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NUMBER 2
DECEMBER 1991

The Lutheran Educator

The WELS Education Journal

The Lutheran Educator

The education journal
of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod
edited by the faculty of Dr. Martin Luther College

ARTICLES

**How We Teach Religion
Part 2** 36
John R. Isch

**Memory Work in the
Primary Grades** 44
Irma R. Paap

**Levels of Sanctification:
Accepting and
Encouraging** 50
Alan A. Bitter

**Profiles of Ministry:
Rural Midwest** 59
John E. Meyer

DEPARTMENTS

As We See It 35
MISFITS IN THE MINISTRY
Teachers Share Ideas 48
Reviews 62

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Editor — John R. Isch

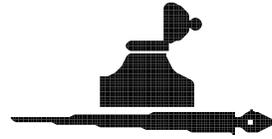
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MISFITS IN THE MINISTRY?

Can you imagine a teaching staff like this?

M. is good at math. His former job involved working with ledgers and balance sheets. But he hasn't been well thought of in the community. There are questions about his honesty. Some on the staff fear that his past reputation may give the school a bad name.

J. seems too young to be a teacher. Some are concerned that he's still "wet behind the ears." They wonder whether he'll make mature decisions. He also seems a little hot-headed, maybe even a bit fanatical. Others are concerned about his inflated opinion of himself; he seems to think he has exceptional leadership abilities. None, however, can question his youthful zeal and enthusiasm.

S. always seems to be putting his foot in his mouth or at least operating his mouth before he engages his brain. But he's the eternal optimist and has leadership potential.

P. is a likeable person but doesn't seem to have any solid convictions. He also tends to be pessimistic. How effective can he possibly be as a teacher of God's word?

T. is concerned about doing things the way they've always been done, so when another staff member suggests an innovative or creative idea T. puts him down and says it can't be done. His skepticism is matched by his sarcasm.

In the past Z. has taken an active role in anti-government protests and insurrections. The others admire his courage and convictions, but they feel he's been misguided in the past, and they wonder if he'll "go off the deep end" again?

How could such misfits ever serve in the ministry? What good could they ever accomplish? Who would ever want people like these as teachers? Jesus would. Jesus did. United in him, inspired by him, and on fire for him these disciples accomplished much for their Lord.

It still happens.

Each of us is a unique individual, not only in physical appearance, in special talents and abilities, but in temperament. Each of us has certain personality strengths and weaknesses. We need to confess our weaknesses as the sins they are and with God's help seek to overcome them. We need to appreciate our God-given strengths and, as they are sanctified by the gospel, use them to his glory. We need to understand other people's weaknesses and be forgiving. We need to appreciate other people's strengths and thank God for them as they use them to his glory. As Christ has made us his own, called us to serve him, and given each of us unique personality strengths for service, so we need to accept and appreciate one another as we work together in the greatest cause on earth.

MJL

How we teach religion

Part 2

John R. Isch



[This article and a previous October 1991 article describe the results of a survey of WELS elementary school teachers on the teaching of religion. Slightly more than half (55%) of the teachers in Synod returned the questionnaire. The previous article discussed the survey and the findings for prekindergarten, kindergarten, and grades one through four.]

Grades five to eight

The picture of the religion class in grades five to eight is more complex than in the lower grades. This is because the curriculum suggested by the Synod materials is a separate subject curriculum with Bible history, catechism, and hymnology classes. The picture is also complicated because teachers of these grade levels are more likely to go to other sources for their teaching materials. Three out of eight persons who returned the

questionnaire teach in these upper grades, and their descriptions of their religion classes are the data for this analysis (see Table 1).

The curriculum for these grades was originally seen as a 2-2-1, with Bible history and catechism each taught two days a week and hymnology taught once a week. Four out of five teachers in grades five and six appear to use this arrangement while fewer (probably slightly better than half) seventh- and eighth-grade teachers use this pattern. About three out of four teachers in rooms that have more than two grades at this level have this pattern.

Thus it appears that the traditional classes are still being taught in most classrooms, but the pattern and the arrangement varies. Friday may be disappearing as the hymnology day in the upper grades. Upper grade teachers have longer religion classes than do teachers in the lower grades. A Bible history class in grades five and six and in grades seven and eight runs about 50 minutes, a catechism class in grades five and six is about 50 minutes also, and in grades seven and eight is about 55 minutes. Teachers of these grade levels finish

a hymnology lesson in about 30 minutes.

One out of four teachers in grades seven and eight has a different subject during the religion class period. These subjects, for the most part, are church history, life of Luther, and Synod history. Some teachers at these levels also listed Bible study separate from the Bible history class and some included Bible study as a Bible history class.

Though teachers in these grades describe their classes as Bible history or catechism, they are not necessarily using the same textbooks for these classes. The teachers were to indicate the textbook they were using in the classrooms: *Bible History* (grades 5-6), *Catechism Lessons* (grades 5-6), *Luther's Catechism* (grades 7-8), *Bible History for Christian Schools* (grades 5-8), and *Luther's Catechism* (Gausewitz edition) (grades 5-8). The percentages reported in Table 2 are the percentages of teachers in the three grade combination categories who were using a particular textbook. The reader should remember that the designation "5-6" could mean a separate fifth grade, a separate sixth grade, or a combined fifth- and sixth-

	Grade 5-6	Grade 7-8	Grade 5-8
Bible History	98%	82%	94%
Catechism	87%	25%	61%
Hymnology	83%	62%	85%

grade room. The same applies to the "7-8" category. The "5-8" category would include any other combination such as grades six through eighth as well as grades five through eight.

The low percentage of teachers using *Luther's Catechism*, the 1982 edition of the small catechism, does not indicate the level of use of this textbook. This section asked the teachers whether they used the book. Information regarding the pastor's use of the confirmation class textbook was gathered in a different survey.

When the data for 5-6 and 5-8 are combined, this conclusion is plausible: Three out of five teachers in the fifth and sixth grades are using the textbooks for these grades (*Bible History* and *Catechism Lessons*). The teachers who used these books rated them in similar ways. They saw both books as understandable (four on a

	Grades 5-6	Grades 7-8	Grades 5-8
<i>Bible History</i>	70%	7%	45%
<i>Catechism Lessons</i>	72%	8%	51%
<i>Luther's Catechism</i>	13%	36%	30%
<i>Bible History for Christian Schools</i>	3%	9%	9%
<i>Luther's Catechism</i> (Gausewitz)	3%	4%	8%

five-point scale), as better-than-average in relevance (3.6) and as slightly-better-than-average in teaching to the affective (3.3). Those teachers who used *Luther's Catechism* thought the book to be very understandable (4.3), relevant (4.2), and teaching to the affective (4.0). Only a few teachers were using the older books: *Luther's Catechism*, (Gausewitz) and *Bible History for Christian Schools*. Ratings for these books are therefore not particularly meaningful. Only one out of ten teachers in the fifth and sixth grades are using the workbooks, *Searching in God's Word*. They also rate the workbook as very difficult, but they see it as having an average level of usefulness. (The reader should note that this workbook has been rewritten.)

Teachers in grades five to eight were much more likely to list materials other than the synodical textbooks. One-fourth of the fifth and sixth grades teachers listed such other materials about equally divided between a primary use and a supplemental use. Three out of five seventh- and eighth-grade teachers also listed such materials; most of them indicated a primary use. One out of three teachers in grades seven and eight who indicated that they use other materials are using the Bible study materials published by Julian Anderson. These materials are the most frequently used of all "other materials"; about one out of seven classrooms in grades five through eight whose teachers responded to this survey are using these materials somewhere in their religion classes.

