
The Abiding Word

The
**ABIDING
WORD**

AN ANTHOLOGY OF DOCTRINAL
ESSAYS FOR THE YEARS
1954–1955

Volume Three

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Publisher's Preface

The essays in this volume were selected by the Literature Board of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod from those presented at the District conventions of 1954 and 1955. They are made available as a continuation of Volume I (1946) and Volume II (1947), issued under the direction of the Centennial Literature Committee and edited by Dr. Theodore Laetsch. Since the original two volumes, published under the title THE ABIDING WORD, are still in demand, the publisher is encouraged to make these additional essays available as Volume III of the series.

THE PUBLISHER

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The Abiding Word

Youth: First-Class Communicants

I

HERE is a group in our society today which has become the center of national attention. This group captures the headlines every day and is featured in magazine articles and editorials the country over. People study them, lecture on and to them, write about them. They have become everybody's concern and almost nobody's concern. In many instances they have forced their attention upon society today. It is youth of many descriptions who is attracting our attention.

Youth is variously referred to as a teen-ager, adolescent, or a young person. The dictionary shies away from bracketing youth to one particular age group. It simply says: "Youth may be the quality or state of being young; it may be the part of life which succeeds childhood; or it may be young persons collectively."¹ It would be difficult to set an age limit for the beginning and end of youth. For our purposes we would define youth as those persons who have been confirmed and are as yet not married. Someone has defined youth as the age between two ages, one that is neither childhood nor maturity. Hence youth is a "between-ager" as well as a "teen-ager."²

This paper will not presume to provide a pat answer for the youth problems of our congregations. Nor is it our intention to introduce a new program for the local society. Our youth program is that of the Walther League, the official youth program of Synod, recognized by Synod thirty-five years ago at the Detroit convention as its youth program. Rather, the purpose of this paper is to direct and focus pastoral and lay attention on the cause of youth for

¹ Funk & Wagnalls College Standard Dictionary.

² Robt. Claude, *The Training of the Adolescent* (New York: Paulist Press, 1944).

a more positive program. Youth needs attention. Youth needs more attention than it has received. The title of our presentation would indicate that youth has not always received the attention it deserves. Unlike the baby of the family who receives immediate attention because he is the smallest member, the Walther League as the youngest organization in the congregation is often held in the same regard as the neglected and unwanted child. There is a discernible discrimination practiced against youth in some congregations. Often the Walther League is treated as a second-rate organization. In many instances the Walther League society must meet on that night of the week no other organization cares to schedule. After all other organizations are satisfied, the young people have a choice for their meeting night; if choice can be defined as what is left over. Little time and less effort is expended in the youth cause. Youth is not always held in regard as a first-class communicant. Too often congregations are entirely negative toward youth. When a chair has been broken at the society meeting, a window broken, or when congregational gossip has whispered the disgrace of sex experimentation among its youth, then youth receives attention. Youth is blamed. The pastor is blamed for not chaperoning youth to and from meetings. The home is blamed. Youth comes in for attention. But how?

The story is told of a young graduate of our Concordia Seminary of St. Louis, Missouri. When the calls were assigned, this young man found himself serving a small congregation in the mountains and wilds of Montana. The first fall the young man canvassed the town of about 2,500 people. The next fall he canvassed an area within a six-mile radius of the town. After canvassing and preaching there was not much to be done in his small parish. He found himself in utter boredom. Being of scholarly bent, he took up the study of Hebrew. He became very proficient. Not satisfied with his own mastery of Hebrew, he decided to teach his wife the Hebrew language. With the passing of time she, too, became quite a scholar. Now the moral of this story is this: brother, you won't have time to teach your wife Hebrew if you have a sincere and sympathetic interest in the cause of youth in your congregation.

When the needs of youth are considered, attention must be forthcoming. Our youth population is growing by leaps and bounds.

The 1950 national census shows that there were then 55 million persons under 21 years of age in the total population of 160 million. Of this 55 million, 26 million are estimated to be within the age group of our present interest. Birth records indicate that within three to ten years the number of our teen-agers will have doubled. Will we be ready and prepared to work with the growing youth population? Our public schools are caught short of teachers and classroom facilities because those in authority would not anticipate the impact of the postwar baby boom. How will the congregation receive this growing youth population? Of course, the problem will not be so aggravated in the church. Not all youth is Christian. In proportion, however, enrollment in youth societies in many instances should grow to numbers beyond our present capacity to handle them. Some of that problem is already confronting us in our Sunday schools.

The youth population of Synod is comprised of approximately 140,000 young people; or, about sixteen and one-half per cent of the communicant membership of our churches are made up of young people. The big challenge in youth work in our circles today is not so much to get more societies into the Walther League, but to enroll all young people of the congregation into already existing societies and to provide for the influx of new members from our growing youth population. Well do we realize that it is an almost impossible task to enlist every young person in the program of the Walther League. Not every young person can fit himself into a youth group. His interest may be in Sunday school teaching, choir work, or some other congregational activity. We should not be discouraged that not all are enlisted in the Walther League. After all, not every adult can be interested in the LLL or the LWML! But this much is certain: each congregation should have an active, balanced youth program which will seek to enlist as many youths as possible. Youth needs our attention!

Growing up in an environment different from that of five decades ago, youngsters today are better educated. They are better informed, and rightly so, on everything from sex to the latest political situation on Formosa and Indochina and the "summit conferences" to be held next month in Europe. They are more sophisticated at a younger age, but unfortunately that does not mean that their

judgment is better at fifteen than in the past generation, or that they are prepared to exercise restraint in the face of increasing temptations. It is easier for young people to sin in our day. There are fewer restraints and controls put out by the home and society. Time was when the neighborhood was close and personal so that reprimand was handed down for even the slightest social aberrations, even though the youngster may have lived blocks away from where the incident took place. Neighbors were concerned. Youth is growing up in a different social environment today and for this reason needs our considerate attention.

Unfortunately, too, youth cannot live in the realms of fantasy with Peter Pan, who protested his growth in the words: "I won't grow up; I won't grow up. I don't want to be a man. I don't want to be a father." Youth does grow up. And it is the most difficult period of growth. Goethe has named the teen-age as "Die Sturm- und Drang-Periode." Emotional, physical, moral, and spiritual tugs continually vex growing youth.

Youth needs a greater share of attention because it has greater problems. It would be difficult to catalog in the order of their importance all problems of the adolescents. Possibly the problems involving *sex* might take first claim for creating the greater amount of disturbance. Questions arise. Is sex good or bad? Where can one obtain information on the matter of sex without embarrassment? What shall be my behavior in company with the opposite sex? Girls may feel that certain concessions must be made in order to be popular. Boys may like to talk about their conquests.

Most young people are concerned about their *economic* future. Some youths will frankly state they want a job which offers the greatest financial advantages and advancements. In these flush days many youths have already reached a mark of financial achievement, and the automobile is looked upon as the symbol of success and prestige among other young people.

The ninth annual New York *Herald-Tribune* Forum for high schools, brought together in the General Assembly Hall of the United Nations last March 27, had as its theme: "The World We Want." Above all else youth from all parts of the world expressed the desire for *peace*, for relief from fear and tension, and for an

end to racial prejudices.⁸ Universal military training is certainly a problem to our youth. By 1965 more than 80 per cent of the young men of our congregations will have had some military training.⁴

Another problem which disturbs youth is *religion*. Army chaplains bear testimony to the ignorance of youth in the fundamentals of Christianity. Coupled with this ignorance, youth finds it must face real and practical religious problems. The girl friend is Roman Catholic. What is the answer to our marriage problem? Then, again, young people through high school friends are confronted with denominational differences. Who is right? Which denomination has the truth? Even though our young people may receive academically correct answers in confirmation, the application becomes difficult in real situations. Who is there to turn to when these critical problems need an answer?

Then there are problems *within himself* which the youth does not understand. Psychologist Maurice Debesse has this to say about the growing up of the between-ager: "As varied as the manifestations of adolescence are, its forms may be put under two headings: the desire to astonish others, and the intimate expression of self. Between the ages of fourteen and sixteen, the lively desire to be outstanding, to astonish oneself and others, is most dominant. This is the extrovert period. He is very interested in clothes, is careful to acquire the 'correct attitude' on popular questions, cultivates a larger vocabulary and more careful diction. He is attracted by all that is strange, bizarre, unusual, and paradoxical. Most of these eccentricities leave him by the time he is seventeen. Their place is taken by a more interior phenomenon. This is the period of the 'cult of the ego.' It is an affirmation of the importance of self that is now directed not to the world at large but to himself. It is an age of the pondering of the mind, a searching and a questioning."⁵

Youth's problems today, while basically similar, have increased in degree and intensity, in contrast to those of a few generations ago.

We live in a day and age of confused and complex marriage situations. Two decades ago marriages were delayed two to five

⁸ New York *Herald-Tribune*, March 28, 1955, pp. 15 ff.

⁴ Claude, pp. 13 ff.

⁵ Raymond Hohenstein, Spring Conn. Valley Conf.

years because of the economic situation. In late years marriages are contracted at an earlier age, and because of the emotional and spiritual immaturity of the people involved many marriages have been and are failing. Statistics made in a Maryland youth survey show that the number of *mixed marriages* which go on the rocks of marital disagreement are only a fraction less than those where both parties were unchurched.

