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Youth: A Part of, Not Apart From, the Church

Glenn Kopper

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, ir_kopperg@csl.edu

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YOUTH: A PART OF, NOT APART FROM, THE CHURCH

A Research Paper Presented to the
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St. Louis, Department of Practical
Theology in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Master of Divinity

by

Glenn P. Kopper

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Approved by: Paul F. Lesemann
Advisor

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Within the past decade youth have seemingly charged onto center stage in the arena of life in America, and the pace of their "now generation" is one which calls for action. As the church, the body of Christ here on earth, we cannot afford to sit back and wait for something to develop, but rather, we must decide on how to respond to the "adolescent epidemic" and then we must act upon our decision by implementing it. "Leading the young to use their power and vitality responsibly is the biggest task facing today's Christian leaders."¹ That statement might well be expanded to include all members of the church today. Yet, as the church endeavors to meet this task it frequently finds itself frustrated. This frustration stems from the tremendous difficulty of understanding how to minister effectively to youth in such a challenging era as the one in which we live.²

It is that "biggest task" and that frustration which I will attempt to come to grips with in the sections of this paper which follow. Yet, having struggled with the problems connected with youth ministry in this decade and beyond, having learned and grown in my own understanding of the sit-

uation, it is, nevertheless, extremely difficult to lay down rules, guidelines and examples which are the final and ultimate word on the subject. Personalities, purposes, aims, goals, expectations, and countless other things add up to make each situation original and different. Where I once hoped to be able to be quite explicit and concrete in my conclusions, I now find that I will probably seem to be quite idealistic and rather "foggy" in the points which I will be making. Yet, in one way, this seems to be exactly the starting point for youth ministry in this day and age. The trend seems to be the offering of ideals and generalities by various youth departments while, at the same time, details are left to be worked out at the local congregational level.³

Another problem encountered with this paper and with many of the resources and materials to which I will make reference, is summed up by Don Hinchey when, in the study guide for the tapes which he edited entitled "Ministering to Young Christians," he warns:

"This tape has already self-destructed." By the time you begin listening to these tapes, much of what is said and sung will be irrelevant and obsolete. Youth culture changes and resources for youth ministry are doomed to instant obsolescence.⁴

Perhaps the greatest challenge which this area of youth ministry presents to the clergyman, youth worker, or parent

is the challenge of keeping up with the constant revision and change. These changes and differences are something we must recognize and deal with.

Youth are "full-fledged" members of Christ's body. To paraphrase the words of the 1960's civil rights movements, "They are somebody!" Yet, it seems, through the years, the best that the church, or at least the vast majority of churches, has been able to do is to recognize them as "members-to-be" who are in a type of "holding pattern" until they reach that magical age when they can sign the church's constitution and become eligible for membership in the voter's assembly of the local congregation. It is the belief of this author, and the basic assumption of this paper, that it is the responsibility of the church to lead its youthful members to the realization of who they are, both within God's church and, to some extent, within the society in which they live, and to impress upon them the responsibilities which accompany this "full-fledged membership." Our task is that of helping youth realize that they are "a part of and not apart from the church."

In studying concerns of people to determine the basic issues which were going to be addressed in A Study of Generations⁵ Merton Strommen found one of the loudest and clearest concerns of adults to be about youth.

Will today's youth support and help maintain the church in years ahead, or can we expect declining memberships and budgets because they will no longer want to be members of a church.⁶

Behind these questions of concern laid the basic fear which people felt as a result of the "generation gap" which, supposedly, had swept the country. That basic fear was a fear of a radical break between the "older generation" and the "younger generation," the fear that the "younger generation" was on the verge of making a radical break with society by adopting a style and philosophy of life which is basically anti-institutional.⁷ However, when the results were in and the statistics added up, the conclusion was that, basically, there were no radical breaks or gaps existing between youth and adults. In fact, these two "groups" are much closer than stereotyped images would lead us to believe. In 40 per cent of the areas tested, youth and adults gave virtually the same answers. The other 60 per cent of the tested areas, rather than pointing to a radical break, showed that there are "tensions" which exist. These tensions need not necessarily be negative, for, if handled properly, may well be effectively channeled into innovation and needed change.⁸

The gap with which we need to be concerned is a gap in understanding, acceptance, trust, and communication. It is a gap of perception as each age group sees life through different world views.⁹

The major areas of tension, as defined by the Strommen study, are: distrust for adults, priorities given to personal piety, an unwillingness to delay gratification, depth of feeling for people, a discrepancy between rhetoric and action, openness to change (especially within the church), and feelings of alienation. These tensions were constantly in mind as this author tried to develop approaches for accomplishing "the biggest task" and overcoming the "frustration" of the church's ministry to youth. The suggestions which will be offered later will all be an attempt to get the most "constructive milage" out of the tensions which exist between adults and youth within the church.

CHAPTER II

WHERE DID WE COME FROM

It is impossible to build a skyscraper by beginning on the ninetieth floor. In the same way, foundation must first be laid before we could hope to build an effective ministry for the youth of the church. Before making what is hoped will be constructive suggestions for youth work in our own day and age, we should first go back and quickly take a look to see what has been done before our own time. Yet history written merely for the sake of filling pages is of no value. For the purposes of this paper, in order to be able to learn from history, we must look at it critically with the idea of finding the strengths and weaknesses of our past. We must try to discover where we might improve on what has been done and where we might borrow and adapt for the purpose of meeting our present needs.

We begin by going back 125 years. A helpful and rather interesting resource dealing with youth work prior to 1900 is the 1944 Bachelor of Divinity Thesis by Henry Simon, entitled, "Background and Beginnings of Youth Work in the Missouri Synod." This author found this work extremely helpful for the English translation it offers of various articles,

records and documents written in German during this period.

Generally speaking, early youth groups of the mid- to late nineteenth century were organized around special interests,¹ and the first "youth group" within the Missouri Synod is no exception. This first youth organization was formed at C.F.W. Walther's own Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church in the city of St. Louis. It was first organized by Pastor Buenger in 1848 as the "Juenglingsverein"² for the expressed purpose of helping a student at Concordia Seminary who was faced with the possibility of having to leave school and terminate his studies for the ministry because of financial problems.³ This idea of extending a "helping hand" to a student in need of financial aid was often the reason for forming the early youth organizations and also provided the "glue" which unified them and held them together.

Although both Walther and Buenger backed the idea of youth organizations among Missouri Synod congregations, not much is said in publications until the turn of the century.⁴ Apparently it was regular practice to warn young people about "worldly carryings-on," secular societies and societies with varying doctrinal bases. However, there was little or no attempt to offer the young people of our synod any real substitute.⁵ It was during these formative years that concerned

and well-meaning members of the church proposed a number of arguments against the formation of youth societies.⁶ Not the least of these arguments was based on the ideas which secular models of youth groups conjured up in the minds of individuals. The fear was that these youth groups might become the center for pleasures and worldliness. Another anti-organizational reason was the danger of the society itself becoming a congregation within the congregation. There seems to be some sound evidence for this fear as the early stages of interdenominational youth work often brought this exact thing about.⁷ Then to, there was that element which sought to preserve the status quo, and since their fathers had not done anything special as far as ministering to the young person, why should they start now.