In two out of three classrooms at these grade levels the parents pay for their children's textbooks. In the

other third, the school purchases the materials or the parents and the school share the costs. The NIV is the translation of choice with less than 3% of the returned surveys showing the KJV used for memorization. Three out of ten classrooms in the upper grades have a memory work course of study that has been developed by the local school; one out of six classrooms have no coordinated memory work schedule. The other classrooms are using some modification of the memory work schedule suggested in the religion materials for grades one to four. The teachers judge their memory work course of study to be neither too difficult nor too easy (3.0 on a five-point scale).

Because of the different subjects and materials used for these grade levels, the type of method used is also likely to vary. Nevertheless, when the teachers were asked about the parts of the lesson (approach, aim, inferences, truth, application), they responded in a similar manner.

Even the inferences in the upper grades are used by more than half the teachers. The teachers in these grades were more likely than those in the lower grades to see the various parts of the lesson as slightly more difficult to plan and teach. The application was a special challenge, but even here the average rating was slightly more than two on a four-point scale (one=not at all difficult, four=very difficult).

One out of four fifth- and sixth-grade teachers typically present a new Bible history lesson by telling it. More likely, however, the students will read the lesson aloud in class. This is also the most common pattern in seventh and eighth grade. The

teachers responding to this item, however, often said that they frequently varied the manner of presentation. In whatever way these teachers present their lessons, the majority (82%) felt they were very well prepared or adequately prepared when they graduated from college.

Half the teachers in these grades think there should be an integrated memory work course across all agencies of Christian education. One-third believe there should be curriculum integration among the Lutheran elementary school, the Sunday school, and the Lutheran high school. A higher percentage (45%) believes there should be better integration between the Lutheran elementary school and the pastor's catechism class. Few (13%) believe there should be more integration between the Lutheran elementary school and the youth Bible class. Yet, the teachers

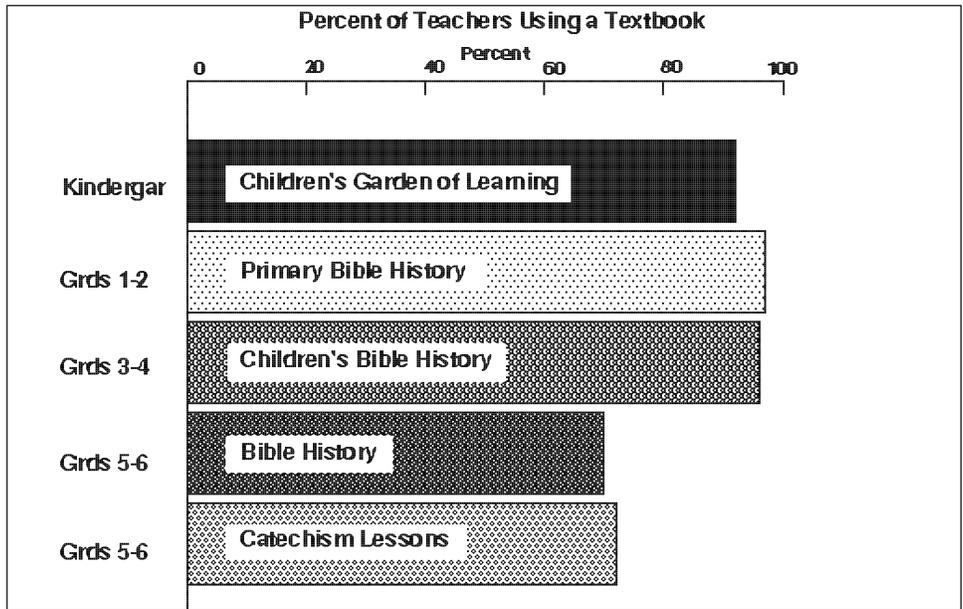
in the upper grades believe, as do the teachers in the other grades, that looseleaf supplemental materials should be part of any new curriculum (88%).

Conclusions and observations

The results of the BPE's survey of elementary school religion classes confirm, for the most part, what most readers probably already know. That is not surprising; most of what we learn ought to agree with what we already know by experience, else we would doubt seriously what we learn.

Still the survey does tell us some things that need emphasis. Those responsible for making decisions regarding the type of materials to be published for our Lutheran elementary schools as part of any new religion curriculum have a critical task. This survey says that the materials

GRAPH 1



used in our classrooms are important; teachers use materials to teach religion. Often the materials determine the content and constrain the methods.

Given the importance of the materials, the question of what teachers currently use is worth asking. Graph 1 above shows grade combination categories and the textbooks published by the Synod. The bars on the graph show the percentage of teachers at these grade levels who are using the particular text.

There are some ambiguities in the data and teachers did not indicate the extent to which they used a particular textbook; but when all the dust settles, it appears that nearly nine out of ten (88%) teachers responding to the survey use one or another of the materials published by the Synod for its religion curriculum. Three out of four of the teachers who do not use

the materials are either prekindergarten teachers or seventh- and eighth-grade teachers.

In addition, the teachers who do use the materials published by the Synod seem satisfied with these materials (see Graph 2).

On the left of the graph are the textbooks recommended for our schools. All the textbooks are rated above average as understandable (first bar), relevant (second bar), and teaching to affective goals (third bar). Of the three categories, the affective goals (grasping the emotional content of the lesson and seeing how that lesson can be used in their lives) presents the greatest challenge for the materials. Even in this category, however, the ratings are above average. Unless the teachers who did not return the survey differ markedly from those who did, it is hard to conclude from the survey that there is a

GRAPH 2

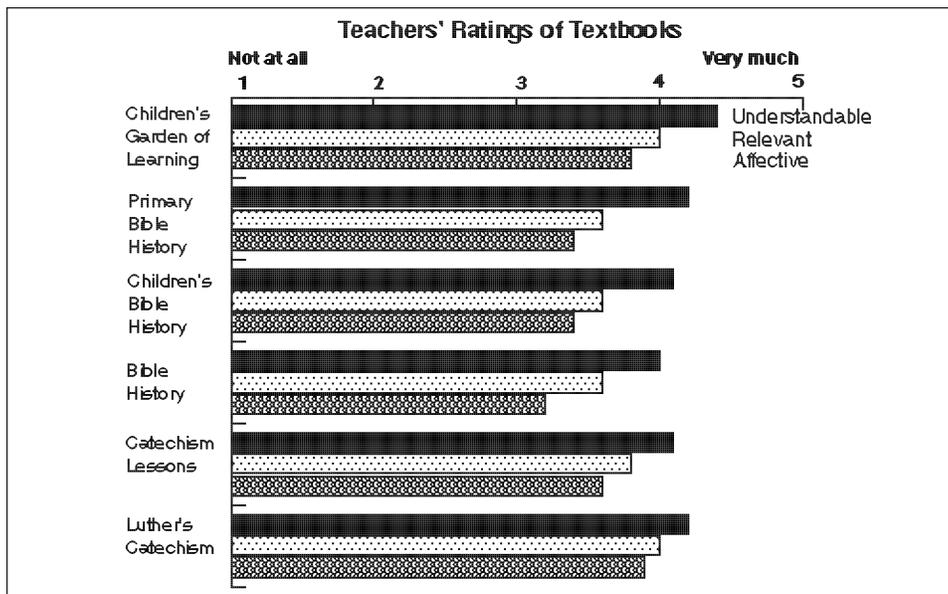


TABLE 3
Which Parts of the Lesson Do You Use?

