

3-1-1952

The Administrators of Parish Education

M. L. Koehneke

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/ctm>



Part of the [Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Koehneke, M. L. (1952) "The Administrators of Parish Education," *Concordia Theological Monthly*. Vol. 23, Article 16.

Available at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/ctm/vol23/iss1/16>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Print Publications at Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. It has been accepted for inclusion in Concordia Theological Monthly by an authorized editor of Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. For more information, please contact seitzw@csl.edu.

The Administrators of Parish Education

By M. L. KOEHNEKE

IT should be noted from the very outset that the administration of education in a Christian parish is a unique process, for it draws its concepts from the precepts of God, and not the ideologies of men. We shall therefore not spend time in the beginning of this paper with a presentation of the various definitions and methods of "administration" from secular sources. We do not disparage them; we rather prefer to try to develop our own from certain basic Christian concepts.

It should be noted further that the object of administration in our instance is again something unique, namely, the divinely established Christian congregation in its pursuit of a divine commission to make disciples of all nations through the means of grace.

We would add, parenthetically and without conscious effort to stir up unnecessary controversy, nor with any desire to castigate the past—a rather dreary and fruitless business—that much of our Lord's work may have been left undone in many a parish because efforts were made to horse-collar the parish with a form of administration that belonged about an ox's neck. We have been disposed to take forms of administration which may well be applicable to secular institutions and foist them upon this unique institution called the parish. Blood pressures have gone soaring over the argument whether the pastor is or is not superintendent of the parochial school. Men have debated up to the point of wheezing whether the office of principal was accidental or essential to the call of a Christian day school teacher. We reckon full well that we are not dangling our toes in tepid water when we speak this way. But there is at least one comfort. A scalded toe is not often fatal.

Let us spend a little time in constructing a Christian point of view on the administration of a Christian congregation and Christian parish.

The Christian parish belongs to God. Every member of the

flock, the drooling baby and the aged saint of God, upon whom the Lord has sprinkled the snow of many winters . . . all belong to God. He is their Lord, their Shepherd, their Friend, their Father, their Savior, their Comforter. Each and all must appear separately before the Throne of Judgment, which for them through Christ's redemption has become a Throne of Grace. They are a people set apart by God for a great and peculiar work. They are precious in His eyes, and dare not be exploited for mercenary purposes or selfish aggrandizement. They are the apple of His eye. They are kings and priests unto God, with an enlightened wisdom and a holy fear of God in their hearts. They need no intermediary priest; they have direct access to God. They need leadership, not dictatorship. They need shepherding, not herding. They need guidance and must not be enslaved by human whims and caprice.

Administrators, therefore, do well to remember that they must have a copious supply of quotation marks in their literary bag when they speak of "my" congregation, "my" teachers, "my" school, "my" Sunday school, "my" Board of Education. Over against God there is no mine and thine. All is God's. *Administrators are stewards.*

Secondly, the authority by which administration is performed in the Lutheran parish is *the authority of the Word*. The Bible is the source book for parish administrators. It establishes the pattern of administration when it says: "One is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren." The Word of God is the great equalizer which makes pastor, Christian day school teacher, principal, Sunday school superintendent, and Board of Education sit in the same pew. *The voice of authority is the voice of God.*

Administration in the Lutheran parish, therefore, does not seek to develop a system which connotes a line of authority, but a line of responsibility or stewardship, if you please. It is not a question of who is over whom. This last observation is both grammatically and Scripturally sound.

Again, the principles of administration for the Christian parish are not dependent upon the emerging culture, the societal pattern, the democratic way of life, the psychological tenets of men, or the fluctuating and vacillating theories of educational science. One might summarize all the principles of administration and super-

vision for the Christian parish in this manner — and we trust that this is not an oversimplification, but rather a Biblical penetration: "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them". . . and do it all for Jesus' sake to the glory of God the Father. Do everything, to be briefer still, "as unto Christ."

