



**RAISING
THE NOW AND
FUTURE CHURCH**

Randal K. Gullickson

"You are seeing and sharing a good and a large vision. It is challenging and helpful. You have lifted up some areas that will provoke discussion...and that is something that is needed."

...The Rev. Donald McCoid, Bishop Emeritus of S. W. Pennsylvania Synod

"This fine vision is an excellent lens through which to view youth and family ministry."

... Dr. Roland Martinson, Professor, Luther Seminary

Raising the Now and Future Church
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Loren Mead founder of the Alban Institute in his book, *The Once and Future Church* and Douglas John Hall emeritus Professor of Theology at McGill University, Montreal Quebec, in his book, *The Cross in Our Context* have both spoken eloquently of the arrival of the post-Christian era.

Over the past decade many have observed an intensification of the efforts of western culture to divorce the Christian Church. It is seen in the removal of the Ten Commandments from court houses and the nativity from public spaces. It appears in the attempts to excise “one nation under God” from the pledge of allegiance and “in God we trust” from our currency. We see it in the culture shift that remorselessly pits Sunday morning soccer and hockey against Sunday School. We see it in the searching of spiritual seekers for whom the church is invisible. Writing teachers tell their students not to use biblical references (the patience of Job) because the audience no longer knows the biblical stories.

While this is going on, mainline denominations are shrinking. Membership and attendance are declining in congregations. According to the American Camp Association, religiously affiliated summer camp is the only segment of the camping world that is declining. Between 1990 and 2002 ELCA Sunday school attendance (nursery – grade 12) declined by 199,000 and Vacation Bible School shrank by 107,000. (Department of Research and Evaluation, ELCA, 2004)

Our cultural context is changing and the church needs to change with it.

If the church is to survive it must engage some basic questions.

Does the world still need the gospel of Jesus Christ? Why?

Is there a place in this evolving culture for a re-invented church?

What would a church that could engage this new culture and deliver the gospel message with integrity look like?

The church is the Body of Christ. The work of this Body of Christ is to continue to do the work of the original Body of Christ. Jesus came “that the world might have abundant life.” He came to free the captive, give sight to the blind and to declare the day of God’s favor. He came to connect people with life.

The church’s driving question in this challenging time must be:

What is separating people from the life God wants for them and what are we going to do about it?

We who are awake and our children must begin to shape a new church in answer to the needs of our time.

A VISION FOR RAISING THE NOW AND FUTURE CHURCH

In Ecclesiastes 1:09 Koheleth, the Preacher says, “There is nothing new under the sun.” In Isaiah 43:19 God says, “Look, I am doing a new thing, now it springs forth, do you not see it?”

While it often appears true that *our* “new” ideas are, at best, recycled old ones in new packaging, *God* does do new things. The New Covenant in Christ and his church are two of God’s new things that Koheleth didn’t live to see.

The church is responsible for living the balance between these two ideas. The church is no longer new and there is nothing new in its message or mission, yet God is always doing something new in and through it.

Jesus “colored outside the lines.” He brought new wine and put it in new wineskins. The nature of wineskins is that they get old and lose their resilience which is fine...for old wine. The church’s dilemma is that God’s wine is always new and the skin must evolve and be renewed to appropriately hold it.

To color inside the lines is to color things as they are, or as someone else has seen them. To color outside the lines is to color things as they could be. To say, “But we have never done it that way before.” is to be a line-drawer.

To remain vital, the church must be open to renewal and to listening to the prompting of the Spirit. It must color outside the lines of culture and of its aging, calcifying packaging.

This document is about looking at the way the church lives its message, mission and ministry and exploring ways to weave together the threads spun by those who color outside the lines into a new tapestry, a new skin that recognizes that the new wine of the Gospel of Christ is simply too lively to remain in the traditional wine cellar gathering dust.

The world needs the church. There is too much at stake for all of us for the church to be anything less than God intends it to be.

THE CHURCH AS VILLAGE

What a mess!

Bishop H. George Anderson, in an address in 1995, said that in America and in the church, today, we do not have problems, we have a mess. He went on to define a mess using the analogy of pickup sticks, the game in which colored sticks are dumped onto a playing area and the challenge is to pick them each up without disturbing the others. In a mess, all the pieces are interrelated. No single stick can be moved without moving the others. The challenge, of course, is to figure out how to clean up a mess.

In order to solve a problem, a person needs to understand the problem and its implications, generate some options and try something new. In order to address a mess, a larger vision is necessary.

The vision presented in these pages, begins with our youth – in many significant ways one of the least carefully addressed groups within the church and yet a vital part of the church of today and the sum and substance of the church of tomorrow. It is clear that the children and youth of the United States are at risk; the children and youth of our churches are at risk.

In fact, the children of the world are at risk and it is not a problem, it is a mess.

It is a simple truth that “without a vision the people perish” and our children are perishing. They are killing themselves and each other at an unprecedented rate. They are starving themselves to death in pursuit of cultural ideals. They are, in many cases, growing up without parents. Many are living in poverty. Many are living in environments that deny them appropriate relationships with adults and with peers. They are integrating life values from a media that often panders to human weakness. They are absorbing ideas about relationships, sex, marriage and family from a culture that is abysmally poor at all four. Many are undereducated and over medicated. They are assailed daily by materialism. It is a difficult time to be a healthy child.

What we need is a vision that is big enough to address this mess.

The lives, values, and choices of our youth are rooted in our culture. Our culture is shaped by adults. Children are raised by adults. Educated by adults. Entertained by adults. Coached by adults. Solicited by adults. It is hard to imagine anyone making a serious case for the cause of the current situation that does not hold adults responsible for it.

Adults need to get to work.

Spiritual Issues:

Our culture today is, by many accounts, a culture of spiritual "searchers." People who are looking for a connection with a "higher power;" with God. People are now, as they always have been, searching for meaning in life. Paradoxically, there is also a widely held notion that religion is optional. It is viewed as being different from spirituality. For many seekers, the church is invisible.

For many, religion enjoys a status that places it below sports and sleeping in on Sunday morning.