	Grades 5-6		Grades 7-8		Grades 5-8	
	Always Usually	Rarely Never	Always Usually	Rarely Never	Always Usually	Rarely Never
Approach	91%	9%	84%	16%	87%	13%
Aim	92%	8%	86%	14%	94%	6%
Inferences	76%	24%	59%	41%	71%	29%
Truth	96%	4%	88%	12%	92%	8%
Application	97%	3%	99%	1%	97%	3%

groundswell of dissatisfaction with the current materials.

This does not suggest that nothing needs to be changed in the curriculum. The naturalistic fallacy of any survey is to conclude that what is, is what ought to be. In addition, the "non-synodical" materials that are chosen by many teachers deserve some thought.

The teachers responding to the survey were asked to list the publisher and the name of any "non-synodical" materials they were using either as primary or supplemental in their classrooms. Many materials they listed were worksheets or workbooks available from publishing houses or produced by individual teachers or pastors. Teachers are apparently looking for and finding assignments or homework that give students a way to review or explore the lesson further. When the teachers are asked, as they were in the final set of questions, what they want in any new curriculum, three out of four agreed that they wanted a wide variety of loose-leaf materials. When the teachers were further asked to suggest what should be in any new curriculum, they frequently described teaching

aids, learning activities, and worksheet exercises.

Well-designed and written worksheets can help children learn their religion lessons. Yet the downside of this suggestion was given by one teacher in a written comment on the survey: "No workbooks! This class should be set apart from the others. It should be the highlight of the day. Don't kill it with a workbook." For those who disagree and believe that workbooks and worksheets are necessary and useful, the challenge will be to have materials that do indeed set the religion class "apart from the others." Whatever one's view of workbooks, all agree on that goal.

A second type of frequently selected, non-synodical material is the many Bible study workbooks, booklets, and guides. A visitor to our Lutheran elementary schools is likely to observe a considerable use of the Bible in the religion classes at all grade levels. Some teachers in grades five and six and even in the lower grades said they had replaced their Bible history books with the Bible and they were now studying the lessons directly from that Bible. Teachers obviously discovered that

children can read the NIV text with understanding and interest. Luther wanted to give his people a Bible they could read. We thank God for this renewed interest in Bible reading in our schools.

There is also a challenge here in this growth of Bible study classes in our elementary schools. The challenge is similar to the one for workbooks: How can we make Bible study something “apart” from other classes like social studies and reading? How can Bible study be taught so students see it as something different from other school subjects, something that is not put aside with the reading and the math book when school is over? How can we turn this new interest in elementary school Bible study into an exciting discovery of God’s words to us that will turn students into life-long, independent, habitual readers of God’s Word?

A third type of “nonsynodical” material listed by teachers are the religion curriculums purchased from other Lutheran and non-Lutheran

publishing houses. Teachers have sought out these materials specifically, and they rate these materials often more highly as understandable, relevant, and teaching to affective goals than they rate our own materials. Many teachers are looking for religion materials that attract the interest and involvement of today’s children, materials that use new and exciting applications to engage children who often appear jaded with just about anything else. Those who are making decisions about new religion materials for our schools should consider the implications of this finding. In contrast to other published materials, our books and manuals can appear less exciting, colorful, and interesting. To some the applications appear stilted and shopworn. That is an unfortunate impression. These perceptions, however inaccurate and inconsequential they may be, do affect the decisions people make. The content of our religion material must be a clear and true presentation of God’s eternal will and Word; the cover and the arrangement of the book should both complement that message and attract and engage the student.

Yet, there is also a challenge here. How do we “set apart” the religion class? The class is set apart, first, by the content of the class; it is not set apart by the cover of the book. Second, the class is set apart by a teacher who knows that content and for whom that content has become the most personal and exciting thing in the world. The excitement, interest, and vibrancy will then be found in people responding to the gospel, not just to materials written by people. The appropriate combination of a





full and clear proclamation of law and gospel with formats, arrangements, books, and manuals is probably the greatest challenge in any new religion curriculum.

Memory work

Few teachers, less than one in five, are in a school that has worked out its own memory work schedule. Three out of four teachers are working with a modified version of the memory work schedule originally published by the Synod. One out of ten teachers are in schools that have no memory work schedule. But in a depressing commentary of the value of having a correlated, locally developed memory work course of study, teachers in schools that did have their own course of study rated the difficulty of this memory work nearly identically with other teachers who are in schools with either a modified synod course or in schools with no correlated course. The overall rating of the difficulty or ease of memory work was a solid 3.0, the dead center of a five-point, too-difficult to too-easy scale.

No one, of course, asked the children how difficult the memory work is although one teacher did comment on the survey: "We had a discussion about memory work. ... My students honestly felt it was not too much." If memory work is beyond just one child, it is too much for that child and a teacher must adjust the requirements for that child. This survey, however, gives no indication that the current memory work requirements are unreasonable for children in our elementary schools.

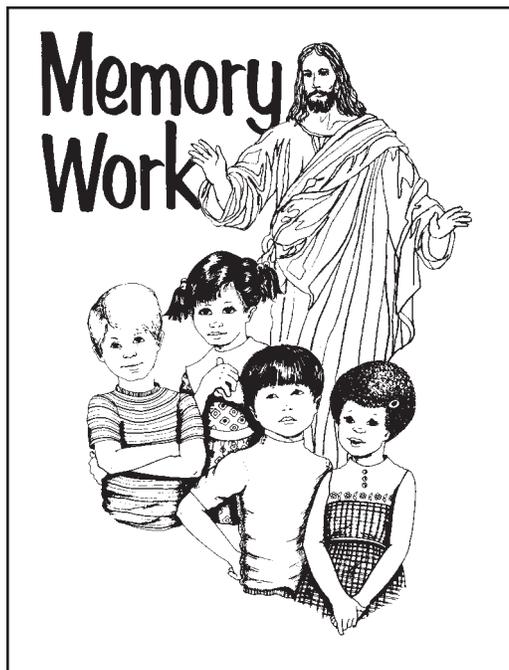
Methods

This author was pleasantly bemused by how well teachers recognized the traditional parts of a religion lesson: very few omitted the item on methods. With more than 90% of the teachers at all grade levels attesting that they used approaches, aims, truths, and applications "usually" or "always," he was suitably impressed. He was even more impressed that two out of three teachers typically presented a new Bible lesson by telling it to their students. Finally, his joy was complete when he noted that 90% of the teachers believed they were adequately or very well prepared to teach religion when they graduated from college. Still, one teacher's written comment brought a breath of reality to the author's musings: "Life and its responsibilities is the best preparation for teaching religion. Then Scripture comes alive and becomes applicable." To this, the author replies, "Amen."

John Isch teaches in the education division at Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minnesota.

MEMORY WORK IN THE PRIMARY GRADES

Irma R. Paap



What is memory work?

The boys and girls in our Christian day schools, confirmation classes, Sunday schools, and vacation Bible schools are regularly called upon for memory work. This memory work usually consists of Bible verses, parts of the catechism, hymns, and prayers.

Why do we have memory work?

The objective of such memory work is to afford a ready source of knowledge, comfort, hope, and strength for the child to use throughout his or her lifetime. The ability to recall memorized Christian gems can be especially valuable when the Christian is experiencing great joy, during the many trials of life, and especially in

the hour of death. How wonderful it is to be able to cite a passage, hymn, or prayer spontaneously at the moment of need! How blessed is the frightened soldier on the battlefield or the Christian on his deathbed who can recite or sing:

Jesus, lead thou on Till our rest
is won;

And although the way be cheer-
less,

We will following calm and fear-
less.

Guide us by Thy hand To our
fatherland. (TLH 410)

How comforting it is for the sick child or lonely college student to recall the Lord's words, "Do not fear, for I am with you" (Is 41:10). How important it is for the tempted teenager or straying adult to be reminded of the familiar prayer which our Savior taught us to pray, "And lead us not into temptation," and then to recall Luther's explanation (The sixth petition of the Lord's Prayer).

