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CONCORDIA SEMINARY
SAINT LOUIS, MISSOURI

REACHING THE COMMUNITY THROUGH CHILDCARE: A PLAN TO USE EARLY
CHILDHOOD CENTERS TO ASSIMILATE MEMBERS INTO RESURRECTION
LUTHERAN CHURCH IN SIOUX FALLS, SOUTH DAKOTA

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

BY
REV. CHRISTOPHER D. ASCHER

SAINT LOUIS, MISSOURI
01 MARCH 2014

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost I give all glory and praise to God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit! It is by God's gifts that I have been given the health, strength, and interest to study and complete this project. It is by God's grace through Jesus Christ and forgiveness given to me through His death and resurrection that I am a child of God and a part of His family forever. Finally, it is through the work of the Spirit that I can cling to that hope and work to serve Him through everything that I think say, and do.

Next, I dedicate this to the love of my life, Laurie. This year marks fifteen wonderful years of marriage! During that time you've proofed more papers, corrected more grammar and punctuation that any wife should have to do. You've put up with extended absences, class deadlines and reading assignments with tremendous grace and minimal grumbling. Thank you for your patience, support, and dedication. I also dedicate this to my children: Elizabeth, Daniel, Luke and Rebecca. You also sacrificed time away from dad. Thank you for your patience when dad couldn't always play outside with you in the yard.

Finally, I dedicate this to the members of Resurrection Lutheran Church in Sioux Falls. You called a young pastor who didn't know what he is doing. I still don't, but we are learning together. Thank you for sparing the time and the resources to help me grow along with you! A special thank you to Donna Wilson, whose heart is that of a servant. You may have gotten more than you bargained for when you volunteered to be my assistant. Words cannot express how grateful I am for the hours upon hours you have spent assisting me, proofing and correcting me, and transcribing all of these interviews.

I could not have done any of this without you!

ABSTRACT

Ascher, Christopher D. "Reaching the Community Through Childcare: A Plan to use Early Childhood Centers To Assimilate Members into Resurrection Lutheran Church, Sioux Falls, South Dakota." DMin Major Applied Project, Concordia Seminary—St. Louis, [2014]. [207] pp.

Churches have for some time operated early childhood programs. Often times the stated reason is to reach out to those in their community, and the unstated reason is to bring members and growth into their congregations. This project is a descriptive study that surveyed congregations operating an early childhood center. Follow up interviews were then conducted with church staff whose congregations saw some growth coming through their early childhood center in order to determine some best practices that could inform an outreach plan at Resurrection Lutheran Church in Sioux Falls, SD. While the project and literature review were intended for Resurrection Lutheran Church in Sioux Falls, SD, the research indicates that many congregations operating early childhood centers are struggling to connect with the families in the center. The findings may provide insights as well as challenges for congregations who operate early childhood centers.

CHAPTER ONE

THE PROJECT INTRODUCED

⁶ Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.

Proverbs 22:6

A. The Problem Identified

Resurrection Lutheran Church was a stalled mission congregation when I arrived in November of 2005. The congregation had been planted in 1990 to reach out to the growing population on the west side of Sioux Falls. The congregation had grown steadily at first causing the congregation to build just two years after it began worshipping. The membership peaked in 2000, and a series of circumstances led to a declining membership and slumping attendance numbers. The chief problem was a series of building campaigns that were unable to provide space for the growing congregation. Eventually, apathy and frustration set in and people slowly found reasons to worship elsewhere. When the only pastor the congregation had known left in January of 2005, it only increased the problem. Another forty-five regularly attending members stopped attending at Resurrection and consequently stopped giving. This created a financial crisis to go along with the other problems.

I arrived after almost two and a half years as the Assistant Pastor at Mt. Calvary Lutheran Church in Huron, SD full of energy and enthusiasm but unaware of the greater problems the congregation was facing. As the new pastor, my primary goal, beyond worship and Bible study, was simply to get to know my congregation. I therefore entered into a very aggressive visitation schedule. Over the next six months, I visited 85% of the congregation. During those visits, two themes developed. First, the building was inadequate to meet the demands of the congregation and actually hindered growth. Second, the congregation desired

a point of contact with the community. Somehow the congregation had lost its mission focus and simply existed to support itself and those who were already there, and yet to its credit the church also realized that the city was literally growing around them.

After several more months of visits, I began to notice these same trends for myself. Although the worship space was large enough to accommodate more people, the educational facilities, the parking lot, and just about every other area of space created a feeling of being cramped. These same concerns were also identified by those looking for a church home. Essentially, there were two primary rooms, a 5,000 square foot sanctuary and a 2,000 square foot fellowship hall that housed the Sunday school. These were connected by a vestibule that had only one door in and out of each room. While people enjoyed the service and the welcoming nature of the people, the facilities simply projected a negative image on the entire congregation.

After several consultations with the President of the South Dakota District, I approached the church council whether the congregation was open to the idea of an early childhood center (ECC). This was a sensitive proposal for a congregation that had already experienced multiple failed building plans and was just starting to rebound from financial difficulties. Attendance and giving had been increasing, but it was obvious that things were beginning to plateau again because of the facilities.

My personal interest in early childhood education goes back to my college years at the University of Kansas. After several years of struggling to find my major, I finally set my heart on being a teacher. The program at the University of Kansas in elementary education was extremely competitive so you needed experience and references in order to get admitted. In order to gain field experience with kids, I applied in the fall of 1996 to the early childhood

center at Immanuel Lutheran Church in Lawrence, Kansas. I worked there for the next three years experiencing many of the joys and frustrations of working with preschoolers. Upon graduation, I concluded that the Lord was leading me to pursue working in the ministry and I entered training at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis.

During my vicarage in Fredericksburg, VA, I was introduced to a congregation in Ashburn, VA that had been planted by opening an early childhood center. I learned that this congregation was part of a larger network to plant congregations with childcare called Open Arms. As I understood it, the congregation first built an early childhood center for outreach and then also used the space as a ministry hub. Because of my background in elementary education and my experience working at a church-run daycare in Lawrence, KS, I had filed away this concept in the back of my head as a possibility for the future.

Now that I was at Resurrection, I wondered if such a concept could work in our community with a congregation that had already been somewhat established. We had an ample sanctuary, what we needed was expanded classroom space and a mission and ministry to reach our community. This could meet some of the needs that I kept hearing from members in the congregation. It would address the facilities because we would have to build to accommodate such a ministry. It would also give the congregation a presence and a contact with the outside community.

The church council was open to the idea, and a feasibility committee was formed. The feasibility committee spent the next three months exploring what kind of need there might be in our community. We talked with other churches locally that were operating similar early childhood centers. We contacted the school district and other city planners to determine the projected growth in our neighborhood and surrounding area. All of the indications were

positive to the idea of Resurrection Lutheran Church expanding its ministry into early childhood education. Resurrection Lutheran Church, in partnership with the South Dakota District, then sent me to an Open Arms conference in the spring of 2007 to get more information about how Open Arms worked. By June, the congregation approved a plan to join the Open Arms Institute and to begin a series of studies that would determine whether or not we could support an Open Arms Center at our location. Our needs were seen as consistent with the stated purposes of the Open Arms Institute, which has on its website: “Our goal is to encourage and enable quality, Christian childcare ministry in connection with new church planting and for expanded Gospel outreach for existing congregations. A well-founded childcare ministry nurtures not only the children but also the parents, and brings them daily to the open arms of the Church.”¹

From January 2008-March of 2010 Resurrection Lutheran Church with the guidance of the Open Arms Institute established a business plan, secured funding, and both designed and built a facility that could connect to our current building and serve both the needs of a state of the art early childhood center as well as a growing congregation. The expanded building was dedicated in March of 2010 and Open Arms began serving children shortly after. During this period of time, the congregation has seen dramatic growth. Nearly one third of our current members have come during this period of time, many of them families with small children. Interestingly, the growth the congregation is experiencing is not directly coming from the Open Arms Center. In fact, very few families have been connected with Open Arms before coming to worship. While this growth is certainly welcome, Resurrection Lutheran Church still desires to be faithful to the Great Commission and to use the Open Arms Center as an avenue to connect people to Christ. Thus, Resurrection Lutheran Church

¹ <http://openarmsinstitute.com/> (accessed June 23, 2013).

is seeking to identify current outreach and evangelism methods that can help the congregation create ongoing relationships with the families they are serving and ultimately bring them to a deepening relationship with Christ and with the congregation through congregational membership.

While I realize that early childhood centers can have a dramatic impact upon their community and be faithful to the Great Commission while doing so, there is an aspect where congregations do expect to see some growth by operating an ECC. This study is intended to understand what other congregations are doing to connect with families in their early childhood centers and then use these ideas as befits our local situation.

The presence of early childhood centers in congregations is not new. Congregations have been operating preschools for quite some time now. Open Arms is representative of a larger movement of congregations seeking to intentionally connect with their community through use of an early childhood center. Although there is a belief that early childhood educational centers can be used as an effective form of outreach, some churches are using them well for outreach to the community while some are not using them at all. This lack of intentional outreach occurs even within the network of congregations affiliated with the Open Arms Institute. Unfortunately, simply having an early childhood educational center does not mean a congregation is making the best use of the gifts that God is giving that congregation to make genuine connections with the families who entrust their children to the care of the early childhood center. Moreover, even though the Open Arms Institute provides significant help in the startup of an early childhood center, the information that they provide about how to connect families using the early childhood center to Christ is minimal and largely anecdotal at this point. This is not their fault. While there have been and continue to be many

books written on education, outreach, evangelism, and connecting with the community, it is a constantly changing field and very little has been written in relation to early childhood centers. Much of the research is extremely limited on what methods are most effective in reaching those who are either unchurched or unconnected to a church and very little of that research focuses on the role of early childhood centers. Even those congregations that are successfully using an early childhood center for outreach would benefit from this research to provide them with additional ideas and data that could possibly be applied to their specific context.

B. The Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project is to establish an outreach plan resulting from research using a descriptive survey that will enhance Resurrection Lutheran Church's ability to assimilate the families of children in the Open Arms Childcare Center into active congregational membership. Through the use of descriptive survey, this project will provide data and information about the use of childcare programs for outreach/evangelistic purposes. Key to this particular study is identifying which methods are seeing the greatest effectiveness in connecting people to the congregation in other locations and settings, and then putting together the more successful approaches into a comprehensive evangelism outreach plan that Resurrection Lutheran Church can then put into place. This outreach plan could then serve as a basis for a mission strategy for the Open Arms Institute or any other congregation or entity that might wish to connect people with Christ through early childhood education.

This study should give Resurrection Lutheran Church a basis on which to proceed with an intentional strategy to connect the children and their families who have been

entrusted to our care with the love of Jesus Christ. I understand that the Holy Spirit is the one who creates and sustains faith through Word and Sacrament, but I also believe that the Holy Spirit calls us as a church to faithfully carry out the Great Commission in Matthew 28 by being intentional about how we are to go about that process. Ideally, such a mission focused strategy with Open Arms will also create a culture where Resurrection Lutheran Church is constantly looking for more and better ways to create relationships and build bridges between themselves and the community using all of the resources God has given them.

C. Intended Outcomes of the Project

The intended outcomes of this project are:

- To determine which forms of outreach/evangelism are helpful in connecting families from early childhood centers with active membership in the congregation operating the childhood center.

- To use the data obtained to establish an outreach/evangelism plan for Resurrection/Open Arms to implement as part of their mission and ministry to the community to connect families to Christ through early childhood ministry.

- To provide information and assistance to other congregations and entities that are interested in using childcare facilities for outreach and assimilation.

- To encourage the Resurrection Lutheran church community to begin to develop a mission-focused identity that will look for other methods of outreach/evangelism to its community.

Ideally, the effects of this project will enhance the congregation's view of outreach and help them to implement a plan in carrying it out. The congregation will both be more intentional in sharing the love of Jesus with a world and a community that need to hear it.

D. The Process of the Project

This major applied project (MAP) surveyed all of the LC-MS congregations in the South Dakota District as well as the Minnesota South District that currently operate an Early Childhood Center (ECC). These Districts were chosen because of their geographical proximity to Sioux Falls.

On the survey, the statistical data simply asks respondents to identify the number of baptized members in the congregation as well as the number of children enrolled in the ECC as of Nov. 1, 2013. The purpose of this information is primarily to get a baseline of the size of both the church and ECC.

The growth data asks the respondents to indicate how many children and adults have: 1) worshiped at least four times in the past year whose primary contact was with the ECC; 2) been baptized in the past year whose primary contact was with the ECC; or 3) formally become recognized as members of the congregation whose primary contact was with the ECC. In order to begin to understand the dynamics of the congregation the survey also asks how many baptisms and new members were received in the last year overall. The growth data will be primarily used to determine what congregations are seeing the most growth.

There were also two more sections of additional subjective data. The first section asked the respondent to evaluate the efforts of the congregation to connect with its community. The second section asked the respondent a series of questions to identify attempts that they have made to build connections with their community that may have been more or less successful. The purpose of this data was to provide some information that can be used in the subsequent interviews.

The growth data requested helped identify congregations that were making connections with the community through the early childhood centers as seen through worship attendance, baptisms, and membership. Based upon the responses to the data, congregations were then identified. Seven churches operating early childhood centers were then chosen for a follow-up interview by personal visit when possible. Responses to the subjective data then identified a list of follow up questions that were used in the interviews. The information obtained from the follow-up interviews was then used to create an outreach plan to connect families using Open Arms with Resurrection Lutheran Church.

E. Presuppositions

This project deals with how to more intentionally use an early childhood center for outreach and evangelism. Thus, there are several presuppositions that will not be discussed in the parameters of this project.

- 1) The primary presupposition is that operating an early childhood center can be an effective context for the practice of outreach and evangelism by the congregation.

2) I will also be presuming that the need for early childhood education (either preschool or daycare) is a given expectation in our society because of the changing nature of the American family.

CHAPTER TWO THE BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION

Introduction

Every week, I have an opportunity to lead chapel for the children in our Open Arms Early Childhood Center. We gather on the floor in the front of the sanctuary so that the children have the opportunity to get familiar with being in a worship setting. In addition, I have at my disposal all of the regular teaching aids of a worshipping congregation. I can point to the baptismal font when talking about baptism. I can use the color changes of the liturgical seasons to teach about the church year. I can use the pictures on the various banners to help make my points. One of my greatest teaching tools, however, is the large backdrop behind the altar. On a piece of wood flooring that spans twenty feet wide and towers forty feet in the air is an image of Jesus ascending into heaven that has been carved with a router. The image dominates the sanctuary and immediately becomes the focal point upon entering the room. While sitting in chapel time for the first time, a four-year old girl named Charlie looked up and said, "Who's that... and why is he up there?" Not only had this little girl never heard about Jesus, but she had never been in a church before. That day we had a discussion about Jesus' life, death, and resurrection in the best way that I can explain it to preschoolers, and I continued to build on that discussion for the next two years that Charlie was at Open Arms. This conversation is one of many that occur every day in Christian early childhood centers around the country, and it shows how important it is to be intentional about our mission and ministry through them.

In order to have an understanding about how Christian early childhood centers can be more than simply a business operating on church property but actually enhance the congregation's mission and witness in the community, it is important to identify the Biblical

motivations behind operating this kind of ministry in the first place. Although far from exhaustive, the following paper looks at some of the background issues that are at play with regard to ministering to families in early childhood centers. This paper will look at three primary areas:

- 1) The first section will take a look at the term discipleship as used in the Great Commission of Matthew 28. The section will ask “What does the term discipleship mean and what instructions does it give us about passing the faith on to future generations?”
- 2) The next section takes the opportunity to look at the calling of parents to pass on the faith to their children. This section will look at what it means to be created in God’s image with regards to the responsibility of parenting as well as God’s Word in Deuteronomy regarding this special calling that parents have to shape the faith experiences of their children in both formal and informal ways.
- 3) Finally, in a society where many cultural factors have converged to reduce both parents’ willingness and their ability to pass on the faith, we must ask, “How is the church to respond? What is the Christian church’s responsibility in passing on the faith to the next generation?” To help answer this question, the paper looks at Paul’s words to Timothy in 2 Timothy chapter 3.

Although these three areas do not exhaust all of the Biblical teachings about discipleship, the vocation of parenting, and the responsibility of the church, they do shed some light on the unique and wonderful opportunity that early childhood centers can and should play in the mission and ministry of the Church. It is my contention that Christian early childhood centers have a distinctive opportunity from which to

make disciples by serving as one of a local congregation's ways to serve and equip parents to be the primary teachers of faith.

Section 1: A look at discipleship in the Great Commission

A brother pastor once shared a story about a special 5-year old boy named Nicholas: Nicholas was “all boy”. He was active and energetic all of the time and especially when he was supposed to be quiet and stand still. Nicholas was the kid that was constantly being singled out by his preschool teacher because of his behavior. Even while they were doing devotions every morning during preschool, it seemed that Nicholas just couldn’t sit still. One day Nicholas’ father approached the pastor. “Pastor, we are really happy here. We are really glad you opened this preschool. Nicholas is learning more here than he has anywhere else, and we can really see the Lord at work in his life and in our lives. We even like that you begin each devotion by making the sign of the cross and saying, ‘In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.’ But I have a favor to ask of you... could you please let him know that we don’t have to start off everything in that way? I mean, we can’t go anywhere at all or do anything without him first making the sign of the cross. Everything begins with, ‘In the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.’ And I mean EVERYTHING!” The pastor smiled and thought to himself, “What is wrong with starting everything that way? Isn’t that what we should all be doing?”

Now, in once sense the father is right, you can’t begin everything by stopping and making the sign of the cross and saying, “In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.” Yet on the other hand, the pastor was also quite right, this father was missing out on the opportunity to teach his own son about baptism and what that means. Our baptismal identity reminds people of who they are and more importantly that they are children of God. While his son’s understanding created some difficulty when they went to do something, the father could have taken the time to teach the faith to his child through these behaviors.

Whether we realize it or not, this process of teaching the faith to our children is called discipleship, and it is exactly what Jesus commands us to do in Matthew 28. Matthew tells us of a time when after his resurrection Jesus went up on a mountain with his disciples and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit; teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:18-20). Those words, which have become affectionately known as the Great Commission, have largely become the unofficial mission statement of the Christian Church.

Indeed, Win Arn argues that the Great Commission reflects the singular direction that Jesus’ pre-Ascension commissions gave to his disciples.

This commission to his followers, repeated on several occasions, reflects God’s eternal purpose that all people everywhere have the opportunity to become disciples of Jesus Christ. It was this command of God through Jesus Christ that exerted singular direction in the early church. When Christ gave the church his final directive, there was no question, but that this command was to be given top priority.²

Certainly, the Great Commission was given a high priority by the early church as the disciples gave their lives in service to spreading the message of Christ’s death and resurrection to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8).

In order to understand what Jesus is saying in the Great Commission one has to wrestle with what it means to make disciples. Lenski states that:

The heart of the commission is in the one word μαθητεύσατε. This imperative, of course, means ‘to turn into disciples,’ and its aorist form conveys the thought that this is actually to be done. The verb itself does not indicate *how* disciples are to be made, it designates only an activity that will result in disciples. It connotes results not methods and ways. The translation ‘teach’ is,

² Win Arn and Charles Arn, *The Master’s Plan for Making Disciples: Every Christian an Effective Witness* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 32.

therefore, unfortunate and even misleading to those who are not able to examine the original.³

Lenski's words underscore the importance of the word μαθητεύσατε. This command to make disciples provides the foundation of the Great Commission. Robert Pazmino puts it this way, "In the New Testament, the Old Testament patterns of education persist, but the followers of Jesus are provided with a new agenda for their educational efforts. This agenda is most explicit in Matthew 28:16-20. The purpose of the disciples' ministry is to enable other persons to become obedient disciples of Jesus Christ."⁴ What is the church about? It is about making disciples. That is what disciples do. As they learn the faith for themselves, they make more disciples by sharing the faith with others.

Not only does Jesus command his disciples to make disciples, but he also describes how they should go about doing what he has commanded them. Lenski states:

Two participles of means then state *how* all nations are to be made into disciples: by baptizing them and by teaching them. The order in which these two participles are used is not accidental. Jesus sees beyond the first missionary stage of the gospel work when adults must be taught before baptism can be administered to them; he sees his church being established among the nations and children thus entering it in infancy and this by means of baptism.⁵

Thus, disciples of Jesus are to make more disciples of Jesus by baptizing them and teaching them as the Great Commission commands. The words *baptize* and *teach* are not used indiscriminately but purposefully and in a specific order. Jesus is specifying the very procedure by which disciples are made.

³ R.C.H. Lenski, *Commentary on the New Testament: Matthew Commentary* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2001), 1172.

⁴ Robert W. Pazmino, *Foundational Issues in Christian Education: An Introduction in Evangelical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 35.

⁵ R.C.H. Lenski, *Commentary on the New Testament: Matthew Commentary* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2001), 1173.

While the worldwide *goal* of the Great Commission is equivalent to Luke 24:7 and Acts 1:8, the sequential *procedure* is unique to the Matthean statement: “going” for the purpose of evangelism and making disciples (Matt. 28:19); baptizing those who respond to the gospel (v 19); and teaching those new disciples what Christ has commanded (v 20) which will only be fulfilled at the time of the Parousia (Matt. 24:14).⁶

Pazmino backs this up by saying:

The purpose of making disciples is totally dependent on sharing the content of Jesus’ own teachings, those truths revealed by God with direct implications for life. The challenge posted for current efforts in Christian education is this question: are obedient disciples of Jesus Christ being nurtured and taught all that Jesus taught? If so, there is a basis for affirmation and continued reliance on God’s gracious undertaking. Of note, there is a challenge for careful evaluation and renewed efforts⁷.

Perhaps the focus of evangelism and teaching all that Jesus taught has slipped from the church at various times throughout history, if so, then now is an even more crucial time for “careful evaluation and renewed efforts”.

Indeed, this renewed emphasis on evangelism and making disciples is what Win and Charles Arn pick up on in their book, *The Master’s Plan for Making Disciples*. In this book, the Arns set up a strategy for evangelism and witness based upon Christ’s Great Commission in Matthew 28. “The word of Christ in Matthew 28:19-20 communicates vividly Christ’s understanding of a disciple. He saw a disciple as one who becomes a follower, who is taught, who is nurtured in the faith, who in turn goes out to make disciples, who are then taught and nurtured in the faith, who then in turn go out.”⁸ Again they write, “Being a disciple in the

⁶ *Anchor Bible Dictionary Volume II* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1091.

⁷ Robert W. Pazmino, *Foundational Issues in Christian Education: An Introduction in Evangelical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 35.

⁸ Win Arn and Charles Arn, *The Master’s Plan for Making Disciples: Every Christian an Effective Witness* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 24.

early church meant a firsthand involvement in the mission of Christ – making disciples.”⁹ Thus, a disciple is perpetually making other disciples as he shares what he has been taught and subsequently has come to believe.

The Book of Acts demonstrates well how the Church grew as the Holy Spirit worked through the testimony of these eyewitnesses. These disciples had taken to heart Jesus’ instruction to make disciples. This can be plainly seen in the eleven disciples to whom Jesus was speaking when he gave the Great Commission. These were not educated men, at least not all of them, but they were taught at the feet of Jesus both before his crucifixion and again between his resurrection and ascension into heaven. On Pentecost though, these disciples began to speak with the help of the Holy Spirit, and as they did they created more disciples who, in turn, did the same thing. They shared what they had been taught and had come to believe. Indeed, this is how the church grew. We see in Acts 2:38-39 the results of Peter’s sermon on Pentecost where many of the hearers are convicted of their sin for killing Jesus, God’s promised Christ, and they ask what they should do.

And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself" (Acts 2:38-39).

The result of the Christian witness is baptism. In the waters of baptism, disciples are given the gift of the Holy Spirit who in turn creates and strengthens faith in them. Thus, baptism is crucial to establishing faith in an individual.

Discipleship does not however stop at baptism. Peter follows Jesus’ command to make disciples by baptizing and teaching. Only a few verses later Acts 2 says:

⁹ Win Arn and Charles Arn, *The Master’s Plan for Making Disciples: Every Christian an Effective Witness* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 25.

⁴¹ So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. ⁴² And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. ⁴³ And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. ⁴⁴ And all who believed were together and had all things in common. ⁴⁵ And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. ⁴⁶ And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved (Acts 2:41-47).

After being convicted of their sin, the process was followed. First, they were baptized. Then, they “devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.” In other words, they were taught what it meant to be a disciple. They were educated and trained in the Christian faith by Peter and the other disciples by meeting together and studying the scriptures. This was not a onetime process. We see this pattern repeated in Acts as disciples grew in faith, they shared that faith with others. “And more than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women, so that they even carried out the sick into the streets and laid them on cots and mats, that as Peter came by at least his shadow might fall on some of them” (Acts 5:14-15). “And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith” (Acts 6:7).

The report of this came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. When he came and saw the grace of God, he was glad, and he exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose, for he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord (Acts 11:22-24).

While the work of the apostles was often accompanied by the spectacular signs and wonders that accompanied their teaching, the emphasis was always on the proclamation of the Gospel rather than on the gifts. Acts chapter 8 gives a wonderful example of this by contrasting two

early disciples: Simon the sorcerer and the Ethiopian eunuch. Attracted by the signs and wonders, Simon appears to hear Philip's words and convert. However, he later attempts to purchase this same power of the Holy Spirit that he too may wield it and is sternly rebuked by Peter in the process. In contrast, Philip is led to the Ethiopian eunuch, but there is no mention of signs and wonders. Instead, Philip simply explains a passage from Isaiah as it relates to Jesus as the Messiah. While signs and wonders were important in that day and age, they were worthless without proclamation of Jesus as the Christ. As Arn again puts it, "Inherent in the definition of a disciple was the idea that one shared the Good News with others."¹⁰

While there is an inherently evangelistic component to the Great Commission, the word disciple should not be confused for the word apostle. A disciple emphasizes the learning and following aspect. A disciple is a learner, who then tells others what they have learned. An apostle emphasizes that the person was sent. Indeed, Robert Scudieri describes this understanding of the word when talking about ourselves as part of the Apostolic Church:

When we call the church apostolic, we are talking about more than just our pedigree; we are declaring the church's missionary task. Of course apostolic means that the church continues to believe the *doctrine* of the first apostles. But it means something more. It means that the church continues to *do* what the apostles did, because the church has been sent by the same sender, (Mt. 24:14)¹¹

It is not that the apostolic sending is not part of the Great Commission, it most certainly is, but it is not the only part of the process that Jesus outlines. This is something that is sometimes forgotten by portions of the Church as they seek to emphasize the evangelistic

¹⁰ Win Arn and Charles Arn, *The Master's Plan for Making Disciples: Every Christian an Effective Witness* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 26.

¹¹ Robert J. Scudieri, *The Apostolic Church: One, Holy, Catholic and Missionary*. (Chino: R.C. Law & Co., Inc., 1997), 3.

message of the Great Commission. The Great Commission commands us to not only *baptize*, but also to *teach*. Baptizing and teaching are two sides of the same coin. Robert Webber does an excellent job reminding us of this in his book *Ancient-Future Evangelism* where he writes:

In the second injunction – make disciples, baptize and teach – the Hebraic sense of holistic continuousness is expressed. These are not three separate categories of spiritual formation but three aspects of the whole calling and mission of the disciples of Jesus. The word *disciple* is the true description of the follower of Jesus....

The Great Commission demonstrates that Jesus did not introduce various programs for evangelism, discipleship, and Christian formation. Instead, following in the tradition of Hebraic holism, Jesus taught that becoming a disciple is a process that takes place in a continuous way in the worship and community life of the church.¹²

Thus, the purpose of the Great Commission is not just to produce converts, but disciples.

This indicates not just a onetime experience but an ongoing relationship with Jesus Christ seen through worship among God’s people.

Certainly, this was the goal of the early church –to teach those who had been baptized what it meant to be children of God. This teaching came by living and interacting with other members of the family of God in worship and study, but then taking those beliefs out into the broader community. By and large, the church didn’t set out on an evangelistic crusade of knocking on doors and asking people if they knew Jesus. Instead, it was disciples doing what disciples do because of what God had done for them through Jesus Christ.

It is important to stress this prime motive of loving gratitude to God because it is not infrequently assumed that the direct command of Christ to evangelize was the main driving force behind the Christian mission. A great deal is made in some missionary writings of “the Great Commission” in Matthew 28:18-20. No doubt this was important... But in point of fact, it is quoted very little in the writings of the second century... However, whereas the precise terms of the Great Commission do not appear to have played a great part in sending the early Christians out in evangelism, the example of Christ and the sense of responsibility to him were very important. Mission, they saw, was grounded in

¹² Robert E. Webber, *Ancient-Future Evangelism*. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 22.

the very nature of a God who gave: it must be no less evident in those who claimed to have relationship with such a God.¹³

Thus the reason the first disciples went out wasn't just to increase their numbers, it was an outgrowth of what God had done for them by sending Jesus in the first place. This fits with the argument in the book that "...neither the strategy nor the tactics of the first Christians were particularly remarkable. What was remarkable was their conviction, their passion and their determination to act as Christ's embassy to a rebel world, whatever the consequences."¹⁴ This is the true mission of the Church, to make disciples by both baptizing and teaching. To do anything less emphasizes outward actions only and doesn't get to the heart of what the Great Commission is about: sharing the love of Jesus with those who have not heard so that they may believe it and then share it with others.

Unless there is a transformation of the contemporary church life so that once again the task of evangelism is something which is seen as incumbent on every baptized Christian, and is backed up by a quality of living which outshines the best that unbelief can muster, we are unlikely to make much headway through techniques of evangelism. People will not believe that Christians have a good news to share until they find that bishops and bakers, university professors and housewives, bus drivers and street corner preachers are all alike keen to pass it on, however different their methods may be. And they will continue to believe that the Church is an introverted society composed of respectable groups bent on its' own preservation until they see in church groupings and individual Christians the caring, the joy, the fellowship, the self-sacrifice and the openness which marked the early church at its best.¹⁵

For the Christian Church to truly function as Christ has called us to in the Great Commission means that we have to be serious about making disciples of all nations and all people in those nations. Although it is imperative that the Church be about reaching out to those outside of the Church, we cannot minimize teaching the faith in our own homes.

¹³ Michael Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 274.

¹⁴ Michael Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 23.

¹⁵ Michael Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 381.

The command that Jesus gives to the Eleven is not primarily “Go!” but “make disciples.” Jesus’ assumption, however, is that what he tells them to do will not happen unless they go to people. As we apply these works to ourselves, we certainly will want to include supporting mission work at home and abroad. At the same time, let us not overlook how this work begins at home in our families. The responsibility God gives to parents is to bring up their children in the fear of the Lord. We do this by bringing them to church to be baptized and by teaching them. If every household took this responsibility seriously, the inreach evangelistic work of the church would be largely done.¹⁶

¹⁶ G. J. Albrecht and M. J. Albrecht, *People’s Commentary Bible: Matthew* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1996), 442

Section 2: The parent's role as the primary teacher of the faith

Samantha's seventh grade year had been a trying one at best. Although she had attended every single confirmation class, she was rarely engaged and her grades seemed to prove it. Beyond confirmation, life was getting hard for Samantha as well. Her older brother who seemed to do everything well, had gone off to college, leaving her with her mother. Her mother; however, was around less due to a blossoming relationship that she had with a man in the community (whom she would later marry). Meanwhile, Samantha began dressing in all black and wearing thick dark makeup around her eyes to show just how hurting she was. Classmates had told me about previous episodes where she had experimented with cutting, but there were no telltale signs on her wrists that day. Instead, she labored slowly to re-take a test she needed to pass in order to be confirmed. She had already taken it twice, and despite my best efforts to provide her with all sorts of hints, it looked as if she would be taking it again.

I walked over to get a drink of water from the water fountain, and when I returned her mother had arrived to pick her up and take her home. When she found that Samantha was still working, she looked down at the paper and pointed to one of the questions: A memory verse from Psalm 23. She innocently said, "Come on, Sweetie, you know that one..." and proceeded to fill in the gaps for her daughter "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want." Amazed, the daughter looked up at her wide-eyed and said, "You know that?" The mother replied, "Yeah, I learned it for my confirmation. I love that verse." She then went on to help her daughter with the rest of the test, and together they earned a solid "B". What's more important was that this was a moment of enlightenment for her daughter. Her mother helped her retake another test that she'd failed a few weeks later. By the beginning of

Samantha's eighth grade year, the Sr. Pastor and I had seen enough to change the program to allow parents to take the tests with their children. It was a small step, and it didn't work with everyone, but for Samantha it was transformative. She went from a student who failed all the tests her seventh grade year to a student who never got below a 97%. Mom's increased interest in confirmation bled over to her schoolwork as her grades there also improved. More importantly, we began to watch how Samantha began to interact more and more with her classmates and slowly her fashion choices were changing as well. I took a call six months after she was confirmed to another congregation in the District and Samantha continued to write letters to me for years identifying that moment as a change in her relationship with her mother and in her relationship with God.

Such is the importance of a child's relationship with his or her parents. We live in a world where the definition of family has been changing for quite some time and continues shift today.

The traditional family is usually thought of as the "nuclear family," the sociological term for a household of a married heterosexual couple and their children. Some definitions of the traditional family include the additional stipulations that (1) this is the first marriage for both spouses, (2) there are no children of either spouse from other unions, (3) the children are the biological descendants of both spouses (not adopted or in foster care), and/or (4) the wife is not employed outside of the home. ...

Regardless of how one feels about the myth or reality or value of traditional families, no one at the beginning of the third millennium A.D. can fool themselves into believing that the traditional family is the dominant family structure and all others are exceptions. Even if blended families (couples in second and later marriages with children from previous unions) are included, in the United States married couples with dependent children account for only 27 percent of families. Married couples without children are more prevalent than any other kind of household (30 percent). Many of these are couples whose children have grown up and left home. The remaining family

households consist primarily of cohabitating couples and unmarried women and their children¹⁷.

Despite the changing nature of families, parents are still uniquely situated in their child's life to impact and shape them. Studies show that from the moment of conception, much of what the mother does, from the foods she eats, to the exercise she gets, to the sounds she makes, have an impact on the child. This crucial connection continues when the child is born as the mother especially is attuned to the child's cries to differentiate between tears of pain, tears of hunger, and tears when a diaper needs to be changed. Even in those earliest moments, children study their parents to determine how and when to smile, how to walk, and even how they talk.

Children learn through observing and imitating the behavior of adults and other children. They imitate the behaviors for which there is reinforcement or benefit. This understanding of acceptable and appreciated behaviors leads to the adoption of certain behaviors. Therefore, the examples and modeling provided by parents and caring adults are of vital importance. When social role modeling is not present within the family, children find other role models to fill that vacuum. That vacuum can be filled by many other influences, such as peers, television characters, and others¹⁸.

Although some of these behaviors are intentionally reinforced by parents, the vast majority of them happen simply by living with and interacting with one another. Thus, a son may begin to walk and talk and dress like his dad simply because his father has modeled this behavior for him. In the same way, a daughter may pick up the mannerisms and characteristics of her mother because they have been modeled for her. This is not a mere coincidence; it is God's plan and desire for families.

When God created the first man and woman as recorded in Genesis 1 it says:

¹⁷ Diana R. Garland, *Family Ministry: A Comprehensive Guide* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1999), 23.

¹⁸ Shirley K. Morgenthaler, *Exploring Children's Spiritual Formation: Foundational Issues* (River Forest: Pillars Press, 1999), 52.

²⁶ Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’ ²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. ²⁸ And God blessed them. And God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth (Genesis 1:26-28).

All of mankind was created in God’s image. This was more than just his physical image since God is spirit, but God had passed his likeness on to them. John Jeske writes:

In trying to understand the concept of the image of God, it may be helpful to describe the effect the divine image had on the personality of Adam and Eve - on their intellect, emotions, and will. Unlike the mental dullness and ignorance we bring with us into the world, Adam and Eve understood perfectly with their *intellect* what God wanted them to know. While they possessed the image of God their *emotions* were also in tune with God’s; they found their greatest happiness in God. And unlike the rebellious will each of us brought into the world, their *will* was in complete harmony with God; what he wanted was what they wanted. Every impulse and desire of theirs was in tune with God’s good will. Created in the image of God, they were human replicas of what God is like.¹⁹

When writing about a new image in Genesis 5, Jeske also indicates, “Moses reaffirms that when Adam and Eve were created they bore the image of their Creator. Their intellect and emotions and will were in perfect harmony with God, and they enjoyed perfect fellowship with him.”²⁰

In creation, God the Father passes a piece of his perfection on to his first children Adam and Eve, and we get a sense of how family works. Not only was God the Father perfect, but He modeled that perfection in how he relates to Adam and Eve. However, after the fall, things are quite different. Sin has entered the world and the relationship between God and our first parents is broken.

¹⁹ John C. Jeske, *People’s Commentary Bible: Genesis* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1991), 24.

²⁰ John C. Jeske, *People’s Commentary Bible: Genesis* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1991), 68.

We know that this beautiful relationship with God was destroyed when Adam and Eve doubted God's love, disobeyed his command, and dragged down the whole human race with them. All of the descendants of Adam and Eve, with a single exception, brought a sinful image with them into the world – a *mind* ignorant of God's good plan for them, *emotions* that find joy in things that displease God, and a *will* which rebels against God's good and gracious will.²¹

This sinful nature continues to be passed to future generations. “In sharp contrast with the preceding, we're told here that when Adam fathered children they bore their father's sinful image. Adam had begun his life in a state of *perfection*. Every one of his descendants, with only one exception, began his or her life in a state of *imperfection*.”²² This is why God had to spell out the relationship between parents and their children when he gave the Ten Commandments. “Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you” (Exodus 20:12).

One area that cannot be overlooked when examining Genesis 1:28 is the mandate included in v. 28. “And God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth’” (Genesis 1:28). Here in the same scriptures where God creates man in his own image, he gives a command to both reproduce and to manage the world which God had now created.

God stated clearly what his purpose was in designing this highest creature. He was to exercise rule over the rest of creation, “over all the earth.” This divine program for the human race makes it clear that God's human creatures were not just another species of animal. Mankind – male and female – is clearly distinguished from the animals, set apart for a function different from the one the Creator assigned to these lower creatures. Mankind was to manage the earth for God. All of earth's resources were placed under his jurisdiction.

²¹ John C. Jeske, *People's Commentary Bible: Genesis* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1991), 25.

²² John C. Jeske, *People's Commentary Bible: Genesis* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1991), 69.

When God blessed the human race (Genesis 1:28) he ordered it to subdue the earth, to rule over it.²³

One of the greatest resources that God would give to Adam and Eve is future generations of offspring. This is why God commands them to multiply. Thus, managing the resources God had created includes managing future generations. This is the first place where God gives both the authority and responsibility to parents to watch over their children, and like the rest of this mandate it predates the fall of man into sin. Parental authority and responsibility are linked to the order of creation.

While modeling the faith is something that is tied into our very creation, it is also evident that this area has been profoundly affected by the fall into sin in the Garden of Eden. Certainly this is the case in Deuteronomy where God's people receive a re-reading of the Covenant given to them at Sinai as they prepare to enter the Promised Land. To be fair, they needed a re-reading. These were the children of the Exodus. It was their parents who were slaves in Egypt, who ate the Passover meal in haste, who passed through the Red Sea, and who had received the Ten Commandments and the entire Old Covenant from God at Sinai. It was also their parents who grumbled while in slavery, grumbled during the plagues, grumbled about the lack of food and water, worshipped a golden calf during Moses' absence on Sinai, and refused to enter the Promised Land because they were afraid. Time after time they doubted God until none of them entered the Promised Land except for Joshua. So when Moses prepares them to enter the Promised Land, there is a reason. These children in the faith have not been mentored and brought up with positive spiritual role-models except for Moses. Moses knows that he will not be entering the Promised Land because of his own sin, so he repeats God's Law so that this new generation can hear God's covenant promise for

²³ John C. Jeske, *People's Commentary Bible: Genesis* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1991), 23.

themselves just as their parents had and continue to pass them on to future generations when they enter the Promised Land.

In Deuteronomy 4:9-14, we hear our first mention of this modeling:

⁹Only take care, and keep your soul diligently, lest you forget the things that your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. Make them known to your children and your children's children - ¹⁰ how on the day that you stood before the LORD your God at Horeb, the LORD said to me, 'Gather the people to me, that I may let them hear my words, so that they may learn to fear me all the days that they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children so.' ¹¹ And you came near and stood at the foot of the mountain, while the mountain burned with fire to the heart of heaven, wrapped in darkness, cloud, and gloom. ¹² Then the LORD spoke to you out of the midst of the fire. You heard the sound of words, but saw no form; there was only a voice. ¹³ And he declared to you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform, that is, the Ten Commandments, and he wrote them on two tablets of stone. ¹⁴ And the LORD commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and rules, that you might do them in the land that you are going over to possess (Deuteronomy 4:9-14).

God's people are to pass these laws and commands on to future generations. They are to model God's covenant by obeying it themselves and by teaching it to their children.