Basically, the thinking and mentality, both within the church and elsewhere, at this time seems to have been that, on the one hand, there was "childhood" and, on the other, there was "adulthood," and there was no third choice or ground on which a person could stand. It was during the last half of the nineteenth century that, whether in Sunday School or youth groups, children and what we have come to know as adolescents were more or less treated as "adults-in-the-making." They were taught and expected to learn as adults

in miniature. This general principle can be supported by remembrances and minutes from the early youth meetings within our own Missouri Synod.⁸

Although the concept of "adolescence" is a relatively recent one, nonetheless, when the church is compared with other aspects of society, the charge has to be leveled that it was tardy in recognizing that youth did indeed have distinctive needs which were crying to be met. The fact that there were secular societies for the church to warn against, while, on the other hand, it really offered nothing as a viable substitute, would seem to bear this out. It was not a matter of ignoring the youth but, rather, a matter of taking them for granted.⁹

A noticable shift in thinking and attitude of the church's people toward the youth took place, and support gradually grew for the idea of providing societies for them.¹⁰ Suddenly, during the last decade of the nineteenth century within the Missouri Synod an organized effort to form youth groups in as many congregations as possible was undertaken. It must be admitted that the amount written on the subject in official periodicals is not overwhelming, but there was a steadily growing interest in this previously ignored and underdeveloped area of church work. Just as before, when there were reasons

which people felt were valid for discouraging the formation of youth groups, so now a number of reasons surfaced which caused people to recognize the need and reconsider the area of youth.¹¹ First of all, there were now a number of pastors holding positions in congregations throughout the synod who were only there because one of the early youth organizations had picked up their cause and given them financial assistance, making it possible for them to complete their seminary training. These men could see value in taking advantage of this resource of youth which the church, up until this time, had virtually left untouched. Secondly, the situation with the youth within the church had degenerated to such a point that many felt youth societies could not possibly make things any worse than they presently were, and since some even appeared to be successful, who knows, they might even help. Finally, pastors were beginning to realize how ridiculous it was to condemn and forbid membership in worldly societies without offering some form of alternative for the young people. With the mixing of these elements the atmosphere began to change within the church, and it became much more receptive to the concept of providing for a ministry to its young people.

Where the pastors of the last half of the nineteenth century warned their young people against the evils of the

world and its societies but then left them stranded with no other acceptable choices, the Walther League, which was founded in 1893, dared to be different. The following words were penned in 1935, yet, with a few changes in wording and examples, might well have been spoken at the first organizational meeting of the Walther League.

The cesspools of the city have welled over into the country. . . It must be clear, even to the most casual observer, that a much closer contact with the generation exposed to these conditions is not only desirable, but supremely necessary. To warn is not enough. That is merely negative. There must be a substitution of positive, Biblical, spiritual values for the twisted and distorted values of a materialistic and lustful world; for the dance -- healthful recreation; for the motion picture -- cultural activities; for the lust for gold -- the far and shining horizons of Christian service.¹²

The aims of the founders of the Walther League were to place the organization into the service of the church. "The principal object of the Walther League was then, as it is now, 'To assist in keeping our young people within the church.'¹³ By offering fellowship with other young Lutherans the Walther League hoped to strengthen loyalty to the faith of the forefathers and at the same time keep the young people from falling prey to the temptation of joining worldly organizations and being led from Lutheran altars.¹⁴ By "keeping the young people busy with a definite program" it was felt that a real need, shared by pastors, teachers and elders of the church,

could be met.¹⁵

Again, a general observation has been made for which I feel the Walther League provides a primary example. For, as the church went through a period of building a strong closely structured denominational youth fellowship, we simultaneously helped develop the peer group as a channel for Christian influence and support. At times we managed to build a greater loyalty to the on-going youth organization instead of to Christ and His church.¹⁶ This leads us to what Dean Dammon considers to be a "big problem" in our present day. The old structures are no longer available and with the Walther League gone, now what happens? As a church it seems that we had been conditioned to think that the organization and structure of the Walther League was the same thing as youth ministry. As a result, many feel that when zones and districts disappeared so did youth ministry.¹⁷

After having looked into the history of the Walther League, it would seem to this author that it was basically a protective agency. One which not only built a wall of defense around the youth, thus keeping the big, bad world out of his life, but which also, indirectly at least, kept the young person within the church. The endorsement of the Walther League which was passed by the 1923 Synodical Con-

vention includes among its principles: "That particular stress be laid upon educational work among our young people in order that in the future our church may have well informed and intelligent workers."¹⁸ This motive for youth work does not really meet the needs of the youth "where they are at," but more or less meets a need which the church had and which they in turn projected upon the youth. It is the motive of self-preservation which, in today's circles is increasingly being seen as a questionable and selfish motive to work with.

There also appears to have been a genuine fear of letting the young people find out for themselves. Despite the fact that great pride was taken, and rightly so, in the laudable service projects which were undertaken and carried out by the Walther League, individuality definitely seemed to be stymied. The organization can be found constantly working for "this purpose" or "that cause," yet the individual with his own interests, talents, and personal weaknesses was never really challenged and given the chance to grow as an individual.

As presented in its Manual, the Walther League appears to have been poured in concrete and standing as an unshakable, unchanging structure. At one point, the proud claim is made, "this is what we have done for forty years,"¹⁸ and the implication would seem to be "and we will continue doing this

same thing right up to the end!" The Manual itself recognizes "increasing leisure time" and "cultural changes," yet it seems that the Walther League was determined to remain a fortress against the onrush of change rather than working with it.

This same attitude appears to have stood right into the decade of the sixties when, generally speaking, youth confronted the church with indifference and challenge. Up until this time the Walther League had done its job and basically had three things going for it. First of all, it had kept the young people in contact with the church. Secondly, it had provided a means for educating the young people; strengthening their faith and preparing them for the day when they would take over from their parents and lead the church. Finally, and possibly the biggest factor, was the fact that it worked and just about every young person within the church had the immediate goal of being a Walther Leaguer.

It was during this decade of the sixties, frequently referred to as the "decade of the young," that youth used new prominence and directness to force the church to listen to their evaluations: they would no longer be taken for granted; they would no longer respond to what they saw as meaningless form and structure; they would not remain silent on the part-

icular issues of their day; and, the church would no longer be exempt from their criticism.¹⁹ With this challenge came the realization that "concrete structure and organization" had outlived their usefulness. Change was needed and part of this change would be the "death" of the Walther League. It is this disappearance of zones and districts, mentioned earlier, which signaled for many within our church the end of youth ministry. Without the structure, which previously had been so noticable, many people seem to be lost. It is in that situation that it is imperative for us to analyze what is now happening. Is ministry occurring? If it is, what can we do to further it? If it is not, what can we do to get it started and on its way? Above and beyond all else, we must guard against the attitude and practice of replacing old structures with new ones, merely for structure's sake.²⁰

At the beginning of this chapter it was pointed out that we would have to take a critical look at the history of youth ministry within the Missouri Synod in order to learn and gain insights as to how to be better able to meet the tasks and overcome the frustrations with which we are presently faced. At times it may have seemed that this author was being overly critical, to the point of being negative and belittling what has taken place. Let it be said that this

was not the intended purpose of this chapter. Many positive effects have been felt as the result of our Synod's past endeavors of working with youth. Considering times, places and prevailing attitudes, many commendable things have taken place which give glory to God and to Him alone. Yet, in light of our present situation, knowledge and insight (things which are rather difficult to ignore) "mistakes" can be seen and definite room for improvement can be found. It is from those "mistakes" that we must learn if we are to effectively minister today. This history provides the answer to the question of "where did we come from?", and it also provides the foundation upon which we must now build for the future.

