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# THE CHURCH AT WORK— TEACHING

## STUDY GUIDE

A DISCUSSION GUIDE  
FOR CHRISTIANS CONCERNED WITH  
"PARISH RENEWAL THROUGH EDUCATION"

PARISH RENEWAL THROUGH EDUCATION



BOARD OF PARISH EDUCATION

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH — MISSOURI SYNOD  
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# THE CHURCH AT WORK — TEACHING

A Discussion Guide  
For Christians Concerned with  
Parish Renewal Through Education

by Victor A. Constien  
Secretary of Adult Education



This symbol  
emphasizes that  
new life  
grows from  
strong roots  
that are nourished  
by God's Word

PARISH RENEWAL THROUGH EDUCATION

THE BOARD OF PARISH EDUCATION  
THE LUTHERAN CHURCH — MISSOURI SYNOD

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“Parish Renewal Through Education” attempts to help each congregation in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod evaluate and strengthen itself for more effective participation in Christ’s mission through better teaching of His Gospel.

A committee in your congregation has already been appointed to work through the “Inventory Planning and Action in Christian Education” manual prepared by Synod’s Board of Parish Education. This self-evaluation committee, on the basis of its findings, will recommend improvements in the congregation’s educational program.

Prior to the self-study you who are members of the congregation’s board of elders, board of parish education, and other officers and leaders will discuss with the committee the foundations of the church’s educational ministry.

This larger group will meet six times. Each session will explore the theological basis for and some of the implications of an affirmation regarding education adopted by The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod at its 1967 convention in New York City.

“The Church at Work—Teaching” is the guide prepared for this discussion.

—VICTOR A. CONSTIEN

**HINTS ON USING THIS DISCUSSION GUIDE**

- (1) You are involved in a Synodwide project called "Parish Renewal Through Education." Later some of you will work through a self-evaluation manual. But first in this discussion group you will explore the implications of the affirmations listed on page 9. As you do, keep in mind this AIM: *"That we gain a new appreciation of the nature and scope of our congregation's educational mission and commit ourselves more fully to the Christ who catches us up into that mission."*
- (2) The material is designed for study under lay leadership, with your pastor as a resource person. A leader's guide is available as an additional help. All six discussions may be led by the same person. However, a new leader for each study may stimulate better participation.
- (3) Arrange an informal setting. Suggest that the group be seated in a circle or around a table so the members can talk with each other face to face. (A pot of coffee and snacks might help.) But do not let any session go beyond the 2-hour limit. An hour and a half is preferable.
- (4) The leader's task is to help the group see itself as a fellowship of the Holy Spirit in which what each one knows and understands will be enlarged and clarified by a study of the Holy Scriptures and by what others know and understand. The leader helps most when he enables group members to ask questions, sharpen thinking, perceive issues, explore Biblical truths, and decide the action that new learning demands.
- (5) The understanding acquired in these sessions must lead to more than intellectual agreement. The intent of the educational affirmations adopted by The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod at its New York convention is that all of us actually become more involved in parish renewal through education. This requires learning by doing. Group members should encourage each other to work through an assignment for each lesson and report on how the assignments were fulfilled. This is essential for achieving session aims. This will also ready the group for its work in the congregation's self-evaluation which follows this study.

## SIX AFFIRMATIONS ON THE CHURCH AT WORK – TEACHING

*“We affirm that Christian education is an essential function of the church.”*

### I. WHY IS EDUCATION VITAL TO THE MISSION OF CHRIST'S CHURCH?

*“We affirm that Christian teaching must provide occasions for Christians to speak of God's love to one another, to witness to their Lord by dealing with one another in love and forgiveness, and to reach out in love to others in their community.”*

### II. JUST WHAT IS CHRISTIAN TEACHING AND LEARNING?

*“We affirm that the church must encourage more extensive, intensive, and evangelical use of the Bible in its educational programs for the renewal of the church's life and spirit.”*

### III. WHY STUDY THE BIBLE SO MUCH?

*“We affirm the need to train consecrated teachers who will proclaim and teach the Word.”*

### IV. WHY DOES CHRIST'S MISSION DEMAND WELL-TRAINED LEADERS?

*“We affirm that in the process of Christian education every member of the church must be both teacher and learner.”*

### V. WHEN DOES THE CHURCH TEACH AND LEARN MOST EFFECTIVELY?

*“We affirm that the Christian family is an influential agency in Christian education and that the church must equip fathers and mothers for their important Christian mission.”*

### VI. WHAT IS THE FAMILY'S ROLE IN THE CHURCH'S EDUCATIONAL MINISTRY?

## I. WHY IS EDUCATION VITAL TO THE MISSION OF CHRIST'S CHURCH?

### Understanding the Issue

In their order of importance, list on a chalkboard or paper four of your congregation's major functions. (Try to reach a consensus.) All these functions are important, of course. That is why it is difficult to establish clear-cut priorities. Under the impulse of his Lord the Christian tries to see joy in each of them.

