

Religious Education
of Adults

YF
Education
of
adults

SPRINGFIELD

SPRINGFIELD

ADULT EDUCATION *in the* LOCAL CONGREGATION

Prepared under the Auspices of
THE BOARD FOR PARISH EDUCATION
EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD OF
MISSOURI, OHIO, AND OTHER STATES

CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY LIBRARY
SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS.

CONCORDIA PUBLISHING HOUSE - SAINT LOUIS, MISSOURI

♦ ♦ *Why Work with Adults?*

1. *To help adult Christians grow spiritually.* A growing faith is a fruitful faith. Those who are grafted into Christ, the Vine, naturally bear much fruit. "So shall ye be My disciples" — said Jesus. The Christian of today must know more than the Christian of any other age if he is to fulfill his mission in life. Even two hours a week with God's Word at church is not enough. One Protestant church body has set for its adults a goal of 350 hours in *church* for worship and Bible study a year. Compare this with the average "intake" of Scripture per adult in your church!

2. *To help adults face life.* The serious responsibilities of making a living today, of rearing children in crowded cities, meeting the hardships, trials, and temptations of life, and the tensions of a confused and troubled world cause the nerves of 750,000 people to snap each year in the United States alone. Adults bear the burdens of life and face its many demands. Those who live close to Jesus and get spiritual power regularly from the Word of God can best stand up under the strain of modern living.

3. *To strengthen Christian elementary education.* The most common hindrance to the spiritual training of the young lies not with the children themselves, but with the adults. The disregard for Sunday on the part of an increasing number of American adults is back of very much neglect of Christian education. Investigations of juvenile delinquency usually lead back to parental delinquency. As a rule, it is the adult who leads the youth astray. It is a common observation of our Sunday schools "that we seldom have the child until we have the parents." The child suffers whenever either father or mother fails to lend wholehearted support to Christian training. Few children can counteract the wrong example of an indifferent parent. To make elementary Christian education really effective the church must have the co-operation of adults.

4. *To help build Christian homes.* This is the No. 1 need of the Church and of the nation. America now leads the whole world in its divorce record and in its disregard for the sanctity

LOCAL CONGREGATION

of marriage and the home. Men and women of the world, without any particular religious persuasion, are trying to arouse the Church to action. They realize that the real help must come from religion through adult education, particularly through parent education. As the home goes, so goes the Church and the nation. The most important step the Church can take is a step into the home. The family pattern set by this generation of adults more than anything else will set the family pattern for the next generation. These patterns may be good, bad, or indifferent. It is an acknowledged fact that the home is more powerful than the church or the school.

5. *To give the church more lay workers.* What congregation is not now hampered because it lacks a sufficient number of trained volunteer workers? The work of the church is being done largely by the upper one third of its membership. The faithful few are being constantly overloaded. In the meantime the work of the modern parish has been increasing until it is far more complex than the church life of a century ago. Every organization, group, class, board, and committee of the congregation must draw on the adulthood of the church for leadership. No church can rise higher than the spiritual caliber of its adults. You build strength when you initiate a program of Christian adult education.

6. *To lift the stewardship of your church.* Low-standard giving for Kingdom purposes keeps most churches from realizing more fully their purposes and expanding their program. This is traceable to weak faith, lack of understanding, insufficient knowledge, and unhealthy attitudes. All of these are lifted by effective adult education. The work at home and the missionary enterprises abroad are entirely dependent on the stewardship habits of our adults. Adults who keep on growing spiritually give the church better workers and better givers.

7. *To help prevent further losses.* A growing Christian who gets daily values from his faith is seldom lost to the church. It is the person who has stopped growing spiritually, or who has made of religion a mere habit, whose name is eventually erased from the church roll. Ever so many who have once confessed the faith have lapsed into indifference. Every congregation has

a list of them. There is another group that is now moving farther and farther to the fringe. It is made up of people who lack deep convictions. As a result their religion means little to them, and they have no enthusiasm for sharing it with others. Losses can be prevented by reaching them in time with a compelling adult program, which shows that the Christian religion is vital for living. The words of Paul in 1 Cor. 3 are true of very many church members today: "I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk and not with meat; for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal."

