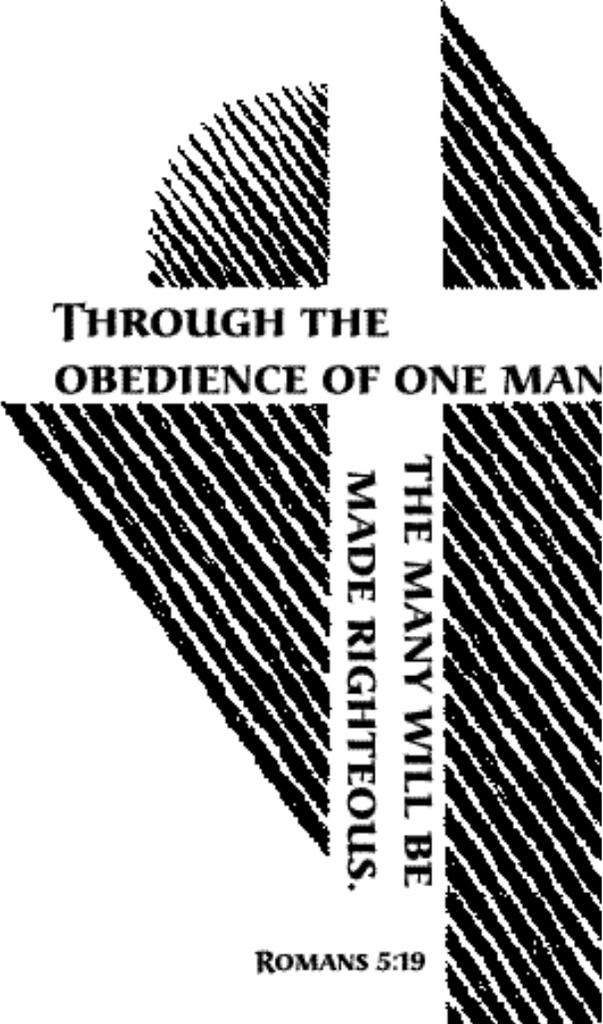


VOLUME 47
NUMBER 3
FEBRUARY 2007

The Lutheran Educator

The WELS Education Journal



THROUGH THE
OBEDIENCE OF ONE MAN

THE MANY WILL BE
MADE RIGHTEOUS.

ROMANS 5:19

The Lutheran Educator



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

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Pondering a Paradox

The highest-ranking U.S. military officer detained at the “Hanoi Hilton” prisoner of war camp during the Viet Nam War was Admiral Jim Stockdale. For eight years he endured a miserable life by anyone’s standards—no release date, repeated torture, a life without even a prisoner’s rights.

Stockdale lived to tell about it in a book, *In Love and War* which he co-authored with his wife. He never relinquished his command and found ingenious ways—like assigning a code to broom and mop strokes during silent work detail—to communicate with his men.

How does one endure such a trial? The degree to which faith played a role is for Stockdale and individual readers to answer. Nonetheless, how he endured is a question that has intrigued many—including business leadership guru, Jim Collins, who interviewed Stockdale for his best seller *Good to Great*

In Stockdale’s story Collins found an important implication for leadership that he calls the Stockdale Paradox: “Retain faith that you will prevail in the end, regardless of the difficulties *AND at the same time* confront the most brutal facts of your current reality, whatever they might be.”

At first glance one might ask what’s so profound. But the verbs “retain” and “confront” joined by “AND” are significant. In difficult times, many slip into despair due to their assessment that the odds are just too overwhelming. Others choose to see only an upside. Stockdale called them “the optimists” who kept saying “We’re going to be out by Christmas.” When that didn’t happen, they changed the date...again and again. They never made it out, or, as Stockdale puts it, “...they died of a broken heart.”

In trial, despair and blind optimism are equally crippling.

A paradox, remember, is a truth that transcends logic. Maintaining unwavering hope in the face of insurmountable odds seems to be an exercise in futile denial. Yet it is possible, and, Stockdale would argue, absolutely necessary.

If Stockdale’s Paradox has some kind of familiar ring to it, perhaps that is because God’s Word has said as much. Trial and triumph create a constant tension in the Christian’s life. Consistently we will deal with lapses in support, ugly attitudes, and the powerful allures of the world *AND at the same time* follow the Lord who promised that not even the gates of hell will prevail against his church. We will deal with challenges instead of ignoring them *AND at the same time* trust the promises of the One who endured death and hell to redeem us. We will fight battles aggressively *AND at the same time* believe the most important battle is over and won in Christ.

To a small band of followers who would face many challenges, Jesus put it this way, “In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). And so we lean into the wind, eminently hopeful.

PML



Christian School Discipline

John R. Schultz

“Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed.... You must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die ... The Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man ,... she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it ... I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.” Excerpts, Genesis 2 & 3

How wonderful, yet tragically sad, are the events in the Garden of Eden: paradise, perfect bliss, the ugly fall into sin, the tragic consequences, the beautiful promise of a Savior. The disobedience of Adam and Eve horribly changed the course of human history. God’s perfect creation was tainted with evil. Our first parents’ lives of bliss were now filled with pain, grief, and hardship. But God’s love and grace beamed like a huge light in his curse of the serpent and his first gospel promise of the Savior! One, “born of a woman” (Gal 4:4) would appear to “destroy the devil’s work” (1 John 3:8). The events of the

Garden of Eden can serve as a model for discipline in Christian schools.

How were Adam and Eve to live in their perfect communion with God? What did God expect of them? How could they show their love for their Creator? God left no doubt about his expectations for his creatures. They were allowed to eat freely from any tree in the garden except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The limitations on the behavior of Adam and Eve were clearly and definitively set. The same should be true of a Christian school. Expectations and limitations for classrooms should be clearly defined by the teacher. The principal makes certain the same is true for the school as a whole. Students need to be clear about the expectations and limitations of their educational environment. The expectations are to be fair and contribute positively to student learning.

The overwhelming image of the home a living God provided Adam and Eve in the garden is its perfect bliss. God bestowed upon the crown of his creation the abundance of his love. He gave Adam companionship and marriage. The naming of the animals indi-

cates superior wisdom. The garden contained all things needed for their lives. Its beauty must have been outstanding. They were blessed with profitable activities. The Christian school cannot create an environment of perfection such as existed in the Garden of Eden. It can, however, make every effort to pattern its environment after that which existed in the garden. A positive, loving relationship between everyone in the school is the first step. Positive, friendly, and helpful words spoken by the teachers on a consistent basis communicate love and concern. Frequent interaction with parents, promoting student achievement and accomplishments, providing meaningful and engaging work—all these and others help create a positive learning environment.

Adam and Eve disobeyed the clear limitations God had set. When God gave the command not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he also said, “When you eat of it you will surely die.” Adam and Eve broke the blissful unity between God and man. Man separated himself from God. “The wages of sin is death,” Romans 6:23. Man would now suffer the just consequences of his disobedience. Students and teachers must confess, “What I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing,” Romans 7:19. Because of their legacy from Adam and Eve and in spite of the positive environment set by the school, students will disobey the clear limitations set for their behavior. When this occurs and loving warnings fail, the school (or classroom teacher) must implement consequences

stringent enough to “train a child in the way he should go,” (Proverbs 22:6) yet not physically or psychologically abusive.