It is obvious that the Christian administrator in a Christian parish is an individual who will live in and with the living Word. He has the make-up of St. Paul, who was wont to ask: "What shall I do, Lord?" What device shall he employ in his administration? The rule: "As unto Christ." If authority is to be exercised, he must know the Word, for his is an authority of and by the Word. If he is seeking the qualifications for a good administrator, let him seek the Biblical virtues of a Christian gentleman. He will not insist that his will is done; but he will insist that the Lord's will be done. When the Lord has not made His will known specifically, then he will submit the matter, when and wherever possible, to the Christian judgment of the group, realizing the wisdom of using the experience and judgment of others in striving to arrive prayerfully at a God-pleasing decision.

The topic assigned to us, "The Administrators of Parish Education," assumes that there are various individuals who play a part in the role of administration in the Christian parish. If we keep in mind that administration in the Christian sense of the word is halloved by the Word of God and prayer, we are not bound to face an inescapable conclusion that disharmony is inevitable. True Christian charity, practiced by all who play a part in the role of supervision, can bind two people together who are poles apart in their thinking. Differences of opinion are wholesome, in so far as they are the seeds of possible progress. Christian administrators will not foment rebellion because they do not see eye to eye on matters which the Lord Himself indicated as matters to be determined by Christian judgment. They may well reckon that if the Lord Himself did not issue a decree which clearly settles the matter, it may well be that the thing which has promise of becoming divisive in their cordial relationships is something which is relatively unimportant, belonging possibly to the ephemeral and transitory things of life. Such things should not bring about ulcerated dispositions

and open clashes. We must be ready in these instances to employ what Prof. Martin Franzmann has called "The Apostolic 'Psha.'"

Christian administrators in the parish, who are wedded and knit together in a common purpose to exalt the Christ of the Cross and the Christ of the Empty Tomb, will recognize their sinfulness, their utter unworthiness of the holy offices which they hold, and the need for displaying true Christian love for those who belong to "the official family" of administrators. Theirs is an administrative marriage, and they will "pray together to stay together." Christian day school faculty meetings, by way of example, will be sanctified by the Word of God and prayer. And when we say this, we are not referring to a hurried reading of a short portion of Scripture, with a prayer said because it is the proper thing to do. Such meetings can well be opened with Bible study, led by one of the group, and followed or preceded by prayer carefully prepared by another member of the group, which includes specific petitions for specific members of the group.

Christian administration in the parish, then, like Christian education, is not people-centered, but Christ-centered. Jesus is the Alpha and Omega also of parish administration, and its objective is "that by all means we might save some."

The administrators of parish education who will occupy our attention in this paper are (1) The Pastor; (2) The Teacher in the Christian Day School; (3) The Principal of the Christian Day school; (4) The Sunday School Superintendent; (5) The Board for Parish Education.

I

THE CHRISTIAN PASTOR AS ADMINISTRATOR OF PARISH EDUCATION

The Christian pastor has been called by God to "shepherd the Church of God, which He hath purchased with His blood." He occupies this position by his call, and not by his academic proficiency. He is an earthen vessel unto whom God has committed the treasures of the Gospel and upon whom God has placed the responsibility of the spiritual care of the entire flock. Are we becoming abstruse when we affirm that the Christian pastor is an administrator of people more than an administrator of things? As a minister of Christ he is a steward of the mysteries of God as they

affect the flock entrusted to His care. If this be a sound distinction, then much of the pathway is cleared for the function of the pastor in the administration of parish education.

I am extremely reluctant to speak of the Christian pastor in any other term in the scheme of parish education than just "the pastor." For us Lutherans this title and office carries nobility and humility in its very breath. He is to be the shepherd of the Christian day school *children*, the Christian day school *teachers*, the Sunday school *Bible students*, the vacation Bible school *children*, the Saturday school *children*, the Board of Education *members*, etc.

Being the spiritual leader of the flock of God by divine appointment, he will be a man who will understand and faithfully apply the divine directives concerning the Christian education of the people entrusted to his care. He will understand and reflect an attitude which sees Christian education as a task which is not optional, but mandatory; spanning the entire Christian life, and not fragmentary; he will understand that it is not only intensive in its character, but often expensive in its nature.

He will understand the basic objectives of Christian education. Christian education is not child-centered or people-centered; it is Christ-centered. Christ is its Heart, Motive, and Pattern. Its objective is to help God's people to become more and more like Jesus in all phases of their total development: That they think more like Christ, act more like Christ, speak more like Christ, have emotions that are Christlike; in short, that they "grow up into Christ in all things."

