin announcements and a sample flyer that you have permission to reproduce or, if you prefer, we can duplicate more for you. Just let us know.

This powerfully, moving, spiritually uplifting presentation will touch the hearts of all who attend. Please consider encouraging your parishioners to attend one of these performances as a group. A youth group, men's, women's or senior citizen's organization would benefit from attendance as well as a Confirmation, Sunday School or Bible Class. Group reservations will be available for the March 15 performance only. Please call the church office early to reserve your seating.

It takes a tremendous amount of effort to coordinate a production of this magnitude, but our congregation feels strongly that it is our way with Jesus of "sending the promise of My Father upon you" (Luke 24:49) and indeed to all of Central Illinois.

We will, of course, appreciate any efforts on your part to help publicize this event. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to call.

In His Promise,

Patricia Titsworth,
Publicity Committee

Zion Lutheran Church Auditorium
1301 North State, Litchfield, IL
(217)324-2033

Sample Announcements

MUSICAL DRAMA - Be sure to mark your calendars and set aside some time to attend "The Promise," Zion Lutheran-Litchfield's annual production of the life of Christ and the promise of eternal life He brings. Performance times are:

Friday, March 15 & 22 at 7:00pm

Saturday, March 16 & 23 at 7:00pm

Sunday, March 17 & 24 at 2:00pm & 5:00pm

Group reservations will be taken for Friday, March 15 only. Doors open one hour before performance. A free will offering will be taken and refreshments will be served afterwards.

"The Promise," a musical pageant with a cast of over 100, tells the story of Jesus' life with drama and song in a way that all ages will enjoy. Performances are scheduled for 2 p.m. and 5 p.m. on Sunday, March 17 and 24. Evening performances (7 p.m.) will take place Friday, March 15 & 22 and Saturday March 16 & 23. Doors open one hour before performance. Group reservations will be taken for Friday, March 15 only. Free Will offering. Zion Lutheran Church, 1301 N. State, Litchfield.

The Easter message and its promise of eternal life for all believers will be portrayed in drama and song at Zion Lutheran Church in Litchfield. "The Promise" performances are scheduled for 2 p.m. and 5 p.m. on Sunday, March 17 and 24. Evening performances (7 p.m.) will take place Friday, March 15 & 22 and Saturday March 16 & 23. Doors open one hour before performance. Group reservations will be taken for Friday, March 15 only. Free will offering. Refreshments and fellowship following.

The highly acclaimed production of "The Promise," a musical drama following the life of Christ, will take place at Zion Lutheran Church, Litchfield, at eight individual performances during the next two week-ends. See the posters in the hallway for specific times and dates. Doors open one hour before the performance. Invite your friends and neighbors. Group reservations will be taken for Friday, March 15 only. Free will offering. Refreshments and fellowship following.

Article for Zion's Newsletter

"THE PROMISE"

For the past six years our congregation has been producing musical drama extravaganzas depicting the life of Christ. Posters throughout the building and town, postcards circulating through the mail, and friends sporting "Ask Me About The Promise" buttons have alerted all to the approach of this powerfully moving, spiritually uplifting presentation.

The set is in place, costumes have been sewn, props have been located, and the cast and crew of "The Promise" are anxiously awaiting their chance to perform for the congregation, community and indeed all of central Illinois.

If you as a congregation member have never attended this production, be sure to mark your calendars for either a Sunday matinee performance or an evening performance. Ask a church member or even unchurched friend to join you. The climax of this contemporary combination of upbeat music, narrative, dialogue and drama is the resurrection of Jesus and our *promise of* eternal life—a timeless Easter message for believers or unbelievers alike.

If you have attended "The Promise," rest assured that you will enjoy returning again. There are new soloists, new performers, a larger set and of course, lots and lots of fresh cookies! Would you

*PROMISE to pray for the success of this mission endeavor?

*PROMISE to inform friends, neighbors and relatives so that they can experience the blessings of this production?

*PROMISE to encourage those who have devoted countless hours before, during and even apart from scheduled practices?

*PROMISE to attend yourself to bring the impact of your Savior's life into sharper focus in your own life?

"For by grace are we saved through faith..." You won't be disappointed in this promise—or our portrayal of "The Promise."

Letter Announcing the Cast Party

PROMISE CAST PARTY

Saturday, July 13, 1996

2:00 pm - ?

At The Beckers'

The cast, and crew, etc. and their families are invited to a "cast party" at the Beckers on July 13 from 2:00 pm until the evening. We plan to eat at 5:00 pm. All families should bring a main dish to share. Also everyone whose last name begins with A-K should bring a side dish. Everyone whose last name begins with L-R should bring dessert. Everyone whose last name begins with S-Z should bring ice tea, lemonade, or soda. You can enjoy the pool or just relax and visit. Maybe we'll get a soft ball game or volleyball game going. Horseshoes, crochet, and boccie ball are possibilities also.

Did you get a copy of "The Promise" video, put together this year by Keith Lewis and the Video Ministry Team from Trinity, Edwardsville? If not, or if you would like to order additional copies for Christmas gifts or what have you, you may place an order. The cost is still \$17.50 per video. Make checks out to "Trinity Lutheran Church." Bring your order to the cast party on July 13. We will place the order the following week. If you cannot attend, you can place your order by dropping off or mailing your check to the church office.

Special meeting of Promise Committee Chairmen and Leaders will be held after the 10:30 am worship service on Sunday, July 7, to discuss the future of "The Promise" ministry here at Zion. Your attendance, participation and input are appreciated.

In case some of you have not yet heard the news, I (Pastor Becker) have accepted a call to Redeemer Lutheran Church, Springfield, Mo. We will be moving the first part of August and the farewell Sunday will be August 11. I will be sharing my farewell message in the worship services and a potluck dinner and reception will be held after the 10:30 service. We hope you all can be there.

Hope to see you on the 13th July.

Pastor Wally & Alvina

1996 - Churches Represented in *The Promise*

- Zion Lutheran Church
1301 N. State, Litchfield, IL 62056
- Trinity Lutheran Church
600 Water Street, Edwardsville, IL 62025
- Immanuel Lutheran Church
111 E. Main, Mt. Olive, IL 62069
- Good Shepherd Lutheran Church
1300 Beltline, Collinsville, IL 62234
- Holy Cross Lutheran Church
304 South Street, Collinsville, IL 62234
- Zion Lutheran Church
500 S. Illinois, Mt. Olive, IL 62069
- St. Paul Lutheran Church
1327 Vaughn Rd., Wood River, IL 62095
- Our Redeemer Lutheran Church
813 East College Avenue, Greenville, IL 62246
- Zion Lutheran Church
625 Church Drive, Bethalto, IL 62010
- Wares Grove Lutheran Church
Butler Grove Twp., Hillsboro, IL 62049
- Mt. Zion Lutheran Church
824 N. Monroe, Litchfield, IL 62056
- Living Stones Fellowship
622 N. Franklin, Litchfield, IL 62056
- St. Timothy's United Methodist Church
219 E. Union Ave., Litchfield, IL 62056
- First United Methodist Church
109 E. 2nd North, Mt. Olive, IL 62069
- South Side Church
500 S. Illinois, Litchfield, IL 62056
- Holy Family Catholic Parish
410 S. State, Litchfield, IL 62056
- Sts. Simon and Jude Catholic Church
304 N. Macoupin, Gillespie, IL 62033

Newspaper and Magazine Articles

LITCHFIELD NEWS HERALD

March, 1996

The countdown is on for "The Promise." There have been changes in this fifth production. Most significant change is that the thieves will also be on crosses. Stories of the healings are different. Other changes are in the scenery.

