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The Lutheran Educator

The WELS Education Journal

To shepherds as they watched by night
Appeared a host of angels bright;
"Behold the tender babe," they said,
"In yonder lowly manger laid."



You shall and must at last prevail;
God's own you are, you cannot fail.
To God forever sing your praise
With joy and patience all your days.

MARTIN LUTHER 1543

The Lutheran Educator

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Reaching Out With Schools

Challenging and rewarding. Those words have long described teaching. Veteran teachers can no doubt point to increasing challenges because of the deterioration of our society and the breakdown of the family unit. But with the increase of challenges comes the increase of rewards. How gratifying and humbling it is to work with children and their parents, and see God at work in their hearts and lives.

As if teaching were not challenging enough, along comes another challenge – one by the name of Challenge 2010. This is the WELS Board for Parish Services' ministry plan that especially looks for WELS congregations to use their elementary schools for outreach. That ministry plan fits nicely with the four-year North American Outreach emphasis that WELS in convention adopted in 2003.

Do Challenge 2010 and North American Outreach mean more work and responsibilities for teachers who are already trying to juggle their busy schedules? Not necessarily. You notice that Challenge 2010 is a vision for congregations to use their elementary schools for outreach. That means that called workers, lay leaders and lay members work together to see how they might reach out with their school to the unchurched in their community.

Certainly teachers will be involved in this work as they teach unchurched children, work with their parents, witness of the Lord in their personal lives and collaborate with others how their congregation might use their school to reach out to others with the love of Christ. But Challenge 2010 will remain merely a vision – and one associated with frustration—if only teachers are involved in it. Challenge 2010 requires the input and involvement of board of education members, church council members, parents and all other persons in the pew.

The same can be said for North American Outreach. That emphasis involves teachers but so many others. Outreach is not limited to those who have been called to serve publicly in the church. Outreach comes with the call to discipleship. Outreach is the coordinated effort of all the members of the church.

Perhaps Challenge 2010 and North American Outreach will lead congregations to examine their current staffing. Perhaps there is the need and perhaps there are the resources to call an individual to coordinate the outreach efforts of your congregation and its school. What is certain is that teachers will continue to teach children about the all-embracing love of Christ. Teachers will continue to look for ways of teaching the youth of the congregation and reaching out to the unchurched youth in their community. And teachers will continue to find that work challenging and rewarding. ✪

JFP



Rejoice! The Lord is Near

John Schultz

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Philippians 4:45

Perhaps you have heard about the woman who in the Christmas rush purchased fifty Christmas cards without looking at the message inside. In her haste, she signed and addressed all but one and dropped them in a mailbox, still not taking time to read the message. Imagine her dismay when a few days later she glanced at the one unmailed card and read:

Merry Christmas

This little card is just to say

A lovely gift is on the way

There were forty-nine disappointed families wondering what happened to their presents. The woman could not keep her promise. The gift was never received by anyone.

For thousands of years God promised mankind a great gift. From the Garden of Eden through the prophet Malachi, God promised "a great gift was on the way." And God kept that promise! He sent a gift in the person of His Son, the Babe in Bethlehem's manger, our

Savior, Jesus Christ. When that wonderful gift first arrived, God announced it through an angel to humble shepherds. "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy," Luke 2:10a. There would be no disappointment at an unkept promise. No, rather there would be joy: rejoicing about a promised gift that was wonderfully given.

That rejoicing is "in the Lord always" for a very good reason. Looking at man's sinful condition and disobedience, God in His grace and love promised and sent His Son who "was pierced for our transgressions, was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed," Isaiah 53:5. This joy exceeds all earthly joys because it is "in the Lord." Through the God-man given first in Bethlehem's manger, we have a great gift of forgiveness of sins and eternal life in heaven. We smile, we rejoice, we are happy; heaven is ours!

Yet we for a time remain on this earth. We rejoice also because "the Lord is near." His second coming is closer today than it was yesterday. As we in joy

await Him, we also know that He is the almighty, all-knowing, risen Lord who promised, “surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age,” Matthew 28:20. He is near to help us, comfort us, encourage us. He is near to see our rejoicing this Christmas and always. He comes to us daily in His Word; He is present in the sacrament. He is near so we can share our Christmas joy as a gift in every Christmas card we write.