He will further understand that because Christian education is Christ-centered, it has a singular application to the individual. He will see each individual in "his" congregation through the eyes of Christ. He realizes that Jesus is the Savior of all because He is the Redeemer of everyone.

He will have a consuming passion for each soul of the parish and a slavish determination that the objectives of Christian education be realized in the life of each individual member of the parish. He will be restless so long as the congregation's program of Christian education is not reaching each member of the parish.

He will thank God that at his side are men and women who are

heaven-sent blessings to work with him in this enervating yet stimulating task. God saw that he could not do it alone. God never expected him to. In some instances, the Lord singled out men and women to devote their entire lives to sharing in the task. It is the Great Shepherd's concern for each member of the flock which prompted the gift of these additional servants, who were to view each member of the flock as precious to Christ and the purpose of their work as being "helpers of your joy."

The Christian pastor will pray for certain administrative gifts and seek the Spirit's discipline to achieve them. We might list them in column fashion and provide the backdrop of the black velvet of the negative so that the bright jewel of the positive might shine a wee bit more brightly.

**THE CHRISTIAN PASTOR
 WILL NOT**

1. Construe his office as the final source of authority and wisdom in matters indifferent; he will not feel that he bears within his person all the answers to the educational problems of the parish; but
2. Shun the experiences of others in the parish, but
3. Feel that his fingers must be in the whole educational pie, but
4. Enslave himself with routine details and neglect His task of shepherding the whole flock of God, but
5. Be jealous of someone else's ideas or initiative, nor will he resent a constructive suggestion as a personal criticism, but
6. Make decisions that should have been made by the group involved, unless helpless to help himself in this decision; but

**THE CHRISTIAN PASTOR
 WILL**

1. Realize the potential power and wisdom in the talents of his immediate co-workers and recognize that in some matters he may be too close to the forest to see the trees.
2. Use these abilities and experiences for growth and power.
3. Look upon the work as a mutual endeavor, to be shared by all.
4. Be creative in his leadership and be ready to give divine direction to principles and philosophy of the work.
5. Be quick to recognize and praise such initiative, and will give credit publicly where credit is due, knowing it is better to give than to receive also praise.
6. Refer matters that pertain to the group for group consideration, knowing that co-operative group decisions bring group action.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>7. Adopt a paternalistic attitude toward the group, receiving suggestions with a maddening indulgent smile which says: "I know best"; but</p> <p>8. Expect hero worship, have a greed for publicity, and take the credit privately and publicly for congregational progress; but</p> <p>9. Refuse opportunities for leadership to others, dictate policies to others, and perform many of them himself, but</p> <p>10. Forget that he is a frail, dying, sinful man, whose power lies not in his person, but in the Christ, whom he represents; but</p> | <p>7. Maintain his position in the group as pastor, friend, counselor, on personal and professional matters, realizing that what at first may seem stupid, may be an electrifying idea.</p> <p>8. Seek the glory of Christ, the welfare of others, and push others into the foreground.</p> <p>9. Share responsibilities of leadership wherever possible, and give a feeling of security and trust in doing so.</p> <p>10. Pray daily and earnestly for the grace of humility, the souls of God's people, and for the gift of wisdom to do His work faithfully and grace-fully.</p> |
|--|---|

II

THE CHRISTIAN DAY SCHOOL TEACHER AS ADMINISTRATOR
IN PARISH EDUCATION

The Christian day school teacher will consider himself humbly what God has chosen to make of him, namely, one of His noble servants who is to help His people get to heaven and to live an abundant and fruitful life here on earth in the Church Militant.

The Christian congregation will do well to sit in its rocking chair of meditative thought and bethink itself once more of the wonderful blessing it has in a trained, Christian teacher. This is a salutary form of meditation likewise for pastors and other teachers in the parish.

But, most of all, it is important that the Christian teacher reflect often upon the unspeakable grace of God in selecting him or her for this noble work, consider again and again that his talents and training equip him for Kingdom work which has so much to do with the Christian growth of the individual, and measure his gifts regularly in their relation to the needs of the total parish.