More than 100 people have become involved in the production and close to half of them are not members of Zion Lutheran, the sponsoring congregation. They come from all over the area to take part. Many have been working on the play since January.

The narrator, Mel Cordani, has played the Grandfather for all five years. This year he tells the story to his daughter Beth, 10, who plays Lisa, and to Bryce Eskes, 10, who plays Billy.

Jesus is being played by a seminary student from Texas, Keith Aschenbeck, who is doing his practical experience work at Zion. Roger Hyam is playing Herod.

The list of soloists is impressive. They include professional singer Roy Waugh, Gail Spangler of Mt. Olive, Ellen Henschen of Edwardsville, Todd Bentz of Collinsville, and from Litchfield, Tammy Perez, Tim Bagby, Ernie Thomack and his son Andy, Wallace Becker, Bill Eskes and Adron Buske.

Have I caught your interest? Last year more than 2,500 people attended the performances so this year another performance has been added. Opening night, March 15, is for groups only. Reservations are required. Performances will be at 7 p.m. on the 15th and 16th, 22nd, and 23rd, and at 2 and 5 p.m. on Sundays, the 17th and 24th.

THE LUTHERAN WITNESS Southern Illinois Section

March, 1996

Zion Lutheran Church, Litchfield, will present its annual musical passion play, "The Promise," during the Lenten season. Performances will be held on March 15, 16, 22, and 23 at 7 p.m. and on March 17 and 24 at 2 p.m. and 5 p.m.

Participants include more than 100 people this year, compared to 45 five years ago. Many of the performers are Zion's own members, but some volunteers are from other churches in the Litchfield community and surrounding area.

Children as well as adults fill the dramatic roles and also perform as soloists and choir in the production which spans Jesus' life from birth through resurrection. Last year, nearly 3,000 people viewed "The Promise."

The first performance has been highlighted to accommodate groups who wish to make reservations. For the remaining performances, seating is on a first-come, first-served basis, with doors opening one hour before performance time.

The auditorium seats 300 on the main floor and another 75 on bleachers. A free-will offering will be collected to defray expenses.

For more information, call the church office at (217) 324-2033.

APPENDIX 3C

THANK YOU NOTES AND LETTERS RECEIVED IN 1996

Dear Alvina and Pastor,

*I think every year seeing *The Promise*, this is the best. But after the performance yesterday, none can compare with this year's production. It was truly wonderful!*

Seeing Keith and knowing this is his first year, it was unbelievable. I couldn't watch the crucifixion, it was too real, and my eyes were filled with tears.

You had such wonderful talent and it must have been very rewarding to work with.

My sincere appreciation for such a wonderful experience, and to you both for making it possible, for it took your guidance to make it such a huge success.

As ever,

Betty J. Hutchins

Dear Helen, and Promise Cast and Crew,

We just wanted to tell you how very much our youth group enjoyed your production.

Everyone did a wonderful job, and it truly was a way to reach out and minister to the community. Thank you for all your hard work and commitment. Thank you too for your consideration in saving us such nice seats right up front. They were great.

May God richly bless each one of you.

Sincerely,

Living Stones Youth

Dear Pastor Becker,

*I attended the performance of *The Promise* yesterday afternoon, and set aside the first thing this morning to write and tell you that it was one of the most thrilling experiences of my life.*

Never have I ever been so spiritually moved. The talent displayed was awesome. I haven't had much experience with live performances, so I am not much of an expert, but even an amateur should be able to see what a great deal of talent was there.

One thing I do recognize is hard work and dedication and to me this effort was the most enthralling aspect of the whole program.

I feel that God blessed me to be able to witness this display of faith and dedication!

May the Lord bless each and every one of you from the infant to the ushers.

Thank you from the bottom of my heart,

Yours in Christ,

Pat Eshew

Dear Ms Becker, Choir and Crew,

Just wanted to let you know what a wonderful blessing I received yesterday, during your fantastic production!

As a singer myself, I have performed in and been a spectator too, many cantatas over the years, and have never been more blessed than I was Sunday afternoon.

Technically and musically, The Promise was a job well done. More importantly, the name of God was truly praised!

God Bless You all!

Sherry Hearst

Pastor and Alvina Becker,

Last Sunday evening I viewed your play, The Promise. It was very good. The emotions that were evoked were very spiritual. It made this Lenten season much more meaningful and I look for the celebration of Easter.

I look forward to bringing more people from Taylorville down to The Promise next year.

Blessings to you.

Larry Peterson

To the Members of Zion,

We want to thank you for again sponsoring The Promise. There is obviously a lot of work in producing this musical, and we want you to know that we really appreciate it. Thank you again for being a blessing to us during this Lenten and Easter Season!

Sincerely,

Pastor Al, Donna, and Kory Janneke

Dear Wally and Alvina,

Just a note to say Thank You for all your effort for The Promise. Ever since we've been here, you have been giving to others on a constant basis! Your example as Pastor and Pastor's wife have given Kathy and I something to shoot for, as Christians, leaders, and as parents. Your friendship is invaluable to us and we look forward to spending time together again soon.

The Promise was Kathy's and my first chance to do something like that. It was a great blessing to all of us. I know Jessica will never forget it! We praise God that He used you in this mighty way!

Thanks for all that you do for us! We appreciate you more than we can tell you!

Love, Peace, and Joy,

Tim and Family

To the Beckers and Cast of The Promise,

Congratulations on your outstanding ministry, "Mission Outreach" you are achieving by your hard work and concerted efforts!!

Once again, The Promise reminds us, ever so vividly, of His love for us, and inspires us to praise Him. With thanks and joy as we go and tell...a new generation. "He is Risen"

Ken E. Ladage

Dear Brother Becker,

I spoke to you very briefly at the door Friday, after the pageant, but decided also to send this note. Thank you very much for all the work that went into the program. It has a great deal. I'd like to thank everyone involved but that's impossible. My wife and I enjoyed it very much. Very well done, inspiring, a blessing in many ways, to many.

We drove 100 miles and it took 2 hours each way, from Chester.

Hopefully, we'll hear about it next year. I'll encourage others, maybe a group, to come from Chester.