The theme of educating the children, which continues throughout Deuteronomy, is important in the context of the covenant. The covenant promise of the land, made first to the patriarchs, moved forward by Moses, and still to be experienced by future generations, spanned time within the framework of the purpose of God. And yet the continuity of the covenant, in its fullness, was contingent upon the obedience of the people of God. Forgetfulness opened the door to failure, and so it was vital that the people of God not only remember their experience of God's mighty hand, but also that they pass on the memory, and thus the experience to their children.²⁴

This idea of passing the faith to the next generation is seen in even greater detail in Deuteronomy 6:

²⁴ Peter E. Craigie, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Deuteronomy* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 133.

⁶ And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. ⁷ You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. ⁸ You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. ⁹ You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates (Deuteronomy 6:6-9).

In a sense, by giving this “Second Law” to His people, God is, through Moses, doing exactly what he wants them to do. He is mentoring them that they should 1) experience or hear the Law for themselves, 2) take it to heart and live it, so that they can 3) pass it on to the next generation. Moses is preparing them for the Promised Land where he will no longer be with them, and reminding them that even after he is gone that God will still be with them.

The commandments, which provided the framework within which the Israelites could express their love of God, were to be *upon your heart* – that is, the people were to think in them and meditate about them, so that obedience would not be a matter of formal legalism, but a response based upon understanding. By reflecting on the commandments, they were reflecting upon God’s words (6:1); and by understanding the path of life set down by the commandments, they would at the same time be discovering the way in which God’s love for them was given expression. Having understood the commandments for themselves, the people were then responsible to their children: *you shall repeat them to your children* (a theme already familiar, see Deut. 4:9). The commandments were to be the subject of conversation both inside and outside the home, from the beginning of the day to the end of the day. In summary, the commandments were to permeate every sphere of the life of man.²⁵

The intentions of these passages are for parents to be the primary instructors of faith to their children. Indeed, this is why Martin Luther paraphrases these verses from Deuteronomy to provide the instruction at the beginning of each of the chief parts of the Small Catechism. “As the head of the family should teach them in a simple way to his household:”²⁶ Luther also addresses the relationship of parents and children in the Table of

²⁵ Peter E. Craigie, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Deuteronomy* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 170.

²⁶ Martin Luther, *Luther’s Small Catechism with Explanations* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1986), 11, 15, 18, 23, 30.

Duties²⁷ by quoting Paul's words from Ephesians 6 to parents in verses 1-3 and to children in verse 4.

Moses' words underscore a significant truth about Christian education, important for us three and a half thousand years later. Transmitting the faith to our children is primarily the responsibility of father and mother. Paul wrote, 'Fathers do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord' (Ephesians 6:4). The good news about Jesus and the life that flows from Christian faith are more frequently caught than taught as sons and daughters follow the model of mother and dad.²⁸

Moses himself gives a wonderful example of faith being '*caught*' rather than '*taught*' later in Deuteronomy:

²⁰When your son asks you in time to come, 'What is the meaning of the testimonies and the statutes and the rules that the LORD our God has commanded you?' ²¹ then you shall say to your son, 'We were Pharaoh's slaves in Egypt. And the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand. ²² And the LORD showed signs and wonders, great and grievous, against Egypt and against Pharaoh and all his household, before our eyes. ²³ And he brought us out from there, that he might bring us in and give us the land that he swore to give to our fathers. ²⁴ And the LORD commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as we are this day. ²⁵ And it will be righteousness for us, if we are careful to do all this commandment before the LORD our God, as he has commanded us' (Deuteronomy 6:20-25).

Through this little interaction, we see Moses' intent. You can almost picture an image of a son who is tired of having to learn all of the statutes and decrees from God come to his parent complaining about why he has to learn all this stuff. Suddenly, the parent is provided with a teachable moment to remind this child of who this child is as part of the family of God and therefore what God has done for that child. This exchange could just as easily be seen between a father and son today when the son is asking why he has to do his confirmation

²⁷ Martin Luther, *Luther's Small Catechism with Explanations* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1986), 38.

²⁸ Mark E. Braun, *People's Commentary Bible: Deuteronomy* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1995), 71.

homework. These are those moments by which parents are specially suited to teach the faith throughout the day.

Though times have changed for God's people, Moses' words back then are still as true as the day they were first spoken. As God's people have handed down the faith for generations, God's people today have the same responsibility to pass on the faith to future generations. Unfortunately, God's people today find themselves in a very similar situation as God's Old Testament people preparing to enter the Promised Land for the first time, because they don't know God's Word for themselves either. In order for Christian parents to actively pass on the faith, they first need to know God's Word. You cannot teach what you do not know, and the sad fact is that biblical literacy is rapidly decreasing. Not only is Sunday worship attendance rapidly declining, but the number of active worshippers who are in God's Word through an adult Bible class is even smaller. The number of "churched" individuals who spend time in God's Word each day and do devotions with their family is lower still. What's worse is that these patterns have been going on for decades.

Over the years, the message has been, "Let the professionals do the teaching. They know best." So, parents send their children to the church for Sunday school or other religious instruction, handing the responsibility of faith education to the teachers. Parents who believe their responsibility has ended when they have transported their children to church schools are not bad parents, however. They simply do not know how to nurture the faith because it was probably not modeled in their own homes when growing up.²⁹

In short, parents have gotten distracted from passing on the faith, and in fact, have now been trained by the church to leave instruction in the faith to the *professionals*. This mental shift results in a people who claim to be Christian and "believe in the Bible" but do not know what it says and do not study it.

²⁹ Merton P. Strommen and Richard A. Harden, *Passing on the Faith: A Radical New Model for Youth and Family Ministry* (Winona: St. Mary's Press, 2000), 17.

It is crucial, then, that parents, who take seriously God's call to impress the Commandments upon their children, first learn them for themselves. After all, it is no coincidence that as Moses begins to speak to the people he says, "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one."⁵ Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.⁶ These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts" (Deuteronomy 6:4-6). First and foremost, God's Word must be in our hearts. Parents must be at worship not just because their children need it, but because *they* need it. They need to come to hear God's words of forgiveness for their weaknesses in their vocations as spouses, parents, employees and employers. They also need to taste forgiveness in Holy Communion as God promises strength through the Holy Spirit to better equip us to serve in our various vocational callings. Parents also need to be actively reading God's Word both in study with others and in personal and family devotions.

It is not enough to simply drop your child off at Sunday school while you head home for coffee and conversation and trust the church to pass the information of faith to your child. While the teacher is teaching the Bible lesson, the parent is also teaching how unimportant the Bible really is through his or her lack of interest and involvement. As Robert Pazmino puts it:

The primary focus in Deuteronomy 6 is parents and their essential role in education. Despite the multiplicity of educational influences today, parents are still the primary educators who actively or passively determine what influences their children. The challenge is for the Christian church to equip parents for their roles as ministers and educators in their homes and to assist them in the choice of other educational influences in the lives of their children.³⁰

³⁰ Robert W. Pazmino, *Foundational Issues in Christian Education: An Introduction in Evangelical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 23.

The role of the church is not to replace the education that parents provide their children, but rather to assist the parents in teaching the faith. As parents grow in their faith and knowledge of their relationship with God and His commands, the church can be a vital ally in reinforcing what is already being taught at home and vice versa.

What makes parents so uniquely positioned to teach the faith is that they have the opportunity to teach in multiple situations. Moses lays it out in Deuteronomy: “⁷ Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. ⁸ Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. ⁹ Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates” (Deuteronomy 6:7-9). Moses’ words actually list two very different types of methods for parents to use to pass on the faith.

The first, and arguably simplest method to teach the faith, is simply talking about your faith as you live out your faith life. When Moses says to impress them upon them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, he is not just prescribing official times when God’s people were to teach the faith. Rather, Moses is encouraging parents to talk about their faith all of the time, *when you lie down and when you get up*. Throughout the whole of life there are all sorts of teachable moments that you can take with your children to talk about the faith. This is how the faith was passed down in Moses’ day and throughout most of history when there was no Bible to read and study or the vast majority of people were to illiterate to study it. While pulling weeds in the garden parents can talk about the fall of Adam and Eve and God’s punishment of Adam and that no one likes to pull weeds, but pulling weeds is now part of the curse living in a sinful world. When dealing with the death of a loved one, instead of sheltering children from death, parents can use the opportunity to

teach about the hope of the resurrection of all flesh for believers. When teaching a child to ride a bicycle, parents can point to Peter walking on water for assurance that Jesus is always with us and there is no reason to be afraid. There are literally countless opportunities to share the faith that parents have each day as they live out the faith in their own lives. Because of their unique relationship, parents are always teaching. They teach by what they tell their children and they teach by what they do not share with their children. Even by not taking those teachable moments to pass on the faith, parents are actually teaching their children that faith does not matter. Parents even teach by what they do not do. Thus, a parent who does not worship God is actually actively teaching his or her children to do the same. Educators have long addressed these aspects by acknowledging that there is a *hidden curriculum* and a *null curriculum* that go beyond what is taught in a classroom.

The hidden or implicit curriculum refers more to what is caught by persons than to what is directly taught through the course of instruction. In other words, the explicit curriculum focuses on content, the hidden curriculum addresses the implicit formation of persons, and the null curriculum is disclosed by considering the wider context of what is possible but not selected for sharing or just forgotten.³¹

These concepts are primarily used by educators when discussing ways to better prepare their students for learning; however, it is not a drastic reach to assume that there is both a hidden curriculum and null curriculum at work when parents teach their own children. Thus, parents should strongly consider the impact of both their intentional and unintentional teaching of the faith.

The second method that Moses indicates is a more formal educational process. “⁸ Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. ⁹ Write them on the

³¹ Robert W. Pazmino, *Foundational Issues in Christian Education: An Introduction in Evangelical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 247.

doorframes of your houses and on your gates” (Deuteronomy 6:8-9). Like it or not, no parent can be a part of their children’s lives all of the time. Part of a parent’s role is to be sure that part of their children’s education is conducted even when they aren’t around. A formal educational process ensures that any gaps that may occur because of any number of reasons can be filled in through an intentional process.

Thus, while a family or community may faithfully pass on to the next generation the truth of God through its socialization and enculturation processes, this transmission may also at key points need correction and reorientation. Formal education can often serve as a vehicle for correction and reorientation of the efforts of a particular home or community. Likewise, a particular home or community may minister to an agency of formal education, such as when parents take an active role in the policies and goals of a Sunday, private, or public school.³²

Even the best parents struggle at times to teach the fullness of God’s Word. Sometimes it is because we struggle with our own sinfulness and cannot bear to share that with our children. Sometimes it may be that we are ignorant of God’s Word about a certain aspect of the faith. Either way, formal education provides a system of checks and balances to ensure that each child has a well-rounded Biblical faith. Part of the parental role then is selecting this formal educational process to ensure that a child is taught all of the essential elements of the faith. This formal educational process could include traditional church activities such as Sunday school, vacation Bible school, and confirmation/catechesis programs. It could also include the use of Christian early childhood centers and schools when they are available. In fact, faithful parents will want to utilize programs and services that serve to educate their children. The point is not that the parents have to do all of the teaching, but rather that they take the responsibility to see that their children learn what they need to know.

³² Robert W. Pazmino, *Foundational Issues in Christian Education: An Introduction in Evangelical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 24.

Regarding this twofold structure where parents are both encouraged to take advantage of those “teachable moments” of the faith that happen when people live in close proximity to one another and realize the need to create structured opportunities to teach the faith through a more formal educational process such as Christian schools, confirmation classes, and the like, Marjorie J. Thompson writes:

I think families intentionally communicate the values and vision of the faith in two basic ways. The first is through *natural* opportunities of life together – occasions that simply characterize the relational fabric of family life. The second is through *intentional practices* – simple but specific structures and patterns that support the spiritual potential within families of faith.³³

This is exactly what God was saying through Moses in Deuteronomy 6.

Whether they realize it or not, parents are always teaching their children. They are teaching them what to do and not to do both by what they say and do and by what they do not say and do not do. When parents take an active role in passing on the faith to their children through the conversations of everyday life and through a more formal religious education, there is a blessing: God’s people continue to prosper and live. The faith is passed on to future generations. However, when parents do not take an active role in the spiritual lives of their children and if they do not intentionally grow in their personal faith and pass it down to their children the consequences are disastrous. That’s why Moses says, “¹⁵ For the LORD your God, who is among you, is a jealous God and his anger will burn against you, and he will destroy you from the face of the land” (Deuteronomy 6:15). The consequences are death. Not just the physical death of the individual, but also spiritual death as the person drifts further and further from the Lord. Left unchecked, this leads to the spiritual death not just of the individual, but also of the family and ultimately the community both physically and

³³ Marjorie J. Thompson, *Family: The Forming Center – A Vision of the Role of Family in Spiritual Formation* (Nashville: Upper Room Books, 1996), 21.

spiritually if the community loses its relationship with God. Do parents want to think of their children and grandchildren not being brought up in the faith? If they don't effectively raise their children in the faith, that is the likely future. One only has to look at the effect of godless kings in Israel's history and see how this plays out. David's sins are passed on to Solomon who indeed passes them to his children. Even after the division of Israel into the Northern and Southern Kingdoms, both Kingdoms struggled with keeping their identity rooted in their relationship to God and were ultimately destroyed because of it.

Just as the death of their children is not the goal of most parents, spiritual death of their children is not the goal of most Christian parents. As believers, parents genuinely want their children to believe and confess what they believe and confess. This means that despite the difficulty and effort, Christian parents must follow Moses' Spirit-guided admonition in Deuteronomy 6 to take seriously the responsibility to pass on the faith to the next generation so that they too will love Him. It also means that the Church will constantly have to look for more and better ways to aid parents in making decisions that help them pass on the faith to the next generation.

Section 3: The Church's role to support the family

Having finished teaching a class of seventh and eighth graders all about the Second Article of the Trinity in midweek Confirmation classes, I returned to my office at the church. Waiting in front of my door was Brian, a parent from the fifth and sixth grade Confirmation class who thrust a rolled up paper into my face and said, "Here, you do this!" Before I could take the papers out of his hand, Brian jerked his hand away, opened the papers and said, "This is impossible! I want every member of the congregation to take this. I bet 80% of them couldn't pass!" I gently brought him into my office and we sat down to talk. In just a few moments he broke forth in a tirade of how difficult Confirmation class is for his son and how his son never wants to come because the expectations are too high. I admitted to him that we need to take a long hard look at the Confirmation curriculum to see if we were accomplishing our objectives. He then said, "My son stays up until midnight doing this stuff. It's just too hard!" As we continued the conversation, I began to realize there was more going on here than simply Confirmation. In separate bits of information the father revealed that this sixth grader was beginning his school homework at 9:00 PM every night and continuing until midnight. In addition, he was getting up at 5:00 AM to get on the bus the next morning. When I asked why this schedule came about, the father indicated that they were in wrestling practice from 4:00-9:00 PM each night. His son was wrestling that entire time except for a fifteen minute interval to eat a sandwich. Although the Confirmation program still needs evaluation, this parent was dealing with more than just Confirmation. He was, and is, teaching that faith isn't important because of what he was prioritizing for his family.

Brian is a well-meaning parent. He sits in the front row at church and comes as often as he can. Yet his frustrations bring up an interesting question, “If it is the parent’s role to be the primary teacher of the faith to their children, what exactly is the church’s role?” All too often, the parent’s “job” of teaching the faith has essentially been reduced to that of bus driver or parole officer where they ensure that the child is brought to the church at the proper time and place thereby fulfilling their duty. The church then spends time teaching the children Bible stories in Sunday school classes, more detailed instruction in confirmation classes, and playing games or doing service projects in youth activities thereby fulfilling their commitment to those children and their families as well. Or are they?

All of those programs (Sunday school, confirmation, vacation Bible school, etc.) were developed to meet needs of a different day and age. Generally, there was more family support and extended family nearby, and for the most part the culture as a whole was more united in what the “ideal” family looked and acted like. Today however, the family is under attack.

Some attacks are direct and self-evident, such as those associated with drug and alcohol abuse, teen pregnancy, and the accompanying threat of sexually transmitted disease. Poverty and low social status, disproportionately borne by women and children, can leave family members vulnerable not only to external stresses but also to all manner of self-destructive behaviors. Equally dangerous are the subtle and indirect attacks that come pleasantly packaged for middle- and upper-income family consumption. It is here, among the ubiquitous cultural messages of materialism, individualism, and competition that the essence of family life is corroded.³⁴

One could add to this list a discussion of the changing face of what a family is as more and more families are moving away from a traditional two-parent household to blended families made up of step-parents, grandparents, and parents with their children. This creates a whole

³⁴ Marjorie J. Thompson, *Family: The Forming Center – A Vision of the Role of Family in Spiritual Formation* (Nashville: Upper Room Books, 1996), 45.

host of other factors that get brought into place, supplanting the parents' role as the primary instructor for faith formation.

Due to all of these factors and many more, many of today's parents were not raised with strong Christian habits in place. Speaking personally, my parents were incredibly faithful when it came to church and Bible study attendance. They were active on church boards and committees, sang in the choir; you name it they did it, except for daily devotions. I think they did them on their own, I know that they do now, but it was not modeled as something we did in our family. Consequently, even as a pastor, I struggle to implement the practice of daily devotions in my home as well. Many of today's parents are similarly struggling. Depending upon their background and their upbringing, they may be unfamiliar with attending church each and every week, so it is perfectly natural to attend church only on Christmas and Easter. They may not be in the habit of being in Bible study or even saying prayers before meals and at bedtime. None of this may ever have been modeled to them or even introduced as a good practice. Although there are Sunday School teachers everywhere who are frustrated by parents who drop off and pick up their kids every Sunday morning, maybe it is actually possible that there are parents out there who generally do not know better.

Churches, eager to seek and save the lost, have admirably attempted to keep things afloat by stepping in and picking up where parents have left off. When parents have failed to teach their children the principle teachings of the faith, churches taught that confirmation classes could teach what a child really needed to know. When parents stopped teaching Bible stories and reading them with their children, pastors and Sunday school teachers encouraged parents to at least bring their children to Sunday school so that they could learn them. Youth

groups were created to keep teens and young adults interested and active in the church while building positive relationships with peers. Unfortunately, despite the church's best attempts, they are attempting to fulfill a role that they were never designed to fill. In the past, extended family and other cultural supports enabled the ministries to function and possibly even thrive because they were backing up what was happening at home and what was happening at large by society as a whole. Family was in the primary position and the church was setting up support systems to assist the family in faith formation. Unfortunately, as the home has collapsed, more and more weight has been put on these institutions to operate in a way they were never designed to operate. A similar thing has often happened to our public school systems which now find themselves tasked with not just teaching the basics of education, but also the ethics of right and wrong and sound decision-making.

The problem is twofold. First, when churches (and schools) step up and fill this void, they are actually teaching that this is the way things are supposed to be done. Currently, at least one to two generations of parents and possibly even three have learned from childhood that faith formation is something that is "the church's role" instead of understanding that Biblically it is first and foremost their duty to pass the faith on to the next generation. Now we have a self-perpetuating cycle that has developed where churches step up to fill the role of parents in faith formation. Parents in turn are taught that faith formation is the church's role, so they respond accordingly and treat the church as experts entrusting any and all faith formation to the churches and thereby dismissing their own calling and authority. This leads to the second problem. Churches are ill-equipped to function as the primary spiritual caregivers, especially when even in the best cases we are limited to a few hours per week. The average student spends more time in front of the television in one day than they do in

their total spiritual formation at church throughout a week. Inadequately equipped for this mission, the churches then buckle under the extra stresses and strains, burning out all sorts of volunteers and paid staff until they can no longer teach the faith effectively. Ultimately, no one ends up passing the faith to the next generation.

Since this is obviously not an acceptable option, perhaps we should go back and take a look at how the early church operated in the New Testament era in order to see the relationship between the Church and the family. A good place to look is at Paul's epistles to his young protégé, Timothy. In these letters, Paul gives this young pastor all sorts of different advice from qualifications of overseers and deacons to women's role in the worship life of a congregation to the temptations of lusting after money. In one specific section of 2 Timothy, Paul warns Timothy of the struggles that come with the office, even pointing to his own life as one that demonstrates that "All who desire to live a Godly life will be persecuted" (2 Timothy 3:12). In order to prepare Timothy for that coming persecution, Paul then says some of the most oft-quoted passages from 2 Timothy:

¹⁴ But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it ¹⁵ and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶ All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:14-17).

While not specifically a text about parenting, there's a lot about faith development here because Paul is encouraging Timothy to "...continue in what you have learned and firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings..." (2 Timothy 3:14-15). Paul's appeal here is that during these times of suffering, Timothy should think back to the teachings he has known since he

was a little boy. Where did this faith come from? Interestingly, Paul has already given us the answer back in 2 Timothy chapter 1 when he wrote “⁵ I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well.” Timothy had been mentored in the faith by his grandmother Eunice, who had obviously continued in the faith and passed that faith on to young Timothy. How did they go about teaching him? They made him “acquainted with the sacred writings (Scriptures) which alone make us wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.” In other words, they put Timothy in the Word. They were among those who were looking for the coming Messiah revealed in the Old Testament and then with Paul’s help they were able to see how Jesus was the fulfillment of those Old Testament prophecies. Special care must be taken here to emphasize that Timothy’s faith did not rest on that of Eunice and Lois, but it rested on the Word that they had brought him in contact with. “Children do receive the Word from and on the authority of parents, but the intelligent parents always lead their children to rest their faith independently upon the Word and not upon them as parents.”³⁵ Good parenting can only expose children to the faith, but it cannot create faith in and of itself apart from the Holy Spirit.

Continuing on in 2 Timothy 3, Paul says to “continue in what he (Timothy) had learned”. Paul is not just referencing Lois and Eunice, he is also referencing Timothy’s relationship to himself. Just a few moments before our text he writes, “¹⁰ You, however, have followed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, ¹¹ my persecutions and sufferings...” (2 Timothy 3:10-11). Paul was keenly aware of his role as Timothy’s “father-figure” when it came to the faith, but that faith was

³⁵ R.C.H. Lenski, *Commentary on the New Testament: The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistles to the Colossians, to the Thessalonians, to Timothy, to Titus, and to Philemon* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2001), 837-8

first passed on from his family (Lois and Eunice) and then as Paul later enters the picture he nurtures and grows Timothy's faith through their relationship. I argue that Paul's role is more like that of the Christian Church. The Church's role is not to step in and takeover for parents because they are inadequate to the task. The church's role is, like Paul's, to build upon what has been taught by the parents (or in this case Eunice and Lois) and to support the parents as they provide them with the means necessary to teach the faith to their own children and then to reinforce the teachings that have been happening in the home.

What's more, Paul does an excellent job in 2 Timothy chapter 3 of laying out just how important the Holy Scriptures are for passing the faith to the next generation. Not only are they desirable because they make us "wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" but the Scriptures also shape our faith and train us for living out our Christian faith. Paul argues that "¹⁶ All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:14-17).

The key here is that the best tool that the church has to teach our families to be godly families is Scripture itself. It is a veritable Swiss Army knife chock full of instructions for all of life's issues. Paul identifies four primary uses: teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness. At first they may seem like the same thing, but there are subtle differences. The word *teaching* is instruction. God's Word tells us everything we need to know about Him to make us "wise for salvation". *Reproof*, on the other hand, is the Word's role in rejecting falsehood. While *reproof* focuses on correction of false ideas and beliefs, *correction* focuses more on correcting the way that we live and correcting our actions to be in line with

God's. Finally, *training in righteousness* is training on how we should live as God's faithful people today. Bible scholar, R.C.H. Lenski says:

The Scripture is thus absolutely incomparable; no other book, library, or anything else in the world is able to make a lost sinner wise for salvation; no other Scripture, since it lacks inspiration of God whatever profit it may otherwise afford, is profitable for these ends: teaching us the true saving facts – refuting the lies and delusions that face these facts – restoring the sinner or fallen Christian to an upright position – educating, training, disciplining one in genuine righteousness.³⁶

The Bible is consistent here. The Old Testament passages in Deuteronomy are supported by New Testament passages such as 2 Timothy chapter 3 that indicate parents are the primary instructors of the faith and that the role of the church is to support them in that role. The argument could be made that what the church is really doing is introducing parents to God's Word in such a way that incorporates all four uses: teaching, reproofing, correcting and training in righteousness so that the man of God, in this case parents, are equipped for every good work, especially with regards to parenting. In this way, parents are carefully mentored and trained in God's Word while they are in fact, mentoring their own families.

In their book, Passing on the Faith: A Radical New Model For Youth and Family Ministry, Merton Strommen and Richard Hardel challenge the church to live by those Biblical truths. They argue that the church's role is fourfold: 1) Strengthen Family Relationships (both the relationships within the family and the family members' relationship with God), 2) Faith-Focused Christian Education, 3) Congregation as Family, and finally 4) Creating a Christian Youth Subculture. The model is radical because instead of placing the church as one of the many things competing for our children's time and pulling youth away from the family as their primary source of faith development, the church is instead a support

³⁶ R.C.H. Lenski, *Commentary on the New Testament: The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles to the Colossians, to the Thessalonians, to Timothy, to Titus, and to Philemon* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2001), 841

agency seeking to support the youth by supporting the role of the family. What's more Strommen and Hardel also give concrete places where each of these things can be identified and strengthened by the local congregation such as: strengthening marriages through pre-marital ministry, providing parenting classes, teaching about family communication dynamics and the like.³⁷ The key is for all of the congregation's ministries to be united in this goal to support parents in being the primary instructor of the faith to their children.

In his book The Family Friendly Church, Ben Freudenberg argues for congregations to change from being home-supported churches to church-supported homes.

There is a paradigm shift happening at the grass roots of our society, and it's working its way quickly into the mainstream. It's a powerful, inexorable refocusing of our time, energy, habits, goals, priorities, and finances onto the home. It's already pressuring churches to change the way they do Christian Education. . . . *From church-centered, home-supported ministry to home-centered, church-supported ministry*³⁸.

The shift that Freudenberg argues for moves away from events that center on the church and its activities, but rather prioritizes the family as we function as a church. This means minimizing the effect of things like church business meetings and other church activities that take families out of the home, but instead making a conscious effort to mentor and equip families to teach the faith in their home. "The role the church needs to recognize and recover in relation to its member families is that of facilitator. The church could begin by calling families to their own sense of blessed and significant identity."³⁹

In a home-centered, church-supported ministry, a clear plan for ministry to families should be laid out by each congregation and its staff. The family ministry plan begins as the

³⁷ Merton P. Strommen and Richard A. Hardel, *Passing on the Faith: A Radical New Model for Youth and Family Ministry* (Winona: St. Mary's Press, 2000), 37

³⁸ Ben Freudenberg, *The Family Friendly Church* (Loveland: Group, 1998), 98

³⁹ Marjorie J. Thompson, *Family: The Forming Center – A Vision of the Role of Family in Spiritual Formation* (Nashville: Upper Room Books, 1996), 43

family is first being formed. It includes strong guidelines for strengthening marriages with excellent and reliable pre-marital instruction. As families begin having children, it includes parenting classes from a Christian parenting perspective at appropriate age levels (Infant, adolescent, pre-teen, teen) to deal with specific issues that arrive in each age group. It also may mean a reformatting of the church's Confirmation program away from a simple lecture-test format that is dependent upon the Pastor or other church staff to serve as the "expert" who is teaching the faith to parents taking an active and participatory role in the faith formation of their families. The options are limitless and adaptable for each congregation's mission and ministry context.

Since early childhood centers are part of a congregation's ministry, they too should be involved in the congregation's focus on meeting those four areas indicated by Strommen and Hardel and Freudenberg's Family Friendly Church. In fact, I would argue because of the general population of children and families that they are uniquely positioned to not only support the families' of members of the congregation, but they have the opportunity to meet their families' specific needs by connecting them and bridging the gap between these families and the church.

At Resurrection Lutheran Church's Open Arms ECC, the majority of the families are either unchurched, in the sense that they have no church home, or underchurched, in the sense that they are extremely loosely connected with any local congregation usually because of extended family, but have little to no attendance recorded at that congregation. Many of these families are ill-equipped to be spiritual mentors for their children because they have not been walking closely with the Lord themselves. But as their child is exposed to both the ABC's and to the sacred stories in God's Word, and as they learn to sing songs about "Where

is Thumbkin?” and songs about how “Jesus Loves Me” they have a tendency to take these things home and in turn model them for their parents.

We also have stories shared with us over the years of parents who come in telling us that their child insists on praying before every meal. These stories are not unique to our center. Songs and prayers have long been a habit shared with a kid and taken to a parent. But to be truly “family friendly” means tweaking things so that parents are equipped to teach the faith at home.

Our society evidently needs basic parenting skills. No consistent arena in our culture teaches us parenting skills apart from our own experience of being parented, which may or may not be a helpful model. Therefore it is appropriate for congregations to provide what they can, perhaps in cooperation with community social agencies and / or congregations. Classes for parents at various stages of child rearing can prove enormously valuable, especially in the realm of what constitutes healthy communication, the positive and appropriate use of discipline, and changing roles through a child’s development- the gradual but difficult process of allowing the child’s autonomy to emerge. All of these and more, may all be understood as ways in which the church prepares parents for the vocation of child rearing⁴⁰.

An example of this could be using something like a Jesse Tree. Jesse Trees have been used for many centuries by Christians to teach the genealogy of Jesus and link him back to Jesse, the Father of King David. More modern Jesse Trees tell the grand plan of God’s salvation by hanging ornaments on a tree each day that are connected with a specific Bible verse (such as Noah’s Ark). Certainly, any early childhood center could simply put up a Jesse Tree and use it as part of their faith curriculum at the center. However, how much more exciting and helpful would it be to also send each family home with a Jesse Tree (a stick or branch off of a tree) along with some instructions of: 1) how to plant the tree, 2) how to do an age-appropriate devotion with your child, and 3) some discussion points to help the parents

⁴⁰ Marjorie J. Thompson, *Family: The Forming Center – A Vision of the Role of Family in Spiritual Formation* (Nashville: Upper Room Books, 1996), 140

discuss things with their children on a more-detailed level. Notice this doesn't mean that the teaching of the Jesse Tree ceases to happen at the early childhood center, but rather it reinforces what is being taught at home and equips parents to be the primary people to teach the faith to their children. Moreover, an activity like this can be used with both the children who are in the early childhood center and those in the church's Sunday school program. This is really where the church fits best: Supporting the ministry of the family as the primary teacher of the faith by equipping and training them to do so.

In Old Testament times, the family was the primary setting for education. The efforts of the family were supplemented and complemented by the instruction in the covenant community as it gathered. In exilic and post-exilic times, the agencies of education expanded to include both synagogues and schools. Even with these developments, the extended family continued to be important in education. In the New Testament, the church functions as the extended and adopted family of God. It is the responsibility of the gifted and experienced to pass on to the next generation accounts of the acts, the power and the wonders of God in the past and present. Those who are gifted and experienced have responsibilities as stewards to transmit this life-giving message to new members of the faith community. This transmission is crucial if persons are to gain a sense of rootedness and identity in relation to a faith community⁴¹.

⁴¹ Pazmino, Robert W. "Foundational Issues in Christian Education: An Introduction in Evangelical Perspective." P. 24. 30-31.

Conclusion

One area of life that Christians can definitely develop relationships with Christ and the church is through early childhood centers. Every day millions of individuals take their children to some sort of early childhood center. Some of those early childhood centers are associated with churches. Many are not. Many of those early childhood centers that are associated with congregations have little to distinguish them from those that do not. This is unfortunate because early childhood centers provide a unique opportunity to bridge that gap between disciples of Jesus and those who do not yet know him.

In 2007, Resurrection Lutheran Church commissioned a demographic survey report through the Lutheran Church Extension Fund. This survey analyzed demographic information used by major corporations when doing advertising. It then compared the surveyed area to the congregation. While the information only gives a snapshot of what was happening at that particular point in time, it does point out some interesting results. First, approximately 33% or 49,210 people were “unchurched” in Minnehaha County and 52% or 13,525 people were defined as “unchurched” in Lincoln County which compose the city limits of Sioux Falls. In addition, 80% of the 31,743 individuals in our surveyed area were considered employed.⁴² The same survey ran the same data through a “Spirituality matrix” based on demographic analysis. According to the survey, 37.7% of the community surveyed, or 11,970⁴³ identified themselves as “unchurched”. Many of them were within blocks of our facilities.

While some individuals and families may no longer feel a need to belong to a church, there is still a feeling by many that the church is a safe place for their kids while they are

⁴² Data from a 2007 Demographics Study composed by LCEF for Resurrection Lutheran Church.

⁴³ Data from a 2007 Demographics Study composed by LCEF for Resurrection Lutheran Church.

away. They also like that their children will be taught the difference between right and wrong, good and bad. This feeling is often extended to early childhood centers that are connected with churches. These feelings give Christian early childhood centers the opportunity to teach more than just morality. They give an opportunity to make connections with families who would otherwise be resistant to the Church and teach about a Savior who loves us even when we can't live up to God's perfect expectations.

Early childhood centers give the Church a unique opportunity to meet the physical needs of the community (i.e. childcare) while also creating relationships with them to meet deeper spiritual needs. The Great Commission is not just about creating programs, but rather it is about fostering a culture of support and love where people of all ages are disciplined in the faith. As parents find their children loved and supported by quality Christian staff, they in turn become open to that same sort of love and care expressed by the church, which is in itself an expression of Christ's love for them. Robert Pazmino argues, "It is essential that evangelism or invitation be a key purpose of the educational ministry of the church. Evangelism can be defined as the presentation of Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit, which enables persons to place their faith in God through Christ and to serve Christ, accept Christ as their Savior, and to serve their Lord in the fellowship of his church and world"⁴⁴.

The relational nature of Christian early childhood centers provides an avenue for discipleship. As children learn about Jesus and what He has done for them, they naturally share it with their parents. Simple activities such as a child insisting that parents pray before meals or the sound of a child singing "Jesus Loves Me" have the ability to minister behind closed doors in subtle yet immeasurable ways to bring both children and adults to faith in

⁴⁴ Robert W. Pazmino, *Foundational Issues in Christian Education: An Introduction in Evangelical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 61.

Jesus Christ and seek the blessings that God gives through the Holy Spirit in Baptism. And because a relationship has already been established, there is an opportunity for ongoing support and encouragement in the faith community where it was formed. Thus, churches operating early childhood centers have a wonderful opportunity to honor Jesus' command in the Great Commission to go and make disciples by baptizing them and teaching them to obey everything he has commanded.

At the same time, discipleship as defined earlier or even the term evangelism should not only be understood as outreach. When a local congregation, or an early childhood center as a ministry of the local congregation, mentors parents in God's Word to disciple their own children in the faith, what they are really doing is fulfilling the purpose of the Great Commission. Sometimes people feel like evangelism is only something that is done when you bring a person who has never heard about Jesus or has completely rejected Jesus to faith. In other words, it is something that only happens when you reach out beyond the church walls. This stands in tension sometimes with the perception that educating those who are already in the flock is somehow less important or less valued in the Lord's eyes. The beauty of the Great Commission is not that these stand as opposites, but they work together. Evangelism and discipleship are ways that we reach out to those outside of the congregation and ways that we reach out to those inside of our congregation at the same time. If either of those two things gets placed in a higher or lower place than the other, then the Christian Church is no longer carrying out Christ's mission to go and make disciples by baptizing and teaching them.

Remembering this dual-emphasis and the Church's impossible charge to carry out the Great Commission on our own is perhaps why the most important verse of the Commission

is actually the last: “And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20). It is an ever present reminder that the Church, its ministries, as well as those who fill vocations as professional church workers, educators, and even parents and children, are unable to do any or all of this on our own. It is always by Christ’s presence with us in God’s Word and the Sacraments as well as the Holy Spirit’s assistance in understanding, believing and trusting those means of grace to strengthen us for daily living and equipping us for the good work that God has placed before us.

CHAPTER THREE

THE HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVE

Introduction:

Although the concept of Open Arms is over twenty years old, there are still many people, even within the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod who are unfamiliar with its foundations. Essentially, the Open Arms Institute is a group of early childcare centers which are connected together by the common vision: “To provide encouragement and guidance for quality Christian childcare with new church planting and existing congregations.”⁴⁵

There are currently more than 50 Christian Child Development Centers with whom the Open Arms Institute has some current or past affiliation. They operate in almost half of the existing LCMS Districts. Together, these centers are serving more than 6,000 children and their families.

Open Arms early childhood ministry is a distinctive ministry. The purpose of an Open Arms early childhood ministry is to provide a point of contact with the broad range of families in a community, to serve those families with a program of quality, Christian child growth and development, and to touch them with God’s love. Open Arms has become a very effective way to join in the Savior’s mission to disciple all nations by drawing children and families to the open arms of the congregation, in the name of the Savior, and by nurturing them in their life with God.⁴⁶

While in some ways, the work of the Open Arms Institute seems to be a new and radical model for the planting of churches with childcare centers, in many other ways, it is simply a natural progression from a long tradition of Lutherans being deeply connected with education.

⁴⁵ “Open Arms Mission Statement.” <http://www.openarmsinstitute.com/#!our-mission/cu6h>. (accessed August 23, 2013).

⁴⁶ “What Makes an Open Arms Child Development Center?” <http://www.openarmsinstitute.com/#!about-oai-centers/cgg2> (accessed August 23, 2013).

In this chapter, we will take a brief look at the history of Lutheran education in three primary places:

- First, the chapter will look at the emphasis placed upon education and educational models by Martin Luther and the early reformers.
- Second, it will focus on the emphasis that was placed on education by C.F.W. Walther and the Saxon immigrants as they established what is now known as the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod.
- Third, this chapter will examine some of the more contemporary research that is happening in the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod with regard to education, especially early childhood education as well as the history of the Open Arms Institute.

The Open Arms concept continues in a long line of emphasis amongst Lutherans, and the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod in particular, on education. Congregations like Resurrection Lutheran Church in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, that are both connected to and independent of the Open Arms concept, can identify specific ways to fulfill the Great Commission's charge to *make disciples* while still encouraging and empowering parents to be the spiritual leaders in their own homes.

The Emphasis on Education During the Reformation

When a young monk named Martin Luther put forth the ninety-five theses for debate on October 31, 1517, it caused a stir in the Christian Church that is still being felt today. While the effects of the Reformation are well documented, perhaps less noticed is the impact of Luther and other early Reformers, notably Philipp Melanchthon and Johannes Bugenhagen, upon the educational landscape of their day. Much of the educational thought of these early Reformers can be traced back to a confluence of three streams of thought: 1) their Augustinian heritage, 2) the influence of Renaissance humanism, and 3) a strong theological emphasis largely centered on the concept of justification by faith.

The fact that many of the early Reformers like Luther and Melanchthon came from Augustinian monastic orders should not be surprising. In many ways, Augustine was the father of Christian education. “Although not the first Christian educator to see the value of the ancient writers, Augustine was one of the first who was able to integrate the classics into a system of Christian instruction.⁴⁷”

Augustine established four educational principles which would be followed by the many Christian educators who succeeded him including Luther and Walther. First, Augustine maintained that all truth was of divine origin. This imbued learning with a certain sacred quality, and compelled the Christian not just to learn what was in Scripture but what other thinkers had said as well. Second, he believed that the Church was the natural heir of the liberal arts tradition. He maintained that God had preserved this tradition to enable the Church to grasp the sum total of divine wisdom and proclaim it in an eloquent and persuasive manner to the world around her. Third, Augustine understood the liberal arts as a flexible model of education – a malleable structure that could be changed to suit the theological needs of the day. Finally, he viewed the liberal arts as a living tradition requiring that educators refer back to

⁴⁷ Thomas Korcok. *Lutheran Education: From Wittenberg to the Future* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2011), 11.

earlier pedagogues for inspiration and direction in applying the arts in their own situation.⁴⁸

One can clearly see Augustine's influence in Luther's educational philosophy as he looks back to Augustine's use of the classical educational model in order to establish an educational system in Protestant territories. "For Luther, Augustine was part of the educational antidote to the poison of scholasticism that had been corrupting the Church. In order for the Reformation to take root, two things were needed: a new relationship between theology and education, and a recovery of eloquence through the teaching of the arts."⁴⁹

However, the early Reformers were not the only people influenced by Augustine nor was Augustine the only person who influenced Luther. In the fourteenth century a collection of northern scholars, called Renaissance humanists, began to read the works of classical authors like Augustine. These Renaissance humanists desired to improve the education and culture of man by encouraging people to read the classics in their original languages as well as reviving the teaching of rhetoric. In many ways, Melancthon and Luther had much in common with Renaissance humanists and probably would have been considered one of them if not for being recognized as such strong theologians. One of the Renaissance humanists that had an impact on Luther was Desiderius Erasmus (1466-1536). Erasmus too had been exposed to Augustine and became an advocate for the use of the classical educational system.

Perhaps Erasmus' most dramatic contribution to education was his work in broadening liberal education to include children. Prior to Erasmus, the liberal arts were restricted to higher education. Generally, elementary education concerned itself with the simple mechanics of numbers and letters; but Erasmus saw that the time to expose a student to what he considered the

⁴⁸ Thomas Korcok. *Lutheran Education: From Wittenberg to the Future* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2011), 14.