Discuss briefly the order of your list. Where is "Teaching"?

Your understanding of Christian education as celebration in and nurture for Christ's mission will determine the value you attach to it. What actually happens when Christians teach and learn from one another?

A study of one or more of the Biblical paragraphs noted below may help to expand and sharpen your knowledge of what happens when God's men and women build each other up for Christ's work through His church. Your study and discussion will help you see more clearly and appreciate more fully the importance of this edifying process.

### Learning from the Scriptures

#### *Read 1 Corinthians 12:4-13*

- Discuss: 1. Why does God supply a Christian congregation with "varieties of gifts"?
2. Show that a congregation's educational task involves more than providing classes.
  3. What attitude will help us share more responsibly in the ministry by which we build each other up in the Christian faith?

#### *Read 1 Peter 2:9-10*

- Discuss: 1. For what purpose does God create for Himself a chosen race, His own people?
2. How do we help each other become better equipped to declare God's wonderful deeds?
  3. Why can it be said that our congregation is both "chosen" and indifferent, "holy" and unholy, "royal" and common? How does this tension affect our educational ministry?

#### *Read 2 Corinthians 5:16-6:13*

- Discuss: 1. Describe God's plan for "righting the world's wrong."
2. Demonstrate that Christian education is the process by which Christ invites men, women, and children to join Him in the Father's mission of reconciliation.

## Summarizing Our Study

Underline the sentences or phrases that best summarize why Christian education is important to the church's mission. Perhaps what we underline will help us prepare a brief report to the congregation on the substance of this study. The next Sunday bulletin or newsletter might be a good place to publish it.

A. God creates a living fellowship when He joins people to Jesus Christ by faith and to each other in love. We are that fellowship through our membership in Christ's church by Baptism, and in our congregation by profession of faith. We exercise partnership as we share the spiritual gifts distributed among us for the common good.

The gifts we possess are from God and belong to Him. We sometimes act as if they were our own—to do with as we please. As a result we ignore each other, close our eyes to each other's needs, refuse to hear each other's cries for help, and shut out new ideas that could enrich our lives and advance Christ's church.

When we recognize that God's Spirit has given us all we possess, we are learning to put away the envy that fractures our fellowship. We are beginning to sense a fuller relationship with all who acknowledge that every good and perfect gift comes from God.

God's gifts free us to work for the other person's advantage. As a result we mature in our ability to help the Christian fellowship grow into the strength of Jesus Christ. Every partner in this fellowship, every Christian, has something to contribute to this growth and is responsible to the Spirit Himself for making the contribution. If he withholds the gift from his brother, he denies the purpose for which he received it: the good of all.

The apostle Paul does not divorce the spiritual life from the material life. He does not put spiritual gifts in one box and material gifts in another. Instead he shows how the Spirit's life in a believer influences for good everything he thinks and does. The Spirit takes hold of all a person's abilities and fashions them for use in Christ's church.

However, one man's aptitudes differ from another's. So the Spirit also works to harmonize the aptitudes. Christians then make up for each other's weaknesses and capitalize on each other's strengths. As Christians proclaim the Gospel and serve in love, they complement each other and grow in achievement.

Paul repeats the phrase "by the same Spirit." He does so to make the Corinthians and every subsequent reader of his letter aware of the source of each gift and the purpose for which the Spirit grants it. Wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, tongues and their interpretation—all are distributed by the Holy Spirit among believers that they might speak and minister to others' needs.

B. Peter gives Christians names that emphasize their unity and corporate purposes. God did not abandon the people of Israel, even though many rejected Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of God's plan to save the world. Instead, God cleansed away the impurities of their unbelief and created for Himself a new people who would

bear His mercy in Christ Jesus to the world. The names by which God called His people in Old Testament times God now shifts to His New Testament people, consisting of believing Jews and Gentiles—all who come to Him through Christ, His Son.

By God's grace, people become Christians—members of the chosen race, the elect generation through faith in Christ. They become a unique kingdom made up of priests: men, women, and children who minister to and pray for each other. Because they are the possession of Christ the King, they are a *royal* priesthood, sharing in His rule of grace and glory. God sets His people aside and hallows them by His forgiveness for His special purposes. This holiness of separation for God's tasks demands and gives an inner holiness to each Christian. It requires a single-hearted devotion, and the clear conviction that Jesus Christ is Lord. Christians strain to follow where He leads.