Teaching memory work

Oftentimes Christian parents begin teaching the truths of God's Word to their children as soon as they learn to talk. They do this by saying short prayers or Scripture passages over and over with their children. By the time these young children reach

preschool and kindergarten, they find it relatively easy to memorize the simple passages, familiar prayers, and hymns. The memorization of such scriptural truths continues into the primary grades where these gems increase in number and in difficulty.

Success in teaching memory work depends on how it is taught. There are three primary concerns: (1) The child's understanding of the material, (2) the child's mastery of the item, (3) the child's attitude regarding the memory work. All are important and one very much affects the other. To accommodate these concerns, teachers need to be fully aware of the following:

1. Each child's individual ability: Maturity and innate ability vary markedly among the pupils in any given class. Some can memorize easily, others struggle with even the simplest Bible verse. Teachers, be patient! Do not expect more of any child than is appropriate for his/her ability. Be ready to assign less or more in keeping with what can be successfully mastered. If necessary, vary the time limit for achieving mastery or omit some assignments for a child. Be attuned to any negative attitudes arising toward God's Word. Memory work should not cause a child to dislike God's Word or to be resentful toward learning it. Rather we want each child to treasure what is mastered and to delight in the suc-

cess of achieving realistic expectations.

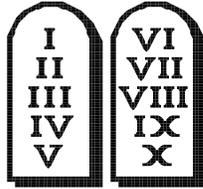
2. How children memorize: Young children need to use several of their senses for successful memorization. These children benefit from *seeing* the words, even if they have not yet learned to read all of them. Seeing pictures which convey the thoughts in the words is also very helpful.

Children need to *hear* the words of their memory work too. As the teacher points to the words, they should also be spoken slowly and distinctly. Then the children should be asked to *say* the words of their memory work. First the children should be guided to repeat small portions of the memory gem in unison several times. Then the smaller parts may be gradually combined, until the entire assign-

ment is being spoken. If the children appear to weary of the repetition, call on various groups or have the children stand, perhaps even turning about to face different points in the classroom. A final test of mastery, might be to call on a few individual children to recite.

3. The best time for memory work instruction: Before attempting to teach any memory work to children, the words and their meaning must be clearly understood. This can best be done if the item to be memorized is correlated with the preceding Bible or

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hymn lesson. Memorization should not be a part of that lesson, however. It is more desirable to teach and drill for memory after the Word of God lesson has been taught. Additional drill may be needed throughout the school day, particularly after the afternoon devotion and at the end of the school day.

Do not expect primary age children to learn their memory work at home. However, you may find it helpful to have parents reinforce what has been taught in school. This will benefit the child if parents are clearly informed of what their child has been assigned and what you want them to do at home. Parents and teachers often find it practical to keep the *Memory Work* booklet at home rather than in school or taking it back and forth each day. At the same time, teachers must realize that not every parent will help his or her child, and that some parents may be too demanding.

4. How much memory work to assign: The curriculum of a school usually designates the memory work for each grade. In the primary grades, this is most likely what has been printed in the *Memory Work* booklets published by Northwestern Publishing House. There is a very important word of caution here, however. Because the memory work for each Bible lesson varies, teachers should not routinely assign everything indicated for a lesson after it

has been taught. Before the school year begins, teachers need to block out the memory work, day by day, to distribute the items evenly, avoiding days after long vacations and also Mondays when possible. Longer recitations may need several days. Items, such as the articles of the Creed, should be broken into parts of reasonable length. Assign each part first, then combine the parts for recitation of the entire article. Some hymns may also need special accommodation. "A Mighty Fortress is our God" has very long stanzas that can be divided for two days. Only one stanza of any hymn should be recited on a given day, unless stanzas are being reviewed. Do not be concerned if the indicated memory work recitations fall behind the pace of the Bible lessons being taught.

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primary age
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work at home.

5. Provision for successful recitation of assigned memory work: To review the assigned recitation and ensure confidence when reciting, groups of three or four children may be called upon to gather near the teacher. Seek the full attention of the

group and try to avoid disruption by others in the classroom. To begin, the teacher should say the recitation to the gathered group of children. Then have the group, in unison, say the assigned portion. Finally, the teacher should call on individual children to recite. If any child is still struggling with mastery, include him or her in another group or work with that child individually. It is important to receive each recitation with eye contact and approval, even if complete mastery has not been achieved. If possible, schedule memory work recitations before the school day begins in the morning.

Special considerations when teaching memory work

There will be times when primary grade memory work will need to be very flexible. During the Christmas season, time must be made available for learning the Christmas service recitations and hymns. Children may need to learn additional songs for singing in church services. "Snow days" and times of illness or extended absences can cause problems. There also may be a new pupil in your class who has never been required to memorize in school. Teachers must guard against expecting excessive amounts of memory work in such situations. It is better to omit a few recitations than to require too much.

Another consideration is the memory requirements of the grade in which the children will be the following school year. If certain teachers, at will, omit articles of the Creed, hymn stanzas, or challenging passages or prayers, the children may not be ready to handle next year's memory work curriculum. Teachers need to

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wisely.

make curriculum adjustments carefully and wisely, perhaps in consultation with the principal and those who will next teach the class. Teachers, do not handicap your pupils' future ability or attitude regarding memory work mastery just because you are inclined to disregard the expected memory work curriculum.

Teaching memory work to young children is an important responsibility. Teachers who have been privileged with this special calling need to pray that God, the Holy Spirit, will enable the children in our care to learn the passages, hymns, Catechism parts, and prayers with ...

UNDERSTANDING
MASTERY
RETENTION
APPRECIATION

Professor Irma Paap of Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minnesota supervises student teachers at St. Paul's Lutheran School.

Teachers Share Ideas



Making Choices

Children like to make their own choices. This also encourages children to be content and helps them practice making decisions. When doing an art activity, provide a few different colors of paper, markers, crayons, or paint from which children can choose. If stickers or stamps are used, give children a chance to choose their own. When toys are distributed or activities are scheduled, allow students to select from several you have chosen as appropriate. Making these choices often works especially well with children who like to be more independent or are strong-willed about doing things their own way. However, it is important that once decisions are made, the children should not be allowed to change their minds just because of what other children have selected.

Lyla Spiegelberg

Good Shepherd, West Allis, WI



Classroom Helper

To simplify the process of assigning routine classroom duties to the children, prepare one name card for each child. Post a chart on which the days of the school week are identified. Then at the beginning of each week select one name card for each day, date the card on the back, and post it beside that day on the chart. This “helper of the day” becomes the special person to do all of the routine tasks of the day. If more children are needed for any task, the “helper of the day” chooses those assistants. This not only simplifies the assigning of duties, it also gives each child an opportunity for being a special person in the classroom.



Irma Paap

St. Paul's, New Ulm, MN

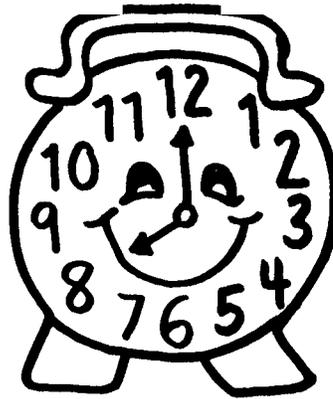
Teachers Share Ideas

Practical Display

Are you looking for more room to display things easily in your classroom or hall areas? Attach a fish net to a larger blank wall. Pictures, papers, and objects can quickly be fastened to it with paper clips, staples, clips, and pins.