8. *To stem worldliness.* We call it "secularism" today. An increasing number of people seem to think, speak, and live without religion. God has been ruled out of their lives. More and more people, including not a few church members, are excessively occupied with the material and physical sides of life: entertainment, easy living, convenience, week-end excursions, and the like. They have little or no time for the things of the spirit. They have erected a barrier between themselves and God. To stem this rising tide of secularism, the Church must increase its contacts with adults. The usual church service, which at one time was sufficient to counteract worldliness, is no longer sufficient to compete with the radio, the movie, the magazine, the sports, and the pleasure craze of our times.

The general moral and spiritual laxity of our day, the breakdown of so many American homes, the revolutionary changes of our age, and the spiritual illiteracy of millions, on the one hand; and the maintenance and sharing of our Biblical heritage for this and for the next generation, the great opportunities of the church in this age, and the power that comes to any parish that has growing adult Christians in its membership, on the other hand, call for a new program of Christian adult education.

♦ ♦ *But Can Adults Learn?*

As long as we live, we learn. We are "never too old to learn." This has always been true. In his revealing study "Adult Abilities" (1928), E. L. Thorndike says: "We have shown that the decline from the acme of ability to learn (located probably at some point between 20 and 25) to about 42 is only about 13 to 15 per cent; and the ages 25 to 35 are superior to childhood, and equal or superior to early adolescence (14 to 18), in general ability to learn." Thorndike's studies plainly indicate that age itself is no serious obstacle to learning.

It is a fact that adults learn much from the radio, the newspaper, the movies; from books, magazines, lectures, sermons, classes, and open forums. We learn much from daily experience. Rapid changes in agriculture, industry, and business make it necessary that adults in every occupation keep on learning. Adult education in these fields has been a vast enterprise. In many States the farmer has taken the lead in adult education. Practically the whole adult population during the war went through new training: for military service, for war work, or for civilian defense. More adults are taking courses in universities than ever before. Unless adult education is taken seriously by the churches, there will be a still larger percentage of church members who grow professionally and culturally and remain "eighth graders" morally and spiritually.

Adults will learn anything in which they are genuinely interested. *Experience proves that with proper motivation adults very often surpass younger students in interest and application.* They are much more serious. They bring to their studies more mature minds. They grasp truths which were obscure to them when they were children.

While some adults would like to reduce Christianity to mere church attendance and others live more or less by a materialistic view of life, thousands of adult Lutherans want to learn more. Many are hungry for guidance in spiritual matters and eager to get a deeper understanding of the Word of God. Many more will become adult students as we prepare them for lifelong growth and awaken their spiritual interests.

The Bible is an adult book, written in adult language. It was given to adults that they might grow in grace and knowledge. In the Epistles of the New Testament, God calls on adults "to abound yet more and more," "to press forward to the mark," "to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length, the depth and the height," to come "unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ," and to be "fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God."

Yes, adults can, and according to the Scriptures, should keep on learning. In fact, it is practically impossible to develop church members as God's priests (1 Pet. 2:9) in the sense of the first disciples without lifelong Christian education.

♦ ♦ *Who Is an Adult?*

We ask the question here to point to the possibilities of adult education. A simple answer would be "every person in your church above the age of 25." However, it is not quite so easy. Some people mature much faster than others. A number of factors determine whether or not a person is to be considered an adult. These are: marriage, self-support, finishing college or completing military service, leaving the parental home permanently, political maturity, and the chronological age of 25. When two or more of these conditions obtain, a person is usually considered a young adult. No hard and fast rule can be set.

The population of the United States in the 1940 census showed the following distribution by age groups:

Pre-school children	10,541,524	
Children, 5-14	22,430,557	
Young people, 15-24	23,921,358	
Young adults, 25-34	21,339,026	} Adults: 73,637,693
Adults, 35-79	52,298,667	

This table shows the relative size of the adult field. This proportion obtains approximately in your community and in your congregation. It can be seen at once that when a parish begins to enlist its adults in regular Christian education, it can easily double its Sunday school enrollment.