In our priesthood we help each other become better equipped to know and declare God's wonderful deeds. God's people remind each other of God's radical love for them. He provided us a new life of hope and peace through the new birth by His Spirit. He baptizes us into Christ's death for our forgiveness that we might rise with Christ to the free life of His service. By what we say and do in each other's presence, by responding to each other's feeling, we are to show forth to our world God's greatness. He always deals with us in love—not in the judgment we have deserved; in forgiveness—not in the punishment we have earned; by the persuasion of His Spirit—not with the threat of His wrath as we might expect.

God surprised not only the Gentiles of Peter's day with His marvelous works. He has startled all of us. Once we were no people. But now God has brought us from nonbeing into being. Once we were without God's mercy. Now in the new birth, through faith in Christ, we have received God's mercy and are called to transmit it to everyone else.

C. Having been reconciled to God through Christ, we are now Christ's representatives. We are the people through whom Christ speaks the Father's love to others. Through us Christ extends His invitations to men to join Him in the Father's mission of salvation. God makes His appeal to people through those who already believe that salvation is by His grace in Christ.

Our message as Christ's ambassadors to fellow Christians and to those who do not yet know Him is: "Be reconciled to God. For our sake He made Him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God." Our task is to bring about that personal encounter with God in which a person repents of the sin that separates him from God and accepts in faith the forgiveness that restores him to fellowship with God.

God's new time has dawned. Now is the day of salvation. Available to all people right now is God's power for re-creation of the world. Wherever God's people come together they participate in God's mission when they urge each other and the world not to receive God's grace in vain. God sends His Son, His Spirit, and His people into the world to entreat every nation to be reconciled to Him and to one another.

## Synod's Education Affirmation I: Its Implications for Us

Being a Christian means more than adhering to those social customs that will label us as "good people." If our congregation requires no more of us, we stagnate and die, for we fail to become better equipped to witness to Christ and serve our neighbor in his deepest need.

Perhaps we all agree that Christian teaching is important. But if we charge the pastor alone with training the congregation for its ministry, if we leave the responsibility for teaching the Gospel to others, if we view Christian education as an option, we again thwart God's purpose for growth in Christ among us.

However, it doesn't have to be this way. At its 1967 New York convention, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod chose to be different. It said: "The entire congregation is a fellowship in Christ. It is responsible for nurturing, edifying, and educating its members. Christian education is the means whereby Christians equip one another to participate in the mission of the church. WE AFFIRM THAT CHRISTIAN EDUCATION IS AN ESSENTIAL FUNCTION OF THE CHURCH."

**Discuss:** What are the implications of this affirmation for our congregation? What does it suggest that we do to renew our sense of mission? to involve all our members in a growing appreciation for education as equipment for the mission?

### Moving On

At each Christian gathering you attend this coming week (committees, auxiliaries, "fellowship," worship services), observe and assess the quality of training there for God's purposes. Report the strengths and weaknesses of what you observed at the next meeting.

## II. JUST WHAT IS CHRISTIAN TEACHING AND LEARNING?

### Understanding the Issue

Identify what you think is the most effective teaching-learning situation your congregation provides for its members: children, youth, or adults. (Ask for opinions.)

Name some of the elements that make this particular experience educationally successful. (List them on a chalkboard.)

In this session you will try to determine just what Christian teaching and learning is. Is it rote memorization of Bible passages? Is it a mechanical recall of the story of God's work among the people of His world? Is it catechetical instruction combined with a study of Bible history? Is it filling in a workbook or listening to a sermon?

When sons and daughters of God gather to teach and learn Christ's Gospel they are involved in a dynamic exchange of God's love. In this interaction they speak to each other's needs, witness to their Lord's forgiveness, and bolster each other to repair in love the hurts of their neighbors across the world.

A brief review of one or more of the following Scriptural statements will help clarify your understanding of what Christian education is.

### Learning from the Scriptures

*Read Matthew 28:16-20*

**Discuss:** 1. What is the goal of our Christian teaching and learning?  
2. In what ways is a "Christian disciple" more than a "church member"?

*Read Ephesians 1:15-19 and 3:4-19*

**Discuss:** 1. Knowledge of the facts precedes intelligent action. What does Paul want Christians to know? (Eph. 1:16-19)  
2. What binds God's people together, and what do they share as they confront common concerns? (Eph. 3:4-6)  
3. How do Christians who study the Gospel together also become ministers of the Gospel to each other? (Eph. 3:7-13)

*Read 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18*

**Discuss:** 1. Identify in this section (1) the teacher, (2) the learners, (3) the subject matter, and (4) the learning process.  
2. How does Paul show that Christian teaching and learning is more than giving a lecture or listening to a monologue?  
3. List some factors that contribute to change in Christians,

for example, as they learn the meaning of Christ's resurrection.

### Testing Some Propositions

Evaluate the following statements. What is right, wrong, or inadequate in each?

1. Christian teaching involves a Christian *teacher* and a *learner* in a *process* to which both commit themselves, treating a *subject matter* in which both are interested toward a *goal* on which both agree. Also involved is the impact of home, community, school, and church on both teacher and learner.