For many who do "affiliate with a congregation," the choice is made on the basis of emotional comfort, entertainment value, and services provided.

Christianity has taken some major hits in recent years. Highly visible clergy engaged in criminal behavior... Publicly proclaimed legalistic political agendas... Radical groups engaged in promoting hatred and basing their positions on perversely twisted biblical theology...

In short, it is popular for Americans to view the church with suspicion and many of us do not value the church at all. The notion that a faith relationship with God in Christ, as expressed and experienced in the gathered community of believers, must be the key and defining element of our eternal lives, is fading fast. Loren Mead, founder of the Alban Institute and author of "The Once and Future Church" identifies this growing disconnect between culture and church as a paradigm shift of the magnitude of the "End of Christendom."

There was a time when the church took the approach of "scaring people into church" with hellfire and brimstone. Hell is not a useful tool today. We have as a culture, perhaps properly, internalized hell. Recognizing that the only place that God is not and cannot be...is in a human heart that is "turned away" from God. And what is hell if it is not being apart from God?

Today we must learn to articulate the Gospel to a culture that is too driven by materialism and too comfortable and too suspicious and too individualistic and too self-reliant and too preoccupied with youth and beauty and too willing to be victims to hear about or care about sin and reconciliation with God or about the abstract love of God or about the world needing love, sweet love.

We are challenged to proclaim a gospel of life-giving love to a world that doesn't know that it is dying. And since the church is having difficulty articulating its own message in a culturally meaningful way, it is not too surprising that the people are turning to whomever can offer them chicken soup for their souls.

Human beings are living four part harmony. We are physical, mental, emotional and spiritual beings. We seem to know at a cellular level that the spiritual component is important, but we do not seem to grasp that the spiritual component is the melody line that shapes the harmony – all that we are, do, and become as well as all of our relationships. The problem in a culture that operates on "spiritual intuition" is that spiritualities are seen as interchangeable and some of them are empty at best, and deadly at worst.

If we don't cultivate in our children a relationship with God, someone will help them put something else in that place. Culture is all together too willing to do so. Madison Avenue wants our kids. It wants to convert them to materialism – the advertising world has demonstrated all too clearly how highly coveted our children are – as consumers – and they spare no effort or expense to get them.

It is very difficult to gather youth without parental support. Building parental support is a part of the solution. Parents support what they believe in. To minister to the youth, we must win the hearts of their parents. There are children who still grow up in the faith. We can make that the rule instead of the exception. But we will have to take responsibility for the task.

The Village

In the “old days,” a person grew up in the parish church in a largely non-transient community. The community knew the person from cradle to grave. The child was raised in the faith by immersion. The life issues of the person were known to everyone. The church was there during all major life transitions. The community of faith was present with support and guidance by example, if not intent, as people moved through the rites of passage into adolescence, into the adult world of work, into marriage and parenthood; old age and death. Social life was centered in the church. The church was the heart of the village that raised the child.

In these later days, people seldom spend a lifetime in the parish church nor necessarily in the town, region, state, or even country of their birth. The people have become mobile. But, apart from [our now declining] interest in foreign missions, the church has largely remained local in its thinking.

It is no longer useful to think of people as growing up in the parish church, but it may be possible to expand the paradigm and think of a person growing up in the distributed congregations of the church.

Suppose every congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America saw itself as an integral part of a network of villages – a village of many villages - responsible for raising all the children in the church, in this country – or even on this planet. Suppose a person at any point in time or geography could be welcomed seamlessly into a congregation that was ready to proactively include him or her in full fellowship with all the supports, resources, and opportunities of the old village church – and more.

Such a transformation of self-image among congregations would require a new vision and a new scale of thinking. It could do wonderful things for the church. It could provide a concrete context for hospitality, campus ministry, support for people in life transitions, and probably for many other aspects of parish life and ministry. It could motivate congregations to define and focus themselves according to niche roles influenced by nearby college campuses, prisons, retirement centers, military bases, identified service learning centers, or any other institution at which Lutherans from around the church might gather or be gathered.

It would be very important in this paradigm for communication between where a person has been and where she or he is going to be very good so that those welcoming them would have some knowledge of their interests and experiences in hand upon their arrival. “We knew you were coming so we baked you a cake.”

The Vision

The graphic at the end of this document is an attempt to sequence and hint at expansion of the ministry components which exist, in some form, in the ministries of the ELCA. In current practice, though the elements may be present, they are not necessarily offered at the appropriate time, nor do they necessarily involve the most appropriate people, nor do they necessarily accomplish what is needed.

The stretch from what “is” to what “might be” lies in the envisioned relationships among the ministry components, together with a new understanding of and intentionality about what is provided, by whom, and when.

PREMISE: It is possible to build a map of a holistic “scope and sequence” – *the body of essential knowledge and experience correlated to the progressive order in which they should typically occur* – for the life-long learning path most likely to result in a person growing to active maturity in the Christian faith. Such a map would provide a unified vision of ministry over the life of a person and serve to offer direction to the various ministry components that exist in the church.

Such a scope and sequence would, at a minimum, need to take into account all of the following:

- Human developmental characteristics
- Principles of faith formation
- Learning styles and learner readiness
- The eight key “Factors” identified in the joint “1003 Study” conducted by Luther Seminary and Southwestern Seminary
- Search Institute’s *40 Developmental Assets for Healthy Youth*
- A lifetime supply of age-appropriate curricula exploring scripture, the Christian experience, doctrine, theology, and life issues
- Skill sets desired or needed
- Learning/growth/support experiences desired or needed

The scope and sequence would define a core of desired ministry components of proven value that should be available to everyone in our church. Further, it would define the outcomes expected of those ministry components.

Such a scope and sequence would go a long way toward giving order to the myriad of church and parachurch efforts to address the needs of youth and families, and, indeed, the whole church.