CHAPTER III

WHERE ARE THEY AT

"Adolescence: the quality of being youthful; the time of life between puberty and maturity."¹ This concept, no matter how much of a "household" word it might seem to be in our vocabulary, is really a relatively new one. It was never emphasized as a separate form of psychology until the very beginning of this century. It was not regarded as a separate period in the stream of life until the 1930's, and it was not until around the end of the Second World War that this period of life was really looked at or studied with much interest.² Yet, it is precisely during this period which bridges the gap between "childhood" and "adulthood" that a person falls within the realm of the church's youth ministry program. For that reason, it is important to look at it from both the perspective of the adult world and also from the perspective of the youth themselves to see just where youth are at and what they are going through.

Today, it is this adolescent portion of society which seems to provide the greatest mystery with which people struggle, and resulting from this struggle, it seems that everyone eventually forms his or her own opinion on the

subject: "The long hair, the drugs, the lack of respect. . . why when I was their age. . ."; "The energy, concern and idealism of the younger generation is something which this world has needed for a long time!" The view of youth held by the "typical" adult in our day and age ranges from the greatest to the worst, from the opinion that the youth of today are really no different from those of earlier days to the opinion that they are the most radical thing to hit the face of the earth.

It is generally agreed that it is only a small minority among the total number of youth today who are "grabbing" the headlines," whether through radical behavior, drug use and abuse, new morality, or whatever it might be. We cannot deny, however, that all youth are growing up in a world greatly different from that of their parents' younger days. The young person of today has never known depression or "hard times," and, in fact, he controls more money and effects our basic economy in ways which prior to this time were never dreamed possible. He has never known a period of real peace in his lifetime for with military confrontation, "cold war" strategy, racial tension, and so forth, tremendous pressures and even blood-shed have become a way of life. He lives in an electronic-technological world which constantly

sees yesterday's science fiction turned into today's facts of life. It is no longer possible for youth to be kept isolated from the adult.

Youth is a time for idealism and action, a time for new visions of human possibilities and potentials, a time of questioning every ideology and methodology of national and international life. And our particular generation of youth happens to enjoy the affluence required for large numbers of people to become less concerned about economic problems and more concerned about ethical and moral problems. The search no longer is for quantity but for quality.⁴

With youth becoming more and more a part of everyday life, how ridiculous it is for the church to live with a policy and an attitude which would attempt to keep youth isolated.

There are new choices and opportunities which confront youth today and all of these cause new pressures for them to deal with. For example, the choice concerning college, which many parents never had to face, now begins to make itself known even before entrance into high school. Youth today tend to look to the future rather than to the past, and this too differentiates them from previous generations.⁵ Such things as the Peace Corps and Vista point to a movement away from thinking only in terms of material gains. Increased leisure time and activities have made many things, including church attendance, which were mandatory for parents optional in the sight of today's youth. New choices, opportunities,

and tremendous pressures lead to new anxiety which must be faced by today's young person. Strommen's study points up the fact that this pressure and anxiety is probably most pronounced for Lutheran youth when it comes to their faith.⁶ In days gone by, this situation might have been tolerable. Today, with children who are not necessarily prone to aimlessly "following along," we have an obligation to show interest and offer youth help for working through this period in their lives. With the elements of adolescent life falling into place in such a way as to produce this pressure and anxiety, there is the opportunity, indeed, there is the demand, for the church to view its youth in a new light.

If ministry is going to happen in this setting we who are within the church are the ones who will have to take the initiative. We cannot sit idly by thinking that we can wait for them to come to us and then something will happen. In order to "get the ball rolling" we must realize and honestly look to see "where they are at" in terms of their own lives. What are their strong points? What do they need and expect from us? Even before we attempt to do this we should first look to see where we are at in our own lives. How do we as adults feel toward them and their position? Do we only expect to give, or do we think we might also be able to receive

something from them?

In viewing ourselves we may well discover that there are obstacles to overcome before we can ever hope to carry out any form of effective ministry with youth. One of those obstacles is that traditionally adults in positions of power, which is what the leaders of the church in fact are within the setting of the church, have been threatened by both youth's idealism and their lack of realism in pressing for changes. Leaders are "turned off" by what youth say and want to see happen. A challenge issued against an older institution or tradition which a person has dedicated his whole life to, can be a very threatening thing. The result of this is that there is a hidden, but nonetheless a very real, fear and resentment for youth in general.⁷

A second contributor to this hidden fear is the fact that in terms of sheer numbers, adults are steadily becoming a minority within our country. Finally, adults may well be afraid of youth and youth ministry for the simple fact, they do not know what to do. Our fast moving world gives the impression that there is no sure foundation upon which tomorrow can rest⁸ and they are afraid that they can not help youth prepare for what to them looks to be a "shapeless future." In many cases adults may be coming to the point of

realizing that there is indeed little value in continuing to pass along the age old truths in the age old ways. Yet, there is no other method with which they are familiar enough to be able to turn to.

Another problem which must be dealt with is that of allowing stereotyped images on both "sides of the fence," to take the place of firsthand knowledge and experience with each other. This first hand knowledge and experience should be the basis for our ministry. We have briefly mentioned how it is generally accepted that only a small minority of today's youth are getting the headlines, yet, it is often these headlines which produce for us misleading images which, rather than being avoided, come to form the basis of our attitudes toward youth and our relationship between the generations. Strommen's study finds that 43 per cent of our Lutheran youth feel like outsiders in relation to their church family.⁹ They feel unwanted, unneeded and unnoticed. They feel like they are under suspicion and that they have no voice or influence in decisions which are made. They live with the impression that adults have made it, that they have "spiritually arrived."¹⁰ This is the case, yet, it simply is not true. Each of us, whether we are the oldest of the older generation or the youngest of the younger generation is still on his or

her way, and are far from "having arrived." We all struggle with the problem of falling far short of what God expects of each one of us every day of our lives.

Soon we reach the point of everyone over thirty being as stuck as if they had been poured in concrete in the eyes of a young person, and everyone under twenty-five being a long haired hippie who is on some kind of trip, in the eyes of the older generation. We reach an impass and the tragedy is that it is based, not on fact, but rather, on fictional untruths which get in the way of our ministering to each other and thereby helping youth over the trials of adolescence.

It is vital that we see each person as a unique individual who combines in himself a mixture of qualities that defy classification. Each person needs to be seen as one of God's divine "originals" and, like a painting, is to be enjoyed for his uniqueness.¹¹

For the youth themselves, the years of adolescence are years of growing up. Adolescence can be characterized as a time of exploring, struggling and discovery.¹² It is during this time of life that a young person moves toward and eventually reaches physical, mental and emotional maturity. It seems only natural that he or she would want to try these new powers out to see what they are all about. As the young matures he or she is called upon to make decisions, and although they do this with varying degrees of anxiety, they

also make them with the idea, again to varying degrees, that there is plenty of time left in their lives to correct any mistakes which might be made on their part. They are struggling to find themselves and to find out what life is all about. Like any true explorer, they are traveling over what, for them, amounts to uncharted ground.

From Strommen's study we can see that all of this leads to a number of rather consistent characteristics of youth. As a group they are the ones who see the least meaning and purpose to life, and, related to this, they are the most anxious and perplexed over their personal faith. They feel as though they are alienated and all alone in this struggle. It is as though they had been cut completely free from their moorings. More than one-half of the young people surveyed by Strommen said that they felt out of touch both with God and with other people.¹³ They tended to feel alienated from hope, or any advantage in life.¹⁴ As a result of all of this, they showed little self-interest. They tend to be rather detached from the world and pessimistic. They also tend to turn to their own peers in an attempt to compensate for their fear of not measuring up to standards set by society which would result in their not finding their place in life. All of this amounts to what psychologist Erik Erickson sees as

the adolescent's struggle to achieve "ego-identity" and at the same time to resist the pressures which would diffuse his identity.¹⁵ It is an effort to find the answer to the question of, "Who am I and where do I belong?" Just about everything that happens during the years of adolescence plays a part in this effort.