2. Christian education is a "trialogue." (1) *God* speaks in His Word to the (2) *believer*, who in turn engages (3) *his fellowman* in an encounter with God so that both may know Him, respond to Him in faith, and do His will with love.

3. The purpose of Christian education is that people change, that they more and more become what God calls them to be through their faith in Jesus: "little Christs," witnesses to God's judgment on sin, and bearers of God's love and forgiveness to every sinner.

4. Christians can better teach one another after they first compassionately have listened to each other. When they know one another's confusions, frustrations, needs, hopes, ambitions, and opportunities, they can more adequately speak to one another of man's sin and God's grace.

5. Christian education is the interaction of believers through whom God makes His appeal to people to accept His grace, to minister to the needs of other Christians, to publish His steadfast love to all people, and to glorify Him in their daily work (as engineer and electrician, carpenter and clerk, student and secretary, farmer and foreman, housewife and hairdresser, teacher and technician).

### Synod's Education Affirmation II: Its Implications for Us

As a congregation we teach people to know facts about God, the Bible, the world, and themselves.

We train leaders to lecture, and learners to listen.

We tell Bible stories and ask students to remember Old and New Testament people and events.

All this is basic. It is not bad. But it is inadequate. So at New York our Synod encouraged us to expand our view of Christian education. It said "Christian education for discipleship involves growth in knowledge, in attitude, in conduct, and in the skills of discipleship. WE AFFIRM THAT CHRISTIAN TEACHING MUST PROVIDE OCCASIONS FOR CHRISTIANS TO SPEAK OF GOD'S LOVE TO ONE ANOTHER, TO WITNESS TO THEIR LORD BY DEALING WITH ONE ANOTHER IN LOVE AND FORGIVENESS, AND TO REACH OUT IN LOVE TO OTHERS IN THEIR COMMUNITY."

Discuss: What does this affirmation suggest that we do about our current educational program? What changes can we suggest so that we focus more on the development of Christian attitudes and behavior patterns in God's men and women? What new settings, different subject matter, and varieties of educational procedures will promote the exchange of God's love in study groups?

### Moving On

This coming week, through conversation and interaction with fellow Christians, try to identify and be open to a new understanding, a new attitude, or a new pattern of conduct. Expect it to happen anywhere—in a class, during a coffee break, at home, or on a bus. If you think nothing like this is happening in your life, discuss it with another Christian. Report back at the next meeting on what you observed.

### III. WHY STUDY THE BIBLE SO MUCH?

#### Understanding the Issue

One congregation reported its progress this way: “After eight years of work in this situation we have come to the conclusion that we must limit much of the present program and activities of our ministry and give major attention to Bible study. We simply do not know how to proceed or to what we must give priority. We are convinced that we are literally being driven back to first things.”

How is your congregation both like and unlike the parish that published this report? (Take time to get some opinions from the group.)

A recent survey concluded: “Biblical illiteracy is a fact, a given situation among both clergy and laity, a sort of fate which must be expected, and with which we can hardly concern ourselves, since there’s little hope of changing it.” If your congregation were surveyed what would the results show? How is your attitude similar? dissimilar? (Don’t be afraid to talk about conditions as they are, not as you wish they were.)

Some congregations are beginning to question whether Christian disciples can somehow chance upon the will of God simply because they have good intentions. Must not the church rather stimulate a more intensive and extensive search of the Holy Scriptures among its members? Only then can we learn what Christ expects of us.

A study of one or more of the Bible passages noted below will help you become more conscious of the nature of Christian discipleship in our modern world. Then you can explore how God makes you more adequate for your role in contemporary society through the power of His Word.

#### Learning from the Scriptures

*Read John 8:31-32*

Discuss: 1. What is the chief characteristic of Christian discipleship?  
2. How are truth and freedom, urgently sought by all people today, acquired?

*Read Colossians 3:16-17*

Discuss: 1. How can we change Bible study from a serious and grim assignment to a happy and free sharing?  
2. When does a community become aware of the presence of Christ?  
3. Compare the “wisdom” God reveals in a college class with the “wisdom” He reveals in a Bible class.

*Read John 15:26-27*

Discuss: 1. Who is the church’s Chief Teacher?

2. What is His role in the church’s teaching ministry?

*Read John 16:12-15*

Discuss: 1. How is spiritual immaturity related to Biblical illiteracy?  
2. What training did the 12 disciples receive? When was it to be completed?  
3. How does a discussion of “the things that are to come” help Christian disciples cope with life today?