In the ugly gloom of sin, God’s love and forgiveness was like a beacon. Even as he administered the consequence of Adam and Eve’s sin, he promised a Savior for them and all their descendants. God provided the means whereby Satan would be crushed. God’s love and forgiveness were apparent to them. They never wondered how they would regain God’s favor. It was freely given to them through the “seed of the woman”. The Christian school will assure a misbehaving student of God’s forgiveness through Jesus. Such a student may experience the consequences of his sin, but he should never be allowed to doubt God’s love and forgiveness. The prophet Nathan’s words to David, “the Lord has taken away your sins,” (2 Samuel 12:13b) is always a regular component of the school’s message to its students.

Read some more: Colossians 3:12-17

Prayer:

Tender Shepherd, never leave them,
Never let them go astray;
By your warning love directed,
May they walk the narrow way.
Thus direct them, thus defend them
Lest they fall an easy prey. (CW 508 st.2)

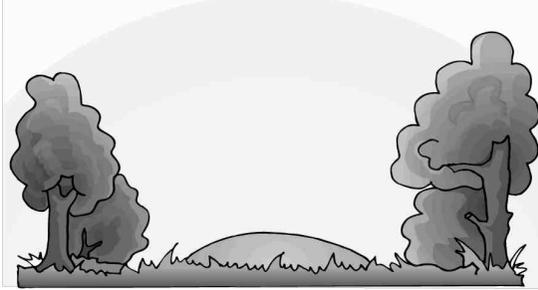
John Schultz served as principal/ administrator of Minnesota Valley Lutheran High School. He is currently retired and living in New Ulm, MN.

Sunrise or Sunset?

What's Ahead for Confessional Lutheran Education?

John Braun

CAN YOU
TELL the
difference



between a sunset and a sunrise? Of course it's easy if you are there or know where you've been. It's a sunset when the day is over and you look to the west and see the sun dropping down below the horizon. When you awake from sleep, look to the east, and watch the sun come up over the horizon, it's a sunrise. Sunsets and sunrises are most often beautiful events on both sides of a day.

But my question is more challenging if you are not there and you see the sky in a photograph or painting. Sunrise or sunset? It's even more difficult to decide whether events we observe in our world represent the beginning of a new era after a period of uncertainty or the end of one grand eventful era marking the beginning of the night. It's difficult to assess where we are in our own personal histories just as it is difficult to determine where we are in history. Will our world spiral downward in increased violence, or will we see the violence reduced and contained? Will the econo-

my continue to be good, or will the price of oil,

inflation, and other factors bring on a period of difficulty? We read and listen in order to decide which it will be: sunrise or sunset.

Let's rephrase the questions: how would you assess the state of confessional Lutheranism today and, in particular, the role of Lutheran college training? Is this a sunrise or a sunset? Are we witnessing the last glorious rays of Lutheran colleges in our fellowship before the night descends upon us all? Or is it much different from that? Is this the dawn of something new and beautiful? Where are we standing today, and what is the future? Can anything help answer those questions or help us decide whether this is a sunset or a sunrise?

Perhaps there's another alternative. Perhaps we are simply watching the regular progression of days with no ominous darkness or glorious day ahead. We may be watching one day giving way to another. Every day brings its own set of challenges. The challenges of one

day are different from those of the previous day, and we are called upon to wrestle with them just as others did on the previous watch.

Where are we?

That's the first question. Can we know where we are? What criteria should we use to assess the current state of our institutions? I don't want to paint some unrealistic optimistic picture. I want to know as clearly as I can what the problems are. Then, by the power of God's grace, work at solving them.

We face a big challenge. Simply, there are fewer students in our midst. Families are smaller; baptisms are down; grade school enrollments are down. At the least this implies that the future will be somewhat different from the past or the present.

If the first challenge is the pool of available students, the second challenge is financial. The cost of education has continued to grow over the years. Congregations are losing members, the members are getting older, and it has become more difficult for the congregation to support its school, the area Lutheran high school, and the WELS ministerial education system. Budget cuts, tuition increases, even staff cuts, and school closings are part of congregational thinking.

Besides the financial challenges, Lutheran education faces challenges in methodology and technology. Most teachers today received their training in the traditional lecture method. The authority stood before the class and pre-

sented the material; sometimes that was supplemented by audiovisual resources. But in the years since, methodologies, strategies, and technologies have changed. The sage on the stage has stepped aside to make way for interactive and cooperative learning, PowerPoint (although this approach is still largely the sage on the stage), brain-based education, and computer-assisted learning. Workshops, online classes, seminars, and discussion groups are common. We have adapted to these things. No doubt additional changes will take place that will help teachers be more effective. Whether we will experience a sunrise or a sunset in our educational efforts, that adaptation will continue.

Is there a future?

Children are coming through your doors because they believe that you will help them mature as Lutheran Christians. They trust you to help their minds mature and grow with knowledge and insight. They believe that you can help them mature and become responsible citizens in our world. But most important, they have chosen your school because they are concerned about spiritual maturity. To my knowledge, not one of our schools hides the spiritual dimension of its mission.

The presence of students in your classrooms and their involvement in your extracurricular activities represent families that desire these blessings for their children. Admittedly, not everyone has the same degree of dedication or

commitment to these principles. And some parents become helicopter parents, hovering over their children and your effort to train them. But whatever the challenges, students are coming. Some may drop out, transfer to a public school, or remain with less-than-enthusiastic interest in spiritual matters or their studies. Some will grouse about assignments, teachers, athletics, and one another. But once again they are in your classrooms. They have made the choice to be there.

I suggest that they represent our future, that is, the future not only of our educational system and your school but the future of our church body. In a world that presents so many choices for young people, they have chosen to enroll. That is important. They are the sunrise on the horizon.

Committed to the Gospel and the Lutheran Confessions

First, these students are God's precious gifts to the world as well as to us. Their faith in the Savior becomes the responsibility of each of our institutions. Some have come to know Jesus through their instruction in their own homes and congregations. That faith has grown, in many cases. Under God's grace it grows at area Lutheran high schools, prep schools, or our colleges. Once they enroll, you participate in their spiritual development and help them grow in their relationship with Jesus.

What does that mean? It means that our colleges have the opportunity and challenge to provide the richest spiritu-

al environment possible. Your students expect regular chapel services that provide a depth of worship opportunities. In the self-studies I was involved with as professor and president, we noted that students ranked chapel as one of the most significant aspects of their lives on campus. That student response was not marginally approving nor was it true for only a demographic segment of the student body. It was an overwhelming response by all students. It was not a one-time blip; the response that occurred in the first self-study appeared again in the second ten years later.

As confessional Lutherans, we ought to realize that the concern for chapel and God's Word occurs because of the gospel of Christ. The gospel is the power of God, and it alone can produce such a response. For us, chapel is not just a social event, like the gathering of the community or tribe. It is not something we endure with our students, but, as long as the gospel is present, it is a faith-building opportunity. But chapel is first and foremost an opportunity to gather together so that the Holy Spirit can work in the hearts of students and faculty through the gospel.