"I can't understand our young people today," complained one pastor to another. "Three of the girls in my congregation married Roman Catholic boys last year." "Yes, that is a problem," replied the other, "but what's wrong with the boys in your church? They seem to be a nice group from my observations of them. Where do the girls meet those Roman Catholic boys?" "At school mostly. The thing that bothers me, though, is that they promise to bring up the children in the Roman Catholic Church; and they don't realize that the Roman Catholic party must make a promise to work for the conversion of the Lutheran. There's bound to be friction. And you and I know most mixed marriages are unhappy arrangements. What can we do about it?" That is the question you and I ask ourselves.

A mother in a mixed-marriage relationship complains: "I would like to have our daughter sing in the junior choir. Every time I suggest the idea to John he reminds me of those marriage papers. It grieves me to think that Carol will not have the same joys that I had as a child." A father laments: "My wife does everything she possibly can to enlist our children in the Roman Catholic schools." Youth needs our attention because many are entering into unhappy marriage relationships.

The menace of *communism* in our country has subsided. Communism has gone underground. No one should be deceived, however, into thinking that communism will not attempt to emerge at some later date. In searching for resource materials we came across a book on the shelves of one of our public libraries, which book purported to show the impact of the social classes on youth. A Mid-western town and its church youth groups were studied. Ridicule is heaped upon the Norwegian Lutheran pastor because he attempts to "bind his young people to the church." The whole book is a subtle attempt to prove that biased class distinctions exist in the

churches. Its communist philosophy is especially discernible in these few selected passages: "The youngsters assume that Christianity is the one right and true religion. . . . Religion to the vast majority is an amorphous body of beliefs symbolized by a number of awesome words as God, Jesus Christ, sin, salvation, Satan, Heaven, and Hell. It is given form in a book that embodies all sacred truth, the Bible. The Church is built on the Bible and Sunday is the Lord's Day. One can believe the Bible without understanding it; just to know about the Bible makes one religious. To the great majority, the sacred words associated with religion through long usage have taken on a magical quality, and one respects them for this reason. To a few God, Satan, Heaven, Hell, Sin, and Salvation are real entities that surround them at all times like the air they breathe.⁶ . . . To most youth the church is a community facility like the school, the drug store, the city government, and the bowling alley. To them, the church is a place where one goes to Sunday School, to young people's meetings, to a church party and to a small segment it is a place of worship. It is not something special or supernatural as the ministers and some elders would have them believe. It is plain that about seven out of eight young people are not troubled by religious questions or problems [p. 244]. . . . The small minority troubled by religious problems are largely Norwegian Lutherans. The Lutheran minister, aided by a handful of elders, attempts to bind my young people to the church through a comprehensive socioreligious program organized in opposition to the high school, fraternal orders, and commercial recreation [p. 246]. . . . It is easy to see that the lower a boy's or girl's economic position is, the higher the probability that he or she does not belong to a religious club [p. 253]. The church girl looks down upon girls who do not go to church, but to maintain her exclusiveness she draws the social line very carefully against the girl trying to participate in religious clubs who have 'low caste' through misbehavior or who comes from a low ranking family [p. 257]." Communism is still interested in our youth.

Last March the communists of East Germany held "youth dedications" on Easter Sunday in Dresden and East Berlin in opposition

⁶ A. Hollingshead, *Elmtown's Youth* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1949), p. 243.

to our Lutheran rite of confirmation. State-owned factories in the Soviet Zone offered young people watches and money for participation. The youth dedication closely parallels the form of our confirmation. It reads: "Are you willing to work with all your strength for the building up of a happy, beautiful life, and for the economic, scientific, and cultural progress?" The reply required is: "Yes, to this we pledge ourselves." Next question: "Are you willing to devote all your strength, in communion with all patriots, in fighting for a united, peace-loving, democratic, independent Germany?" Answer: "Yes, to this we pledge ourselves." Third question: "Are you willing to work with all your strength, together with all peace-loving people, in the struggle for peace, and to defend that peace to the limit?" Answer: "Yes, to this we pledge ourselves." After the questions the leader of the ritual said: "We have heard your pledge. You have taken upon yourself a lofty task. We, the community of all workers, promise you support, protection, and help. With united strength, forward to victory."⁷ Stores were selling dark suits, white shirts, black ties for the boys to wear at the "dedications" — the same outfit usually worn at confirmation. A happy issue out of these attempts to communize youth through a dedication ceremony is the story from Dresden where 5,000 had signed up for the ceremony, but 3,500 withdrew the Saturday before Easter. Also, by way of encouragement, Bishop Dibelius announced that young people taking part in the dedication ceremony would not be confirmed. No doubt, he, too, is convinced that if youth will not stand for something, it will fall for anything. Communism at home and abroad is militant. Communism is still seeking to dominate our youth. Youth needs our attention.

One can scarcely read a newspaper without being confronted with the glaring headlines of a young person in trouble, a young soul virtually hell-bent for destruction. No matter where or what the city or town, we are confronted with youth in trouble. One need not see the motion picture "Blackboard Jungle" to be aware of the threat of hoodlum gangs in schools and on the street corner. A random collection of headlines appearing in local Albany papers for a period of one week. April 17-23,⁸ announced three youth

⁷ *The Lutheran*, April 13, 1955.

⁸ *Knickerbocker News & Times Union*.

vagrancies and crimes: "N. Y. Police hunt boy in youth center killing"—"Eighteen-year old youth held in shotgun death of boy"—"Youth tells of ruse he used to buy beer"—"Two youths and girls injured in Philmont and Albany crashes"—"Boy admits knifing, beating girl to death."

The Senate subcommittee investigating juvenile delinquency has compiled case on case in staccatolike fashion of youth gone wrong the nation over. These are the all-too-familiar news accounts. From Boston the committee reports the case of three boys with good family background, who completely terrorized several neighborhoods by roaming the streets at night and attacking almost any youth they chanced to meet. They had no apparent motive and they had no interest in fair play. They made sure the odds were three to one in their favor, and instead of using their fists they attacked with garrison belts and brass knuckles. From N. Y. C. comes the report of two boys who killed a man they had never seen before and with whom they had no quarrel. On a Saturday night in Milwaukee, a sixteen-year-old took a .410-gauge shotgun from the attic closet and blasted the life from his mother and his young brother and sister. He did it in a fit of anger because his mother would not let him take the family car to a basketball game.⁹ And so the story reads *ad infinitum* and *ad magnum*. No community is free of youthful expressions of rebellion. No congregation can escape the dire necessity for a program to combat the growing ranks of the juvenile delinquent.

Since 1948 a steadily increasing number of American boys and girls have become involved in juvenile crimes each year. The best available figures on the subject, on a national basis, are those compiled by the Children's Bureau of the Department of Welfare, Health, and Education, based on cases handled by juvenile courts. The stream of children through the nation's juvenile courts grew from 300,000 in 1948 to 435,000 in 1953, and only ten per cent of this increase, we are told, can possibly be attributed to a growing juvenile population.¹⁰ The actual number of children who have broken the law, whose cases were disposed of without court action,

⁹ *Ladies' Home Journal*, April 1955, p. 217.

¹⁰ Interim Report of the Subcommittee on the Judiciary to study J. D. S. Res. 89 and S. Res. 190, pp. 4, 5.

according to J. Edgar Hoover, is 1,791,160 arrested for 1953. 8.4 per cent of these were seventeen years or younger, and 24.9 per cent of these were under twenty-five. Testifying before a House Appropriations Subcommittee, Mr. Hoover said that teen-age groups accounted for 18 per cent of all robberies in the United States; 24.9 per cent of all violations involved in the receipt of stolen goods, 40.1 per cent of all larcenies, 49.3 per cent of all burglaries, and 53.6 per cent of all auto thefts.¹¹ In 1950, about 32,000 of the 142,000 unmarried mothers in the United States were seventeen years of age and younger.¹² Best estimates of runaway children place the number at 30,000 per year. Again, this estimate does not include those cases handled by police and social agencies without referral to court. (Page 20)

What are the causative factors in this rise of juvenile delinquency? The problem is manifold. No one cause or segment of society is to blame. It may be the result of many circumstances over a period of many years. Progressive education, television, comics, inadequate recreational facilities, defective glands, inferiorities, police negligence, lack of spiritual training in the home, slums, emotional instabilities, broken homes, frustration of the fundamental drives, lack of love, narcotics, alcohol, easy money, temporary insanity, just plain stubbornness, incorrigibility, and lastly the emphasis on individual liberty — these are all blamed.¹³

Authorities agree that our fast automobiles and "no-questions-asked" motels have played an important part in contributing to youthful sexual misconduct today. The automobile, in the mind of the average youth, has become a symbol of power, prestige, and wealth. Behind the wheel of a car, the teen-age boy feels grown up and important. This attitude toward wealth has been fostered by our materialistic education and by the void of spiritual values.

Success is measured largely in terms of the amount of money a person can earn and the automobile he drives. This worldly education has given youth a perverted sense of values. Added to this is the fact that in our public educational system, of necessity be-

¹¹ Springfield Union, Mass., April 11, 1954.

¹² Interim Report, op. cit., p. 20.