For the benefit of the whole church, it would:

1. Affirm the importance, place, and purpose of each of the ministry components relative to one another and the whole
2. Help resource and curriculum developers define their tasks and, perhaps, be more effective
3. Provide those who conduct or direct ministries a context for determining the best use of curricula, resources, and principles developed by church and parachurch sources
4. Provide a checklist to conscientious congregations as a standard for their overall ministries
5. Awaken the church to the importance of deliberately spending significant time, talent, and treasure on “converting our children to the faith”
6. Potentially invite a rearrangement of some of the furniture in seminary education and other leadership development venues

For the benefit of the ministry components, it would:

1. Help the separate ministry components which now often do their work in isolation from one another, to share a common vision of themselves and one another as important and complementary parts of a greater whole
2. Guide each component in terms of what the church expects of it and needs from it
3. Move each component toward a greater sense of responsibility toward the other components to do its part well and thus be a strong link in the chain
4. Possibly strengthen support for the components, including financial, since clearer definition can lead to stronger cases for support
5. Focus energy on strengthening components such as campus ministry (which says it needs help)

The original thought was that an umbrella vision could unify and therefore strengthen our ministry to youth and families, but it seems likely that development and implementation of a vision of this sort could have even wider benefits.

For the purposes of this document the term, “Village Church” will refer to the church as if it were recast in the above vision.

PRINCIPLES AND ELEMENTS OF THE SCOPE AND SEQUENCE

There is probably enough research available to us today to get us started on building a true and useful scope and sequence.

PRINCIPLES AND IDEAS TO WEAVE INTO IT ALL:

Assets

Search Institute has done a remarkable thing in identifying forty "Assets" – conditions, opportunities, relationships, and resources that children need to have present and available in their lives if they are to have the best chance of growing up healthy. In the Assets approach to ministry, being a part of a religious community is number 19 of the 40 Assets that should be available in a child's community and life. The Village Church would be both an Asset and a primary provider of Assets. It would be important work to build the Assets into the life of the now and future church. The Village Church would be in a position to model, empower, provide, create, or promote each of the 40 Assets to one degree or another in the community, the congregation, the family, or the child.

The list of Assets is attached to the end of this document.

Youth and Family Ministry

In a joint project between Luther Seminary and Southwestern Seminary called, "Factors In Youth And Young Adult Faith Experience And Development: A Longitudinal Study" Dr. Roland Martinson and others have been doing research with a five cohort population that is yielding ongoing information about the common elements in the growth and development experiences of these people that have kept them in the faith until age 35. They have identified eight "Factors" that they consider to be key elements in staying actively connected to the faith. The Factors are listed at the end as well as being identified in the body of this document. (**8** identifies elements which address the eight factors.)

Experiential Learning and the Inductive Praxis

People come to know and believe what they *do*, far more readily and completely than any other way of acquiring information or insight. People are more interested in learning when they are engaged in the process. They are engaged in the learning process when what they are learning has immediate application in their lives; in the moment. Teaching/learning models that accomplish this are challenging to staff. It requires different thinking and some, as yet, uncommon skill sets among our teachers to make it work. Yet, we know that it is possible because every summer hundreds of college age men and women are trained to do this very thing in our summer camps. In fact, there are thousands of former camp staff in our congregations who could do this today if the opportunity were there.

Mentoring

8 *Having three or more adult Christian mentors is factor #2.*

There has been a lot of press about the idea of mentoring in recent years. It is a classical and profoundly desirable educational model since it is a one-on-one relationship with maximum awareness of the learner's progress, the suitability of the material, and feedback to the educator. Mentoring children should be considered in the context of the scope and sequence. In practice, a mentor would connect with a child at baptism and "walk the faith" with the child through high school or beyond. The mentor would provide the child with one ongoing adult relationship. A key part of the content of that relationship would be the sharing over time, from generation to generation, the personal stories and struggles of faith. In one possible mentoring model, a person would mentor only one unrelated child in his/her life. This would limit the breadth of the commitment, but, at the same time encourage a deeper relationship between mentor and child by making it a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. It would seem likely that the ideal age for a mentor would be the early to mid-fifties which would place a mentor in retirement while the child was in the mid-teen years and might mean that the mentor would have the discretionary time to spend with the child in the important service learning opportunities.

Listening

One of the things children mention often when asked what they need, is being listened to and understood. One of the common mistakes adults make in dealing with children is in thinking that the hurts and problems of childhood are *childish* and therefore of no major consequence, and they tend not to give them the hearing they deserve. It is important to remember in all areas of ministry that the person who is hurting or struggling, at any age, is facing new, serious, and difficult (for them) challenges and they need to feel that there is someone who will listen and help them sort the problem out and not dismiss it or salve it.

Touch

Some say that we are living in a touch starved age. It may be so. In many places in our lives, touch has been virtually outlawed due to the litigious environment and the rise in awareness, or perhaps, the increase of incidents of abusive touch. The fact remains that touch is a critical part of human life and we must take the risk to touch our children. Jesus touched lepers in direct violation of the law and conventional wisdom of his day. We must dare to do this. Kids need hugs and pats on the back and sometimes, just to be held. The church is one of the few places left in society where we may dare to hold this ground.

ELEMENTS

Worship:

⑧ *Involving children, from age 10 on, in worship leadership roles, is factor #6.*

⑧ *Church must be “cool” with engaging music and sermons, quality relationships, and genuine interest in children; factor #4.*

Worship is the backbone of the Christian community life. Liturgy is “the work of the people.” The liturgy gets mixed reviews these days. Interestingly, people still work, but the way people work has changed. So while the job description of God’s disciple people in the world has not changed in essence or in mission, a relevant question might be, “How might liturgy evolve to be the work of the people of today?” Congregations must find ways to make worship “child friendly” so that kids grow up worshiping. Sure, worship is for adults, too, and fussy children are a distraction so there must be a well run nursery for kids having bad days, but activity bags, coloring pages, children's songs, children's sermons, children's choirs, a kid-loving atmosphere, and other things we can think of can go a long way toward channeling or holding the interest of young children. Involving children and youth from age 10 on, in roles as lectors, crucifers, readers, ushers, acolytes, or in music can help keep them and their worshiping friends in the congregation engaged.