Dear Heavenly Father, we praise you and rejoice that you kept your promise and sent us a Savior. At Christmas time and always, move us to share your Son with others so they may rejoice. Amen ✠

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

Read some more: Habakkuk 3:17-18

MLC Special Services

John Paulsen

Special Services exists to provide services to Martin Luther College and support to the teachers in WELS schools from early childhood to high school. These academic endeavors are outside of the normal two-semester school year and frequently off-campus. Special Services personnel are a part-time director, a part-time secretary and a part-time work-study student. The instructors are mostly MLC professors with a few professors from WLC. Some pastors and teachers with the necessary qualifications and proximity to a teaching site sometimes teach a class.

Courses are offered on-campus during summer sessions and off-campus throughout the entire year. In addition to the summer sessions, Special Services offers in-service courses for ECE, regular teachers and administration, extension courses for staff ministers and certification, study tours, foreign language immersions, online courses and correspondence courses. In 2004 more than 600 WELS teachers, staff ministers, MLC students, ECE personnel and others seeking certification or licensure participated in one or more of the programs.

MLC Special Services works with the Commission on Parish Schools to coordinate and promote the various courses, workshops and tours that are available. Special Services is a self-supporting endeavor that benefits the college and the constituency that it serves.

For more information, go to our website at: <http://www.mlc-wels.edu/SpecialServices/>

John W. Paulsen is the Director of Special Services at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, MN

MLC – Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow President’s Perspective

Theodore Olsen

NOT A MAJOR milestone, but one worth celebrating, at least a little, nonetheless. This school year is Martin Luther College’s tenth. It is a time to reflect on her beginnings, to take a look at where she is, and to have a vision as to where she is going.

Yesterday – The past 10 years

MLC officially opened its doors on July 1, 1995, having been formed by an amalgamation of Northwestern College in Watertown, WI (est. 1865) and Dr. Martin Luther College in New Ulm, MN (est. 1884). Since that time many things have happened to shape what she is today.

The New Ulm campus might no longer look the way you remember. Summit Hall has been remodeled, new windows are in Centennial, Augustana, and Concord dorms as well as in the Library. Old Main and the Music Hall have undergone renovation. The classroom building and Old Main are linked by a new building. The boiler house was replaced by a new one behind the gymnasium along with a new maintenance



area. The Waldheim homes are gone and replaced by tennis courts and parking. In place of the old tennis courts there is an attractive pond with three aeration fountains, a result of state regulations. The cafeteria – well, you won’t recognize it in its renovated and expanded state. Infrastructure has been brought up to date and MLC has entered the new millennium in technology.

Curricular wise MLC has a new curriculum and offers five programs for ministry: Pastoral ministry, Early Childhood Education ministry, Elementary Education ministry,

Secondary Education ministry, and Staff ministry. She offers a major in Early Childhood Education and student teaching is done in the College's Early Childhood Learning Center located in Luther Manor just a stone's throw from the campus. MLC, as a new college, had to attain accreditation from the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association and also received recognition from the Minnesota Department of Education as a State Licensure granting institution. MLC moved away from long registration lines and office scheduling of students' programs to preschool registration via mail and electronic arena scheduling.

Administratively MLC changed its structure to include four vice presidents: academic, administration, enrollment management, and student life. Now there are two deans, pastoral and educational. Remember the days of the dean of students? MLC handles counseling situations with a campus pastor and discipline falls to the VP for student life.

A new athletic conference has been founded with MLC taking the lead, Upper Midwest Athletic Conference, and MLC and other conference members either belong to or are joining NCAA division III.

Amalgamation was not an event which took place in 1995, but a process which continues today and may well continue for some years to come.

Today

Today MLC is an exciting, vibrant institution of which the WELS can be

proud. She offers graduate courses for credit and is constructing these into a Masters Degree for the future. She is planning and implementing programs for North American Outreach for students and faculty with a view to assisting congregations and schools to implement and carry out programs of their own. She offers on-line courses for both certification and high school students wishing to gain college credit before enrollment in college. She attempts to involve students in cultural experiences among the Hmong in the Twin Cities, the Dakota peoples in south central Minnesota, and Hispanic peoples who surround New Ulm. Her graduates are going to China, Japan, and the Czech Republic to teach English. Her students have been active in Brazil, the Dominican Republic, Mexico, and other Caribbean areas with the WELS Kingdom Workers programs. At the same time she is deeply involved in institutional assessment and continual strategic planning.