¹³ Hearings before the Subcommittee to Investigate J. D. S. Res. 89, pp. 74 to 76.

cause of our constitutional principle of separation of church and state, God is virtually ignored. Youth unconsciously concludes that God and Christianity are relatively unimportant to life.

Tensions and insecurities have reaped havoc with modern youth. It has been said that today's youth have never known anything but tension and crisis. They were born amid the suffering and anxieties of World War II, and in their later years they are surrounded by the instabilities and the threats of a cold war which for them may at any moment become hot. They are compelled to enter into military duties and into war without clearly understanding why it should be necessary. They are compelled to take sides in disputes they have had no information on and never had real interest in.

Judge George W. Smyth of the Children's Court of Westchester County, this county in which we are conventioning, reports: "The absence of true religious convictions and practice in the home is definitely marked in the cases we see in court." He goes on to say: "Where there is a true religious belief and a faithful adherence to it, where the parents rely upon the church as a cornerstone on which their home rests, and their children are taught the elementary truths of the commandments and the Golden Rule — that kind of home doesn't usually produce delinquency."¹⁴ We may not agree with the good judge's theology, but the fact remains that a lack of spirituality in the home is the basic fault for many of our youth problems today.

The *home*, not the slum or the lack of recreational facilities, is the breeding ground for today's young criminal. This is the general consensus of all concerned with youth problems. In staccatolike fashion reports appear in our national magazines stressing the breakdown of the home. A study of Macon, Ga., provokes the local judge to say: "In many instances, parents are not assuming their full responsibility, and there is a breakdown of the home." A report of gang activities in Fort Worth, Tex., draws the conclusion that "authorities there believe that their best effort is to sell parents on the idea of keeping a tighter rein on activities of their children."¹⁵

¹⁴ *Ladies' Home Journal*, March 1955.

¹⁵ Hearings, etc., pp. 119—121.

Definitely the home is the key to our youth problem. Under date line February 20, 1955, the New York *Herald Tribune* reported a decrease of juvenile delinquency in Chicago. This decrease, Judge Sigmund Stefanowicz attributes to the parents who have begun to realize that the problem is theirs. He notes that only a few months before, only 25 per cent of the parents of juvenile offenders even bothered to show up in courts with their children. Now, he said, between 80 and 90 per cent of the parents appear in court. As a result of parental interest, the judge believes, all types of juvenile crime have shown a downward trend. There can be no doubt of the link of the home with juvenile problems. The home must be returned to its rightful place as the center of family life.

When all is said about the causative and contributing factors of juvenile delinquency today, as Christians we remember that the power of the devil and the reality of sin are most certainly manifest. Satan is not restricted in his effort to one economic group. His work is not limited to the slums. His evil machinations are prevalent in every activity of society. His subtlety is found in comic books and television and every other modern means of communication. With sly enticement and seduction he afflicts youth with every modern means available.

With these things in mind, we ask ourselves as pastors, teachers, and laymen: How can we cope with these growing, vexing, manifold, spilling-over youth problems? Years ago the sociologist would attribute youth problems to his environment. Wipe out the slum, and there will be no delinquency. Give children adequate play and recreational facilities, and the problem is solved. A later development advocated the individual approach to the youth. In the casework method the child was studied for his psychological quirks, physical and mental balance. Correct these, and the problem is solved.¹⁶ But there are too many problem children and not enough trained psychiatric personnel. At the present time it seems the focus has shifted and centered itself on the family and particularly upon the parents. Punish the parents of delinquent children! Educate the parents! Keep the children off the streets at night! Parents

¹⁶ "The Effectiveness of Delinquency Prevention Programs," U. S. Dept. of Health, Education, and Welfare, Children's Bureau, pp. 9—17.

are blamed, and more often not without reason. However, when all is considered, basically the problem remains the delinquent child. It is to be hoped that the next development in our thinking on this sore and distressing problem will lead to the conviction that the individual youth is responsible for his actions, as a person; that responsibility cannot be shifted to the impersonal slum or the personal family. Finally, and at last, it is to be hoped that a recognition will come that the individual youth's sinful nature is in need of cleansing regeneration through Christ Jesus, our Savior.

At the First International Congress on Mental Hygiene held in Washington, D. C., Dr. Franz Alexander, a psychoanalyst of Berlin, Germany, declared that "contrary to popular conception that it is natural to be a law-abiding citizen, mental science has demonstrated that people are born criminals and that if all children were free to respond to their instinctive impulses, they would act as criminals."¹⁷ This is, of course, just another way of saying that man is born sinful and is in need of the regenerating influence of God's Word and the sacraments. Unregenerate youth, steeped in original sin, will and does react as a criminal in too many life situations. Youth, left to his own resources, without the spiritual influence of the family altar, and without a good Christian environment, has frequently proved his criminal instinct.

The lack of spiritual values has lessened youth's sense of moral and social responsibility. With this recognition we will have begun to arrive. Youth kept spiritual-minded, Christ-centered, and church-interested will be checked in seeking outlet for emotional stresses and inner urges in wrong directions. In our efforts to win and hold youth, the power of the Word of God is still a most effective approach.

It is a happy privilege to report to this convention that a survey of our four Albany congregations: St. Paul's, Western at Lexington; St. Matthew's, 208 Whitehall Rd.; Our Savior, Stop 5, Albany-Schenectady Rd.; and Christ, 1080 Western Ave., have had no young person connected with our Walther League sentenced by a judge and jury to a correctional institution in the history of the present pastorates. In fact, in the total 67 years of ministering of

¹⁷ Arthur Steinke, quoted at Albany-Schenectady Pastoral Conference.

the four Albany pastors, no youth has been sent to a correctional institution from any of the congregations they have served.¹⁸

If the ministry of these pastors and their congregations is a sampling of the influences of a good youth program, it can safely be said that Christian training is a deterrent to delinquency. That only five per cent of our national youth is delinquent can be attributed, no doubt, to the leavening influence of Christian youth.

When we think of growing youth population, the physical changes in growth period of youth, the number of mixed marriages taking place in our congregations, when we remember the subtlety of atheistic communism, and when we are confronted with the rising tide of juvenile delinquency, surely it must be admitted youth needs our individual and collective attention. There would be no time for teaching one's wife Hebrew if the needs and problems of youth are considered.

It may have occurred to you from these observations that more must be done for youth in the congregation and in Synod. *Just what is being done for youth in Synod?* Besides the work of the Walther League, what other attention does youth receive in Synod? An examination of our educational program reveals that most of our literature is geared to the child and to the adult. Synod takes cognizance of the newborn babe in its very fine Cradle Roll Nursery literature. The Primary, Junior, Intermediate, and Senior Sunday school literature is excellent. When we arrive at the postconfirmation level, the literature for the adolescent comes to an almost abrupt halt. Yes, we do have Bible class literature. It is meant for the teen-ager. But does it meet the needs of the changing, maturing, adolescent youth? A casual examination of the first half year's copy of *Portals of Prayer* reveals an almost total lack of consciousness of the needs of youth. No prayers are written for youth. Little mention is made of youth. Very seldom does youth make the *Lutheran Witness*. A perusal of copies of *Today*, that fine journal of practical missionary procedure now succeeded by the equally fine *Advance*, brought to light only one article directly concerned with youth. This was entitled "Winning Youth for the Kingdom." It was written anonymously by a former vicar. One

¹⁸ Arthur Steinke, 24 years; Walther Litke, 15 years; Ernest Kunsch, 15 years; Arthur Gerhardt, 13 years.

out of fifty-six essays in the two-volume centennial, **THE ABIDING WORD**, devotes itself entirely to the youth theme. One S. T. M. thesis, one Th. D. thesis, and one B. D. thesis have been written on the youth subject, and these as recently as 1950 and 1951.

NOTE: Since 1955, the year in which this essay was first delivered, the Board of Parish Education of The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod and Concordia Publishing House have published two new Bible Discussion Guide curriculums, comprising 26 different courses, especially for younger and older teens — plus a curriculum of 16 Bible Discussion courses for young people of ages 18 to 24; five books: *Teenagers Pray*, *Teen-Ager*, *Christ Is for You*, *Teen-Ager, the Bible Speaks to You*, *From Teens to Marriage*, and the recent *For You, Teen-Ager in Love*; a parent-guidance booklet, *Teen-Agers Need Parents*; a statistically accurate treatment of youth's problems in all the volumes of the Marriage and Family Research Series (*Engagement and Marriage* is Volume One); and more than 30 articles for and about youth in *This Day*, *The Lutheran Witness*, and other church magazines and papers. — ED.

No synodical or District convention has had the cause of youth come to its attention through the medium of a paper or essay.¹⁹ Only two articles in the youth field have been published in the *Concordia Theological Monthly*, one in August 1937 and one in July 1940.

This dearth of synodical literature in the youth field should not lead to the false impression that Synod is not and has not been aware of youth. Dr. Walther in the first years of Synod's history urged the establishment of young men's organizations. In his lectures on pastoral theology to the students at Concordia Seminary, Dr. Walther stressed the importance of youth work. He once told his class in pastoral theology: "You cannot use your time to better advantage than by serving well the young people of the congregation." A young men's society of Trinity Lutheran Church in St. Louis, Mo., was organized on May 7, 1848, under the direction of J. F. Buenger, the first youth society to be established in the Missouri Synod. The specific purpose for which Trinity Society was organized was to give support to needy students preparing for the ministry. By 1851 the society in Trinity Congregation numbered more than 70 young men. The minutes of the meeting of Trinity Young Men's Society, St. Louis, in January 1875 reported as follows:²⁰

¹⁹ Acting librarian of Pritzlaff Library, Concordia Seminary.