Another useful display idea is the use of a fish line or strong cord strung across a classroom. Such a line can be used as a number line, a time line, alphabetical order activities, to display art work, etc. The line must be high enough to prevent any obstruction problems, but it need not be taken down when not in use.

Marlene Wendler
St. Paul's, New Ulm, MN



Useful ID Cards

Teachers often have need for specific information about their students. ID cards are useful when alphabetizing an enrollment list, sorting pupils into groups, making a birthday chart, guiding children in learning, and writing addresses.

To make these ID cards, use 3x5 index cards. Write the child's full name and address on the card in the format and penmanship which the children are expected to model. Include the child's birthday, telephone number, and whatever other information you would like to have readily available to you and your students during the school year.

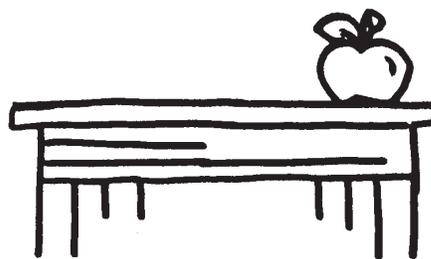
Sandra Yehl
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An Invitation

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Levels of Sanctification: Accepting and Encouraging

Alan A. Bitter

All this he did that I should be his own, and live under him in his kingdom and serve him in everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness, just as he has risen from death and lives and rules eternally. This is most certainly true.

The lines above are familiar. They have lived in our memory for years. In Martin Luther's explanation to The Second Article they follow a record of the justifying work of our Savior and express the goal of that work and of our lives as redeemed sinners. They are also words we teach to the children in our classrooms. They likewise express the goal that we who are privileged to serve as Christian teachers have for those precious souls entrusted to our care.

Yet neither we nor our students have attained that goal. Even a brief glance into the mirror of the perfection God requires (Mt 5:48) reveals that both we and our pupils join a sin-cursed humanity in falling far short of the mark (Ro 3:23). In fact we are not even able to take the first feeble step in that direction. Luther is equally articulate in identifying the moving force that jump-starts our sanctified engines and keeps us moving on salvation's highway in similarly familiar words from his explanation to The Third Article:

I believe that I cannot by my own thinking or choosing believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to

him. But the Holy Ghost has called me by the gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith...he daily and fully forgives all me and all believers.... On the last day he will raise me and all the dead; And he will give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ. This is most certainly true.

These are two basic Biblical truths: man has earned the "wages of sin" (Ro 6:23a)—LAW, and Christ has earned for man the "gift" of eternal life (Ro 6:23b)—GOSPEL. These truths must be our guide as we consider the sanctified lives of our Savior's lambs.

The title of this paper suggests that among our students there are individual differences in Christian knowledge and maturity and that the development of their sanctified lives will progress at different rates. I am sure a mental survey of your classroom will confirm this. All are traveling on the same road, yet while some appear to cruise easily over hills and rough terrain, others sputter and choke, and a few appear to be stranded on the shoulder without a spare tire. As we consider that levels of sanctification exist, let us do so under three headings:

Sanctification is a growth process

We can accept status but also expect growth

God promises results

Sanctification is a growth process

In the Garden of Eden man and woman were created with a priceless gift, the "image of God" (Ge 1:27). They were able to conform perfectly to God's will. Our first parents could serve God in "righteousness, innocence, and blessedness." But Adam and Eve were also created with the freedom to choose. When they exercised that freedom to disobey God's will, they exchanged God's holy truth for the lies of Satan and lost the precious image of God.

The story of their salvation and ours is the regaining of that image. And while our justification before God is a completed fact, while our new man is free to do the will of God, we are still plagued by our Old Adam which takes the deceptions of the devil at face value and gladly trades what is holy for what is vain.

Sanctification in the narrow sense has been described well as "spiritual growth that follows justification by faith" (Lauersdorf 1989,3). It is, in fact, the Holy Spirit guiding the believer in regaining the image lost in Eden. In the process, the redeemed sinner daily "puts off more of the Old Adam and puts on more of the new man" (Lauersdorf 1989, 3). Luther shows his gift for articulating the divine in

human terms with the following simile: "The righteousness of man is like a rust-eaten tool which God has undertaken to polish; it cuts badly as long as it is rusty and until it is perfectly polished. (Plass 1959, 751)"

Such sanctified living is not optional, but is what God tells us he has "prepared in advance for us to do" (Eph 2:10). It is a natural and immediate process

that goes along with saving faith. James asserts that anything labeled "faith" without this process is not true faith at all but is "dead" (Jas 2:17). Examples from Scripture abound. The Philippian jailer rushed to have himself and his family baptized (Ac 16:33). Zacchaeus not only scaled a sycamore to see and hear Jesus, but he also invited the Lord to his home and pledged to change his ways (Lk 19:1-10). A sinful woman poured out high-priced perfume to anoint our Savior (Lk 7:36-50). All are examples of saving faith showing itself

in deeds of love.

As God nourishes and strengthens faith, this faith continues to express itself in sanctified acts of love. This truth permeates the Scriptures:

They go from strength to strength, till each appears before God in Zion (Ps 84:7).

All this he did that I should be his own, and live under him in his kingdom and serve him in everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness, just as he has risen from death and lives and rules eternally. This is most certainly true.

Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good (1 Pe 2:2-3).

Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ (Eph 4:14-15).

Yes, sanctification in our lives and in those of our children is a growth process, with the end result, in heaven, a complete regaining of the lost image of God. Paul's prayer for the saints in Philippi can be ours for our students: "In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus" (Php 1:4-6).

We can accept status but also expect growth

Having accepted sanctification as a growth process, it is clear that accepting a student at his or her level of sanctification does not mean that he or she is not encouraged to grow in sanctified living. Our acceptance is rather of the pupil's status as a redeemed child of God. Herein lies the proper application of our Lord's often misapplied words against judging (Mt 7:1). In no way are we to practice what Paul Kretzmann characterizes as "personal, unkind, uncharitable, unauthorized, condem-

natory judgment" (1921:37). Certainly it is a temptation for the Christian teacher who makes so many determinations regarding a student's intellectual and physical abilities and achievement to rise to the judgment throne that God has reserved for his Son (2 Co 5:10, Jn 5:22). When a child reveals little if any evidence of living for his Lord, how easily such improper judgments worm their way into our thoughts

To accept the status of the faith life of each of our students is to assert that fluctuation of faith does not affect its saving power.

and are reproduced in our casual conversation, or worse, are communicated to that child for whom the Savior shed his blood. In this regard, Paul quotes words that God speaks through Moses, "Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: 'It is mine to avenge; I will repay,' says the Lord" (Ro 12:19). Luther paraphrases the

idea and makes it personal:

Take hold of your own nose, reach into your own bosom. If you are looking for a villain on whom to pass judgment, you will find there the biggest villain on earth If you see a great deal of another person you see a year or two. But when you look at yourself, you see your whole life, especially the serious blemishes that nobody else knows about. And then you must be ashamed of yourself. (Plass 1959, 672)

There is proper Christian judging. Its goal, however, is never to condemn the soul but to bring it to repentance (Mt 18:15) and build it up in the faith (Ga 6:1). The Lord has placed children in the care of parents, and in turn teachers, so that inappropriate attitudes and behaviors can be corrected and proper guidance given (Eph 6:4). Paul's instruction with respect to the weak and the strong (Ro 14) and the exercise of Christian liberty (1 Cor 8) apply also to our relationships with the young "brothers" and "sisters" that populate our classrooms.