As confessional Lutherans, we also know the reality of our own sinful nature and the sinful nature of students. We are not naturally eager to come to hear a message we think we already know. Students and faculty members are often distracted by other things and create other priorities. The challenge we have, entrusted with the lives of future Lutherans, is to provide models for the priority of the gospel. Faculty

priorities often become student priorities. Chapel is an investment in our own spiritual lives and the future spiritual lives of our students.

But it's also more than chapel, isn't it? And it's more than the model you present in your worship priorities. It's also the conversations you have with students, the counseling you do, and the models you present as thoughtful intelligent Lutheran Christians. In this area as well as in the chapel services, Lutherans want to talk about Christ, recognizing Jesus as the heart of the gospel message. Our knowledge and experiences revolve around the Truth, who is also the Way for all our personal journeys and those of our students, and the Life now and beyond.

In other religious colleges and universities there is a lot of God-talk. Much debate and discussion about God occurs in and out of the classroom. Unfortunately such God-talk may be nothing more than the natural religion of the unregenerated human spirit. It feels spiritual and transcendent; it may even show signs of ecstatic emotion—with or without the Pentecostal overtones of that term. It may become a cult of do-gooders out to change the world for the better. A fine sentiment but not necessarily Christian. But we know more. We know that Jesus came to achieve our justification and provide victory over death. It's easy to have God-talk but much more difficult to have Jesus-talk. The natural inclination of the human heart is to talk about God but to resist any reference to Jesus, his purpose for humanity in general, and his role for

us individually. Without Jesus and his cross, God-talk is a discussion in the natural classroom of the human heart, perhaps little more than a rarified discussion of the "force" of Star Wars. But with Jesus, that discussion builds faith; it becomes the power of God for salvation.

So our conversation should be about Jesus and the gospel, not about a vague theology without him. That is what makes us different from other colleges and universities and other religious colleges and universities. It's also what helps us create the future. The future of our congregations and our church bodies is not the development of young men and women who possess thought patterns that can satisfy intellectual curiosity about God. Instead, that future is tied to the faith in Jesus that lives in the hearts and lives of the students who leave our schools. We are helping their faith mature, not just providing them with skills and knowledge to earn livings, solve problems, and be productive in our society.

Remember we are confessional Lutherans and our institutions are committed to that orientation. Faculty members in our schools are Lutherans proficient in their academic disciplines. They pledge faithfulness to the ideas presented in the Lutheran confessions because those ideas represent the ideas of Scripture. Those confessions and our adherence to them tether our academic freedom. Our subscription to the Lutheran Confessions provides many positive blessings. It shapes us and provides the standard for internal discipline to accept what we all share and to

reject what is at odds with what we believe. Because we share a common allegiance to the Confessions, we have been molded into a discourse community with shared beliefs and a particular way of thinking and expressing our thoughts. Along with that comes a common culture in the sense that any discourse community has a common culture, whether it is a nation, a region, a state, a city, a business sector, or a company within that sector.

Some would suggest that this is a negative factor and that we are a closed group that is narrow in our approach and thinking. While some claim that it is an ethnically generated phenomenon, I'm growing more convinced that the barriers are not so much ethnic as they are confessional. But there are many who would disagree with that assessment. But the unity and internal peace that our common faith provides allow us to work together with a minimum of difficulty.

Two vocabularies

Our brand of orthodoxy may come with a strong inclination to congratulate ourselves—and the Lord—for the blessing of unity and to hold events that foster our unity. God's directives on fellowship nurture the concept, and much of human experience underscores the same inclination. For example, people live in homes that they decorate to their own tastes. They draw the shades at night to preserve their space and privacy. Although they retain their own private space, they do come out to talk with

the neighbors and even invite them into their space for conversation and, in some cases, shelter, from weather and other threats.

I want to explore that illustration a bit. Those who live in the house of confessional Lutheranism have many choices. Among them, they can remain secluded within the safety of their shared space. If they do that, the rest of the neighborhood will not know who they are or what they believe. But if they leave the doors open for everyone, they will lose the space they treasure; it will become everyone else's space and even disappear. Even the treasured heirlooms may be broken or lost. They will cease to be the family that the space nurtured and instead become like everyone else. One might then ask if this family has any separate identity that it can maintain. So the confessional Lutheran family members must find a way to keep the treasured space where they can grow and mature while at the same time venturing out to share who they are and what they believe. In venturing out, they invite others inside to share the treasures they have. For us as confessional Lutherans, we wonder how to retain what is ours by God's grace and how to give it away. The tension between separation and outreach may not be easy to determine in all cases. It may even be disputed and debated.

We have the responsibility to teach two different vocabularies. First, like any family gathering, they teach the way family members should talk—with love and respect. Even disagreements can provide lessons for such conversation.

But it's the vocabulary that is important. They need to talk the same language as the other members of the family. Concepts like trinity, justification, fellowship, predestination, faith, sanctification, among many others, must be understood so that a new generation can participate in the dialog within the house of Lutheran confessionality. That effort will assure the continuation of the family but, more important, it will preserve the treasures God has given us in his Word as expressed in our confessions.

Yet the truths we hold dear are for all humanity, and our task is to share them with others. That brings me to the second vocabulary colleges must teach Lutheran students. Students need to know how the rest of the world thinks and shares ideas. After spending time with you, they will open the door to the outside world, leave the comfort and security of your confessional home, and take their places among neighbors who do not share the first vocabulary. This second vocabulary does not just provide the tools necessary to talk about the weather, the news, or the fortunes of their favorite sports team. This vocabulary carries the potential for effective communication about the concepts learned by mastery of the first vocabulary. Their dialog will be conducted with those who have not mastered the confessional vocabulary of Lutheranism and who may actually be ignorant not only of Lutheranism but of the simple gospel of Jesus.

I am concerned that we conduct the work of education in a closed environ-

ment which does not permit exposure to or discussion about ideas and thoughts different from our confessional norms. For some that may be too much to say or write, but let me explain. Confessional Lutheran students will enter a world where different ideas will hold more value than the concepts they learned as Lutherans. I think they need to engage those other ideas before they leave our classrooms. Literature, history, and philosophy open windows through which to look at the world outside. All too soon they will engage those ideas in their daily walks.

We have much to learn from the vast range of human thought and effort, even if we do not agree with everything we encounter. Paul and Moses provide examples of those who mastered both vocabularies and were trained in the disciplines of their day. While we confront ideas and discuss them, we must also maintain the separation and distance from evil and from false teachers that God requires of his faithful people when he says, "Watch out...Keep away" (Rom 16:17).

Some have suggested that we should be more concerned about practical matters and theological precision, in other words, specialize even more than we already do. One consequence of that shift might be to jettison the humanities. Under such a scenario, class time and degree requirements may shape a curriculum that provides only proficiency in the language of our own household with a very limited proficiency in the language of the neighborhood. Then we will become more focused on

internal dialog with one another and those who think as we do; we will become even more isolated than we already are.