²⁰ See the unpubl. diss. by Clarence Peters, "Development of the Youth Programs of the Lutheran Churches in America," 1951, p. 5.

The pastor opened the meeting with prayer.

1. Mr. Keller was elected chairman.
2. Minutes of the last meeting were read and accepted.
3. Declamation by Student Aron: "The Witch of Endor."
4. The pastor refuted the stand of the Swedenborgians.
5. A debate was held on the question: "Which is the most useful animal, the horse or the dog?" The decision went to the side which upheld the cause of the dog.
6. Declamation by Student Leudemann: "The Artist and the Farmer."
7. An English declamation by Mr. Weking.
8. It was resolved that the general debate at the next regular meeting should be on the subject: "Which can be borne longer, hunger or thirst?" The subject for the special debate will be: "Who was the greater general, Napoleon or Frederick the Great?"

An encouraging sign for youth work appeared on the synodical horizon in 1883, when H. C. Schwan, then President of Synod, delivered a paper at the convention of the Southern District, in which among other things he discussed the question whether societies should be permitted in the congregation. He drew the conclusion that some, including youth societies, were permissible. Ten years later, in Buffalo, N. Y., the Walther League was born. It took, however, until 1920 for Synod, at its Detroit convention, to recognize the WL as its official youth program. Resolutions appear in synodical proceedings from time to time encouraging Districts and pastoral conferences earnestly to consider what could be done to work among confirmed youth. This has been about the extent of synodical interest in the youth cause in time past.

Literature on youth work is scarce in Synod; so also is there a paucity of money allocated to the cause of youth. In the first copy of the stewardship department's "Fraternally Yours," information was given that the one and one-half cents, not of the synodical dollar, but one and one-half cents of the minimum \$7.17 per communicant member needed by Synod to carry on its work, goes to help promote the program of our young people. This is

the smallest amount of money allocated to any agency or group in Synod.

Through its Board for Young People's Work, Synod's fiscal conference has allocated the sum of \$19,500 to the youth cause for the year 1955. Walther Leaguers through proportionate giving hope to raise the sum of \$89,500. Adding the \$19,500 allocated by Synod and the \$89,500 raised by youth for youth, we arrive at the total of \$109,000 for the work of youth in Synod in 1955. Synod shares in the financial effort. Synod does something for youth. But is it enough? Is it enough in view of the growing youth population within Synod?

The purpose of our essay is to call attention to the growing needs and to the increased problems in the youth field. Is our program adequate to meet the needs and problems of the youth of our time? No one in Synod need worry about having to teach his wife Hebrew if there is an honest and sincere concern for youth. Is youth held in regard as a first-class communicant in Synod?

What does your *congregation* do for its youth and the youth of the community? Is the parish youth program the best possible? Does it help youth solve its problems? Does it meet the needs of a growing youth population? Five years after confirmation our congregations lose an estimated six out of ten confirmed youths. While this percentage may not be the same in all congregations, it does nevertheless point up the fact that our losses are heavy in the years immediately following confirmation. Mention was made at the spring N. Y. Pastoral Conference of the losses in our own Atlantic District. Our greatest losses in the Atlantic District, we were told, are experienced in the high school and college groups.

Losses are not peculiar to our District or church. It may be of comfort to look at the performance of other churches in this respect. One church, the Northern Baptist Association, estimates that of every 100 young people in the Sunday school at the age of twelve and thirteen, only twenty-two remain there at the age of twenty-one. Seventy-eight young people for the most part are lost to the churches of the Northern Baptist Convention.²¹

²¹ Edwin Phelps, *The Pathfinder in Church Work with Young People* (Philadelphia: The Judson Press, 1928), p. 7.

Do we enlist our youth in the local parish? Do we enlist the great unchurched youth population?

The following is a comparison of the enlistment of youth in the major Lutheran synods (1954):

	Confirmed members	YP in youth groups
ULC _____	1,518,434	31,519
Mos _____	1,306,656	76,863
ELC _____	646,083	81,500 *
ALC _____	581,374	38,450 *
Augustana _____	516,968	35,000

* These are estimates

If Synod and our congregations in particular fumble and neglect to put forth concerted effort in behalf of youth, not only will more youth be lost, but the *Government* will take over in this field as it has in so many others. Welfare originally belonged to the province of the church. Gradually the Government with its vast taxing resources encroached upon this field and is taking over. The same thing is beginning to happen in the youth field. New York State, always a pioneer in social legislation, has a Youth Commission whose function for the present is largely concerned with delinquency prevention. Ten cities and counties have established Youth Bureaus whose purpose is to co-ordinate and supplement the activities of public and religious agencies devoted to the protection and welfare of youth. These are located in Hudson, Geneva, New York City, Corning, Cortland, Ithaca, Oneida, Rochester, and the counties of Erie and Rensselaer.²²

In the Federal Government nine departments of cabinet rank with forty-four bureaus and twelve independent agencies with seventeen bureaus are listed as concerned directly and indirectly with youth.²³ The Federal Government conducts research on the growth and development of children, the prevention and treatment of diseases, food values, and nutrition. It assists in financing health services. It shares in the development of education. In the field

²² *Blueprint for Delinquency Prevention.* New York State Youth Commission pamphlet, p. 18.

²³ "Programs of the Federal Government Affecting Children and Youth," prepared by the Interdepartmental Committee on Children and Youth, 1951, pp. 124, 125, 126.

of recreation it supports the facilities of national parks, forests, and other public lands. Social service to help meet the individual problems of children and youth is an integral part of many of the programs in which the Federal Government participates (pp. 4-5). The agencies responsible for most of the programs for children and youth are the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Labor, and the Federal Security Agency. Two units in the Federal Security Agency, the Office of Education and the Children's Bureau, have programs that are principally or entirely concerned with children and youth. (Page 19)

Through the UN and working with UNESCO (UN, Ed., Scientific and Cultural Org.) our Government is collaborating with other nations to advance ideals of equality in education and opportunity for growth in economic, social, and political freedom among youth. (Page 30)

Cities have youth committees, states have youth commissions, the Federal Government has agencies concerned with youth, the UN has a youth organization, but too many of our congregations do not have active and functioning youth societies. Too many congregations do not have youth committees reporting each month to the church council or official body. Government is interested in youth; is the congregation?

Perhaps one of the main results of the Senate Subcommittee's investigation of juvenile delinquency will be the setting up of more juvenile courts, psychiatric and social legislation, and a National Institute for Juvenile Research. But whatever the outcome of current investigations of youth delinquencies, this much is certain, that government is becoming more and more interested in the youth field, and necessarily so. It will remain for the individual congregation to show increasing concern for its youth.

II

Now where does youth work fit into the program of the interested congregation, into the schedule of the busy pastor, into the thinking of a concerned people? Is it *Nebensache*? Is it a congregational adiaphoron? Where does it fit into the organizational ladder of the congregation? On the bottom rung? Is youth a third- or fourth-rate communicant? Should youth work be ranked below

the church council, the voters' assembly, the LLL, the LWML, and the Mary-Martha Guild in order of importance?

From the numerous verses of Scripture it should be clear that God attaches great importance to youth. One commandment addresses itself particularly to youth. Through Holy Baptism, God has provided for the entrance of children into His kingdom. While the chief responsibility for bringing up children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord rests upon parents, the law of love and our communion of faith make it incumbent upon the congregation to assume some concern for youth. While Scripture prescribes no particular agency for dealing with youth, it does place an obligation upon the congregation as well as upon the parents.

The same line of reasoning and Scripture which obtains in the argument for good Sunday schools and Christian parish schools must be consistently followed in our attitudes toward youth work.²⁴ The educational process of Christian growth does not automatically come to a halt after confirmation. Youth work is a continuance of Christian growth through the media of education established in the church. If we feel that we have reasons based on Scripture for the establishment and maintenance of Christian parish schools and other agencies and institutions for training children in Christian knowledge and living, these same reasons must compel congregations to give the proper attention to young people after confirmation.

Even social and recreational concerns are the obligation of the congregation. By this it is not to be inferred that a congregation will compete with the bowling alleys, the roller rinks, or the gymnasiums to keep or hold its youth. We do, however, have playgrounds for our parish schools, and we do have other recreational outlets for adult communicants; why not for youth? Is it right, in this respect to say that we are, after all, only to take care of the souls of our members? Is it right to let youth seek its own social and recreational outlets elsewhere? Obviously the congregation cannot compete with a commercialized recreation. Nor should it attempt to. We have a duty, however, to create an atmosphere of Christian surroundings and to inculcate into the minds and atti-

²⁴ P. E. Kretzmann, "Fallow Field — the Church's Youth," *Concordia Theological Monthly*, XL (July 1940), 515.

tudes of our youth standards of conduct and behavior above those of the world. In short, the congregation has something the world does not have.