⁴⁹ Thomas Korcok. *Lutheran Education: From Wittenberg to the Future* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2011), 22.

greatest writings of the greatest men was at the earliest possible age: at an age when their minds could easily be shaped by the Greek and Latin masters. He believed that the art of grammar – beginning with Latin and Greek – should be taught to children almost as soon as they are born. In fact, Erasmus felt that parents should consider this even before they were born. Men were to select a wife based on what type of early education she might be able to provide for their children.... In short, every part of a child's life was to be arranged so as to provide him with the best possible faculties for entry into the world of the liberal arts through the door of grammar.⁵⁰

In many ways, the reforms of the Renaissance humanists like Erasmus mirror the Reformation concepts of Luther and the early Reformers. Both were heavily influenced by Augustine. Both advocated a return to the classical educational model including a renewed emphasis on grammar and the classical languages of Greek and Latin. Both increased attention on education of younger learners more than the traditional classical model had done. However there was a difference in the aims of each of the two groups.

While humanists like Erasmus were given to viewing the arts as the starting point for a progressive life of moral improvement, Erasmus' contention that there was still a *scintilla of perfection* in a child led him to believe that the arts had the ability to reform a person. The Evangelicals could not accept that premise. For Luther, the corruption of the human soul was complete, voiding Erasmus' optimistic view. For the Evangelicals, the primary function of the arts was to serve the same purpose as it had for the scholastics: that is, to enable one to understand Evangelical theology.⁵¹

In discussing these two groups, Robert Pazmino notes the following contrasts between what he classifies as the Renaissance (humanism) with the Reformation:

1. Whereas the Renaissance generally focused on persons, the Reformation centered life and education on God, evidencing a renewed consideration of persons as God's creatures with definite privileges and responsibilities.

⁵⁰ Thomas Korcok. *Lutheran Education: From Wittenberg to the Future* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2011), 28.

⁵¹ Thomas Korcok. *Lutheran Education: From Wittenberg to the Future* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2011), 32.

2. Whereas the Renaissance centered primarily on the elite, the Reformation included the masses of society as well.
3. In the Reformation spiritual renewal was primary, whereas the Renaissance centered on cultural and intellectual renewal. But spiritual renewal and cultural or intellectual renewal are not mutually exclusive. In Reformation thought, human reason was viewed as fallen and subject to God's revelation in Scripture, whereas in certain Renaissance developments human reason was viewed as perfected. Given the Reformers' sensitivity to human depravity, their primary source for understanding was the Bible, but biblical truths were integrated with insights through reason and experience.
4. In contrast to a Reformed focus on the Bible, Renaissance thinkers relied primarily on extrabiblical classical literature.
5. Reformers stressed the expanded view of the vernacular in disseminating knowledge in contrast to the exclusive use of classical languages by Renaissance scholars, who were not necessarily committed to universal education. Nevertheless, many of the Reformers were schooled in classical studies and used classical languages in their scholarship.
6. A final contrast might be stated in terms of the ultimate goal of education. In the Reformation knowledge was viewed in relation to the higher goal of commitment to and communion with God, whereas in the Renaissance traditional knowledge itself was a goal, largely irrespective to God's revelation.⁵²

While they had much in common, it is this distinction which clearly separated the early Reformers, like Luther, from the Renaissance humanists, like Erasmus. Lutherans were thoroughly wedded to the idea of *justification by grace*. Paul states it succinctly in Ephesians “⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹not a result of works, so that no one may boast.” (Ephesians 2:8-9, English Standard Version) In short, Luther understood that we bring nothing to the table before God because of both the sins we have committed as well as the sinful nature we inherited from our parents. Erasmus, on the other hand, believed that while man does not save himself, man

⁵² Robert Pazmino. *Foundational Issues in Christian Education: An Introduction in Evangelical Perspective* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 2008), 152.

does play an active role in seeking God out, and that is done through a classical education. In this way, Erasmus followed the more traditional Roman Catholic understanding of free will.

Thus, the final piece of the puzzle was the newfound understanding of Reformation theology which set it apart from Rome.

All the points of difference, however, may be reduced to three comprehensive and fundamental principles, the wide-reaching significance of which can hardly be exaggerated. They are the fundamental principles of Protestantism, and may be stated as follows: 1) The Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are the only rule of faith and practice in matters of religion. 2) Man is justified by faith alone; and 3) All believers become kings and priests to God.⁵³

The change to these core principles of Protestantism signaled not only a change to the Christian Church, but also to the nature of education. An emphasis on the Holy Scriptures promoted increased attention to education. Prior to this time, emphasis on education had waned.

A notable and lamentable fact in the educational arrangements of the Middle Ages was the neglect of the common people. No general effort was made to reach and elevate them by education. The ecclesiastical schools were designed chiefly for candidates of the priesthood; the parochial schools fitted the young for Church membership; the burgher schools were intended for the commercial and artisan classes of the cities; knightly education gave a training for chivalry. Thus the laboring classes were left to toil on in ignorance and want; they remained in a dependant and servile condition, their lives unilluminated by intellectual pleasures.... Popular education was the outgrowth of the Reformation.⁵⁴

The emphasis on being able to read the Holy Scriptures forced the Reformers to take seriously the charge to teach all classes to be able to read and write. Indeed, Luther goes so

⁵³ FVN Painter. *Luther on Education* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2001), 55.

⁵⁴ FVN Painter. *Luther on Education* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2001), 87.

far as to advocate that all girls should be taught to read and write, which was unheard of in his day.

It was natural, therefore, that he should emphasize religious instruction, and make the Scripture prominent in schools of every grade. “Above all,” he says, “in schools of all kinds the chief and most common lesson should be the Scriptures, and for young boys the Gospel; and would to God each town had also a girls’ school, in which girls might be taught the Gospel for an hour daily, either in German or Latin! ...”⁵⁵

An emphasis on justification by faith as the core of the Christian faith led to Luther developing other doctrines that continued to create a unique new educational philosophy.

There are three areas of Evangelical theology which, perhaps more than any other, provide an understanding of the Evangelicals’ pedagogical views: Baptism, vocation, and catechesis. Baptism reveals the Lutheran understanding of the nature of man. Vocation reveals the purpose of man, and consequently to what end a child should be educated. Catechesis reveals how man would come to realize his nature and purpose.⁵⁶

Thus, with this doctrinal background, the Reformers (Evangelicals) could operate liberal arts schools that in many ways mirrored the Renaissance humanist institutions of their day.

However, they had a reason to educate people who might normally be missed by that system.

The Reformers (Evangelicals) then created systems, largely under Bugenhagen, that worked to blend this doctrinal identity with a liberal arts curriculum first adapted by Augustine and now changed for a new day and age.

Taken together, the humanistically molded liberal arts and the Evangelical understanding of the catechism presented a model that dealt with the old sinful man and the new righteous man preparing Christians to live simultaneously

⁵⁵ FVN Painter. *Luther on Education* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2001), 147.

⁵⁶ Thomas Korcok. *Lutheran Education: From Wittenberg to the Future* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2011), 34.

under the Law and the Gospel, in the kingdom of the left and the kingdom of the right, to be served by God and to serve their fellow man.⁵⁷

Based upon this emphasis of the liberal arts, the Reformers (Evangelicals) set in order an educational system that would reflect their faith.

There are three characteristics in this order that would be reflected in many of the school orders to follow. First, instruction was to be conducted in Latin so that the children would be furnished with the ability to communicate eloquently and effectively. Second, like the humanists, the Evangelicals were concerned that education not be overwhelming to children. They wanted a child's exposure to classical education to stimulate his interest and desire to progress through the arts to higher learning. Finally, the children were to be divided into different groups according to their level of learning and abilities...

The Evangelical pedagogues held to the medieval tradition that every seventh year brought change into a child's life. At age seven, a child entered into childhood; at age fourteen, a child was introduced to the world; and at age twenty-one, a young man was ready to assume his place as a contributing member of society in marriage and the workforce. This view of childhood corresponded with the different stages of learning into which the trivium was divided. Age seven was the ideal age to begin learning grammar, by age fourteen they were equipped with the tools for logic, and at twenty-one they would have mastered the rhetorical arts.⁵⁸

In this model, Luther and the Reformers (Evangelicals), like most of their contemporaries, understood that the place for the youngest children, those below age seven, belonged in the home receiving the earliest education at the hands of their parents. Thus, while Luther gives much attention to sending children to Christian schools and he gives much attention to training in the home and the vocation of parenting, there is little to no background of

⁵⁷ Thomas Korcok. *Lutheran Education: From Wittenberg to the Future* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2011), 61.

⁵⁸ Thomas Korcok. *Lutheran Education: From Wittenberg to the Future* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2011), 74-75.

Luther's views on early childhood education as it is commonly understood today applying to children under age five.

A New Emphasis on Education in the New World

The educational system that Luther and the other reformers established in Germany during the time of the Reformation (1500's) remained largely unchanged in terms of format. On the outside, it emphasized a broad education based on the liberal arts. While the system didn't necessarily change, a number of forces converged in the late 1700's and early 1800's to create tensions within both the educational system and the Lutheran Church as a whole. This led to a mass exodus of confessional Lutherans from Germany to the United States and the establishment of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod. This Saxon migration, as it has sometimes been called, was a move that would reshape the Lutheran Church in its emphasis on education in an exciting new direction for the nineteenth century and beyond.

The first of these forces was a result of enlightenment thinking upon the church, often called rationalism. Like the Renaissance humanism in Luther's day, enlightenment rationalism consisted of a broad range of beliefs that are difficult to classify. Largely, however, it was a movement that sought to understand the nature of things. While some of these rationalist thinkers were better classified as deists who were outside the Christian faith, there was also a movement of rationalism that attempted to remain within the Christian Church while changing it to be more relevant to the intellectual understandings of the day.

Unlike the radical deists who discarded the heritage of Christian doctrine, the moderate rationalists reinterpreted historical Christian doctrine in the context of Enlightenment philosophy. They wanted to reshape the Christian faith into what they believed would be a more reasonable religion that would have broad appeal to the modern understanding and intellect.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Thomas Korcok. *Lutheran Education: From Wittenberg to the Future* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2011), 96.

As a result of rationalism, emphasis within the church began to call into question the existence of miracles in the Bible. In addition, sermons began to emphasize practical content that was more relevant to the average person in place of the saving message of Jesus Christ. This became a difficulty for confessional Lutherans like C.F.W. Walther. “Walther believed that these rationalists were so preoccupied with the so-called “practical matters” of temporal life that they had abandoned the chief concern of the Christian faith – eternal life.⁶⁰”

While rationalism challenged the church to become more “relevant” and “practical” in the daily life of an individual, another challenge came in the form of pietism, which tended to focus on Biblicism. Pietism tended to emphasize the faith of the individual above and beyond the corporate confession of the church. Thus there was an emphasis within pietism on how one was to live out their Christian faith. This is where rationalism and pietism overlap.

According to the Confessional Lutherans, both theologies resulted in a theology based on works, and both allowed for the participation of the individual on coming to faith. Walther saw that although pietism and rationalism approached theology from two different directions both confused the historic Lutheran distinction between the Law, which served to bring the sinner to repentance, and the Gospel, which alone gave the new life in Christ.⁶¹

A final attack on the confessional Lutherans came from an increased German nationalism. Seeking to recover from the Napoleonic wars, Prussian King Friedrich Wilhelm III sought to unite the Lutherans and the Reformed under one state church. While this was acceptable and even supported by the rationalists and pietists, the confessional Lutherans rejected it completely.

⁶⁰ Thomas Korcok. *Lutheran Education: From Wittenberg to the Future* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2011), 98.

⁶¹ Thomas Korcok. *Lutheran Education: From Wittenberg to the Future* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2011), 101.

Since the Prussian Union demanded that the Lutherans surrender their confessional stance, the confessional theologians, who opposed the Union, affirmed that the orthodox view of the confessions was the only allowable position for the Church to take. Anything else would result in a compromise of their confessional integrity.⁶²

The convergence of rationalism, pietism, and German nationalism soon sent the confessional Lutherans looking for a place where they could practice their faith without intrusion. A noted battleground was the schools, which emphasized right living above a broad based education.

While not a factor in the exodus, it is helpful to understand that because the Saxon Lutheran pastors frequently acted as representatives of the state regarding parish schools, the battle over rationalism was joined often at the level of parish schools. . . . The dissenting Lutheran pastors who tried to correct perceived rationalism in the school's instructional program were at risk of being reported to those above them in authority⁶³.

One educator named Johann Friedrich Oberlin (1740-1826) was at the center of this controversy because of his emphasis on vocational training and moral living in place of the traditional liberal arts curriculum. Oberlin was a pietist Lutheran pastor who had been called to a congregation near Strasborg. Not only was he strongly directed by his pietist theology, he was also profoundly influenced by rationalist thinking.

Oberlin also initiated a program of early childhood education in which he enrolled children as young as three with the hope that they might be saved from what he considered to be the corrupting influence of their parents. This represents a remarkable departure from Luther. Whereas Luther elevated the role of the *Hausvater*, making him the chief catechist of his children, Oberlin

⁶² Thomas Korcok. *Lutheran Education: From Wittenberg to the Future* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2011), 103.

⁶³ William C. Rietschel. *An Introduction to the Foundations of Lutheran Education* (St. Louis: Concordia Academic Press, 2000), 25.

viewed the *Hausvater* as a corrupting influence from which children need saving.⁶⁴

This is one of the few areas where we see early childhood education highlighted in the discussion, yet even here, the emphasis is more on the role of the father of the house as the spiritual head of the family than it is directly about early childhood education.

Nevertheless, it emphasizes the increasing tensions between the confessional Lutherans and these other groups as pietism and rationalism often worked with similar ideals.

Rarely did Lutherans have trouble with the methodologies of nineteenth-century German schools. Indeed, when they established their own confessional school system in North America, they incorporated many of the practices previously established by the German pedagogical reformers. Just as it was doctrine that separated Luther from Erasmus in the sixteenth century, so it was doctrine that separated the confessionalists of the nineteenth century from their pedagogical opponents. There were, however, five areas of nineteenth-century pedagogy that presented problems for the confessionalists: the nature of God, the nature of man, the knowledge of God, the role of psychology in catechesis, and the use of education to promote nationalism.⁶⁵

With such a distinction between the confessional Lutherans and these other groups, tensions often flared when confessional pastors were placed with rationalist schoolteachers.

Eventually the increasing frictions led a large group of confessional Lutherans to leave their homes in Saxony for religious freedom in the United States of America under the head of Bishop Martin Stephan. This move to the United States allowed this group of confessional Lutherans that would later be known as the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod to establish a uniquely Lutheran school system for the new world.

⁶⁴ Thomas Korcok. *Lutheran Education: From Wittenberg to the Future* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2011), 109.

⁶⁵ Thomas Korcok. *Lutheran Education: From Wittenberg to the Future* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2011), 111.

The emphasis on education was tightly connected to the creation of this new community and schools were a priority from the very beginning. “In a sense, the Missouri Synod opened its first school when Martin Stephan and his group of Saxon dissenters set sail from Germany in 1838. Their emigration code stated that ‘during the voyage the children shall receive necessary instruction.’⁶⁶” Not only was instruction for the children important during the voyage, but one of the first items of business upon reaching St. Louis was to rent a two-story building to establish a school. Later, when a community was being set up in Perry County, the establishment of a school was indeed a high priority. Thus began a pattern amongst the Missouri Synod Lutherans of starting churches and schools at the same time.

The Synod’s strategy was to have a Lutheran school in every congregation. The usual scenario was the simultaneous establishment of a congregation and school. Occasionally, a school was built prior to the establishment of the parish. The premise for all of this activity was that the founders of the Missouri Synod generally considered Lutheran schools to be a “self-evident and simple necessity. In their constitution... no congregation or parish could become a member of Synod unless it maintained a school for its children.”⁶⁷

Building churches and schools went hand in hand for the Missouri-Synod. These newly established schools were largely constructed in a fresh adaptation of Luther’s liberal arts curriculum used in Germany without the emphasis on rationalism and with a heavy dose of confessional Lutheran training. Just as in Luther’s day, doctrine once again took a high place in not only what is taught in the schools, but how and why the schools are formed in the first place. “The doctrinal forces that animated the Reformation-era model of education – namely Baptism, vocation, and catechesis – resurfaced in the pedagogy of the Missourians.

⁶⁶ William C. Rietschel. *An Introduction to the Foundations of Lutheran Education* (St. Louis: Concordia Academic Press, 2000), 31.

⁶⁷ William C. Rietschel. *An Introduction to the Foundations of Lutheran Education* (St. Louis: Concordia Academic Press, 2000), 31.

Like their sixteenth-century counterparts, they used these doctrines to shape their new curriculum.⁶⁸

While the Missourians looked heavily at the work of the Reformers on education, this does not mean that they simply went back to the old ways. One of the most notable changes was the use of Luther's Small Catechism. Luther largely intended the catechism to be a prayer and devotional book for instruction in the home. Under Walther's leadership; however, the Small Catechism becomes the main text of teaching confessional truth to future generations.

In spite of Walther's affection for these same theologians, he and the rest of the Missourian pedagogues paid scant attention to the Orthodox theologians' belief that the development of Christian piety was the aim of catechesis. Thus, when Walther and his associates wrote about the catechism, it was portrayed as an abbreviated dogmatic textbook designed to supply the catechumen with a correct understanding of pure doctrine.⁶⁹

Likewise, Walther and the Missourians readily adapted Luther's use of the classical gymnasium for the older grades, but they sought to find something more practical to use in the lower "elementary" grades. Again looking to their Lutheran roots, they found a model of Lutheran education using the liberal arts in the work of Christoph Semler, an eighteenth century Lutheran pastor, who also avoided both rationalism and pietism. "He provided an example of a practical adaptation of the arts that was designed to prepare children to live in a

⁶⁸ Thomas Korcok. *Lutheran Education: From Wittenberg to the Future* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2011), 205.

⁶⁹ Thomas Korcok. *Lutheran Education: From Wittenberg to the Future* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2011), 213.

modern setting, while at the same time maintaining the historic doctrinal and pedagogical formulations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church.⁷⁰”

Having established a plan for the education of both younger and older students, little attention was given to the youngest of the children. As noted earlier, Luther was steeped in the medieval understanding that the time for a child to begin formal education was at the age of seven. Walther and his contemporaries saw little need to question this assumption in the establishment of their schools. It was simply understood that the place for children under five was in the home. These principles were challenged with the kindergarten movement at the turn of the century.

The first kindergarten was clearly in the Missouri-Synod’s view since it began in St. Louis. Among other things, one of the reasons for starting kindergarten was to Americanize immigrants, like the Missouri-Synod Lutherans, faster by getting them away from their immigrant parents at a younger age. Having gone through the issues in Saxony once already, the Missouri-Synod Lutherans readily objected. “The qualities that made kindergarten attractive to the American educators were the same qualities that made it objectionable to Missourian educators.⁷¹”

It was clear to the Missourians that formal programs of early childhood education, such as kindergarten, were to have no place in the Lutheran school. The only proper location for the education of children lay in the home. Parents were the child’s God-given teachers and nothing could replace the influence of a pious and godly mother in the early years of a child’s development. Parents were adjured to take this matter seriously, teaching their young children the catechism and Bible stories that they might learn true Christian

⁷⁰ Thomas Korcok. *Lutheran Education: From Wittenberg to the Future* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2011), 216.

⁷¹ Thomas Korcok. *Lutheran Education: From Wittenberg to the Future* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2011), 218.

piety from infancy on. When they were old enough to read and write, then they could attend a school where teachers would continue to build their piety by teaching them the catechism and the subjects associated with the liberal arts.⁷²

A Look at Contemporary Early Childhood Education from a Lutheran Perspective

Despite this initial resistance to early childhood education by both the Reformers in the sixteenth century and the confessional Lutherans of the nineteenth century, early childhood education has been mainstreamed into the Lutheran educational system. Today, it is a rarity that an elementary school, Lutheran or public, would not offer some sort of kindergarten, most of them offering full day programming. Furthermore, while both the enrollment and the number of Lutheran schools is currently declining, the number of Lutheran churches offering some sort of early childhood education in the form of preschools and childcare centers is on the rise.

By the time William Rietschl wrote his book, *An Introduction to the Foundations of Lutheran Education* in 2000 there was already an understanding amongst Missouri Synod Lutherans that it was in these earliest grades that the church is serving people from outside of traditionally Lutheran families and thereby helping the church fulfill the Great Commission.

A biblical theology of mission has evolved that still acknowledges the Lutheran school's primary end of promoting and nurturing the faith, but that also stresses the Great Commission: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matt. 28:19-

⁷² Thomas Korcok. *Lutheran Education: From Wittenberg to the Future* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2011), 219.

20). The main command or goal of the Great Commission is “to make disciples” and is accomplished by “going,” “baptizing,” and “teaching.”⁷³

Understanding “God’s Education manifesto as ... “making disciples”” changed the Lutheran school paradigm. No longer is the end of Lutheran schooling to “just teach, or only share the faith”; now a purpose of the school is to focus upon non-Lutheran and non-Christian parents and students “becoming responsible members of the body of Christ – disciples” through the work of the Holy Spirit.⁷⁴

This change in the Lutheran school paradigm causes us to ask the question about the state of early childhood education in the Missouri Synod today. However it is also within this new paradigm that early childhood education, like that of the Open Arms Institute, seeks to fill a need in today’s culture to meet families increasing need for care of these youngest children while also being faithful to the Great Commission’s call to go and make disciples.

The reshaping of the educational philosophy of the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod occurred in conjunction with a reshaping of its mission and purpose for the church as a whole. The Missouri Synod had always been deeply committed to missions and outreach as part of its commitment to Christ’s Great Commission in Matthew 28, including Native Americans, freed slaves, as well as foreign mission efforts to name a few. However, the bulk of its efforts and the majority of its success was predicated on reaching out to the settlements of Germans who had immigrated to the United States during the 1800’s. In addition, the early positions of the Missouri Synod when it came to use of the German language and the education of children in the public schools tended to create a relatively isolationist and protectionist attitude in many of its members, congregations and even its church workers. In many ways, it is an issue that the Missouri Synod continues to struggle with today. How does

⁷³ William C. Reitschel. *An Introduction to the Foundations of Lutheran Education* (St. Louis: Concordia Academic Press, 2000), 71.

⁷⁴ William C. Reitschel. *An Introduction to the Foundations of Lutheran Education* (St. Louis: Concordia Academic Press, 2000), 72.

the church remain faithful to its beliefs while also remaining faithful to the call to share those beliefs with others?

This broader issue has not been lost on those involved in Lutheran education in the Missouri Synod. In fact, with education playing such a prominent role in the background and formation of the synod and its churches, it is only natural that education would also play a crucial role in a discussion on the mission of the church. The discussion in the Lutheran education circles of the Missouri Synod can be seen through the work of two of its largest universities producing Lutheran teachers: Concordia University Chicago and Concordia University Nebraska.

The winter 2007-8 edition of *Issues in Lutheran Education*, the Lutheran education magazine from Concordia University Nebraska, is dedicated to the topic “From Maintenance to Mission: Changing the Paradigm”. Within this issue, Robert Newton, District President of the California, Nevada, Hawaii District, writes a column entitled, “The Great Commissions: Given to Whom???” which attempts to couch the argument in these terms:

The so-called maintenance model, if the practice in many of our congregations is an indicator, answers his question by saying, “the unsaved need *to come* to church in order to hear the Gospel.” That assumes that Gospel proclamation locates primarily in the church (the gathered assembly of believers) around the ministry of the called pastor. The so-called mission model answers Paul’s question by saying, “The Gospel needs *to go* to the unsaved in order for them to hear.” That assumes that the Gospel locates primarily in the world around the ministry of the baptized in their everyday lives. The paradigm change is from a “coming or attraction” model of Gospel proclamation to a “going” model. This change in thinking is critical to understanding our Lord’s Commissions.⁷⁵

⁷⁵ Newton, Robert D. “The Great Commissions: Given to Whom???” *Issues in Lutheran Education*. Winter 2007-08.

In that same issue, Richard Boring, Executive for District Mission and Outreach in the Nebraska District of the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod, also wrote an article entitled “Marks and Assets of a Maintenance Congregation” which seeks to outline the differences between maintenance and mission churches. In it, he also describes this transition in the Missouri Synod.

The LCMS has had a strong history of gathering Lutherans. From 1850 to 1900, the church gathered immigrants from Germany – especially German Lutherans... From 1900 to 1950, the Lutheran Church was a reproducing church. The rural family was a large family. The father needed helpers on the farm. He may have even sent one or two children to Concordia College to become church workers. From 1950 to 1980, congregations in rural areas were sending churches. The young people moved from the farm to the city to find jobs and enter higher education. We planted churches in the cities to gather Lutherans who were living in the city. During these times, there was mission activity, but the focus was gathering and taking care of Lutherans.

The Church is in a new day. There are people coming over on boats and planes, but they are not German Lutherans. The rural community is growing old, and new families who are moving into the rural areas usually have no relatives living in the community. The youth are still moving to the city, but most are disconnected from the church. Rural and urban areas are finding new immigrants moving into their area. Suburbs are finding young families building houses and moving into their area. While we live in a society that is mobile, many who move are not usually looking for a church home. This suggests that the church needs to move from maintaining the status quo inside the church walls and engage the mission field God has placed in their community.⁷⁶

Schools are part of where Lutherans are engaging people in their community. Lutheran educators at the university level have clearly heard the challenge to be more missional as they train the next generation of teachers. In spring 2010, the same periodical, *Issues in Lutheran Education*, addressed the issue of missions in Lutheran education. There,

⁷⁶ Boring, Richard. “Marks and Assets of a Maintenance Congregation.” *Issues in Lutheran Education*. Winter 2007-2008.

Rev. Paul Hueneke and Rev. Dr. Anthony Steinbronn argue that “The aim and goal of *mission Lutheran education* is to help people make sense of their story in light of God’s story.⁷⁷” They lay out several Bible passages to support this understanding of mission Lutheran education.

There are many biblical passages that could ground our understanding of mission Lutheran education, but the primary passage is 2 Timothy 3:14-17. Missional Lutheran education is predicated upon:

1. Making known in the lives of all people the Holy Scriptures which are able to make a person wise for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ (for it is in the stories of Scripture that we are able to see His heart revealed and His saving intentions made known through His words and actions);
2. Thoroughly equipping, from infancy, God’s people for every good work that God has prepared for them to do through the use of Scripture for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.

In other words, Lutheran missional education seeks to make disciples through evangelism and edification. In this 2 Timothy passage, we have the testimony of Paul that ever since Timothy was an infant, Lois and Eunice were active in making known “the stories that really matter” in the life of Timothy so that he could know of his Savior Jesus and be thoroughly equipped for his life as a disciple.⁷⁸

They later refer back to the Great Commission in Matthew 28 as the basis of this dual understanding of evangelism and edification.

The mission and ministry of the church’s educational agencies is to make disciples of all nations. The Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20) lays the double obligation upon His educators: the strengthening of present disciples in their already existing discipleship and reaching out to those who are not yet disciples with the hope that they will become His disciples.⁷⁹

Using these two sets of Scriptures, they set out points for missional Lutheran education:

⁷⁷ Hueneke, Paul and Anthony Steinbronn. “What is Missional Lutheran Education?” *Issues in Lutheran Education*. Spring 2010.

⁷⁸ Hueneke, Paul and Anthony Steinbronn. “What is Missional Lutheran Education?” *Issues in Lutheran Education*. Spring 2010.

⁷⁹ Hueneke, Paul and Anthony Steinbronn. “What is Missional Lutheran Education?” *Issues in Lutheran Education*. Spring 2010.

- 1) The most important place for discipleship formation is the Christian home as parents are equipped to teach and model the Christian faith and life and to instill a biblical worldview and live God's design for living:
- 2) ... someone must be sent, and someone must preach the Good News...
- 3) It will be those congregations, schools, and church's educational agencies who, being led by mission Lutheran educators, will equip His servants for personal proclamation of the Good News as His living letters and ambassadors to the nations;
- 4) ... The Christian life can be summarized in two words: *faith* and *love*, through which every believer is placed midway between God and one's neighbor, becoming God's instrument of blessing as His missionary priests and people to the nations;
- 5) The modern Church follows in a long succession of bridge builders throughout history – Christians who have tried to relate the Biblical message to their particular cultures. Yet, if we are to build bridges into the real world, and seek to relate the Word of God to the hearts and minds of people in our day, we must be committed to three things: (1) a lifetime of studying God's Word; (2) a lifetime of studying and listening to the people we are seeking to edify and evangelize; (3) being His "incarnational bridges" as we communicate His Word and message in words and ways the hearer can understand (Romans 10:11-17).⁸⁰

Writing in the *Lutheran Education Journal*, the periodical of Concordia University Chicago, Michael J. Meissner argues that schools are uniquely positioned within the church for mission efforts because of their contacts with families who otherwise would not be in contact with a church. "If a student comes into your school program and remains through the 8th grade, they will be on campus a minimum of 13,860 hours. To get that same time in church, they would have to attend every Sunday for roughly 266 years!⁸¹" In addition, he comments that parent contact is made through pick-up and drop-off, ball games, extra-curriculars and interaction with the teacher. Indeed, the teacher interaction is crucial. "Day in and day out, teachers are involved in the lives of these families. They know when a student is sick and when parents are splitting up. They hear about siblings being born and grandparents

⁸⁰ Hueneke, Paul and Anthony Steinbronn. "What is Missional Lutheran Education?" *Issues in Lutheran Education*. Spring 2010.

⁸¹ Meissner, Michael. "Rethinking the Mission Strategy of our Lutheran Schools." *Lutheran Education Journal*. Volume 140, NO. 1. 2005. <http://lej.cuchicago.edu/historical-print-archive/lutheran-education-volume-140/issue-1/> (accessed July 27, 2013).

dying. The relations that develop in a classroom are huge and give us an incredible opportunity for sharing the Gospel in the right way at the right time.⁸²”

While Meissner is primarily addressing schools, the same elements can be seen with early childhood centers since they have an even greater number of unchurched and unconnected families utilizing their services.

No longer are schools viewed primarily as a tool for bringing people to churches where they can learn about Christ. Instead, churches are seen as places where “the body of Christ is built up” (Eph. 4:12) and equipped to share their faith. Schools become the mission field where the precious news of Jesus Christ is spread. The schools are where we come in contact with the community. The schools are where the unchurched gather. The schools are where faith conversations are safe for them. The schools are where we have relationships that give us the opportunity to share the message.⁸³

What makes Meissner’s article unique is that he attempts to provide methods and ways in which schools can actually reach out to the unchurched. In his opinion, while the concept of opening a school and inviting people to come is in a sense missional, Lutheran schools can be even more intentional by going to where people are and creating relationships with the families who are served by the school. He even encourages the creation of school missionaries to ensure that the school becomes the primary mission field.

This is essentially the same argument that Rev. Scott Snow, who formerly served as the Director of National Outreach for the LCMS, wrote about in the spring 2010 issue of *Issues in Lutheran Education* in an article entitled, “Missional Education Starts with Mission,

⁸² Meissner, Michael. “Rethinking the Mission Strategy of our Lutheran Schools.” *Lutheran Education Journal*. Volume 140, NO. 1. 2005. <http://lej.cuchicago.edu/historical-print-archive/lutheran-education-volume-140/issue-1/> (accessed July 27, 2013).

⁸³ Meissner, Michael. “Rethinking the Mission Strategy of our Lutheran Schools.” *Lutheran Education Journal*. Volume 140, NO. 1. 2005. <http://lej.cuchicago.edu/historical-print-archive/lutheran-education-volume-140/issue-1/> (accessed July 27, 2013).

and Mission Starts with the Heart of God”. There he argues that “Lutheran Missional Education, then, is all-encompassing and to be effective must involve every aspect of the Church’s education system, including: pre-schools and day cares, elementary day schools, junior highs, senior highs and the colleges, universities, and seminaries of the Church.⁸⁴” Not only does he argue that all levels of education in the church should be missional, but all aspects of the church should be missional.

In other words, missional education is a part of *everything we are and everything we do*. It includes: worship and preaching; music ministries and athletics; Sunday school; mid-week school and Vacation Bible School; men’s and women’s group ministries; young and adult educational small-group opportunities in homes, the church and throughout the community. Mission education and “being missional” encompasses more than accomplishing a few occasional mission-related activities.... Rather, being missional means “thinking ‘mission’ at every level.”⁸⁵

If we take the comments by Rev. Meissner and Rev. Snow seriously, there is an increased awareness of how missional Lutheran schools can be at all levels. Yet, in no area is this opportunity quite as strong as in early childhood programs. Writing in the spring of 2008 copy of *Issues in Lutheran Education*, Dr. Judith Christian, Director of Children and Family Ministry of the LCMS cited some interesting statistics. “The most recent Lutheran School Statistics (2006-07) reveal that the number of children enrolled in LCMS early childhood programs exceeds the total number of students in grades 1-8.⁸⁶” Those statistics are over five years old at this point. In that span, more early childhood centers (ECCs) have opened and a large number of parochial schools have closed. This only increases the need for congregations to be even more intentional about being missional with their ECCs. Dr.

⁸⁴ Snow, Scott. “Missional Education.” *Issues in Lutheran Education*. Spring 2010.

⁸⁵ Snow, Scott. “Missional Education.” *Issues in Lutheran Education*. Spring 2010.

⁸⁶ Christian, Judith. “The State of Early Childhood Education in the LCMS.” *Issues in Lutheran Education*. Spring 2008.

Christian states it clearly, “It is anticipated that the emergence of larger centers will continue, the majority of which will provide full-day child care for very young children.⁸⁷” While the rest of the Lutheran educational system predominantly serves members of area congregations, ECCs are unique in their demographics.

Lutheran early childhood centers serve a growing population of non-Lutheran children as well as children from families who openly claim no church membership. Among the 132,000 children enrolled in LCMS early childhood programs, 20 percent claim no church affiliation and 52 percent are reported to be non-Lutheran. It is estimated that among the non-Lutheran group, approximately half are not active in their reported churches.⁸⁸

The challenges to this mission are many. Most early childhood programs are self-funded, receiving little to no support from the congregation. This means that available funds for teaching staff are low, and few of the staff come from Lutheran backgrounds. While this provides an additional missional field, these are also the individuals who are doing most of the primary day to day contact with the families. If efforts are not intentional, an early childhood program can quickly lose its focus as a mission outpost. For this reason, a clear and healthy relationship must be established between the center and the congregation. “A growing number of early childhood centers serve as mission outposts from which a congregation is established. Where there is an established congregation, the role of the early childhood center in achieving Christ’s mission with the congregation must be clearly understood and articulated.⁸⁹”

⁸⁷ Christian, Judith. “The State of Early Childhood Education in the LCMS.” *Issues in Lutheran Education*. Spring 2008.

⁸⁸ Christian, Judith. “The State of Early Childhood Education in the LCMS.” *Issues in Lutheran Education*. Spring 2008.

⁸⁹ Christian, Judith. “The State of Early Childhood Education in the LCMS.” *Issues in Lutheran Education*. Spring 2008.

A History of the Open Arms Institute

From its inception, the Open Arms concept centered on the early childhood center being focused on mission and outreach while maintaining the Lutheran emphasis on education. In 1985, the congregations of the English District of the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod were each challenged by their Mission Executive Rev. Robert Scudieri to plant a congregation. One of the congregations to take that challenge to plant a congregation was The Lutheran Church of the Ascension in Buckhead (Atlanta), Georgia led by the Rev. Phillip Kuehnert. After some conversation and planning, a potential location was identified in nearby Alpharetta, Georgia, about 20 miles away. However, the cost of the land seemed to make a traditional church plant too difficult to manage. Instead of giving up or changing locations, those involved at the church began to wonder “...if an income-producing ministry, such as a Christian child care center, might provide some financial support to offset the high cost of the land.”⁹⁰ Soon, the congregation began to explore early childhood ministry.

As the congregation researched early childhood ministry for the mission plant, they quickly realized a need for childcare at the Buckhead location as well. Instead of choosing to take on early childhood ministry at one location or the other, the congregation voted to support both childcare ministries simultaneously. This meant doubling the resources and funds needed for startup. The Lutheran Church of the Ascension was not alone in this process. The English District eagerly partnered with the congregation in order to provide connections and support to see whether this concept of planting congregations with childcare centers could not only survive, but be replicated as a model for other church plants. With the success of these two childcare centers in the Atlanta area and the potential of this model, the

⁹⁰ Rev. Dr. Phillip Kuehnert, *The History of the Open Arms Institute*, (Loveland, CO: The Open Arms Institute, 2007), 2.

concept of “Open Arms” was born. By 1990 the Lutheran Church Extension Fund (LCEF) also began to partner with the project in order to both serve the work of the church and to minimize the financial risks involved.

During this time, the model was in the early phases of being replicated. Two locations in Arizona as well as two more locations in the Atlanta area opened over the first several years in the early 1990’s. “Each of these congregations and their Open Arms centers partnered in some sense toward the refinement of the Open Arms concept. The four Atlanta area centers, in fact, worked together quite closely, and cooperated in registering the trademark for the name and logo of Open Arms with the federal government in 1996.”⁹¹

When two of the key players took calls out of the English District, the work of Open Arms could have largely stopped. Rev. Bob Scudieri received a call to St. Louis to work at the International Center of the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod in the area of North American Missions. Rev. Phil Kuehnert accepted a call to Fairbanks, Alaska. Both however, in their new roles, continued their passion for developing the Open Arms concept.

With the Open Arms experiences in the Atlanta area, Rev. Kuehnert quickly recognized a need for childcare at his new location at Zion Lutheran Church in Fairbanks, Alaska. In this case, the purpose was not to plant a mission congregation, but rather to transition the entire church to a new location where they could more effectively minister to the community. In this way, Open Arms became a springboard to a separate campus while still facilitating relationships and connections with the congregation. This insight demonstrated that the Open Arms concept was useful for more than just church planting. It could also be utilized in an existing congregation’s mission and ministry.

⁹¹ Rev. Dr. Phillip Kuehnert, *The History of the Open Arms Institute*, (Loveland, CO: The Open Arms Institute, 2007), 2.

Meanwhile, from his new role in St. Louis, Rev. Scudieri continued to build upon the work done in the Atlanta area while he was in the English District. “In 1996, Dr. Scudieri, now called by the office of missions of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, collaborated with Rev. Kuehnert and the Synod’s Department of Children’s Ministry to establish a means to develop and share this approach to the planting of new congregations.⁹²” Together these groups worked “... to bring together a group of experts on using childcare as one part of a strategy to begin new LCMS congregations⁹³” known as the Open Arms taskforce. The task force was given the following charge:

The basic job of this task force will be to encourage districts to begin new missions with a childcare center. To do this they will:

1. Promote the vision of church planting and childcare.
2. Review existing materials and advise about changes to improve them.
3. Organize, promote an annual meeting of executives, LCEF Vice Presidents and childcare consultants to update and encourage districts to plant churches with childcare centers.
4. Promote a semiannual meeting hosted and organized by a church begun with a childcare center.
5. Develop a “resource” packet to share with districts, to include a manual for planting new churches with childcare centers, brochures which describe and promote this strategy, videos which promote dealing with childcare and which give information how to do this, and an active listing of strategies and practices followed by those successful with the concept of church plants with childcare.
6. Report to the North American Mission and the Early Childhood Department.⁹⁴

The vision of this taskforce was “A church whose passion for the Gospel-centered nurture and outreach plants churches.⁹⁵” The taskforce arranged for multiple conferences in

⁹² Martin Barlau, *The Open Arms Concept – A Record of Use by Congregations: An Annotated Study and Review* (Loveland, CO: The Open Arms Institute, 2013), 1.

⁹³ Rev. Dr. Phillip Kuehnert, *The History of the Open Arms Institute*, (Loveland, CO: The Open Arms Institute, 2007), 5.

⁹⁴ Rev. Dr. Phillip Kuehnert, *The History of the Open Arms Institute*, (Loveland, CO: The Open Arms Institute, 2007), 5.

⁹⁵ Rev. Dr. Phillip Kuehnert, *The History of the Open Arms Institute*, (Loveland, CO: The Open Arms Institute, 2007), 6.

order to make districts aware of the Open Arms concept as well as provide some training for its use. The taskforce however, was limited.

Neither Synod's Child Ministry Department nor North American Missions saw the maintenance of the taskforce as part of their charter. In planning meetings held either immediately before or after the conferences, the task force continued to plot its transition to a self sustaining 501(c) (3) organization that would carry on and develop the vision of planting churches with childcare centers.⁹⁶

Thus the Open Arms taskforce gave way to the creation of what is now called the Open Arms Institute. While the name has changed, the mission is still the same: "To provide encouragement and guidance for quality Christian childcare with new church planting and with existing congregations.⁹⁷" In order to carry out that mission, the Institute charges a small fee in the form of membership dues. "Congregations, judicatories, or recognized mission core groups may avail themselves of the materials and services of the Institute by applying for membership and paying a modest membership fee. The fee varies, depending upon the status of the ministry, and is always relatively modest so as not to be prohibitive.⁹⁸" In response to partnering with the Open Arms Institute, members receive the following benefits:

1. Members have the right to use the trademarked name and the logo for Open Arms.
2. Together we promote the image of quality Christian childcare for which Open Arms has become known.
3. Together we **discover and share new ways to enhance our service** to the Lord and His church;
4. We seek to **protect the trademark and logo** of Open Arms childcare for our exclusive use;
5. We provide **advocacy with the major entities** in church planting with childcare ministry such as:
 - The Lutheran Church Extension Fund
 - LCMS Child Ministry

⁹⁶ Rev. Dr. Phillip Kuehnert, *The History of the Open Arms Institute*, (Loveland, CO: The Open Arms Institute, 2007), 6.