Ken Young

Alvina,

Thank you so much for giving your whole heart in making The Promise such a wonderful program.

Richard and I have really enjoyed each practice as we feel very much a part of the program.

Your energy and love shows and we are sure the program will be a huge success again within our community.

*Thanks for all your hard work,
Ceressa and Richard Waldrup*

Dear Pastor Wally, Alvina, and The Promise Performers,

Charles and I attended this afternoon's performance and were truly blessed.

Thank you so much for the message portrayed in beautiful music. I feel both the church and the entire community is blessed not only with lovely talents, but generous people who will freely give of their time to further the knowledge of the Kingdom of our Lord.

It certainly was a time of renewal for our faith. May many more be drawn closer to Him through these performances.

*Thanks and God Bless you,
Charles and Carlene Knoche*

Wally and Alvina,

I can't find the words to express my gratefulness for you both. I know how taxing it has been in your roles as directors of the Promise, but I also know how fulfilling it is to you as well as the cast. Being a part of the cast has been an opportunity beyond measure. The friendships started and strengthened, the memories made, and most of all, learning and living the greatest story any of us can know—Jesus.

I pray that you both continue to feel and respond to God's call as helping us witness to our little world. Bless you both for your hard work and dedication to our Lord and our cast.

*Thank you,
Jan Thomack*

Thank you so much for giving me the opportunity to participate in The Promise. It meant so much more to me than I thought it could. I felt very welcomed by your church family. I felt more comfortable singing with them than I ever have in my own church.

*Thank you,
Sincerely,
Jan Dona*

Dear Pastor Wally and Alvina,

Thank you so much for letting us be a part of this special ministry! We have been richly blessed by this experience! Your congregation has been so welcoming. We will miss seeing you all each week.

*Love,
Terri and Todd*

Dear Pastor and Members,

Just a few lines to tell you we enjoyed the production of The Promise on Friday night. It was a wonderful way of witnessing to the world. Your people did a great job, and we enjoyed Grandpa and the children. They were great. The singers were very good and the Director did a good job.

You are doing a wonderful work portraying Jesus' life. God Bless you.

*Sincerely,
Joyce Flowers*

Dear Friends in Christ,

God's richest blessings to you in Jesus, Christ our Lord. He is the God of Promise—the God who keeps His promises.

Thank you for The Promise. Yours was a wonderful production of this musical, directing all present to Christ crucified and raised from the dead for us. I pray that God will use The Promise for the salvation of many.

God be with you and with each of those in the cast.

I remain, yours in the service of Jesus Christ,

Rev. Herbert C. Mueller Jr.

Southern Illinois District President

Dear Pastor Becker and Cast of The Promise,

Greetings in the Name of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

During the past few weeks, and especially this last weekend, I have thought about The Promise on many occasions. As Christmas and the New Year rolled around this year, I felt that something was missing: the anticipation of starting another production of The Promise. I have told many people here in Pierre, SD about the production, and everyone seems to be impressed. Certainly, it is something to be proud of, and I'm sure all of you are doing a wonderful job.

As you enter the last weekend of performances, I know how hard it can be to get psyched up for the Show. I want to encourage all of you to remember that you are being God's messengers through your acting and singing. Many people are touched by the Passion Story that they see in real life in front of them. The many sniffing noses during the Crucifixion demonstrate the power of your ...no... God's message through you.

You are proclaiming Jesus as your Lord and Savior through the Show. You are involved in a most noble task: sharing the gospel of Christ. God has promised to send His Spirit to help those who proclaim the Gospel. Let His Spirit work through you tonight! There may be someone in the audience who has never heard this message before!

God Bless you all! I miss you and will see you next year.

Joel Krueger,

"Jesus" – 1994-1995

To Whom It May Concern:--Cast of The Promise,

I can't tell you how moved I was when I saw The Promise a few weeks ago. The performance was spectacular and presented in such a professional manner. I along with my three sons, ages 11, 7, and 3 were very glad they witnessed this unique story about Jesus' life. It really touched them!

I wish everyone could see this production once in their life time.

Again I bless you all for such a great job and keep up the good work.

Sincerely,

Dale Ohren

Alvina and Wally,

Thank you so, so , so, so much for all your hard work and dedication. We have truly been blessed to be a part of The Promise.

Love,

Rhonda, Jamie and Daniel

Dear Keith,

Greetings in the Name of the Lord Jesus! I just wanted to drop you a note to express our thanks for the wonderful job you did yesterday. A few of our members came to see The Promise and everyone did a great job of inspiring and uplifting! Our thanks to all who worked so hard and made our trip worth it. Please convey our thanks to Pastor Becker, his wife, Alvina, and all the good people at Zion for hosting the Passion Play.

God Bless you in Christ,

Rev James Stuenkel

Dear Sharon and Mel,

Monday morning—but this is a different Monday morning for you. After weeks of preparation and eight performances, The Promise of 1996 is over. I am sure that for your family there is a sense of weariness, thanksgiving for the opportunity to present Christ in a unique way, and even a feeling that there is something missing from your routine.

How good to see the many ways that entire families were involved! Repeatedly I found such names as Becker, Lovejoy, and Cordani, etc in performance and crew.

The importance of the presentation as it made never-to-be-forgotten impressions on all age groups should bring gratification to your family and the entire cast.

Thank you for including us in your invitations,

Sincerely,

Edith Simcoe

Dear Wally,

I was most impressed. I enjoyed the evening. You and your congregation are to be commended for a stellar performance. I hope you are as pleased with what you are doing as I was in being present.

I thank you for the invitation. My son, David, who teaches at Metro-Lutheran also was enthused about what you are doing. Too bad the whole student body could not have been in attendance.

May you continue to “Shine Like Stars” in His love for His Church.

A Blessed Lenten-tide,

Yours in His Service,

Walter M. Schoedel,

APPENDIX 3D

EVALUTATION OF FAMILY ENRICHMENT THROUGH *THE PROMISE*, SPRING 2000

We asked the participants of *The Promise, 2000*, in Litchfield if they would fill out the survey we used with the cast of *Love Will Be Our Home*, in Springfield. We were interested in seeing if some of the same assets were being built through the musical drama experience that continues to take place there. Even though this musical drama ministry does not specifically seek to build developmental assets in the participant families, because it is a family oriented experience, where whole families are encouraged to participate together, family members did express that they grew in these asset areas. Only seventeen forms were returned. These are the responses made by participants in *The Promise*:

1. "The levels of love and support between our family members increased."
All agree except three "Uncertain."
2. "Our family members communicate in more positive ways."
All agree except five "Uncertain."
3. "Our children developed positive relationships with other Christian adults."
All agree.
4. "Our children experienced the care and support of other families."
All agree.
5. "Our children felt that they were valued and important."
All agree.
6. "Our children and youth were given useful roles and responsibilities."
All agree except one "Uncertain."
7. "We were given opportunities to serve others."
All agree except one "Undecided."
8. "We feel safer and more secure in our family and congregation."
All agree except three "Uncertain."
9. "Our children saw their parents and other adults model positive, responsible behavior." All agree except one "Uncertain." A note was added:
"Some were positive, unfortunately some were negative."
10. "Our children were with other children who modeled responsible behavior."
All agree except two "Undecided." One added the note: "Some were, some were not."
11. "Our children and youth were given encouragement and support."
All agree.
12. "We experienced a creative activity together."
All agree.
13. "We experienced a spiritual activity together."
All agree.