#### True or False

*Mark these statements true or false. Explain your choice.*

1. The Bible is easy to understand.
2. The unity and power of the Bible arise from the fact that the writers used the same style, wrote at approximately the same time, and for situations that were somewhat similar.
3. Times and people have changed. Christians can no longer live and teach the Biblical message in a way that is meaningful to modern man. People can no longer perceive that Christ’s Gospel is as vital for them today as it was for the men who first heard it.
4. The Bible is important because it presents a set of universal principles ready to be put to work in any culture.
5. The significance of Bible study lies in the truth that Holy Scripture presents to us the living God, judging and forgiving, at work in all of history, confronting people in the decision-making situations of everyday life.
6. The Bible tells us what God’s plan is for His world and the people in it.
7. The Bible is “food for wrestlers.” It equips us for the conflict with Satan, flesh, and evil, and for service to our neighbor.
8. The God of Holy Scriptures is interested in people and wants for them a full life, here and now, not only in the future. The Bible deals with life as it really is!
9. Christian faith is the same as believing that all Scripture is inspired by God.
10. If we are faithful to the Christian Gospel we will present to our world the Bible as a whole and Jesus Christ as its center.

#### Synod’s Education Affirmation III: Its Implications for Us

Sometimes a congregation decides on a course of action because it is the most expedient or the most comfortable among several alternatives.

Sometimes to us, as individuals, it appears that in time of need we think we get our most important help from an aspirin or a tranquilizer.

Sometimes a family is satisfied to look only to an industry, a labor union, the government, or a university to teach its members wisdom.

But at its New York convention The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod recalled us to a much more abundant life which is Christ's gift to Biblically-informed believers.

"God's great gifts to the church are His Word and the sacraments, the means whereby the Holy Spirit nurtures the faith life of the church. The love of God in Christ is the interpreting key to the Bible. WE AFFIRM THAT THE CHURCH MUST ENCOURAGE MORE EXTENSIVE, INTENSIVE, AND EVANGELICAL USE OF THE BIBLE IN ITS EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS FOR THE RENEWAL OF THE CHURCH'S LIFE AND SPIRIT."

Discuss: What can our congregation do to hold before our members various good reasons for studying the Bible? How can our congregation provide more opportunities for encounter with God through Bible study? How can the congregation train its members for more competent participation in Bible classes and for more fruitful personal study?

### Moving On

Choose an issue confronting your congregation. (For example, indifferent members, inept outreach, inadequate leadership, racial tension, blindness to community needs and world dilemmas.)

Encourage each member of your group to prepare a plan by which to attack the problem.

Let the plan generally follow this outline: (1) Explore the Bible for help in understanding and approaching the problem. (2) Propose alternate solutions, all faithful to the Scriptures, and decide on the best one. (3) Prepare a course of action to carry out your plan.

Discuss the proposals at the beginning of your next meeting. What are the advantages of thinking of Bible study as the process by which Christians (1) explore, (2) decide, and (3) act?

## IV. WHY DOES CHRIST'S MISSION DEMAND WELL-TRAINED LEADERS?

### Understanding the Issue

Think for a moment of something vital to your relationship with God and His church. Try to remember how you realized its importance, and when. Did someone help you, or did you learn it by yourself? (Allow sufficient time to think, make notes, and compare ideas with others in the group.)

We learn much individually by reading, drill, memorization, listening, and practice. These activities help fix a fact or shape an attitude.

But we learn even more by association with a good teacher. Most significant learning is the result of an intimate relationship with another person: a parent, a teacher, a friend, a classmate. He need not be a teachers college graduate. Many Christians are effective teachers even though they may not be professionals.

What makes a good teacher? (List on a chalkboard some of the qualifications you look for in a good teacher.)

Your congregation's skills in mission will not for the most part rise above that of your lay leaders and teachers.

A study of one or both of the sections of Scripture noted below will help you understand why better training of more adequate leaders for children's classes, youth and adult discussion groups, committees, and task forces is essential to parish renewal.

### Learning from the Scriptures

*Read Ephesians 4:1-16*

- Discuss: 1. What is the unity out of which God produces His leaders? (Vv. 1-7)
2. How do different abilities in different people serve this unity? (Vv. 11-12)
  3. In what sense is every Christian a teacher? (V. 12)
  4. How do Christians complement each other? (V. 13)
  5. Explain why pastors and teachers should train people how to teach and how to learn from one another.
  6. How do teachers enable people to grow up into Christ, the Head of the church? (Vv. 15-16)
  7. On what promises does the church base its recruitment and training of Christian leaders? (Vv. 11-14. See also Matthew 9:38.)

*Read Colossians 1:24-29*

- Discuss: 1. What did Paul teach the Colossian Christians about the

- mystery hidden for ages? (Vv. 24-27)
2. What hallows the role of Christian teaching? (V. 28)
  3. In what sense does the Christian teacher suffer? (Vv. 24, 29)
  4. How is the Christian teacher also a Christian missionary? (Vv. 27-28)

### Some Questions on the Recruitment of Leaders

Below are some questions a congregation might ask itself before recruiting a new teacher. Check the three most significant and discuss why the question deserves to be asked. Add any that are missing.