In view of what has been said in the previous paragraphs about the congregation's responsibility and the need of youth to grow in faith and sanctification of life, it should become apparent that some committee or group in the congregation should be directly interested in youth. This could be a subcommittee of the board of parish education of the church council, working as a committee concerned only with youth. Many congregations see fit to establish a *Youth Committee*, separate from the committee or board of parish education. Whatever the organizational structure in the local congregation, recognition must be given to youth, its problems, its needs, its growing numbers.

In this thinking it should be stated that on the District level we believe our approach to youth work to be a correct one. The Executive Secretary of Parish Education, Dr. Arthur Wittmer, is charged with the supervision of our Atlantic District youth work in the field of promotion, publicity, and counseling. Dr. Wittmer is in touch with the activities of the four Walther League districts within the confines of the Atlantic District. The educational program of our District includes youth work, because youth work spells growth, growth in knowledge, service, missions, evangelism, stewardship, and in social and recreational outlet.

Now whether or not the church council is organized to care for youth activity as a subcommittee under the parish education committee or under an entirely separate committee, this is certain, someone must head up the whole youth program of the congregation.

In a previous paragraph it was mentioned how parents are blamed for the delinquencies of youth today. In most instances this is true. Our first line for offensive work among youth should be with parents. God has after all laid the first responsibility upon *parents*, who are to bring up their children in His nurture and admonition. It becomes the duty of parents to recognize and assume their obligations and co-operate in the youth program of the congregation. It comes, then, as nothing new to us that the National Conference on Juvenile Delinquency is discovering that one of the keys to youth problems is the family and the home. With parents

admittedly playing such a key role with youth, it might be in order that a meeting of all parents of youth be held once or twice in the course of a year. Dr. Wilton E. Bergstrand of the Augustana Luther League recognizes an important fact often overlooked when he writes in the pamphlet *Youth of Confirmation Age*: "The importance of the parents and the home cannot be overemphasized. Of the 105,000 hours from childhood to maturity, the vast majority are spent in the home. If parents through their indifference cancel out our efforts by saying through their lives, 'This business of church is not important for an adult,' we can expect no better results in our church in the future. We must win the parents also through evangelism. In short, we must inform parents about our youth programs. Perhaps we should rethink our youth program not in terms of youth alone, but in terms of parents and youth."

Before children are confirmed, parents might be gathered in a special meeting to inform them of the program of the Walther League. Parents could be interested as counselors, if their qualifications are equal to the job. In a special parents'-night program, the Walther Leaguers could bring to the attention of their parents the programs of the LSV school and the LSVI, what the Talent Festival is, how a zone and district operates. The value of informing parents and of parental co-operation is recognized during elementary school days in parent-teacher associations and the school-parent relationship; why not in the church? We do not aid our cause if we fail to take parents into the picture at and after confirmation.

The person charged with the fulfillment of the objectives of our youth program is the *pastor*. His call to the congregation stipulates that he is to be a curate of all souls in the congregation, regardless of age. In his work with youth, the conscientious pastor will be deeply serious about their problems. He will include them in his sermonizing. Young people after all are first-class communicants in the Kingdom. All too often pastors fail to take youth seriously. Far too many of our pastors are bored by the bubbling enthusiasm of youth; harassed by the irresponsibility of youth; and shocked by the questioning of youth. With fuming righteous indignation, the stilted pastor is ready to climb down the back of Johnny who dared to speak his mind about sex in a wholly unconventional

manner. Johnny is wondering about Alice, the girl who sat next to him in confirmation instruction. The understanding pastor takes Johnny seriously.

Questions will pop. Answers are sought. While blatant atheism is not running its rampant way as was the case in preceding generations, when it was popular to coddle communist ideologies; and while it has become popular to speak and think religiously in this generation, perhaps because of the fear of the atom, none should think that young people will readily accept the beliefs of their elders. Our younger generations are being trained to expect proof and not to rely on mere say-so. Youth wants to know: What meaning does the deity of Christ have in repentance and forgiveness? What authority does Scripture have in this 1,300-mph jet-traveling age? What does justification by faith mean in a time when treaties are made to be scrapped and the only power seemingly effective is universal military training and the power of nuclear weapons? These are serious problems confronting youth. They deserve the answer and the time of the conscientious pastor. One pastor solved his problems of answering teen-age questions. As he said in his own words: "I always keep them talking about geography or something like that. That way they won't be in danger of heresy." By avoiding the issues and the direct concerns of youth, this pastor is sending his young people elsewhere to find answers. It may be true that "they won't be in danger of heresy"; by the same token it is also true "they will not be in danger of coming into a Scriptural appreciation of God's purposes in their lives."

Time, of course, is of the essence for every pastor. One often receives the impression that pastors because of the limits of time relegate youth work to a level of secondary importance; first, because young people are hard to handle, and secondly, because it takes a lot of effort to produce a bang-up program.

True, the pastor must be selective in the use of his time. Several men could be employed to do justice to all the areas of work in which the pastor tries to operate. But in many respects the pastor's work is similar to that of the doctor who is a general practitioner. He does not have time to specialize. He is a preacher, a minister, a counselor, an organizer, a promoter, a missionary, and a teacher. He meets with boards, councils, committees, auxiliaries, and other groups. Confronted with a multitude of demands on his time, he

is forced to make choices; but not at the expense of youth. Young people are first-class communicants.

Looking at maturing young people, the pastor remembers that these, too, are God's children. As an undershepherd of the Lord Jesus, the pastor is responsible for the sheep and the lambs of his flock. The apostle Peter writes: "I urge you to see that your flock of God is properly fed and cared for. Accept the responsibility of looking after them willingly and not because you feel you can't get out of it, doing your work not for what you can make, but because you are really concerned for their well-being."²⁵ As a shepherd, the pastor has been feeding the lambs with the Word of God in the confirmation instruction. During this period of instruction the teen-ager has grown close to the pastor. A fine spiritual relationship has been built up. The pastor is very close to his young people at this point. Now after confirmation, when young people are undergoing rapid physical, emotional, and mental changes, should the shepherd abruptly sever his ties with the lambs? The faithful pastor will bridge the gap between confirmation and maturity, meeting regularly with his young people. In this continued meeting with his young people as a group the pastor has an excellent opportunity to discuss more specifically the problems of their individual lives. By his continued interest in youth he holds their confidence. They in turn will seek his advice in matters of sex, courtship, marriage, a Christian vocation, drinking, motion pictures, TV, and many other problems immediately confronting youth. Even when the pastor is so fortunate as to have the help of a vicar, who is charged with the responsibilities of all youth matters, the pastor should continue his close contact with youth. They need him.

Social pressures and mores have their effects upon the impressionable plastic, glamour-minded and popularity-personality-conscious youth. The pastor is aware of these secularistic and materialistic influences. Hot-rodding Arnold Schultz deserves his special interest not only because he might wrap his jalopy around a telephone pole, but also because Arnold Schultz must begin to realize his stewardship obligation to the Lord. As a teen-ager who can afford the expenditure of four dollars a week in the use and upkeep

²⁵ J. B. Phillips, *Letters to Young Churches* (New York: Macmillan, 1948), 1 Peter 5:2.

of an automobile, Arnold should be made aware of his need to give proportionately to the kingdom of God.

The conscientious pastor will work with and find time for youth because these future leaders may be the means to revitalize a traditionalized congregation. The Walther League is a training school for service in the congregation. The older members of the congregation may become sterile and set in their thinking and approaches. When a new method of doing Kingdom work is advanced, the traditionalist overrules it with the satisfied pronouncement that what has been good in times past is good even today. How is the congregation to overcome the inertia of some of its membership? New blood can be transfused by the apprentice who has served in the Walther League training school. The pastor who knows his youth and has trained them will find them a rich source of new life in the congregational meeting. While it is true that the youth of the church are the church of tomorrow, it is also true that they are a large and important section of the church of today. Young people are first-class communicants today. Their time, talent, and treasure should also be utilized now; their potentialities must be developed now. A delay of five years in our enlistment of youth may find that other interests have supplanted those of the church.

What has been said of the pastor's duty and responsibility toward youth applies also to the *Christian day school teacher*; first, because of his profession, and second, because of his membership in the congregation. In a special bulletin for Lutheran teachers, William A. Kramer writes under the title, "The Ethics of the Lutheran Teachers": "The teacher should have at least one responsibility outside of school duties. This responsibility should preferably involve work with young people or with adults. This extra school activity will give the teacher status, provide associations he needs, provide an outlet for his talents, widen his acquaintance with people."²⁶ The teacher, in lesser degree, has the same responsibility toward youth as does the pastor. And for that matter so does the laity.

All of us, pastors, teachers, laity, profess love for young people. We express concern for the future of our youth. Our thoughts of intention, however, too frequently remain in the abstract. Our atti-

²⁶ Wm. A. Kramer, "The Ethics of the Lutheran Teacher," *Special Service Bulletin for Lutheran Teachers*, January 1955, No. 401, p. 8.

tudes may be described best by the professor of educational psychology who continually admonished his classes to show love for young people. Love is the great solvent, he reasoned. However, one of the students of this particular professor was sadly disillusioned one day when he returned to his alma mater and decided to pay his respects to his former professor. As the student approached the professor's residence, he saw him putting the finishing touches on the freshly poured concrete walk leading to the home. Just as he came near the toiling professor, a neighborhood boy ran crisscross over the professor's newly laid concrete sidewalk. Up jumped the professor after the young vandal, a streak of blue invective trailing off behind him. When the professor returned from the futile chase, the former student with great surprise said: "Professor, I thought you said you loved youth?" The professor replied, "Yes, I do in the abstract, but not in the concrete." Our love and concern for youth is too often expressed in the abstract in our sermonizing and in discussions. There is not enough direct application of our thinking in concrete forms. Pastors, teachers, and laymen need not teach their wives the Hebrew syntax if there is a concrete interest in youth work in the congregation.