⁹⁷ <http://openarmsinstitute.com/> (accessed 7/1/13).

⁹⁸ Rev. Dr. Phillip Kuehnert, *The History of the Open Arms Institute* (Loveland, CO: The Open Arms Institute, 2007), 8.

- Church Development Partners
 - LCMS North America Missions
 - Market Research agencies
 - District Missions, Education, and Early Childhood staff
 - Other Open Arms centers
 - Childcare management software providers
 - Curriculum and materials suppliers
 - Accrediting agencies
6. **Consulting services** as follows:
- **A first on-site consultation at cost**, usually in the preliminary stages to help a ministry evaluate the potential for successful church planting with childcare and to become acquainted with the Open Arms Institute and its services. Cost includes travel, lodging, meals, and task-related incidentals.
 - **Additional on-site consultations**, by formal agreement, at cost plus a modest consultant's fee of \$250 per actual 8-hour day on task, to assist with any stage of the developing ministry such as evaluation and interpretation of a Market Research Study, review of building plans, interviewing of prospective staff, etc.
 - **Limited informal phone consultations** at no cost.
 - **Extended phone consultations** with an assigned consultant, under formal agreement, billed at the rate of \$40 per hour, in lieu of daily consultant's fee.
7. A **Business Plan** template consisting of both the textual material and a self-calculating spreadsheet for projecting the financial viability of a proposed new ministry; required by the Lutheran Church Extension Fund for consideration of a loan.
8. A **discount** of \$500 on the cost of a Market Feasibility Study by one of the recommended providers.
9. A **Director's Guide** offering practical guidance for the successful operation of an Open Arms center, including a variety of forms for use by administrators.
10. A **Financial Procedures Manual** providing methods and procedures for ensuring the security and accuracy of the financial operation of an Open Arms center, and for proper reporting of finances.
11. A **Personnel Manual** to help deal with the growing technicalities in the area of employment.
12. A complete **Staff Handbook**, adaptable to a given ministry.
13. A complete **Parent Handbook** adaptable to a given ministry.
14. A 30 second **TV advertising spot** for Open Arms childcare, usable by any center with slight modification.
15. **Networking** with other centers and their staffs.
16. Occasional **newsletters, bulletins, and specialized conferences** for members.⁹⁹

⁹⁹ Rev. Dr. Phillip Kuehnert, *The History of the Open Arms Institute*, (Loveland, CO: The Open Arms Institute, 2007), 8.

While these resources are indeed extremely helpful for setting up a center, the Open Arms Institute still has its share of challenges as they seek to refine this ministry. Along with the positive reports of congregations thriving under the Open Arms concept, there are also a number of congregations that are struggling or have even failed for a variety of reasons including but not limited to: the management abilities of the director, the stability and support of the congregation, and poor research done in the early phases of the startup.

In response, the pastor of a new church plant with childcare ministry who comes out of a career in the business world is urging that the Institute develop a full-blown process for providing the place and program of ministry for a new mission. The challenges for a mission pastor and his core group to navigate through the unknowns to the point where they worship and conduct the Open Arms ministry successfully in their facility - these challenges are more than a new, young congregation or its pastor should be asked to bear. They would benefit from more of a turn -key solution to those early phases, and they would likely leap at the option if it were made available.¹⁰⁰

Comments like these have caused the Open Arms Institute to begin researching options where they not only serve in a consulting role, but they actually take a more active role in the management and training of the center in order to better equip congregations for success.

Conclusion

It was with this missional concept in mind, maintaining its Lutheran heritage while also being faithful in its call to *go and make disciples* that Resurrection Lutheran Church decided to open an early childhood center in their community. The challenges identified with carrying out the missional aspects of the ministry have been numerous. Even with the support of the Open Arms Institute and its knowledge and expertise, the Open Arms Center at

¹⁰⁰ Rev. Dr. Phillip Kuehnert, *The History of the Open Arms Institute*, (Loveland, CO: The Open Arms Institute, 2007), 12.

Resurrection has struggled under the weight of its own startup costs and has consequently been more involved in dealing with budgeting and management concerns than it has the missional aspects they intended. This is exactly what Dr. Christian was identifying nearly five years ago about the potential and challenges of missional early childhood ministry.

Dr. Martin Barlau, who has served as a teacher, principal, and Mission Executive for the Rocky Mountain District of the LCMS as well as in various positions within the Open Arms Institute, recently wrote an article for the Lutheran Education Association entitled, “The Case for Lutheran Christian Early Childhood Education.” It concludes with this statement which summarizes things well:

A Christian early learning center is a bridge for a congregation to the unchurched families of a community. No other program of congregational ministry can match it as a point of contact. It’s a place where God’s people can meet those who are not yet His people, get acquainted with them, develop a relationship with them, and allow them to feel the warmth and fellowship of God’s loving family.

The gulf between God’s family and the unchurched has grown much wider than it once was. It can be very difficult for someone who has been away from the Church for most of a lifetime to find the courage to draw closer once again. They need a “bridge” to cross that gulf, and they will walk that bridge to find secure childcare even if they do not walk it to find God. Yet in a Christian childcare center God’s Word is on the walls, in the air with Jesus songs, and on the lips of the staff and children. And when they enroll a child, they are signing up for an extended period of time. That time is needed for relationships to develop and barriers to come down.

A Christian early learning center can be a congregation’s strong response to the Lord’s command to make disciples. It can be a Lutheran school’s finest invitation for the right education for their own children. And it can be a doorway to eternity with God Himself for a child who might otherwise never know Him.¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹ Barlau, Martin. “The Case for Lutheran Christian Early Childhood Education.” *LEA Shaping the Future*. Fall 2012. <http://stf.lea.org/fall2012/feat3barlau.html> (accessed July 27, 2013).

CHAPTER FOUR THE PROJECT DEVELOPED

Introduction

Much of my purpose in enrolling in the Doctor of Ministry program in 2008 was to pursue additional education that would help me supplement what I had learned in my Master's of Divinity (MDIV) classes and from the experiences of the two parishes that I had served to that point. With the process of researching Open Arms, putting together a business plan, and going through construction, one might have thought my plate was full. Indeed, it was a stressful time for my family and me, but the Doctor of Ministry (DMIN) program has also served as a sort of sabbatical and respite that both equipped and prepared me for the shifts that were happening in my rapidly changing congregation. As soon as I learned about the Major Applied Project (MAP), I knew that my project would have to revolve around the key element to those shifts at Resurrection Lutheran Church in Sioux Falls, SD- the Open Arms Christian Child Development Center.

As Resurrection's Open Arms Christian Child Development Center progressed through its different phases: concept, pre-operational, and operational, I realized that while the Open Arms Institute gave sufficient material and advice to open an Open Arms Child Development Center, running it was a much more difficult matter. Indeed, as information indicated in the last chapter, this has been something that the Open Arms Institute has been attempting to solve for some time. More importantly, while the emphasis on mission and outreach is behind the purpose and identity of Open Arms, there was little research done as to effectiveness. In fact, many congregations that I was connecting with were struggling with the same issues that Resurrection had. The business operations of running the Open Arms Child Development Center actually utilized some of the resources (such as money and

volunteers) that made it difficult to fulfill the mission element for which it was built in the first place. Thus, my original plan was to work with the Open Arms Institute to develop a survey of members of the Open Arms Institute in order to determine the best practices of Open Arms Centers that were seeing positive results from their outreach efforts and then put together a plan for Resurrection Lutheran Church that could possibly be replicated in other Open Arms Centers.

Unfortunately, the primary individuals that I worked with during this process, Dr. Martin Barlau and Rev. Phillip Kuehnert both retired in 2013. This led the Open Arms Institute to find a new director in the fall of 2013 and do some internal reorganization. Due to the changes happening within the Institute at the time my study was taking place, they were no longer able to participate in the study. While this did close the door on what I still believe is an important study that could and should be done, it also opened other doors. While discussing my proposed research with pastors and congregations who were operating early childhood centers that were not associated with Open Arms, I found there was great interest in the results of my study beyond the Open Arms family. While the congregations in the Open Arms Institute are connected with at least an intent to use the early childhood center for outreach, there are also many congregations throughout the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod that are struggling with the same issues. In working with my advisor, Dr. Rick Marrs, we concluded that the same study could be conducted using early childhood centers (ECC's) in the same geographical region as Resurrection Lutheran Church. The following plan shares the details of that study.

The Design of the Study

The component that I am really trying to study is the number of individuals who are joining congregations whose primary contact is through the early childhood center (ECC). I do this fully recognizing that there is a significant argument that can be made that early childhood centers that are connecting families with non-Lutheran congregations are also being faithful to the Great Commission in Matthew 28, but unfortunately, I could not find a way to collect and measure that data. Instead, I chose to survey congregations that were operating early childhood centers and sent a survey¹⁰² requesting data from both the congregation and the early childhood center. Seventy-three congregations were sent a copy of the survey on November 1, 2013. Along with the survey was an introductory letter¹⁰³ identifying myself and the purpose of the survey. Churches were also sent a stamped envelope with a return address.

The surveys requested some statistical data from both the congregation and the early childhood center. Congregations were asked to include their baptized membership as of the original date of the letter. Baptized membership was requested because it includes the number of children who are members of the congregation prior to being confirmed. Since the students of most early childhood centers would fall into this category, it seemed the appropriate measurement. The early childhood centers were also asked to give their enrollment as of the same date. While this information wasn't crucial to the survey itself, it was used in helping to determine a method of identifying which congregations were seeing the best results from their outreach.

¹⁰² See Appendix One: Survey

¹⁰³ See Appendix Two: Survey Request Letter

The majority of the quantitative data used came from the second section in the survey regarding growth data. In this section, congregations were asked to identify the number of children and adults whose primary contact was from the early childhood center who: 1) worshipped at least four times over the past year, 2) were baptized in the past twelve months, or 3) joined the congregation over the past twelve months. In order to understand what is happening in the congregation, I also asked them for their data on how many baptisms and new members had joined the congregation in the past twelve months. It is possible that a congregation is not intentionally doing anything to connect with the people in its early childhood center and yet is seeing positive growth because of other factors. It is also possible that a congregation is seeing less growth than another congregation and yet is being more intentional in its attempts to create relationships with the people in its center. Community dynamics play a large role here. These questions attempt to provide some information to identify which congregations are really trying to reach out through their early childhood centers and seeing growth because of those efforts instead of simply identifying growing congregations that have early childhood centers that are run without intent to use them for outreach. Two congregations that responded to the study indicated this was their situation, and they did not start the preschool for outreach. One started the ECC to provide early childhood education primarily for children in their school. The other started their preschool program years ago simply because there was a need in the community for preschool and the church could support the community by filling that need. There was no intent initially, and there still is no intent to reach the community through it.

There were also two other sections included in the initial survey. The section entitled “Outreach Data” attempted to measure the congregation’s involvement with the center and

the perceived visibility of both the congregation and the early childhood center in the community. Finally, there was a series of questions that were intended to provide information that could be used to help determine what kind of intentions a congregation had to reach out to the families of the early childhood center. This information also helped create a structure for the follow-up interviews that would later be conducted.

Research Tools and Methodology

As the study moved away from a select group of congregations and early childhood centers that were associated with Open Arms, it meant that I had to find a suitable cross-section of congregations to survey. Because my efforts are primarily focused on people joining the congregation through contact with the early childhood center, the size of the congregation and the size of the early childhood center were less important than the numbers of baptisms, confirmations, and congregational visits that churches were seeing through the early childhood centers. The information about the size of both the congregation and the center were collected in order to help determine which congregations are intentionally connecting with the families in their early childhood centers.

Since congregational size and early childhood center size were less important to the survey, I made the decision to narrow the survey population by using people in similar geographic areas to Sioux Falls, SD. I reached out to Rev. Darren Olson, Executive Secretary of the South Dakota District, and was informed that there are twenty early childhood programs (both traditional preschools and daycares) in the South Dakota District. This was a smaller survey group than I had originally intended, and I felt that I needed to broaden the survey a bit to include a better cross-section of congregations with early childhood centers.

Again, working with Rev. Olson, I contacted Sean Martens, Director of School Services in the Minnesota South District. Being only twenty miles from the Minnesota border, Sioux Falls, shares many socio-economic and cultural traits with the Minnesota South District. In addition, I had been to a workshop in Minneapolis entitled, “A Missional Plan for Early Childhood Centers” in 2010 that was hosted by the Minnesota South District, so I knew that they had interest and support in being mission-minded with their early childhood centers. Mr. Martens passed along the contact information for fifty-three early childhood centers¹⁰⁴ in the Minnesota South District. Between the two districts, there were seventy-three locations¹⁰⁵ to survey.

The first phase of the study was to send out the Early Childhood Center Evangelism and Outreach Survey to these seventy-three locations. Following the return of the surveys, the data would be analyzed. Statistical and growth data would be used to identify congregations that were seeing growth through their early childhood centers. The rest of the survey would be used to provide a list of questions to be used in follow-up interviews. After congregations were identified by the statistical and growth data, they would be contacted for a follow-up interview that would be conducted on their site when possible.

Implementation of the Project

The project began in June of 2010 as I was taking DM – 955 “Project Researching and Writing Class”. I had known for a while that I wanted my research to involve our Open Arms Christian Child Development Center (which opened in March 2010), but the class

¹⁰⁴ I later found out that the list I received from the Minnesota South District was primarily those early childhood centers that were considered “free standing” as opposed to something operated in conjunction with a Lutheran School. Several of the centers that I heard very positive reports about were not listed in this survey because of this omission.

¹⁰⁵ See Appendix Three: List of Contact Centers

helped focus my research in a particular direction. Throughout the rest of 2010, I continued to refine and redevelop my project's concept.

On January 13, 2011, I sent my finalized proposal to Dr. David Peter, the head of the Doctor of Ministry program. At that time, I had included a concept of what my research survey would look like. A few weeks later, on January 28, 2011, I received communication from Dr. Peter that the project had been approved without any revisions. While the project proposal had gone through, I still had a majority of my coursework in the Doctor of Ministry program remaining.

Having the concept of the project identified and approved early enabled me to tailor my coursework towards my research and writing over the next few years (2011-2013). Several courses, most notably DM – 954 “Strategies for Evangelism and Assimilation” and DM – 999 “Independent Study¹⁰⁶”, were chosen during this time specifically to help me research content in a particular area. In addition, some of the required courses, especially DM – 900 “Pastoral Theology” and DM – 913 “Systematic Theology Today” were also extremely helpful in further developing key sections of my research. At times, I intentionally took fewer classes so that I could spend extra time in the library researching and writing.

In November 2011, I began working with the Open Arms Institute on a series of surveys that they were conducting in an attempt to get feedback from the directors on what they were doing for outreach. At the time we were hoping to coordinate the two studies, but it soon became apparent that the survey tools had a different scope and set of parameters. They were focusing primarily on qualitative feedback from directors, while I wanted some quantitative content regarding membership gains. Still, it was an opportunity to work with and get feedback from both Martin Barlau and Phil Kuehnert who both had extensive

¹⁰⁶ Self-titled “A History of Lutheran Education”.

experience in this area and a heart for outreach with early childhood educational centers. It also gave me a chance to get feedback on my research tool from Gary Goscenski, Director of Consulting Services for Perspectives Consulting Services. Gary has worked extensively with the Open Arms Institute to conduct market surveys about the feasibility of early childhood centers in particular areas¹⁰⁷.

After concluding my bibliographic research in August of 2013, I then began to work towards releasing the surveys to the originally intended population of Open Arms Centers in October of 2013. It was at this time that I found out about some major transitions happening in the Open Arms Institute due to both Martin Barlau and Phil Kuehnert retiring. The restructuring occurring at the Open Arms Institute led to them being unable to be involved with this survey. It took a month to recalibrate my original survey to the more regional concept that I eventually conducted.

Because it required information from both the church and the early childhood center, my assumption was that most forms were filled out by some combination of the pastor and the director of the early childhood center. Requiring information from multiple parties probably contributed to a lower rate of return than if I had used one respondent, but I felt I needed input data from both areas. Of the seventy-three possible surveys sent out, twenty-four were returned by Dec. 31st of 2013. This was after multiple attempts and follow-ups asking directors to please submit the surveys. While I would have loved to have a 100% response rate, my initial goal was to have thirty responses for a 40% response rate. With only twenty four responses, I had only a 33% response rate. Figuring the timing of the holidays may have played a role in my low response rate, I attempted one last push in early January to

¹⁰⁷ Gary Goscenski and Perspectives Consulting had also performed the initial market study for Resurrection Lutheran in 2007.

get additional responses. Because the district offices had only given me contact information for the early childhood centers, I attempted to look up each center and its corresponding congregation. An email request was then sent to each of the senior pastors of the congregations. These emails resulted in another eight surveys being returned. Getting people to respond to the surveys and fill them out was one of the most difficult and frustrating aspects of the entire process.

Once I received the responses, I began to analyze and sort through the data in order to determine which congregations were seeing the most membership gains through their early childhood center.¹⁰⁸ The results of this survey provided me with a list of congregations that were seeing gains of membership that I could then contact for a follow-up interview. In addition, the qualitative questions on the form gave me information to create a list of questions to ask during the interviews¹⁰⁹.

Of the responses that I received, there were two that were atypical because of their specific situation. One was from Sioux Falls Lutheran School, a school that is comprised of an association of churches that support it, including Resurrection Lutheran Church. Because of Sioux Falls Lutheran's makeup as an association school, they were not able to track the outreach data. They did fill out the other elements of the survey. I then took the opportunity to contact the pastors from each of the five association churches and compiled their data together for the rest of the survey. The other atypical response was a letter from Hand in Hand Child Care Center in St Paul. Hand in Hand is not operated by a congregation. They are operated by Concordia University in Saint Paul in order to train their education students. Because they are not connected to a congregation, they had no outreach data to provide.

¹⁰⁸ See Appendix Four: Survey Data

¹⁰⁹ See Appendix Five: Interview Questions

Having received my goal of thirty responses on January 13, 2014, I began to scrutinize the data to identify which congregations were seeing membership gains through their early childhood centers. Not surprisingly, there were a significant number of congregations that were seeing little to no growth through their early childhood centers. The surprising part was that the congregations that were seeing growth weren't seeing as much growth as I expected. While I was intending to survey only congregations with the highest ratio of growth data, the number of responses identified only eleven congregations that had seen any growth through baptisms or families joining their congregation. There were other congregations to which I was referred that were said to be doing good work in this area, but they did not complete the survey so I could not use their data. Therefore, these eleven congregations served as my focus for the follow-up interviews. Ideally, I could arrange interviews with at least seven of them.

Of those eleven congregations, one was vacant at the time, so I chose not to visit about what they were doing for outreach. Another church, the congregation with perhaps the largest numbers, indicated that it was doing little to nothing in the form of outreach on the survey, so I chose not to visit them. Two other congregations declined the opportunity to do interviews because of time conflicts. That left me with exactly seven congregations to interview. One of the benefits of completing the survey geographically was that I had the opportunity to go on site at each location to not only interview the individuals involved but also to see for myself what was happening. After the interviews were completed, I then had them transcribed. They are included in the appendices¹¹⁰ in the back. These responses were then used to develop the outreach plan for Resurrection Lutheran Church.

¹¹⁰ See Appendix Six: Interview Transcripts

CHAPTER FIVE THE PROJECT EVALUATED

Introduction

The purpose of this project was to be a descriptive process about what was happening in other congregations that were operating early childhood centers in order to use this information to help build an intentional plan of outreach at Resurrection Lutheran Church using its Open Arms Center. The project was really centered on two phases. First, there were surveys that went out to the congregations in the South Dakota and Minnesota South Districts of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod that are operating early childhood centers. This provided a great deal of information as to which congregations were seeing growth and some of the things that congregations were doing that contributed to that growth. Second, congregations that were seeing growth were selected for a follow-up interview which was conducted on site. Transcripts¹¹¹ have been provided. Some information has been redacted on both the surveys and the transcripts for privacy of the participating individuals, congregations and early childhood centers. This section will analyze the data provided from these two sources and then provide recommendations for Resurrection Lutheran Church about how the congregation can be more intentional in our outreach to the families in the Open Arms Center.

Analysis of the Evangelism and Outreach Survey

Seventy-three surveys were sent out to congregations in the South Dakota and Minnesota South Districts that were operating early childhood centers. Of the seventy-three

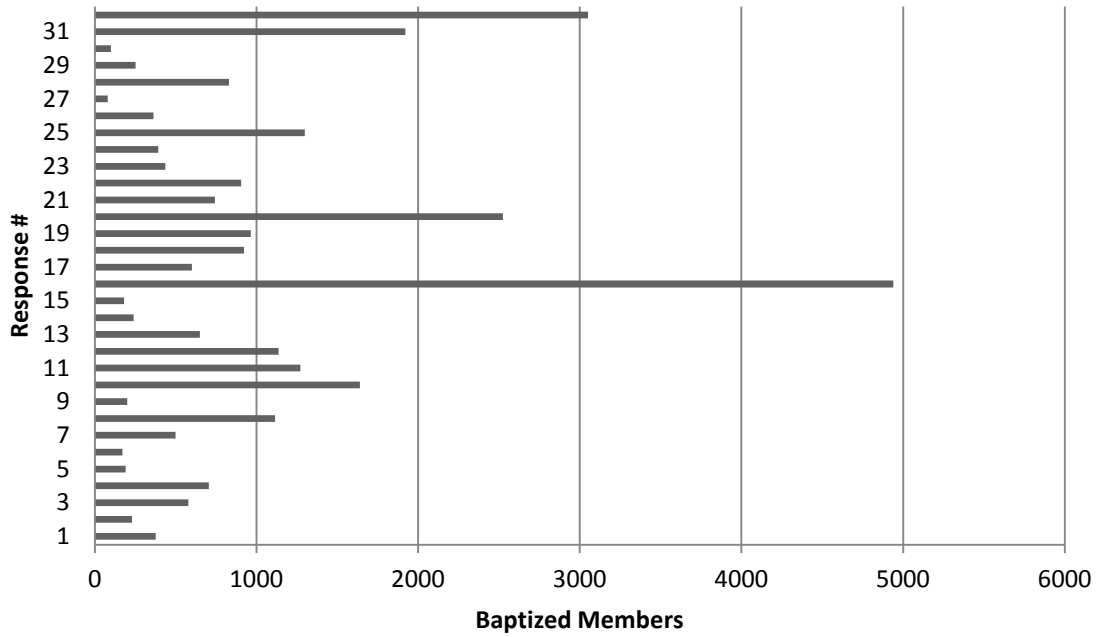
¹¹¹ See Appendix Six: Interview Transcripts

surveys that were sent out, thirty-three were returned. One of those surveys returned was not able to be used because it had no data provided, which left thirty-two usable responses. The survey was divided into four primary areas: 1) Statistical Data, 2) Growth Data, 3) Outreach Data, and 4) Survey Questions. The Statistical Data asked the size of both the congregation and the early childhood center. Growth Data attempted to measure which congregations were seeing families from the early childhood center in worship or were seeing an increase in baptisms and membership gains. The combinations of these two areas were used to identify congregations that were seeing positive growth and select them for follow up interviews.

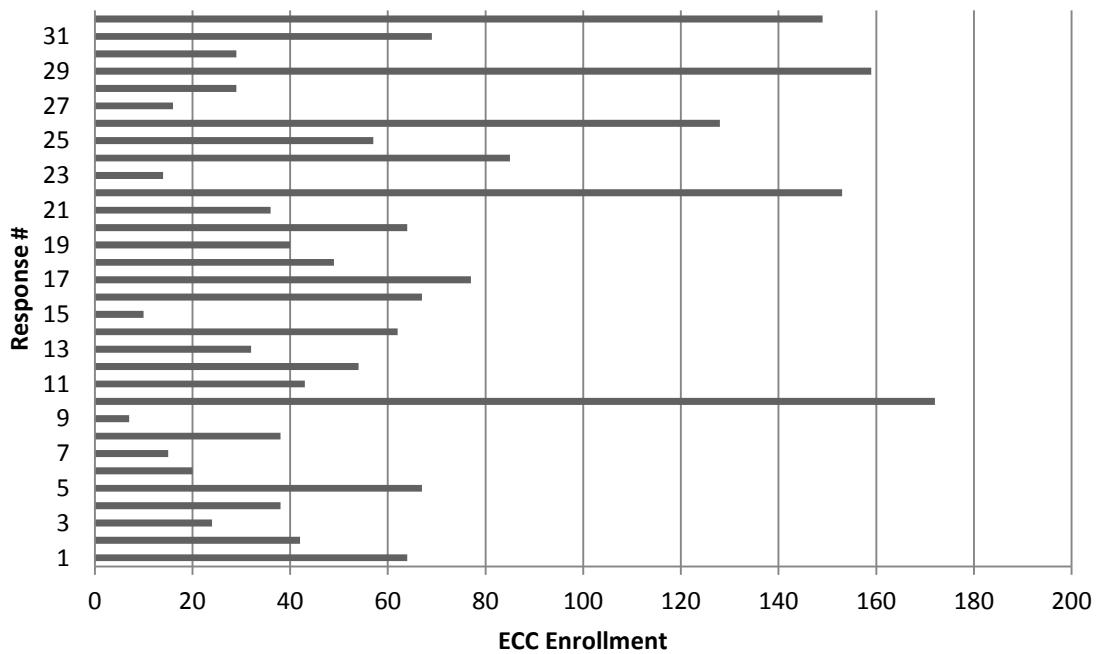
Statistical Data:

The statistical data provided below indicates the great variety in both the size of both the congregations and the early childhood centers. Congregations varied from 80 to 4,939 baptized members with a mean of 922 baptized members. The range for the early childhood centers was considerably smaller. The ECC's had between 7 and 172 students enrolled with a mean of about 60 kids. There was no obvious relationship between the size of the congregation and the size of the early childhood center.

**Graph 1:
Baptized Membership of Congregation**

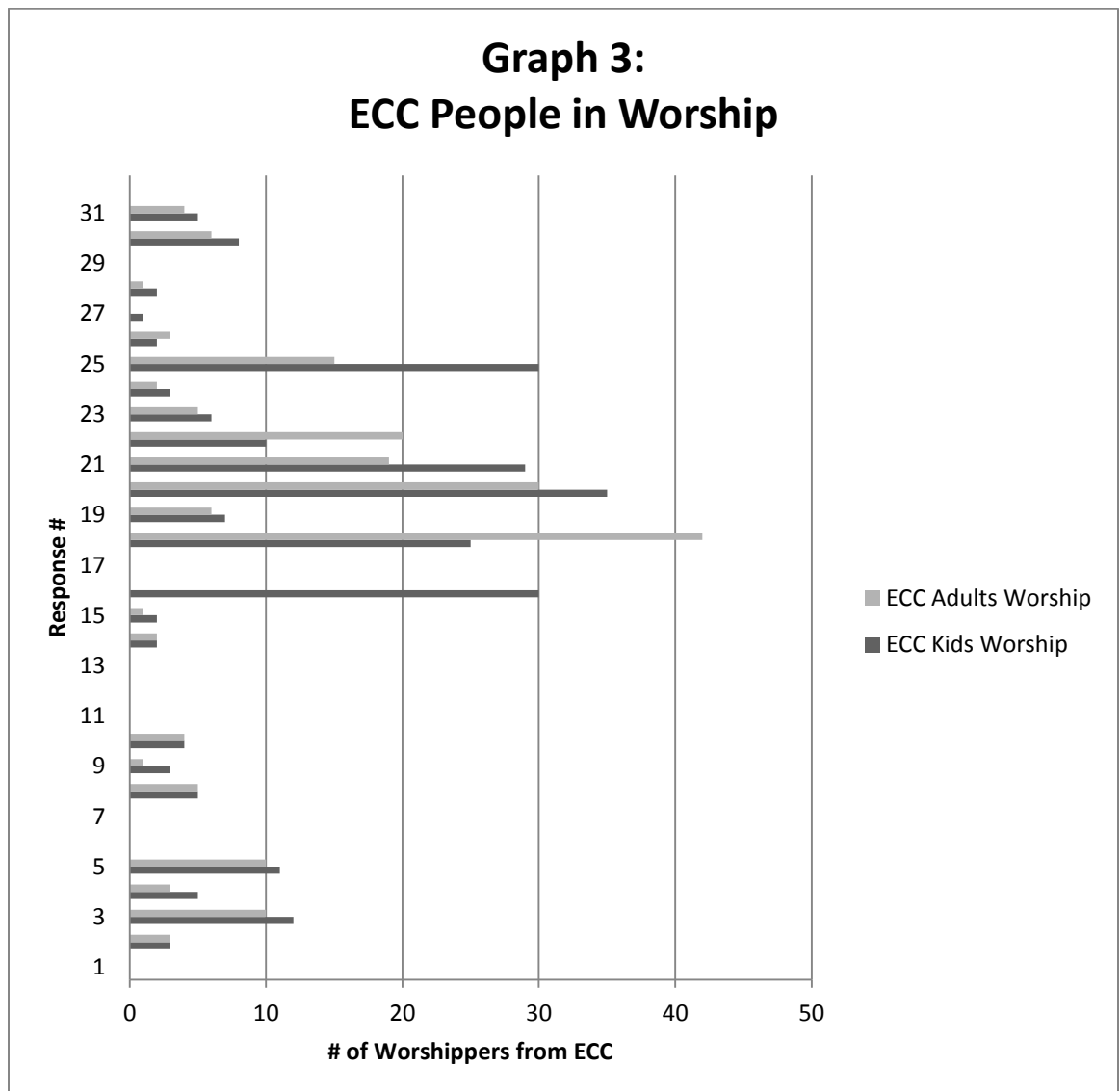


**Graph 2:
ECC Enrollment**

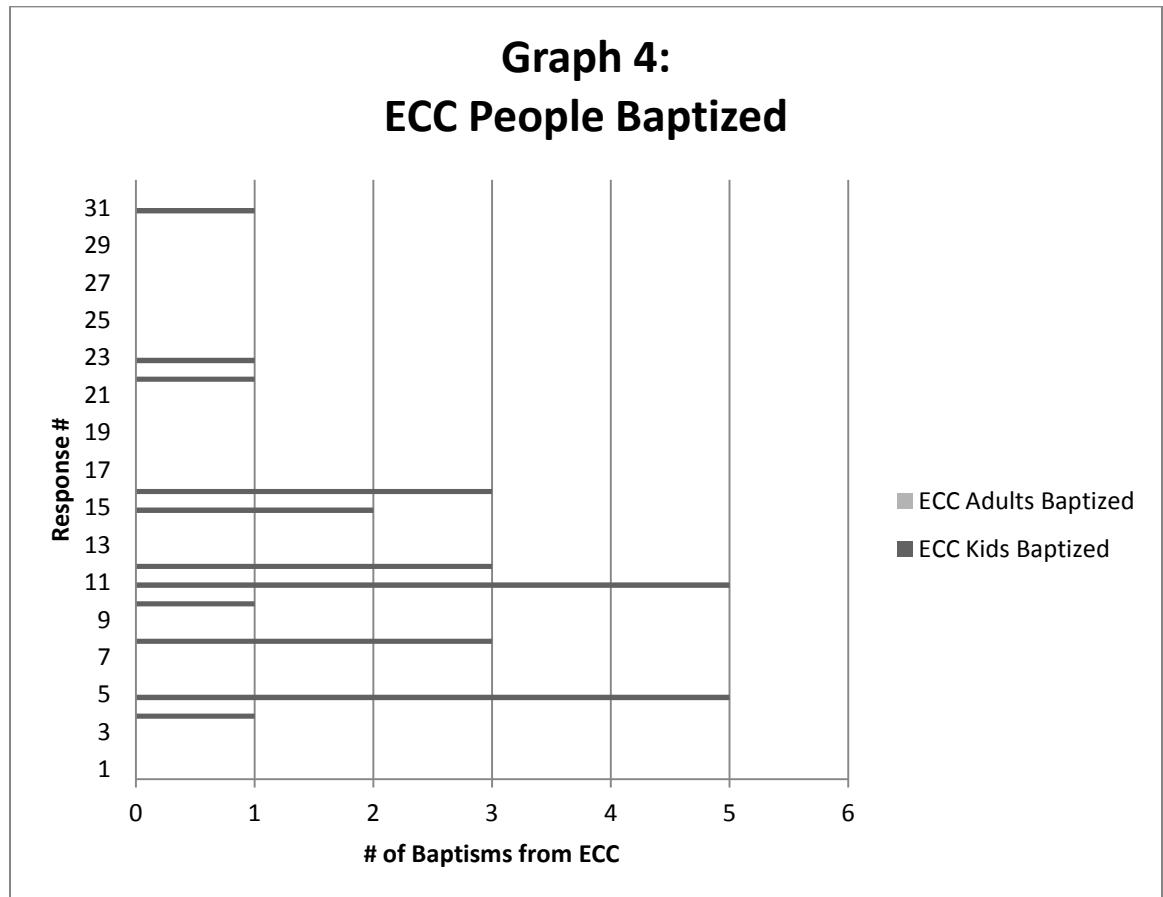


Growth Data:

While the statistical data gives a picture of the great diversity of the congregations and early childhood centers that were surveyed, more telling is the growth data. Again, the attempt of the growth data was to find out which congregations were seeing people join and assimilate into the congregation primarily through contact with the early childhood center. Surveys indicated that between 0 and 35 kids and 42 adults worshipped with the congregations from the early childhood centers. The mean was 7.5 kids and 6 adults.

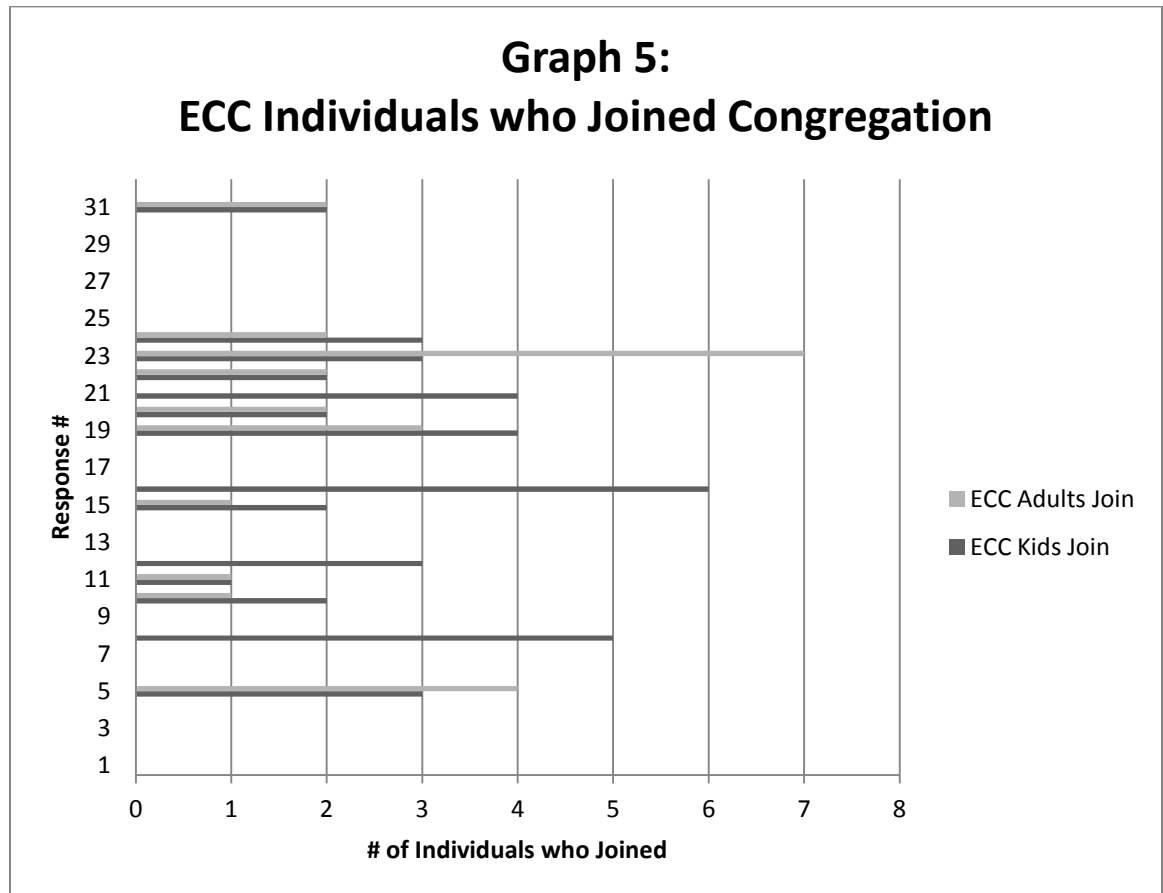


The above chart indicates that while several congregations are getting a fair number of families to visit about four times a year, there are a number of congregations indicating no visits at all. Roughly one third of the congregations reported that they had not had any families visit four times in a year.



Congregations indicated between 0 and 5 children being baptized through their ECC with a mean of .8125. There were no adult baptisms. Having surveyed Lutheran congregations, it is not a surprise that no adult baptisms were recorded. Baptisms in those congregations occur more commonly with infants and children. I did expect there to be more child baptisms because of that fact. Only eleven congregations indicated that they had baptized a child from the early childhood center in the past twelve months. Half of those congregations that did perform child baptisms through the ECC only indicated one. The

largest number of child baptisms was five. Perhaps my expectations were out of line, but I was expecting a few high responses to be near ten baptisms, a few more responses in the five to eight range, and a much larger number in the one to three range, with about half indicating no baptisms at all.



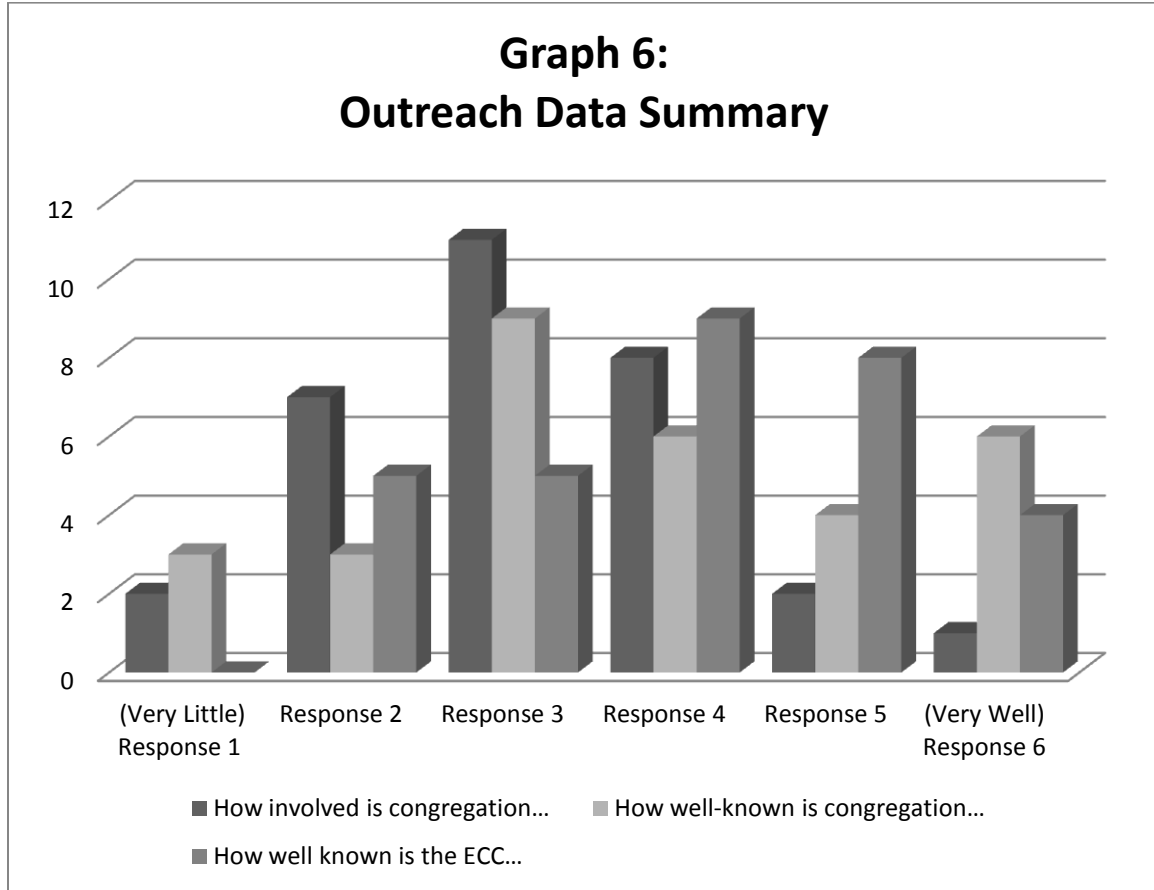
Responses to the surveys indicated between 0 and 6 children and 0 to 7 adults joined the congregation. The mean was 1.125 kids who joined and .78125 for adults. The amount of early childhood center children and adults who joined the congregation over the last twelve months continues the trend of falling below my expectations. Since I expected more baptisms, I also expected more families would be joining with their baptized children. Admittedly, this is not always the case. Some families only have their children baptized and do not become members. Other families have had their children baptized elsewhere before

they join. This chart seems to reflect the most congregations that are seeing families join are adding in the range of one to two families over the past year. I was expecting somewhere in the range of five to six families of different sizes.