1. Is the prospective leader alive to the possibilities that Christian teaching offers?
2. What is his daily work? What are his hobbies?
3. Does he have time to study? to regularly attend class sessions?
4. Is he too young? too old?
5. Is he curious about life and willing to encounter new ideas?
6. Is he an enthusiastic Christian with a good general knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, Lutheran theology, and church history? Or is he ready to acquire this knowledge?
7. Can he with a loving spirit help others inquire, discover, perceive, question, and draw conclusions? Is he happy doing these things?
8. Can he sense when his students are ready to learn for themselves? Can he put himself into his students' thoughts and attitudinal framework?
9. Is the congregation willing to free him from other tasks so he can devote himself to teaching?

### Some Questions on Leadership Training

Below are some questions a congregation might ask itself about the training its leaders receive. Check the three most significant questions and discuss why each deserves to be asked. Add any that are missing.

1. Before pressing the potential leader for a decision, will the congregation provide him with literature to read, a seasoned teacher to talk with, a chance to hear lectures on Christian education, and an opportunity to visit a class in session?
2. Do we provide classes to prepare our teachers for their first appearance before a group?
3. Do we offer "apprenticeship" opportunities?
4. Do the pastor and the congregation's professional teachers help train church school workers and other leaders?
5. Does the congregation offer weekly (biweekly) meetings for church school staff with departmental subdivisions from nursery through adults?
6. Do we train leadership teams as well as individual teachers?
7. Do we give at least annual public recognition to faithful teachers who improve themselves through additional training?

8. Do we provide teacher-parent consultations to improve the quality of teaching that occurs in both the family and church school?

### Synod's Education Affirmation IV: Its Implications for Us

Some Christian teachers work at their tasks quietly, with little recognition and support from others in the congregation.

Some teachers would welcome opportunities to acquire new skills through congregational staff meetings and circuit workshops. But often their congregations and circuits fail them.

Some congregation members hunger for meaningful, growing relationships with others. They are willing to "roll up their sleeves" if they are asked to engage in a challenging piece of "church work." But often congregation leaders fail to recognize, recruit, or train them for teaching, one of the church's most important ministries.

At its New York convention in 1967 The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod again chose to be serious about the training of adequate teachers. "The Holy Spirit enlightens, sanctifies, and empowers God's people through the Word of God and the witness of Christians. Christian teachers need to know the Scriptures. They must also understand the interests and problems of individuals at specific age levels. WE AFFIRM THE NEED TO TRAIN CONSECRATED TEACHERS WHO WILL PROCLAIM AND TEACH THE WORD."

Discuss: What can our congregation do to identify more potential teachers and leaders? What improvements can we suggest for our current teacher training program? How can the congregation better acknowledge, encourage, and sustain its faithful teachers?

### Moving On

List some people you think would be good teachers, although they are not currently teaching.

Select a different member of the group to approach each of them. Inquire of them what training they think a congregation should give church school teachers and why.

Share their answers with the group at the next meeting.

**V. WHEN DOES THE CHURCH TEACH AND LEARN MOST EFFECTIVELY?**

**Understanding the Issue**

List on a chalkboard some factors that might cause people to shy away from your congregation's educational efforts. (Allow time for group reaction.)

List the factors that would help attract people to a class or group. (Summarize them.)

Isn't it true that adults, young people, and children become disinterested in the congregation's mission and ministry when they are ignored, talked down to, or treated as if they were unimportant?

Don't we take our place in the church more cheerfully, learning who we are by Baptism and what our work is as the new people of God, when we (1) are allowed to play a responsible decision-making role in a group, (2) are helped to discover our own needs, (3) become more aware of our spiritual needs and the study programs that will help meet them, (4) are led to accept responsibility for our own learning, and (5) study the Scriptures in an accepting, concerned fellowship of Christians?

An examination of one or more of the statements from the Bible noted below will help you participate in the church's teaching-learning ministry with better personal understanding and with more compassion.

**Learning from the Scriptures**

*Read Romans 15:1-14*

- Discuss: 1. Who are "strong"? Who are "weak"? (V. 1)  
 2. What kind of exchange is possible among the strong and the weak? (Vv. 1-3)  
 3. Why study the Scriptures in a class? (Vv. 4-6)  
 4. What Christian attitude encourages personal growth through group experiences? (Vv. 7-13)  
 5. What ability is cultivated best by study and practice in a group? (V. 14)

*Read Galatians 6:1-10*

- Discuss: 1. What's the supreme test for a "spiritual" man, a Christian? (Vv. 1-6)  
 2. How does the interaction of a group such as ours counteract the "weariness" and "faint-heartedness" that easily overtakes us? (Vv. 7-10)

*Read Ephesians 5:15-21*

- Discuss: 1. Children, youth, and adults have both different and similar

needs. What common need unites them as Christians engaged in the teaching-learning process? (Vv. 15-17)

2. How do Christians "address" each other and thereby teach each other in (1) the church worship service and opening and closing devotions and (2) classes and discussion groups? (V. 19)  
 3. Should we "be subject" or "submit ourselves" to those who are not our equals in income, education, or sense of etiquette? Why? (V. 21)

**Every Christian a Lifelong Teacher-Learner**

Select the best ending to the following and tell why it is best. Add any ending you consider better.