The Christian day school teacher has a specific duty assigned to him or her in the parish which must retain its position of pre-eminence. He is called to integrate Christ into the total educational

development of certain children for five days a week for about 180 days of the year. This is a monumental task which calls for heroes of faith and masters of the educational craft. It takes time, energy, devotion, love, patience, skill . . . it takes everything a teacher has plus everything that the Lord develops in him. He must exercise a stewardship or administer a group of his own.

In the Christian school, however, he and his group are not an entity totally within themselves. They are a part of the whole. We are grateful for the growth of many of our Christian schools; larger staffs are becoming more and more evident. But we are concerned about articulation in our schools. We fear that teachers are proceeding too independently of one another in the total development of the individual child in our schools. Are we having four schools under one roof when we have four-teacher schools? The Christian teacher will consider his classroom activity as one phase of the child's total development and correlate his activities with his co-workers in the school. But more of this when we speak of the Christian principal.

The Christian day school teacher is well suited to be, and is often considered, an educational leader in the parish. His should be a Kingdom view, and his talents should reach into all areas of the educational life of the parish. Keeping in mind his primary function, and realizing the limits of time and ability, the Christian teacher will say no to service only when to say yes may rob someone else in the group of doing the same act of Christian service which the other person is capable of performing. There is no educational leader in the parish who, following this principle, will ever find himself with time on his hands. The souls of men, women, and children will be there instead.

The Christian teacher will continue his professional studies to maintain his position of educational leadership in the congregation. We are not implying only professional schooling following graduation when we say this; but we are implying its inclusion. There are other avenues of professional growth; you know them. As many as possible ought to be pursued, for the purpose of equipping the Christian teacher for greater service to the Lord and His people. Many of our congregations are of such composition that the Christian teacher cannot forever sit on his pinnacle of educational leader-

ship when that pinnacle represents no greater height than his first diploma from the teachers' college he attended when he was young and generally gay.

Be gracious enough to permit an observation which ought to be self-evident. The Christian teacher's professional growth should begin with growth in the Scriptures. He must be a Bible student. Christ must not stare at him from the pages of Holy Writ as a fuzzy stranger. A Christian teacher who does not arm himself mightily with the sword of the Spirit in his professional growth will soon lose much of his power as a Christian educator and administrator and is in danger of climbing the Tower of Babel in hot pursuit of men's wisdom when first he should sit and listen to that still small voice so that he may be able to "prove all things."

The Christian teacher will do relatively less work with the masses than others in the parish. He must remember that in his administration of parish education, he will have his share of the crowd and that Christ had much to say about working with the individual in some still, sequestered nook. He will not preach sermons from the pulpit, but he will preach them wherever he moves . . . in the classroom, Sunday school class, V. B. S. department, parent-teacher organization, the choir, the young people's society . . . wherever he goes, he goes as a representative of Christ. There should be no place in the Christian parish for jealousy — that loathsome serpent that squirms in the breast of us all. It must be remembered that he who would be the whole cheese must be ready to bear its odoriferous proportions. In the Christian parish, Christ must be IT. He must remain central. He is the Head.

III

THE CHRISTIAN PRINCIPAL AS AN ADMINISTRATOR OF PARISH EDUCATION

The Christian principal in most Lutheran schools occupies the position of head teacher, who normally bears a full teaching load in addition to being entrusted with certain administrative opportunities. His added duties can be given the glassy look of an added chore or become an opportunity for educational leadership and a fuller life of educational administration in the parish. Much will depend upon the manner in which he views his office as principal,

how his co-workers esteem the office, and how the congregation is disposed to feel about the teaching principal.

The general principles stated previously regarding administrative principles which govern a Christian pastor apply to the Christian principal as well as he moves within the scope of this assigned area of service. We will not repeat them, but will try to apply a few.

The Christian principal needs to view his office as a position of educational leadership, sacred trust, and professional competence. If he, on the contrary, constantly stands in awe of his importance and bewails the added work which the office entails, he will soon become a cross to the parish and to himself.