The Christian teacher does well to remember also that those in his care are young both in faith and in age. The art of tact is an acquired skill even for the mature. Discernment is born of knowledge and experience. What an adult only thinks, a child often verbalizes; what an adult only says, a child will often do. While these misbehaviors are sins worthy of death, through faith in Christ the

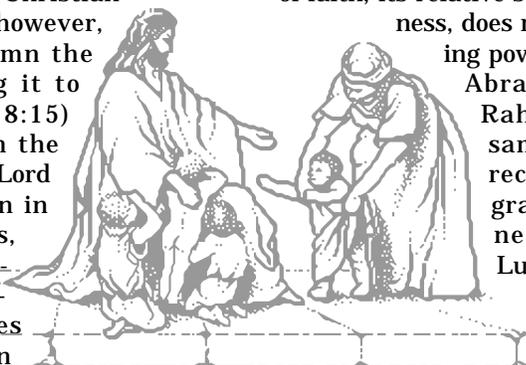
believer is forgiven. We dare not mistake inexperience for malice. Many in our classrooms may have to sit in the highchair of immaturity and drink spiritual "milk" before they are ready to rest their elbows on the big table of mature sanctified living and say, "Please pass the meat." In fact, guidance toward that end is the purpose of Christian education.

To accept the status (that of a redeemed child of God) of the faith life of each of our students is to assert the Scriptural truth that fluctuation of faith, its relative strength or weakness, does not affect its saving power. Both mighty Abraham and timid Rahab trusted the same promise and received the same grace and forgiveness. Again, Luther described it well:

Two persons may hold glasses

of wine in their hands: the hand of one trembles, the hand of the other does not...a purse full of money: one with a weak hand the other with a strong hand. Whether it is strong or weak...it neither increases nor decreases the contents. (Plass 1959, 489)

But our duty as Christian teachers is not only to accept that Johnny and Suzie have been saved even though each may demonstrate it to a greater or lesser degree. The purpose of Christian teaching is to guide them in the growth of that young faith, to fan the feeble spark into a roaring blaze that will remain ignited when the storms of temptation howl and spit.



The problem lies in the “how.” How do we facilitate the increase in faith that will automatically show itself in works of love?

The dilemma becomes a bit more sticky when we realize that the mark of faith, actions in accord with the will of God, can be produced by improper motives. Paul tells us that even unbelievers can give the appearance of living a God-fearing life (Ro 2:14-15). Indeed educational psychology offers no small number of methods to coerce children into desired behaviors. To add to the quandary, we have best-selling authors who propose training that is little more than Skinnerian theory dressed up with “Christian” labels.

With the preceding in mind, we are obliged to accept also God’s tools for increasing sanctification in our children—the proper use of and distinction between law and gospel.

While it is true that “good works” are not truly good if done under duress or from fear of punishment or desire for reward, the law legitimately functions as a “curb” in the life of the believer, albeit only as a “bitter emergency measure that ought not to be necessary...if we would allow ourselves as children to be supplied from the riches of the Father, which he has prepared for us” (Koehler 1939, 170). Yet we know from experience that evil is multiplied when improper thoughts become words and actions. Adolf Koberle depicts it well: “Evil thoughts can poison days and weeks, false words can destroy fellowship for years, but evil deeds can ruin life irretrievably” (1936,213). Our old man follows the correct path only when forced by threats or fueled by self-interest. This is not sanctified liv-

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ing, but it keeps the Old Adam from going as far as he’d like.

Still, this is not the primary purpose of the law. Luther tells us that the previous purpose failed because of the wickedness it worked in man. The law produces three reactions: rebellion, attempts at work righteousness, or when serving its chief purpose, despair. Here is the law’s main function—“to make original sin manifest and show man to what utter depths his nature has fallen and how corrupt it has become” (SA Tappert 1959, 303). This is the law as “mirror.” It is instructive. It must be used. But it leaves the job unfinished. “It cannot bring a sinner to repentance; it cannot create faith or even the desire to amend one’s sinful life” (Jeske 1989, 10). Remember the Old Adam is drowned by “daily sorrow and repentance.” The law can set the stage, and

is necessary for doing so, but it cannot act out the play.

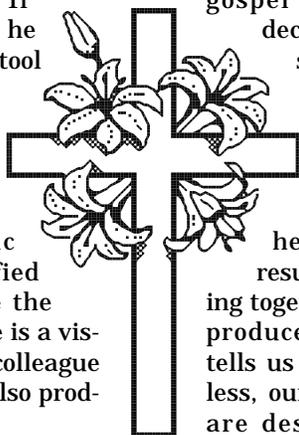
Here is an important point for teachers, for we have the Old Adam at work in us also. If your old man is like mine, he urges you to use the wrong tool to produce a counterfeit product for the wrong reason. Legalistic means produce short-term results in what appears to be godly conduct. Thus legalistic means do not yield sanctified growth, but they can make the teacher look good when there is a visitor in the room or when a colleague walks by. Our Old Adam is also prodded by fear and self-concern.

God's law must always function in the service of his saving gospel. Whether the purpose is to crush the heart of a secure sinner or to use management techniques that result in an orderly classroom, the law and the behaviors that result from using it ought not become ends in themselves. The heart is not to be crushed by fear so that it will no longer rebel, but so that it can be reassured with the saving message of the gospel. Management techniques that utilize systems of punishments or rewards are not just to provide order, but to provide order so that the saving Word can be proclaimed. C. F. W. Walther expressed the same idea: "The word of God is not rightly divided when the person teaching it does not allow the gospel to have general predominance in his teaching" ([Walther] Stellhorn 1954, 378). When law is used to manufacture a gospel product, it is like a replacement button too small for the original hole. It gives the appearance of being functional and endows the

user with a false confidence until it is needed most. But when tension is applied, it pulls free and is unable to achieve its intended purpose. The gospel we have been called to declare must never be overshadowed by the law.

True sanctified living must not only conform to God's law; it must proceed from the proper motive of a thankful heart. Such a heart is the result of law and gospel working together. The mirror of the law produces a sordid reflection. It tells us that our actions are loveless, our desires are evil, and we are deserving of a holy God's curse. But through the lightless gloom of what we have failed to do radiates the dazzling beams of what God has done. It is a unique and wonderful truth of the Holy Scriptures that the redemption of mankind through Jesus Christ, God's grace in him, and the justification that results is universal and complete. Thus there are no exceptions when our heavenly Father says he loves "the world," and when our Lord and Savior says his gospel message is for "every creature" (Stellhorn 1954, 379).

Through the gospel God's Holy Spirit lives in us. He has "begun a good work" in us, and he will "carry it on to completion." For the believer God's law also serves as "guide" (Ps 119:105) and the redeemed heart searches for ways to express gratitude. Now a sanctified life is possible because through the Holy Spirit we are new creatures and our works, even though they are "contaminated with the sinfulness of the flesh (Is 64:6), for Christ's sake...[they] are



acceptable to God (1 Pt 2:5)” (Koehler 1939, 163). This is a message our students need to hear—every day. This is a message that produces faith, keeps it strong, and makes it grow. This is a message that motivates sanctified living.

Listen to Paul’s example. He was no supporter of stagnant Christianity:

When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me (1 Co 13:11).

Brothers, stop thinking like children. In regard to evil be infants, but in your thinking be adults (1 Co 14:20).

Paul also realized that only God can carry this out. Listen also to his recognition and encouragement: “Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness” (2 Co 9:10).

Paul therefore encourages believers to live God-pleasing lives:

And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way; bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully, giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light (Col 1:10-12).

And in fact you do love all the brothers throughout Macedonia. Yet we urge you brothers, to do so more and more (1 Th 4:10).

We ought always to thank God for you brothers, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love every one of you has for each other is increasing (2 Th 1: 3).