This struggle on the part of youth is made all the more intense by several other elements which come into play. First of all, youth do not feel the freedom to speak out against what they see as sham and pretense. Many times they see adults either simply allowing this to pass or else they merely take these things for granted.¹⁶ For example, their keen feelings about what is done to people, their sense of social justice and social concern, leads them to see things existing which should not exist in this world, and yet, at the same time, they see the way in which adults seemingly ignore the issues which surround them and which cry for their attention. In connection with this is the fact that after struggling with the world in an attempt to find out what life is really all about, youth then turn around and see adults who stubbornly cling to institutions and traditions¹⁷ which are felt to be necessary simply because they have always existed.

"Why don't adults focus their efforts on achieving a meaning-

ful and worthwhile goal rather than simply preserving structures for structures' sake?" These last two elements seem to have become quite well-known, in fact they have been quite closely associated with youth in general. The final element might come as a surprise to many. Almost all of the church's young critics have very little actual knowledge of the real purpose of the church. They almost seem unanimous in the fact that to them the "goings on" are "incomprehensible." It seems that when they were under eleven years of age they didn't expect to understand because there were so many other things in the world which they experienced and which they didn't understand. Beside that, adults didn't expect them to understand these things either. As they grew older they began looking at the mysteries of birth, evolution, psychology and atomic energy in school, and as they gained these insights, adults, for some reason, seemed to think that understanding of the church would naturally keep pace.¹⁸ However, knowledge of the church did not suddenly appear and keep pace. As a result the church, its life, people and their habits are completely befogged and blurred in the minds of many young people through hearsay and lack of understanding.¹⁹

Struggle, exploration, discovery, confusion, anxiety, alienation -- all of these things are what we are dealing

with when we speak of the church's ministry to youth. We are working with creatures of God who are making an all-out effort to find out who they are and what the purpose for their existence is. It is in their effort to find purpose in life that the church finds itself in a position of being able to play a key role. That responsibility is what should shape our ministry to youth. If that ministry is to be an effective one, it must strive to meet the actual needs which youth have in their lives, and not to merely accomplish those things which we as adults think youth should have.

From what has been said above, it would seem that there are at least four basic needs of youth with which we who minister to them should concern ourselves with. First of all, it would appear, they are looking for something which is "the real thing." At the same time this should be presented in such a way as to be flexible and applicable to their personal situations in life. They are looking for honesty in approach and practice. Because of this they tend to reject the idea of the church, often embodied within the minister, presenting all the pat answers, in a "matter-of-fact manner, which everyone then blindly tries to follow!"²⁰ Their relatively brief, but nonetheless valid, experience of life has shown them that things are more complicated and,

therefor, worthy of a more thorough and honest approach than what they see many of the adults within the church working with. Reality for them consists of developing one's personal style of life on the basis of a person's feelings, experiences, and inclinations.²¹ Rather than an approach to life which centers on the institution, youth would have us concern ourselves more with the person, making the individual the center of our attention and effort. Again calling on Strommen's survey, the data would show us that youth generally see adults as people who care and who are inclined to do something. At the same time, there is also a strong feeling among many youth that the church and the status quo are inseparably bound together.²² They would see the structure of the church or congregation as being "stuck in it's tracks." What they want is for the church to show to the world that it can be responsive to the cares and realities of the world in which it exists.²³ Young people do not seem to be saying to adults, "Become like us. Join our world." In fact they reject the phony adult. What they are saying is, "Try to understand our world and respect us as individuals within that world."²⁴ Seventy-four per cent of the young people surveyed by Strommen said that they favored "variety, spontaneity and personal involvement" in worship

services. The reason is that more than hearing the words, young people today have a strong desire to experience the Gospel.²⁵

Secondly, and closely related to the first need which youth have today, is the fact that they are looking for something which is not only real and flexible, but also which has meaning for them where they are at in life. They are not looking for "whishy-washy kid's stuff," but rather, they want high standards that will challenge them to be and do their best.²⁶ They are looking for meaningful help in establishing for themselves a set of values and life-directing goals.²⁷ They are telling us that they do not want to be spoon-fed, nor do they want to have people expect them to respond with unquestioning obedience. They are struggling with life and what they want is something which will help them deal with the social and moral problems that play such a prominent part in that struggle.²⁸ If we look at the one isolated area of congregational worship, the attitude of youth can be summed up as a desire to see congregational worship become "a way of helping the community become a helping community."²⁹

Thirdly, as youth struggle to find their identity, perhaps more than anything else, they are looking for a genuine

feeling of being loved, wanted and understood not only by God Himself, but also by the members of their congregation. We have mentioned how teens naturally tend to feel insecure. Religion, unlike any other aspect of life, can give purpose for and meaning to what goes on while we are here on earth. It creates a feeling of security³⁰ when you know that someone who cares about you personally is in control and because of that we have no need to fear the future, even if, as human beings, we do not understand everything that takes place.

Finally, we mentioned earlier how youth generally want to see an attitude on the part of adults which is not institutionally centered but rather, person centered. In one way, this speaks a warning to us concerning a need which youth have. The term "youth ministry" conjures up in the mind's eye the image of ministry to a group of people. Yet, we must not forget the fact that this group is made up of individuals who each possess individual needs and interests: not all of them are going on to college after high school, not all of them are Bible scholars, not all of them are interested in ice cream socials and old time movies. The fact is that we are in trouble if we think that they are all the same. When we reach the conclusion that our youth program has successfully met the needs of all the youth, we are simply

kidding ourselves.

In this chapter we have attempted to come to a better understanding of "the biggest task" and how to overcome the "frustration" of contemporary "youth ministry" by looking at "where they are at." But, before we could do that we had to first come to grips with the reality about where, as adult leaders of the church, we are at in our relationship to them. Having done that, hopefully, we have come to a better and clearer understanding of what the situation is in which we are attempting to carry out this ministry to youth.

Frank R. Donovan, a social historian who has studied teen-age behavior ranging from primitive societies through our present one concludes that in "almost every area of juvenile activity, youngsters of yore make today's kids seem relatively saintly."³¹ If, in fact, "when we were their age. . ." we were like them in a number of ways, and worse in other ways, then perhaps we have been wrong in our opinion of them. When we come to see youth for what they really are, why they are that way and what they really need, then we will have a better chance to accomplish, with God's help, some real ministry. That is what Strommen is saying as he states:

A basic tenet of our faith is that God has created all people in His image to be loved and respected as Christ loves us. We must not, then, allow false and negative images to serve as artificial barriers to close relationships and feelings of mutuality between youth and adults.³²

As people involved in and concerned with ministry to youth, we do not necessarily have to accept and act upon everything they say and think. Yet, on the other hand, we will get nothing accomplished if we take the attitude that we alone know what is best for them and that they are always completely wrong. It is important that we do not misunderstand them. It seems that they do not want to change the basics of our Christian faith. They just want to make it easier to see that faith by doing away with "dead" forms and making that faith real and meaningful. To accomplish this they want to bring that faith out into the open through action on the part of believers.

CHAPTER IV

WHAT SHOULD WE DO ABOUT IT

In writing about youth ministry, and all which that phrase means, it seems that it would be rather easy for people to come to the realization that the church should indeed be involved and active. It seems that a major part of what the church is all about is being involved in meeting the needs of people. Youth, like all other people have needs to be met. As we look at where we have come from and where we are at the present time, the natural question which seems to surface and demand an answer is the question of, "what should we do about the situation in which we find ourselves and our youth living in?" "How can we most effectively minister to youth?" This is not an easy question to answer. As was pointed out in the introduction to this paper, specific situations and personalities involved will call for different details. Yet, from the past history of youth ministry and especially from looking at where the youth are, it seems possible to offer a number of suggestions and ideals which might be kept in mind as congregations attempt to work out the details of youth ministry which they would then hope to carry out within their midst. That will be the purpose of this chapter,

namely, to offer general directives which congregations might consider and work with in the context of their own specific situations.

