

For the

LIFE of the WORLD

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- Through All Generations - p.7**
- Needs of My Generation - p.10**
- From Where Do "Christian" Children Come? - p.12**
- The Golden Thread of God's Presence - p.14**
- In The Field - p.16**

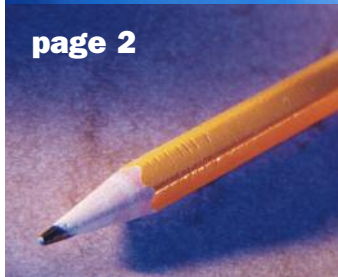


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P R E S S

CONTENTS



page 7



page 2



page 10



page 14

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FEATURES

2 Letters to the Editor

6 From the President

7 Through All Generations
by Dr. Gene Edward Veith
Dean of Arts and Sciences
Concordia University, Mequon, Wis.

The Christian church should be the place where generational differences are transcended, not reinforced. Only a church which resists being merely one generation can be relevant to them all.

10 Needs of My Generation
by Ben Mayes
Admissions Counselor
Concordia College, Seward, Neb.

The perceived needs of young people are no different from those of other generations. Young people, like everyone, need the forgiveness only Jesus can give to cover over their many sins.

12 From Where Do "Christian" Children Come?
by Rev. Dr. Charles A. Gieschen
Asst. Professor Exegetical Theology
Concordia Theological Seminary
Fort Wayne, Ind.

God makes and keeps us His children through His means of grace. So, too, with our children. We do not make our children Christians. That is a work He accomplishes.

14 The Golden Thread of God's Presence
by Helen Kraus
Cape Elizabeth, Maine

God's presence has woven a golden thread throughout her life. This thread has created a life that is sustained by God's Word and His Sacraments.

16 In The Field
by Pam Knepper
Managing Editor
For the Life of the World

Features the Rev. John Fiene, Pastor at Advent Evangelical Lutheran Church, Zionsville, Ind.

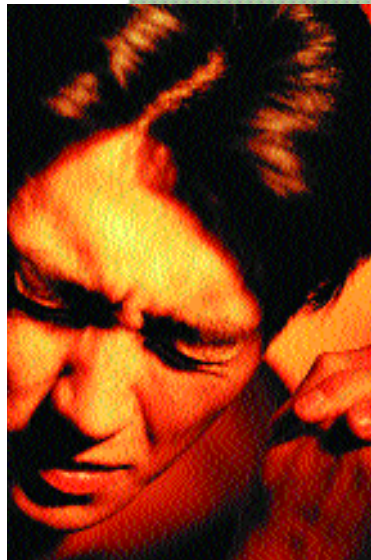
NEEDS OF MY GENERATION

Many college students today have an exciting, culturally-relevant worship style—the worship of the self. Young people have needs that they want fulfilled. While at college, some young people adopt habits of alcohol and drug addiction. Many listen to what culture tells them about sex. They decide that virginity is a disgrace and that sex is not so precious a thing that it needs to be reserved for marriage, as God instituted it. Many students make their habits relevant to college culture by adopting the provocative clothing styles as seen on television and acting in ways that are relevant to the sinful world, but not to God. Even among Christian young people, habits and modes of dress and speech are chosen that identify them with the market-oriented, needs-driven, self-serving culture that we all know as America.

Despite the many perceived needs of young people, their real needs are no different from those of other age groups, nationalities and generations. Young people today need the forgiveness Jesus gives to cover over their many sins. Our real problem is sin; our real need is forgiveness; our real solution is Christ.

Many young people recognize that worship is where Jesus comes to us in His Word and especially in His Body and Blood. His Body and Blood given in com-

munion are holy, so conscientious young people feel that a solemn reverence is the proper attitude to have during the time and place when Jesus comes to us. Kneeling and making the sign of the cross come to mind as appropriate responses to the presence of God. We realize that these external actions don't contribute to salvation, but they are a joyful response to that salvation! We also realize that holy joy is not the same as a spirit of carousing (Rom. 13:13). Instead, holy joy includes solemn reverence.



Despite the many perceived needs of young people, their real needs are no different from those of other age groups, nationalities and generations. Young people today need the forgiveness Jesus gives to cover over their many sins. Our real problem is sin; our real need is forgiveness; our real solution is Christ.

Young people like things that entertain. Those items that educate or are good for them are usually not enjoyed. Yet if a person is brought up in a liturgical church, he will learn the liturgy soon and will have it memorized even as a very small child. He will then be able to carry the word of God with him wherever he goes. The liturgy, as given in the hymnal, is very easy for young children to learn if it is used consistently. What a joy it is to hear young children singing "Hosanna in the highest!" during the liturgy of Holy Communion, just as they did at Palm Sunday. Children in churches with changing liturgies or minimal congregational participation are not given the opportunity to learn God's Word by heart.

ATTENTION

by Ben Mayes

So naturally, worship in the Divine Service becomes meaningless time spent watching or drawing pictures. Because of this, they never learn first-hand why worship is important—it is the place where Jesus comes to forgive His people.

While growing up, there were certain times when I didn't enjoy church and liturgy. At those times my parents made me go to church, say the prayers and sing. Over time, it eventually grew on me and it's a good thing that no one told me that church had to be fun. Indeed, God wasn't "fun". If it wasn't for the habits that were instilled in me while young, my personal tastes would have gotten in the way and kept me from going to church, which is the very place I needed to be in order to have my sins forgiven.

That's why the Divine Service, as it has been handed down in the Lutheran church, is so special. It has its own 'other-worldly' culture. The words of the Divine Service focus not on the needs and cravings of the moment, but on the real problem of sin and the real solution, Jesus.

The Divine Service is special to many youth today. They respect and long for a style of worship that connects them to the historic roots of Christianity and rejects today's commercialized silliness. The music in the Divine Service focuses on God's words in a solemn, repentant and joyful way. It's not a question of what instruments should be played, but in how music should be used. Should music seek to draw attention to itself and entertain? If this is what young people were truly looking for, then we would be foolish to look for it in church. We could just turn on the radio or travel to the next rock concert.

Our church's historic liturgy is relevant to youth. It is constant and addresses the needs of God's people.

The propers for the church year provide Biblical teaching and change from week to week and from season to season. The preaching proclaims the Law to help people recognize their sins and in turn offers the Gospel where forgiveness from those sins is found through faith in Jesus Christ. The Lord's Supper is simultaneously the most personal experience with Jesus and also the most social, as His true Body makes us again into His mystical body. For some young people, the time of private Confession and Absolution is both the most terrifying and comforting encounter with God.

Finally, young Christians long for a sense of belonging and connectedness. We need to see that our generation is one among many who are Christian. Instead of tailor-made liturgies emphasizing the uniqueness of our generation, we need to see that we're part of the one Holy Christian Church. This is evident in 1 Cor. 1:10, which states, "Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."

Young people today are no different than any other generation. We're all sinners who need forgiveness from our sins that only Christ can give. This is the real answer for our real need.

Ben Mayes is an admissions counselor at Concordia College, Seward, Neb.