14. "We spent positive time at home working together."
All agree except four "Uncertain."
15. "We became more committed to the value of helping others."
All agree except five "Uncertain."
16. "We were encouraged in our convictions and were helped in expressing what we believe."
All agree.
17. "Family members were enabled to accept and take personal responsibility."
All agree except three "Uncertain."
18. "Family members developed skills in planning ahead and making choices."
All agree except four "Uncertain."
19. "Family members developed empathy, sensitivity, and friendship skills."
All agree except one "Uncertain."
20. "Our children developed skills in resisting negative peer pressure and avoiding dangerous situations."
All agree except four "Uncertain."
21. "Family members were encouraged to handle stressful situations in more positive ways."
All agree except four "Uncertain."
22. "Our children observed how to resolve conflict in a more peaceful way."
All agree except three "Uncertain."
23. "Family members grew in self-esteem."
All agree except one "Uncertain."
24. "Family members felt a sense of purpose."
All agree.
25. "Our children have a more optimistic view about their future."
All agree except six "Uncertain."

Question #26 asked, "Has this experience enriched your family? Yes or no? If answered yes, how?"

The responses included only one "not applicable." The rest all answered "yes" and gave the following responses:

- "Whenever there is a chance to bring family members together to work toward a common goal, it is usually positive and worthwhile – add the content of *The Promise* (many verbatim scripture verses) and a lot of fun and time with friends as well."
- "We shared in a positive and creative activity that strengthened our spirituality and growth as Christians."
- "It has brought us closer to God."
- "We have enjoyed participating in a Christian activity that is a witness and outreach to others."
- "Positive production; helped in knowledge of Christ and the scriptures."
- "Everybody is too busy these days! It makes it nice to have at least one project which involves your whole family."
- "Togetherness and a new Christian family."
- "It was a family activity for four months out of the year."

- “It has helped very much.”
- “It drew Jamie and I closer.”
- “It gave us a chance to work in theater which we love and serve God while doing it.”
- “By giving us time to be together.”

Question #27 asked, “What would you change to make this experience more ‘family friendly?’” The responses were:

- “no changes – continue to encourage family (or at least parent with child) involvement. First the family members not participating less likely to resent time commitment & secondly the Spirit brings out talents that were ‘hidden under a bushel.’”
- “More ‘child’ oriented.”
- “Nothing. It is perfect.”
- “How adults and high school age cast members have more Christian comments and attitudes.”
- “Nothing.” Stated five times.

Question #28 asked, “Has this experience helped you and your family to grow in your faith? yes or no? If answered yes, how?”

There were two forms that did not respond to this question. The rest all answered “yes” and gave the following responses:

- “By giving a chance to minister to people.”
- “Being with others who share their faith in various ways and provide good role models. Also such familiarity with the script – Bible verses – has forever imprinted in our minds.”
- “Any experience we have with God helps our family’s faith to grow.”
- “We shared in a positive and creative activity that strengthened our spirituality and growth as Christians.”
- “This lets us get close to God on more times than just Sunday.”
- “Wonderful Christian music has helped our faith and helped to express our faith in powerful words.”
- “Affirmed our beliefs and importance of Christ to our family and personal lives.”
- “When the kids were small I think it brought the whole picture to them. Kids and adults benefit by showing it more clearly to others.”
- “Keeps reminding me just how great God is and how He always takes care of us.”
- “The emotions and warmth from the audiences.”
- “We are closer and we do more good things together.”
- “Got to share with people from other denominations. Found far more in common than differences. A way to share our faith and love – to serve.”

Question #29 asked to evaluate the importance of leadership Characteristics for persons in Musical Drama leadership roles. The seven characteristics were: Influential; Priority Minded; Possesses Integrity; Problem Solver; Positive Attitude; People Sensitive; Vision Minded. All seven characteristics were rated “somewhat valuable” or “extremely valuable.” We asked for comments on the impact of Leadership for their family experience. Only a couple people gave input. These are the comments that were shared:

- “All of the above values are needed to provide meaningful leadership although I cannot rank one much higher than the others – true Christian love and commitment to sound scripture representation is very important.”
- “Due to participating: Bill became President, Joyce became Secretary/Treasurer, Susan was a leading actress and Stacy was always were the action was.”

Question #30 said, “Please share any interesting stories or anecdotes that happened to you or a family member as a result of your musical experience.”

- “It was great fun. We made new Christian friends and the back stage fun was great too. It lets young people see you can have good clean fun.”
- “Too numerous to mention.”
- “We’ve shared some very fun-filled moments with our friends during performances.”
- “My favorite – most touching – comments from audience are, ‘I’ve gone to church all my life. No sermon touched me like that,’ and ‘I never realized Jesus suffered like that.’ To which I remind them He did it for us. ‘Are all those neat stories really in the Bible?’ is also a comment I’ve heard more than once. I tell them to read the Gospels and find out how close the script is.”
- “*The Promise* is a great example of what the true church can do outside of the walls that divide us.”
- “Where to start?! Andy yawning as ‘Little Yeshua’ at every performance. Ernie forgetting the words to ‘Arise’ – (gulp!) as Gabriel. ‘The Rabbits! The rabbits! Release the Little Rabbits!’ ‘Pizza, Pizza!’ from a certain someone playing Pilate. Tim falling asleep on my lap during Crucifixion scene. Ceresa & Rhonda’s ongoing ‘gotch-ya’s’ during the performances. The awe I felt watching the Nativity scene & watching Jesus die – How I can lose myself & feel the guilt of shouting ‘Crucify!’ & then tears at the cross. Friendships & memories we will always cherish.”

Even though providing growth in the forty assets from Search Institute was not specifically a goal of the musical drama ministry in Litchfield, it is evident from the survey responses that growth in many of these assets did take place. Because the congregational leadership encouraged whole families to be involved and provided a positive experience where families could work together on the same activity, these families were enriched through their involvement with this musical.

APPENDIX 4

ORGANIZATIONAL AND PROMOTIONAL MATERIAL FOR
LOVE WILL BE OUR HOME, SPRING 2000,
REDEEMER LUTHERAN CHURCH, SPRINGFIELD, MISSOURI

Fliers



Presented by
Redeemer Lutheran Church
2852 South Dayton
Springfield, MO 65807
417-881-5470

Sunday, April 9
3:00 p.m.