This is not mere lip service. We know from Paul’s ministry that he did not back off when there was a problem to be confronted. But notice how he shows equal zeal in acknowledging God’s work in his hearers and encouraging them.

What about our classrooms? Do we search for the good with the same vigor with which we hunt down the bad? When was the last time Billy

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was recognized for not cursing today? ...Jane for letting the gossip stop at her ears? ...John for not protesting a clearly unfair call that favored a younger child on the playground? When was the last time we thanked God, in the children’s presence, for their growing faith?

God promises results

We face an awesome task. Use only the law and the child when he obeys,

does so out of fear. Use only the gospel and we have a secure sinner on our hands. How does the teacher know whether he has dispensed both teachings in proper amounts? We too are sinners who as handlers of God's Word, have often mishandled it. It is a situation that easily breeds frustration and self-doubt. Who of us hasn't lain awake contemplating the weight of a mill-stone?

So it is proper for us to evaluate our actions. C. F. W. Walther is recorded as saying that the "how much" of teaching and applying law or gospel "must be learned under the guidance of the Holy Spirit in the school of experience" ([Walther] Stelhorn, 1954, 387). Indeed it is necessary that we regularly look to the Holy Scriptures where the Spirit gives that guidance and then apply it to our experience. Furthermore, It is essential that we do so again and again. We teachers deal with students whose lives of holiness are, as also our own lives, still under construction.

Frustration will appear over our imperfect efforts to carry out our Lord's perfect work. When it does we can find comfort in the fact that while we have been called to guide and nurture young souls, the Producer, Keeper, and Perfecter of faith is a holy God who tells us that his Word "will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I

desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it" (Is 55:11).

We also know that only a minority enter at the strait gate, and walk the narrow way that leads to life. Might some be lost through our improper use of law and gospel? Certainly. When we see students or former students who appear to have fallen by the wayside, does it mean law and gospel must not have been correctly divided in our teaching? Certainly not. In his free will, man possesses a terrible power. Pharaoh hardened his heart after witnessing miraculous things, the once-faithful Saul succumbed to pride and despair, Judas turned away even after being instructed at the feet of the Master himself. Does this mean that what we do makes no difference? No. God has chosen to call his elect through the witness of his followers: "He has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were

making his appeal through us" (2 Co 5:19b-20a). God's saving message through the mouth of Nathan recalled David when he had fallen into unbelief. Through the lips of Peter, God brought three thousand to faith in a day. From the tongue and pen of Paul, God spread his Church into the entire world.

We are entrusted with the same message. We have the same promise of

We teachers deal with students whose lives of holiness are, as also our own lives, still under construction.

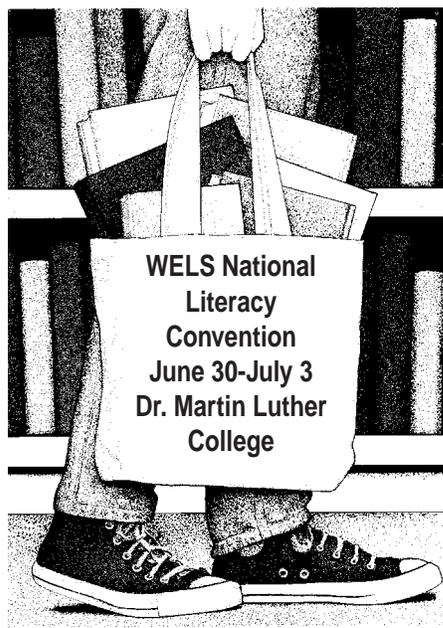
results. In our “workshops of the Holy Spirit,” Paul’s exhortation is in place: “Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain” (1 Co 15:58).

We can see in those rust-eaten tools which the Lord has undertaken to polish not only dull reddish-brown grime, but also areas that reflect light and have begun to sparkle and shine. God has begun a good work in them and us that will be completed when we see him face to face. We need to accept our students where they are, encourage them with the proper means to grow, and trust our loving and all-knowing God to produce the results he has promised.

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Profiles of Ministry: RURAL MID- WEST

John E. Meyer

What is a typical WELS teacher and what does he or she do? There is no single description that fits most of the 2000 teachers in our Lutheran schools. We decided to examine what is common and what is different among the teaching ministers in our schools. To do this we asked several writers to draw a profile of their own ministry. The first of this series describes a ministry that was more common forty or more years ago. Some may believe this setting for a ministry has disappeared. But it has not and we begin this series with John Meyer's rural Midwest ministry. (Eds)

I grew up in New Ulm, Minnesota and always thought of it as a small town. When I graduated in 1987 from DMLC, I was assigned to Wood Lake, Minnesota. My idea of a small town was soon altered. My future wife, Heidi, and I drove across the high plains of western Minnesota on graduation day to view where we would make our first home together.

After a seemingly endless expanse of flat farmland, we came upon a mammoth grain elevator with a small cluster of homes surrounding it. This is where the Lord had sent me to do his work.

Wood Lake is a rural town of about 400 people. Life there revolves around the farming industry. The few businesses in town are designed to support the farmers. Most of the town's inhabitants are retired farmers. Since coming here I've learned a lot about the agricultural lifestyle. I even spent some time baling straw in return for all the favors a farmer had done for me.

Many of the people have lived here most of their lives as have their forefathers and relatives. Everyone is

related to somebody else. I even found I had a first cousin once removed in the congregation.

We are also a community in the middle of change. The farms are becoming larger. This is causing the rural population to decline. Areas of land that once supported three or four farms are now the home of one farm. Since there are fewer farms, fathers are often unable to pass the farm to their children, and young people are unable to finance the purchase of the amount of land needed for a profitable farm. Therefore, many of the young people leave the community after high school or college in search of work elsewhere.

The people in Wood Lake are the most friendly and helpful you will find. They always have time or make time to help a person in need, whether it be a neighbor or a stranger. When walking down the street or driving in the car, it is mandatory that you wave at each person you meet or you discuss the weather with those you see on the street. I can't say enough about the people. I have really enjoyed getting



to know them and serve them.

Here are two examples of their generosity. A couple of years ago, late in the summer, a man in our congregation had a heart attack and needed bypass surgery. Several farmers from our congregation harvested his crops for him that year. These people also wonderfully care for us. At Christmas and harvest time the called workers are often showered with food.

But because the community is so close knit, you will find that rumors and gossip can spread quickly. Within our congregation, problems that elsewhere would be ignored or easily solved, can become overblown catastrophes.

The called workers are expected to be leaders within the community and to have a high profile. When I first came to Wood Lake, I didn't know anyone, nor did they know me, yet they looked to me for leadership. Appearances at community functions are strongly encouraged. There is no possibility of blending in with the crowd. From the first day we came here, everyone knew my wife and me. Our picture was on the front page of the *Wood Lake News* along with an

article on our lives. No matter where I go, I am always "the principal at St. John's school."

That gives you a pretty good idea of what the community is like, but what about our lives in the congregation? St. John's Ev. Lutheran Church has about 400 members. I teach grades 5-8, serve as principal, head organist, choir director, and athletic director/coach. The school has two and one-half teachers and forty-five students. Of the twenty-two students in my room this year, 15 are from farm homes. Five of the seven "town" students are children of pastors.

Being a Lutheran elementary school teacher in Wood Lake has its advantages: All the students enrolled in St. John's are from two-parent homes. In only two cases are the children not living with both of their natural parents. The families are generally quite strong. The children live in relative isolation on farms and have learned to get along with their siblings and to work side by side with their parents. The children are emotionally stable and the parents are supportive of the work which the called teachers do.