Baptism:

The child of flesh becomes a child of God and begins the journey of faith. In addition to sponsors (who may not be from the congregation), a trained mentor from the congregation could be chosen for the child. Such a mentor would make a long term commitment to be “a significant adult” in an ongoing relationship with the child. Parents, sponsors, and mentor could be taught the principles of raising a child in the faith. Involved adults would receive the vision and training for raising children in the faith (the congregation would also be reminded of its specific responsibilities for providing the “Village.”)

Relationships: Parents, pastor, sponsors, congregation, mentor

Sunday School:

Here, children begin the life-long scope and sequence of sharing the stories of the faith community, scripture, doctrine, theology, and practice. A Sunday school curriculum properly scoped and sequenced into a life-long learning map, would take into account a person's intellectual, social, and faith development and the effectiveness of experiential learning. It would also work toward intermediate goals such as being certain that children are prepared to begin First Communion classes in the 5th grade and Confirmation classes in the 7th. In the context of a lesson, references could be made to experiences at worship, day camp, summer camp, youth group activities, and service activities, and so help weave together the total congregational life experience in the minds of the students. In later years the dialogue between faith and life should be fostered to encourage values clarification, the exploration of significant life issues, and a deeper understanding of the faith.

Relationships: Teachers, peers, mentor

After School Program:

These programs provide a safe, caring, and helpful place for children to go after school. They may offer academic help and tutoring, relationships with adults, creative fun, study space, healthy snacks, and whatever other needs might be met in this environment. Children experience the church as a safe place where people care about kids, their lives, and their well-being in ways that go beyond Sunday morning. Such experiences introduce the church as a place to go for support and fellowship and for help and may set an early precedent for support in times of transition such as beginning school or moving on to middle school. This could plant the seeds for an appreciation of campus ministry as a bridge to college life – a time when many students drop away from active church life.

Relationships: Trusted adults, peers

Vacation Bible School:

VBS is a safe place to spend a summer week with "church friends." The amount of time spent together in a week is enough to "gel a group" if the time is used well. (It takes a minimum of 16 contiguous hours of time together to bond a group.) It is an early evangelism opportunity for kids to invite friends to church in a comfortable venue. If done well, it is a leadership development opportunity for older children who help teach younger ones. VBS is essentially an indoor program.

Relationships: Teachers, pastor, peers

Summer Day Camp:

Another safe place to spend a summer week with church friends and to which children can invite their friends. Typically, this program is a collaboration with an outdoor ministry center and utilizes a core group of staff trained by the camp. This is an outdoor program conducted in a park or on church grounds if the green space is adequate. The program is active and the day includes as many elements of residential summer camp programming as the site allows, including such things as "campfire," outdoor games, skits, nature study, bible study, crafts, stories, worship, devotions, cookouts, and even sleepouts. The benefits of this program are similar to those available in residential summer camp, but are not as fully fledged. Day camp is often a precursor to attending regular summer camp.

Relationships: Counselors, trusted adults, pastor, peers

Summer Camp:

Camp often starts as early as 2nd grade with "short week" programs and goes through the senior high school years. Camp is a "faith integration laboratory" because camps are all about reflectively living the faith in intentional Christian community. Camp is a safe place in which kids can experiment with their social skills and with "being themselves." Many kids cycle through this self-exploration process as elementary, junior high, and again as senior high school students. Campers develop group living skills and experience community. They explore the faith, questioning and comparing ideas with their peers. They learn to live, in a peer environment, what they have learned at home and in church. Meeting youth from other congregations gives kids a larger vision of the church. Campers often form very long lasting friendships with others who share their interests and faith values. They often come to know God in a personal way since the natural environment is often an easier place for young people to see God's handiwork than elsewhere. Personal independence is encouraged and camp is often the first opportunity children have to spend extended time away from home. Decision making is nurtured. Activities at camp are extremely diverse, but always include bible study, worship and devotions. The style of camps tends to be experiential and one which capitalizes on "teachable moments" in which campers can plainly see the impact, for better or worse, of their behavior on others and the group. Learning opportunities should harmonize with the scope and sequence to experientially support parish learning. No wonder Search Institute found camp and retreats to be so high on the list of faith shaping experiences in the lives of our young people.

Relationships: Counselors, chaplains, staff, peers

Peer Group (Youth Group) Ministry:

⑧ *Feeling that they have been involved in quality ministry in their high school and college years is factor #5*

Youth group ministry can start as early as 4th grade and continues through senior high school. Quality of ministry is important throughout a child's youth group experience, but it *must* be strong in the later years. Being a part of a youth group provides for relationship building, growth in faith and the integration of the faith into life choices and relationships, a social context for "good clean fun," experiences in goal setting, group decision making, and leadership skill development. At its best it is a highly relational ministry with adult leaders who really get to know their kids in a whole life context and who are available, mentoring, empowering, accepting, encouraging – and most of all – listening. It is made meaningful when it addresses real life issues, when it welcomes and utilizes the gifts of youth, and gives them the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of others. A key to effective youth group ministry is group building – the formation of community. This is best and most effectively done in retreat. The most appropriate model for the role of adult leaders in youth groups is that of mentor or coach.

Relationships: Trusted adult leader, pastor, parents, mentor, peers

First Communion Classes:

Learning about Jesus' role in our lives and the depth of God's love for us can open the way to moving beyond "story" to building a relationship with the risen Lord. Even if congregations practice infant or early childhood communion, this learning time is a good opportunity to deepen the child's understanding of the faith and relationship with Christ. Participating in a Passover Seder meal in the context of these classes is a wonderful way to help children understand the roots of our holy history. This is, perhaps, the first personal contact with the Pastor in a learning environment and it can initiate the relationship with the pastor as a "significant adult relationship."

Relationships: Pastor, parents, mentor, peers

Confirmation Classes:

Why is it that so many Lutherans, these days, don't know what makes us Lutheran? Why are we needing to launch an "identity project?" Confirmation classes are intended to give people the basic, but complete, fundamental tenets of Lutheranism. This can be done experientially. It can be done inductively and in ways that engage the interest and imaginations of youth. This is a time to clearly teach our children the biblical basis of the values we hold and the nature of the struggle between right and wrong and good and evil that exists even in the minds of adults and in the church as a whole. Our children need to know the overall biblical story. If our youth do not read the Bible through and get the whole picture of the biblical story during these years, when will they do it?