LOCAL CONGREGATION

The reason why our Lutheran Sunday schools are usually smaller than those of other Protestant bodies is that we have failed to enroll large numbers of adults. Adults form 30 to 60 per cent of the total Sunday school enrollment in some denominations, and in some instances they exceed the number of children. (Our Synod has from 3 to 5 per cent!) A study of the age distribution of the souls in your parish will show you new possibilities for expansion in Christian education.

Go over your church rolls, and divide your souls into the age brackets given above. Add to the number of adults the unchurched over twenty-five years of age from your church's community census. Bring these figures to the attention of your Sunday school, adult groups, and voters' assembly. They will be a challenge to action.

♦ ♦ *What Is an Adult Education?*

It has been falsely assumed that education is finished at eighteen. Education is never a finished product. There comes a time, however, when we no longer devote the major part of the day to school but instead must devote it to making a living. Yet, we keep on learning. It is the learning that takes place simultaneously with our regular vocation that is rightly called adult education. Adult education takes place wherever and whenever we learn. This may be through formal classes, discussion groups, and open forums, or it can be more informal through reading, observation tours, and daily experience. It includes all we hear and see and do.

Adult education begins with, and is built around, the interests of adults who come together to learn from each other and from some leader who is a co-discoverer with his group. Directing adults in making new discoveries in any field of knowledge is Adult Education.

Christian adult education is any activity, study, program, or experience that helps adults grow as Christians in grace, knowledge, service, understanding, and attitudes. It is not confined

to a class, a book, or a teacher, although we always make better progress when we have a good guide.

The purpose of the Gospel is to change people, first, by conversion; then, by lifelong spiritual growth in sanctification. Jesus attached no time or age limit to His words "Teach them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." This word of Scripture tells us to go beyond knowing to doing.

The purpose of Christian adult education is to help adults fulfill their mission as Christians in the home, in the church, and in the world. This is a big order. It cannot be completed between the ages of six and fourteen; and not between six and twenty-one. It takes a lifetime!

♦ ♦ *The Purpose of Christian Adult Education?*

As in all Christian education, our purpose should be to train Christian people by the Word of God to fulfill their function as Christian priests on earth. It is well to remember that we may learn by listening, but listening is not learning; that we may teach by telling, but telling is not teaching. If we are to make our people priests of God, they must have much more than knowledge; they must have insights, attitudes, and skills. (1) They must by all means have knowledge of the chief contents of the Scripture, Law and Gospel. They must likewise have skills for reading the Bible with profit and an at-homeness in both the Old and the New Testament. (2) They should possess a passion for souls and ability to win people for Christ. (3) They should not only have knowledge of good devotional literature, but ability to formulate their own prayers. (4) They should not merely be acquainted with Biblical history and doctrine, but should possess ability to translate God's Word into daily living. (5) They must have keen Christian judgment to interpret all modern problems in the light of the Scriptures. A Christian education which does not provide these skills fails in its major assignments.

In these five points we have goals as well as practical tests for all Christian learning and teaching. Learning and doing are not two things, but one thing. We learn not merely to know, but to use what we have learned, in order to fulfill our mission as Christians in life. Christian study must be closely linked to Christian action.

♦ ♦ *Which Agencies Shall We Use?*

Ordinarily, it is not necessary to organize a new group for effective adult education. Besides the church service, most parishes already have the Sunday school and organizations for the men, women, and young people. With these alone a strong adult education program can be built up.

1. The *church service* reaches more adults than any other agency and more regularly. Fearless, timely, practical sermons, dealing with, and illustrated by, living situations, will motivate and direct the whole life of the congregation. The good sermon supplies not only the Biblical foundation, but leads the worshiper closer to Christ. It is this loyalty to Christ that is the most essential element in successful parish work.