In addition, if we adjust curriculum to discuss practical issues and solve current perceived problems, we run the risk of another set of problems. We are better off teaching how to think as Lutherans rather than teaching what to think. We do well to teach them how to think critically and evaluate what they encounter. Critical thinking skills are always important. One of my greatest fears in any curriculum revision suggested by well-meaning and dedicated people is that we prepare students of tomorrow by giving them the answers to the problems we perceive today. Once they get to tomorrow, today's issues and answers won't matter.

I've asked you to look at the future through the lens of the students before you. That should imply that you look at the students as precious individuals that the Lord has given to you. God willing, they are the Lutherans of tomorrow. The implication is that you should adopt a view that will permit you to teach them and not just fill them with content. But the idea of teaching people has much to commend itself to us as we seek to mentor students and operate within the Christian principle of love for one another. Your greatest goal is for the student to grow not only in the discipline that is your area of expertise but also in his or her Christian faith. How can you open the individual minds before you? How can you turn them on so that they develop a healthy curiosity?

Not all students have the same buttons. If that were true, we could use tape recorders to teach. But the lesson you wish to teach flows from one individual to another and from one mind and heart to another's. True not only for biology or math but also for biblical truth.

Vocation

By "vocation" I do not mean the internal calling or impulse a student might have to pursue the training necessary for full-time work in the church. Nor do I mean the call into public ministry issued by God's people to various individual Christians. God has established that ministry and continues to call individuals through his people to areas of service and responsibility. Instead, I'm talking about the calling all Christians have to serve God in whatever their circumstances and with whatever talents and inclinations God grants.

God has sprinkled us all as salt into this world. We are his and have a wonderful status in this world. As Peter expressed it, all believers are "a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God" and, as such, our common task is to "declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light" (1 Pe 2:9). These words do not apply to professional church workers only. They, of course, receive double honor (1 Ti 5:17) as those entrusted with the Word of Truth, but all believers have the status and purpose described by Peter. Each believer has a role in the

kingdom of Christ as Christ determines. Christ is the Head of the Church; he controls the affairs of the Church, not us; his wisdom, vision, and leadership far surpass any of ours. Not all are pastors, not all are teachers, in the same way that not every part of your body is a mouth or every members is a foot (1 Co 12).

Let me illustrate the point with a short story. About a year ago, I visited one of our congregations away from the Midwest. The pastor was handling a vacancy in a nearby town and had to leave immediately after the service to conduct services in the vacant congregation. I attended the Bible class conducted by a member of the congregation we visited. It was an excellent Bible study conducted by a dedicated and energetic layman. He happened to be a colonel who had taught at West Point and would soon be transferred to another university with courses on military science. What struck me was the light coming from this believer. That light was evident not just in the Bible study and the local congregation, but those who knew him could recognize it in the course of his official responsibilities. Now think about that for a moment. The pastor of this local congregation could not step into a classroom at West Point or sit with other officers at a military base, perhaps even thousands of miles away, but this young man could. He has a vocation as a Christian officer. He did not presume to assume responsibility for the teaching and preaching ministry of the local congregation, his role was to complement the work of the

pastor. His fellow believers had turned the public ministry over to the pastor. This was a wonderful lesson about how the body of Christ functions.

However, one thing is wrong with my illustration. It focuses on the way this man served the local congregation. That's not a bad thing, but our concept of vocation is not limited to the local congregation or the visible church. Sometimes I think we at least give the impression that the only service one can render Christ is participating in some activity in the local congregation or the larger visible organization. This believer's service at Bible class was important to the saints of God, and he deserves honor for that role, but he is also God's royal priest in his fatigues on the field of battle or in the classroom teaching military science.

I do not want to minimize the great value all our called workers represent or the high office God has entrusted to them. As a called worker, I take seriously the emphasis Scripture gives to called workers among the saints of God. Yet I confess that I have had the privilege of working with and serving some very talented people. Some of them were smarter than I am, others had a deeper insight into the grace of God and how to live as representatives of Christ in this world, still others had more enthusiasm for sharing Jesus than my weary bones could ever muster. I learned from them and together—yes, together—we did God's work. We looked to find ways to complement one another and not work against one another.

I hope I am pointing you to the east

so you can watch a different event. I believe there is a sunrise for all believers—each one having a place without competition, each one faithfully carrying out the role Christ has assigned—encouraging one another rather than bickering and grouching. God has given us the opportunity to assist in shaping that sunrise. It may be his will to bring it to pass, and he may chose to do it through our efforts.

I believe that the Lord of the church knows whether we are looking at the sunset or the sunrise. I still cannot tell for sure. When the end comes, Jesus reminds us that the visible church may be in shambles. Isn't that what Jesus implies when he says, "At that time many will turn away from the faith ... and many false prophets will appear and deceive many. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold ... If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened" (Mt 24:10-12, 22)? We may witness the death of the visible organizations and institutions we know today—including our Lutheran colleges and even our synods. To our human vision so tied to measurement by numbers and goals and our human experience so tied to what we know of our own histories, that would be a sunset. One that the world would hardly notice or care about. From that perspective, I don't know which direction I'm facing—east or west.

But there is another perspective. The Lord of the church reminds us all that his church has a bright future—a glori-

ous sunrise. It's not tied to our visible colleges or churches. If the organizations and institutions we know disappear, yet the Lord will still have his church sprinkled among the hordes of humanity. At the trumpet call, the angels "will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other" (Matthew 24:31). Now that will be a sunrise better than any we have ever witnessed.

We serve at the Lord of the Church's direction. He asks us to be faithful—that's all. The students who have come into your orbit are the future of our church bodies, not just the future of our ministerium. But it's more than that. As you look at the young men and women before you, you can catch glimpses of the future—the sunrise of the Church of Christ. Help them maintain their orbit long enough to gain speed and momentum until they spin off to attract others to the gospel they possess—the gospel you have modeled for them and shared with them.

John A Braun serves at Northwestern Publishing House and is the editor of "Forward in Christ."



Effective Leadership and Supervision in Today's Schools

Benjamin Troge



Introduction

The days of administrators are filled with phone calls, upset parents, discipline issues, demands from higher authorities, developing budgets, and teacher supervision, just to name a few. With high-stakes testing, budget cuts, teachers' unions, unruly students, and lack of parental support, the cards seem to be stacked against every administrator. So with the myriad of issues listed above, how is it possible to be an effective leader in today's schools?

Effective leadership today involves much more than sitting behind a desk answering phone calls and pushing paper. Leadership means not only being the boss when called for, but also being a teacher so that others around the "boss" can take appropriate leadership roles. From my research, I believe that an effective leader addresses four main issues. An effective leader promotes a shared vision, adequately manages pedagogical and instructional programs, promotes a positive school cli-

mate, and promotes continuous professional learning among his staff.

Key aspects

A shared vision.

The ultimate goal of every educational institution should be to increase student achievement; how a school gets there is determined by its mission and vision. The purposes of many schools vary just by the nature of its organizational structure. Some schools are parochial, others private, and most public. A mission statement tells everyone what is the purpose of the school. The vision of the school is the view of the school and how it should develop. It is a matter of asking where do we want this school to go?