Relationships: Pastor, parents, mentor, peers

Retreats:

Retreats can be powerful tools in the hands of those who know how to develop them. They can be used with children 4th grade and up and, of course, retreating is every bit as powerful for adults as youth. Retreats are effective because they get people away from their usual space, schedules and distractions. They are most often 24 to 42 hours long and provide good opportunities to build groups, to focus intensively on specific topics, and to blend indoor and outdoor activities in a rhythm that enhances learning, creativity and productivity.

Service Learning Opportunities

③ *Doing at least three months of service to others in the name of Christ is factor #3.*

Service learning experiences come in a variety of formats. At their best they are complex and challenging. There is an element of doing work that benefits others. Some are paid positions such as being on camp staffs. Many are volunteer such as mission trips or servant events and may even require that participants pay their own way and buy supplies to do the work. There is an element of learning from those served in a dialogue which understands that it is a mutual experience and NOT "the haves helping the have nots" whether in terms of faith or expertise or material goods. Belonging and making a difference are two of our deepest needs.

If we take seriously the fact that service learning opportunities are an essential ingredient in the scope and sequence, there will have to be LOTS of options available to provide opportunities for all of our kids. We may recognize that Lutheran Volunteer Corps, Youth Encounter, and camps and others provide excellent opportunities, but that the number of opportunities available in these venues is limited – at least in Youth Encounter and camps – and that not everyone has the gifts to work in these venues. There are at least two ways to look at this: 1) We need to find a lot of places where we can put kids into some kind of an opportunity that meets the desired profile of an effective experience – and find some way to supervise all of them, whew!

2) We have a huge opportunity here to develop an army of workers that could make a phenomenal impact on the world. Suppose youth and their mentors (possibly retired by the appropriate service learning time in the life of the child) and/or a parent or grandparent, together, participated in service work, locally, nationally, or internationally, for two or three weeks or even a whole summer in each of 2 – 4 years, wow!

Learning Opportunities:

Our older youth are ready and able to grow in skill and responsibility. They are also struggling with their increasing awareness of the world around them and its inconsistency with what their faith tells them it should be. This is a great time to be giving older youth opportunities to develop skill sets related to teaching, peer counseling, critical thinking, values clarification, and more. It is also good to explore the issues and paradoxes they face in the light of faith. Clues for other opportunities may be drawn from the Assets.

Churchwide Youth Gathering:

This event is normally a once-in-a-lifetime experience. It is a great opportunity for youth to plan, to find funding and to travel together to a huge event in which they can see, feel and be a part of a church that is much larger than they might have imagined. It is a wonderful thing for our youth to know that there are others – many others – like themselves who are in the faith and in the church.

Campus Ministry:

⑧ *The college experience of meaningful, relevant, relational ministry extends the youth group ministry in factor #5.*

In the Village Church, the concept and reality of campus ministry would be expanded to include not only *on campus* churches but *near campus* churches. This rite of passage would be addressed as the critical juncture that it is. These congregations would see themselves as having a responsibility to serve and support “our Lutheran kids” on behalf of all congregations. An unfamiliar, indifferent congregation presents yet another uncomfortable new situation to be entered “at your own risk” for the college student who is already negotiating massive transitions. If congregations were proactive in providing a welcoming, supportive, familiar place, and one where positive social connections could be made, it might go a long way toward making the other college transitions easier. It might also help crystallize an appreciation of the faith community as a place of support and encouragement during times of transition and major personal change.

Out of the Nest (or just On the Road):

⑧ *For those who leave the nest directly from high school, this ministry must extend the youth group ministry in factor #5.*

Leaving home is a difficult thing for many, these days. Often the jobs people find are not near their homes and require a move away from their childhood support base and from college friends. Parishes of the Village Church would know who was moving to their community and be there to actively seek them out, welcome them, and personally invite them to worship – before the first Sunday passed. Parishes greeting new folks with invitations, hospitality, retreats, forums and social opportunities – especially for singles – would be providing useful ministry on behalf of the Village. All of this is true even for older, more experienced people when they relocate. We could take a lesson from one congregation that was recently noted for its practice of taking newcomers a loaf of fresh-baked bread and an invitation to worship – an appropriate variation on the “cake.”

Marriage:

⑧ *Good counseling here sets the stage for the next generation to experience the deeply embedded family faith life of factor #1.*

The church has a perspective on marriage that is quite different from that of our culture. It needs to communicate that perspective. God is part of marriage and it is bigger than the people involved. Preparation in a retreat setting with other couples can be a good thing. Does anyone know whether couples who receive pastoral pre-marital counseling have a lower divorce rate than the secular population? Apart from pre-marital counseling, this is a great time to flesh out some very specific ideas about life together in a family such as family rituals and traditions, devotional life, prayer together, etc. How about linking newly weds to a couple who have been married for 15 or more years who could provide perspective and encouragement especially during the first year of marriage.

Next Generation Baptism:

⑧ *A vital time to reaffirm and encourage the family faith life of factor #1.*

This is the same as it was for the generation now becoming parents, except that these parents have experience with their own mentors to build upon and they would be more aware of the potential and, hopefully, more engaged in what they would see as a valuable relationship for their child. This would be a good time to suggest the benefits of Village-offered parenting groups, or new mothers groups or other similar family building opportunities.

Adult Education Opportunities:

Adult education can take many forms and the best approach is to listen to the people and address real issues and areas of interest. Meet needs and people will come. This is a good time to offer service related skill sets. Clues in this area can be taken from life cycle needs such as parenting, grief and loss, and retirement.

Adult Service Opportunities:

Most people like to make a difference in the world and in the lives of people. In the Village Church, the joy of serving would be cultivated. The world is full of people who need help, street ministries, Habitat for Humanity, food pantries, homebound seniors, camps, retirement center residents, disaster victims, the neighborhood hungry, prisoners, and on and on. Often it just takes someone to set up the opportunity and make people aware of the project to get good things happening. Some of these opportunities might do well when offered collaboratively.