Before looking at what should be done, it might prove helpful to look at principles which we should not operate with. These are pointedly summed up as the "four heresies of youth work."¹ The first of these is the heresy of the "future-church." The phrase, "a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's people,"² refers to all those who profess their faith in Jesus Christ as Lord -- young and old alike. Although it has become convenient to see youth as being "the church of tomorrow" it is quite inaccurate. They are called as Christians to be responsible participants in the church's mission to the world and the ministry which has been committed to it.³ Youth are not "the church of tomorrow" but rather first-class members right now, an integral part of the church today. For this reason, they should be taken seriously.

The second heresy against which we should be on guard is that of the "numbers-game." This is a trap which the church has fallen victim to in a number of areas. When we feel we have been successful merely because we have a high percentage of people involved, we are working on the basis of quantity and not necessarily quality. The question we are to

ask is not "how many extra chairs did we have to set up?", but rather, "how effectively have we worked with, and met, the needs of those involved with our program?" This heresy often leads to a third one which is the heresy of "street-cleaning." Behind this, of course, is the idea that we must keep the kids busy and off of the street where they can only get themselves into trouble. This heresy, like the previous one, often leads us to think that since we have tremendous numbers of kids busy, we therefor, have been successful.

Finally, there is the "stop-gap" heresy which would lead us to constantly fill in holes which exist in our total ministry with whatever we can find to keep the program going. Often this leaves us with a "patch-work" program made up of various aspects and activities which have no "rhyme nor reason" in their being where they are. This produces a buckshot effect which finds things going in every conceivable direction but which really does not get much accomplished.

These are the common heresies which often show themselves in the church's youth ministry program. It would do us well to avoid these things, but more than this, there are a number of principles connected with youth ministry which would be advisable for us to bear in mind as we attempt to work out

the details of the program in our own congregations. As a direct response to the "stop-gap" heresy which was discussed above, it seems almost mandatory that we begin our youth ministry program with a clear cut definition of purpose, aims and goals. This is even more helpful if it is drawn up in written form. Once we have arrived at this, we should not discard these statements to some obscure and out of the way place in our files, but rather, use them and constantly refer to them. Such a written statement can prove to be an effective tool for seeing how we are doing and how the various undertakings of our youth ministry program measure up with the original purpose. Before we can ever hope to effectively minister to youth we must have this clarity of purpose.

The primary program of the church for the young should be directed toward their spiritual regeneration and subsequent growth.⁴ Basically, we must help them link their life with the Eternal, so they can discover meaning and hope in their "now" experiences.⁵ A possible goal might be to help youth realize exactly what they are. They are not perfect human beings, and for that matter, neither is anyone else. Youth like everyone else, are sinners who do not always do what they are supposed to or what God expects of them. Nevertheless, they have been forgiven by their Father in heaven. We might

take all of this for granted by thinking of it as something which really does not need to be said. Yet, it can be a great relief for anyone, especially a young person, to discover and to be told that we do not constantly have to struggle to be something which, in fact, we are not. In speaking earlier of the characteristics of youth today, we said that they found the least meaning to and purpose for life.⁶ They were constantly struggling with the pressures of measuring up and finding their particular place in life. What we have just said is that, although not measuring up to what ultimately counts, namely what God wants and expects from each one of us, is something which should be taken seriously, God stills loves us and He is the one who has taken care of all of our shortcomings. That fact alone can give real hope and meaning to life for anyone, despite his or her age.

A second principle comes to us from the question which is often asked by adults, "What can we provide for youth?" The answer to this is that we can best serve youth by providing them with latitude in planning experiences which will prepare them to do things for themselves. Strommen observes:

Our incompleteness as a church has been in the realm of mission. Our approach to youth of the church has been a shelter model of feeding and keeping. We have done little to equip and send our youth into areas of need. The same can be said with respect to adults. We

need to develop ways and means of doing this.⁷

Basically, we are to help youth in the process of becoming spiritually independent and responsible Christian people.⁸

It seems that they will rebel against being pressed into the mold of organized religion, yet, at the same time, they need to be challenged and to see the practical value of following this Jesus of Nazareth. It is from this following of Him that their personal friendship with Him will develop.⁹

The youth of today, better than anyone else, knows where their needs are and where their weaknesses are. As they experience life day in and day out, they come to realize where the church can best meet their needs and which parts of the total of what the church has to offer to them they can really use. This brings us to our third principle of youth work, namely, building programs based upon youth's needs and interests rather than on what we as adults project upon them. In this setting, we must be careful not to say, "This is what we will let the youth do and this is what we expect them to do!" Such an attitude completely shuts the youth out of the planning picture and gives little regard to where they are at the present time. It gives the impression that the church is an adult world in which they are permitted to exist without benefit of adequate participation or franchise.¹⁰

If we could reach the point of allowing youth latitude in planning programs which are based upon their needs, very likely, we would find that the youth will discover for themselves the existence of "unconscious needs" which even they themselves have not seen before.¹¹ Putting such principles into action can be challenging because it means being flexible and changing as the youth themselves change over a period of time. However, on the other hand, it can be quite beneficial to a congregation in that it will lead, in varying degrees, to the experience of a new birth and sense of renewal. In such a setting the youth, and, hopefully, the other members of the congregation, will come to see the church as a dynamic fellowship in which the members can grow with a sense that the church is really alive, something which is really interested in and involved with their very real and everyday lives, and also something which is at work in a worthwhile manner within today's world.¹² If the church seems to be near the line of battle with everyday life, it would seem to follow that the God who lives and works through this church will also seem to be interested and near at hand.

A fourth principle stems from what was mentioned before, namely, that the world and, up until the present, the church has been "dominated" by adults. The basic attitude is one

which holds that youth exist for the church rather than the church existing for youth. This principle would call for a closer working together, as co-members, between the youth and the adults of the congregation. The fact is that the church is one and it's mission is one. This principle amounts to accepting youth for what they in fact are, "young adults" who have the responsibility and the right to expand their horizons. Yet, it is right here that we confront the problem discussed earlier, of images which we hold concerning the young person of today.¹³ Data from A Study of Generations¹⁴ points to the fact that a major problem in youth work centers in the negative image which many adults hold of youth. "Youth hear words of love and acceptance but they feel the distrust and rejection of many whose image of youth is a negative one."¹⁵ If the stance which we as adults take toward youth is a negative one, young people will sense it and it will cause them to feel as though they are on the defensive.¹⁶ Youth ministry means more than what is done for youth. It means youth and adults working together to deal with feelings and attitudes which build barriers between them and thus hampers their living and working as the one church.¹⁷

The church has long felt the effects of segregation, specifically segregation on the basis of age. Outside of

the Sunday worship services, there are very few chances offered for youth and adults to meet and enjoy fellowship. This interaction of ages, which this "principle" speaks of, should go beyond the level of a few select leaders, to include the entire congregation. However, this brings us face to face with one of the invisible barriers to mission within the congregation. Although adults want young people to be occupied with youth activities -- a kind of "make believe church" -- they may not want to welcome them as full partners in the task of carrying out the church's mission. This age segregation with respect to the serious business of the church leaves both young and old poorer in spirit and resources.¹⁸