Oftentimes the principal or head administrator will come into a school with his own vision of what he wants the school to be. Sometimes the staff and constituency will buy into the administrator's vision, but oftentimes the administrator will be left high and dry. How leaders are judged is often deter-

mined by how well the administrator builds cohesiveness, unity and “builds some form of common commitments” (Day, Hadfield, and Harris, 2003, 73). Neuman and Simmons (2000) state that “the leaders’ responsibilities are to pro-

promotes distributed leadership where more people can take ownership of what is transpiring within its walls. I believe Hoerr (2006) summarizes this point very well. “The key, as in so many aspects of leadership, is to involve others in creating the solutions” (92).

An effective leader promotes a shared vision, adequately manages pedagogical and instructional programs, promotes a positive school climate, and promotes continuous professional learning among his staff

Managing instructional programs.

The next key step in effective leadership in today’s schools involves carrying out the shared vision of the school. How the principal “understands” and “carries out” that vision of what the school needs is the principal’s main job (Portin, 2004). Without getting bogged down in the daily grind of monotonous paper work, ultimately the principal must decide what is in the school’s and primarily the students’ best interests. Consequently, he must concentrate on what is actually transpiring within the school. Southworth (2002) gives three aspects of effective instructional leadership, as well as three additional aspects that are directly tied to the three effective instructional characteristics. Talking with teachers, promoting teachers’ professional growth, and fostering teacher reflection are Southworth’s three aspects of effective instructional leadership. Along with those three aspects, Southworth also states that being visible, praising results, and extending autonomy are three additional behaviors that can have positive or negative effects.

vide direction and guidance for the implementation of that vision, to keep it constantly evident in their own words and actions, and to help the school community remain faithful to the vision in its daily practice” (11).

Developing a vision without the cooperation of the school community can undermine the vision of the school and ultimately every effort to improve student achievement. Allowing others within the school community to participate in developing the vision of the school

It is physically impossible for today’s administrator to single handedly administer every instructional program in the school. Therefore, it behooves the principal to delegate and empower others

accordingly. The aspect that seems to have the most positive direct relationship with effective instructional leadership is promoting teachers' professional growth. In order to develop effective instructional programs, faculty and staff members must be allowed to make decisions about professional development (Chrisman, 2005; Chavez, Hall, Long, Pritchard, Randolph, Shahid, Sullivan, and Wildman, 2001; Cavanagh, MacNeill, Silcox, 2003). As Cavanagh et al. state, "The educative mission of schools concerns improvement of student learning which necessitates a principal leadership approach that empowers teachers to make classroom learning appropriate for the needs of all students" (16).

Fostering teacher reflection and talking with teachers goes hand in hand. In order to conduct these two activities, an administrator needs time. Time is a valuable commodity, so learning how to empower others to conduct these two activities can really show the strength of a school leader. One possible option given by Goldstein and Noguera (2006) is to provide peer assistance and review. This model takes supervision of instruction beyond the norm and "rather than reducing the principal's power, this approach presumes that strong principals serve as effective instructional leaders when they use the strengths of those around them" (36). Peer assistance and review is an opportunity for professionals to collaborate with one another on best instructional practices and how improvements in instruction can be made. Peer assistance and review does

not always have to be about improving, it can also be about reassurance and encouragement when professionals might be questioning the practices within their classrooms. Ultimately, this method empowers teachers to be responsible for the quality of instruction within the school.

Managing instructional leadership is a daunting task especially with all of the legal requirements and calls for accountability by the public. How well a leader manages the instruction within the school will not only determine how truly effective he is, but also to what

In order to develop effective instructional programs, faculty and staff members must be allowed to make decisions about professional development.

degree the true educative mission of the school is being carried out.

Promoting school climate.

"Effective leaders create an environment in which everyone can do his or her best work—an environment that is safe, comfortable, and effective and has an intellectual focus" (Neuman and

Simmons, 2000, 12).

No one likes being in an uncomfortable environment. If it's hot and muggy outside, people generally tend to migrate to an area of shade or air-conditioning. Why? The answer is quite simple; it is more comfortable. The school climate is not much different. If the school promotes an atmosphere of love, concern, safety; values the opinions and contributions of others; and is academically stimulating, the climate is inviting and people will tend to move in that direction. The opposite can be said if the climate is academically stifling, unsafe, and does not promote an atmosphere of care and concern. How a leader addresses these issues is another key aspect of effective leadership.

Teachers must first of all "buy into" the shared vision of the school. As Southworth (2002) states, "when school leaders work toward establishing a collaborative learning culture, they simultaneously create the climatic conditions for instructional leadership because professional cultures characterized [sic] by openness, trust and security appear to be the ones where teachers feel confident to become learners" (88,89). How effective the instructional programs are in a school is directly related to the attitude of the teachers. Administrators have a direct impact on the job satisfaction of teachers (Robinson, 1998), and the teachers' perception of the effectiveness of the principal is directly related to the climate he creates. Is it coincidental then that "school climate, leadership, and quality instruction are frequently associated with effective

schools" (Daugherty, Kelley, and Thornton, 2005, 18)? When an environment is created that allows for teachers to share in leadership and take ownership of pedagogy and student learning, instructional practices will ultimately get better.

The response by parents and students to the climate of the school is ultimately fostered as a result of the attitude of the teachers. It essentially becomes a multiple cause-effect relationship that trickles from the top down. There is a heavy burden on administrators' shoulders to provide a climate that is appealing to all those involved with the school. As Daugherty et al. state, the implications for administrators to create a positive school climate are great. "A positive school climate can enhance staff performance, promote higher morale, and improve student achievement...school climate may be one of the most important ingredients of a successful instructional program" (19).

Continuous professional learning.

At the risk of sounding like a broken record, I included continuous professional learning as a separate key factor in effective leadership, even though this topic has already been mentioned in the other categories. Continuous professional learning is so critical to the overall success and/or failure of the school that virtually every aspect of the school is in one way or another tied to teachers' professional growth. From a strictly instructional leadership point of view, an administrator must keep in mind all of the knowledge and skill areas teach-

ers need to be competent in; “these include knowledge of curricula, pedagogy, student and adult learning and skills in change management, group dynamics and interpersonal relations and communications” (Southworth, 85-86).

Continuous professional learning can take many forms. These forms may include classes, seminars, workshops, peer critiques, staff meetings, advanced degrees, preparing curricular policies, and many other opportunities. But before an administrator requires his staff to continue their education, Southworth mentions that “anyone appointed to a headship needs to be able to demonstrate they are a continuing professional learner” (86). This is an area where it is especially good to lead by example.

Providing for continuous professional learning has the possibility of many benefits. First of all, this opportunity allows for teachers not only to feel empowered, but also it actually does empower them to take a leadership role of the instruction in the classroom (Sun, 2004; Chrisman, 2005; Southworth, 2002; Day et al., 2003; Daugherty et al., 2005). Second, it also contributes to increased teacher commitment, especially pride in being a teacher and the enjoyment of teaching (Sun, 2004). Last, it is one of the key components in what separates a successful from an unsuccessful school (Chrisman, 2005).