SOME IMPLICATIONS FOR LEADERSHIP:

Ministry is: “Meeting the holistic needs of all the people while helping them to discover their identity as beloved children of God and empowering them to reach out to others to share the gifts of God.”

The church is “The Body Of Christ” and as such it is called to do what Christ did. In order to do what Jesus did in his ministry – teaching, touching, feeding, healing, counseling, admonishing – a very holistic ministry – pastors and the seminaries that train them may need to adjust their vision. Over the years a good many pastors have been heard to say that they “don’t do youth ministry.” Isn’t this like saying, “I don’t do middle age ministry?” Isn’t the call to ministry a call to serve *all* the people? Can we allow pastors to segment their parishes and decline to minister to certain groups? If pastors are, in fact, not trained to “do youth ministry” then they need to be better trained. Jesus was certainly interested in children – much to the chagrin of the disciples whose vision he summarily adjusted.

The hope for this vision is that among other things, it can begin to flesh out a clearer vision – read “job description” – for pastors that lets everyone know what needs to be in place and available to our people. In this fast changing world in which we are struggling to manage global issues of economy, ecology, and diplomacy, perhaps we rely too heavily on pastors to develop their local ministries on the strength of their own gifts and the local vision of the people. Is it possible that even a person, ungifted in relating to youth, who at least makes a diligent effort to be sure that the basic opportunities, as defined in the Village Church, are available, provides a better ministry to youth than one who simply hopes someone else will deal with them?

Seminaries need to provide a fully dimensioned vision of ministry to students that cuts across all ages and needs.

Adults who work with youth must be trained. Willingness to serve, and caring about youth, are fundamental qualities in youth leaders, but we don’t expect pastors or chaplains to serve with such slim resources and should not expect people to minister to youth without a good “tool kit,” either.

SOME IMPLICATIONS FOR PARISHES:

Collaboration:

Bigger is not always better, but not big enough is a recipe for failure. Some ministries need to reach a critical mass in terms of numbers. Young adult ministries would be an example. In a town with several parishes, if each parish tries to do certain programs on its own, the potential audience is divided and may not reach viability in any setting. Collaboration can be an answer. In a multi-parish setting it is good to think outside the walls and look toward rotating special opportunities on behalf of all the congregations in a town or area. For example, one parish in a town might coordinate the offering of “Out of the Nest” ministry, while another offers certain skill set development opportunities, and all might join in on Pre Cana type marriage preparation retreats, or other good niche ideas.

Evangelism:

Parents sometimes follow their children to church. Programs that invite the neighborhood such as VBS and day camp are wonderful opportunities to encourage children to invite their neighborhood or school friends to church, and to simply canvas the neighborhood to invite the general population. Children will show up. But, children do not know that because they are welcome to attend day camp they are also welcome to come to worship. They need to be invited by someone in charge to know that they are wanted there. If children are invited to come to worship and encouraged to invite their parents to come along, evangelism can happen.

It is tragic that this proven strategy is sabotaged in some congregations by parishioners who view growth as undesirable and by pastors who do not see evangelism as “their job.” (This was confirmed in the ELCA/AAL Church Membership Initiative summary published in 1993.) Anecdotally, while encouraging congregations to use day camps in this way, some camp directors have been told, “we don’t want new people joining – they always want to change things.” Jonah! Old wineskins!