2. The *Bible class* is second only to the sermon. In learning values it often is superior to the sermon. The Bible class permits questions and answers, the handling of the Bible, the study of reference passages, and the give and take of discussion. Many people will never get into the Bible itself unless someone guides them and supplies the weekly stimulation through a Bible class. Bible study by adults vitalizes the entire congregation and all its activities. The average expository sermon gives 30 minutes of the Bible to the parishioner. The good Bible class gives from 30 to 45 minutes *more* of God's dynamic Word; an increase of 100 to 150 per cent.

3. The *voters' assembly*, in most instances, is being used for Christian Adult Education. A Lutheran congregation is to be a Christian democracy, that is, the members themselves are to be judges of right doctrine and Biblical practice. To fulfill this

function, they must be well versed in Scripture and have spiritual judgment on all matters that concern the Church in the modern world. The voters' assembly should be used to give part of that preparation. Brief topics presented in various ways, carefully planned in advance, and fitting the needs of the parish will help.

4. *Men's, women's, and young married couples' organizations* are a part of our modern church life. They should not merely be "social groups" reaching a minority of the men and women, but part of the congregation's program of activities for all adults. The Women's League should find ways and means of serving the entire womanhood of the parish. The Men's League should plan to reach all men with a program that supplies spiritual power and Christian fellowship. The adult program should not be "a hit or miss affair," but carefully outlined in advance. Back of every successful meeting is hard work on the part of the leaders. Each organization should be an integral part of the congregation, taking over some important phase of the work which God has given the Church. It should serve as a training unit; much as each unit of the Army trains a part of the nation's military force. It should help cement the parish into a closer Christian fellowship. Duplication and working at cross-purposes should be avoided.

5. *Teacher training* and Sunday school staff meetings are very important. Some of the best learning is done by the teacher himself. Most churches need more Sunday school teachers to replace those dropping out or to permit expansion of departments! All adult groups should have as one of their goals supplying teachers, officers, and leaders for children's work, youth work, and adult work. Many parishes now have a Sunday school teacher-training class for prospective teachers meeting each Sunday morning. Practice in teaching and leading groups should be coupled with such instruction. Actual experience is still the best teacher training.

6. *Parent organizations* exist in many churches in connection with the Christian day school or the Sunday school. Training for parenthood and Christian family life should take place in all church agencies. The home is the primary agency in a program

of Christian education. Nothing can surpass it. Character training must be done in the home. It cannot be done in the Sunday school. It can be done only partially in the parochial school. The church should not only enlist the home, but develop a constructive program of service to the home. Good parent education must be carefully planned. The approach is very important. A beginning can be made in the Bible class and in the organizations.

7. *Mission study groups pay rich dividends.* The whole congregation is God's mission society. An occasional mission sermon is not enough. If once a year all parishes conducted a week of mission study, or gave a course in personal mission work, missionary interest would rise to new heights and give to the entire church new missionary power. Such a short course can be presented: each night for one week, each Sunday evening for a month, or once a month in the fall or winter quarter. The Book of Acts will supply excellent study material.

Every parish should seriously ask this question: "*Can our congregation afford not to have an ADULT BIBLE CLASS, CHRISTIAN PARENT EDUCATION, and a MISSION STUDY PROGRAM?*"

♦ ♦ *How Can We Co-ordinate Our Efforts?*

Especially in the large churches it sometimes appears that one group hardly knows what the other group is doing. Each agency and organization goes its own way, and sometimes it becomes an end in itself, instead of only a means to an end. Each group should become strongly conscious that it is a branch of the living plant which we call the local congregation.

How can we avoid conflicts and working at cross-purposes? Some congregations have found that a Parish Educational Council is helpful in co-ordinating the program. This council could be composed of all persons of the congregation, its organizations and agencies, who have some responsibilities for leadership in

the educational program. This council can help to simplify, unify, and co-ordinate the work of the whole congregation. As these leaders plan and work together, they discover the essential work of the parish, raise the standard or quality of their programs, build a stronger spirit of fellowship and co-operation, and concentrate energies on the most important work in church and community. Often we burn up our energies on the trivial and the nonessential. Joint planning in an Educational Council will help to avoid duplication of effort, working at cross-purposes, or working without clearly defined objectives and well-laid plans.