Christian worldview

As if the information presented above

was not enough for a leader to chew on for some time and try to come to grips with all of the responsibilities laid upon his shoulders, God our heavenly Father has given us some guidelines as well. In Romans 12:7-8, Ephesians 4:11-12, and 1 Corinthians 12:7-31 (NIV), the apostle Paul identifies a number of gifts each of us has been given to serve the body of Christ, and leadership and teaching are both mentioned. Being a leader and/or

*Any school leader
worth his salt knows
that it takes many
people with different
talents to effectively
run a school.*

teacher of a school is a tall order, and it can be both mentally and physically challenging at times. That being said, what a privilege! What an opportunity to build up the body of Christ and “to prepare God’s people for works of service” (Ephesians 4:12).

Now, any school leader worth his salt knows that it takes many people with different talents to effectively run a school. As Paul mentions in 1 Corinthians 12:12, “The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body” (NIV). How well an administrator empowers his fellow workers to adequately fill their roles, while simulta-

neously empowering them to do it effectively, efficiently, and with enthusiasm and excitement so that students become the recipients of a shared vision, quality instruction, a positive school climate, and continuous professional improvement, is the true test of an effective leader. ✪

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Code Red

Jack Minch

“Code Red” was in the subject box of an email I recently received from a practicum supervisor. That was the first time I had ever read those words. I was certain that it must be something important.

After reading the email, I learned that on the day I planned to visit that particular school, my student’s teaching would most likely be interrupted by a Code Red drill. I still was not sure what a Code Red was, but thought it might be similar to the lock down I had experienced at another public school.

The day I made my observation visit, the student told me that the Code Red is a lock down type of drill required at various times throughout the school year. This new form of drill has been introduced in many public schools since there had been an increase in school shootings.

While my student was teaching his lesson, the principal announced over the intercom, “This is a Code Red drill.”

Immediately the second grade children moved from their desks to a corner of the room where they were not visible from the classroom door. They hunched down on the floor as low as they could.

The teacher locked the classroom door, drew the shades and turned off the lights. She too then joined the children in the corner getting down on her knees so as to hide. Everyone sat quietly waiting for further directions.

It wasn’t long before I saw the principal try to open the door and look in through the window.

Once the principal had made his rounds, he announced the “All Clear” over the intercom. The children returned to their seats and my student began to finish his lesson.

Fire, tornado, and, in some cases, earthquake drills are a regular part of our Lutheran elementary school planning. But has your faculty considered implementing a Code Red? Maybe it should be the topic of one of your faculty meetings. Praise be to God no serious harm or danger has come to any of the children in our Lutheran elementary or high schools to date.

Here are some suggestions to take under consideration regarding school security:

- Once the school day has started, lock all doors to the school except the main entrance. Be sure that anyone who comes in that front door can be

seen entering the building. Signs should direct the visitor to the school office. If you choose to lock all doors, it is important to have a doorbell and intercom available at the main entrance so that visitors can let you know they are wanting to enter your building.

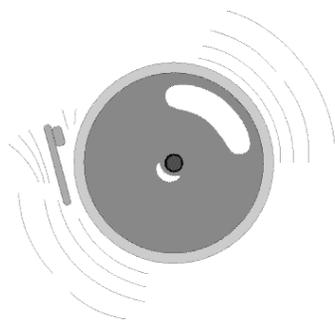
- Should classroom doors be locked or unlocked during the day? I've found schools where classroom doors are always locked. If an intruder enters the building, he cannot easily enter one of the classrooms.
- Are the classroom teachers able to call the office from their classroom? If in a lockdown or in any other emergency, it is important to be able to call the office and not leave the children unattended.
- Should visitors be required to identify themselves by wearing a visitor's pass? In the public schools all personnel and visitors normally are required to wear the identification badges or a pass.
- If you should be required to evacuate the building, where will you take the children? Public schools have an offsite place where the children are to go should a building evacuation be necessary.
- Have you as a faculty established shelter areas where you will go within the building should a refuge be needed in an emergency?
- Other areas your faculty might want to review or consider are staff responsibilities in any disaster; assault/fight, or bomb threat procedures; development of a crisis team for your school,

fire procedures, guns in school, hazardous material emergency, vandalism, burglary, medical emergency.

We are in an ever-changing world. As we've seen in recent years, schools are not safe from those who would do children and teachers harm. It is important that we think ahead and know what we will do should some emergency or disaster suddenly confront us and our children.

We need to be proactive rather than reactive. ✪

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Do Not Judge, or You, too, Will be Judged

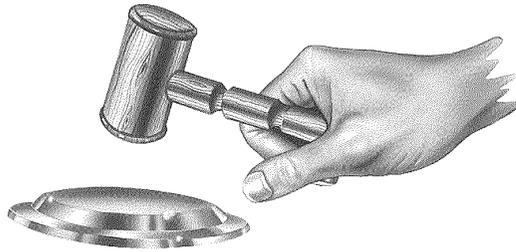
Theodore Hartwig

AT MANY PLACES
Scripture warns
against judging

people's hearts. The warning becomes most serious when considering whether people are believers or not and whether saved or not. By the rule of love, as Luther expressed it, we count people as Christians on the basis of their Christian confession and the evidence of that confession in their personal lives. If, as hypocrites, they do not mean what they say, we leave the judgment to the Lord. We cannot look into hearts.

What of people whose Christian confession and life are muddied with unscriptural teachings, beliefs, and practices? More to the point, what of people in other Christian denominations? What of their leaders better acquainted with, and more confirmed in these teachings and practices? What of the pope? May they, by the rule of love, be accounted Christians and among the saved?

Here the words of St. Paul come to our assistance. He writes, 1 Cor.3:11-15:



No
one can
lay any
founda-
tion

other than the one already laid which is Jesus Christ. If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay, or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but barely as one escaping through the flames.

From this inspired explanation, it should not be difficult to resolve the question about people and their leaders in other Christian churches. If the foundation on Jesus Christ is present in their faith and life, we have our answer. And when, on this genuine foundation, people have built further activities of their faith life which are in accordance with Scripture, then at death their works, like

imperishable gold, silver, and precious jewels, will endure the test of God's judgment. However, if, on the foundation of Jesus Christ, people have built religious beliefs and practices not in harmony with Scripture, they at death will experience the burning away of all that unscriptural thinking and doing, which like wood, hay, and straw is perishable. Nevertheless, the individual will be saved because of the underlying foundation.