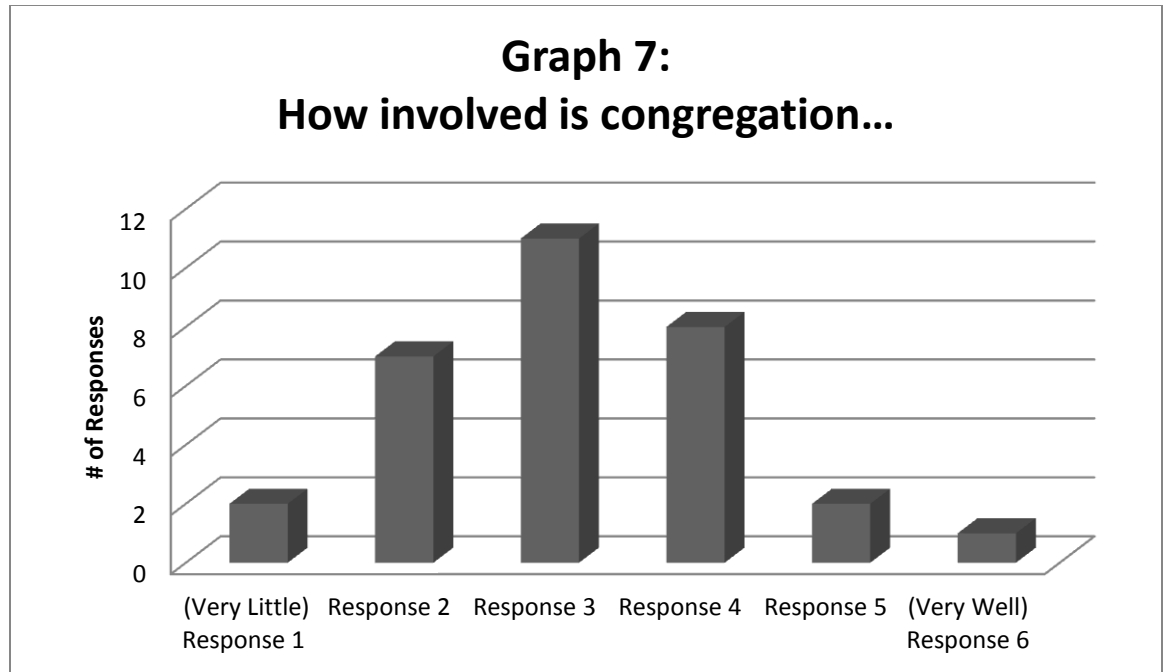
Overall, I was surprised by the Growth Data. While I had assumed that there would be a fair amount of congregations with little to no growth, I did not realize the extent of how many congregations were seeing no growth at all. I also did not accurately anticipate how little growth the congregations that were seeing growth were really having. Perhaps this could have been adjusted based on the size of the early childhood center in order to develop a ratio of which congregations were seeing the most growth, but with the responses I had, I did not feel this step was necessary to identify the congregations that were seeing growth.

The survey also included two areas that attempted to determine the congregation's involvement and intentionality in reaching out to the families of the early childhood center. One section entitled "Outreach Data" scored responses to questions on a scale in order to determine how successful they were in each of the listed questions. Somewhat predictably, answers to the outreach data were all over the board. The outreach data asked three primary questions. 1) How involved is the congregation with the staff, children and families of the center? 2) How well-known is your congregation amongst the members of your community? 3) How well do the members of your community know the early childhood center?

Outreach Data:

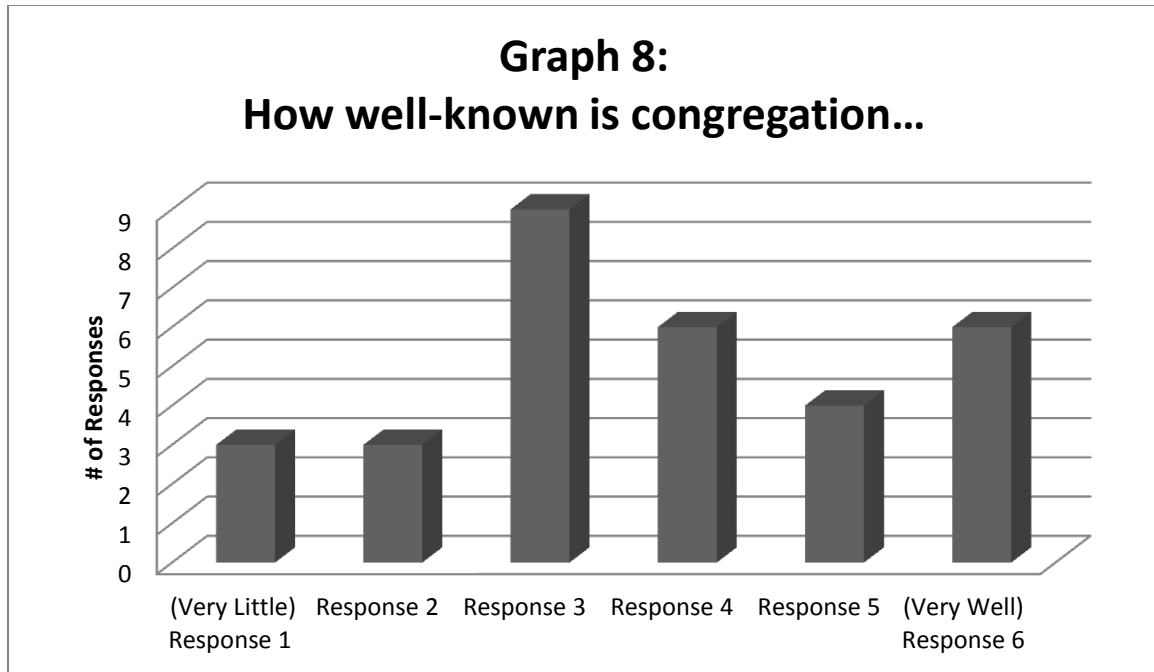


Whereas I estimated that congregations seeing somewhat positive results in their growth data would also project positive results in their outreach data, this did not necessarily seem to be the case. Some congregations that were seeing outreach growth indicated lower scores on the outreach data while some congregations that were experiencing little to no growth actually indicated rather high scores on the outreach data. This could be because the sliding scale really encourages the respondent to measure their perception of how well things are going in a particular area. Nevertheless, a closer look at the responses to each question provides some interesting information.



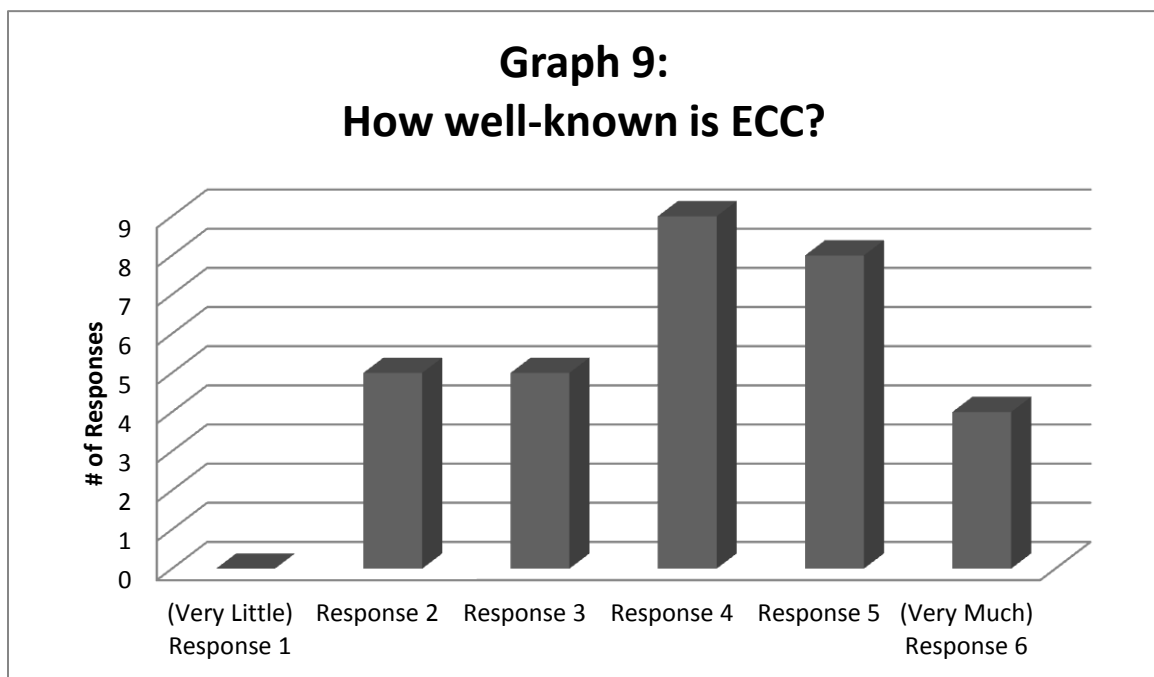
The first question was “How involved is the congregation with the staff, children, and families of the center?” The intent of the question was to get an idea of how intentional the congregation was in reaching out to the families in the early childhood center. Responses seemed to indicate that the majority of congregations were doing something, but they were not doing much when it comes to reaching out to the early childhood center families. Answers seem to cluster in the 2-4 range. Some comments praised their congregations support (usually through financial means), but there were also several comments that indicated that congregations were doing little to nothing in the way of outreach to the families of the early childhood center. When efforts were recognized, they were often praising the church staff, especially pastors, for their willingness to create relationships with those families. This makes some sense since the vast majority of the congregation is not on site during the hours of operation of most early childhood centers. Thus, the staff bears the primary weight of the daily and weekly interactions with staff, children and families. The key here is that a congregation that is placing emphasis on its relationship with the early

childhood center should be showing some fairly positive results in this area. The fact that things trend to the low side indicates that the perception is that congregations aren't putting as much emphasis into reaching out as they might think.



The second outreach question was, “How well-known is your congregation among the members of your community?” The intent of the question was to determine the congregation’s presence in the community in order to see if there was any relationship between a congregation’s outreach and its presence in the community. Responses seem to be varied with the highest cluster of responses being somewhere in the middle. Generally, congregations seem to have some presence in their community although the comments provided seem to indicate that building location and the presence of the early childhood center are the primary reasons that most community members know of the congregation. In a few of the lower rated responses, sometimes the size of the church and/or its location in the

community contributed to it being less well-known. Generally, the longer a congregation had been around or its location in the community seemed to be the primary reasons for positive responses. My initial assumption was that congregations that were better known in the community might be more successful in bringing in members through their early childhood centers, but this does not seem to be the case. Congregations seeing growth came from all of these categories.



The final outreach data question was, “How well do the members of the community know the early childhood center?” The question was asked in order to see what kind of visibility the center had and whether that visibility was making an impact in bringing new families into the church. Again, there seems to be very little relationship. As a whole, most of the early childhood centers were more well-known than their congregations. Those that weren’t were either new centers (several newer startups responded) or smaller centers associated with much larger and more established congregations. It makes sense that the

early childhood center should have more visibility than the congregation if it is the congregation's primary face to the community in its outreach efforts.

One possible factor that could also account for these responses is that it seems that the surveys were primarily filled out by the early childhood center directors. Not all of these directors are members of their congregations and so their perceptions of the church's visibility, especially when compared with the early childhood center, could be different than if pastors filled out the initial survey. They are also more naturally attuned to what is happening in the early childhood center than to the congregational dynamics as a whole.

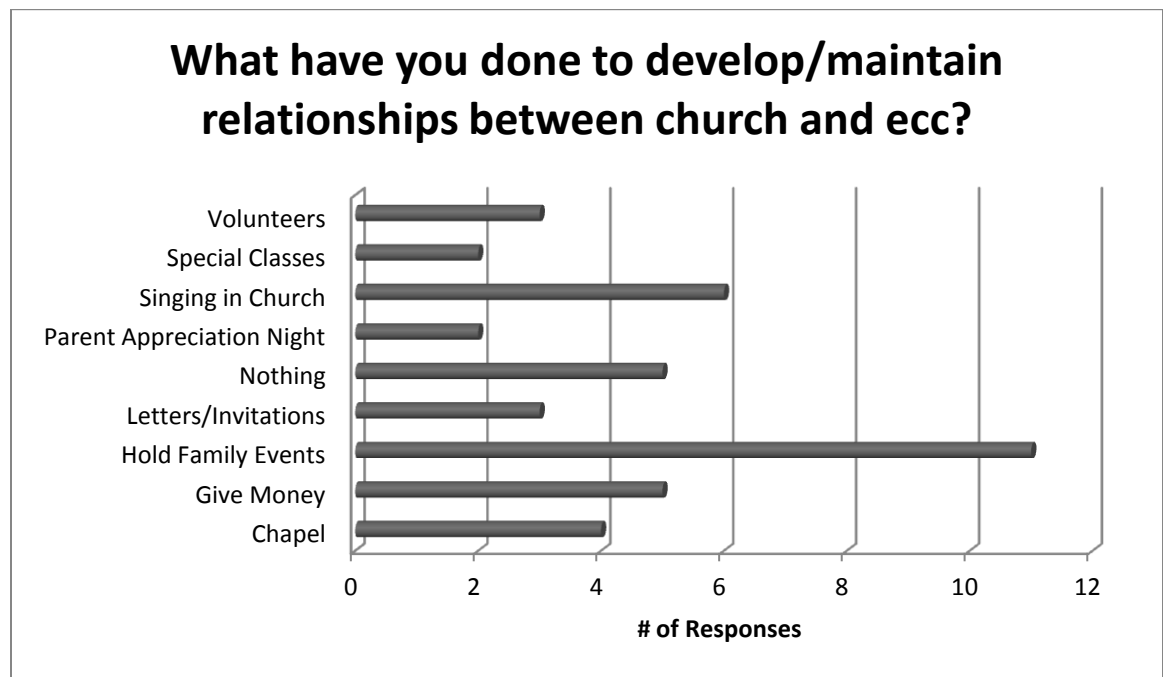
Survey Questions:

The survey also included a section of questions. Initially, the questions were intended to simply provide some information about what congregations were doing in different areas so that I could determine how intentional they were really being. I could also use this section to develop a list of questions for the follow-up interviews and get some general information from those that were not interviewed. After looking at the surveys, I found this one of the most fascinating portions of the survey to read, and generally it was the section that respondents took the most time to fill out. Because the questions were intentionally open-ended, it allowed them the freedom to cater their response to what was happening in their respective situation. This makes it a little more difficult to interpret because sometimes a respondent would attribute a response to one question whereas I would naturally place it in another. It also meant that at times I had to interpret a response and place it into a generalized category.

Relationships between Congregation and ECC

The first question was, “Please share some things your congregation has done to develop and maintain relationships with the staff, children, and families of your early childhood center (ECC).” The primary way that most respondents indicated that congregations are attempting to develop or maintain relationships between the church and the early childhood center is to create crossover events where members of both groups can meet and interact. Responses varied at what kinds of events that these were. Sometimes it was activities like a “Trunk or Treat”. Other times it seems that families in the early childhood center were invited to congregational events such as special meals/fundraisers, Christmas programs and Vacation Bible School. I separated out the idea of “singing in church” because it was the only mention of developing a relationship with people through corporate worship. Though it had the second most responses, it was nearly half the amount of “family events”. Two responses indicated hosting special classes (such as parenting classes) that were geared specifically for families in the early childhood center. I saw this as separate from inviting the families to otherwise congregational events and a rather interesting strategy. Concerning was the number of responses that openly admitted that they do nothing or the responses that indicated that the congregation only sent letters or gave money. Sending letters and giving money are not bad things, but when they are the only indicator of a congregation’s attempt to create a relationship with families it is concerning. There is a general lack of personal contact in these areas that is vital to creating relationships. Also surprising was the fact that only five respondents mentioned something like chapel or Jesus time. Perhaps it is so common that it was simply assumed, or perhaps it is not being done as much as it should. Either way,

spending time in God’s Word is crucial to developing relationships for a Christian congregation.

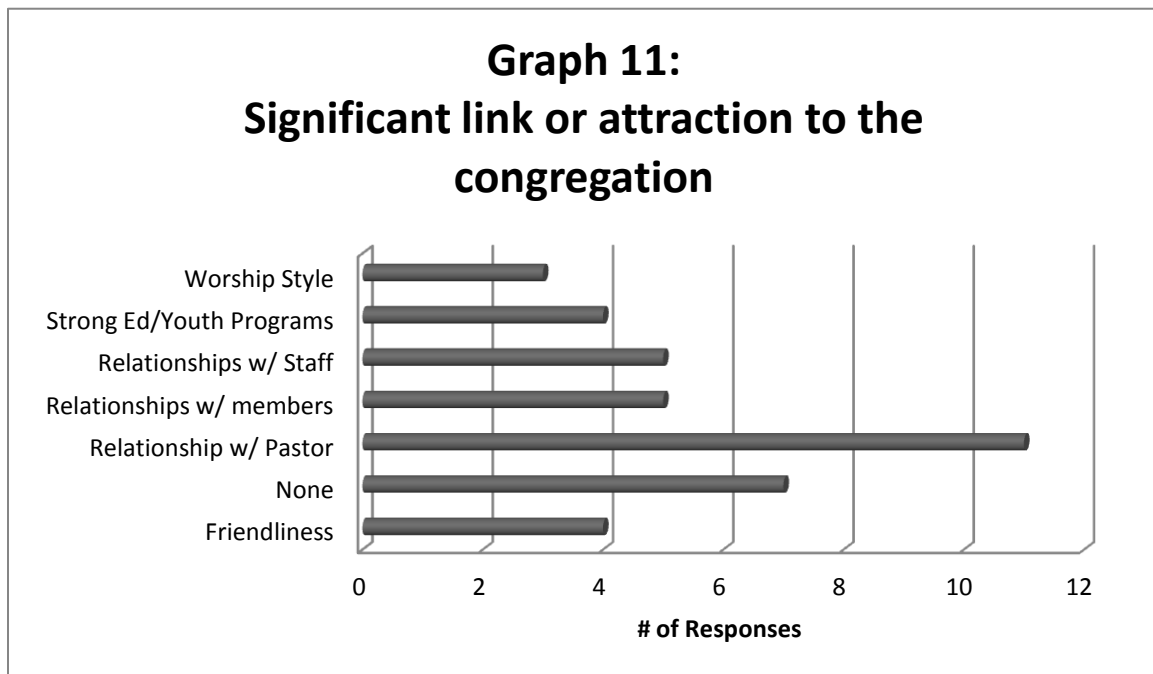


Reasons for Assimilation into the Congregation

The second question was, “When families have assimilated into the church from your early childhood center, what do you sense might have been the most significant link or attraction that they found, other than the center itself? [For example: a personal relationship with pastor; the worship style; children’s worship involvement; their connections with congregational members; special events, such as parents nights, etc.]” I struggled with whether or not to include the examples on this question because I did not want to bias the survey, but I included them because I wanted to be clear about how it was different from the previous question. Whereas the first question identifies things the congregation is doing, this question focuses more on what families are indicating is important to them. Ideally, what the congregation is doing should be based on what they are seeing from families who are joining.

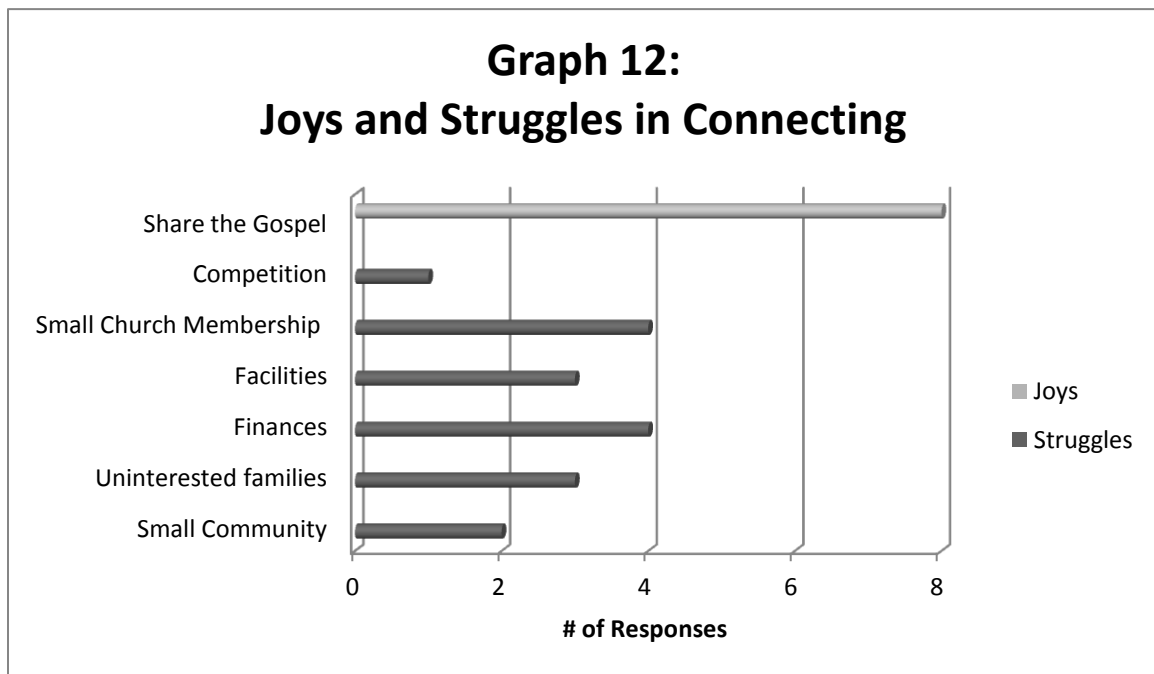
Unfortunately, the study indicates that many congregations never have had anyone join. This was the second highest response.

The highest response was the relationship with the pastor. This makes sense because the pastor often serves as the face of the congregation. Closely behind this was relationships with other members of the church staff and relationships with members of the congregation. This is a key element. For people to feel comfortable joining a church they have to feel comfortable with the people who are a part of that church, both paid staff and the general membership. Any outreach plan has to look to foster these relationships. Several congregations indicated many of the early childhood center staff were members of the congregation and that it seemed to ease transitions for early childhood centers when they worshipped and saw familiar faces. Interestingly, the style of the worship service was less important than whether or not there were active youth and education programs in place for the children.



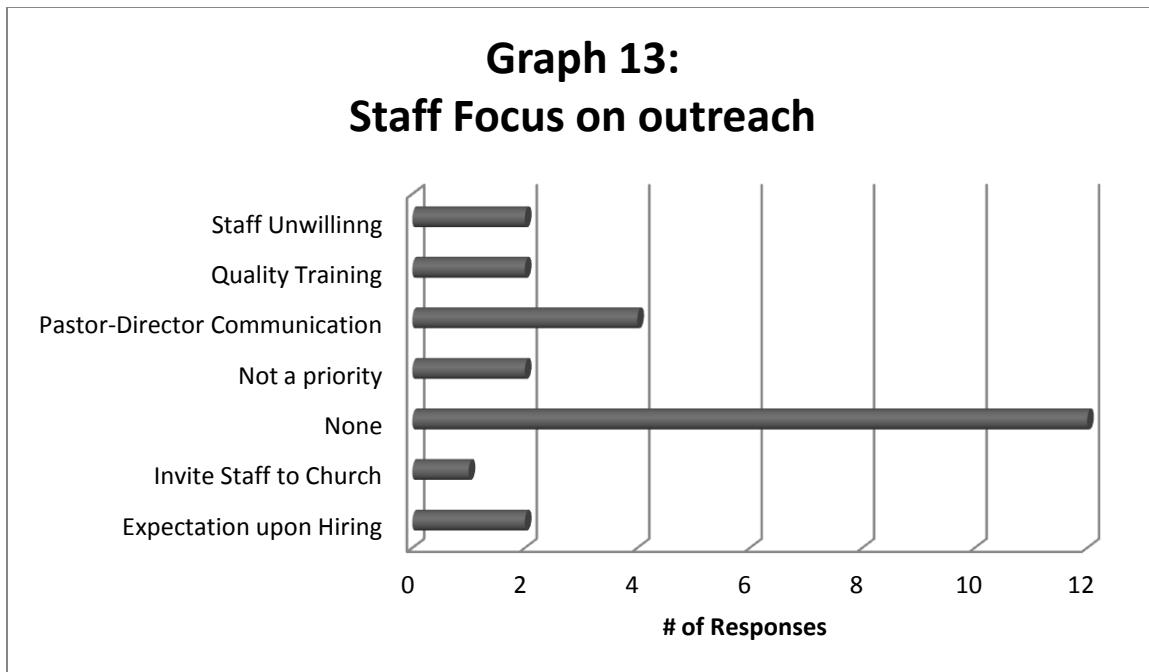
Joys and Struggles

The third question was, “What joys and/or struggles have you had as you have attempted to connect more fully with your community through your ECC?” In hindsight, this was a poorly worded question. The intent of the question was to figure out which outreach concepts they believed were seeing results (joys) and those that were less effective (struggles). Instead, most responses indicated some of the struggles that they were facing in their particular situations. While the information given is not what was expected, it is interesting to look at the variety of frustrations or struggles that churches with early childhood centers experience, most notably challenges with finances and facilities. It is also interesting that the only response given to joys was the reason that churches gave: to share the Gospel. Clearly, this is the primary goal for the existence of most of these early childhood centers.



Staff Focus on Outreach

The fourth question was, “If you have made some effort to help your staff focus on outreach, please share how you have done so.” It should be noted that the intent of the question was to evaluate the early childhood center staff. This is an area I would clarify in future surveys; however, it did not seem to be a problem for those who responded to this question. For the vast majority, there was either no answer, or they indicated that they do no training on outreach with the staff of the early childhood center. Two even indicated that it is not a priority for their staff training, and three responses indicated that their staff is unwilling to participate. Staff training is incredibly important because the early childhood center staff are the ones who are the face of the church’s ministry to these families. Essentially, the staff are front line missionaries, and if they don’t understand the relationship between the congregation and the early childhood center, chances are the parents don’t either. Despite their importance, only one response indicated that staff were intentionally invited to worship with the congregation. Another two responses highlighted the special relationship that is necessary between the church staff, especially the pastor/senior pastor, and the director of the early childhood center. They ask specific questions on their registration forms that ask whether families are looking for a church, want to know more about baptism, or about the congregation. That information was then shared with the pastor for follow-up. This seems to be an often overlooked aspect of identifying opportunities for further contact and relationship building.



There was a fifth question, “Please share any other thoughts or ideas you have about outreach through your ECC.” This was really a question designed to catch anything that was missed in previous questions. Most of the responses were able to be tabulated with the previous questions or they were specific to the situation and context of the individual center.

Follow-up Interviews

After receiving and studying the surveys, the plan was to select at least seven congregations that were seeing growth for a follow-up interview. Congregations were primarily chosen based upon the amounts provided in their growth data section. While I had assumed that I would have to determine a fairly complex method of selecting these congregations, it actually turned out to be quite simple. Of the thirty-one responses, only eleven congregations had seen any growth over the past year. One of the congregations was vacant. One more indicated that they did not do anything intentional with outreach. Two others declined the opportunity for interviews. This left me with seven interviews to

complete. All interviews were done on site with the pastor and the director of the early childhood center, when possible. In order to be as uniform as possible, each interview followed a list of five open-ended questions¹¹² with occasional clarifying questions. These questions were used with some variation in order to fit the flow of the conversation. Transcripts of each interview are provided after redacting portions of the interview that would reveal personal information about an individual or a specific congregation. What follows is a summary of each congregation's background and identity as well as some common themes that were found from the interviews. Even though a fairly standard list of questions was used, respondents answered in a variety of ways. One respondent may have brought up something in response to one question while another respondent may have actually addressed the same topic in response to a different question. Thus, these topics have been grouped together for simplicity. Quotes and paraphrases from all seven interviews are provided to highlight the ways in which respondents answered the questions according to the identified theme.

Background Summaries of Interview Participants

R#1 is a congregation in a transitioning community. They had once been a larger congregation but now have about 240 members. After having closed their elementary school, they refocused their efforts on early childhood education. As the community transitions and welcomes more young families they are seeing increased demand in their ECC. During a district-led process of missional formation, they sought to align their mission and focus around the early childhood center. Both the pastor and the director were involved in the interview.

¹¹² See Appendix Six: Follow-up Interviews

R#2 is also in a transitioning community, but with very different dynamics. Once a small town, they have grown dramatically in the last fifteen years. There is a socio-economic difference between the old town members who started the church and the new people who have moved into the community. The old town community tends to be more blue collar while the newer community is more white collar commuters. This is much of the struggle with outreach. The interview includes only the pastor.

R#3 identified itself as a fairly typical suburban congregation. It is located in a white, upper-middle class neighborhood where people are highly educated and there is very little racial diversity. The congregation made a significant investment in their early childhood center around four years ago that has changed it from a small-time production in the fellowship hall to an established business. They are experiencing significant turnover in key positions with a pastor and a director who have been in their roles for only a year. This interview was with the pastor of the congregation.

R#4 is an established congregation in a bedroom community. They operate a Lutheran school, and the early childhood center has grown out of that school as a possible feeder. Because many people commute from their community, staffing and outreach are difficult. The pastor, director and lead teacher were all involved in this interview.

R#5 is a large established congregation in a community that is transitioning from primarily middle class to lower income. They have a large group of older people and a large group of young families. The early childhood center is one of their areas of outreach, but they also run a number of community agencies such as Food Shelf to help those who have fallen on hard times. Only the pastor was able to participate in this interview.

R#6 is a congregation that is also transitioning as a new generation of families are moving into homes that were built 50 years ago. They operate a preschool which was opened when many of the families in their community were much younger. As they grew older, the preschool declined because there were fewer children in the community. As the community turns over, young families are once again beginning to utilize the preschool. Only the pastor was interviewed.

R#7 is an older congregation in a community transitioning to an area of great ethnic diversity with significant populations of Asian, African, Hispanic and East Indians surrounding them. They once operated a Lutheran school, but have transitioned to a full-time early childhood center as their primary point of outreach to their community as part of their mission revitalization program. Both the pastor and the director were interviewed.

There is great diversity in the congregational makeup of each of these respondents. For different reasons each congregation has clearly identified its early childhood center as one of the primary, if not the primary, form of outreach to its respective community. Many of these congregations view their early childhood center as a key ministry as they transition between two different types of communities.

Common Themes

1) Unified Mission/Purpose

One of the themes addressed in nearly every interview was the need for the congregation and the early childhood center to be on the same page. The church needs to understand that the purpose of the early childhood center is an extension of its ministry to the community. Likewise, the early childhood center must realize that it is not a ministry unto

itself, but it is connected to the ministry of the congregation as a whole. As a piece of advice, one respondent noted:

First I would encourage them to make sure that that is a part of the congregation's mission and ministry. Is that an audience that they want to attract – beyond themselves? Obviously they would have to have a number of members who would have a need or seek a need in that area, wanting Christian education for their young children. But also they would need, the whole congregation would need, to see it as a need beyond their walls – if there's a need out there in the community. Make sure there's congregation buy-in to the whole process. So it doesn't become – what I've noticed in some ministries – and probably in every ministry that I have seen that has had either a school, a daycare, or an ECC is of an “us and them” kind of mentality – the school and the church, the school and the church. I think if you get a buy-in from the congregation right off the bat, then there would be more of a tendency as a part of ministry rather than a separate ministry.¹¹³

Several respondents identified this “us and them” mentality arising between the congregation and the early childhood center. There are many difficulties like financial issues that can come into play to cause that dissention and hard feelings between the church and the early childhood center. Thus it takes an intentional effort to create that unified culture instead of two. There were two places where respondents found themselves dealing with this problem.

The first place where unity was created was in strategic planning and public documentation. Just like a married couple plans their lives together by interweaving finances, discussing common goals, and establishing a plan to achieve those goals, so too the congregation and the early childhood center must intentionally create these aspects in their relationship. Too often, issues between a congregation and an early childhood center are discussed only verbally in places like council and voters' meetings. While it is important to have open dialogue when starting an early childhood center, good record keeping and documentation is important. Two of the congregations refocused their efforts on childcare as

¹¹³ R5, p. 178.

part of an intentional process of missional focus. The missional focus included things like mission statements, vision statements, and a clearly outlined strategic plan of how the mission would be carried out. Two congregations also identified that they intentionally shaped their budget to reflect a more unified connection between the congregation and the early childhood center. Congregations that did not have these documents seemed to voice frustration about promises made that weren't kept. One response said, "...there seems to have been at one point in time, a promise that the ECC would supply new membership to the congregation and also fund the congregation. And that tends to be a struggle for us."¹¹⁴ Whether or not the promise was made at this church, the perception is out there. By having these sorts of strategic plans and formal documentation, both groups can look to an agreed upon set of expectations and work together to achieve them.

While many of these documents might be on the congregation's side, it is also imperative to note their importance in foundational documents of the early childhood center.

We tell parents, "We are a Christian Center. So your child is going to learn Bible stories, and go to chapel, and learn to pray before they eat their lunch and this is just part of what we do here." So I think that has been an important part of our outreach because we've created an identity not as an ECC that is sort of connected and in the building of a church, but I think we've made it clear from the very beginning that our identity is imbedded into the church itself.¹¹⁵

This sort of information can happen non-verbally in their family tours, but it also can be included in documentation that can be listed in parent packs, staff training, and even advertising materials. These are ways to more closely tie together the ministry of the church and ECC, and to formalize it in the minds of both the ECC staff and the families who are served.

¹¹⁴ R3, p. 166.

¹¹⁵ R7, p. 189.

Even with more formal documentation available, both the church and the early childhood center will constantly need to be reminded of the united purpose of both entities. Sometimes this happens verbally like when a pastor says, “When we meet as a church council I really am very specific about trying to use words always that this is church/childcare connected.”¹¹⁶ Sometimes these things are not verbal. Several respondents mention intentionally placing artwork or other projects from the early childhood center in places that they could be easily seen by members of the congregation. One respondent even identified having ECC kids sing in church was as much of a reminder to the congregation about what the mission of the ECC was doing as it was a reminder to families and staff that the early childhood center was connected to the congregation.

There is great variety in the ways in which congregations sought to unify these two aspects of their ministry. While the methods were quite diverse, the common theme was the necessity for having both a written strategic plan and documentation in both the official documents of the church and the early childhood center that were then constantly communicated to both groups in a number of different ways. That communication is an essential part to the second characteristic: build relationships.

2) **Build Relationships**

While the importance of building relationships is not a surprise from these interviews, the number and types of relationships that were important to concentrate on were surprising. Part of the difficulty of this kind of ministry is the sheer number of relationships that have to be considered before even connecting with the families in the early childhood center. If the early childhood center is truly to be a part of a congregation’s outreach to those families, then

¹¹⁶ R3, p. 166.

the congregation must also be intentional in creating relationships internally between the congregation and the early childhood center.

a. Internal Relationships

As a church, all relationships begin from our identity as a church and an understanding of our relationship with Christ. With that understanding, the relationships between the church and the early childhood center similarly start with the relationship of the two most common positions in all of the centers interviewed: the pastor and the director. For the church and the early childhood center to be unified in mission, the pastor and the director of the center have to have a strong working relationship in order to coordinate the ministry efforts. This means that a congregation that is either operating or interested in operating an early childhood ministry must take this into account when assessing the strengths and weaknesses of a pastor when calling him. Considering these items when calling a pastor is important because over time he will guide the congregation's attitude toward the early childhood center. In most cases interviewed, the pastor worked directly with the children in the ECC to at least some extent. In almost all cases, the pastors received smiles, comments, and high-fives from children in the early childhood center during the tour except when there were no children present. Indeed, it was the pastors who indicated they were fighting to bring together a sense of harmony between the church and early childhood center and keep them united in mission. Where the early childhood center fits in the mission of the congregation is largely shaped by the head pastor's understanding of where it fits into all of the congregation's ministry.

As important as the pastor is, the director is just as important. For the most part, all of the centers interviewed seemed to express strong relationships between the pastor and the director, but that hasn't always been the case.

The biggest thing for me with the ECC is getting the right leader. This has been going on for seven years here, and we are on our third director in seven years. And the first three years were painful for me, and I wish that we hadn't opened it at the time, even though I kept building these relationships. Take the time to get the right person because it will just make life so much more smooth. And that continuity in the community makes a difference also. When we were turning over a director every other year for those first few years, I think that the community was like, "What's going on?" but now it's a little more stable. It's a little bit easier to see where we can grow again.¹¹⁷

Just as the pastor provides a sense of direction for the ministries of the congregation, the director provides a sense of importance and direction for the early childhood center. If the director understands his or her relationship to the church, it goes a long way to building the cohesive unity between the congregation and the early childhood center. Nearly all of the interviews indicated that the director was also an active member of the congregation. While this probably is not possible in every situation, it was clear that this aspect helped the directors understand their place in the entire ministry of the congregation and to look for a greater depth of interaction between the two. They showed interest and involvement in all of the aspects of the church's ministry, even the areas where the early childhood center was not directly involved. If the director cannot be a member of the congregation, special efforts must be made by all parties to be aware, interested, supportive, and involved in these other areas of the church's ministry.

Even when the relationship between the pastor and the director is good, there are still intentional steps that came out during the interviews. First, several of the interviewees mentioned that the director of the early childhood center was brought into the church staff as

¹¹⁷ R2, p. 166.

a part of their meetings. This gave them an opportunity to form relationships as they prayed together, studied together, and collaborated together on different tasks.

We call it our ministry staff, our ministry team, and that includes the director from the Child Development Center, we have a part-time DCE (Director of Christian Education) that does youth ministry and junior high ministry, so it includes her, and our secretary, our music director, and sometimes even the Sunday school superintendent....¹¹⁸

While some respondents did not address ministry staff/team meetings, it was clear that they were working together to collaborate on ministry objectives, and that the director was seen as a part of the church staff.

So the relationship is, it is our preschool, we pay for the director, and the preschool pays for its teachers and so on. It sees itself as a mission of this church because we work closely together and the director tries to have us come on down and get to know the kids and get to know the families – it's kind of seen as the first step in the door....¹¹⁹

By making the director part of the church staff, the director had more awareness of what was going on in other areas of the church, and it also increased communication between the church and the early childhood center. Again, this could be accomplished during formal times like church staff meetings, but often it also included informal discussions.

Our ECC director is very deliberate about coming up to visit with me and let me know what's happening, and ideas they're thinking about or concerns that they've had, or issues, so that there is an open line of communication so that in turn I can communicate with the congregation and let them know that we're all in this together and that we're working on it together.¹²⁰

The building of the relationship between all of the ministry staff, including the director, seems to happen through ongoing study in God's Word, reading books together, discussing critical issues together, planning coordinated activities and although it was not specifically mentioned, searching for ongoing training opportunities. These build the personal

¹¹⁸ R1, p. 155.

¹¹⁹ R6, p. 182.

¹²⁰ R5, p. 179.

relationships and develop a group philosophy so that everyone is on the same page. In each of the interviews where a good relationship was seen, it was clear that while there was a hierarchy of sorts, each person was seen as a valuable member of the team with their own unique perspectives, expertise and responsibilities, and they acknowledged the gifts of each member of the team.

Once the relationships between the pastor, as well as any other church staff, and the director are established, a more intentional process of communication can develop. In addition to conversations that just happen as issues arise, one church even included a specific process to facilitate this communication between the early childhood center and the church through their intake materials.

[Our directors are] really intentional in directing families to me, to the front office so that we know their situations. That if we've got an infant coming in after six weeks, the questions are asked: What is your church home? Baptism – has it happened? Are you interested? Things like that. So the directors are really good at that. They funnel the information that we might miss in just a regular conversation so that I can follow up on that. . . . I think the directors making that information aware back to us running the administrative part of the church has been the biggest thing besides connection with other Lutheran churches beforehand. . . . It's part of their form. All the information is gathered on a new family, that's a very, very direct part of their form, but the directors get it too.¹²¹

This same intentionality of process that happens within the office can also be used to build relationships between the church staff and the early childhood center staff. This was an area where most of the congregations were struggling to intentionally build these relationships. There seemed to be an understanding that while the director often understood how the early childhood center fit into the ministry of the congregation, this was often not the case for some of the teachers in the classrooms. In response to the question, “Does the ECC now see themselves as part of that [the church’s] outreach?” one pastor commented:

¹²¹ R3, p. 168.