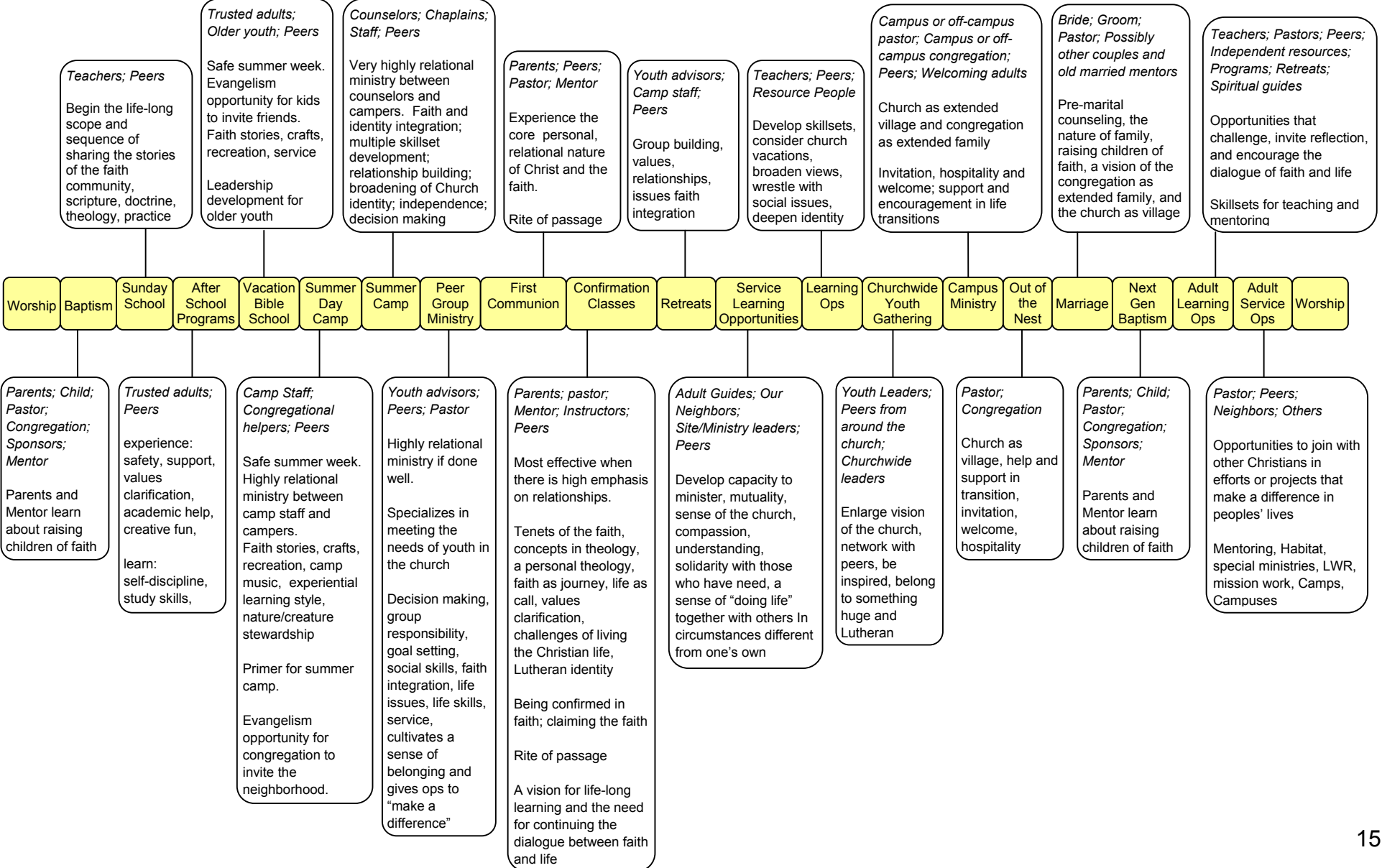
AFTER WORD

Aren’t these things already happening in the church? Not like they would if there were a commonly held vision and we were, as a church, intentional about incarnating it. Speaking from the point of view of a Camp Director, I can say that our kids coming to camp as campers are, as a group, biblically, theologically, and doctrinally under-educated. As a group, they are not noticeably more knowledgeable by the time we interview them as college students for positions as summer camp counselors. There are exceptions, certainly, but in general, this is true. I believe that the proposed vision would help me do a better job of ministering to our people in the camp setting by giving me clearer goals, a larger context, a sense of partnership, and an awareness of the broader church’s expectations. I believe that it could do the same for others.

Worship is the backbone of the life of the church. It is the faith environment into which a child is born and in which the faith becomes known in the collective life of the faith community. Congregations must be "child friendly." Children should be encouraged to worship and should be given opportunity to share their developing gifts in the worship setting: music, reading, ushering, acolyting, and serving in any way possible.

RAISING THE NOW AND FUTURE CHURCH

MAPPING A SCOPE AND SEQUENCE



***The information presented here is excerpted from the full document available on the internet at:
<www.faithfactors.com>***

**LUTHER SEMINARY & SOUTHWESTERN SEMINARY
“FACTORS IN YOUTH & YOUNG ADULT FAITH
EXPERIENCE AND DEVELOPMENT:
A LONGITUDINAL STUDY”
A Working Concept Paper**

Luther Seminary’s Dr. Roland Martinson conducted preliminary qualitative research that sheds light on this issue [of post-confirmation youth remaining engaged in faith communities] and helped to inspire the proposed study. Dr. Martinson interviewed young people about faith factors and found that approximately 10-12% of young people never stop engaging in a faith community. This early research suggests that this group may share some defining characteristics:

1. Faith is deeply embedded in their family—their family identity and lifestyle.
2. Three adult Christian mentors—coaches, employers, etc.—have played important roles in their lives.
3. They have engaged in three or more months service in the name of Christ, as a volunteer missionary, camp counselor, etc.
4. They feel their church is “cool,” which they define in terms of quality relationships, interesting preaching that tackles key questions, engaging music, worship, and a feeling that everyone is welcome and valued.
5. They feel that they’ve been involved in some of the best ministry after confirmation, in high school or college.
6. From the age of ten, their leadership has been invited by the church in many ways, such as playing the piano at events, etc.
7. Encouraged by strong Christian friend(s)
8. Support within an engaging Christian community during a personal crisis



40 Developmental Assets

Search Institute has identified the following building blocks of healthy development that help young people grow up healthy, caring, and responsible.

CATEGORY

ASSET NAME AND DEFINITION

Support

1. **Family support**—Family life provides high levels of love and support.
2. **Positive family communication**—Young person and her or his parent(s) communicate positively, and young person is willing to seek advice and counsel from parent(s).
3. **Other adult relationships**—Young person receives support from three or more nonparent adults.
4. **Caring neighborhood**—Young person experiences caring neighbors.
5. **Caring school climate**—School provides a caring, encouraging environment.
6. **Parent involvement in schooling**—Parent(s) are actively involved in helping young person succeed in school.

Empowerment

7. **Community values youth**—Young person perceives that adults in the community value youth.
8. **Youth as resources**—Young people are given useful roles in the community.
9. **Service to others**—Young person serves in the community one hour or more per week.
10. **Safety**—Young person feels safe at home, at school, and in the neighborhood.

Boundaries & Expectations

11. **Family boundaries**—Family has clear rules and consequences and monitors the young person's whereabouts.
12. **School boundaries**—School provides clear rules and consequences.
13. **Neighborhood boundaries**—Neighbors take responsibility for monitoring young people's behavior.
14. **Adult role models**—Parent(s) and other adults model positive, responsible behavior.
15. **Positive peer influence**—Young person's best friends model responsible behavior.
16. **High expectations**—Both parent(s) and teachers encourage the young person to do well.

Constructive Use of Time

17. **Creative activities**—Young person spends three or more hours per week in lessons or practice in music, theater, or other arts.
18. **Youth programs**—Young person spends three or more hours per week in sports, clubs, or organizations at school and/or in the community.
19. **Religious community**—Young person spends one or more hours per week in activities in a religious institution.
20. **Time at home**—Young person is out with friends "with nothing special to do" two or fewer nights per week.

External Assets

Commitment to Learning

21. **Achievement motivation**—Young person is motivated to do well in school.
22. **School engagement**—Young person is actively engaged in learning.
23. **Homework**—Young person reports doing at least one hour of homework every school day.
24. **Bonding to school**—Young person cares about her or his school.
25. **Reading for pleasure**—Young person reads for pleasure three or more hours per week.