*We, by the rule of love
and thankful for
God's grace to us
imperfect sinners,
refrain from making
graceless judgments.*

So how shall someone be judged who in publications to the world at large declared that "Jesus Christ is the only true way to salvation" and who also correctly condemned today's popular notion that "one religion is as good as another"? These confessions of his faith were made by the late pope. Why then does one hear public utterances (yes, not singular but plural) in our Synod that John Paul II is burning in hell? Granted that the papacy has built cords of perishable firewood and bundles of inflammable straw on the foundation of Jesus Christ, how do such utterances accord with Scripture? They are not merely careless. They are offensive in

the real sense of the word; and if spoken in jest, this is no matter for jest. Those utterances do no good and do a great deal of harm. They hamper us from our mission as Christian witnesses of the Gospel. They are judgments that need to be called uncharitable. How it can be possible for a prominent religious leader like the pope to fill an office in the church which in many respects promotes ideas and activities contrary to the teaching and the spirit of Christ and yet be among the saved is a mystery that we leave in God's hands. He alone is the judge of people's hearts as to whether their faith was genuine or just a sham. He alone, on this basis, determines people's eternal destiny. And we, by the rule of love and thankful for God's grace to us imperfect sinners, refrain from making graceless judgments. ✠

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The Assignment Process

Vilas Glaeske

MY BROTHER IS convinced that he has the assignment process figured out. He describes it this way. The members of the Assignment Committee sit in a semi-circle. Each has some darts in his hands and on each dart is printed the name of a congregation that is requesting a candidate through the assignment process. In the middle of the semi-circle is a large wheel with the names of all the candidates written on it. The chairman of the Assignment Committee spins the wheel and the first district president to nominate a candidate throws a dart at the spinning wheel. The name of the candidate pinned by the dart is assigned to the congregation names on the dart. The wheel is spun again for each president to take his turn throwing darts until all the darts have been used.

I suppose that to some folks trying to figure out why one candidate was assigned at a certain place and not another, could conclude that a certain randomness is involved. Nothing could be further from the truth.

As with all things that we do in the church in the name of our dear Savior, each session of the assignment meetings begins with a serious and sincere invoking of God, the Holy Spirit to be present

to guide the assignment of God's gifts to His church. It is an awesome experience and responsibility. It is also a humbling experience.

How does it really work? It begins with a congregation requesting that a candidate be assigned to carry out the work of public ministry in their midst. The congregation with the help of the circuit pastor or district president will define the duties of the office to be filled. In the case of a teacher, for example, the grades to be taught are listed. The number of students anticipated for each grade is given. If there are other needs to be filled by the teacher such as organ duties, teaching instrumental music-keyboard, coaching, or cheerleading, they are all listed.

Each member of the Assignment Committee receives a book from Martin Luther College (MLC) listing all the candidates with a biographical sketch for each of them including the report of the practice teaching experience as well as a recommendation for a level of service. The area of concentration in their studies is given along with their grade point average. Marital status is also noted.

Let's assume that a district president has a request for a female teacher who

is to teach grades 4 and 5. She is also to teach departmentalized art in the middle and upper grades. She is to be an organist who can handle playing every other Sunday. The president then looks through all the available candidates to find those who fit the needs of the congregation. Sometimes there are several to choose from. Sometimes there may only be one. The agony occurs when another district president has a similar request and only one candidate is available who matches the needs. No darts are used! Discussion takes place and a decision is made with the best interests of the candidate and the congregation in mind. It is rewarding but exhausting work.

Each president takes his turn at nominating a candidate to fill a request which he has from his district or from a foreign field for which he is responsible. The rotation is determined by the synod secretary keeping in mind the number of requests each district has.

Who is in the room? The Assignment Committee is composed of the twelve district presidents, the two synod vice presidents, the synod secretary and the synod president (who chairs the meeting). There are also advisors present. At MLC, the college president, the academic dean, the director of clinical experiences, the vice president of student life, the presidents of the two prep schools and the administrators for the Board for Ministerial Education (BME) and Commission on Parish Schools (CPS) are present. At the seminary there are also two faculty members present. These men are often consulted in

the discussions for the wisest placement of candidates, humanly speaking.

The question might be raised whether the Assignment Committee has ever made a mistake. Of course it has. The church can err. The Lutheran church cut its teeth over that issue. When it happens, adjustments are made in the interest of the candidate and the calling congregation. This kind of situation is usually the result of information coming to light which was not available to the Assignment Committee at the time of the assignment process.

It is always amazing to this writer how the Holy Spirit guides the process with all the different people involved beginning at the congregational level all the way to the men seated around the room making the assignments.

I believe everyone who has ever been involved in assigning candidates would agree that the process, though a human endeavor, leaves a person with the conviction that God the Holy Spirit certainly is the one who oversees the work. Each candidate and each congregation should have this same conviction.

Remember, we do not gather for a dart-throwing contest. We gather in accord with the responsibilities placed on us by the church for the most beneficial placement of candidates in their first place of service in the public ministry. ✠

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Whoever is Not Against Us is For Us

David Sellnow

SOME MONTHS AGO (May 14, 2006, p.F-1), a travel writer for the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* published an article on the town of New Ulm, Minnesota. In commenting about Martin Luther College, the writer named the college as being associated with the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, and described WELS as being “so conservative that it won’t associate with other Lutherans” (not to mention anyone beyond Lutheranism).

I know a number of WELS members who were upset by that comment. “Nobody understands our stance on fellowship,” one person remarked. Another contacted the *Pioneer Press* journalist, trying to get her to print a clarification.

Meanwhile, I wondered if the journalist’s appraisal was all that far off the mark. Have we become so good at insulating ourselves from the world around us, that to the world around us it looks like we simply do not associate in any way with anyone beyond ourselves? I don’t mean fellowship—there certainly are biblical imperatives we must follow in regard to our worship and work as a

church. But do we go so far as to be overtly unfriendly toward persons outside our own circles? Are we more inclined to look with suspicion and disdain on anyone of any other church body, more so than to rejoice that the kingdom of Christ on earth is indeed larger than our little corner of it?

Some interesting research results about our Wisconsin Synod were published a little over a year ago. In answer to a 2003 synod convention directive, a study was commissioned to determine reasons why many young people pull away from WELS after having been confirmed in our churches. (Bret Goodman Marketing, Research and Strategic Planning: *Why Young People Leave WELS*, Mequon WI, September 2005. Available at: <www.wels.net/jump-word/youthstudy>.) One prong of the study involved surveying young people who have left WELS churches. Among several strains of thought in the comments those “leavers” offered, a significant emphasis was this: WELS churches can turn people off when we appear mean-spirited and negative in our attitude toward other Christian churches. Some sample comments from some of

the young people who were surveyed:

- “WELS proclaims they do everything right, it almost seems.”
- “Church leaders [in WELS] are quick ... to try to prove a person wrong.”
- “Many WELS members seem very judgmental, closed-minded and almost conceited. The church seems to place itself on a pedestal above all others.”
- “Members of the church where I used to be a member were self-righteous and holier-than-thou.”
- “This church is a stiff-necked church. They have exalted doctrinal beliefs above following Jesus for the sake of ‘being right.’”
- “I got sick of hearing how our church was the only church and better than anyone else’s.”

What are we to make of such comments?

Should we back off from our strong doctrinal teaching? No, we are charged by Jesus himself to teach everything he has commanded us (Matthew 28:20).

Should we stop warning our people against dangerous errors that can be harmful to faith? No, again Jesus himself warns us to watch out for false teachers who come in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves (Matthew 7:15).