♦ ♦ *What Should Christian Education Give Adults?*

1. *The Bible* as it relates to this life and the life to come.
2. *Christian doctrine and Christian ethics* on ever higher stages to nurture the whole person.
3. An understanding of *Christian worship and the arts* to enrich the devotional life.
4. An appreciation of *Christian education* as learning during all of life and for all of life.
5. Guidance for fulfilling the responsibilities of *parenthood* and strengthening *Christian family life*.
6. An understanding of the *Christian's place in society* and of the *Church in the world*.
7. Instruction in *personal evangelism* and an understanding of *missions*.
8. A sense of *stewardship* and of lifelong devotion to Christ and His kingdom.

These are the eight areas of Christian Adult Education. They are (1) a challenge to action, (2) a measuring staff for evaluating your adult program, and (3) a check list to keep it varied and diversified. Over a period of years all areas should be touched. Some deserve constant and concentrated attention.

LOCAL CONGREGATION

Bible study should be continuous. The objective should not be mere information, but lives changed and action pleasing to God.

Christian adults may rightly expect to gain new knowledge of the Bible and the ability to use it, a growing conception of Christ and the Christian doctrine, spiritual guidance for everyday problems, training for Christian service and participation in it as an expression of faith, and the enjoyment of greater Christian fellowship. Enriching persons spiritually with Christ-centered, life-directed study should be the aim of every Christian adult group.

♦ ♦ *Building Up A Bible Class Department*

Take Stock

How many communicant members have you? Subtract those needed for the Sunday school staff and those who by reason of work, illness, or some permanent situation cannot attend a Sunday Bible class. What you have remaining represents your potential Sunday School Bible Class Department.

Interest People

How shall we interest these people who are members of "the Bible Church" in the regular study of God's Word? First, take them into your confidence. As children of God they *are* interested. Adults will respond if you will work *with* them and develop initiative *in* them. Adults cannot be driven. They can be led.

Point out that no person can be a good Protestant, much less a Lutheran, who is not at home in the Bible. When the day comes that our people take their religion at second hand from their teachers, they cease to be genuine Lutherans, for it is just this right of individual study of Scripture that Luther fought for.

We shall remain the Bible Church only as long as laity and clergy live in the Scripture. You have God with you in every appeal you make for Bible study.

How to Start?

Start with one group at a time. The young adults will perhaps respond most quickly. They are just out of high school or college. They are still eager to learn. They have many questions to ask and, properly guided, will go on from course to course until they have covered most of the Bible. Once brought together in a congenial study group, they will continue through the years. Every four or five years begin another such class. Gradually, you will train the whole congregation in Bible study, and the majority of the adults will be in your Bible Class Department.

A Bible Class Department eventually should supply *classes for all age and interest levels above confirmation*, high school, post high (young people), adults (men, women, mixed). The size of the congregation will determine the number and type of Bible classes needed. For good learning the small class is superior to the large class. In making your plans, be sure to *reach out especially for the men*. There are advantages in a mixed class of men and women and in the couples' class. Others favor a separate men's Bible class and a separate women's Bible class.

Who Should Take the Lead?

Adults want the leadership of their pastor. He can be their best guide, and usually they will follow his guidance. They may not respond at once. *They will if their interests are properly cultivated*. Get clear on the values of a Bible class for the parish. Present these values attractively to the people, and start planning. People must be prepared. They must take part in the *initial* planning. Let the pastor call three or four interested adults together to discuss Bible study. Let them express their needs and interests. Help them get ideas from classes in other churches. They will soon develop such an interest that they

LOCAL CONGREGATION

will take over the leadership themselves. Only a class built *with* adults who have been *made ready* will endure. It is then not the minister's class, but the people's class.