Free Will Offering



Come celebrate with us!

Musical Practice Schedule

Sunday, February 6, 2000 - 9:30-10:30 am

A Prayer For Families
I Will Be Here
Love Will Be Our Home

Sunday, February 13, 2000 - 9:30 - 10:30 am

What is A Family?
What is A Family (Reprise)
When Amy Smiles
Review Week 1 Songs

Sunday, February 20, 2000 - 9:30 - 10:30 am

The House We Call Home
Watercolor Ponies
Review Week 1 and 2 Songs

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 2000 - 12:00 - 1:30 PM

AUDITIONS FOR THOSE WISHING TO TRY FOR SOLO/ACTING PARTS

Sunday, February 27, 2000 - 9:30 - 10:30 am

Let's Hear It For Love
Every Other Saturday
Review Weeks 1, 2 and 3 Songs

Sunday, March 5, 2000 - 9:30 - 10:30 am

Hold On
Review all Songs
Afternoon - 2:30-5:30 pm
2:30-4:00 Chorus
4:00-5:30 Solos and Actors

Sunday, March 12, 2000 - 9:30 - 10:30 am

Review all Songs
Afternoon - 2:30 - 5:30 pm
2:30-4:00 pm Chorus
4:00 5:30 pm Solos and Actors

Sunday, March 19, 2000 - 9:30 -10:30 am

Review all Songs
Afternoon - 2:30 - 5:30 pm
2:30-4:00 pm Chorus
4:00-5:30 pm Solos and Actors

Sunday, March 26, 2000 - 9:30 - 10:30 am
Review all Songs
No Afternoon Rehearsal

Sunday, April 2, 2000 - 9:30 - 10:30 am
Polish Rehearsal
Afternoon - 2:30 - 5:00 pm
Entire Cast
Technical Rehearsal
Putting it All Together

Saturday, April 8, 2000 - 7:00 - 8:30 pm
CAST DRESS REHEARSAL

Sunday, April 9, 2000 - 9:30 - 10:30 am
Polish whatever still needs work
PERFORMANCE 3:00 PM
Cast reports by 2:00 pm

Tear Down Set after show

Cast

SOLOS

George - age 60-63 (Dad) "I Will Be Here"

JIM APPELQUIST

Kate - age 34-35 (Oldest Daughter) "Hold On"

CARMEN DORMAN

Rachel - age 23-26 (Youngest Daughter) "When Amy Smiles"

STEPHANIE RICHTER

Robin - age 30-33 (Middle Daughter) "Watercolor Ponies"

DIANE STAUDTE

Gary - age 30-35 (Robin's Husband) "Watercolor Ponies"

SID WHITING

Bryan - age 27-30 (Son) "Every Other Saturday"

JOSH WANNER

Beth - age 27-30 (Bryan's Wife) "Every Other Saturday"

GAIL WHITING

ACTORS

Miriam - age 55-62 (Mom)

DARLENE APPELQUIST

Charlie - age 50-60 (Mail Man)

GARY BECKMAN

Willy - age 19-21 (Kate's Mail boy)

ZACH PRECISE

Harry - age 55+ (Neighbor)

BEN BROWN

Janet - age 35-40 (Neighbor)

LYNETTE SUCHMAN

Bill - age 35-40 (Neighbor, Janet's husband)

BOB SUCHMAN

Stan - age 23-26 (Rachael's husband)

TIM BELDEN

CHILDREN

Lauren - age 7-8 (Robin's daughter)

PIPER DORMAN

Neale - age 7-11 SOLO (Bryan's Son)

KYLE DANIELS

Rusty - age 12-13 (Robin's older son - no lines)

MURRAY MOSS

Sean - age 8-9 (Robin's middle son - no lines)

THOMAS BELDEN

Amy - infant (Rachel's daughter)

ANDREW RICHTER

Costumes/Props/Sets

COSTUMES - Choir members should have one outfit that would be appropriate for a Wedding, background chorus, and outdoor Wedding Anniversary. Possible options, slacks, khakis, bright colored shirts. No jeans or shorts please. We will be sitting on risers, so probably not a dress.

SETS - We need help rounding up set props. Please see if you have or can borrow these things for us and let us know ASAP!

- _____ 2 Porch Chairs and small table, plants for Anderson home
- _____ Small drawing table, chair and lamp for Kate's set
- _____ Baby crib, mobile, stuffed animals, rocker for Rachel's set
- _____ Overstuffed chair and small end table for Robin's set
- _____ Small desk, chair and computer for Bryan's set
- _____ Wooden Stool with no back for Beth's set

PROPS - We need several props for use throughout the play. Let us know if you can loan, provide money for, or make the following:

- _____ Dark (Black) Jackets for George, Bryan, Gary, Stan, Rusty, Sean, Neale with Boutonnieres for Wedding Scene
- _____ Bouquets for Mimi, Kate, Robin, Beth, Rachel, Lauren for Wedding Scene
- _____ "Easter" type hat for Lauren for Wedding Scene
- _____ Wedding Veil for Mimi for Wedding Scene
- _____ Wedding Gifts (same as ones used in Anniversary Scene. (large wrapped empty boxes)
- _____ Photographer type camera with large flash for Photographer for Wedding Scene
- _____ Robe, Stole, Bible for Pastor Wally for Wedding Scene
- _____ Mail and Mail bag for Charlie
- _____ Letters for Mimi in Scene 1
- _____ Mimi's glasses
- _____ Stationery, envelopes, address labels, stamps, and pens for letters
- _____ Family photo in frame of Beth, Bryan and Neale
- _____ 2 Watercolor Pony paintings, one matted/framed for Anniversary Scene
- _____ Box of baby clothes that have come by mail in Scene 4
- _____ Baseball cards, watercolors, brush, pony picture, 2 baseball caps for Rusty and Sean for Scene 4
- _____ Tray, coffee cups, carafe, cookies for Scene 5
- _____ Mail for Willie to give Kate in Scene 6
- _____ Invitation for Charlie to read in Scene 9
- _____ Night Lites for Sacristy and Vestry
- _____ Anniversary Scene items
 - _____ Corsage and Boutonniere for George and Mimi
 - _____ Gifts wrapped in Wedding/Anniversary Paper
 - _____ Punch Bowl with few glasses of punch
 - _____ Wedding Photo of George and Mimi
 - _____ Flower Bouquet for Table
 - _____ Tables with table cloths
 - _____ 4 Balloon Bouquets
 - _____ 4 Tier Artificial cake
 - _____ 2 Candles for table
 - _____ Anniversary Cards
 - _____ Wedding Album