So we will continue to teach as Jesus has taught us, and we will continue to warn as Jesus has warned us. But there is something else we need to realize too: We are to be glad for the genuine ministry work that others do in Jesus’ name, because Jesus urges us in that direction too. On one occasion, Jesus strongly

corrected his disciples when they thought of themselves as the only authorized workers of the Lord:

“Teacher,” said John, “we saw a man driving out demons in your name and we told him to stop, because he was not one of us.”

“Do not stop him,” Jesus said. “No one who does a miracle in my name can in the next moment say anything bad about me, for whoever

The holy Christian church, the communion of saints, is not limited to the group of churches that identify themselves as Lutheran or Wisconsin Synod Lutheran.

er is not against us is for us. I tell you the truth, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to Christ will certainly not lose his reward” (Mark 9:38-41).

“Whoever is not against us is for us.”

In a very simple way, right there Jesus gave a definition of what his church is. His church on earth is not this group of disciples vs. that group of disciples. It is not this denomination or that denomi-

nation. Christ's kingdom "does not come visibly, nor will people say, 'Here it is!' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is within you (Luke 17:20,21). The holy Christian church, the communion of saints, is not limited to the group of churches that identify themselves as Lutheran or Wisconsin Synod Lutheran. The one, holy, Christian and apostolic church that we confess is something we cannot pinpoint to any particular place on this earth, but exists in the hearts of all

*You are not saved
because your church
has more substantial
hymns than the
praise songs at a less
liturgical
congregation.*

those everywhere who believe in Jesus' name for their hope and salvation—and "the Lord knows those who are his" (2 Timothy 2:19). This is something we say in the creed every week. This is something we have been confessing since our childhood. As Martin Luther put it, even young children know "what the church is – namely, believers ... sheep who hear the voice of their Shepherd" (Smalcald Articles III:12).

So let us be clear in our confession. When we talk about the church, we do

indeed confess the holy Christian church—and that is a miraculous body unseen to the human eye but held together by the power of the Holy Spirit. Wherever the Word of God is declared, wherever the sacraments of Christ are offered, the Spirit will be at work to create faith in hearts and to nourish those hearts in their faith in Christ. Let's make sure all the world around us knows that this is our confession. Let's learn a lesson from the way Jesus' disciples were corrected by their Lord. We do not need to block and bad-mouth everything that anyone else is doing in Jesus' name. "Whoever is not against us is for us." Whoever is believing in Jesus' name and acting in Jesus' name is included in Jesus' kingdom, by his grace. And the boundaries of fellow-

*You are not saved
because you keep
yourself more pure in
your doctrinal
understanding than
someone whose Bible
knowledge is somewhat
cluttered or cloudy.*

ship do not bar us from having human contact and sharing a kind word with those other Christians who are outside of own particular church membership. As Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my

name because you belong to Christ will certainly not lose his reward.” God expects us to be kind and compassionate to everyone around us, not just those within our particular congregation. “Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers” (Galatians 6:10)—noting once again that the family of believers is in fact larger than the number of them that gather in our own house of worship.

If I can put it rather casually in terms for our laypeople living out their faith day to day in the community: If you happen to stand around the water cooler on Monday morning with an associate who goes to church somewhere other than where you go on Sunday morning, it’s okay for you to encourage one another in Christ’s name. In fact, Christ would want you to encourage one another in his name and urge each other on to be ever more faithful to Christ and ever more full of his grace. This is part of your mission as Christ’s disciples—to urge others of his disciples to draw closer to Christ.

Finally, it is all about Christ, isn’t it? You aim to point others to Christ, and you seek to find your only confidence in Christ. You are not saved because your church has more substantial hymns than the praise songs at a less liturgical congregation. You are not saved because you keep yourself more pure in your doctrinal understanding than someone whose Bible knowledge is somewhat cluttered or cloudy. If you think it is your way of worship or it is

your devotion to doctrine that keeps a place in heaven secure for you, step back and realize what then you are saying: that heaven is based in some part on your effort, your work, what you do to follow Christ. That is not Lutheran belief! That is not what the Reformation was about! We know that we can do nothing to avail ourselves before God,

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for we are sinners from start to finish. But we live by faith from first to last. We are saved by grace in Jesus’ name. And it is the same name of Jesus that will save anyone else who acknowledges his own sin and believes in Jesus’ mercy. “Everyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame” (Romans 10:11). “Everyone who believes that Jesus is the

Christ is born of God” (1 John 5:1).

And so one last point. If it is the name of Jesus and Jesus alone that saves, what is there for us to do? Simply the mission that Jesus himself gives us: to be busy proclaiming the name of Jesus, to preach the good news to all creation. The reason we do not hesitate to point out how others may be straying in their churches’ view of the Bible is not that we want to prove ourselves right and others wrong, but to call everyone to look to Jesus; in him is life. The reason we have a college like Martin Luther College is not so we can keep to ourselves and refuse to associate with others, but so that we can train workers to go out into all the world and proclaim the name of Jesus; in him is life. The reason we might even dare to have a discussion about matters of religion with our neighbors and associates who are Catholic or Methodist or Baptist or who knows what is not because we want to show off how Lutheranism is better, and it is not to try to get them to quit their church and join ours. It is to call attention to the name of Jesus, in whom is life, only in whom is there any salvation, so that more and more all of us who call ourselves Christian may be reminded that there is “one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all, who is over all and through all and in all” (Ephesians 4:5)—so that more and more Christ’s people (including ourselves) might be reminded that it is in Christ that we are saved, and not in anything of ourselves or about ourselves or things done by ourselves.

I mentioned the survey of young peo-

ple who left the WELS. I’d like to share one final quote from someone answering that survey—someone who noted that the problem is not a problem of young people leaving the WELS:

“It’s not about getting me or anyone else simply to come back to the WELS. It’s about inviting a lost and broken world into the kingdom of God through Jesus Christ and what he did on the cross! God doesn’t need the WELS or any other church. The church needs God! I want the WELS to understand that Jesus does in fact love Catholics as well as Lutherans. I want the WELS to understand that there are wholehearted believers in other churches. I want the WELS truly to live the gospel of grace and not just talk about it. ... I say none of this looking down on the WELS. Jesus loves them! Fiercely! Passionately! And unconditionally! I am thankful to God that I was able to be raised in a WELS church. He has used it for his glory.”

Honestly, that young person expressed an attitude Jesus wants all of us as his disciples to espouse. “Whoever is not against us is for us.” Jesus loves every one of his people passionately and unconditionally. And he calls upon us to love all people in this world with the same sort of passion and unconditional commitment. We will do everything we can to bring the name of Jesus to those who do not know it, and to encourage those who are in Jesus’ name in other churches to be faithful to his name. We don’t seek to oppose anyone who is in Christ. Christ works miracles of faith wherever his name is preached. We seek

to oppose only one thing: When people speak against Christ and against his gospel. There too, we have a word from Jesus, for Jesus also said: “Whoever is not with me is against me” (Luke 11:23). We do not approve or applaud any teaching that turns people away from Jesus’ name. But wherever the Savior’s name is held in honor and

believed in faith, we are glad to seek Jesus’ Spirit at work. ✠

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For the message of the cross is
foolishness
to those who are perishing,
but to us who are
being saved it is
the power
of God.
1 Corinthians 1:18