- Christian education courses should be planned (a) in the Synodical headquarters, (b) in the District office, (c) in the local situation.
- A Christian congregation experiences renewal as all its members are challenged to (a) "get with" the new cultural patterns, (b) repent and get a new grasp of God's forgiveness in Christ, (c) pursue beneficial technological advances, (d) develop a more loving attitude.
- Our classes must always speak to the fact that most Christians live the major portion of their waking hours in (a) making a living, (b) leisure-time activities, (c) doing "church work," (d) going to school.
- The primary purpose of Christian classes is to help members search for understanding about (a) how the Bible came to us, (b) how The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod is organized, (c) how God involves us in His work for His world, (d) God's plan for His world.
- The most effective classes are those that (a) treat interesting subjects, (b) provide various ways for Christians to get at issues that confront them, (c) depend on the pastor for leadership.
- Good group leaders and members should first be willing to (a) tell what they know, (b) support class projects, (c) listen to people describe their struggle to live as Christ's people.
- Classes in Christian faith, life, and work, especially short-term groups, are best attended when people are enrolled by (a) interest, (b) age, (c) sex.
- The training of Christians as Christ's representatives to His world occurs (a) under the supervision of the congregation, (b) in the family, (c) wherever the Christian participates in a teaching-learning situation.
- Congregations help members best when they (a) encourage maturing Christians, as volunteer learners, to choose for themselves and their children from several options, (b) when they provide one big Bible class for all adults and a number of classes for all youth and children, (c) when they make a rule that every member should be in Bible school.

10. To capitalize on its opportunities our congregation should (a) build a new elementary school or education center, (b) employ a director of education, (c) encourage more study by individual Christians, purchasing good books for the congregation's library, and counseling potential leaders through suggested reading lists, (d) make better use of facilities and personnel, (e) increase the number and variety of classes and training groups.

### **Synod's Education Affirmation V: Its Implications for Us**

Sometimes we have been satisfied to think of Christian education as something only for children. And even then we have reduced it to situations where teachers tell and pupils listen.

Too easily we have said that youth work is necessary because we simply must "keep them with Jesus." We have neglected to train them so that they can sustain each other, sharing both God's judgment on sin and His promise of forgiveness in Christ.

Often we have looked on adult work as remedial, teaching people what they missed as children; or as review, recalling what they have forgotten since confirmation.

At its 1967 convention in New York, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod underscored its conviction that "Christian education is a lifelong process. Spiritual growth is both necessary and possible at all age levels. A formal program of Christian education provides positive influence for Christian training and learning. WE AFFIRM THAT IN THE PROCESS OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION EVERY MEMBER OF THE CHURCH MUST BE BOTH TEACHER AND LEARNER."

**Discuss:** What steps can the congregation take to make class participation more helpful to every group member? How can we plan our classes so that each student is involved in actually teaching and learning repentance and forgiveness, faith and renewal? What can we do to strengthen teacher-learner relationships so important for effective Christian growth? What is the purpose of adult education?

### **Moving On**

Encourage each study group member to contact a different congregational leader, especially former committee chairmen and organization leaders. Ask each leader the three questions below. Bring their answers to the next meeting.

1. What do you think is the most critical issue facing our congregation today?
2. How is (was) your committee or organization involved in train-

- ing its members and other members of the congregation for our common work?
3. What do you suggest the congregation do to help people deal with the problems they face as committed disciples of Christ? After studying this chapter, in what ways do you and the interviewed person agree and differ regarding how we learn most effectively?

## VI. WHAT IS THE FAMILY'S ROLE IN THE CHURCH'S EDUCATIONAL MINISTRY?

### Understanding the Issue

Poll your group on the following questions:

(1) What did your congregation do this past year to help its members strengthen family relationships?

(2) How did your congregation help families equip themselves for a more effective ministry with and to other members in the community? (Tabulate the results on a chalkboard.)

The family is the basic unit into which God sets people so they might be trained to serve Him. As parents and children we sometimes fail to recognize the purpose of the family. We do not grasp the mission into which God calls us. We neglect the love and conversation that heals family hurts and sends its members to their work and play with joy.