Accepting youth as partners in the church's mission does have its irritations and its tensions for both generations. Traditionally, youth have orientated themselves toward change, been open to new "ideas," less regulated by how things have been done in the past, more inclined to "upset the apple-cart," and have pressed for new patterns and ways of doing things.¹⁹ But these tensions and differences can become occasions for learning from one another. As things stand now, we seldom deal with and talk to youth except for those times when they seek our counsel, or when we are trying to

push a lesson onto them or get across some message or words of wisdom which we feel they cannot do without. Yet by listening to them and by dealing with them openly and honestly much can be accomplished. First priority should be given to communication between generations.²⁰

This whole approach uses organization not as a tool for unifying youth as youth, but rather, organization becomes a means of unifying and involving youth with the whole church.²¹ Youth and adults, together, experience "give and take" of ideas. Youth and adults, together, grow and mature in Christ. Youth and adults, together, move forward in mission. Accepting youth for what they are, "young laity," is above and beyond all else an attitude which hopefully will become characteristic, not of a few people but, of the entire congregation.²²

Bearing in mind a shift in stress which has taken place in recent years, especially among the "younger generation," we are led to a fifth principle of contemporary youth ministry. "Youth ministry needs to and is moving toward a new point of view emphasizing people and relationships rather than programs and organizations."²³ This movement from being highly organized to a personal approach stems from the realization that we cannot solve everything by analysis and

research based conclusions. It demands several things to happen. First the emphasis moves from merely "doing" projects and busy work to "being" a person with needs, talents, interests, and all that is necessary to make us the individuals that we are. Accent falls on feelings and experiences. Secondly, opportunities must be provided which present the individual the opportunity to come to know others and their situations in depth. We can be sensitive to the needs of suffering people, for example, but contemporary thinking would doubt that we could really help until we have, in one way or another, "walked a mile in their shoes." Finally, this person centered approach calls for variety and experimentation within the program. The idea is that as individuals, we will never know what we can do until we are given the chance to try. If we try something and fail, that failure is no reason to lose heart and give up. We simply must pick up the pieces and try all over again from a different angle.

A final principle is one which deals with those who work directly with the youth program as leaders, counselors, workers, or whatever their title might be. We have seen what a difficult time and struggle the period of adolescence presents for the young person today. In this situation, to provide young people with leaders who are less than "competent"

is, to put it quite bluntly, cheating them of what they need and deserve. Granted, it is often difficult to find anyone who is willing to take on the responsibility of heading up the youth program, but, in fact, if we have to resort to "twisting a person's arm" it is probably best to simply forget about that person as a potential leader and look elsewhere for the help which is needed. It is a mistake to start out with an image and then look for people to fit the image of a youth leader.²⁴ What is really needed is a desire to do the job; anyone who is willing to, can handle the task. It is up to us as the church to help these willing people recognize who they are and where their strengths and weaknesses lie. We must also work with them to develop their skills in relationships, such as listening to what is really going on, and their skills of planning, such as setting goals and planning so that these goals might be reached.²⁵ The church working with these leaders must provide help, training, guidance, and development so that they might do the best possible job.

Another quality of leadership lies in the outcome of the old struggle between the "old way" and the "new way"; between "control" and guidance." Control is the idea of getting what you want and then making people like it. Guidance

is influencing people to co-operate together toward a common goal.²⁶ Teen's increased ability for independent thinking may make them critical of beliefs taught in childhood, especially if those beliefs have been taught in an authoritarian, unnatural, or bigoted manner. Doubting is an indication that one is maturing, and it can be healthy because it can lead youth to come to a personal firsthand acceptance of truths.²⁷ The secret to this healthy effect of doubt is found, not in a more authoritarian approach, but rather, in loving acceptance and understanding which shows itself through concerned guidance. The lay youth leader is not going to be, in most cases, an expert on teen-agers, nor should he pretend to be. His position calls for an honest and authentic personal approach. Anything less will be sensed by the youth and rejected as being phony. This approach, of guiding youth rather than controlling; dealing with them on a personal level knowing full well that you do not have all of the answers to the questions which they are going to come up with, but that you are nevertheless willing to struggle with them to find those answers, can be quite an intimidating thing for the person undertaking it. Yet, it is one which cannot be compromised.

The six principles which are presented here, really do

not tell us anything "new." They are merely deduced from the information contained in chapters one and two of this paper and presented in a slightly different form, namely, that of general suggestions. Also, as has been mentioned several times before, they no doubt will seem to be rather idealistic. Many will feel that, at best, they are impossible to put into operation to the full extent in which they are written up here. This author is aware of this fact and is willing to concede that if we found a church where things existed in this state, it would be the exception rather than the rule. Yet, if a youth ministry program within a congregation is to be successful, it would seem that these elements should be present to some degree. If we want to more effectively meet the task of "leading the young to use their power and vitality responsibly,"²⁸ and if we want to overcome the frustrations which this task can present, we will have to bear these principles in mind as we undertake the challenge of reshaping our ministry to youth.

CHAPTER V

GIVE ME SOME EXAMPLES

The preceding chapter was an attempt to present several principles which this author saw to exist after looking at both how youth work within the Lutheran Church -- Missouri Synod had developed over the last 125 years, and also the attitudes, expectations, and characteristics of people in our own day and age. Specifics were omitted for the reason that details will depend on the particular situation. As far as these specifics are concerned, when you are working with the principles sighted in the last chapter, "the sky is the limit." Work under these principles can go in any conceivable direction and as far as the variables of each particular situation allow them to go.

In attempting to reshape, or possibly in some cases rebuild, the youth ministry program at a given church it is rather important to remember the necessity of preparing and laying the proper groundwork. Slow and steady progress is better than charging forward only to discover later that you are "in over your head" and no one is willing to throw you a life-preserver.

It is also unwise to start out anywhere other than that

place at which both the adults and the youth you will be working with are at. As is the case with most areas of congregational life and work, this will be a gradual process and not simply a matter of "now you see it this way. . .now you don't!"

It is the purpose of this chapter to offer to the reader a minimal list of specific applications which might be considered. Very likely they will have to be modified in some way to meet the particular needs of a given congregation. It should be pointed out that many of the ideas which follow are not original with this author, nor are they offered as the last word. In most cases those ideas which are presented would probably best serve merely as a starting point, soon to be worked over and built upon. It is hoped, they will provide the reader with some idea of how to proceed from the principles of the last chapter to actual practice.

It is strongly suggested that a start be made by appointing or electing a committee of concerned youth and adults to examine the church's ministry with youth. This committee might be made up of the executive board of the existing youth group matched by an equal number of concerned adults. However the make-up is arrived at, the "equal representation" idea is encouraged. As a place to begin, this committee might

find it helpful to work through David Evans' book Shaping the Church's Ministry with Youth,¹ or some other material of this nature. This group should begin by evaluating the situation as it exists and then proceed with general planning and periodic re-evaluation. This initial evaluation should thoroughly consider where the youth of the congregation are and what their specific needs are. This process might take three months or longer in order to be handled properly, but if it is undertaken with a sincere desire to learn it should prove to be a very worthwhile procedure. A sample inventory conducted among the youth might contain such questions as: What do you like about the church? What do you see as being wrong with the church? How are you personally involved with the church? What are some of the problems which you see the church confronting at this time? What are your opinions about denominational stance toward certain issues? How might the church become more involved with certain issues?² After the initial work has been carried out by this committee, it then becomes the responsibility of the committee to research and review the program by looking for possible new areas to move into and also to check various aspects of the total program against the purpose, goal and aims which have been established.