Announcements

March 19, 2000

1. **Practice in gym at 10:10 am during Bible Class. Go immediately. Do not pass GO.**
2. **After Late service, set up is needed in the chancel for practice today. (Guys especially are needed for risers and platforms)**
3. **Join us for Lunch in the gym, after set-up. We sing right after PW and PB.
We will sing
 "Let's Hear it for Love" - Charlie will read invitation
 " I Will Be Here" - George will do solo, prayer on interlude by PB**
4. **Afternoon Practice - Immediately following Luncheon, (or when we finish Singing--take a quick bathroom break etc and then meet in the chancel.) Practice will be 3 hours with a 20 minute break after we run through it once. Refreshments (drink and small snack) brought by Moss-Whiting.**
5. **Wednesday Lenten Dinner --Kathy Daniels announce. 6 families for dessert, rest \$3.00 each. Need a few servers and cleaners. Proceeds to go for musical.**
6. **Small Group for 4 Solo Songs: Alvina announce.
 "When Amy Smiles"
 "Watercolor Ponies"
 "Every Other Saturday"
 "Hold On"
 Possible practice next Sunday, March 26th after late church or afternoon.**
7. **PROPS - sign up for Wedding Gifts, need about 10 in pretty Wedding Paper and special ribbon and bow. Also other props needed. All MUST be here by April 2nd or before. Can be stored in Alvina's office.**
8. **April 2nd - Sing at Redeemer worship services. At beginning of both services.**
9. **April 2nd - Rehearsal until 5:30. Refreshments (drink and light snack) provided by Appelquist-Dorman.**
10. **April 8th - Dress Rehearsal at 7:00 pm. Do we want to have a Ci Ci's Pizza dinner at 5:30 pm. \$2.00 per person will cover salad, pizza, dessert pizza, drink?**
11. **Post Card Advertisements - Take about 50 post cards per family and give them to everyone you know. You can even send some by mail. They should be handed out within the next week and a half. Let's try to fill Redeemer on the 9th.**

Speaking Parts in the Songs
Presented at the Teacher Appreciation Luncheon

CHARLIE'S INVITATION FOR "LET'S HEAR IT FOR LOVE"

Ladies and Gentlemen, Friends, Family, and Children. You are hereby cordially invited to celebrate the gift of families with us at the Musical, "**Love Will Be Our Home**" on Sunday, April 9th, at 3:00 pm right here at Redeemer Lutheran Church. Be sure to bring your family, friends, and neighbors.

"PRAYER FOR FAMILIES" ALTERNATE SCRIPT

(FOR INTERLUDE-AFTER A FEW MEASURES-
SAY SLOWLY AND WITH FEELING)

Our God and Father, You are so gracious and good to us. Thank you for your steadfast love that never fails us. Thank you for the precious blood of Jesus that covers our sins. Thank you for your mercies that are new every morning. We thank you Lord for placing us into families--for Mothers and Fathers, Grandparents, Sisters and Brothers, and children. Lord you are the only one that can give us the power to love like you love--power to laugh and hope and find joy with each other in the good times. Only you can keep us holding on and believing through the hard times. Please keep us faithful when we waiver. Keep us strong when we get tired. Most of all, keep us turning back to you for all that we need. Touch our lives Oh Lord Our God and save our families. We humbly pray, heal our homes and our hearts today. Oh Thank you Lord for the gift of families. We worship you and we call you our Father, and we pray to you in the precious name of Jesus Christ.
Amen

Mission Project

In the past we have used 10% of our offering to support a Mission Project. This is voted upon by the group. The following is a partial listing of some projects that the group could support. We are open to further suggestions. Please vote and return after dress rehearsal.

Each person of the entire cast and crew may vote. This will be announced on Sunday before the offering is received.

NAME _____

- _____ **BRAZIL 2000 (BUILD A CHURCH IN BRAZIL)**
- _____ **VITAE SOCIETY (PRO-LIFE AGENCY)**
- _____ **CAPTIVE FREE (ANDY BECKER OR GROUP AT LARGE)**
- _____ **HEITS POINT (LUTHERAN CAMP)**
- _____ **VICTORY MISSION (SPRINGFIELD NEEDY)**
- _____ **CROSSLINES (SPRINGFIELD FOOD PANTRY)**
- _____ **OTHER**
- _____ **OTHER**
- _____ **OTHER**
- _____ **OTHER**

The Program

LOVE WILL BE OUR HOME

Written by Claire Cloninger

Arranged by Gary Rhodes

Redeemer Lutheran Church

Sunday, April 9, 2000

3:00 p.m.

Welcome Pastor Becker
Offering

What Is A Family? – Chorus

Scene 1 The Front Porch of George and Miriam Anderson
135 Clark Court, Springfield, Missouri

What Is A Family? (Reprise) – Chorus

Scene 2 Anderson's Front Porch,
Kate's Office in Washington D. C.,
Bryan's home in Dallas,
Robin's home in St. Louis

The House We Call Home – Chorus

Scene 3 Anderson's Front Porch,
Rachel's home in San Diego
When Amy Smiles – Rachel, Backup Chorus

Scene 4 Rachel's home in San Diego,
Robin's home in St. Louis
Watercolor Ponies – Gary, Robin, Backup Chorus

Scene 5 Anderson's Front Porch

Scene 6 Kate's Office in Washington D. C.,
Bryan's home in Dallas
Every Other Sautrday – Bryan, Neale, Beth, Backup Chorus

Scene 7 Bryan's home in Dallas,
Kate's Office in Wasington D. C.
Hold On – Kate, Backup Chorus
Prayer For Families – Chorus

Scene 8 Beth, Bryan

Scene 9 Charlie
Let's Hear It For Love – Chorus

Scene 10 40th Anniversary Celebration in Anderson's Yard
I Will Be Here – George, Chorus
Love Will Be Our Home – Chorus

Cast Call Let's Hear It For Love (Reprise)

Cast

George Anderson – Jim Appelquist
Miriam Anderson (Mimi) – Darlene Appelquist
Kate – (George and Miriam’s oldest daughter) – Carmen Dorman
Robin – (George and Miriam’s second daughter) – Diane Staudte
Gary – (Robin’s husband) – Sid Whiting
Rusty – (Robin and Gary’s oldest son) – Murray Moss
Sean – (Robin and Gary’s younger son) – Thomas Belden
Lauren – (Robin and Gary’s daughter) – Piper Dorman
Bryan – (George and Miriam’s son) – Josh Wanner
Beth – (Bryan’s wife) – Gail Whiting
Neale – (Bryan and Beth’s son) – Kyle Daniels
Rachel – (George and Miriam’s youngest daughter) – Stephanie Richter
Stan – (Rachel’s husband) – Tim Belden
Amy – (Rachel and Stan’s baby) – Andy Richter
Charlie (Mail Carrier) – Gary Beckman
Photographer at Wedding – Gary Moss
Pastor at Wedding – Pastor Becker
Willie – (Assistant in Kate’s office) – Zach Precise
Harry – (George and Miriam’s neighbor) – Ben Brown
Janet – (George and Miriam’s neighbor) – Lynette Suchman
Bill – (Janet’s husband) – Bob Suchman