What Shall We Study?

The selection of a course of study is part of the planning. Suggest to the group books of the Bible, interesting portions, various doctrines, important issues, questions, problems, topics. Draw them out on these subjects until one is found in which the entire group seems to be interested. Build the course around expressed wants and needs. Take as long as necessary to discover these needs. Start *with people where they are*. Five "Interest Finders" are available which help groups locate study courses and guide the Bible class teacher.

Where Get the Teachers?

The pastor and the parochial school teacher have the best background and can easily acquire teaching techniques suitable to adults. But often they are not available, owing to a heavy schedule, and in large churches many Bible class teachers are needed. How get them? Select your most consecrated and able lay people: men for men's classes or mixed classes, and women for women's classes. Some of these will be ready to teach with very little further preparation. Others will need a more extensive period of guidance. Suggest a number of books to read. Meet with them regularly to discuss "How to Study the Bible" and "How to Build Effective Bible Classes." Don't be afraid to learn from others who have been successful. Meet with the teachers as long as they need help. Often the pastor can work out the weekly study sheet with his Bible class teachers in such a way that the teaching of the class is greatly simplified. If the pastor lacks time, a Sunday school superintendent or a parish school teacher should be enlisted for this work.

Why Hesitate?

The Lutheran Church prides itself on having the best-indoctrinated laity in Protestantism. We have thousands of consecrated

adults who are not only well grounded spiritually, but have a good education and an appealing personality: public school teachers, businessmen, lawyers, college graduates, or simply well-read, self-educated people. There is hardly a church without such a person. Why not use them? A church that does not develop lay teachers is not likely to have a sufficiently large or strong Bible Class Department.

Where Meet?

Where shall we find space? Many of our churches have built educational facilities for children, but not for an educational program that extends from the cradle to the grave. The church auditorium, the parish hall, the schoolroom, and the church basement can be used. A separate well-lighted room is ideal. What if the Sunday school already occupies the available room? Then plan the redistribution of the floor space. There are, of course, many churches which are simply too small and have very poor accommodations for education. Let these take courage from the Bible classes which are being held today in storerooms a block or two away from the church, in homes, in the public school auditorium, or in some temporary building on the church grounds.

How Organize?

Bible study should be available for all adults whatever their age. The idea of "joining" should be minimized. Approach Bible study not as an optional thing, but *as the chief thing in Christian discipleship*. Bible study should always have the "right of way" and not be sidetracked by other activities, even if a complete rearrangement of schedules is necessary.

A class can have a satisfactory growth on the strength of good teaching alone, but it will never reach all those who should be reached without much prayer, personal contact, and good organization. As the Sunday school itself is organized, so the Bible Class Department should be organized. "Everybody's business is nobody's business." Experience has shown that Bible classes do not grow without good leadership and proper promotion.

LOCAL CONGREGATION

The leadership of the class should be in the hands of its officers. They in turn should enlist all class members by dividing the class into working groups of ten, with one person responsible for each group. This is a proved method that insures growth. The vice-president may be placed in charge of the group leaders and work with them for an increased enrollment and attendance. The teachers, officers, group leaders, and department superintendent should be trained for their work in regular meetings. Meetings of the leaders are as important for the Bible Class Department as congregation meetings for the functioning of the church.

How to Build Up Bible Classes

Officers, group leaders, and members should be given a place in the operation of the class: opening, closing, introducing visitors, working on committees, studying assignments, reports, and discussion. Welcome cards to visitors and messages (positive and instructive) to absentees and the sick will show that the class is genuinely interested in people for Jesus' sake. At least one letter a year should go to all communicants who are not attending a Bible class. The purpose of this letter should be to present the study courses for the year in such an appealing way as to create a strong desire to join in the study of God's Book. The letter may simply call attention to an enclosed Bible-study tract. Keep in mind your real aim: not merely the building up of a department, but the building of a *Bible-studying parish*.