Today MLC is an institution which is committed to excellence in education with a global outlook. She continually strives to improve where improvement is called for and to change where change is warranted.

Tomorrow

What will tomorrow bring? There are three areas in which MLC will be challenged and thus have opportunities to serve her Lord and his church.

Enrollment is always a cause for concern. Supplying the church with the

Olsen

candidates she needs and enrolling sufficient numbers to make MLC an efficient operation will require delicate balance. Rising educational costs will make it difficult for students to afford an education unless we compensate for those rising costs with ever increasing financial assistance. MLC will have to make a concerted effort to garner financial support from individuals and groupings.

Facilities are what a young recruit looks at as one of the reasons for attending a certain college. MLC needs a space dedicated to worship – a chapel – as well as a student recreational building and revamped and adequate athletic fields. Classrooms equipped to educate students in the new century are a must and include smart classrooms (equipped with needed technology) as well as classrooms of adequate size and in adequate numbers. Some of these things can be accomplished with the additions mentioned above. MLC needs to stay current with technology if the church's future heralds are to carry out their callings as their congregations expect.

Education specifically begs for vision. Perhaps the days of MLC serving as a cookie cutter are over. The needs of the church are changing and the needs are diverse. MLC will have to move into more specialized education to fill these

needs. World Missions needs candidates prepared to meet and understand diverse cultures. Home Missions calls for people able to work in urban areas and among Hispanic culture. Early childhood education is the fastest growing WELS educational arm. Do we need to fill not just the needs for ECE directors (a five-year course of study), but also for teachers, other than directors, with a two-year Associates of Arts degree? MLC needs to work toward licensure for its ECE and Secondary education students. We need to work at having our people in the field understand better what a Staff Minister is and how he/she is a valuable member of a congregation's ministry team. MLC needs to take a pro-active role in the funding of her programs to continue excellence in the education she offers.

So much to do! Who can do it? Only the Lord Jesus can do it. Only he can guide and direct MLC in the daunting challenges and opportunities of tomorrow. We look forward to them, greet them with open arms, for we know the Lord has his way, yesterday, today, and tomorrow. ✠

Theodore Olsen serves as the president of Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minnesota.



The Writing Teacher

Kenneth Kremer

ARE YOU a good writer? Of course, that's the kind of question that can only be answered subjectively. If you're as self-conscious about your writing as I am, you'll probably flavor your response with a dash of sarcasm. "Ernest Hemmingway I'm not!"

Classroom teachers ply their trade mostly through the spoken word; writing just isn't a priority. But it is an essential part of our profession. Sooner or later you'll be faced with the prospect of writing an article for the school newsletter, submitting a report to a church committee, communicating with a parent in a note, scripting a skit for a special event, preparing a written devotion for your classroom, recording the minutes of a recent faculty meeting, or sending an e-mail to a fellow teacher in Poughkeepsie. Then your professional integrity will become a matter of written record. Like it or not, fair or unfair, you will be judged on the basis of what you write, and how you write it.

For some educators this is a daunting prospect. Many of us cringe with apoplexy when called upon to write anything more substantive than a grocery list. We agonize over stylistic issues. We

struggle with the mechanics of writing. We wrestle with our ideas. We hesitate to write with a flair for creative self-expression. We're so tied in knots over the many decisions that writing involves that we never even get around to some of the really important considerations like the rhythms of language, sentence structure, metaphor, logic, or clarity. Besides, the written word has a kind of mystique to it. We've seen how powerful a well-written piece can be though we don't always understand how it has worked its magic. Thus, the source of this power-of-the-written-word remains a mystery.

Many teachers, possibly the majority of teachers, go out of their way to avoid opportunities to write. Yet, in the wake of new communication technologies, the demand for well-developed writing skills among educators is on the increase. This is a fact of life that raises the bar with regard to our attitudes about the writing process. If we are going to rise above our own inhibitions, we will need an attitude bursting with self-confidence in our ability to write effectively.