They [the directors] see that absolutely. If I were to go and interview each of their staff, I would venture to say most of them do not. They understand that it is a Christian childcare, that we have Bible stories and all of that, but I would say that to be able to make the connection... I would say that most of them would not necessarily see the connection. We're trying to change that. Most of our staff, the vast majority of our staff, are not members of our congregation.¹²²

There was a significant difference here in congregations that had a majority of their early childhood center staff who were members of the congregation and those congregations that had a majority of their early childhood center staff that were not members. In the interview with one congregation, many of the conversations that were happening regarding baptism started with three of their teachers. Two of those teachers were members of the congregation. In another congregation, the pastor estimated that nearly 65-75% of their sizable staff were members¹²³. This meant that during special services when the children sang, the staff was comfortable serving as greeters, ushers, and even participating in the service as readers. Admittedly, our congregation struggles with singing in church because the teachers are not very willing to leave their own churches and worship with us a few times during the year. This visible presence of the staff is a blessing that not everyone can utilize based on the makeup of the congregation; however, having early childhood members as staff only seeks to further build that relationship and sense of mission between the church and the early childhood center. It also gives more faces that are familiar with both the families in the church and the early childhood center to help facilitate relationship building. In the situations where there were not a lot of staff that were also congregational members, the effort to connect must be much more intentional and staff training is that much more crucial so that they see themselves as part of the congregation's outreach ministry.

¹²² R3, p. 166.

¹²³ R5, p. 180.

One last area that was specifically brought up several times was the intentional use of a unified curriculum. There were several ideas of how this could be done, but generally the concept was for what is taught during the week at the early childhood center to be coordinated with what is taught on the weekends in both the church service and Bible class and Sunday school times. Some churches took themes, like the Ten Commandments and studied them for a period. Other churches studied the same Bible stories in this unified format. No one mentioned it, but the early childhood center curriculum could be connected with the lectionary readings in congregations that follow that model. While it took a great deal of coordination, the congregations doing it found that it helped the ministry team to collaborate and reinforce ideas that were taught in different areas of the church's ministry.

b. External Relationships

The stronger the congregation and the early childhood center come together in their internal relationships, the more opportunities are presented to create lasting relationships between the congregation and the families in the early childhood center. According to the interviews, each of the following individuals has a unique role and special relationship to establish a series of relationships with the congregation.

i. Pastors and Other Church Staff

Earlier the importance of the pastor was addressed with regards to the overall mission and ministry of the congregation and the importance of building staff relationships and a unified vision. One of the items that came out of the interviews was a strong emphasis on the importance of the pastor (and other ministry staff) in relating to children and their families. Some of this happens in chapel, where God's Word is taught to the children at an age appropriate level in ways they can understand. As one interview put it:

Chapel is a crucial thing. Once a week we bring all of the children out of the childcare to the church. However you do chapel, there are a myriad of ways, but to bring them together to be able to have a short chapel discussion, sing some songs, show some video, or whatever it is – we even have infants come down. We bring them in strollers. I think that’s a huge thing because kids develop a relationship very quickly – in our case, with me. They know who I am when I walk down the hallway. They see me, it’s, “Hi, how’s it going?” high fives, all that kind of stuff, but they’re developing a relationship with the church.¹²⁴

Chapel is crucial, but the pastor’s involvement with the early childhood center must go beyond doing chapel. Nearly every single interview echoed that point. Because of their role, because of their availability, etc. the pastor and any other ministry staff, are often seen as the first face of the congregation. They are the first relationship that is often developed with the church. One pastor admitted:

... I think it’s through conversations that they get that understanding [that the church cares]. But for preschool parents especially, it’s a relationship with me. Because you know, most of the volunteers in our congregation can’t be here at 9:00 when they drop the kids off, or 11:30 in the morning when they pick the kids up. They’re working themselves. So it’s really got to be me, and it’s small enough that I can get out and get to know everybody.¹²⁵

Another pastor shared this concept of pastoral presence:

The number one thing if you’re looking for something for outreach and getting to the parents, it was greeting at the door. And I have to admit, it’s one of the things I regret not having as much connection here as I did in my previous church. But that being at the door thing – I can’t tell you how many conversations I’ve started just, you know, somebody lost their dad that day and they see, “Oh, the pastor’s here.” Where you wouldn’t get in a conversation normally. But since you’re there anyway and they’re there, they’ll take ten minutes and talk to you. And “Why don’t we sit down again here soon and let’s talk, and it’s been big... that was probably the best thing from my previous church. I wouldn’t be surprised. We probably brought in 50 to 60 members that way – that started with conversations at the door.¹²⁶

¹²⁴ R3, p. 170.

¹²⁵ R2, p. 162.

¹²⁶ R6, p. 183.

Not every congregation that has an early childhood center can afford multiple church staff, but for those that do, these relational concepts could be connected with them as well. One congregation mentioned that their school principal did an excellent job visiting the children and creating relationships as well.

ii. Directors

Like the pastors, directors have a role with the internal relationships that happen between the congregation and the early childhood center, but they also have an incredibly important role in building relationships with the children and their families. One director commented:

When they come in I get to know the families, that's the big thing. Know their names, look at the information, get to know who they are and where they work. And then make sure you always acknowledge them when they come in and when they leave.... We have to remember that we have a lot of unchurched people so to build the relationship and somehow plant the seed is important. In doing that you have to have a relationship with them and their children. I do that because if I walk into a classroom and have to sub I need to know those children and they're not afraid of me anytime and not disrupted just because they don't know who I am. Just because I enrolled them, I don't walk away. I make sure that I'm always going into classrooms and talking to parents. That's a big part of it.¹²⁷

Armed with this kind of information a director can serve as a wonderful resource between the church and the parents. The director can refer parents to the pastor when they are struggling with personal issues or considering a baptism. They can also serve as a resource about church activities like Vacation Bible School and Sunday School.

iii. Teachers

As much as pastors and directors have a very public role as the face of the church or the early childhood center, the importance of classroom teachers is also extremely important. Not only do these teachers have the responsibility of both educating and caring for the

¹²⁷ R7, p.190.

children during the day, but they are also the primary contact point with parents. It is the teachers who may notice a change in behaviors in the child that may signal issues that are developing at home. It is the teachers who are often involved in the difficult transition at drop-off in the morning when a child refuses to let mom leave. It is the teachers who get to interact with parents at pick-up after they've had a difficult day of work. In short, it is the teachers who are on the front lines of building relationships with the parents. As the teacher interacts with the child and the parent, they are uniquely positioned as missionaries to deal with the immediate needs of both parent and child with an encouraging word or a listening ear. Unfortunately, few if any of the centers spoke about any intentional training for teachers in this role. As part of their education, most teachers receive some training to interact with parents, but additional training on God's Word and how it can be used in certain situations could certainly be beneficial in equipping teachers in this role.

iv. Families

The final relationship that the interviews revealed was the relationship between the families of the early childhood center and families in the congregation. In many ways, this is the most difficult relationship to create because it cannot be controlled by staff. You can introduce families, but you can't force the relationships. At the same time, the difficulty of creating these relationships also makes them some of the most valuable. One pastor, who had indicated that his congregation actively participated in "door-knocking" and other such evangelistic programs when asked to assess their return replied, "I would say no, not particularly. The return that we get more is people who are friends, or co-workers, or family members of our own members who bring them in. It's pretty much what research shows; when they have a good relationship, a certain level of trust with people, and that can bring

them in.¹²⁸” When a person who attends the early childhood center attends a church service and meets several other families whose children are also involved in the early childhood center it increases the probability of those relationships growing because of multiple points of contact. This is why congregations and early childhood centers focus so much time and effort in creating activities as opportunities for members of both groups to interact.

There are not specific events where we say, “Okay, church families, come and meet ECC families.” But there are activities, several of which I mentioned before, of which ECC members and church members are invited to the same events.... We specifically invite both groups hoping that we’ll have members from both groups there, and then there’s the natural mixing of folks.¹²⁹

The natural mixing of folks does occasionally happen between the two groups spontaneously. This is especially true if there are other points in common such as the ages of a child, a contact at work, or a shared friend. More commonly however, people tend to cluster in groups with which they are already familiar. In this situation, church families huddle with church families and early childhood center families gather with other early childhood center families. For a church to reach out to the early childhood center families, intentional efforts need to be made either by the members of the congregation to interact outside their comfort center or by the organizer of the event to mix the groups of people and facilitate that interaction. Preferably both interactions happen.

Activities that seem to be popular reflect what was identified by the initial surveys. Far and away, congregations encouraged singing in church. This was seen as an activity with multiple purposes. It reinforced the importance of the early childhood center and its work to the majority of the members of the congregation who do not interact with it on a daily basis. It also introduced the families of the early childhood center to the broader worship life of the

¹²⁸ R4, p. 171.

¹²⁹ R5, P. 177.

entire congregation. Again, this emphasized the unity between the two ministries to both groups. Also popular were movie nights, Trunk or Treat nights, and other large celebrations that could be used to draw groups of people into interaction with one another.

Summary of Interview Research

The process of conducting interviews was time consuming and exhausting. Each of the interviews was intentionally done during a forty-eight hour span of time in order to be able to compare things between visits as consistently as possible. Despite the physical constraints of doing that many interviews in that short of a period of time (including travel), the process was eye-opening as to the challenges that each location faced and the variety of blessings that God has given to each congregation to deal with those challenges. No two situations were exactly alike, and yet there were remarkable parallels between them. When I embarked on this journey, I was probably looking for more quick ideas like greeting families as they enter and leave or specific activities like Trunk or Treat that had seen positive results in certain situations. Instead, what I found was a deeper and more profound set of qualities that were present in these ministries that could be intentionally developed as a part of our plan to create relationships between the families of Open Arms and Resurrection Lutheran Church.

Mostly, what I noticed in the interviews was that all of these congregations were struggling to connect with the families in their early childhood centers. One congregation may be attempting one set of ideas while another congregation focused on others. No one had come close to perfecting the task of building relationships.

Shortly after having conducted the interviews, and while I was in the process of analyzing the data, I had the opportunity to visit with Jerry Twombly, an expert in Relational Development while he was consulting with Sioux Falls Lutheran School. The conversation revolved around his unique perspective of relational development and how that is used in all areas of life. On his website he describes some of that conversation as he outlines the following process to developing relationships.

There are four definable steps that move people into a relationship. They have occurred in conjunction with everyone and everything we enjoy and become the basis of what we must do in order to grow the cadre of supporters our organizations will require to fulfill their mission. Knowing them is important, applying them essential, and reaping the results imperative to the important work of development.

1. The Exposure Opportunity—In all relationships, at every level in which we experience them, there came a time when we were exposed for the first time to someone (or some organization) that we never knew existed. It may have been an event that we attended, an article we read, the testimony of someone, a letter we received, a news report we saw, a captivating picture that caught our imagination, a newsletter or brochure, an infomercial, a receptionist's answer to a phone call, a website, a business card casually passed on, or an advertisement. The list goes on and on. Everyday people are being exposed to you and the organization you represent. It may be intentionally planned or a casual encounter. Every relationship we have had a beginning point and understanding and acting on that reality is where all development begins.

2. The First Commitment—The next step occurs when a choice is made to act upon something. It might be going to a website after reading an interesting article, filling out a form to receive a free report, completing an assessment to determine your eligibility, or a simple phone call to meet someone for coffee. This is a rational choice; it reflects curiosity more than commitment. It's an independent choice made by someone we don't really know and success here is measured in terms of how well the first step was managed.

3. The Second Commitment—The third step reveals more. It may have been curiosity that motivated an initial contact but more is communicated when more information is sought. Movement here is much more significant as it expresses interest. It's at this time we provide "free trials" and "risk free" opportunities. It's the proving ground upon which subsequent decisions will

be made. Performance is being measured at this point and success lies in the balance.

4. The Commitment to Trust—Among the hardest things to do is to trust someone. Everyone has a story of trust misplaced. The older we become, the more wary we are to commit ourselves to someone or something. People prefer the fringes rather than the war, to be spectators rather than participants. And gaining trust is a process that takes time, experience, communication, and consistency. The more we deliver over time the more successful we become. And it's the repetition that yields confidence and the willingness to make the life-long commitments to a person, a product, an idea, or an organization.¹³⁰

If, as Twombly argues, this four step process occurs in all of our relationships, then any strategic plan to create relationships between a congregation and its early childhood center must keep these four steps in view. A congregation cannot rely on one point of contact or one event to create a relationship. There must be a series of intentional contacts from multiple individuals over a sustained amount of time that seek to develop the relationship with the congregation. This is where we often seem to fail in the church. While these contacts may be intentionally set up in order to create the exposure opportunity, congregations must then think strategically about how to maintain and even deepen the relationship through asking for more commitments. Thus, someone may become familiar with the congregation through the early childhood center ministry. After an invitation to the congregation's vacation Bible school (VBS), they take an intentional step to enroll their children in VBS as well. Where does the relationship go from here? Has the congregation developed a plan of contact beyond that? Have they created avenues to deepen the relationship with the congregation, not just the individuals involved in the event? If so, what would that look like? What commitment would be the next step in the process? If there is no next step provided, the congregation is either intentionally or unintentionally communicating that this is the

¹³⁰ Twombly, Jerry. "The Relational Continuum." http://jerrytwombly.typepad.com/jerry_twomblyfunding_your/relational_development/ (accessed February 10, 2014).

extent of our interest in a relationship with that family. Too often, this is where churches end up. They create an activity but fail to follow up and deepen the relationship by asking for a greater commitment.

Conclusion

In following what the interviews seemed to suggest, I presented the results of my findings to my ministry team at Resurrection Lutheran Church in order that we could work on a strategic plan together. The plan¹³¹ is our attempt to put a plan together that intentionally recreates the best of these qualities in what we are doing at Open Arms so that we can be more effective in reaching out to the families and deepening the relationships that God has blessed us with at Resurrection Lutheran Church and Open Arms Christian Child Development in Sioux Falls.

¹³¹ Appendix Seven: An Intentional Plan for Using Open Arms Missionally at Resurrection Lutheran Sioux Falls

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

When I began this project, I was quite naïve about nearly everything. So many times I had heard people champion early childhood ministries as a door into the congregation. Perhaps because I find it easy to develop relationships in my personal life, I got caught up in the thought that it must be easy to build those relationships with the church too. I thought “all you have to do is simply throw a couple of activities together and people will mingle and the church will grow.” Early childhood educational programs are not easy. Operating them in a God-pleasing way challenges even the best administrators much of the time and tests congregational resources. All of this stresses the ability to build relationships. Because of these challenges, there were times that I was frustrated by our lack of contact with the families of our Open Arms Center and I wanted to know what other congregations were doing in order to make these connections with families who were coming to our doors every single day because they were not coming to our activities. Were they bad activities? Were they the wrong activities? Was it a failure by the staff of the church and/or the congregation? Perhaps they might have been, but not necessarily.

What I realized through this project is that building those relationships is important and they take work. Like much of the work of the church, relationships are really what drive so much of what we do. First, we have our relationship with God which is established through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and affirmed through the work of the Holy Spirit. Then, guided by the Holy Spirit, we have our relationships with others. These relationships don't just develop because someone went to a family movie night or a Trunk or Treat. They don't develop because a letter was sent or because money may have been given.

Relationships happen over a period of time, and they are always growing stronger or weakening. We had to focus on more than activities. We had to build a strategic plan and a culture of outreach and develop relationships between the church and the Open Arms Center.

Contributions to Ministry

Because this is a descriptive survey where I measured what was happening in other places and brought the information back to create a plan for our congregation to use, the entire plan¹³² is, in a sense, a contribution to the ministry at Resurrection Lutheran Church and Open Arms. It gives us direction to be able to be intentional with our building of relationships as well as giving us a guide to hold us accountable. Resurrection Lutheran Church deliberately opened its Open Arms Christian Child Development Center in order to better connect with the community at large through this important ministry. Due to the wonderful blessings of growth on the part of both the congregation and Open Arms, we have not been as purposeful in carrying out that mission.

However, this plan not only guides Resurrection with how we can be more intentional about reaching out and connecting with families at Open Arms. It also provides a framework for our own growth and direction as a congregation as we seek to build up our Family Ministry program in order to connect with the young families using Open Arms.

Contributions to Personal and Professional Growth

I am still fairly early into my career as a pastor. May 2014 will mark the eleventh year since my graduation from Concordia Seminary with my Master's of Divinity (MDIV) in

¹³² Appendix Seven: An Intentional Plan for Using Open Arms Missionally at Resurrection Lutheran Sioux Falls

2003. While I appreciated much of what I learned during my MDIV, there is certainly no substitute for experience. The experience of eleven years of pastoral ministry have taught me much about both the wonderful preparation I received as well as areas that I needed to keep growing. The Doctor of Ministry program has served as a sort of sabbatical for me. For a period of time, I am the student not the teacher. This provided both stress and relief. At times, the things that I was studying were exactly the things that my congregation needed at that time. At other times, they helped prepare for times still to come. My goals were to work on my preaching, my administrative skills, and my counseling skills. I had the opportunity to learn in all those areas. More importantly, there were areas that I did not know that I needed to address as much, but I still valued going through classes that taught me new ways to think about the respective subject areas.

This is especially true for the Major Applied Project (MAP). Although I have written papers, I have never had to research a topic so deeply. I have never had to put a project of this size into place and then examine the data to draw assumptions. This paper is literally years of my life, and it has been transformative to my ministry at Resurrection and will shape any future ministry I have. Specifically, the MAP gave me a realistic picture of what kind of growth congregations are seeing through their ECC programs. While this does alleviate concerns that we are not missing areas that someone else has figured out, it also raises concerns that early childhood centers may not be as effective at growing congregations as we might like to think.

Specifically, I notice a challenge in our churches. While there are many congregations operating early childhood centers, few are putting any intentional effort into sharing the Gospel with the entire family. While we are happy to share Jesus time in the classroom, too

often that is where we stop. While this is faithful to the Great Commission to a point, there is also an aspect where we are missing that intentionality to push these relationships to the next step and really connect with people. Many of our staff are not trained as Christian school teachers. They may not be Christian at all, and yet we entrust them to carry out this mission opportunity on our behalf with little or no training. Many times, directors do not have the time, the training, or the resources to help train those staff, and pastors are often too overwhelmed with their own duties. It is too easy for the early childhood center to become just a business.

Part of my personal growth through this project is to think critically about how to be more intentional and strategic about reaching out through early childhood centers and then to help find a way to train and equip pastors and directors to do the same. Despite what the results of this survey indicate, my hope is that with training and more effective processes in place, congregations can create better relationships with the families they serve in their early childhood centers.

While this project was conducted specifically for Resurrection Lutheran Church, the process of being missional with our early childhood centers is something that can benefit all of Christianity as we strive to be faithful to the Great Commission. In talking about this with our ministry team, there is intent to develop plans and procedures and then possibly serve as a place for some sort of leadership training for pastors and directors.

Recommendations

Because this is a descriptive survey, the bulk of my recommendations specific to Resurrection Lutheran Church are contained within the plan itself¹³³. However, a brief summary that could be applicable to other congregations might be as follows:

1 – Evaluate your mission.

What is the purpose of owning and operating an early childhood center at your congregation? What is the internal relationship between the congregation and the early childhood center? How can you intentionally build a more formal relationship between the two? Do your formal documents (constitutions, mission statements, budgets, etc.) reflect that relationship or are they so separated that it is hard to see the connection?

2 – Evaluate your leadership staff relationships (particularly those of the director and pastor).

The pastor and the director are the two primary wheels that make this thing work. Are they both supportive of the relationship? What is their relationship like? Are they given enough resources to do their own job effectively? What is their Christian walk like at this time? Are they committed to the common mission of this congregation and its early childhood center? Do we need more staff (or volunteers) to accomplish this mission? Are advertising and other communication materials shared with members of both groups? Is there an intentional effort made to share information between the two sides? Are there areas where these efforts could be streamlined or improved?

¹³³ Appendix Seven: An Intentional Plan for Missional Early Childhood Centers

3 – Evaluate your teaching staff.

Who are our staff? What is their faith walk like at this time? How does it show in their day to day life? What is their connection and relationship to the congregation? Is there a way that we can foster that relationship even if they do not become members? What training needs do they have in order to share the Gospel with children and their families?

4 – Plan overlap events between the congregation and the early childhood center.

This is an area that many churches are quick to try to organize events, but if the other pieces aren't in place, the events can fall flat and frustrate church members. "We tried that and no one came..." There are several types of events and activities, each with their own strengths and weaknesses. Remember the key to an activity is intentionally mixing people from both groups so that they talk with one another:

A – ECC Specific Activities –These include ECC events such as Christmas Programs and Graduations. We always host a "thank you" Thanksgiving lunch for ECC parents. Congregational support is important at these events because it tells parents that the congregation cares.

B – Church Specific Activities – The most obvious church activity is worship, but this would also include things like Vacation Bible School and youth group events. These are events that are highly connected with the congregation and its ministry that can (and should) be advertised to ECC families, especially if it can be done in a personal way.

C - Crossover Activities – These are activities that are offered and advertised to both groups specifically to have them intermingle. Examples include Trunk or Treat, Family Festivals, Movie Nights, etc. Care should be taken to organize events in order to facilitate mixing.

D – Education Activities – This could be simply an example of “Crossover Activities”, but its special focus merits special consideration. These are special educational opportunities offered to members of both the church and the early childhood center in order to meet common needs. These could include, but are not limited to: parenting courses, financial courses, or marriage/relationship courses.

5 – Plan and Communicate in Advance.

The problem with most church activities is that we don’t put enough planning into the communication of the event. It is not enough to simply send a note home with the child. Most of us need to hear something five times, in five different ways, before it starts to stick. This means give plenty of thought on how to communicate and give enough time to communicate it effectively. A little extra detail and organization goes a long way when building relationships with families.

Questions

I loved conducting this research, and I am convinced that early childhood centers can be one of the ways that congregations are effective in connecting with their communities. There are several questions from my study that need further exploration. I have divided them according to the categories used previously.

- 1 Mission – What resources are out there to prepare a congregation to open an early childhood center with mission and purpose so that different funding models, governing models and administrative policies can keep the ministries tied together?
- 2 Leadership – Because the leadership positions of pastor and director are so critical to early childhood centers functioning missionally, what sort of training do they receive in these areas?
 - a. Are pastors trained to work with young children and families? Are they taught about the importance and history of Lutheran Education?
 - b. What sort of training do directors receive? Not all of our directors are Lutheran or were not trained as called workers. They may not understand the importance and history of Lutheran education or what it is like to work in a church. Not all synodically trained teachers have the makeup to manage the administrative complexities of an early childhood center.

What sort of ongoing training is available to both of these individuals?
- 3 Staff – How do we better train ECC staff, who are often not Lutheran, what their relationship is to the congregation and its ministry?
- 4 Congregation – How can congregational members be better equipped to communicate and witness as they interact with families in the ECC and throughout the community?

- 11.** Please share some things your congregation has done to develop and maintain relationships with the staff, children, and families of your early childhood center (ECC)?
- 12.** When families have assimilated into the church from your early childhood center, what do you sense might have been the most significant link or attraction they found, other than the center itself? [For example: A personal relationship with the pastor; the worship style; children’s worship involvement; their connections with congregation members; special events, such as parent nights, etc.]
- 13.** What joys and/or struggles have you had as you have attempted to connect more fully with your community through your ECC?
- 14.** If you have made some effort to help your staff focus on outreach, please share how you have done so.
- 15.** Please share any other thoughts or ideas you have about outreach through your ECC.

Contact Information:

Pastor		E-mail	
Congregation		Phone	
Director		E-mail	
ECC		Phone	

***Please Return to:
 Rev. Chris Ascher
 c/o Resurrection Lutheran Church
 5500 W. 26th Street
 Sioux Falls, SD 57106***

Appendix Two: Survey Request Letter

3/31/2014

Dear Pastor and/or Director:

My name is Rev. Chris Ascher. I am a Pastor at Resurrection Lutheran Church in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. We recently launched an Open Arms Center in March of 2010. Our purpose for starting this early childhood center (ECC) ministry was to create outreach opportunities for carrying out the Great Commission of Matthew 28. As you are probably aware sometimes the operation of the congregation as well as the center itself sometimes makes it difficult to focus on ways to use and improve the use of the center for its created purpose: sharing Jesus with the children and families that your center serves.

As part of my Doctor of Ministry studies at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, I am undertaking a study on forms of outreach and evangelism in early childhood educational centers. Specifically, I am surveying congregations in the South Dakota and Minnesota South Districts in order to find out what they are doing that the Holy Spirit is using to bring these children and their families into our congregations. The purpose of my project is to compile data in order to see what kind of outreach results are happening. From there, I will identify five to ten churches that have families joining the congregation through the early childhood center (ECC) and do follow-up interviews with the appropriate staff person or persons for a deeper understanding of what is and is not working for each congregation.

This information will be used to create an evangelism and outreach strategy at Resurrection Lutheran Church that utilizes the early childhood center. This strategy would then be available to those who are interested through the District offices in order to increase the effectiveness of all of our early childhood centers as we attempt to be faithful in carrying out the Great Commission.

Please take a moment to have someone fill out the brief survey and return it to me by Nov. 15, 2013. Once your survey is complete, please mail it back using the postage paid envelope included by Nov. 15, 2013. You may also return it by e-mail. My e-mail address is: pastor@resurrectionlutheransf.org.

I would appreciate any help and information you can share on this survey. Please know that I will make every effort to keep the information used in either a group format or in other forms that cannot be identified to particular sites or situations.

Thank you in advance for your timely response. If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely in Christ,

Rev. Christopher D. Ascher

Appendix Three: List of Contact Centers

Trinity Family Center	Hudson	WI
Rose of Sharon Sonshine Preschool	Cottage Grove	MN
Trinity Lutheran Preschool	Faribault	MN
Peace Lutheran Preschool	Faribault	MN
Trinity Little Lambs Preschool	Northfield	MN
Good Shepherd Preschool	Owatonna	MN
His Kids Concordia Child Care Center	Red Wing	MN
Our Savior Christian Preschool	Rosemount	MN
Trinity Little Lambs Preschool	St Francis	MN
Hand in Hand Childcare Center	St Paul	MN
South Shore Trinity preschool	White Bear Lake	MN
Messiah Lutheran Preschool	Mounds View	MN
Open Arms Christian Child Development Ctr	St Paul	MN
Christ Lutheran Preschool	Eagan	MN
Woodbury Lutheran Preschool	Woodbury	MN
Life In Christ Lutheran preschool	Albertville	MN
Mt Olive Christian Preschool	Anoka	MN
Family of Christ Christian Preschool	Ham Lake	MN
Noah's Ark Lutheran Preschool	Brownton	MN
Noah's Ark Lutheran Preschool	Buffalo	MN
Living Christ Early Learning Center	Chanhassen	MN
St John's Early Learning Center	Chaska	MN
Christ Victorious preschool	Chaska	MN
Shining Stars Learning Center	Gaylord	MN
Sonshine House	Hamburg	MN
Zion Early Childhood Center	Hopkins	MN
Little Lambs Christian Center	Hutchinson	MN
Shepherds Care	Maple Grove	MN
Christ's Kids Preschool	Shakopee	MN
Open Arms Christian Early Childhood Center	Bloomington	MN
David's Christian Learning Center	Columbia Heights	MN
Redeemer Lutheran Preschool	Robbinsdale	MN
Children of Peace Lutheran Day Care	Robbinsdale	MN
Loving Shepherd Early Learning Center	Golden Valley	MN
Mt Calvary Lutheran Preschool	Richfield	MN
Mt Hope Lutheran Child Development Center	Bloomington	MN
King of Glory Christian Preschool	Blaine	MN
St Michael's Lutheran Preschool	Bloomington	MN
Cross View Early Childhood Center	Edina	MN
Precious Corner Preschool	Plymouth	MN
Holy Cross Lutheran Preschool	Austin	MN
Our Savior Preschool	Brownsdale	MN
St. Mark Little Lambs Preschool	Rushford	MN
St Matthew Community Nursery School	St Charles	MN

St John's Wee Care center	Stewartville	MN
Redeemer Lutheran Preschool	Winona	MN
God's Young Minds Preschool	Mankato	MN
St. John's Lutheran Preschool/Daycare	Good Thunder	MN
Kinder Haus Daycare	New Ulm	MN
Sonshine Preschool	Windom	MN
Little Lambs Preschool	Luverne	MN
St Paul Lutheran Preschool	Pipestone	MN
Trinity Lutheran Preschool	Slayton	MN
The Lighthouse Preschool	Aberdeen	SD
Divine Shepherd Lutheran Pre-School	Blackhawk	SD
Blessed Redeemer Pre-School	Brandon	SD
Peace Lutheran Preschool	Brookings	SD
Zion Lutheran Preschool	Canistota	SD
St John's Lutheran Preschool	Groton	SD
Trinity Lutheran Preschool	Hartford	SD
Bethesda Lutheran School	Hot Springs	SD
Mt. Calvary Preschool	Huron	SD
Emmanuel Lutheran Preschool	Milbank	SD
Holy Cross Preschool	North Sioux City	SD
Jesus Loves Me Preschool	Philip	SD
Faith Lutheran Preschool	Pierre	SD
Peace Lutheran Preschool	Rapid City	SD
Zion Lutheran School	Rapid City	SD
Sioux Falls Lutheran School	Sioux Falls	SD
Open Arms Christian Childhood Center	Sioux Falls	SD
Little Lambs Lutheran Preschool	Sturgis	SD
Risen Savior Lutheran Preschool	Tea	SD
St. John's Lutheran Preschool	Yankton	SD

Appendix Four: Survey Data

<u>Resp.</u> <u>#</u>	<u>Bap.</u> <u>Memb.</u>	<u>ECC</u> <u>Enr.</u>	<u>K.</u> <u>Wor.</u>	<u>A</u> <u>Wor.</u>	<u>ECC K</u> <u>Bap</u>	<u>ECC A</u> <u>Bap</u>	<u>ECC K</u> <u>Join</u>	<u>ECC A</u> <u>Join</u>	<u>All K</u> <u>Bap</u>	<u>All A</u> <u>Bap</u>	<u>All K</u> <u>Join</u>	<u>All A</u> <u>Join</u>
1	376	64	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	0	5	0
2	230	42	3	3	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	3
3	579	24	12	10	0	0	0	0	7	0	8	8
4	705	38	5	3	1	0	0	0	9	0	8	7
5	190	67	11	10	5	0	3	4	5	0	2	3
6	170	20	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	10
7	500	15	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	3	1
8	1115	38	5	5	3	0	5	0	8	1	10	15
9	200	7	3	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	4	6
10	1640	172	4	4	1	0	2	1	-	-	13	34
11	1271	43	n/a	n/a	5	0	1	1	14	0	9	11
12	1137	54	0	0	3	0	3	0	15	1	15	7
13	650	32	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	0	3	2
14	240	62	2	2	0	0	0	0	3	0	-	19
15	181	10	2	1	2	0	2	1	7	0	7	13
16	4,939	67	30		3		6		100+		110+	
17	600	77	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	0	0	2
18	924	49	25	42	0	0	0	0	18	2	13	31
19	964	40	7	6	0	0	4	3	10	0	9	15
20	2525	64	35	30	0	0	2	2	36	6	25	55
21	742	36	29	19	0	0	4	0	9	0	-	-
22	906	153	10	20	1	0	2	2	15	1	15	15
23	436	14	6	5	1	0	3	7	9	1	17	20
24	392	85	3	2	0	0	3	2	8	4	22	21
25	1300	57	30	15	0	0	0	0	7	0	-	22
26	363	128	2	3	0	0	0	0	10	1	14	40
27	80	16	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	5
28	830	29	2	1	0	0	0	0	3	1	2	6
29	253	159	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	8	0
30	100	29	8	6	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	4
31	1920	69	5	4	1	0	2	2	34	6	38	52
32	3050	149	0	0	0	0	0	0	33	3	-	-
33	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA

Appendix Five: Follow-Up Interview Questions

1. Take a moment to tell me about _____ Lutheran Church and the community around it? What are your primary points of outreach?
2. What is the relationship between the ECC and the congregation? Does the ECC see itself as an extension of the congregation's outreach? If so, explain. If not, why not?
3. Please explain some of the things that you have done to create relationships between the church and the ecc families?
4. What do you credit for the number of baptisms and/or membership growth that has happened through your ECC?
5. What advice would you give to someone opening an ECC with the intent to use it for outreach to the unchurched?
6. Is there anything else you would like to share at this time?

Appendix Six: Interview Responses

Response #1

PA Could you take a moment to tell me about this congregation and the community that it serves and maybe what your primary points of outreach are?

R1 Our congregation, for the first fifty years or so, had a parochial school, and what was it ... four years ago now that it closed? And with the closing of the school we made the decision to kind of re-tool and focus on early childhood education. We did have an existing childcare and so we started with that foundation and then built around that to have a very good preschool. We even had a kindergarten here for one year. That kind of went by the wayside because the numbers just weren't there for that. We have a long history of Christian education in the congregation. The congregation will be 60 years old in two more years. So, really, four years ago we really started in earnest to really develop a top-notch early childhood center and focus primarily on preschool and prekindergarten classes and that really is where we are today. We're a small congregation – about 240 members. At one time in our heyday, back in the late 80's or so there were about 1200 members and we had like 300-400 kids in Sunday School and now we have less than 20, and so... But we are growing, and we are in a capital fund drive now and are going to remodel our existing facility and update all of our facilities. We're going to have a sanctuary, and we're going to be state of the art as far as early childhood education.

PA What are the dynamics going in your community right now?

D I've actually lived in this community since 1972 -- away for college for a couple years and things like that, but for the most part – we moved in '72. My block where I live right now is still made up of the people who originally lived in their homes. We, right here at the church, have surrounding apartment buildings. The town has a wonderful school system. And just now are we starting to see turnover. And so my neighborhood is changing; we have new families coming in, the elementary schools are growing and the preschools – there's a need again for us. And so we were able to have a waiting list this year, we specifically went from three classrooms down to two, not knowing exactly what the building project would look like and when we'd need to be mobile and so we did operate with a waiting list. So there is a new group of families now coming up in our neighborhood. During missional formation, demographics discovered that there are 3,000 unchurched families within a mile radius of our church.

PA What is “missional formation”?

R1 It's intentional re-focusing the church on the mission of the church. So often churches have become self-serving and... are you familiar with the lifeline of a church – how it gives birth and they're very outreach minded to grow but as it grows it becomes more

inward focused and takes care of their own needs and they lose that outreach mode of the church. And that was typical -- that has happened throughout our synod, and so, maybe six years ago, the synod adopted an intentional program to train congregations to reverse that trend. If you don't "re-birth" yourself again you're eventually going to die. As the congregation continues to grow older and older if you don't have new families coming in and new people, the congregation just continues to dwindle. And that is where we saw ourselves. So we went through a two year intentional process... We finished it, and so out of that, we got a new sense of mission and that really kind also of went hand in hand with our vision of having a topnotch child development center.

PA That kind of leads to the next question, which is: What is the relationship between the ECC and the congregation? Does the ECC see itself as an extension of the congregation's outreach?

R1 I would say so.

D Absolutely

PA How does that work then?

R1 I think it works in various ways. You know the congregational support of the child development center -- it's not a separate entity -- it's part and parcel of our church. We have tried to maintain that it's not "them" and "us", it's "we" together in mission, and it's one way that we are reaching out to our community -- by having a child development center. We do not look upon it -- although there probably are some members who look upon it as a way of financing the church. It does happen that way -- they not only cover their own expenses, but they also contribute to the overall cash flow of our congregation, but we do not say they owe us so much for utilities or so much for insurance or anything like that. We're in this together -- that type of thing. So we don't separate any of that stuff out and I think that by and large the congregation sees the child development center as a viable part of the congregation.

D We're inviting people into our home.

R1 Yeah

D And we've worked really hard to keep it affordable, which speaks to the people who live in the apartments by us who are more blue-collar workers. The residential area's more white-collar, but we really have tried to reach everybody by providing excellent education that's affordable to everybody that lives in this neighborhood, and it's working.

PA Can you give me an idea of what affordable is? I'm just curious

D Affordable means... Well, we offer both a traditional curriculum from nine to noon – you can choose whether you come 2, 3, 4, or 5 days a week. Our pricing for a 3 hour class is comparable if not lower than most of the other places in the area for their 2.5 hour class. So we are very competitive with our pricing. Our childcare, instead of charging for preschool on top of our childcare fees, childcare fee includes traditional preschool. Just by eliminating some of those additional add-ons that used to be part of the system before I came, we kind of streamlines the finances. It's easier for people to do. They feel like they can handle it because they won't be presented with "oh, yeah, and then you'll need to pay for this and then you'll need to pay for that." It's all in one, and we are very competitive – especially with the centers in the area that are charging quite a bit more than we are. They have more bells and whistles with their buildings, but we have really dedicated, highly-educated staff that do a good job. When people come for a tour, I say it's small, it's homey, we'll take really good care of your children, we'll educate them well so that they'll be ready for K, but it's not going to look like one of the fancy new training centers that's out there. They charge a lot more. It's affordable.

PA What are some of the things in the mission/revitalization you mentioned that you guys did? What are some of the ways that you guys have consciously tried to bridge or create relationships between the church and students or families of the ECC?

D Most of the main activities that the church is planning right now are planned around how can we involve the families and is it accommodating to their schedules. These are people, some of them that work – you know -- they drop their kids here at 6:45 in the morning and they pick them up at 5:45. So we have to plan our meals according to when we think we can hit the majority of those families and be available for them. Easter egg hunts and funfest things – a lot of the activities planned within them are based on the age group that we have, what we know about their families, what we think they'll like and what we think they'll show up with. To be available and really reach the people right here in our building that we could take a step further. Does that cover it?

PA Yes

R1 Whenever you've had programs we've had volunteers from our church serve like at the Christmas program they served the families Christmas cookies and beverages after the children's program. We did that twice. In the fall the women sponsor; they bring the fire trucks over here and the fire department does a demonstration for all the families for fire safety in the home and then the women serve a supper for the families in our child development center. All free.

D I think that's the biggest thing – we don't use them as a fundraiser. It's for them; it's free. Come and be here and be part of things.

R1 We try to take that element out of it. If it's going to cost them any money, we absorb that cost so they don't have that as a stumbling block as any reason why not to -- like I can't afford it, that type of thing.

D We're very intentional with invitations to our 3rd to 6th grade youth group – anybody who's in my program that's in that age group their addresses and contact information goes to our youth director so she can contact them and invite them to her events.

R1 Vacation Bible School

D Yeah, invitation every week for Sunday School. The unified curriculum that we use allows us every week to say “Your child learned this week about Blessed are those ... from the Beatitudes in this part of the Bible. If you come this Sunday you can hear Pastor preach about the same thing that we taught your child during the week.”

PA Talk about the unified curriculum. What is that?

R1 We started that two years ago. We got the idea from a neighboring church because they went out to...they heard about this church out in California that wanted to start a child development center and during their research they discovered that it was necessary to have something that would be simple for unchurched families to gravitate to first of all and because unchurched families do not have a history of liturgy and all of that stuff and so that was the first thing. They wanted to create a worship service that unchurched families from the ECC would feel comfortable being a part of. And then they took that a step further in saying that whatever the kids are learning during the week that should also be highlighted then on Sunday so it's all connected together. And so they brought that back and I don't know whether they've ever developed that – I think they're doing the same thing. I have a mission formation coach and he kind of passed that on to me. And so we talked about it at a staff level and we decided that was a good idea that we would develop a curriculum so when the kids have “Jesus Time” here during the week then that also is taught on Sunday morning at Sunday School and is also part of what our worship service is about. So every week we don't follow the lectionary system any more. We have developed a series for the times of the year. In the fall we did the Ten Commandments, we did the Fruits of the Spirit over the summer, now we're doing the Beatitudes. During Lent we're going to be doing The Lord's Prayer. We pick out, when we develop those kind of segments that...

PA Is that kind of an on-going thing or is this a structured...? Is this something where we come up with a theme like we're going to cover The Ten Commandments for the next ten weeks or is this something where always at this time of year we're always going to cover these or...?

R1 It's different every...so we're developing that ourselves.

PA So you're self-developing.

D Yes, the theme for the whole year was "Back to the Basics". So the Ten Commandments, the Beatitudes, are those things that are basic to the Christian faith and I think for our members (me being one of them) we are really enjoying it because it's a look back at all the things that we learned when we were younger and then developing them at a much higher thinking level when we listen to you talk about them. I'm enjoying it as well. I think even if a whole bunch of families aren't showing up for church or knowing it – as far as the congregation and the staff itself – it's keeping all of us connected. We're all on the same page. We may not see the benefits of it for a year or two yet as far as the ECC families joining/coming more often, but we are always thinking about how does this work with what Pastor's going to talk about, how does this work with what the music is doing. We literally sit down and go, okay what's – you know The music lady comes with songs that will work and we look at Scripture together and decide what should be the main verse, what should be the main piece that we're trying to communicate this week. So we're all together.

PA Talk about that dynamic – how the staff works together. Who's involved in the relationship, when do you meet, who is the staff, all of those kind of things.

R1 We call it our ministry staff, our ministry team, and that includes Kim from the Child Development Center, we have a part-time DCE that does youth ministry and junior high ministry, so it includes her, and our secretary, our music director, and sometimes even the Sunday School superintendent who's not on staff per se, but is a lay volunteer – because she's involved in the development of that curriculum we include her in our staff meetings sometimes. We formally meet on the first Wednesday of every month, and during that time we will hammer out the themes. Initially, before we start the whole thing we kind of do a plan of what it's all going to be and then we kind of flesh it out as we move along. Like this is the one we're working on right now.