While the pastor must keep in touch with the entire life of the congregation and will always remain the chief counselor to his young people, and while he is anxious to remain close to them because they need especially his guidance, there is a need to enlist additional help from the congregation. Most of our congregations are not in a position to engage a full-time youth worker, and the truth that God wants all His Christians to be at work for Him suggests that we enlist volunteer laymen as *youth counselors*. Of the two hundred twelve Walther League societies in our Atlantic District, only ninety-one have lay youth counselors. More youth counselors are needed to assist pastors in the work with our young people. The lay counselor must be selected carefully. The bill is hard to fill. A married couple or other mature Christian with sympathetic understanding for youth might be selected. The church records show few persons are qualified. In selecting a youth counselor we must ask ourselves: Who cares for youth? Who understands youth? Who is willing to learn? Not the person who cares but is "unwilling to learn" is selected. Not the one who is "willing" but has neither the time nor the patience. But the one who cares,

understands, and is willing to take time and to learn is selected. The prospective counselor must be challenged in the thinking that work with young people is the Lord's work; young people are first-class communicants. The prospective youth counselor is then acquainted with the resources available from 875 North Dearborn, Chicago. Their use is explained. Assurance is given of the backing of the youth committee. The prospective counselor is reminded that he has been selected after a careful search of the entire church membership and because it is believed that he is best qualified for this work of the Lord. And although this new youth counselor may soon be able to carry the full load of responsibility, the pastor or teacher will always be available, attending meetings when possible, and with his presence show his continued interest in the youth field.

Each society needs some person to serve as a counselor just as a coach serves a baseball or track team. A good coach works with and trains his team. So will the lay counselor work with and train youth.

Under no circumstances should youth be permitted to shift for themselves, that is, without the aid and guidance of some interested adult person or persons. We wouldn't think of turning over to a young person who knows little or nothing of what was below, behind, or in front of the steering wheel, a new high-powered auto. Turn that person loose with no previous training or instruction in the mechanics of the car, and no one beside him to guide or direct him, and the result may be a smashed auto and several dead or injured people. We wouldn't think of doing that. But it happens in youth work. Inexperienced young people are having placed into their hands the running of a society. All they know about it is what they have learned from observation. They are asked to take the "wheel" of leadership, and generally they are glad to take on the challenge of responsibility. But no one in the congregation seems to be interested beyond turning the society over to them and advising them "to make it go." Our interested young people know that the society has a number of parts — members, officers, committees, etc., but just how these parts are put together and what it is that makes them go is not altogether clear. They start somewhat thrilled with the sense of power in leadership. In the one case the new president, or the other officers, may not be able to get things started right because, not knowing the mechanics of the job, they do not

know where to look when trouble arises. In the other case all may be well until something shoots across the path, and because they do not know enough about the "workings" of the society, they are not able to keep it under proper control. They have not been instructed in the "mechanics" of their job. And so the result of haphazard youth programs is a "smashed machine"—no Walther League and many young people spiritually injured.

Youth counselors will find valuable resource material available in the Walther League *Workers Quarterly*. The April 1955 issue contains a number of basic guidelines meant especially for youth counselors. However, no counselor should feel that cold print from a *Workers Quarterly* or some other such tool can solve his youth problems. The warmth, love, and friendship of the counselor is still needed. Pastor, teacher, and lay counselor need never teach their wife Hebrew if there is a sincere interest in youth.

Two remedial programs have been established by the Walther League to assist the local congregation in training its youth. The LSV provides a leadership training program for youth, and the YWC is designed to meet the needs of the youth counselor.

The Youth Workers' Conference, begun in 1948, is meant for the training of pastors, teachers, and youth counselors in particular. It is a two-week school usually held at three regional locations. Our Atlantic District this year is being serviced by the YWC to be held at Westminster College, New Wilmington, Pa., July 10 to 22. The cost of \$50 for the school covers board, room, and tuition. Congregations will find it a wise investment to send their youth counselor to a YWC either on a whole scholarship or by means of a direct subsidy. Courses are conducted in Bible study, group-work techniques, worship, society administration, and recreation. This summer, three similar YWCs are being sponsored by the WL and the Board for Young People's Work, one in Minnesota, one in Nebraska, and the third in Texas.

Mention has been made of the Lutheran Service Volunteer school. This is a training school meant primarily for the Walther Leaguer. The Lutheran Service Volunteer schools are conducted for five days during the summer months, either at a boarding school or at a summer camp. The purpose of the Lutheran Service Volunteer school is to give young people an opportunity to operate with the Christian principles which must be applied in the planning and conduct-

ing of a youth program in their congregation so that every activity is a way of growing up into Christ in all things. The LSV school emphasizes group participation as an expression of our fellowship with Christ. Through the group technique it is hoped that the individual will appreciate his oneness in the group as a member of the body of Christ. The LSV school is directed by a faculty of three members who lead discussions in worship, Bible study, and Christian principles of group work in administration and recreation. It is called a volunteer school because the individual volunteers his talents and abilities for the good of the group. The volunteer hour gives the students an opportunity to write about spiritual experiences which have been particularly meaningful to them. The volunteer hour with its hymns, prayers, Scripture reading, and personal witnessing is an important factor in integrating the group. A demonstration period permits the participants to examine the program activity of their league through discussion of program planning, quest for talent, society meetings, membership, and *Messenger* promotion, applying in a practical way the principles of group work which the school urges. Cost of the five- or six-day school is usually around \$20. The program is subsidized by the Lutheran Youth Fund and is administered by the Board for Young People's Work. In the period 1944 to 1954, approximately 5,600 students attended Lutheran Service Volunteer schools. Some 128 pastors give one week of their summer to staff the faculties of over fifty schools. While youth leadership is a prime objective, most important is the development of the life of the individual in Christ. Opportunity is afforded young people to learn by doing in worship, prayer, topic discussion, and recreation, hence the use of the term "school."

Unique and peculiar only to youth work in our Atlantic District is the Lutheran Service Volunteer Institute. The institute has all program features of the LSV school, but in abbreviated form because of the limitations of time. Usually the institute is held on four or five evenings of a week or on consecutive evenings of a month. Twenty-six pastors of our District who have received training at a YWC serve as faculty members of the LSVI. The institute is designed to bring the principles of the LSV to a larger number of our youth.

III

Youth deserves our attention because the Walther League society offers apprenticeship training for real work in the congregation. As a service arm of the church, the Walther League participates in every field of Christian endeavor. Meeting in Buffalo in 1947, the Walther League adopted a new program chart designed to emphasize that all activities are centered in Christ. One of the areas listed under "Christian Growth" in the program chart is labeled "Parish Help." This label highlights the fact that young people gather as a Walther League group to assist their congregation. By following the Walther League program, young people have been and are being trained in every phase of Christian endeavor, including missions — foreign and domestic, evangelism, welfare, and stewardship.

During World War I the league gathered \$25,000 to provide literature for the men in the *Armed Forces*. The New Orleans convention of the league in 1941 appropriated \$2,000 for the work among the men and women in the Armed Forces. Besides raising money during the two world wars, league members sent bulletins and other pieces of literature with news items of congregational activity to those who were separated from normal congregational life (Peters, p. 102). The *War Time Service Fund* brought an offering of \$120,000 to supply servicemen and chaplains with devotional booklets, subscriptions to the *Walther League Messenger*, and other Christian reading materials.