The general area of education is one which has seen a considerable number of innovations take place within recent years. It also may be the area most likely to start reshaping a ministry to youth in, since through education, considerable background information can be provided and a rationale presented for constructive projects which might follow at a later time. It seems that basically the church has stayed pretty well with the same method for instructing a person whether he is a child, adolescent, or adult. While in many areas, history for example, youth learn not only the facts but also how to critically appraise those facts and make judgements. The church appears to have been afraid to allow adolescents to put their faith "to the test."³

Although there are innumerable "religious" subjects which could and should be presented, we might make more of an effort to meet youth where they are at by offering to them subjects which are not, strictly speaking, "religious" in nature, but, which nevertheless, form a big part of their life and with which they struggle daily.⁴ Another approach might be to offer areas of study which are open to youth and adults in which both groups are made to feel welcome and needed. Areas where this might be experimented with could be: worship with both youth and adults looking at the

"traditional" and also "new" forms of worship and exchanging opinions on the materials being considered. Juvenile delinquency, drugs and the whole area of relationships might be other areas of discussions which could see interesting results from "give and take" on the part of different generations.

Although in the past this might not have fallen within the realm of youth ministry, it might prove beneficial to offer help and guidance for parents of teen-agers. This suggestion is made because it is obvious that adolescence is not a disconnected period of life which has no roots. In terms of the past, adolescence builds from the crib through childhood and right up to the present moment in the life of a young person. Moving into the future, adolescence looks to parents, teachers and other adults for examples.⁵ By working with parents, and for that matter anyone who might have extensive contact with children and adolescents, we might better equip them to understand, strengthen and encourage young people.

Serious consideration also might be given to our present system of confirmation which, in most cases, takes place at the seventh and eighth grade level. It is at this time that the "struggle" for meaning to life is building up steam in the life of the young person and he is preoccupied with all

kinds of things in his own life and in the world around him.⁶ It may be better to put this formal instruction off for a few years, thus giving the young person the opportunity to better know himself as a maturing person. Of course with this suggestion is also the risk that some may choose not to join the church. At the same time, however, it would be easier for the young person to find his identity within the church.⁷

Another general area in which we might want to reconsider our approach as individual congregations has to do with the way in which we work together with others; specifically with community organizations and with other congregations. First of all, as far as congregations within a given area working together, it would probably prove very helpful to open up and share with each other exactly what kind of approach and methods are being employed successfully. Again there is the possible risk accompanied with a possible benefit.

Imitation of something someone else has done is always risky since the same act could be expressive of real mission by one group and sheer hypocrisy by another. On the other hand, consideration of some things which have been done, could be suggestive and could spark in others alertness to situations and stimulate their imaginations.⁸

Another aspect of inter-congregational co-operation is identical to what is causing many congregations with par-

ochial schools to think and act in terms of consolidation. It is a fact that the best and most effective results are not gained where there is reduplication of effort at each of two, three, four, or however many congregations there might be in a given area, when things could be more effectively carried out as a joint effort. What this amounts to is that, in this author's opinion, it may well be time for congregations in a given area to look into the possibility of making certain aspects of their individual programs into joint efforts. Such an approach might find one congregation as the meeting place for young people from several congregations who are interested in learning about worship services and putting together some of their own worship material which will later be used. At the same time a second congregation might house a group interested in working with some community projects while a third congregation might offer recreational facilities.

As the church seeks to meet the needs of the young it must, at the same time, recognize the fact that it may not be able to meet the most pressing needs of every person.⁹ With this being the case, it would seem logical for the congregation to look for help in handling that part of the load which it cannot handle by itself. In this respect we might want to reconsider our use, or even more basic, our acquaint-

ance with, various community resources which are available. A very simple example would be in the area of occupational guidance. Unless we fool ourselves into thinking that all of our young people are destined to become pastors and parochial day school teachers, this particular need might best be met by a professional guidance counselor in the local high school. Still, the church should remain interested in what is going on in this young person's life, and what his final decision is. Perhaps the church might choose to supplement this "professional" help with an adequate and understandable explanation of Christian vocation. This might provide interesting material for one of the educational programs discussed earlier in this chapter.¹⁰

The final area of specific suggestions to be covered in this chapter is the area of "congregational business." By this I mean such things as serving on congregational committees. Accepting youth as "young laity" does not necessarily mean that we place them on all sorts of boards simply for the sake of saying that we have them there. Nor does it mean lowering the congregational voting age to twelve. However, if we view the work of the church and look at those areas which come into most frequent and closest contact with the youth, we will also probably find areas

where youth could serve quite competently by providing insights and understanding. An example where they might provide the congregation with such serve can be found in the Board for Parish Education, or whatever board's jurisdiction the youth organization falls under. It may not mean giving them full voting status on the committee or board, but, perhaps, they might fill the role (if we can humble ourselves this much) of advisors. In one particular case where this has been done, not only did the young people shed some new light on what was happening with the youth but they also shared some youthful insights concerning other areas of the board's work.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

In this paper I have attempted to wrestle with the "biggest task" facing the church today in regards to it's relationship with it's young people. That task is not to babysit for teen-agers until "some day in the future," but, rather, it is to help young people realize their God given power and ability, and then to lead them to use these things in His service.

As an approach, I first looked at how youth work within the Lutheran Church -- Missouri Synod has developed over the past 125 years. This was done with the intention of learning from the past in an effort to prepare ourselves for both the present and the future.

Secondly, I looked at the present situation. The silent assumption here was that before we could understand and minister to the young, we had to first understand where we stand at least in terms of our attitudes toward the young people of today. For this reason I tried to synthesize where I thought both the "older generation" and the "younger generation" are at in the 1970's.

On the basis of the historical review and "soul searching"

of these two chapters I then attempted to provide several over-riding principles by which youth ministry might be guided within the context of the local congregation. Details of ministry to the young person must be worked out in the specific congregation if they are to be effective. Realizing this, and at the same time trying to facilitate thinking along these lines, a number of specific suggestions were offered in the final chapter of this paper.

No matter what the reader's opinion of this paper might be, no matter how much of what has been offered here is accepted or rejected, even if everything else is eventually forgotten, I would hope that you would remember one point which has been present throughout this paper. To say that we are called to be babysitters for the "church of tomorrow" is wrong. For, by virtue of their baptism, the church's youth are part of, and not apart from the church right now. They have interests, abilities, insights and all types of resources which they can offer to the church. To waste them is bad stewardship of God-given gifts on their part. To ignore them is bad stewardship of God-given gifts on the part of the church. At the same time, they have needs which are crying to be taken care of. We, as the church, have a duty

to listen and to respond, for the simple fact that ministering to the needs of people is what "being the church" is all about.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

¹William M. Dyal, "The World of Today's Youth," Review and Expositor, 65 (Spring, 1968), 144.

²W.R. Cromer, "Church and Youth," Review and Expositor, 65 (Spring, 1968), 163.

³"Ministering to Young Christians" (Cassette Tape), Continuing Education Series, edited by Donald Hinchey (St. Louis: Office of Continuing Education, Concordia Seminary, 1972), part I.

⁴Ibid., "Study Guide," 1.

⁵Merton P. Strommen, Milo L. Brekke, Ralph C. Underwager, and Arthur L. Johnson, A Study of Generations (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1972).

This paper is written within the context of the Lutheran Church, and specifically the Lutheran Church -- Missouri Synod. A Study of Generations is the report of a two year study made of 5,000 Lutherans who ranged in age from fifteen to sixty-five. The purpose was to get a comprehensive picture of the beliefs, values, attitudes and generally the behavior of members within the Lutheran Church. Throughout this paper references will be made to the findings of this study.