Positive Values

26. **Caring**—Young person places high value on helping other people.
27. **Equality and social justice**—Young person places high value on promoting equality and reducing hunger and poverty.
28. **Integrity**—Young person acts on convictions and stands up for her or his beliefs.
29. **Honesty**—Young person "tells the truth even when it is not easy."
30. **Responsibility**—Young person accepts and takes personal responsibility.
31. **Restraint**—Young person believes it is important not to be sexually active or to use alcohol or other drugs.

Social Competencies

32. **Planning and decision making**—Young person knows how to plan ahead and make choices.
33. **Interpersonal competence**—Young person has empathy, sensitivity, and friendship skills.
34. **Cultural competence**—Young person has knowledge of and comfort with people of different cultural/racial/ethnic backgrounds.
35. **Resistance skills**—Young person can resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations.
36. **Peaceful conflict resolution**—Young person seeks to resolve conflict nonviolently.

Positive Identity

37. **Personal power**—Young person feels he or she has control over "things that happen to me."
38. **Self-esteem**—Young person reports having a high self-esteem.
39. **Sense of purpose**—Young person reports that "my life has a purpose."
40. **Positive view of personal future**—Young person is optimistic about her or his personal future.

Internal Assets

ON BEING THE NOW AND FUTURE CHURCH

Supplemental Thoughts On The Life Of The Church

The Church

The Church is sent into the world to transform lives. It is a big place so the task is large and often complex.

To be the Church is to be about the business of meeting the holistic needs of people in the name of Christ, while helping them discover their identity as children of God, and empowering them to reach out to others to share the gifts of God.

The Congregation

Just a little after the beginning, were the Apostles and through them the Holy Spirit called into being congregations. There has always been a congregational oversight function within the church; someone outside who supports and encourages congregations even as it holds them accountable. This is important to remember because the following statement can be misunderstood.

The congregation is the fundamental unit of ministry in the church.

The congregation is the place in which the people of God are gathered in the common life of faith. It is where the ministry of Word and Sacrament is conducted. It is where peoples' needs are addressed one-on-one, face-to-face, in the context of life lived together. It is the lamp on the lamp stand. It is the leaven and the salt in the world. It is the Body of Christ living out the Great Commission; loving the world as God loves the world; playing the role of sheep in a world of goats and hunger, thirst, loneliness, vulnerability, and imprisonment. The congregation is the face of the Church that most people see. It is the hands and voice of God in the context of the place in which it exists.

It is into membership in the life of our congregations that we invite the world. Our congregations, in order to be the Church, must

- be inviting and welcoming (A wonderful sign on a Mennonite church said, "Visitors Expected." Maybe they have cake.)
- be committed to raising the now and future church
- value people of all walks of life
- share the stories of the blessings of faith in day-to-day life – introduce people to Christ
- identify and meet the needs of the people in their context
- see themselves as part of the distributed village of the Church

The Agencies and Institutions of the Church

Congregations minister in response to Christ's Commission that sends us into all the world. Some tasks are local; others are larger. Providing for the future leadership of congregations, carrying the Gospel into the distant world, and care of the vulnerable and those at risk are all parts of the mission of the Church. Because this is an increasingly large and complex task, our congregations have pooled their resources and created a wide variety of ministries including schools, colleges, seminaries, hospitals, orphanages, convalescent homes, counseling services, retirement centers, assisted living facilities, camps, homes for troubled youth, low cost housing, street ministries, campus ministries, prison ministries, and outreach and mission ministries both foreign and domestic.

These are extensions of the life and ministry of our congregations.

They extend the reach, enlarge the grasp and strengthen the hands of the congregations and allow the Church to do ministry on a scale that no congregation could hope to do on its own. The congregations must never forget that they have collectively called these entities into being. These extension ministries must never forget that they are not disembodied hands, but exist to minister in the name of Christ and on behalf of our collective congregations – the distributed village of the Church.

The Synods

Synods exist both to support and hold accountable the congregations and their extension ministries. Synods should be expected to be keepers of the larger vision of the Church. They should be aware of the nature and needs of the “field” that is their geographical area. Synods should be identifying areas in which the Church needs to extend itself in the form of congregations or extension ministries. They should be equipping ministry by providing education, brokering ideas, and fostering problem-solving dialogue.

Growth

Growth of congregations and the growth of the village through the planting of new congregations is predicated on the enthusiastic obedience of Christians to the command of Christ to share the life-giving, life-transforming, Gospel with others. This task inherently requires Christians to be witnessing, ministering, inviting, and welcoming to all of God’s people – especially the poor, the hurting, and the disenfranchised – the very people with whom Jesus spent most of his time and energy. The Church must be willing to meet people as and where they are. It is not necessary – nor desirable – for people who are diverse in culture, race, tradition, and in many other ways to be socially or culturally transformed in order to become Lutheran Christians. Peter and Paul faced this millennia ago in the controversy over whether converts needed to become Jews before they could become Christians. The answer was, “No.” To be unwilling to welcome any human being into the fellowship of the Church is to have missed the point of the Gospel.

The Liturgy

The Lutheran Church is a liturgical church. Our liturgy is a defining characteristic in our common faith life as expressed in worship. The word, “liturgy” means, “the work of the people.” Work has changed over the centuries. Work is very diverse in our age. While the conciliatory work of the people in terms of our Christian call to the gospel life doesn’t change, our understanding, attitudes, and practice of work does. Liturgy must, therefore, be contextually aware and responsive. It must reflect the lives of the people for whom it becomes the vehicle for worship. In a living Church, the liturgy must be alive and life means being open to change and adaptation to contextual constraints and opportunities.

A Symphony

The life of the Church is a symphony. If the prime directive of an orchestra is as simple as “make beautiful music,” then that of the Church is just as simple, “give life to my people.” Each of our congregations and our extension ministries is a section of the orchestra. No one section plays all the parts. Each section contributes in its context and harmonizes its part with the whole. There is a conductor who knows the full score and sets the beat. We are not a tin whistle playing, “Happy Birthday.” Our music is a very complex symphony and each of the sections must know its place and the importance of its respective role in the whole of the work. Each must play, using all of its gifts, to its fullest potential. And God’s music will be heard...and God will dance.