In a sense, the teaching principal has an opportunity to develop an *esprit de corps* and co-operative administration of the Christian school which the full-time principal does not possess. The teaching principal is distinctly "one of the gang," and only a weak-minded cohort on the staff will not be able to see that "together we stick, divided we're stuck." The planning of faculty meetings can quickly become a co-operative enterprise, which can more quickly lead to group action. His fellow teachers know that he is not spending his time in his plush office, feet in the air, satanically concocting schemes to justify his office, and gleefully contriving ways and means to get extra work out of the faculty. He will be wise enough to use the word "we" generously and "I" sparingly. Studies in curriculum revision can more easily become group enterprises. Secretarial detail can be parceled out in and by the group.

The principal of the Christian school must nevertheless face the inevitable fact that he is being looked to for educational leadership, which calls for study of all types. His right hand must know what his left hand is doing in matters of public relations. He must be the friend and faithful confidant of his fellow teachers, a square shooter with God, his pastor, his fellow teachers, the members of the congregation, and the children of the parish school.

He must be able to see the educational process in part and in whole. He is to be concerned with correlation in his school, and the correlation of the school with the work of the total parish. He must love the Christian day school, but see its work in the light of Christ's total love for the individual and the group.

He must be ready at all times to give an accounting of the

stewardship of the Christian day school. In doing this, he should speak with sincere conviction and happiness about the work which the school is doing. He should not clutter up Board meetings with a lengthy dissertation on the relative values of white and yellow chalk, but be mindful constantly of the great work in the ongoing school program of guiding children to be more like Jesus in their total development and speak of this. He should not be reluctant to say, "I don't know," and should be ready to offer a solution: "I'll try to find out."

Being in a position of educational leadership, he must be ready to feel the sting of Satan's darts — and they are fiery — which are directed at an institution so important in the development of the total Christian character. He must be sensitive to criticism so that he may learn from it, but not oversensitive, lest he become discouraged by it. He must be on good terms with his Employer, Christ.

The principal, together with the pastor and his fellow teachers, will plan in-service professional growth and study. Summer recesses will be carefully exploited for the fullest possible gain.

The principal and the pastor will consult on many matters and air them thoroughly so that there will be a mutual understanding of aims and objectives, even though there may not be total agreement among them. Both must carefully distinguish between principle and practice, philosophy and method.

IV

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT AS ADMINISTRATOR IN PARISH EDUCATION

The average Sunday school superintendent in the Lutheran Sunday school all too often is a titular rather than functioning superintendent. Either because of limited talent and professional know-how or due to a failure to have well-defined functions and training for his office, it can happen that the Sunday school superintendent is a "chore-boy." He is elected, and then is given something to do. He orders the Sunday school material, after someone else makes out the order. He opens the Sunday school with devotions that have been prepared by someone else for him. We are not trying to be facetious. We feel sorry for many Sunday school superintendents because, by and large, they want to serve the Lord in the great

work of the Kingdom and they are surrounded by an organizational mist which might be best characterized as "ceiling zero."

Is the Sunday school superintendent to provide educational and professional leadership for the congregation's Sunday school? If he is, then he should be capable and trained for it. To do less is to perpetuate the Sunday school in our Church as an educational orphan. If God has given a layman in the congregation the talents for this office (they may be raw and portend good development), he needs to be singled out by the Board for Parish Education for this work, appointed to it by the congregation, and then be given guidance and professional opportunity to develop himself for this leadership. Districts will do well to conduct training schools for Sunday school superintendents, and congregations will do equally well to make it possible for their Sunday school superintendents to attend these workshops.

As a training program conducted on the home base for the development of such leadership, we would suggest the possibility of having departmental superintendents, who together would constitute the Sunday School Council, the administrative arm of the Sunday school. If lay professional leadership for supervision of the entire Sunday school is lacking, we would further suggest that one of the trained, called workers serve as Sunday school superintendent and give direction to the administrative function of this Sunday School Council.

The Council could be comprised of the following departmental heads:

1. Nursery Department Superintendent
2. Beginners Department Superintendent
3. Primary Department Superintendent
4. Junior Department Superintendent
5. Intermediate Department Superintendent
6. Senior Department Superintendent
7. Superintendent of Each Bible Class
8. Superintendent of the Home Department

We are envisioning a larger Sunday school when we outline such a Council. Obviously, variations can take place, determined by judgment of the local situation.