Well, bursting with confidence might be an over-reach. Most of us would set-

Kremer

tle for enough confidence in our writing ability to convince others that we are not functionally illiterate. And that is very doable. We're not talking brain surgery here. If you can talk to people in a way that is coherent and conveys meaning, then you can learn to write with the same kind of effectiveness and confidence. Here's how.

First, don't be intimidated by other writers. The academic environment is loaded with people who would like nothing more than to impress us with their capacity to write well. And we fall for it. We admire the confidence of their voice and covet their rhetorical élan. And then we try to imitate them. The things we put on paper inevitably pale by comparison. Ignore the stylistic achievements of others. If you feel that the only way to be heard is to impress others with your writing prowess, you have missed the whole point, which is, we write to communicate, not to posture.

Effective writers adopt a writing style that resembles their conversational style. If you tend to talk to other people in a light and breezy fashion, then write in a light and breezy style. If your speech is slow and pondering, then make that ponder-some approach a benchmark of your writing. Be yourself. Don't try to write like someone else. Write in your own unique style. Then your readers will see your personality permeating everything you write. And they will read what you write because they will sense a genuineness that is not present in a phony knock-off of someone else's writing style.

Note what the preceding paragraph did not say. It did not say that style is unimportant. Nor did it say that you should think of your writing style as secondary to your message. How you write is every bit as important as what you write about. In our world style may even have surpassed substance in importance. Literary experts like to argue this point in style vs. substance terms. It's a silly discussion because writing should never be approached as a dichotomy in which one trumps the other. Where one is found in good writing, the other is also likely to be present. Substance without style won't be read. Writing that has stylistic excellence but lacks a message has no reader value. In either case the flaw undermines any value the writing might have had. If you don't believe this, open your Bible and note of how deftly its powerful messages are nestled in a dynamic framework of colorful rhetorical devices—narrative, metaphor, poetic forms, subtle pictures, figures of speech, patterns of repetition, contrast, irony and sensory-driven text. From God's literary perspective, style and substance are apparently inseparable and thoroughly complementary. The bottom line is that style definitely has to be part of the equation. And like anything else of value, good writing style is commensurate with hard work.

Serious writing should never begin with a blank screen or a white sheet of paper. The writing process begins in the mind, where an individual shapes new thoughts. When you write a letter to a friend the thoughts you put to paper have probably been rattling around in

your head for a while. There is a history to the experiences you will share. A whole set of emotions are brought to bear on the topics that you write about and the thoughts you express. Our writing always happens within some structural context. It is never completely arbitrary or serendipitous. Good writers know how to draw upon that context.

Plan your writing tasks so that you will be thinking about what you want to say long before committing words to paper. For more formal writing like devotions, reports, or conference papers, the pre-

*There oughta be a
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to who might actually
read it.*

planning process demands research. Your task is to find out more about your subject than you know right now. It may mean reading commentaries, searching websites, or interviewing people. Or it may mean that you will need to dig deep into the reservoir of your memory for a life experience that can serve as an anchor for your other ideas. This can be

painful. And the research step definitely takes more time. Nevertheless, it is a serious mistake to try to bypass this step.

One other mistake that many would-be writers often make is to foolishly imagine that readers will value their opinions. Today's readers are very sophisticated. We have all been exposed to that massive gray body of human opinion. We are all skeptics in this regard. So, for the most part nobody really cares about your opinion, or mine. If you really want people to listen, you will have to find a way to frame your thoughts within a factual context.

All this is said assuming you actually have something to say. You'd be surprised how many writers don't. This doesn't mean they are intellectually challenged. It just means they have foolishly become bound to words before they have actually taken the time to think about what was so important that they felt the need to write it down. On the page message-less writing goes nowhere. It amounts to words taking up precious (and expensive) print space, or stealing the occasional unwary reader's valuable time. And for this flagrant violation your professional reputation is toast.

Before you write, you must have a message. If you really do not have something to say, this is the time to run to your nearest writer's shelter to wait for an epiphany. But whatever you do, for heaven's sake, don't write a thing until you have something to write.