⁶Ibid., 20-21.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid., 236.

⁹Merton P. Strommen, Bridging the Gap (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1973), pp. 28-29.

CHAPTER II: WHERE DID WE COME FROM

¹W.R. Cromer, "Perspectives for Youth Ministry," Review and Expositor, 69 (Winter, 1972), 80.

²Henry E. Simon, Background and Beginnings of Organized Youth Work in the Missouri Synod (St. Louis: Concordia Seminary, 1944).

³Ibid., 11.

⁴Ibid., 13.

⁵Ibid., 28.

⁶Ibid., 66.

⁷Sara Little, Youth, World and Church (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1968), p. 14.

⁸Simon's thesis gives a number of examples of this point. The pastor generally made a presentation at the early youth meetings, and it seems to be the rule rather than the exception to find the pastor speaking on a subject such as the Swedenborgian concept of the soul of man, answering the heathen arguments on a particular subject, or something of this nature.

⁹W.R. Cromer, "Perspectives," p. 80.

¹⁰Simon, p. 18.

¹¹Ibid., 67.

¹²The Walther League Manual (Chicago: The Walther League, 1935).

¹³Fifty Years of Christian Service to Lutheran Youth, edited by W.F. Weiherman (Chicago: The Walther League, 1943).

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵The W.L. Manual, p. 6.

¹⁶Little, p. 14.

¹⁷"Ministering to Young Christians" (Cassette Tape), Continuing Education Series, edited by Donald Hinchey (St. Louis: Office of Continuing Education, Concordia Seminary, 1972), part I side II.

¹⁸The W.L. Manual, p. 22.

¹⁹Cromer, "Perspectives," p. 82.

²⁰"Ministering," part I side II.

CHAPTER III: WHERE ARE THEY AT

¹Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language: College Edition (Cleveland: The World Publishing Co., 1962), p. 19.

²W.R. Cromer, "Perspectives for Youth Ministry," Review and Expositor, 69 (Winter, 1972), 79.

³Marshall McLuhan, Understanding Media: The Extensions Of Man (New York: McGraw Hill Book Co., 1964), p. 5.

⁴Donald Jerke, "What's Going On Here?: The Church and the New Culture," Concordia Theological Monthly, 41 (June, 1970), 332.

⁵Eugene van Antwerp, "So Who Listens?," Theological Education, 5 (Summer, 1969), 328-329.

⁶Merton Strommen, Milo L. Brekke, Ralph C. Underwager, and Arthur L. Johnson, A Study of Generations (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1972), p. 198.

⁷Merton Strommen, Bridging the Gap (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1973), p. 14.

⁸Cromer, 82.

⁹Strommen, Bridging, p. 67.

¹⁰Ibid., 55.

¹¹Ibid., 39-40.

¹²Denton R. Coker, "Leadership for Today's Youth," Review and Expositor, 65 (Spring, 1968), 183-184.

¹³Strommen, Bridging, pp. 44-45.

¹⁴Ibid., 52.

¹⁵Erik Erickson, "Youth and the Life Cycle," Readings in Educational Psychology, edited by W.C. Morse and G. Wax Wingo (Chicago: Scott Foresman, 1962), p. 42.

¹⁶Strommen, Bridging, p. 19.

¹⁷Mary Bray, "The Image of the Church in the Mind of Young People," London Quarterly and Holborn Review, 193 (January, 1968), 18.

¹⁸Ibid., 16.

¹⁹Ibid., 17.

²⁰"Ministering to Young Christians" (Cassette Tape), Continuing Education Series, edited by Donald Hinchey (St. Louis: Office of Continuing Education, Concordia Seminary, 1972), part I side I.

²¹Jerke, 33.

²²David Kucharsky, "A Case for the Young," Christianity Today, 13 (October 11, 1968), 3.

²³"Ministering," part I side I.

²⁴Sara Little, Youth, World and Church (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1968), p. 39.

²⁵Strommen, Bridging, p. 23.

²⁶Ray F. Koonce, Understanding Your Teen-Agers (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1965), pp. 84-85.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹"Ministering," part I side I.

³⁰Koonce, p. 85.

³¹Frank R. Dovavan, Wild Kids (Harrisburg, Pa.: Stackpole Books, 1967), p. 65.

³²Strommen, Bridging, p. 12.

CHAPTER IV: WHAT SHOULD WE DO ABOUT IT

¹Christopher Dann, Virginia L. Harbour and Charles McManis, "A Platform for Youth Work," International Journal for Religious Education, 4 (March, 1964), 8.

²I Peter 2:9

³Sara Little, Youth, World and Church (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1968), p. 29.

⁴David Kucharsky, "A Case for the Young," Christianity Today, 13 (October 11, 1968), 5.

⁵W.R. Cromer, "Perspectives for Youth Ministry," Review and Expositor, 69 (Winter, 1972), 85.

⁶Supra, pp. 24-25.

⁷Merton Strommen, Bridging the Gap (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1973), pp. 96-97.

⁸Edwin J. Potts, "Objectives and Standards for Youth Work," in Youth and the Church, edited by Roy G. Irving and Roy Zuck (Chicago: Moody Press, 1968), p. 55.

⁹Mary Bray, "The Image of the Church in the Mind of Young People," London Quarterly and Holborn Review, 193 (January, 1968), 21.

¹⁰More will be said on this matter later in this chapter, specifically under the fourth principle which is offered.

¹¹W.R. Cromer, "Church and Youth," Review and Expositor, 65 (Spring, 1968), 167-169.

¹²Denton R. Coker, "Leadership for Today's Youth," Review and Expositor, 65 (Spring, 1968), 192.

¹³Supra, p. 22-23.

¹⁴Merton Strommen, Milo L. Brekke, Ralph C. Underwager, and Arthur L. Johnson, A Study of Generations. (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1972).

¹⁵Strommen, Bridging, p. 11.

¹⁶Ibid., 17.

¹⁷Ibid., 75.

¹⁸Ibid., 97.

¹⁹Ibid., 13.

²⁰Charles W. Stewart, Adolescent Religion (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1967), 296-297.

²¹Little, p. 31.

²²Ibid., 32.

²³"Ministering to Young Christians" (Cassette Tape), Continuing Education Series, edited by Donald Hinchey (St. Louis: Office of Continuing Education, Concordia Seminary, 1972), part I side II.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Coker, pp. 184-185.

²⁷ Ted W. Engstrom, "The Challenge of Today's Youth," in Youth and the Church, edited by Roy G. Irving and Roy Zuck (Chicago: Moody Press, 1968), p.16.

²⁸ William M. Dyal, "The World of Today's Youth," Review and Expositor, 65 (Spring, 1968), 144.

CHAPTER V: GIVE ME SOME EXAMPLES

¹ David Evans, Shaping the Church's Ministry with Youth (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1965).

² W.R. Cromer, "Church and Youth," Review and Expositor, 65 (Spring, 1968), 165.

³ Denton R. Coker, "Leadership for Today's Youth," Review and Expositor, 65 (Spring, 1968), 187.

⁴ Ibid., 192.

⁵ Cromer, p. 170.

⁶ Supra, 23-24.

⁷ Charles W. Stewart, Adolescent Religion (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1967), pp. 294-295.

⁸ Sara Little, Youth, World and Church (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1968), p. 51.

⁹ Cromer, p. 169.

¹⁰ Generally speaking, this area is one which is seldom "adequately and understandably" explained to people within the church. This may be one reason why many people today who are living in the "post-high school years" seem to think of Christianity as a less than vital element of, and in some cases totally disconnected from, their occupation and everyday life.

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