Solos’ Backup Group

BASS	TENORS	ALTOS	SOPRANOS
Ben Brown	Tim Belden	Phyllis Beckman	Annie Belden
Gary Moss	Doyle Richter	Nadine Moss	Melinda Brown
Nick Moss	Sid Whiting	Stephanie Richter	Carmen Dorna
Bob Suchman			

CHORUS

<u>SOPRANOS</u>	<u>ALTOS</u>	<u>TENORS</u>	<u>BASSES</u>
Jennifer Baker	Darlene Appelquist	Jim Appelquist	Gary Beckman
Annie Belden	Alvina Becker	Paul Baker	Ben Brown
Melinda Brown	Phyllis Beckman	Wally Becker	Gary Moss
Kathy Daniels	Abby Moss	Tim Belden	Nick Moss
Carmen Dorman	Nadine Moss	Doyle Richter	Zach Precise
Kathy Precise	Stephanie Richter	Diane Staudte	Bob Suchman
Lynette Suchman	Kari Wanner	Sid Whiting	Josh Wanner
Gail Whiting			

CHILDREN

Erinn Beckman
Tori Belden
Audrey Belden
Thomas Belden

Claire Brown
Jenna Daniels
Kyle Daniels
Chelsea Dorman

Piper Dorman
Murray Moss

SPECIAL THANKS TO:

Practice Accompanist – Nancy Vieth
Prompter – Jane Stouder
Lights – Mark Daniels
 Jeff Dorman
 Dave Williams
Sound – Doyle Richter
 Michael Brown
 Justin Precise
 Mike Fisher
Balloons – Marion Beckman, Katie & Larry Schmidt
Set – Paul Baker
Program – Darlene & Jim Appelquist
Make-Up & Hair – Janice Richerson
Serving Refreshments – Larry & Katie Schmidt
Props – All the cast, Esther Brockman
Directors – Pastor Wally and Alvina Becker

Without a doubt, one of God’s greatest gifts to us is the gift of Family. It is within families that we grow in love, support and even learn of and experience God’s grace and forgiveness.

Truly within families some of life’s greatest joys and difficulties can be found.

Today’s family faces many unique challenges – financial, time constraints, broken relationships, and hurts of all kinds.

We are thankful to the Lord for His Words of hope, His unconditional Grace and His voice of encouragement.

It is with great joy that we present to you “Love Will Be Our Home” – a musical full of hope for today’s family.

---- Pastor Wally & Alvina Becker

Letter to Cast after the Performance

April 15, 2000

Dear Families,

Only a week has passed since the Musical, Love Will Be Our Home, and we hope you are still warmed in the after glow of its message and experience. We want to take this opportunity to thank you for participating. Each one of you made special memories for us and contributed to the whole production. For us the experience was rich with closeness, laughter, and joy and we truly are appreciative for your efforts, dedication, and great time commitment. We also want to thank you for the lovely floral arrangement (a home-very clever) and the generous gift certificate to Steak and Ale. We will really enjoy this! Want to come along?

We are enclosing a financial report of all monies collected and expended. Ben Brown and Gary Moss served to assist in counting the offering, tabulating, and expending funds. As you can see we were able to pay all of our bills--it always amazes us how wonderful God is in this way. We also were able to send our tithe to Heits Point, as the group selected and we were able to give an honorarium to Doyle Richter who spent countless hours and loaned us much equipment to make the sound work well. Thank you Doyle for using your talents in this unselfish way.

LWML of Redeemer has asked our group if we would be able and interested in singing a few (3-4 chorus numbers) songs at the **Mother-Daughter-Friend Dinner on the evening of Sunday, May 21, 6:00 pm**. We need to ask you of your interests here. We would use Books, hurray, and may need to have one rehearsal ahead of time to run through them. They have also invited us to eat with them and stay for the fellowship. Wanna' do it again? Let us know ASAP by telling us or calling our machine---890-9189. We need to get back with the ladies soon, so we appreciate a quick response.

One last item--most of you have returned your books, tapes, and surveys, but for those of you that need our last little nudge to do so, here it is. Please turn them in immediately so that we can tie up the loose ends.

Once again, thank you dear friends. The experience was rich and I'm sure we will always look at you all with new eyes of deeper friendship and tugs of family.

Let's Hear it For Love!

Pastor Wally and Alvina Becker

Financial Statement

LOVE WILL BE OUR HOME

April 9, 2000

Income and Expenses

INCOME:

Lenten Spaghetti dinner:	134.00
Offering	<u>595.81</u>
Total	729.81

EXPENSES:

Tithe (HEITS POINT)	67.00
Lenten dinner salad (Kathy)	6.00
Soda SLS (rehearsal dinner)	6.00
Programs (Copy Shoppe)	81.09
Attendance awards (Russel Stover)	33.12
Photo development (Walgreen)	11.45
Flowers (Albertsons)	10.62
Jello (Aldis)	1.21
Labels and binders (Walmart)	4.99
Binders (Walmart)	22.88
Binders (Walmart)	8.80
Copyright (Word Music)	24.00
Spotlight rental (ATC)	150.00
Helium and balloons (Party City)	22.75
Shipping of books (Jean Grady)	9.40
Return Shipping of books USPS	6.99
Music Membership (High Country)	100.00
Book Tape for repairs (IPA)	10.01
Doyle Richter (Sound equipment)	100.00
Publicity Postcards (Copy Shoppe)	<u>53.50</u>
TOTAL:	729.81

Musical Drama Evaluation Survey

Love Will Be Our Home--2000

Type of Involvement:	Cast member	Support Member	Leadership Role		
Please rate the following statements					
1	2	3	4	5	N/A
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree	Not Applicable

Because of our participation in this musical as a family:

1. The levels of love and support between our family members increased.
1 2 3 4 5 N/A
2. Our family members communicate in more positive ways.
1 2 3 4 5 N/A
3. Our children developed positive relationships with other Christian adults.
1 2 3 4 5 N/A
4. Our children experienced the care and support of other families.
1 2 3 4 5 N/A
5. Our children felt that they were valued and important.
1 2 3 4 5 N/A
6. Our children and youth were given useful roles and responsibilities.
1 2 3 4 5 N/A
7. We were given opportunities to serve others.
1 2 3 4 5 N/A
8. We feel safer and more secure in our family and congregation.
1 2 3 4 5 N/A
9. Our children saw their parents and other adults model positive, responsible behavior.
1 2 3 4 5 N/A
10. Our children were with other children who modeled responsible behavior.
1 2 3 4 5 N/A
11. Our children and youth were given encouragement and support.
1 2 3 4 5 N/A
12. We experienced a creative activity together.
1 2 3 4 5 N/A
13. We experienced a spiritual activity together.
1 2 3 4 5 N/A
14. We spent positive time at home working together.
1 2 3 4 5 N/A
15. We became more committed to the value of helping others.
1 2 3 4 5 N/A
16. We were encouraged in our convictions and were helped in expressing what we believe.
1 2 3 4 5 N/A
17. Family members were enabled to accept and take personal responsibility.
1 2 3 4 5 N/A
18. Family members developed skills in planning ahead and making choices.
1 2 3 4 5 N/A
19. Family members developed empathy, sensitivity, and friendship skills.
1 2 3 4 5 N/A
20. Our children developed skills in resisting negative peer pressure and avoiding dangerous situations.
1 2 3 4 5 N/A
21. Family members were encouraged to handle stressful situations in more positive ways.
1 2 3 4 5 N/A