The easiest way to define your message is to write exactly what you want to say in one sentence of 12 words or less.

Kremer

Read the statement. Self-critique it. Edit it. Rewrite it. Revise it. Polish it. Let somebody else read it and criticize it. Make the words in that sentence say exactly what you want to say to your readers.

Which brings us to the matter of audience. There oughta be a law forbidding writers from rendering a single word without first giving consideration to who might actually read it. And not in superficial terms either. Your audience needs to be well defined. Think about things like their personal beliefs, educational background, socio-economic experience, cultural background, ethnicity, likes or dislikes, and a lot of other things as well. By defining your audience you will be able to accomplish those tough writing decisions with a lot less consternation. Knowing your audience well will help shape your choice of vocabulary, your approach to style, your decisions about word economy and sentence structures. It may even sharpen your understanding of the message you wish to convey.

One trick that usually works for me is to select an individual who typifies the audience that I am trying to reach. I write to this individual. This also personalizes my writing in some subtle ways that I might not even be aware of when I am writing.

Finally, let's talk about some kinds of writing that do not work. I have tried to also include a few thoughts specifically for Christian writers because we have a unique set of writing rules to adhere to. Those of us who write a lot have learned that today's readers do not tolerate cer-

tain approaches. Here is a list of the most serious problems and some thoughts about how they might be resolved.

Hyperbole

Hyperbole happens when a writer has an over-riding desire to out-do everyone else's story. It's sort of literary King of the Hill—a lot of smoke with very little fire. The format is exaggeration, and one can easily detect it because the writing is overrun with superlatives. We sometimes call it hype. Hype abounds in bad writing.

Most people know hype when they see it. To avoid the taint of hype, my advice is to state your case and leave it at that.

Idealizing

We would like to think that all families, for example, are ideal families. They aren't. We would also like to idealize churches, relationships, pastors, teachers, Christmas, learning, democracy, motherhood, and apple pie. We would like the Christian faith to appear to the world as a Hallmark greeting card. Would you believe that we even tend to present an idealized version of self? Unfortunately, these are all tainted by our struggles with sin.

All writing, including fictional writing, suffers when it is not rooted in reality. Writers lose their credibility when they paint a picture that is rosier than it deserves to be painted. As an amateur, your integrity is one of the few things

you have going for you. Don't blow it. Write from a perspective that is completely transparent. Show life as it really is, warts and all.

Theological shallowness

This problem is, of course, unique to religious writers. Unfortunately, it crops up more often than it should. Yes, Jesus died to take our sins away so that we can enjoy being with him in heaven. That is explicit gospel. We cannot say it too often. But we dare not be shallow in how we say it. We need to speak the gospel in a variety of ways and show how the whole counsel of God is connected to the message of Christ. There are other things—implicit things—that also need to be said. Jesus commissioned us to disciple the world by teaching “all things that I have commanded you.” So let's get on with the rest of the story.

In particular, we frequently give short-shrift to our talk about life in Christ's kingdom here on earth. How many of Jesus' parables began with the words, “The kingdom of God is like...?” These are parables about life in our current world of time and space—the imperfect world we know now. It is very Lutheran to talk about heaven. (A theologian would say the Lutheran Confessions have a strong eschatological bent.) But we dare not fill our conversation with so much heaven that it is to the exclusion of our talk about life on this earth.

This problem of shallow writing can also be exacerbated by another bad habit (probably coupled with a bad atti-

tude) that allows a Christian writer to begin writing before taking the time to consider the full impact of a text. It boils down to a failure to do one's homework—to do research, and thus a failure to think about the text's full implications.

The problem is corrected by taking more time to understand the truth at the heart of a text. A writer should never approach God's Word with a preconceived idea of what God is going to tell him. A strong writer will let the text speak without imposing his or her own interpretation on it.

I find *The People's Bible*, the *Concordia Study Bible*, the *Thompson's Chain Reference*, and a good commentary, like Franzmann, are indispensable research tools for preparing for a writing project that takes me into a deeper understanding of the Scriptures, even if I am writing for a very young audience.