PA Would I be able to get a copy of some of these?

R1 Sure

PA So right now we're working on the Beatitudes and so the kids are learning what the Beatitudes are. We take one each week and we put it into their kind of language and context, and that's really where Kim's expertise comes in. I don't think like a three or four year old, you know – but she has that ability to convert.

D And then I pass those on to the two lead teachers and then they take it even further. And they might not be doing the same Bible stories to go with it; they may be doing different songs to go with it, but the main idea is always the same and everybody can take it and adjust it to the group that they're working with.

R1 We take turns doing the weekly chapel service and so that theme will always continue through that.

PA Who is “we”? I’m just curious.

R1 It’s kind of changed right now, but it’s the director and I and our youth director right now.

D We do have a full-time called teacher and she would be on that ministry staff is she wasn’t in a classroom on Wednesday morning. So I just keep her up to date with what we’ve done and where we’re at. She also does chapel; she just happens to be on fulltime bed rest right now. And then those same people do the children’s message on Sundays.

R1 So we rotate that around too.

D So half of the ECC staff does half of the children’s message.

PA Is that message the same message that they did in chapel?

R1 No, it’s slightly different.

PA So you’re on the same theme, but...

D ...a different analogy, a different object lesson

PA What advice would you give someone – say they were coming to you and they were looking at starting an ECC for outreach, what kind of advice would you give them? Where would you start?

D What was the book that we did together in Bible study -- the one with all the baseball analogies?

R1 *Seven Practices of Effective Ministry*

D It was that book that talks about... How do you set a goal? How do you know if you’re being successful in ministry? And I think that’s where you and I [to R1] really got on the same page too with the child development center. How do we know if we’re being successful? We may not know.

R1 Right

D And for people starting out, I think the first thing they’d have to decide is how are we going to decide if we’re doing a good job or not.

R1 Yeah

D It’s hard.

R1 For the last couple of years we, as a staff, we've read a book together. And we talk about that during our staff meeting and that has kind of given us inspiration and direction and some foundational principles that we adhere to in developing our curriculum and applications for all of that.

D You want a very well-done child development center where there's people who have faith that their child is being well treated, they're comfortable, they feel like they're at home in the building. And then as far as the congregation planning events – we do a few and they're well known in the community – Family Funfest – we've had people walk in for our Funfest. We've had August events out on that massive piece of land with bouncy houses and a petting zoo and live music and have had people stop there.

R1 And food

D And food. People come inside and then enroll. Once they were actually in the building... and started a month later for September school.

PA So when is that?

D Late July, August

R1 It's always been like maybe the week before school starts or the first week in August or something.

D People know that one; they wait for that one in the community.

R1 We've been doing that now for, let's see, six years – maybe seven years now. The first year we did it was 2006, yeah.

D Our VBS program is well attended. It can be 100 kids, which in this neighborhood with a center of 60 kids, that's good.

R1 Yeah. And we used to do it during the day, but now we do it at night. And we try to make it more family centered. We have a meal for families to come and when they're bringing their kids, if there's interest, we try to have something for adults while the kids are going through VBS activities and so forth.

D I hadn't been part of an evening VBS before, and it is really nice.

PA It can be.

R1 It was hard for us to make the switch. The first few years that I was here we had it during the day and the majority of the kids that were in VBS were the kids that were in our center. And there was another center down here in the strip mall and she'd bring her kids over, but it was mostly taking care of the kids we had, it wasn't really reaching out to the

community. So we made that switch to making it available for everybody not just the ones that are already here.

PA Any other advice that you would give to someone starting a center?

R1 Look upon the people that you are inviting to come as people, and not as a dollar sign. And to love them and to care for them and be sincere about that. We are very good about recognizing some of the people that come who might have some special needs – single mothers and so forth. And we do have a means of providing financial assistance for those families that may be struggling, so we care for them that way as well. We give everybody the ability to give us prayer requests; we want to pray for those families and help them in any way that we can. While they may not be members of our church per se, but we still – they're a part of our community and so we pray for them and we care for them. If they're in the hospital I go visit them. So we do whatever we can do for them as if they were members of our church.

D I think, too -- and you and I have never talked about this – but I was explaining it to my children when they were looking at the annual report yesterday and saw the financial statement where it looks like I brought in a whole bunch of money and the church was here ...to not have the money separated out is a fantastic thing. I was able to explain to my kids, they don't take out for the lights and the whatever, and so it really is just everybody contributing and we pay what we need to pay for our bills and everybody contributes, because I think the second that it gets too divvied up and your percentage of the lights is this and your portion of the copy machine it starts you down a road that would be really hard not to be negative at some point. You'd have to be so careful not to let that become negative. And because we don't have it that way, things don't come up that could be nitpicky and negative.

R1 Right

D Everybody's trying real hard to make it financially work. So I appreciate that tremendously

PA Anything else you'd like to share from your experiences?

R1 I would encourage any congregation who wants to do early childhood to try it and it's a wonderful outreach to the community, if that's what you really want to do. If you want to share Jesus with people and there's no guarantees – it's not necessarily going to grow your church, but it will grow heaven, and we do know that we are very active in sharing the Gospel, and people are hearing it. People are learning to pray at mealtime because they learn prayer here and kids tell their parents, oh we have to pray first. So it does have many positive effects and I can't imagine...when they're not in session, this is a dull place. I think it's fantastic; I just love having the children around.

D It can be loud sometimes, but...

PA That happens. Anything else you'd like to share?

R1 I can't think of anything else right now.

END

Response #2

PA Could you take a moment to tell me about your Church – kind of your community and how you reach out to your community?

R2 Our focus as we started doing this has been ...there's a school across the street; an elementary school and they have 750 kids in there every day Monday through Friday. And I could knock on every door in this neighborhood and not come up with 750 kids. But if we go over there and serve them and care for them we have an opportunity to reach a lot of people. So we have been focused on what can we do for kids fifth grade and younger? So we do a summer camp – we have a local Lutheran camp an hour south of here come in and do a whole summer traveling Bible camp here. And we started the preschool, and we also started something for the low income children of the community in the summer – it's about six weeks we do this camp where anybody can come for free. We'll pick them up with a bus, we'll get them here we'll feed them breakfast and lunch in partnership with the school and we will have activities here. So everything we do is targeted for kids fifth grade and younger—to reach them – and it's made an impact. Over the last five years we've probably baptized close to 20 kids between the ages of four and fifteen. So, for a small church, because we only have 100 people in worship, that's huge percentage.

PA Absolutely! What is your town like and maybe this area, wherever you consider in your area?

R2 For about a ten year period of time it was it was one of the ten fastest growing communities in the United States. It had been a small town forever, I mean and if you talk to people who have been here 30 years ago it was a town of 3,000 people. It's now a town of close to 40,000 people. And that all really happened in the last 15 years. So you've got old town which planted this church and you've got new town. Old town is very blue-collar and very much community people – the same names – the names that the streets are named after still live in this community. But new town is white-collar that came into the city. It's almost like two different communities that don't know what to do with each other. And the ethnic differences – 15 years ago this was less than 5%

minority and now it's close to 30%. So that's made a huge change in the community also.

PA How many churches serve this town – of our churches?

R2 Missouri Synod – one. Just us. For a town of 40,000 that's not much and yet we had such a difficult time with the splits that it's been hard for this church to gain traction. There are, within 15 minutes of here, four other LCMS churches and people commute from here to those. When I first arrived a larger non-denominational church also had a campus here. I met their pastor and he said “Welcome, the place where churches go to die.” So this whole community struggled, it seems like. But there seems to be something happening, that churches are getting healthier and growing and the Gospel's being proclaimed, so something good is happening. So we'll see what happens.

PA That's interesting. So it seems like your primary point of outreach is really through the school and kind of working with them but you also use the early childhood center as a way to try to incorporate that. What is the relationship between the ECC and the congregation? How does that work, does it see itself as part of the outreach?

R2 Yes. And that's a good...one of the issues... when we had first started this, and the congregation had started working on this before I ever came. They had this insight and this vision that they had to do something, but they weren't exactly sure how to do it, so they started this preschool with the hope of reaching out into the community. And I think they really had it married to the congregation when they first started the idea; however, when they called a director to start it, they called a full-time director with a master's degree and 27 years of experience, which almost bankrupted the church, because the first year it lost \$100,000. For a small church that had gone through three splits that had no money – they were \$140,000 in debt when I got here. And the idea was, how do we keep the doors open? That put a really bad taste in the mouth of the congregation. So it's been a healing process of trying to get the congregation to see the preschool again as part of – a healthy good part – of the congregation. We have a handful of people who truly integrated the preschool with their ministry, and I do my best to get in there. I do chapels, I get in there and talk to kids on a regular basis, but that's – and I talk to the parents on a regular basis. And then we have opportunities to bring those kids in. We try, because a lot of what we do is focused on children, we do a harvest fair at Halloween, we do the summer camp, and those kinds of things where we bring these kids back in. And we try to keep building relationships. I spend a lot of time talking to the parents when they sign in, I try to make sure that I'm around to talk to them. A lot of it has to do with relationships I'm building and getting to know what's going on with the parents. But we have a handful of people from the congregation, and we're talking about a church that worships 100 people on a Sunday, getting a handful of people is a pretty decent representation, that come in and they help serve the kids and they help get to know the parents. So there is some ministry,

but really, I think, for the majority of the people in the congregation, they see it as something **other** that we're doing. We're still trying to integrate that and we're still trying to make people feel that it's not a drain. Although it's not a financial drain at this point in time. We've gotten the debt taken care of through a bunch of means. And so we're finally getting to the point where it sustains itself, and just two months ago, we baptized two children from there. So **that** is what makes the congregation go, "This is important."

PA What are some of those things that you've done, whether it's you individually or you the congregation to kind of build those relationships between the ECC families and your congregation? What are those intentional processes?

R2 A lot of it has to do with serving. Well, two things – one -- it's spending time getting to know people and talking to them and knowing what's going on in their lives, but two – it's serving where they're at – whatever the struggles are. Because... At the beginning of this year – this is the first time that there haven't been any kids that were registered at the beginning of the year that were members of our congregation. So **all** the kids – it's a small preschool this year; it's 11 kids right now. But, again, we just baptized two of them, which makes me very excited. This is the first time that none of them were part of our congregation, so instead of looking at it as oh my goodness, what's going on, it's really an opportunity. That means that there are 11 kids there that, for the most part, aren't attached to a church anywhere. And we have an opportunity to share Christ with them. Our director does a great job on incorporating the Bible and Bible stories in everything. She does a fantastic job with that.

PA She's director and teacher?

R2 Yeah – she's **the** person. And we have a full-time volunteer -- a woman from the congregation who volunteers, because when you get to ten people you need a second person in there by law. And rather than spend the money, this lady who's a retired lady in our congregation, for the last four years has volunteered her time in there with the kids. It's amazing, the commitment she has. And so a lot of it has to do with spending time getting to know the parents; intentionally be there when they're signing the kids in so you have a chance to talk with them. And getting to know what's going on, and then when you find out needs – with the economic struggles the last few years some of the parents have troubles and we try to serve them any way we can. One single mother with a few kids in here that we, as we started looking at the people that we're serving...we could really partner with the U.S. Marine Corp and their Toys for Tots and so we had a toy distribution here and gave away 6,000 toys to people in need here in the community. Half of the parents from our preschool were among those we served. And those are ways – they start to go, "This is a church that really cares." And so, I think that makes an impact on their willingness to come in, and to get to know us. So now even though none

of the people who are associated with the congregation we have the two that we baptized, plus there's another two children that are at least visiting our congregation and getting to know us a little bit.

PA So the two that are baptized, is that one family?

R2 One family; they're here every week. And then the other two are two different families, and they are, I'm guessing, within the next few months they'll be baptized and come and participate on a regular basis. Just because of the relationship that we're starting to build.

PA That kind of goes to the next question; maybe you've answered it, but I'll ask it anyway. What do you credit for the number of baptisms or the growth that is happening through the ECC?

R2 Relationships

PA Relationships with who?

R2 Relationships with me, a lot of it. For most of the people we've brought into our congregation the last number of years have been people completely disjointed from churches. They haven't wanted to be part of a church for at least ten years, it seems like. And so, I think that a lot of it is getting to know either a member of the congregation or me that goes, "They actually care." And based on what we are doing here they're not a church that just says "we have services, come and join us." But we're a Christ-centered church that's actually trying to care for the community. And I think it's through conversations that they get that understanding. But for the preschool parents, especially, it's a relationship with me. Because you know, most of the volunteers in our congregation can't be here at 9:00 when they drop the kids off, or 11:30 in the morning when they pick the kids up. They're working themselves. So it's really got to be me, and it's small enough that I can get out and get to know everybody.

PA OK. What advice would you give to someone opening an ECC with the intent to use it for outreach to the unchurched? So someone comes to you looking for advice, says "you guys operate and do this thing..."

R2 It can't ... I think, for the most part, pastor or staff has to be of the congregation, not the preschool. It has to be attached and in there and getting to know the kids and the parents in order for the parents to see connection to the church. It doesn't necessarily have to be the senior pastor if it's a large church, but there has to be somebody in there that they go, "This is a person from the church." And getting to know people and inviting them to whatever it would be appropriate to invite them to. And have things for them. Basically none of the people who come in for the first time come for worship service. Most of the time they come in through the summer camp or our harvest fair or through other things

that we do – bike giveaways, toy giveaways...and eventually they come to church here. We even have exercise classes for the parents and stuff like that. Because some of these people have been exercising in our church for a year and they've never come to worship.

PA Describe some of those things.

R2 We have the exercise classes. Because of minorities in the community we've started ESL classes for the parents of the preschoolers. We have to have something for the parents that is an open door for them to walk into to build the relationship, so that they go, "I could actually go to that church." I think, this is my personal opinion, at one time in Europe when they built those cities in the middle ages, they built the church and they would build the community around it, the church was truly the heart and soul of the community. I think for most people, the church is irrelevant in our communities. And sometimes churches still have the mindset that hey, we have services, good services, and we open our doors, they know where to find us. We have to actually be out in the community as the heart and the soul. That doesn't necessarily mean as the church, it means as servants. Which I think **is** the church. Let's go out and serve and care for people, where they're at, what they need. You know, we have two soccer leagues out here in the summer, because we've got all this grass that sits with nothing on it, so we put up soccer goals and we have 150 kids out there every Saturday playing soccer. It doesn't take almost any time at all for us, and yet, if you walk around and talk to parents, you get a chance to build relationships, and you're doing something for them that they couldn't afford on their own. By having coaches out there, by having referees and we partner with other people in the community who pay for coaches and referees, so it's something good. The local hospital here in town gives us \$50,000 a year to run summer programs. Because what we're doing is we're helping create a healthy community. They've done that for the last four years.

PA \$50,000 each year?! That's like a staff person.

R2 It is. It's amazing. But if you're truly trying to serve the community, the community wants to walk with you. This is a big thing. You asked what you'd tell the people who are starting an ECC – determine if it's the right thing to do. If it's the right thing to do, then do it. And don't worry about the results as long as it's not bankrupting your church or something. If it's the right thing to do, then do it. And that's one of the things we chose to do with our summer camp and out soccer and things like that. Is this loving our neighbor? We keep it pretty simple. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, strength, soul. Love your neighbor as yourself. Loving your neighbor is the right thing to do. If it is, and if nobody ever shows up on Sunday morning, it's still the right thing to do so we do it. But if it's not the right thing to do, then don't worry about it. Don't do it. But if it's the right thing, just do it. Continue to do it and don't worry about the results. We went years before seeing... We've been doing this for seven years; it was the fourth

year before we saw anybody start to come. We worked at this for a long time – building relationships and nobody cared – at least it didn't seem like it. But we can't see what the Holy Spirit's doing, and then all the sudden something happens and you grow. We're still a small church; it's not like we're growing leaps and bounds, but it's a healthy church for the first time. I think it's healthy for the people who are here because they've got the idea if it's the right thing to do, we do it. That's an odd way of looking at it maybe, but often we only look at how many people are in worship. And we have grown and I'm happy about that. But I'm more excited that the people who are here – we've had a whole lot more of them in Sunday School now than we used to. And our offerings are up. It's not just a financial thing; it's a thing about spiritual discipline. People are committed and they're growing in their faith. So the fact that over the last two years it's been pretty steady actually. We haven't been growing as far as people in church, we're plateaued at 100, and sometimes that gets frustrating. I'll be honest, I've got my human side and I want it to continue to grow, but I'm excited about the fact that Sunday School and Bible class with the adults is growing. It means the 100 people that are here are getting more and more dedicated. And then offerings are going up, which is another sign of spiritual discipline – people are growing in their faith. As we grow enough leaders, I think that God will then give us more people to care for it to grow in their faith. So it's a time consuming thing and we're not a very fast growing church in that way. But the things that are happening are exciting to me.

PA Anything else you'd like to share for the official interview that you want to make sure is on there?

R2 The biggest thing for me with the ECC is getting the right leader. This has been going for seven years here, and we are on our third director in seven years. And the first three years were painful for me, and I wish that we hadn't opened it at that time, even though I kept building these relationships. Take the time to get the right person, because it will just make life so much more smooth. And that continuity in the community makes a difference also. When we were turning over a director every other year those first few years, I think that the community was like "what's going on?" But now it's a little more stable it's a little bit easier to see where we can grow again.

END

Response #3

PA Since I'm not familiar with this area at all, take a moment to tell me about the Church and the community here or wherever you consider your area that you serve and what are your areas of focus for outreach and those kinds of things.

R3 I've been here since March of 2013, so just under a year. This is a relatively young congregation; we'll actually be celebrating our 40th anniversary the first part of February. So the congregation is relatively new. We have had childcare for about ten years, most recently about four years ago they built on, they expanded from a childcare run pretty much in a fellowship hall to a childcare -- one that has infant rooms, toddler rooms, preschool, that kind of situation.

PA We're talking construction.

R3 Yes, to the tune of about \$2,000,000. That was added on to the church building and it wasn't just childcare expansion, it was offices and new kitchen for the fellowship hall, things like that, so there had been ...in four years' time there had been quite a shift in gong from a "mom and pop" kind of a situation to a childcare that needs to establish business policies and things like that, always understanding that it's ministry -- you know how that goes. Most recently we had a change in our directors' position. We had co-directors for a long period of time and then one of those ladies retired and they brought in another to take the co-director position, and then the lady that was in place, she wanted to drop down to lead the charge for our preschool ministry. So we have one director now and lead teachers like most childcares have and someone who is in charge of our preschool ministry. None of our workers in childcare are called Synod-trained workers. My knowledge is limited to the year that I've been here so far, but I do perceive this to be a growing suburban community. If you would look at a standard suburban community, this would be a picture of a suburb of most metro areas. Though here we have a liturgical service at 8:00 in the morning and a contemporary service at 10:30 so there is some mix there too, but a very conservative, very traditional Bible-based, standing in Scripture kind of a regular Lutheran church in that way -- as a suburb. The city is growing. As I've looked at the history to try to understand a little bit it's a pretty young town, or city -- 25 to 30 thousand. It's all very affluent. When I say very affluent I'm not saying millions of dollars, but this area would be a much higher socio-economic area than if we would travel even 15 minutes. Diversity is pretty much non-existent. Again, a pretty standard white Anglo area.

PA Are you talking white middle upper class?

R3 Absolutely. Less than 2% of the population is ethnically diverse at all. African-American, Hispanic, or Asian, SE Asian really not so much at all.

With that, a welcoming community, as far as that goes. Our ministry -- our main outreach is in childcare right now and to try and use that as a ministry contact point for outreach. It's interesting though because the last number of people that I've had the opportunity to sit down and talk with about church and outreach have not been connected to the childcare, but my perception is that by having advertising for the childcare, that's one of

the great ways that our name is getting out there. It's not just the church, but it's the church and childcare. We have a pretty good reputation for serving the community that way and for being a good place. When I say "we", of course, I'm pulling a lot of history.

PA What is the relationship between the ECC you have and the congregation, and does the ECC see itself as an extension of the congregation's outreach?

R3 That is one of my driving forces is that I ...there seems to have been at one point in time a promise that the ECC would supply new membership to the congregation and also fund the congregation. And that tends to be a struggle right now for us. In building on the section that is primarily for childcare we're still undergoing the growing pains from the mom and pop, grandpa and grandma situation to a business that is also ministry. When we meet as church council I really am very specific about trying to use words always that this is church/childcare are connected. And physically they are... physically there's no separation between the two. And parts of childcare use the church building too. Not so much vice versa, but a lot of times the kids go into the church. One of the hard parts is to show each that the ECC is not primarily a revenue stream, but it's ministry. And that's one of the struggles that I perceive that we're having right now.

PA So, does the ECC now, do they see themselves as part of that outreach?

R3 The director does, absolutely. The lead preschool, absolutely.

PA ...Who was a former director...

R3 Correct. They see that absolutely. If I were to go and interview each of their staff, I would venture to say that most of them do not. They understand that it is a Christian childcare that we have Bible stories and all of that, but I would say that to be able to make the connection...I would say that most of them would not necessarily see the connection. We're trying to change that. Most of our staff, the vast majority of our staff, are not members of our congregation. So that is one thing to show that they may not see it as an extension of the Church, but one of the things they're doing is – one of the staff is having some medical issues and we're having a fundraiser for her, and I think that's one of the things that is going to help us to help make that connection. Some of those things.

PA And maybe this ties to that, I'm just going down my list. Explain to me some of the things that you have done to try to create relationships between the church and the ECC families.

R3 Let's go first in our parish life board, we throw those invitations out to parish events all the time. There is a communication flow. Paperwork, e-mail, Facebook, all of that. From the congregation to the parents in the childcare, with not much success. I'll be very upfront about that. There hasn't been many of the families who have started to

participate in church events outside of worship. The adult Bible study clubs, parish fellowship like our Christmas celebration, there was nobody from childcare, even though there were invitations made. That's one thing; four times a year we have the childcare children sing in church to help that intersection. The kids do a Christmas program every year to help that intersection. And those are two examples of the childcare more reaching out to the congregation maybe than the congregation reaching to them.

PA Explain what you mean by that.

R3 Well, my background ...I spent five years at a church with a school. It was always a struggle to see that it wasn't church/school/childcare there. It was always a struggle to draw them all together. Because separate entities want to be run separately and but they need to flow all together out of one ministry and have one ministry goal of – in that situation it was teaching – teaching Christ from the infants that came in all the way from the day school into the church. And that's the thing here, too, I think. There just isn't always this idea that we're all one. The words are very specific from both sides – “they,” “them.” I'm trying to stop that to put it quite frankly, because I want this to be seen as one ministry. So, that's the heard part of that. And the things that I do – I have chapel once a week with the kids so they see the connect with me that way as being the pastor. It's not on a regular basis for me, I mean I'm not on a strict schedule, but I try to be here couple of times a week pretty early in the morning, just to be that face that the parents are making contact with coming by, the same thing when they leave in the afternoon. Just the presence, to be present when they're around to make those connections and again on the other side, at church to try and bring the people into the understanding that, hey, well, I'm kind of bouncing all over the place but...One of the things we do is have Lenten and Advent meals; we are very, very direct in trying to funnel the families through that so they have dinner with us. They don't stay for church – ok. But it's one way to make the contacts, the connections.

PA And do they stay for the meals sometimes?

R3 A couple times; a few times. Not a lot. I would say for Advent – I suppose two or three families staying through the three weeks. And then they go home, because we do have a number of families who are connected to congregations outside of here.

PA What do you credit for the number of baptisms and/or membership gains that have come through the childcare center? What is the reason?

R3 Apart from the Holy Spirit...

PA What are the reasons – the feedback you're getting?

R3 Connection to former Lutheran congregations, so there's some experience whether it's whatever brand of Lutheranism it is, they've had some contact before and they've been close to the area so they checked out our childcare here and it seemed like a natural thing when they've had some experience before – there have been a couple families like that that I can remember. A number of the other baptisms, speaking of the ones I've had, a connection to a stable kind of a situation. In the last year there were a number of families that were kind of holding back to figure what was happening here at Shepherd because there was about a fourteen month vacancy. So they had connected to the childcare but they didn't connect to the church because vacancy pastor what does that mean, interim pastor, what does that mean? In the year that I've been here, and to know that I'm the guy and it's going to be the same face all the time, again, again, and again. That's been part of it too; they sense the stability of that. And then, I think the directors are really good. Our current singular director, our former co-directors were really, really intentional in directing families to me, to the front office so that we know their situations. That if we've got an infant coming in after six weeks, the questions are asked: what's your church home? Baptism – has it happened? Are you interested? Things like that. So, the directors are really good at that. They funnel the information that we might miss in just a regular conversation so I can follow up on that. We're small enough here to be able to do that yet.

PA Can you give me roughly the size of both congregation and ...

R3 The congregation is just over 200; we're looking at 80 in the childcare. Of course, that's not individual families – there's doubles in some areas. That discounting the work of the Holy Spirit, but I think the directors making that information aware back to us running the administrative part of the church has been the biggest thing besides connections with other Lutherans churches beforehand.

PA Is that an organized process, or is that kind of an intuitive process? Is it something where they know they are the questions we hit or you latched on to some good directors that just do it. Was there training, was there emphasis there?

R3 That's part of their form. All the information is gathered on a new family, that's a very, very direct part of their form, but the directors get it too.

PA Can I get a copy of that form?

R3 We can sure find it – remind me. If nothing else we can e-mail it to you.

PA Anything else that you can kind of credit that too? Things that are coming back in feedback?

R3 It's more after the fact, for retention of some of the members – this is a really welcoming congregation – we have a number of people who, and I don't know if they were ever trained, but they've taken it upon themselves to be our greeters that when they know someone is in church they're following up with them, they're welcoming them all the time. We have a couple of ladies, and this would be partial training anyway, who were involved in the Stephen Ministry. And they have ears to listen and they're aware of things. That's kind of after the fact, the welcoming part of it. It goes back to the intake to know who's ... and to be aware too... you know, Johnny's in the toddler room and they notice the mom's coming in and she's going to have a baby, then those conversations happen eventually too.

PA Are our directors members of the congregation?

R3 Yes. The retired director is and always was and the former director is, and the former co-director who is now lead preschool is a member of the congregation.

PA Was that intentional? Do you know?

R3 I don't know. I know that the current director has been a member all her life; she grew up here; she was confirmed here. She came up through the childcare and she has undergrad in early childhood from Concordia, St. Paul. But not called. And then the other two ladies, I don't know if they were members here and then just flowed into the childcare when it was started, or not. I can't answer the question for sure. But I know they're active member now.

PA What advice would you give to someone opening an ECC with the intent of using it for outreach to the unchurched? So somebody comes to you, they say, "You guys are doing this here, and what advice can you give me?"

R3 Never ever, ever judge your success by the numbers of people that flow from the childcare to the congregation to become "members." Because we do ministry every single day to families and children that may never walk through the doors of the church HERE. They may be members somewhere else, or maybe we are their first exposure to Christianity. I know right now that we have three families who are that way – no exposure to Christianity before and they are getting their feet wet through the childcare and through contacts with the directors, the teachers, and with me, and this is just – we're working along to see how it happens. My modus operandi is not over the top – hey, we've got to get you into this adult class right away. We're letting it grow and keep going. That would be my big thing. Childcare's a business, but if we look at it as only a business, then we're not doing it for the right reason. My humble opinion. It's not a revenue stream for the congregation – you just can't do it that way – it is, but that can't be the point. My biggest advice is when you're starting a childcare, don't make those promises that there's going to be a stream of new members coming into the congregation

– quite frankly, that’s not up to us. We share the Word, spread the Word, teach as much as we can, but that’s going to be the Holy Spirit. And then don’t promise that revenue stream because it may or may not come right away. And those are the two things that I would. Because I look at the childcare here and I look at my background with a Lutheran day school – every moment that we have to share Christ with someone, that’s what it’s about. That’s what it’s about.

PA Is there anything else that you would care to share kind of on topic that I haven’t gotten to that you say, “I just have to make sure that he has this on file.”

R3 Chapel. Chapel is a crucial thing. Once a week we bring all of the children out of the childcare to the church. However you do chapel, there are a myriad of ways, but to bring them together to be able to have a short chapel discussion, sing some songs, show some video, whatever it is – we have even infants come down. We bring them down in the strollers. I think that’s a huge thing because kids develop a relationship very quickly – in our case, with me – Pastor Tim. They know who I am when I walk down the hallway. They see me, it’s “Hi, how’s it going?” high fives, all that kind of stuff, but they’re developing that relationship with church.

PA So you have one large group chapel.

R3 Yes. I think that is really important; I think it’s really cool to be able to do that. It works really well for our situation here. We have Thursday mornings at 9:15. We bring all the kids down at that time. We probably have infant to preschool, maybe 40 kids at that particular time frame. It’s an amazing time; I love it.

END

Response #4

PA Since I am not from this area, take a moment to tell me about the Church, the community around it, and what some of your outreach is to this community.

R4 It’s not a brand new church but it’s not an especially old church either. I would say that the community here is kind of a transitional community here. It serves pretty much as a bedroom community for people. There are fewer farmers than there used to be, but there’s a lot of ground around that it seems to have gone over from crops to housing developments and golf courses. So it’s a pretty good steady growth on through and over the years it has maintained. We’re at roughly 1,300 baptized members. We have the school; not only the preschool, but kindergarten through eighth grade. We tried high school for a while, about three years before I came, but that just didn’t take off. But we’re maintaining the school enrollment in the mid-60s to the low 70s over the last few

years. And the daycare got started in 2010, latchkey if 2008, before that we had a nursery school program that was a two day a week program, just mornings, and that started I think back in '64 or '65 and continued. We just sort of rolled that in with what we have now, and took the preschool/latchkey/daycare/nursery school and rolled that all in underneath the school. Actually our executive director and principal has responsibility for not only the school but also the little lambs. And then we have the director.

You asked also about outreach things. The tradition of door knocking continues. We have a small group of people that pretty much every Thursday night they go out and knock on doors. W, for evangelism, also our Vacation Bible School, every summer we'll have 200 or more children here, and probably half of them are unchurched. Some of them are coming from other churches, and may be active or not. It's hard to tell. But we do outreach that way.

D Youth group

R4 Youth group, we have a pretty active O AFC (On-going Ambassadors for Christ) and they do some things here and also go out to other churches and do canvases in those areas. This year (in 2013) we did not do it, but we have every year done a community blitz, where our members go out in a given area and try to knock on all the doors and invite people to come and see what we're about and leave some materials behind.

PA Do you see fairly good return on that?

R4 I would say no, not particularly. The return that we get more is people who are friends, or co-workers, or family members of our own members who bring them in. It's pretty much what research shows; when they have a good relationship, a certain level of trust with people, and that can bring them in.

D We have a hard time getting people from the outside in.

R4 Yeah, a little bit

D But it's getting better.

R4 And we're working hard at trying to be more open to the community. I think there was somewhat of a reputation of being insulated from the community over the years, and we're working hard to change that and not only the preschool, but being open to baptisms. I've lost count, but I think I'm approaching 100 baptisms over the last five years, many of them parents from the community call and they have a child they want baptized and I say okay, let's meet. Again we're not seeing a huge return on parents bringing those children back to church, but I keep praying and I keep hoping and I keep running into people in the grocery store and inviting them to come back. We'll see what

happens. In one case it took two and a half years and two baptisms before we saw someone come back. We let the Spirit work.

PA What is the relationship between the early childhood center and the congregation? Does the ECC see itself as part of the church outreach?

D We do, and it's getting a lot better. When we first started, it wasn't set as a mission, but it's getting a lot better. It's getting more helpful.

R4 Very frankly, there was a strained relationship with people saying "it's costing us a lot of money and this is not something we want to do", and others saying "it's part of the mission of the church and we're meeting a need in the community." As I said, it's a bedroom community, so we have two parent households where both parents are working and some are commuting two hours to work.

D We don't get a lot of traffic out here, that's our problem. At first I think a lot of them were used to driving down further away and using daycares there. Because there are about three to four others in town. They all don't take infants, we're finding out. Now our infant department is full. So the word is out there now and it's getting a lot better.

R4 I think that when the Board of Education decided to fold the preschool into the school, put it all together, a large part of that was to try help the parents transition their children into our parochial school. An incidental that doesn't reflect very well maybe – our principal was downstairs for an open house one time, and some parents who were picking up their children from the daycare said, "We're sure going to miss this place next year when they go to kindergarten." And so the principal said, Well, we have kindergarten here." And they said, "Oh, you do!?" So they were in the same building, not realizing that we had the parochial school. And the same thing – we have families who come here for baptisms who don't realize that we have daycare and preschool. So it's a lot of communication and continuing to put ourselves out there and get people to come and take a look.

D Once they're here and look, they like the facility, they like the set-up, and for the most part if they don't come, it's a financial issue.

PA Are there any specific things that you are doing as a congregation, more as an ECC, to promote families coming into the congregation?

D We're working on things to do that. We're doing the open house. We invite everybody to come to an open house for the daycare. Also we incorporate that with the kindergarten. Whenever anything going on in the school, we try to set up a table and try to bring them in that way.

R4 If I'm understanding your question correctly, aside from letting parents know here are time of worship and Sunday School, we don't have anything in place right now that's intentionally directing them toward worship. That's something that clearly needs to be worked on. But at this point in the history of the daycare...you know it started as an afterschool program because there were students from the school who were being left here until their parents got off work, and so our faculty said, "We need some kind of latchkey program and it has morphed into all day daycare, preschool, kindergarten readiness component, latchkey along with it.

PA All the way down into the infants... How big is the program?

T I think we have close to 30 preschoolers, seven toddlers, and eight infants.

PA And it's only been since 2010.

R4 Yeah. And this morning we had 13 in the latchkey program.

D They're all public school kids who come before and after school now.

R4 Though some of them... I recognized several faces when I was down there just now, they're in the public school, but they're members of the Church. For whatever reasons, the parents don't have them in school here.

PA So, The latchkey program was created for the school kids here and yet they're not using it.

D Not this year

PA OK. I just thought that was an interesting thing.

D We used to have quite a few from the school here.

R4 And we do have some things happening in the afternoons, separate from the latchkey program, for the kids who are involved in the athletic program – they're here until practice and so we have volunteers primarily that are coming in and keeping them on task with homework until practice starts, and the parents now started paying an activity fee to help cover some cost of that, so...

PA Do you guys do anything specific to engage families and to build relationships between the ECC families and the congregation? And the congregation can be defined broadly – it can be just you, it can be you and the school staff, it could be...however you want to define that.

D The Principal stops in every morning and says "Hi" to the kids. We're trying to get some more people from the church to come and be involved here so we've put some things

together so that they know what's going on. I think that in just the last few months the teachers are all doing their own little letter for the newsletter, which sparks a lot of comments, so I think that's going to be a good way of starting to get more people involved. I would like to see more people involved with the program.

R4 The rest of the congregation with the ECC. The other thing is – I know the director has put together over the years a number of opportunities like Thanksgiving dinner kind of thing – of an evening we bring people together. We have tried very hard to combine the kids from the preschool in with the school kids for like the Christmas musical and Christmas program. Doing those kinds of things so that the parents at least see each other and get together some. As pastor I try to stop down once in a while and do a few things. I'm a big Dr. Seuss fan, so come the second of March, I come down and read Dr. Seuss books to the kids.

PA Do you have a big red and white striped hat?

R4 I have the whole outfit.

PA You should have that on your website! You did record on your survey that you'd done a number of baptisms and had members come in. To what do you attribute (aside from the Holy Spirit) – people saying “this is the reason we ended up joining” or “this is the reason we came here for a baptism” or those kind of things. What are you guys hearing?

R4 I think they're two separate questions. As far as why they're coming here for a baptism, because there's a general knowledge out there that children should be baptized. We get a lot of that – they maybe have some minimal church background – typically Lutheran or Roman Catholic and so they have some understanding of baptism. It isn't a correct understanding, and that's the main reason when someone calls, I say when can we sit down and visit with the parents or parent? And talk about Baptism and what it means, and one of the things included in the conversation is me saying when your son or daughter is baptized that means that he or she is my newest member and it gives me the right to bug his parents to bring him to church. And the parents usually laugh and they don't come back, but you know, we try. As I say, I run into them, and the children say, “Oh, Mom, look, look. They remember me and the parents sometimes when they see me they go down another aisle because they don't want to have that conversation. So, the reasons they bring them for baptism – that's kind of hard to say – just a vague “we should do it” for some reason. Why they join the church. That's usually because they have some kind of personal connection. They come here and the people here reach out to them and are friendly. That's something we're constantly working on. And when that personal connection is made with some other people, then they tend to come back. If it's only with me as the pastor that they have a personal connection, then we don't usually see them. But if we somehow make other connections, then they come back.

PA If someone (a congregation) was coming to you for advice on starting an ECC and said, “We hear you guys run an ECC here. What advice can you give us?”

D That’s hard, but a survey would be a good thing to start with.

PA What kind of survey?

D Well, how many people would be interested from the congregation first to see what kind of support you would get from them?

R4 You definitely need to build that support. I think the old advice about start with the end in mind, which as I said earlier, didn’t really happen here; it was an afterschool program for our parochial students and now it’s morphed into something entirely different. And that has been a challenge all the way along, but I think if you intend to start an ECC you should have clearly in mind what you want it to look like and some of those questions you’re asking about how do we get those families into the church? How do we get the congregation more involved with the ECC? Have some things in place right from the start and of course you’ll have to be flexible and adapt as you go along, but if you have that in mind to begin with and work toward that, I think it’ll go much easier.

PA I’m curious as a staff member that works with the kids...you’ve been kind of quiet, maybe you’re just a quiet person...but what do you kind of sense the staff responsibility is particularly toward outreach and bringing families into the congregation?

T I think we have a lot of room to grow. I think we have a lot of possibilities out there and opportunities out there that we just need to harness them. I think it’s possible and I think a lot of families joined us by word of mouth and so I think that if we figured out the right way to get the word out there we could grow more. Does that answer your question?

PA That’s fine; that works. The last question is pretty easy. Is there anything else that you would like to share that maybe I didn’t cover in my questions, that you say “this is kind of important”? Now’s your time.

R4 Well, from my observation and the idea of starting with the end in mind, that also includes checking into the state and local regulations for the facilities, for the program, for staff requirements and all, because I know that was a big challenge for our director as things got going and we became licensed by the state, it put some restrictions on what we could do. There were certain people that wanted to work with our ECC and we would love to have had them here, but they weren’t qualified under state licensing. And we’ve had some challenges hiring staff because of the licensing requirements. Those are things that you need to be aware of as you get started.

T Our problem kind of here is that we don’t have enough people looking for work that qualify, so every time I need somebody, the person that comes to the door – if that person

qualifies, they've got a job, because there's no one else coming in. And we're always looking for teachers. We're in need of one now for three or four months and nobody comes. So that's one of the hardest things for us out here. I think maybe if we were in a different location...where you've got traffic it might be better. But those rules are a lot to look into first.

END

Response #5

PA Take a moment to tell me about this congregation, the community that you're in, and kind of the methods of outreach that you're using.

R5 Okay. The congregation has been here for around 50 years, and this is their third location, where we're at right now. And on this present location, we've just added an addition about 7-8 years ago, both to accommodate our membership but also to have more facilities and opportunities to reach out to the community or to invite the community to use our facilities. The congregation is about 1,800 in size, we average about 600 in worship on a weekend. We are a congregation that has a significant bubble on top because of age, and then a rather large bubble on the bottom – so we look like an hourglass as far as our age makeup is concerned. So we have young families, and then we have a large segment of older people, and a few of us in between. We worship four times on a weekend. We have one traditional service and three contemporary style worship services. And as far as the community is concerned, we have a community that has certainly changed in the 50 years that we have been here. It was a middle class neighborhood, very solidly middle class; now it is changing to the point where we have a very large low income segment, and actually we have a large number of homeless folks who live within the area. And so one of our outlets for outreach is going out to the community and working in the community but also making our facilities available – for instance, homeless people through local organizations use our facilities once in a while for overnight stays. We also have a weekly meal that is free and open to the community, and we attract a rather large segment of folks from the community who come in once a week for a free meal. Plus, we get quite a bit of donations from local grocery stores, bakeries, coffee shops, so we give out a lot of free bread and danish and so forth on a weekly basis as well as having a very active Food Shelf ministry here – food and clothing. Food Shelf. And that's open to the community once a month and open to our members once a month.

PA What is the relationship between the ECC and the congregation? Does the ECC see itself as part of that outreach? If so, how? If not, why not?

R5 Very much so. They see themselves as one of the “doors” for the community to come in to the congregation. They’re actually looking now to developing a more active scholarship fund so we can have more monies available for low income families to participate, and that’s kind of in the works here in the near future. But right now we have – we’d have to talk to the director about that -- but we have well over 50% of the people that use our ECC are from the community and not from the congregation. It has become an outreach tool and it has become a kind of feeder system for our church. Many families who’ve been involved with our preschool have become members of the church.

PA Explain some of those things that you’ve intentionally done to create relationships between the congregation and those families in the ECC. How does that route kind of form?