This Council could be to the Sunday school what the Christian day school faculty is to the Christian day school. Each department head would be deeply concerned about the internal and external development of his or her respective department. The general superintendent, in turn, would function as co-ordinator of the Council and representative on the congregation's Board for Parish Education. We have a lurking feeling that if administrative responsibilities in the Sunday school were broken down into smaller areas of supervision, we would have not only a training program in action, but a more alert and progressive Sunday school program in the congregation. Presently, if we are intent upon enlisting lay leadership without first providing a real training program for that leadership, we are either asking too much at once from our laymen in assuming the full functions of the Sunday school superintendency, or we are creating an office with a title which belies its actual functions. (See R. C. Rein, *Building the Sunday School*.)

V

THE BOARD FOR PARISH EDUCATION IN ADMINISTRATION OF PARISH EDUCATION

The Office of the Keys is a divine trust committed to the Christian congregation. In the exercise of that trust, it calls workers who are at God's direction to serve in the public ministry of the Word. The congregation, acting under Christ's directive in Matt. 28:18-20, is concerned with the Christian education of every member of the parish. It elects a Board for Parish Education to be concerned primarily with this divinely imposed duty.

If a Board for Parish Education is to function properly and beam a program of Christian education at the congregation, it must first determine the complexion of the congregation before seeking to ascertain the methods whereby it will seek to carry on such a vital program. By way of illustration, in the Texas District there is a congregation which numbers 80 families, in which there are 28 children of school and pre-school age. A Board for Parish Education in that congregation must know this fact before it can go into gear with a program of Christian education suited to the needs of the parish.

It is for this reason that we must advise local Boards first to study

the *souls* of the congregation before it studies or sets up *agencies* for Christian education within the congregation. Agencies are not an end in themselves; they are means to an end, and the end is the salvation and conservation of each precious blood-bought soul. We are encouraging local Boards in our District to make a thorough soul accounting in their congregations before making any further steps. ("At-a-Glance Soul Accounting Record.")

This, then, remains a constant and primary administrative function of a Board for Parish Education: *To study the educational needs of the parish with a purpose toward providing each soul of the parish with the optimum educational opportunity for Christian growth.*

When the Board sees its educational opportunity, its second administrative function is to advise the congregation of the need for setting up such agencies and creating such opportunities as will make provision for this optimum educational opportunity. Care must be taken, lest we choke or fragmentize the congregation by "over-organizationitis." Before there can be administration, there must be an organization. And before there is organization, there must be a real need for it.

When agencies are created at the recommendation of the Board for Parish Education by the Christian congregation, it becomes the perpetual function of the Board to act as an arm for the congregation, and keep the congregation mindful of the fact that its agencies are congregational agencies, deserving the interest, support, prayers of the entire flock of God.

Boards will do well to divide responsibility for the various educational agencies. One member of the Board could have a primary concern for the Christian day school; another for youth work; a third for part-time agencies. And so on. If a congregation is carrying on an ambitious program of Christian education, it will do well to have sufficient membership on the Board to give sufficient attention to each agency. Representatives of organizations can well function as advisory members of the Board.

The chairman of the Board will concern himself with the coordination of activity on the part of all Board members, prepare the agenda for the monthly Board meeting by informing himself in advance of matters to be presented by each member of the Board

in relation to his specific area of responsibility, as well as draw up matters for discussion of a general nature which affect all agencies. Individual Board members will familiarize themselves with that area for which they have assumed a responsibility, participate in the activities of the agency as much as possible, and generally seek to be more informed on sound educational principles governing these agencies.

Because of the perennial nature of such a Board's work, it becomes a harmful process at times to have a complete turnover in Board personnel. Procedures in electing membership to this Board should be such as to allow for constancy in the Board without sacrificing vitality brought about by wholesome change. Board members could be elected to serve for a period of three years, and, assuming a Board of six members, two members could be elected annually.

CONCLUSION

One cannot but rejoice over the increasing interest in Christian education on the parish level. We are sharing Christ's joy when we rejoice over this manifest blessing.

May God graciously bless all who function as administrators in the educational scene on the parish level! Theirs is a great work, a difficult task, but one that cannot but bring results. In Christian education we teach men, women, and children the living Word of the living God. It cannot return void. God's honor is at stake as we serve Him and teach His Word. He cannot fail us. And, with His help, we dare not fail Him either.

Austin, Tex.