On the other hand, many Christian parents are learning to trust God's full forgiveness in Christ and teach it in the home. Sometimes they get together with other parents in the congregation to share insights on how to live under God's grace. The church of Jesus Christ more fully reaches its potential as a training force when parents realize their calling as Christian teachers. Families then can become more capable agencies of the Holy Spirit for helping other families, too.

A study of one or more of the following Bible passages will help to clarify the educational role of Christians in families.

### Learning from the Scriptures

*Read Deuteronomy 6:1-9*

- Discuss:
1. Should parents teach their children to fear what God will do to them if they don't obey? How should children learn to "fear God"? (Vv. 1-3)
  2. What binds members of a Christian family together as they set goals and work toward them? (Vv. 4-5)
  3. What sequence is necessary for family members to be instructed in God's will? (Vv. 6-9)
  4. Note the recommended teaching-learning activities listed in these verses. Discuss parallel activities for today's families.

*Read Ephesians 6:1-4*

- Discuss:
1. Why does God require and bless the obedience of children toward their parents? (Vv. 1-3)
  2. To what and to whom are both parents and children subject? (Vv. 1-2)
  3. How does a Christian father show that he too lives under

God's grace? (V. 4)

4. What happens to families when God's commandments are ignored or neglected?

*Read 1 Peter 3:1-22*

- Discuss:
1. Is a Christian wife different from a wife who does not know God? How are they alike? (Vv. 1-6)
  2. How should a husband treat his wife as "the weaker sex"? (V. 7)
  3. How will family relationships be improved by love, reverence for Christ, and a new awareness of the meaning of Baptism? (Vv. 8-22)

### Christians Helping Each Other in Families

Below are 15 statements that show how congregations can help families better serve Christ in His mission to all families. Number them in the order they might best be introduced. Discuss reasons for the order you have chosen.

- Train Sunday school teachers to help parents discover and utilize educational opportunities in the home.
- Arrange with the pastor for a series of Sunday services that help members rediscover the meaning of Christian marriage and how Christians can live together under God's forgiveness.
- Assist the board of elders to set up classes for expectant parents to discuss the significance of infant Baptism and Christian child training.
- Assign family life education to a special committee, responsible to the board of parish education.
- Survey the families in the congregation and construct a graph to show what was discovered about the religious affiliation of parents, age and number of children, place of family residence, and any other information that would help the congregation involve them in its ministry.
- Conduct a series of parent talk groups to examine the issues raised in the new Concordia Sex Education Series.
- Plan a home visit to ask parents and youth what the congregation can do to help them live under the Gospel, with love for one another.
- Examine the congregation's current educational program to see how well it serves Christians in families.

- Plan a special observance of Christian Family Week next May.
- Test all programs to determine how effectively the congregation stays in touch with all its families—not only the ideal but also the broken, split, incomplete, and faltering.
- Clarify the objectives of a program of families ministering to families, and methods by which they can be achieved.
- Conduct parent-youth discussions.
- Organize a parent-teacher group in the Sunday school.
- Arrange for special visits by officers to acquaint new families with the congregation's educational opportunities.
- Conduct a retreat for married couples on the theme, "Building Unity in Marriage."

#### **Synod's Education Affirmation VI: Its Implications for Us**

Christian parents are often the key to effective Christian education. Sometimes, however, when parents enroll their children "at church" they feel relieved of their role as teachers of the faith.

Often a parent incorrectly concludes that when he sends his child "to church" he is thereby automatically giving him a Christian education.

At its New York convention, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod stated again the conviction that parents, young people, and children will learn to know God in Jesus Christ more intimately and obey Him more freely when fathers and mothers are His chief teachers. "Family attitudes and values profoundly affect family members. The Christian home is vital to spiritual growth, for parents exert important educative influences on their children both through example and through precept. WE AFFIRM THAT THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY IS AN INFLUENTIAL AGENCY IN CHRISTIAN EDUCATION AND THAT THE CHURCH MUST EQUIP FATHERS AND MOTHERS FOR THEIR IMPORTANT CHRISTIAN MISSION."

**Discuss:** How can we help parents recognize their ongoing need for training in Christ's mission? What values should the Christian family cultivate and guard in the midst of fluctuating moral standards? What plans does the congregation have for counseling engaged couples preparing for marriage?

#### **Moving On**

Where do parents feel they need the most help? in discipline problems? handling money? sex education? understanding children at

different age levels? dealing with quarrels and conflict? family worship?

Interview several parents. Ask what kind of group discussions they would like to attend. Convert their concerns into suggested titles for parents' classes. Give the titles to the adult education leader of the congregation, or to the chairman of the board of parish education or of the board of elders. Volunteer to invite parents to classes that might be developed as a result.

*(If you have time at the close of this session, review the six affirmations you have discussed. List on the chalkboard a capsule summary of each.)*