R5 Well one is that we have several opportunities during the year when the children from the ECC take part in our worship service. So we bring the families in three or four times a year where they are able to see the church in worship and meet some of the folks that way and we get a chance to meet them. The school has many activities for school families and the community. The school is involved in several early childhood events, which is open for both members of the school, members of the community, and members of the church. A family night, a Veggie Tales movie night, a variety of things... Trunk or Treat which we do at Halloween time in October, and that’s an opportunity for both the school and the church to work together to provide something for our community.

PA Now you’re using the word “school” – are you talking about the ECC? I just want to clarify as this is a large church and you could very well have a school.

R5 Yes, I mean the ECC --- I sometimes call it a school.

PA With those events, are congregation members invited to those events too? Are there specific ways that they’re encouraged to mix with those ECC families?

R5 There are not specific events where we say, “Okay, church families, come and meet EC families. But there are activities, several of which I mentioned before, of which ECC members and church members are invited to the same events.

PA So you just announce it generally and you get a response out of both groups.

R5 Sure, and we specifically invite **both** groups, hoping that we’ll have members from both groups there and then, obviously, there’s the natural mixing and meeting of folks. The participation of the ECC in the worship services four times a year has been huge as far as connecting (what I’ve seen the 2.5 years I’ve been here) families to members but also to ministry here and what we do here, and we’ve had a lot of folks who have talked to me

and have become part of our church family or at least have inquired as a result of that participation in worship.

PA What do you credit (apart from the Holy Spirit) – what are families telling you as they come into the church through the ECC, what is the thing that draws them? What is that thing that’s bringing them in through your doors or causing them to come to you for baptism? Is there a specific…?

R5 One, I think, is because of the number of families that they see here that would be similar to their family makeup – since we have a lot of young families here, especially at the worship service, the late service that the ECC would take part in. So they see a lot of families and in some cases friends who are also here who are members, who have families similar to theirs. I think the feeling of family and caring that they feel when they’re here. We have a very large narthex, if you will, or welcome center, so there’s a great opportunity for people just to connect. I think the ECC families that have come through our new member process in the last couple years since I’ve been here have mentioned the friendliness of the congregation and just feeling cared for when they were here, whether it was the third time or the fifth time.

PA What advice would you give to someone who came to you and said, “You’ve obviously got this ECC that’s part of your congregation and its emphasis – we’d like to do something similar.” What advice would you give them?

R5 First I would encourage them to make sure that that is a part of the congregation’s mission and ministry. Is that an audience that they want to attract – beyond themselves? Obviously they would have to have a number of members who would have a need or seek a need in that area, wanting Christian education for their young children. But also they would need, the whole congregation would need, to see it as a need beyond their walls – if there’s a need out there in the community. Make sure there’s congregation buy-in to the whole process. So it doesn’t become – what I’ve noticed in some ministries – and probably in every ministry that I have seen that has had either a school, a daycare, or an ECC is of an “us and them” kind of mentality – the school and the church, the school and the church. I think if you get a buy-in from the congregation right off the bat, then there would be more of a tendency as a part of ministry rather than a separate ministry.

PA Any other advice you’d share?

R5 Just to encourage the church staff as well as its members to be involved in the school. To participate in chapels, to visit with the children when they’re on campus…

PA How does that work here for you guys?

R5 Fairly well, because the staff works in close proximity, in the same building as the ECC, there's quite a bit of daily interaction. The kids are always walking by our offices and waving at us. And then, of course, always making sure that we deliberately involve ourselves in ECC activities. For example, if there's a Parents' Day, or Grandparents' Day, or there's a special singing day where parents and grandparents and the like would be present. That we'd make sure that we have staff representation down there beyond the school to welcome them, to thank them for being here, to encourage them to ask us if they have any further questions or any further needs while they're here. My advice would be to make sure that not only having congregation buy-in when you begin a school, but also to maintain that connection between church and ECC as a part of the same ministry and mission.

PA The last question is the hardest, but it's the hardest intentionally. Is there anything else that you would like to share that maybe didn't come up in my questions, but you say, "Hey, this is something you need to know."

R5 I kind of skirted on it, but communication is huge when it comes to the ECC and church working together. Because, for many reasons... I mentioned before the importance of having congregation buy-in. Even with buy-in you are always going to have those folks who are going to see the school as a burden. Whether it's building burden or a financial burden of some sort. Our ECC is not financially independent, so some of the money does come from our church budget, and so there are times when the congregation – especially if we're going through financially challenging times, where they will question whether we should continue the school or not. So to help alleviate some of those concerns, it's very important to maintain communication with the congregation, and to show them – and that's one of the reasons we also have them in church on occasion – is to show them the importance of what we're doing here through the ECC. And so, to do that, the church and the school need to have an open, honest line of communication – and we have that here. Our ECC director is very deliberate about coming up to visit with me and let me know what's happening, and ideas they're thinking about or concerns that they have had, or issues, so that there is an open line of communication so that in turn I can communicate with the congregation and let them know that we're all in this together and we're working on this together.

PA You mentioned several times that you get good response from families coming to worship. Is there something specific you do in order to get them here? In some congregations they're struggling to get families to show up for that.

R5 Yes, and actually the first time that I participated in a service with the ECC, the children sang a couple of songs toward the beginning of the service and then it was a mass exodus, and people sitting in the pews toward the front to see their children all left after they were done and did not remain for worship. So we talked that through and we made sure that

we involved the children and the families in all parts of the worship service. So we displayed their artwork and some of their school projects all over the building – in the welcome center, in the worship center itself. We had a couple of slideshow presentations of what goes on in the school both before and after the service and during the offering time. We involved the children in helping usher, school teachers are reading lessons, and so forth. Plus the children have been asked to make statements of faith and we've shared statements of faith as our creed for that Sunday. We made sure that families felt connected to the worship service, and as a result of that, families are staying. Very few are leaving. They're staying for the whole service, and they're also then able to see the church in action so to speak, and they continue to come as a result of that experience.

PA How many of your staff are also members? A good portion or not many at all?

R5 Of the ECC staff?

PA Yes

R5 At least half – it's over 50%. An exact number we'd have to get from the director, but I would say that we're at about 65% to 75% are members.

END

Response #6

PA Take a moment to tell me about the Church.

R6 As a whole or just the preschool?

PA At this point I'm just trying to get an idea about the congregation, the community around here and your kind of outreach to this community.

R6 The church started in the mid-40s in a house just down the street and quickly moved from that into a little white church which was actually right over there where that parking lot is. Then what they did from there is they created a basement church. I'd never heard of these before, but apparently up here in the northern suburbs these were very popular. You'd basically build the lower half of what you wanted to be your church, you'd worship in there until you had enough money, and then you'd build the upper half. And so you can see [reference to photo] the two different colors of brick – about a foot and a half up from the snow you can see the color changes. And so they had a basement church over there, and that lasted not too long because they quickly got the upper half and they turned that into the actual church and they used the lower half as a gathering space and then in the late 50s they built this building. It's mainly a blue collar community, a little

bit of white collar, but if you just think of the people mainly as blue collar – the last couple of years – probably last 30 years – a few more white collar. But mainly blue collar neighborhood. And then the last probably ten years, really picking up in the last five, there's been a switch in the community from all those workers that came in the 50s and have stayed here all those years, are finally retiring, dying, or moving out to retirement homes. And young couples are moving in, taking over those houses – most of the houses around here they've kept up – they don't look like much, but you walk in and they're neat, they're well-repaired, and young couples just married or having their first kid are coming in.

So the demographics have changed; that kind of thing. About 40 years ago they started the preschool very early. It was a big outreach to this community, because everybody had a kid. A lot of people in this community have gone through the preschool. It's dwindled a little bit over the years. The preschool was mainly because the people who had kids just weren't here anymore. It was mainly older adults without kids, and so there just wasn't the demographics to pull from. So we've been doing better the last few years. We were down to 30 kids in the preschool, and this year I think we're in the high to mid-40s. The year before, we were at 60. So we've been bouncing around from high 40s to mid-60s pretty much every year right now. Basically we went from a blue collar workers to younger families moving in is how our demographic goes. And the preschool was started to reach out to those families from the blue collar slowly get to practically nothing, and now it's starting to come back up because of these families in the area.

We're trying to use the preschool to reach out to some of the new families coming in, you know, trying to let people know that it's there and doing some different celebrations to let them know it's here. Our preschool director does a wonderful job of making sure that faith is integrated into pretty much everything they are doing. They have "Jesus Time" every day. They read the Bible, they have prayer, they have like a little ...the other Pastor and I go down their regularly to just kind of read a Bible story to them or something like that. And she has the kids sing in church on a regular basis.

PA That kind of goes to the next question: What is the relationship between the ECC and the congregation? Does the ECC see itself as part of the congregation outreach to the community, and if so, how?

R6 They do. As far as the relationship goes, we can start off there. It has its own finances technically. The finances of the preschool are not in our budget, it's in the CC budget – except for we pay the director's salary. So that was the congregation's way of saying, "Okay we don't want to be there watching all your "Ps and Qs", having to approve every time you want to buy Cheetos or something like that. At the same time we wanted to have something to say, we want to have some control over what is being preached and taught and that kind of thing. So the relationship is, it is our preschool, we pay for the

director, and the preschool pays for its teachers and so on. It sees itself as a mission of this church because we work closely together and the director tries to have us come on down and get to know the kids and get to know the families – it’s kind of seen as that first step in the door to Messiah. And then she tries to have the kids sing at least twice a year. Sometimes it ends up being more, but at least twice a year, so the kids are invited to church and they can come and they can see their kids and be in worship. We try to make sure that ...we know what Sunday that’s going to be...so we have a real Gospel oriented message on that Sunday. We consider ourselves a pretty family and child friendly church – we’ve got the children’s sermon, we’ve got Sunday School – well, most churches have Sunday School – we try to make sure that the kids are integrated into worship and it’s not just put your kid in the nursery. We encourage people openly; please have your kids in worship, worship together as a family, and that kind of thing. And on the days we have the preschool we try to make sure that we make that known to everybody – we do have a nursery if you need it, but we want to encourage you to be here with your kids and be in worship and we’d love to have you back and, you know that kind of stuff.

PA Please explain some of the things you’ve done to try to create relationships between the congregation (and that may be yourself) and the ECC families.

R6 It usually starts with the kids. The other Pastor and I go down and read to the kids and that kind of thing. I haven’t been able to do this here as much because my schedule’s different. At my previous church I had a full preschool through eighth grade school. And I would stand at the door every day and welcome everybody in. Like I said, my schedule’s changed and I’m here a lot in the evenings so I don’t start here until 9 or 9:30 and by then the kids have started. But that worked wonderfully! So many parents I got to know so well. And I still try to if I’m going to be here; if I’m here early, I will try to be down there just to say “Hi.” But the big thing, to be honest, is to make sure that we’re available. If we’re walking through the area we’ll make sure that we walk through the preschool intentionally. Just to say “Hi, how’s it going?” And the thing from that is, the kids will introduce us to their parents later on. When we’re at a function or we’re sown there and kids are being picked up, kids will literally bring mom and dad over to say, “This is Pastor.” Or we’ll hear from parents when they see us, “Hey, my daughter just came home last night and told us about you being in class and reading to them – that was really cool, and she was really excited.” And so, that’s kind of a combination us and preschool, because they invite us to do that. Now I could go down and just say I want to do something, but she makes sure she invites us on a regular basis and she builds it up with the kids, you know – “Hey, guess what! Pastor is coming today; he’s going to be here to read to you guys. Isn’t that cool?” And they say, “Yeah!” So you get down there and they’re already all fired up. So when they go home they see it as a big thing that they tell their parents about, and when the parents come they want to meet you because they’ve heard about you.

PA And it gives you some accountability.

R6 True, very true. I'd say honestly, in my ministry so far – I've been out ten years – the number one thing if you're looking for something for outreach and getting to the parents, it was getting at the door. And I have to admit, it's one of the things I regret not having as much connection here as I did in my previous church. But that being at the door thing – I can't tell you how many conversations I've started just, you know, somebody lost their dad that day and they see, oh, the pastor's here. Where you wouldn't actually get that conversation normally. But since you're there anyway and they're there, they'll take ten minutes and talk to you. And "Why don't we sit down again here soon and let's talk, and it's been a big...that was probably the best thing from my previous church. I wouldn't be surprised. We probably brought in 50 to 60 members that way – that started with conversations at the door.

PA What do you credit the number of baptisms and/or the membership growth that has happened through those families in the ECC? What are you hearing from them? You obviously has some growth that was reported through you or your director because that's why I'm here. What are they giving feedback about? This is why we're here. This is what you did. And yes, it's the Holy Spirit, but...

R6 I'd say it's two different things. At my previous church the big one was that front communication. People who thought church was scary realized there was a face to it. And it was like – oh, I got to know you and you weren't freaky like I thought pastors would be freaky; you weren't yelling and screaming at me, you were a normal human being and I could talk to you. And that was a big thing to a lot of those. Here, it's the kids being the little evangelists. They're hearing about baptism through preschool, and they're hearing about being baptized, and they're taking that home and what's happening is parents are asking about it. "My kid was asking about this the other day, and I didn't know, so..." "Could you explain this to me so I can talk to my child about it?" The Lord's blessed both the congregations I've been at with kids coming in and baptisms from the preschool. But it's been interesting to see the difference in how the Lord does it. In my previous church it was these conversations started up front, here it's been the Lord using these little kids to do a little evangelism at home. We've tried to do stuff like, hey we're here if you would like to get your children baptized, if you'd like to hear more about the Lord, come on down.

PA How do you do that? What are the avenues that...?

R6 One is that when we have those worship services where the preschoolers are at, we make sure we push that real hard. I try to say it in the way, "You know, you might not have been in church, this might be the first time since you were a little kid or maybe you've never been in church. You know, we've got a Savior that dies for us, rose again for us, if

you want to know more about that Savior, if you want your child to know more (you always throw that in there because they go, yeah, I want to do good things for my kid) if you'd like to know more, catch me after the service. And the nice thing is, they're thinking about it right there, they're seeing it in action what this is like and you're right there too. So a lot of times I will, instead of shaking hands, if someone pulls me to the side I'll literally just walk off to the side with them. Or the other Pastor will do the same. So that's one area. The other is sometimes we've been known to just put in the preschool newsletter, Hey, we're going to have a baptism class or a Christianity 101 class coming up here soon, so if you'd like to know more about Christ..." Just putting it out there so it's in their publications, they see it regular. I try to coordinate it so if she's talking about baptism with the kids – that takes some coordination between the ECC and us – is that when I know she's talking about baptism I might throw a little thing in their newsletter that says, "Hey, if you'd like to know more about baptism, contact me at this." You know, that kind of thing.

PA What advice would you give to someone opening an ECC who comes to you and says, "I know you guys have operated this center for X number of years," what kind of feedback would you give them?

R6 First thing that I would say is make sure that it is the church's ...start off with the right idea; start off with the right foundation. Somme places just say, "We're going to start an ECC, it's going to be its own animal and we're going to get people through it. In other words, they don't want anything to do with it, they just want the people through it. In other words, we want people to come into our church, but we don't want to deal with the center, whatever it is. Integrate it into what you're doing. Bring the preschool staff into your staff. Consider it from the very beginning to be your church's preschool. And from the very beginning open it with the idea that this school is to teach Christ. So even if they don't become members, they have heard about Christ. The seed has been planted, as Paul would say. So, you've got *one*, it's part of the church; the church has ownership. They want it to be part of what they're doing, and so... I've seen too many preschools. We've lost too many Lutheran schools in the last few years because churches saw them as a drain on the finances and nothing more. And I think those churches in another ten years are going to reap the whirlwind of that, which will be these kids who have now gone through the public school system and been officially brainwashed into believing the Bible's not true, you're basically a monkey, and so on and so on. Where our Lutheran schools were teaching them so that they could listen to what the Lord says. You know, these two are different and this is how you can discuss that, and so on. I apologize; I've got two ideas bouncing around in my head at the same time. But the one would be: make sure that the church has ownership of it, so it considers it its preschool, that it's part of what you're doing there, that's it's part of the ministry. There are way too many churches out there that see the preschool as just a drain. And the *second* is to integrate

what you're doing together so if the kids are talking about baptism, have the church put something in there about baptism, or have a sermon about baptism that week, but try to put the two things together as much as you can. And, I suppose, whoever the pastor is should be there as much as humanly possible. I've never seen anything in my ministry that brought on more growth than just a discussion with these families, being there with them, letting them see that you're there, that you're not scary. And it took a while – have patience! Every year, about November-December, my Leadership Council would say something like, “Why haven't we had any new baptisms this year? Or “Why only two?” Or “Why haven't we had any adult baptisms this year?” It's funny, it's almost like clockwork, every year, November-December, why this? Why that? I would say “Wait.” And almost always, every year, about January-February-March people would start asking, and January-February-March were always big baptism times for us. Because what it would take them six months to trust you. Six months to see that you're a normal human being that isn't some priest like they've seen on TV that's just looking to take their kids away or some of that kind of stuff. Unfortunately there is that image out there. If they see a pastor hanging out with the kids they're like, the first thought is suspicion. It takes a little while to get past that. You'll find there are tons of people who have had bad experiences at a church. They've got to get past that too. They've got to see that you're not that pastor that hurt them. This is something different. It took a while, and sometimes it took years, but the Lord was teaching me patience those times. It took a while to get to that point.

PA The last question's the hardest.

R6 Oh, great

PA Is there anything you would like to share at this time that I haven't asked you?

R6 No... Integrate, that's important. See as a ministry, not as a drain. And be there. As I said, I haven't been able to stand there when they all come in; however, I try to be there if there's a function – like they had their Christmas service, we're part of it. If they have a recital, we're there. We might not be saying anything, but usually she asks us to open up with a prayer or something, but we're there. So even when we're not there first thing in the morning, we're there as much as we can.

END

Response #7

PA Because I don't know the area, take a moment to tell me about the church, kind of the community, and kind of what's going on here in terms of outreach.

R7 Our church is 65 years old, has been here since the post WW II era. Formerly had a Lutheran elementary school as an association with two other congregations in the area that went for 40 years and closed about 2006. So that particular means of outreach through the Lutheran elementary school was done. In the meantime we had started a small half-day preschool as a ministry of the church, not part of the association school. Probably five years before that or so.

D 1999

R7 That preschool program started, and just a couple of years before the day school closed we had purchased a house next to the parking lot of the church and started a day care house. And so when the school closed we combined the preschool and the daycare program and then we pulled it all together and utilized the space that was vacated when the elementary school closed. So we've used that as an outreach to our mixed and changing community, probably we have about 85% English-speaking here and there's significant Asian and African population around us, some Hispanic and some East Indian.

PA Are you talking African or African-American?

R7 Both. There are some communities of first generation African immigrants as well as long-term African –Americans, so we have both.

PA We just have a significant group in Sioux Falls that are coming, and when you're dealing with Hmong and all of these other immigrant groups I was just wondering if that was incorporated in there as well. And what are your primary points of outreach to this community?

R7 We, of course, make the center available to everyone in the community. We have an annual community event. it's just kind of an afternoon/evening festival with food and games for kids and bands, live music, entertainment, and then a fireworks show at night. And that happens every August on a week night usually. And that's been going for about ten years, I think, and that's become a place where we can distribute literature and let people kind of see what our ECC is all about, because they get on the property and we have contacted many that way. Another way is through our Vacation Bible School in the summer, so we also intentionally distribute information about our ECC to the families that utilize our VBS, and then just any visitors to church and Sunday School.

PA What is the relationship between the ECC and the congregation? Part of that question, but not exclusively, does the ECC see itself as an extension of the outreach ministry of the congregation, and if so, how? If not, why not?

R7 Well, the quick answer is yes, it is a part of our outreach and yes, they see themselves as that. Our congregation went through a two year process of revitalization through the

district. So we received prescriptions, one of which was to do exactly as your question suggested – strengthen the connections between the ECC and the church and more effectively use it as an outreach tool. And so we developed some specific objectives along those lines and we instituted things that were on-going programs like bringing the preschool students – inviting all of them to come and sing one Sunday a month in our late service, and developing special afternoon worship opportunities prior to Christmas and Easter for the families and the ECC students to come in on a Sunday afternoon prior to Christmas and Easter for a service which involved their kids singing and would celebrate those two holidays.

D Our Fall Fest event brings the families in too.

R7 Right. We have a fall festival type thing around Halloween time.

PA How do you – what are some of the things that you do – explain how they work. This is something that the families really seem to appreciate...

R7 Well, we've done things, for example, like giving away kind of a children's Bible to every family and we presented those on, I think it was a Valentine's Day event or whatever that the parents and children came to and we presented them with a children's Bible to use at home. One of the strategies that seems to work pretty well, whether it's a harvest party or an Easter egg hunt of the Saturday before Easter is simply for me as the pastor, and our director of Christian education, and some other, you know, active elected leaders in the church to just be present at those activities and circulate around and stand or sit down and visit with people who have come to the event and get to know the families and then look for opportunities. Invite them to utilize what we have to offer.

PA And that kind of goes into this. Please explain some of the things that you've done to create those relationships (and that may start with the staff) between the church and the ECC families? Where are those relationships built?

R7 In the spring of the year we have kind of like a graduation celebration at the end of preschool and preK and those families all come and we have a little ceremony in the church and some music, and they're receiving their diplomas, and that sort of thing. And then the volunteers and people from the congregation put on a picnic for those families right after that event, so those are times when people in the congregation can talk to and serve and get acquainted. We've done a few other things like National Lutheran Schools week and parent appreciation kinds of things – we'll set up a table outside and give away coffee mugs or free... We brought in Caribou coffee one time to give away to the parents as they were dropping their kids off in the morning or something. We've done things like that and we've tried to involve as many people as possible from the congregation to help them see that this is a chance to reach out through the ECC.

D And the families to recognize some of the members so when they come in on a Sunday when they're singing, they see people they recognize, along with the staff that's here too. So there's other people that can talk to them.

PA And do you find that they see some of that crossover that when families come in, they go, "Oh, I know Janey, she was at the last thing that I was at."

D I guess...

R7 You know our staff is really good at watching for visiting families, they're kind of before and after church, they connect with anyone that comes to visit.

PA Do you have a large number, or a number of staff who are members of the congregation?

D Yes

R7 At least a half a dozen.

D Yes, we have a large amount that is. Which is a good thing too because

R7 Six or seven out of a staff of

D 21, that's a good chunk of them

PA What do you credit for the number of baptisms and/or membership growth, again coming through the ECC or through that pipeline?

D I think through the events that we have and to know that Pastor is always there talking to them, if they need anything any needs that they have that they can talk to him. He's talked about baptism. I think that...

R7 I get to know the kids because we do a weekly chapel service so all of the preschool age kids all the way down to the two year olds in the toddler program all come into the church Wednesday morning and we do a little chapel service – time for singing and praying and that..Of course we talk about things like baptism and that sort of thing and then we've made...I don't know if we've recently done a specific kind of outreach as far as getting the families some information in their hands – we've done that from time to time and so then usually they'll make a request through Michelle or through one of the teachers that they'd like to talk about a baptism or set up a baptism or whatever and so I guess I credit it with opening some lines of communication and developing some relationships that people are free to ask.

PA You brought up the discussion of baptism with Michelle and/or some of the teachers...

R7 Sometimes the parent just goes to the teacher of their child and asks for the information.

PA Do you find it ends up being the same teachers? Think about it.

R7 Certain teachers might be better at that than others?

D Yeah, I ...2 or 3 of the same teachers, I think.

PA And are they church members?

D Two of them are.

PA It's a valuable component to this. That's me interposing, but looking at that piece.

Going on to number 5 – what advice would you give to someone thinking about opening an ECC with the intent of outreach to the unchurched? If they said, “We see what you’re doing here, we want to do this over here. Give us some advice.” What do you say?

R7 One thing we could say is that we can be unapologetically Christian in our approach, you know. That has not been a hindrance for us at any time, we tell parents, “We are a Christian Center. So your child is going to learn Bible stories, and go to chapel, and learn to pray before they eat their lunch and this just part of what we do here and so I think that has been an important part of our outreach because we’ve created our identity not as an ECC that is sort of kind of connected and in the building of a church, but I think we’ve made it clear from the very beginning that our identity is embedded into the church itself.

D That we’re a Christian ECC.

PA Anything else? Any other advice that you’d say?

D Many parent events helps, and then bring in your congregation people. I think that’s a big thing.

R7 Create opportunities to build bridges and relationships

PA Is there anything else that you say this is important for me to know or for this project that I haven’t really asked but you say we do this well or this ties to this conversation but I didn’t get it in that you want to share?

D Let the congregation know that the center’s there. We put pictures up at the entrance with the children. We put things up so that they know that we’re here. That we’re not just down on this end of the building. That they can see kids. The guys that come on Tuesdays see the children, but. On Sundays when we sing. To be noticeable I think is a big thing.

R7 Yeah, I can second that, and you know one of the things we’re trying to do right now is get our staff offices for pastor, administrative assistant, DCE, we’re trying to look at changing our space utilization and remodeling some different spaces and getting our

offices with the ECC offices all together so that we're in a place physically located where the parents are coming and going, dropping off from 6:30 in the morning to 6:30 in the evening so that we are visible and we're unified and not kind of on opposite ends of the building. That is just helpful for that...

- D For the parents to see [Pastor]; to go and talk to him for any reason. I think that will be best if he's down at the end, because we are the traffic of the church most days. I think there'd be very good if he's down there so they can go right to him and not wonder where the pastor is located in the church. It would help with the building of relationships. Which we do have – we have really good relationships with our parents. That's key.

PA And how did you develop that?

- D When they come in I get to know the families, that's the big thing. Know their names, look at the information, get to know who they are and where they work. And then make sure you always acknowledge them when they come in and when they leave. My office is set up in a perfect way in this building. Make sure that you and acknowledge them and when they talk, make sure you listen to what they have to say, because that's very important.

R7 One of the secrets of our success has been, I think, that our director came into this position from a strong customer service background in the private sector, so coming into the non-profit world and bringing that attitude of really... Instead of coming in trained as a Lutheran school teacher or whatever, she came in trained in customer service as somebody that really views the families who use our OA Center as our most valuable asset, and so she gets a lot of credit for developing this kind of loyal customer base that we have. And so many of our new students come from direct referrals from our current families because they will go to their friends or their siblings or whomever has a need for this and say that we're very happy with how we're treated.

- D We have to remember that we have a lot of unchurched people so to build the relationship and somehow plant a seed is very important. In doing that you have to have a relationship with them and get to know them and their children. I do that because if I walk into a classroom and have to sub I need to know those children and they're not afraid of me anytime and not have that disrupted just because they don't know who I am. Just because I enrolled them I don't walk away, I make sure that I'm always going into the classrooms and talking to the parents, that's a big part of it.

PA Do you do anything specific to train your staff to do that?

- D Yeah, we have some conferences that we go to, but I talk to them a lot about how to talk to them, there's a little training that I do. Some of my staff are better with it and some are

not. And so I make sure that the ones who have those good qualities are the ones who step up and do it.

PA Anything else that you feel needs to be shared?

END

Appendix Seven: An Intentional Plan for Using Open Arms Missionally

This was created by taking the suggestions at the end of Chapter 6 and looking in greater detail at what is happening at Resurrection Lutheran Church in Sioux Falls, SD at the time.

The plan is laid out in more of an outline so that it is easier to read.

1 – Evaluate Your Mission and Official Documents.

A. Strategic Documents:

a. **Resurrection Lutheran Church and Open Arms CCDC Mission**

Statement:

In Christ the Cornerstone...Living His Word, Sharing His Love.

b. **Values of Resurrection and Open Arms CCDC Lutheran Church:**

We are: *Christ-centered – Biblical*

Lutheran – Confessional

Welcoming

Family friendly

Outreach oriented

c. **Resurrection Lutheran Church and Open Arms CCDC Vision**

Statement:

We see a church/ECC that is:

Thoroughly rooted in Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions.

Welcoming and Inviting

Family Friendly

Nurturing

Dedicated to Christian Education for All Ages

Serves our Community

B. Budget Documents:

- a. While Resurrection and Open Arms officially keep two separate budgets, they are intentionally interconnected. In a sense, they are a budget within a budget. The net loss/gain from the Open Arms budget crosses onto the congregational budget as a line item so that both organizations understand the relationship that Open Arms is a ministry of Resurrection Lutheran Church. The budgets are passed concurrently.

C. Logo/Branding:

- a. Each organization currently has its own independent branding.
 - i. Resurrection Lutheran Church is in the process of revising their branding to fit their current mission and ministry focus.
 - ii. Open Arms uses the logo connecting it to the Open Arms Institute. We have added a phrase below the logo indicating that this is “A Ministry of Resurrection Lutheran Church.” This logo is used on all publications, signage, and even employee work shirts.

D. Constitutional Changes

- a. Open Arms has its own Board of Directors and operates under a “Policy-Based Governance System”. The chair of the Open Arms Board serves as a member of the Resurrection Lutheran Church Council and reports to that body.

- b. In addition, the director of Open Arms attends Council meetings as an ex-officio non-voting member and answers questions specific to the management of Open Arms.

E. Other

- a. We discovered during this process that the registration forms that we have been using from the first day at Open Arms ask about the family's church background and history as well as whether or not they have interest in learning more about Resurrection Lutheran Church. This information has never been shared or followed up on by staff from Open Arms or the pastor.
- b. As the director processes information for registration, notes will be taken with regard to the registration form. Inquiries will be immediately identified and brought to the Ministry Team meetings where they will be shared with the entire team. A member of the Ministry Team will follow up with a phone call and set up a personal visit.

2 – Evaluate your leadership staff relationships (particularly those of the director and pastor).

A. Resurrection Lutheran Church and Open Arms will create a Ministry Team (Church Staff) to work together to help brainstorm, plan, and coordinate all activities and events in the congregation at the staff level. The Ministry Team is comprised of:

- a. Pastor
 - i. Background - Pastor Ascher has been at Resurrection since 2005.

In addition to his MDIV, Pastor Ascher has his undergraduate

degree in elementary/middle education from the University of Kansas with experience working in a church-run childcare center.

- ii. Relationship with Open Arms – Pastor Ascher was the initial contact with Open Arms and part of the development of Resurrection’s Open Arms Center in all phases. He is supportive of Open Arms ministry at Resurrection and seeks to build relationships between them. Although he does not run day to day operations, he serves on the Open Arms Board of Directors as an Ex-officio member. He works with and leads the Ministry Team at Resurrection, including the director, to develop ways to coordinate efforts to reach out to the families of Open Arms. He conducts weekly chapels with 2-13 year olds and is present at most Open Arms family functions.

b. Director

- i. Background - Jodene Baker has been at Resurrection since September of 2013. She is the fourth director since March of 2010. Throughout those director changes, Resurrection has sought a closer relationship between the church and ECC. Jodene is a called church worker (DCE) with experience running other early childhood programs. She has dual degrees as a Director of Christian Education (DCE) and teacher from Concordia University in Nebraska.

- ii. Jodene runs the day to day operations of Open Arms. She is responsible for managing the finances, staff, and family relationships at Open Arms. Although she is welcome to participate in other church activities as her time and her interests allow, her primary responsibility is running Open Arms. Although she is part of the Ministry Team of Resurrection, she reports directly to the Open Arms Board of Directors.
- c. Custodian / Building Supervisor
 - i. Our custodian, Bruce Hoefler, is a charter member of the congregation and has served as a volunteer custodian for the church almost from the beginning. Since 2011, he has been full-time at Open Arms as well.
 - ii. While most places may not include this role, Bruce is indispensable to maintaining everything between the church and center. Bruce supervises all activities that happen on the property and grounds at Resurrection as well as insuring that they are kept up at all times. This means that he carries an administrative responsibility that knows the availability and usage of each of the rooms and how they are best used.
- d. Additional Staffing - Both Resurrection Lutheran Church and Open Arms have seen significant growth since Open Arms opened in 2010. Open Arms now has nearly 145 children that they serve in a given week. They utilize around 40 staff. Nearly 1/3 of Resurrection Lutheran Church's

membership has come since 2010 and they have grown by nearly 125 baptized members in that time. Their average age is around 30 years old which creates challenges of leadership and giving. Because of these factors, we seek to add the following positions as funding allows:

- i. Family Life Director - Because of the good blessings of growth, it is difficult for the pastor or the director to provide some of the critical time organizing and tying together the activities of both groups. A director of Christian education (DCE) intern has been requested from Concordia University in Nebraska to work with the area of Family Life at Resurrection. While an internship is initially a training in broad areas of ministry, the hope is that this position will eventually work to bridge some of the relationships between the church and the center through building personal relationships, evaluating needs, and creating and overseeing activities between the two groups. This means working closely with various groups within the congregation. The Family Ministry Director will be a part of the Ministry Team and work closely with both the pastor and the director. Although he or she may go into classrooms and interact with children and staff, the Family Ministry Director will not be in a position of direct authority with Open Arms staff, nor will they regularly fill positions in the classroom.
- e. Administrative Positions – Currently both Resurrection and Open Arms reviewing future plans for administrative help in the office.

- i. Resurrection is currently using a part-time worker for fifteen hours a week and a part-time volunteer to handle duties for the church. This is not a solution for the long term and we are working to move the position to a full time office assistant. The office assistant will serve on the Ministry Team taking minutes.
 - ii. Open Arms is establishing a position of Administrative Assistant. This individual monitors the front desk, answers the phones, and helps out with other Open Arms duties as requested. This person is not actually on the Ministry Team, but works with the Open Arms director and is connected to the rest of the Ministry Team by his or her presence in the office.
- f. Ministry Team meetings
 - i. They will meet weekly on Wednesdays from 10-11:30 AM.
 - 1. Study (30 Minutes)
 - 2. Strategic Planning
 - 3. Coordinate Upcoming Events
 - 4. Create an Action Plan
 - 5. Highs and Lows (Personal Sharing)
- g. Resurrection Lutheran Church and Open Arms will work together with a common goal in mind when identifying and calling future pastors and church workers. Pastors and other church workers will be asked about their support of Lutheran schools and early childhood programs.

- i. Special care will be given to extend a call to future directors in order to build the continuity between the church and Open Arms.

Sample questions¹³⁴ include:

1. What are the educational and spiritual needs of the un-churched in your community?
2. How do those needs differ from the families in your congregation?
3. How do tuition, enrollment, and financial aid policies reflect the un-churched as a priority?
4. What training is available for staff and parents to help them reach out to those who do not yet know Jesus?
5. How do curricular choices, teaching themes, and bulletin boards express the love of Christ to children and their families?
6. How is the Sacrament of Baptism communicated to the children and families who do not yet know Jesus Christ?
7. How is the mission of the ECC integrally tied to that of the church?
8. How do staff, board members, and parents articulate the mission of the school both publically and privately?
9. How is goal setting and evaluation of the ECC program carried out?

¹³⁴ Zimmer, Michael J. and Dr. David Roth. "A Missional Plan for Early Childhood Centers". An unpublished document of the Minnesota South District of the LCMS. Sept. 29. 2010. P. 2.

h. Getting to Know You

- i. Ministry Team will serve coffee to families arriving between 7-8:00 am one day each week and greet them at the door. They will set up a rotation of servers so that each person serves approximately once a month.

B. Evaluate Teaching Staff

a. Overview

- i. Lead Teachers – As a whole, the lead teachers are committed Christians who are regular in worship at their respective congregations. (This has not always been the case at this Open Arms.) None are members of Resurrection. One is a member of a neighboring LCMS congregation. Because of their varied background, most are content to teach Bible stories as a portion of their day during circle time, but they struggle to incorporate it throughout the day. This is not a surprise due to position turnover amongst both the teaching staff and formerly, the director position.
- ii. Assistant/Float Staff – By nature of the industry, assistant teachers and float staff are a high turnover position. They range from former lead teachers waiting for an opportunity for their own classroom to college and high school students working a small number of hours each week while they are not in school. This means that assistant teachers and float staff come from an even

broader cross-section. Some individuals in this group are Christians with an active faith life, some are not.

b. Future Staff

i. Our intention is to build ourselves as a quality Christian ECC. In order to do that we are committed to hiring only committed Christians with a demonstrated faith walk as lead teachers. Instead of just asking them about their faith, direct question will be used. Examples include¹³⁵:

1. How can children learn about Christ in an ECC curriculum?
2. How does your faith help you share your faith with the children?
3. How does your faith help you address conflict with other staff?
4. How does your service with children build bridges to talk about God with their parents?
5. How can the ECC introduce people to the ministry of the church?

ii. While we realize that we will most likely never have the funds available to call all trained LCMS teachers, our intent is to target a few key areas, and as funds become available and positions open, call rostered early childhood teachers for those positions. We

¹³⁵ Zimmer, Michael J. and Dr. David Roth. "A Missional Plan for Early Childhood Centers". An unpublished document of the Minnesota South District of the LCMS. Sept. 29. 2010. P. 3.

would also like to increase the number of ECC staff who are members of the congregation.

c. Ongoing Staff Development

i. Prayer Ministry/Bible Study

1. Director will create a plan to pray for Open Arms staff and families each week in staff devotions, teacher meetings and Resurrection worship services.
2. Pastor will offer an optional weekly Bible Study for staff on a scheduled day during the week during their break. The study will also be open to the congregation.

ii. Religious Curriculum/Chapel

1. Resurrection and Open Arms will work toward a unified curriculum which loosely follows the CPH Sunday School program themes and the Sunday lectionary.
2. Once a month, the pastor and/or family life director will attend the lead teacher meetings for a portion of the time to discuss/coordinate the upcoming themes and songs for the religion curriculum.
3. Chapel will be conducted in a large group format with all ages (including infants) and all staff (including church staff) attending. Families from the congregation will have an open invitation. Chapel will rotate among the pastor, Open Arms director, and the family life Director.

iii. Staff meetings

1. A portion of each staff meeting will be given to discussing living by faith as witnesses to both children and families as well as helping teachers connect and interact with parents and families.
2. Staff will also be asked to help create, schedule and implement family events with Open Arms families in order to create ownership on their part. These events will still be coordinate with groups in the congregation.

iv. Annual Event – Conference / Seminar

1. Resurrection and Open Arms will work to partner with other ECCs in the South Dakota District to promote a professional event designed to support pastors, directors, and teaching staff with conversations about how they can continue to share the faith from their respective positions.

v. Observation / Professional Development Site

1. Resurrection and Open Arms will open our doors to other centers as a place of exemplary Christian childcare so that we can be utilized as a training site for other pastors and directors.

C. Families

- a. Resurrection is already a pretty welcoming place. The key is designing a set of activities that intentionally create opportunities to intermingle and

mix. There should be a broad set of activities available to appeal to the interest and needs of a broad spectrum of individuals. Care will be taken to coordinate the dates and times at the beginning of the school year so that parents and staff (including church staff) can arrange their schedules accordingly.

i. ECC Specific Activities – These activities are primarily associated with Open Arms. They will be announced ahead of time in the congregational bulletin. Church staff will be in attendance.

1. Open House (Spring/Fall)
2. Thanksgiving Appreciation (November)
3. Advent/Christmas Program (December)
4. Preschool Graduation (May)

ii. Church Specific Activities – These activities are already a part of the Resurrection's regular calendar of events. Because they are planned well in advance, the information will be shared with the Open Arms families and staff through newsletters, registration forms, and personal invitations.

1. Vacation Bible School (July)
2. Christian Education/Sunday School Kickoff
(August/September)
3. Open Arms Sunday (May)

iii. Crossover Activities – These activities are created for both the church and Open Arms families. Our hope is that there is

intentional mixing at these events so that families from different groups get to know one another better, which builds and strengthens relationships. Although we have done Trunk or Treat, we have not yet settled on a regular date or time. We have done movie nights for both Resurrection and Open Arms, but we have not combined these events in the past. The Summer Celebration is something that we have never done. It is an attempt to create a new activity special in the summer.

1. Family Movie Night (January/February)
2. Summer Celebration/"SonFest" (end of June)
3. Trunk or Treat (October)
4. Open Gym / Cabin Fever Burn Off (March)
5. Easter Egg Hunt (Holy Week)

iv. Education Opportunities – While we ran Financial Peace

University some years ago, we have not done it since Open Arms opened. This would be marketed to Resurrection, Open Arms, and the community at large. After the results of the survey/interviews, we already began to invite families to our Art of Marriage Weekend in February. We have run several good parenting courses. These may be taught by the pastor, other called workers, and qualified lay people as there is interest.

1. Financial Peace University (Fall)
2. Parenting Classes (Winter)

3. Art of Marriage Weekend (February)
 4. Other examples of one day classes: (as needed)
 - a. New Child/Baptism
 - b. Potty Training
 - c. Crafts for Toddlers
- b. Joint Project – This did not come up in any specific aspect of the MAP; however, after hearing the results of the MAP, it was suggested by Donna Wilson, an administrative volunteer who is on the Ministry Team. She pointed out that we should have a joint focus as both Open Arms and Resurrection. Specifically, we have a little over three acres of property that are undeveloped, and there is no long term plan for their use. By coordinating interests between members of both groups, we could develop those resources into a small park that could develop over time. The park could include a spiritual fitness and walking trail, an outdoor classroom, a pavilion, and perhaps a ball field that would be utilized by the church, the center, and by the neighborhood. The plan would be developed in phases as funding allows. Steps would be taken to draw in key members of all groups in order to facilitate relationship building throughout the process.

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