The league teaches Christian charity and *works of mercy*. Seventy-five tons of clothing, shoes, sheets, blankets, soap, and foods were sent for European relief in 1924. In 1930 the league collected 44 tons of clothing and almost \$1,000 for Russian refugees in Canada. In the same year it contributed \$50,000 to The Lutheran Hour. (Page 105)

The cause of *higher education* has been aided by leaguers. The Law library at Valparaiso University was the recipient of \$15,000 in 1929. The Houston convention of 1936 authorized a fund for the erection of a hospital unit at Valparaiso. (Page 104)

Interest in *foreign missions* has been and is being fostered by the program of the WL. A convention report in 1924 shows that eleven districts of the league were supporting twelve missionaries

in India, China, Germany, and Arizona, and that the league had undertaken to supply the funds for a mountain retreat for Synod's missionaries in China. The 1938 Pittsburgh convention authorized a gift of \$2,000 for the erection of a youth house at Porto Alegre, Brazil. At the annual convention held in 1948 in Portland, Oregon, it was resolved to gather a sum of \$10,000 for Chinese youth, one half to build a youth center at Wuchang, China; the other half to furnish room and facilities for the youth activities of the True Light Church, Chinatown, New York City. The Houston convention of 1949 resolved to gather \$10,000 to construct a Lutheran Youth Center at the University of Hokkaido in Sapporo, Japan. Last May a check for \$12,979 for the erection of an administration building at the Lutheran Normal School in Ibehechi in Nigeria was presented to the Board of Missions of the Synodical Conference. (Pages 104-108)

One of the finest teaching programs in missions ever attempted by the Walther League is the current *Foreign Missions Builder* plan. Seven young men, six from the United States and one from Canada, were selected from among seventy-five applicants to give two years of their lives in the Savior's service in the construction of chapels, homes, hospitals, and hydroelectric plants and in the teaching of agricultural methods on the mission compounds of New Guinea. Their names deserve mention at this convention. We pay tribute to the consecrated service of Donald F. Hall, Darmstadt, Ind.; James Kahre, Evansville, Ind.; Clarence Schultze, Fairmont, Minn.; Clarence Rivers, Jr., Seattle, Wash.; Robert Marquardt, Sebewaing, Mich.; August H. Harms, West Palm Beach, Fla.; and Walter Biberdorf, Saskatchewan, Canada. The Foreign Mission Builders will be supported by the Christian Vocation Fund of \$22,000 which the Walther League initiated in May of this year. During the two years of service, these seven volunteers receive no compensation except an allowance for daily necessities. Chosen for their skills in carpentry, electricity, and plumbing, and because of their devotion to the Lord's work, these young men will perform their duties in New Guinea as assigned by the resident missionaries. Truly this is an inspiring, real, and practical mission training for the youth of our church. Let no one say that youth is not interested in missions. Youth is a first-class communicant in the Kingdom.

League youth has shown interest in *evangelism*. The league has co-operated with the American Lutheran Publicity Bureau in distributing over two million tracts to unchurched people. (Page 103)

The main resolution of the 1950 convention meeting in Denver concerned itself with the Christian Youth Mission. It outlined a seven-point program, most important of which was the sharing of a copy of the New Testament and the *Walther League Messenger* with a foreign-mission pen pal. The response was so overwhelming that not enough names of foreign youth capable of writing could be secured for the interested young people of our league. Two years ago the Youth Evangelism Service program emphasized the need of young people for reaching out to enlist other youth of the congregation and community in the work of the Lord. Currently our young people are asked to "witness where you are" in the Christian Vocation program.

Through the Walther League, Synod's youth is being trained in *stewardship*. Besides contributing toward mission, educational, evangelism, and welfare projects, and besides raising money to erect its own youth building, our WL societies annually raise the major portion of their budget. Approximately \$89,000 of the \$108,000 Walther League budget is raised by the proportionate giving of our young people. Synod makes up the \$19,500 difference as a subsidy to the Lutheran Service Volunteer School training program. In addition to supporting its administrative costs and projects, the league supports the Wheat Ridge Sanatorium and Wheat Ridge Foundation to the tune of approximately \$325,000 annually. According to recent announcement the Foundation will extend its service to tubercular sick in foreign mission fields.

The Walther League is the only Lutheran youth group in the United States which owns its own office building. At the 1940 convention in Chicago, the league made plans for a Golden Anniversary Fund of \$100,000 to erect the Lutheran Youth Building. Leaguers raised \$130,000 for the erection of this building. An additional \$40,000 was gathered for a third floor. This project has not yet been completed. (Page 110)

These are the projects promoted by the Walther League on a national scale, projects which have developed churchmanship in our youth. If the local society follows the Walther League pro-

gram, its members are bound to become missions-conscious, stewardship-trained, and evangelistically minded. The local Walther League is a training school.

However, it is contended by some in our circles that, while it may be true our young people do receive training in most areas of churchmanship, little of it is of direct benefit to the local congregation. It is said: National and international projects do not train young people for the real work of the local church. There should be a greater enlistment of youth in the real work of the local congregation. Our young people are not being integrated into congregational activity and life. The thought is advanced that we pour a lot of religious knowledge into youth during confirmation and then graduate these young people into a spiritual and congregational vacuum. Consequently, we are told, our congregations often violate one of the basic principles of education, namely, that there can be "no impression without expression." In substance we agree with this latter thought. The program of the Walther League should not be faulted for this situation; rather this irresponsibility should be placed at the doorstep of the congregation.

We are in sympathy with the ideal that young people be trained for the real work of the church. The young people's society must certainly never be an organization apart from the church. Ideally, it is a cog in the congregation's machinery for the promotion of an adequate program of religious education. It is not simply a society for the promotion of plays, socials, good times, and entertainment of youth. It exists for Kingdom work. "Use us or lose us" is not just another catchy cliché. It is true. But if youth is lost for Kingdom work because of inattention and neglect, who is to blame? Who is to blame if young people are not being trained for the real work of the church? The program of the Walther League? Or the congregation's inattention to youth and consequent lack of challenge to youth? We agree with the proposal that young people must be integrated into the real work of the church. We differ in the extent or manner in which they should be integrated. The proposal becomes somewhat unrealistic when it overlooks the fact that young people through their own program are already being trained for churchmanship. With their limitations of time they can

not assume all the responsibility which this proposal would heap upon them. It suggests "that congregations by official resolutions and the organizations of men and women in the local congregation by official resolutions should open up the membership of every board and committee to from three to five young persons age sixteen and over, who would be representative of the youth who would be attending the regular meetings of the boards and committees for the purpose of giving their ideas on the problems confronting the church in the specific areas of work, and how young people in general could help in their activities. This proposal is conditioned upon local situations. Confidential matters would also exclude young people."²⁷ It is suggested that youth be represented on every committee and agency of the church governing body. The thought is further outlined that for intelligent participation, these so-called apprentice trainees be given reading materials, etc., so that they may assist in the problem solving of the congregation; that they be requested to give the point of view of youth on the problem involved so that the congregation has the benefit of the thinking of some of its young people; that they be requested to participate in work projects of the congregation. If canvassing is the project, teams of one adult and one young person might be set up. If visiting of new members or the sick is involved, again teams of one adult and one young person could make these calls. In the preparation of the chancel, teen-age girls would assist the women's group in charge. These young people would then report periodically to the entire Walther League and thus give them insight into the work and program of the local congregation. This is an ideal proposal. Does youth have time to serve on committees of the council, etc., besides trying to promote their own program? We agree with the ideal. The question is: To what degree or extent should youth be integrated?

While we would certainly want to see youth integrated into the life stream of the local congregation, too much cannot be expected of them. God Himself has set limitations by making the period from thirteen to nineteen a period of development and unfolding from the obedience to authority to the exercising of authority. The

²⁷ Arthur L. Miller, "Making Use of Our Youth in the Real Work of the Church" (unpubl. study, 1954).

problem is: When are young people ready for the real work of the church? To dump batches of young people into committee and church-council work and business is to deny the limitations of youth and to overlook the ability of the individual.

It is to be doubted that many young people after confirmation, filled with high resolve and pent-up energy, are ready for the full and real work of the congregation. It is likewise pure assumption that young people become frustrated when they are not immediately after confirmation integrated and enlisted in the real or full work of the church. Nor can we share the opinion that leaguers are interested in zone, district, and international affairs to the neglect of any direct benefit accruing to the local congregation.

To what extent youth should be enlisted in the real work of the church will depend on the youth material available. Enlistment which would detract from the league's own program cannot work for the ultimate good of the congregation. Our Walther League societies are committees, boards, and councils in miniature. In the function of committee work and in the administration of its affairs, the society is a training school for churchmanship.

The league has always emphasized knowledge and service. When the new Walther League program chart was adopted in 1947, knowledge and service to the congregation centered in Christ still remained the specific objective of the Walther League. One of the areas listed under "Christian Growth" in the Program Chart is labeled "Parish Helps." This label highlights the fact that young people gather as a Walther League group to assist their congregation. A practical list of suggested activities has been published by the Walther League. This list has been arranged under the following subtitles: "Helping the Parish — to Expand," "To Be Known in the Community," "To Strengthen Fellowship." Reprints of Walther League congregational service projects are available in quantities gratis from 875 North Dearborn St., Chicago 10, Ill. An active society can be a true apprentice training school for future churchmanship without overextending itself with memberships on every committee, board, and organization of the congregation.

If there is a fault in the enlistment of Walther Leaguers in the real work of the congregation, it is no doubt due to the fact that youth is left to shift for itself. It pursues its own program, its own

goals, its own purposes, which may or may not be closely related to the total program of the church because no one in the congregation has ever challenged the young people. No attention is paid to the young people. There is no Youth Committee on the church council, no one who is directly concerned with youth affairs. All too often the work of the congregation is planned without, and to the exclusion of, young people. Youth representing a great resource of energy has been permitted to lie dormant and neglected. Young people want to be first-class communicants doing real work in the church.

There are perhaps good and sufficient reasons why young people have been overlooked in the real work of the church. Some of them are noisy, irresponsible, and even reckless. Many of them have shown a lack of initiative. But at the same time has the adult membership encouraged youth in the church? Has youth really been challenged? Does the adult worker in the congregation take a young person into confidence and use that young person as an understudy? It is usually easier and more efficient for the adult to do the job himself than to take the time and put forth the effort to draw a young person into the thinking and activity of the congregation.

This is perhaps the skeptical thinking of the average church council member when he considers the place of young people in congregational life. There may be some foundation in fact to substantiate that sort of reasoning, but should we not also remember that young people are God's children? Therefore, should we not also have confidence and trust in them?