Failing to engage the reader

This problem goes to the core of good writing. While no writer intentionally sets out to bore readers, it does happen that a would-be writer will assume that what he is sharing is of real interest to the reader when it really isn't. The problem has to do with our natural curiosity and what human beings find interesting in life. The postmodern reader has an almost simplistic view about the choices he will make with regard to his reading material. It goes something like this: Don't tell me what I already know; tell me what I don't know. The writer that ignores this atti-

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tude is doomed never to be read.

Today's readers are engaged with a steady diet of newness. Give them something fresh and different from the things they have already experienced, either in real life, or through a vicarious media, and they'll be hooked until something else new and different comes along. That is the way of the world in which we write. It's a phenomenon that isn't going to be changing anytime soon. If you genuinely care about having someone read what you have written, you will need to write about things that will capture the reader's attention. If the idea itself is not new and different, then you will need to couch an old familiar idea in the guise of new and different verbiage.

Often the problem of failing to engage the reader occurs when the writing has become too prosaic. Colorful language, metaphor and other figures of speech will go a long way to sustaining a reader's interest. Making them a regular part of your writing palette will require some effort. But the effort is almost sure to be rewarded with readers who have an interest in what you have to offer.

Narrative (story telling) is an especially effective way of holding the reader's attention. If you doubt me, open your Bible and take a moment to analyze the writing you find there. God's Word is jam-packed with a full range of many writing devices; but story seems almost foundational to God's way of unfolding the essential gospel.

C. S. Lewis wrote, "The first responsibility of art is to be interesting." Writing

is much more art than science. No matter how modest your writing art may be, if it is to have impact, it will need to engage the reader's interest.

Preachiness

"Preachiness" is a lot harder to define than it is to spot. For me, the flaw occurs when a writer's agenda is to tell me how to run my life. Some have termed it moralizing. Others refer to it as a confusion of law and gospel. It stems from a basic lack of humility and makes an author sound arrogant and self-righteous. Good gospel writing does not dwell on what I ought to do. It remains rooted in the ecstatic news of what God has done, and continues to do for his people in and through Christ Jesus. While it may sound relatively innocent, it is by far the most difficult writing flaw of Christian writing to overcome. And, in this writer's opinion, it undermines otherwise good gospel writing more than any of the others.

Technical flaws

I just can't pass on the opportunity to say a few things about technical flaws. Good writing is supposed to be relatively free of technical problems. But, you say, teachers are not professional writers. You're right. So I won't harp on the commas out of place or a split infinitive here or there. Nevertheless, there are four technique-related issues that require some attention. By concentrating on these areas, I guarantee your effectiveness as a writer will improve,

and your self-confidence will grow.

- *Failing to pay attention to the rhythms of the language*

Antidote: Read what you have written out loud. You will begin to hear (and feel) the rhythms—strong beats and weak throbs, pulsing through your words. Over time you will develop a sense for these rhythms and begin to naturally incorporate them in your writing style.

- *Failure to get other opinions about how your writing reads*

Ask, is it clear? Is it concise? Is it logical? Does it flow? *Do not ask*, Do you like it? Or, Do you agree with me?

- *Lengthy/complex sentences*

For the average (lay) reading audience of adults, a steady diet of 17 words or less per sentence is a good standard. It's OK to sneak in an occasional 30- or 40-word sentence in an unexpected place for good measure. A rare one-word or two-word sentence every now and then also helps keep your reader on his toes.

Avoid using a lot of complex sentences—sentences having dependent clauses embedded in their structure. Reading these kind of constructions requires considerably more concentration and patience, which is a serious problem. Today's casual readers are prone to check out before they are willing to make the effort to unravel a complex thought. This is especially true when complex sentences are strung together. Educated people often forget that there is a much larger population out there that does not have as much reading experience as they have. Pastors

and teachers would do well to keep this concern about sentence complexity at the top of their checklist of things to avoid. It is probably a more serious issue than sentence length.

- *Feeble verbs*

Verbs make sentences work, not nouns, adjectives, adverbs, pronouns or conjunctions. Using exciting action verbs in the active voice will make your sentences tingle with excitement and keep your readers on task. Before you begin writing, create a list of interesting verbs that are congruent with your topic. As you write, chose verbs from your list that fit in context.