22. Our children observed how to resolve conflict in a more peaceful way.

1 2 3 4 5 N/A

23. Family members grew in self-esteem.

1 2 3 4 5 N/A

24. Family members felt a sense of purpose.

1 2 3 4 5 N/A

25. Our children have a more optimistic view about their future.

1 2 3 4 5 N/A

26. Has this experience enriched your family? yes no
If answered yes, how?

27. What would you change to make this experience more "family friendly?"

28. Has this experience helped you and your family to grow in your faith? yes no
If answered yes, how?

29. Evaluate the following Leadership Characteristics and rate how valuable they are for persons in Musical Drama Leadership roles.

1	2	3
Not Valuable	Somewhat Valuable	Extremely Valuable

Influential (Creating Positive Change, Energetic, Resilient, Good Reputation, Flexible)

1	2	3
----------	----------	----------

Priority Minded (Prepared, Schedule Keeper, Organized, Self Disciplined, Self Controlled, Responsible)

1	2	3
----------	----------	----------

Possesses Integrity (Honest, Value Driven, Hungers for growth and personal faith development)

1	2	3
----------	----------	----------

Problem Solver (Absence of personal problems, Creative, Ability to see solutions and fix problems)

1	2	3
----------	----------	----------

Positive Attitude (Good Self Image, Sense of Humor)

1	2	3
----------	----------	----------

People Sensitive (Personal Warmth, People Skills, Intuitive)

1	2	3
----------	----------	----------

Vision Minded (Dreamer, Ministry Minded, Sees the big picture for the group and ministry)

1	2	3
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Please feel free to make comment on the impact of Leadership for your family experience.

30. Please share any interesting stories or anecdotes that happened to you or a family member as a result of your musical experience.

(Please feel free to use additional paper for further comments.)

Survey Results

Here are the forty assets¹ that Search Institute identifies as important in healthy families, and the responses of the participants to the twenty-five assets we included on the survey:

1. I feel loved and supported in my family.
Survey: “The levels of love and support between our family members increased.” All agree except four “Uncertain.”
2. I can go to my parents for advice and support. We talk with each other often about many different things, including serious issues.
Survey: “Our family members communicate in more positive ways.” All agree except six “Uncertain.”
3. I know at least three adults (besides my parents) I can go to for advice and support.
Survey: “Our children developed positive relationships with other Christian adults.” All agree.
4. My neighbors give me support and encouragement. They care about me.
Survey: “Our children experienced the care and support of other families.” All agree except one “Uncertain.”
5. My school is a caring, encouraging place to be.
6. My parents are actively involved in helping me succeed in school.
7. I feel valued and appreciated by adults in my community.
Survey: “Our children felt that they were valued and important.” All agree.
8. I’m given useful roles and meaningful things to do in my community.
Survey: “Our children and youth were given useful roles and responsibilities.” All agree except one “Uncertain.”
9. I do an hour or more of community service each week.
Survey: “We were given opportunities to serve others.” All agree.
10. I feel safe at home, at school, and in my neighborhood.
Survey: “We feel safer and more secure in our family and congregation.” All agree except three “Uncertain.”
11. My family has both clear rules and consequences for my behavior. They also monitor my whereabouts.
12. My school has clear rules and consequences for behavior.
13. My neighbors take responsibility for monitoring my behavior.
14. My parents and other adults in my life model positive, responsible behavior.
Survey: “Our children saw their parents and other adults model positive, responsible behavior.” All agree except one “Uncertain.”

¹ Roehlkepartain, *Building Assets*, 202.

15. My best friends model responsible behavior. They're a good influence on me.
Survey: "Our children were with other children who modeled responsible behavior." All agree.
16. My parents and teachers encourage me to do well.
Survey: "Our children and youth were given encouragement and support."
All agree except one "Uncertain."
17. I spend three or more hours each week in lessons or practice in music, theater, or other arts.
Survey: "We experienced a creative activity together."
All agree except one "Uncertain."
18. I spend three or more hours each week in school or community sports, clubs, or organizations.
19. I spend one or more hours each week in religious services or spiritual activities.
Survey: "We experienced a spiritual activity together."
All agree except one "Uncertain."
20. I go out with friends with nothing special to do two or fewer nights each week.
Survey: "We spent positive time at home working together."
All agree except four "Uncertain" and two "Disagreed."
21. I want to do well in school.
22. I like to learn new things.
23. I do an hour or more of homework each school day.
24. I care about my school.
25. I spend three or more hours each week reading for pleasure.
26. I believe that it's really important to help other people.
Survey: "We became more committed to the value of helping others."
All agree except five "Uncertain" and two "Disagree."
27. I want to help promote equality and reduce world poverty and hunger.
28. I act on my convictions and stand up for my beliefs.
Survey: "We were encouraged in our convictions and were helped in expressing what we believe." All agree except five "Uncertain."
29. I tell the truth—even when it's not easy.
30. I take personal responsibility for my actions and decisions.
Survey: "Family members were enabled to accept and take personal responsibility." All agree except three "Uncertain."
31. I believe that it's important for me not to be sexually active or to use alcohol or other drugs.
32. I'm good at planning ahead and making decisions.
Survey: "Family members developed skills in planning ahead and making choices." All agree except seven "Uncertain."
33. I'm good at making and keeping friends.
Survey: "Family members developed empathy, sensitivity, and friendship skills." All agree except five "Uncertain."

34. I know and feel comfortable around people of different cultural, racial, and/or ethnic backgrounds.
35. I resist negative peer pressure and avoid dangerous situations.
Survey: "Our children developed skills in resisting negative peer pressure and avoiding dangerous situations." All agree except two "Uncertain."
36. I try to resolve conflicts nonviolently.
Survey: "Our children observed how to resolve conflict in a more peaceful way. All agree except one "Uncertain."
37. I feel that I have control over many things that happen to me.
Survey: "Family members were encouraged to handle stressful situations in more positive ways." All agree except seven "Uncertain."
38. I feel good about myself.
Survey: "Family members grew in self-esteem."
All agree except four "Uncertain" and one "Disagree."
39. I believe that my life has a purpose.
Survey: "Family members felt a sense of purpose."
All agree except four "Uncertain" and one "Disagree."
40. I feel positive about my future.
Survey: "Our children have a more optimistic view about their future."
All agree except two "Uncertain."

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