Good Teaching

The well-taught class is one in which the people are led directly into the Bible, participate in the discussion, develop individually, receive personal guidance, and get many spiritual values. Such a class is the best guarantee of success.

This means that the good Bible-class teacher expounds the text with the class, helps students get tools for Bible study, encourages study and discussion, relates the lesson to life, encourages members to bring up their problems, and gives them guidance.

He leads the class to fruitful Christian living and a satisfying spiritual growth. He helps to discover and develop talent for the work of the church. He learns along with his class as a co-discoverer of truth. He has a great love for Christ and Christian doctrine and possesses a deep interest in the spiritual well-being of people. Good Bible knowledge, plus a Christian personality, plus training equals a good leader. Good leadership plus good class co-operation equals a successful Bible class.

♦ ♦ *How Can We Provide Parent Education?*

A parent-teacher organization may be very helpful, but it is only one of many approaches to the opportunities in Christian parent education. A combination of the following should be considered to meet the great challenge which faces the Church today: the Christianizing of more homes.

1. Thorough Christian indoctrination of young and old.
2. Premarital and postmarital counseling.
3. A program of guidance to parents beginning at the birth of the child (Nursery Roll).
4. Study classes (for parents of newborn children and for parents of adolescents; short courses offered in a Bible class or separately).
5. Use of a Christian home charter and "A Self-Analysis Chart for the Home."
6. Greater church-home co-operation (family night; parents' library, etc.).
7. Better use of our organizations for family-life training.

The regular Sunday school lesson may be used one quarter of each year in the Bible class, with special reference to its application by parents and children in the home. Special topics for parent study classes are available.

Family Night

To bring church and home together more often, many churches are finding the family night very helpful. All organizations, boards, and committees work together in setting up the program. Such family nights are held from four to ten times a year. The whole congregation meets "as a family of God." There are provisions for the children, the young people, and the adults. A theme is selected, and a film or other visual aid is used to present part of the topic. A general discussion follows, or the group is divided into sections, each group discussing some phase of the topic. The talents of the members are used for special numbers. At least an hour of the evening is used for Christian fellowship and singing. Important projects of the parish can be presented. Carefully planned and well-directed family programs are an effective adult-education medium and help build up the congregational morale and the "oneness" we have in Christ.

Planning Adult Education

Before planning your adult program consult the Monthly Emphases suggested in "Resource Materials for Planning the Parish Program." Education can and should grow out of, and be linked to, every major congregational activity: soul winning, soul keeping, reclaiming those on the fringe, assimilating new members, all phases of Christian education, stewardship, the Christian home, church and Communion attendance, and the like. Also keep in mind that the young adults, married or unmarried (persons between the ages of twenty-five and thirty-five), are a pivotal group for building the whole adult program.

A Check List

Check your adult program by this list. Lutheran adult education should supply:

1. Bible study that leads to personal searching of Scriptures.
2. Training in worship and in the devotional life.
3. Topic discussions led by the members themselves.

ADULT EDUCATION IN THE LOCAL CONGREGATION

4. Mission study and training in personal evangelism.
5. Training for parenthood and Christian family life.
6. Special service to the local congregation.
7. Special service to the church at large (Synod).
8. The cultivation of Christian stewardship (self and money).
9. Leadership training for Kingdom work.
10. Guidance for the individual and his daily problems.
11. Cultivation of Christian fellowship through co-operative work and play.
12. Service to all of the adults of the parish.

What a parish is, and what it is to be in the future, depends largely on the understanding, attitudes, training, and responsiveness of its adults. The home and the church, like the nation and community, are largely controlled by adults. Genuine improvement comes with the enlistment of more adults in the program of the local parish. It is not likely that we shall gain the young people for genuine Bible study until their parents are in a Bible class. For further guidance in setting up your work with adults and for suggestions on any points presented in this agency tract, write your District Board of Education or this office.

THE BOARD FOR PARISH EDUCATION

3558 S. Jefferson Ave., St. Louis 18, Mo.

OSCAR E. FEUCHT

Secretary of Adult Education