Young people will do real work in the local congregation if challenged. The degree of their participation in the real work of the church may depend on the time available and the attention their own program deserves. Certainly no one thinks that young people should wait until they have arrived at a certain age level before they are enlisted in the real work of the church. To have that attitude is to reveal a lack of confidence in the power and the love of Christ which is just as manifest in the young hearts as it is in that of the adult. We believe what the Bible says about every child of God, namely, that he or she is a king, a priest, a member of a holy people, a saint of God, elect and precious, having been redeemed

by the precious blood of Jesus Christ. Congregations deny this profession of faith by their attitudes and dealings with young people in the congregation. Congregations support the statements of Scripture which tell us of the power of the Holy Spirit in the heart of the believer and then hesitate to make use of this power in their approach to Christian teen-agers. To ignore is to lack love. Delinquent youth, it is generally agreed, has been ignored by working parents and neglectful homes and so gives vent to stored-up energy in other directions. To ignore youth in the congregation is to encourage their seeking and taking up activity in directions away from the congregation.²⁸

These remarks should not be construed as advocating a revolutionary change in our congregational structures and constitutions. It is not our intention to initiate a plan for young people to vote and perhaps outvote those in our poorly attended voters' meetings. Although, in this connection, it should be recalled that President Eisenhower and others in government advocate an earlier voting age limit, preferably at 18, based on the theory that if youth can bear arms at the tender age of 18, then youth should also be permitted to have a say as to where, when, and why he should or should not bear arms. Applying this line of reasoning to the congregation, youth could very well reason: if we are asked to contribute to the congregation through our packet of envelopes, then we should like to have a say as to where, when, and why our moneys should or should not be expended.

No radical departure from the organizational *status quo* in the congregation is recommended. Rather, we would like to see youth gradually introduced to the inner workings of the organizational structure of the congregation. Such an introduction could be begun during the period of confirmation instruction. The pastor could explain the administration of the congregation, the general structure of the boards and committees, the function of the voting assembly, and the objectives of the organizations of the congregation. He could explain the mission of the church in the community. To help him, the pastor might invite members of the various boards

²⁸ *Christian Growth Manual*, a 39-page Walther League publication, Chicago, 1948, p. 29.

and committees of the congregation to attend his classes on occasion. One of the elders might be asked to explain some of the spiritual tasks of his board. A member of the board of Christian education might be able to show the many phases of congregational life with which it is concerned. If the congregation is in the midst of a building program, a member of the building committee might address the class on the need for co-operative planning and thinking in the completion of that task. The Sunday school superintendent; the parish school teacher, or representatives of the various service organizations might be invited to discuss the particular objectives of their programs. Not to be forgotten, however, are the efforts of the youth committee to draw the nearly confirmed into the Walther League.

The congregation, paying attention to the growth processes of its young people, will find a rich resource for the larger service and work of the church. Youth must be cultivated for work in the congregation. The job of integrating young people into the work of the church should be a special challenge to every congregation.

Why not invite the youth committee of the *church council* to attend meetings of the society on at least three or four prearranged dates during the year? The youth committee would become better acquainted with the Walther League's leadership, and at the same time the young people would know the congregation is sincerely interested in their program. Such a meeting would also help the council's officers to "get a line" on those teen-agers with particular ability for real churchmanship. Youth representatives should periodically be invited to sit in church-council meetings. The council should go to youth; and youth should go to the council. The process of co-ordination and integration must always be a two-way street.

Most certainly the voice of youth should be heard in the *parish planning* of the congregation. When the organizations of the congregation meet in late summer to plan for the new season of church activity, then youth should be invited to express opinion and to co-ordinate its effort so that the basic parish needs are met. Youth should have a place at the planning table. Youth should be considered an integral part of the congregation today. Plans must be made with youth and not for youth. The total life of the congregation includes the total thinking of its membership. Good parish

planning and a periodic interchange of visitations by youth leaders and adults can result in co-operative work and fine, mutual assistance.

Mrs. Oveta Culp Hobby, Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare, speaking at the seventh annual Barnard Forum last spring, placed the same emphasis on the need for enlisting youth in planning, she, of course, being interested in all youth concerns of the community. Mrs. Hobby said: "I have a deep conviction that one of the best ways the community can help the young generation find themselves is to get rid of the last vestiges of the artificial distinction that earlier generations drew between the "young" and the "adult" generations. Let's have done with the notion that all wisdom resides in persons over twenty-one. Let us find ways in every community of including young people in our community life. Let us share with them. Let us encourage them to participate."

"The youth of today are the church of tomorrow." This phrase tells us that young people of today will assume the leadership position of the future church. Certainly Christian young people represent the hope of the kingdom of God. But it would be wrong simply to wait for some future date before youth is utilized in the actual work of the church. The fact is "the youth of today are also the church of today." Young people are first-class communicants now.

To further recognize the place of youth in the total life of the congregation, a variety of means might be employed to call attention to youth. One such means to that end might be the celebration of a "Youth Day." Just as our city governments attempt to create an awareness of the duties of the mayor and other officials by having youth "take over" the reigns of government for a day, so the church council might wish to permit youth to take over the administration of the congregation in one meeting in order to whet the appetite for participation.

Or the congregation could call attention to the place of youth by designating one outstanding boy and girl as "*Youth of the Year*." After a Sunday morning worship service, or at a regular meeting of the Walther League, or at a family-night fellowship, a suitable award would be presented to the leaguer who has rendered outstanding service to the congregation. Suitable publicity might be

given to this award through nomination and vote by the society in submitting candidates to the church council. Other youth looking to the honor bestowed on the "youth of the year" might derive incentive to improve their service to the congregation and to the church at large. In this connection an award might also be made on the *synodical level*, using candidates of local congregational choice. An act of Congress of August 3, 1950, provides for recognition of boys and girls eighteen years of age and younger, who during any calendar year perform an outstanding act of bravery or who achieve an outstanding record of service. These are known as Young American Medals for Bravery and Young American Medals for Service.²⁹ Why shouldn't Synod encourage youth by offering an award for outstanding service? Two nominees from each of the thirty-two Districts could be presented by the District Presidents to the Board for Young People's Work of Synod for selection. Nominations would be accompanied by a full and complete statement of the youth's service record.

It is well realized that too frequently pastors are asked to interrupt their sermon series to bring to the attention of our congregations the good cause and needs of this organization or that particular agency of Synod. Would it be amiss to ask pastors to designate one Sunday of the year as "*Youth Sunday*," preferably the Sunday nearest the Walther League birthday, May 23? After all we do call attention to other needs of Synod. Should not a local concern for youth deserve a prime consideration? A positive message, outlining the objectives of the Walther League program, could go a long way in presenting youth work to the whole congregation.

Or the youth society might *sponsor* an annual or semiannual *family night*, to which all members of the congregation are invited. In a well-planned program the young people would have the opportunity to present their program and its objectives and thus to enlist the support of the congregation. The same evening might furnish the church council an opportunity to tell the congregation what it does for, and intends to do for, youth. Such an evening of mutual sharing would do much to bring about a closer co-ordination of the youth program with that of the total program of the congregation.

²⁹ *New York State Youth Service News*, March 1955, p. 7.

CONCLUSIONS

The congregation is a communion of believers, who have been brought to faith in Jesus Christ as the only Savior through God's Holy Spirit working in their hearts in Word and Sacrament. Its believers are the body of Christ. The Head of the church, our Lord Jesus, would work through His members to strengthen them in faith and to bring others to a recognition of His saving grace. As a vehicle of God, the congregation must recognize each appendage of the body of Christ as having worth in the sight of God. Youth as a younger, smaller, and minority member dare not be regarded as a second-class communicant.

Someone has said that in Synod its first century of history was largely that of gathering in the immigrant from European shores; that the second century of Synod's history should be a great evangelism effort to reach the vast unchurched American public. That must always be the mark of the true church. It seems, however, we may be confronted with the problem of logistics. An army which overextends itself in one direction may find itself without adequate supply. A church which is concerned only in one direction to the neglect of another may not find the necessary reserve pool to carry on the work of its ministry and teaching professions, to say nothing of an indoctrinated and loyal laity.

Thirty-two District conventions of Synod will be meeting this summer and fall. At these District conventions an average of at least five resolutions related to youth work will be adopted, making a grand total of some 160 resolutions. Attending these District conventions there are and will be some 9,000 church representatives listening to the half-million words formulated in our 160 resolutions. In God's name, sanctified with prayer and supplication, our Districts will resolve to bring the youth cause into the parish and to transmit the program of youth into positive Christian action. What will be the results?

There will certainly be results, and for good, when we realize our common task. Our common task as pastors, teachers, and laymen is so to direct the development of our teen-agers that their thoughts and motives of life may be controlled by the life and teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ. Our common task is to bring our young people into the attitude and atmosphere where worship

is natural and easy. In the acquisition and possession of material things, our common task is to lead our youth to a practice of giving to God that which recognizes the proportion as a basic means of measurement. Our common task is to be ready to meet the needs and problems of our growing youth population. Our common task is to help our between-agers to find opportunity for experiencing the joy of working in Christ's kingdom. Our common task is to train up a generation ready and fit to carry on when this world will know us no more.