Many of the families take their spiritual life very seriously. The Word taught to the students in school is often exemplified by the parents at home. Many families attend church together each week. This further aids the children in their spiritual growth.

Maybe this sounds as if we have a utopia. However, I also need to share some of the challenges I face.

Although the families I serve are very spiritually minded, the gospel is often taken for granted. To keep Christianity from becoming merely a ritual is a challenge in my ministry.

Traditions also play a large part within our community. In a time when Lutheran schools are being encouraged to reach out to the unchurched within the community, I'm afraid we haven't done very well. School allegiances are sharply defined. St. John's school has been here for 102 years. You either send your children to St. John's or to the local public school, because that is where your family has always sent them. To break with the tradition of your forefathers is almost unthinkable.

In Wood Lake, it is considered an act of betrayal to the community to send your children to anything but the public school. You are expected to show your loyalty to the community. One reason for this attitude is the declining number of children due to lower birth rates and fewer families in the area. All schools are fighting to stay alive. Because enrollment had declined so much, the local school had to combine with another school district and Wood Lake ended up losing both its grade school and high school this past year. All that is left is a

middle school. These are some of the barriers which keep us from drawing the unchurched to our school.

As a parochial school, we too are suffering from the severe decline of children in this area. Within our congregation, the number of younger children is very small. In a time when the negative influences of the world are so strong, we need to continue to provide a Christ-centered education to as many students as possible. Yet where will the students come from? We are reaching out to as many as we can, but I sometimes feel we are fighting a losing battle.

Keeping the children and adult members of the congregation true to God's Word is another challenge. Even though we do not face many of the big city problems, the media also reach into each of our homes. Humanism and other philosophies of the world are being accepted here as well as anywhere else. The relaxation of morals and the tempering of scripture with human "wisdom" are evidence of Satan's work among us too.

The Lord has blessed Heidi and me in Wood Lake. Our family has grown to four. We have made valuable friends and we already have memories to last a lifetime. I have witnessed students grow in faith and knowledge, and have seen evidence of that faith during their high school years. I thank the Lord for the opportunities he has given me to serve him in Wood Lake, and pray that he will continue to use me as His tool in this community.

John Meyer is principal and upper grade teacher at St. John's Lutheran School, Wood Lake, Minnesota.

REVIEWS

New from WELS Audiovisual

Report on Brazil (VHS-99-RPB)
1991 14 min. color JSCA

WELS missionaries have been working in Brazil since 1988. This is the first progress report now that the work has begun. It will be interesting to learn what has been accomplished since the Synod made the decision to enter this field.

How Different Can This Be?
1991 70 min. color CA

This video is intended to sensitize teachers to the special problems of children with learning disabilities. Through adult role playing this tape vividly demonstrates the frustration, anxiety and tension that LD children experience. The WELS Special Education Committee strongly recommends that this video should be seen by every school faculty.

Out in the Open
1991 28 min. color SCA

This video intersperses a narrative with interviews to expose the emotional damage done by premarital sex. With all the emphasis on unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases, most are not aware that the sex act also regularly destroys a promising relationship and leaves emotional scars that may be permanent. Just one more reason for honoring God's will as expressed in the Sixth Commandment. Rental: \$5.00.

Order from
Audiovisual Services

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Milwaukee, WI 53226-0975

Larrick, Nancy. *Let's Do a Poem*.
Delacorte Press, 1991.

Gerald J. Jacobson

Nancy Larrick's long career has been a major influence in the teaching of reading in American schools. Her love of poetry for children has expressed itself in twenty anthologies of poetry for children and in a Poetry Workshop which she directed at Lehigh University for quite a number of years. *Let's Do A Poem* is Larrick's compilation of ideas and attitudes which she and her students developed in those workshops.

It is a loving book. It is a practical book. Its advice begins with the notion that "poetry is meant to be heard." (2) Its first chapters suggest ways to help children experience the rhythm or music of poetry and the language of poetry. From there Larrick moves to the movement (or dance) of poetry and the drama of it. She offers very sensible and simple suggestions. Each suggestion has some sample poems (98 in all) which teachers can use when they try the Larrick plans. Some of the poems are old favorites; others are new and fresh. Teachers of lower and middle grades (even if they are reluctant to "do" poetry) will enjoy Larrick's quiet but powerful invitation. A carefully

chosen bibliography completes the book.

One might wish, however, that Larrick had provided a cassette tape to accompany the book. Hearing her suggestions would be more valuable than only reading them.

Gerald Jacobson is librarian at Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minnesota.

Cheryl Semple and Tony Stead,
assisted by Dave Baker. *How Big Is
The Moon? Whole Maths in Action.*
Heinemann, 1990.

David J. Pelzl

How Big Is The Moon? is the title of a small 100 page resource book for teachers. This reviewer looked at the book for two reasons – to find out what whole math was all about and to find out how big the moon is. If your only reason for reading this book is the latter, you won't find the answer in the book. Apparently the title was chosen as one of a representative number of projects that illustrate whole math.

The book contains only four chapters, and in them the authors give a good idea of what they did to change their "unstimulating, uninteresting, unchallenging" mathematics classes. The authors integrated reading, writing, science, social studies, mathematics, and other subjects by applying all of them to solving both real and abstract problems that required cooperative groups and perseverance.

While the authors used the "whole maths" approach to replace their pre-

vious math class, this reviewer was not impressed with that thought. Some mathematics must be taught and learned just because it is mathematics. Trying to combine all the subject areas seems an injustice to all of them. This book does have potential for giving ideas for research-type projects appropriate for grades 5–8. These could be used in the classroom for five or more weeks, in addition to the regular subject areas that are taught. Many good ideas are proposed for dealing with individuals, small groups, and larger groups to keep them on task, and a portion of a chapter entitled "Sharing" has some excellent problems and games.

This reviewer would not recommend the "whole maths" approach as illustrated in the book, but this book is a good source for children's research ideas and how to carry them out and for problem solving. The book would be a good addition to a teacher's resource library.

David Pelzl is professor of mathematics at Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minnesota.

*Book Links: Connecting Books,
Libraries, and Classrooms*

Arthur J. Schulz

Almost every elementary school classroom today feels the impact of the growing trend toward using children's literature as a basis for instruction or at least for enrichment. A common need exists among teachers who embrace the whole language philosophy, who opt only for a literature-based reading program, or who continue to structure basic learning

experiences on selected textbooks but care a lot about providing good "outside reading." That need is for sources to identify trade books appropriate for classroom use. Frequently, the search is for books that fit a theme, such as an aspect of language development, a historical period or event, a scientific phenomenon, biography, or just plain fun.

Book Links, a new bimonthly magazine of the American Library Association, provides an outstanding resource for teachers with these varied needs. The trial issues of *Book Links* (Volume I begins in September 1991) suggest the magazine should accomplish what its subtitle claims, *viz.*, connect books, libraries, and classrooms. *Book Links* presents bibliographies of books related to themes appropriate for exploration by preschool to young adult readers. Other interesting and helpful features include articles on books and authors, information on book illustra-

tions and illustrators, helpful hints on using single titles or groups of books for creative responses, and updates of projects across the country. The 8 1/2" x 11" format is tasteful in appearance with full-color illustrations and print pleasingly arranged and inviting to be read. But the medium is not the whole message, each page makes its contribution to the *Book Links* purpose of helping teachers and children find the thrill of "connecting books, libraries, and classrooms."

Book Links: Connecting Books, Libraries, and Classrooms is available from ALA Subscription Services, Attention: *Book Links*, 50 E. Huron Street, Chicago, IL 60611 or call 1-800-545-2433/1545. The cost is \$18 per year, single copy \$3.50.

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