- *Finally, the power of a well-written sentence*

The sentence is the workhorse of language. Good writers are particularly keen about the wording and structure of each and every sentence. Craft your sentences by moving the elements around, clipping here, pruning there, shaping them to achieve variety or to give them a dramatic effect. Solid sentences stand the test of time. They are memorable. They are compelling. They are the stuff of real communication, so they are worth taking the time and making the effort that it will take to get them right. ✪

Kenneth Kremer is an editor, serving Northwestern Publishing House. His background includes twenty years of teaching and administrative experience in WELS elementary schools.

People

Paul L. Willems

HAVE YOU ever heard someone say, “If the students didn’t show up today I could get caught up with my work.”? Have you ever said or thought that yourself? Are you content to work with the children in your classroom, but balk at working with “those eighth graders” or working with the “little people” in the first and second grade room? Do you enjoy talking with students, but become uncomfortable speaking with their parents at parent-teacher conference? Do you feel like other members of your faculty interfere with your ministry just by being in the same building with you? Do you view your administrator as more of a threat than a help? Are these problems you identify with?

When people bother us or when we think people interfere with getting our work done, we have missed the boat in ministry. Ours is a ministry to people—all people—and not a ministry of coaching, chemistry instruction, stewardship preaching or school administration. We are to share the gospel with all people. This means we must focus on people. People are important. Jesus, the Master Teacher, stopped to visit with people who interrupted his “work”

while here on earth. Recall the time when Jesus and his disciples were on their way to heal the daughter of Jairus, an important leader of a synagogue. As he traveled to Jairus’ house, an unimportant old woman interrupted Jesus by touching his robe (Mk 25:27). She believed Jesus could heal her illness when no medical doctor could. Who would bother with her? Jesus did. Jesus stopped and focused on her and on her problem. He cared about her. On another occasion Jesus spent time with Nicodemus late one night (Jn 3:2). This man was a member of the Sanhedrin, but was confused about the way to heaven. Jesus took the time to instruct this teacher of Israel about things he should have already known.

Jesus cared about people. He raised a young man of Nain from death (Lk 7:14). He instructed Mary of Bethany (Lk 10:39). He counseled a woman from Syria Phoenicia (Mk 7:26) whose daughter was demon possessed. Jesus healed the blind, the crippled, the mute and even had compassion on the hungry (Mt 15:30-32). Jesus was concerned about people and their needs. Shouldn’t we follow his example in our ministry?

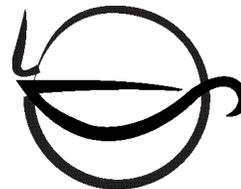
When an upper grade teacher stoops to help a kindergartner, a deeply positive impression can be made on that young person's heart. While an irate parent may destroy your self-image with complaints, coarse language and verbal abuse, your patient suffering and kind words witness Christ to that parent. The Holy Spirit may use your example to begin to prepare that parent's heart as a place where Jesus wants to reside.

One morning after a trying and frustrating 7:00 am faculty meeting I was feeling sorry for myself and complaining about my lot in life. I thought people were making my calling more difficult than I thought necessary. In a mood of depression the Lord allowed me to look out a window where I saw school buses arriving and discharging students. I was moved by God's grace to realize that the students were coming to school in spite of the problems we had just addressed. They were coming to school in spite of our limited resources and meager facility. They were coming in spite of my bitter and unloving attitude. In spite of all, they still came. Jesus' words became true to me that morning when he said, "Open your eyes and look to the fields! They are ripe for harvest" (Jn 4:35). We were in the middle of harvest time and it was March in Minnesota.

Our work as called workers in the gospel involves working with people. The disciples didn't always get it either. All believers need to be reminded by our Savior that the people we find all around us are not irritants or obstacles to our work; they are our work. We

need to open our eyes. We have been called to go and make disciples of all people. That's it! That is our work. Our work is not coaching a baseball team, teaching fifth grade math, grading spelling tests, working through the Catechism with confirmands or preparing a lecture in elementary Greek. These are all worthy tasks. They may even be significant parts of what we do, but our real calling is all about people. Our work is not about things or ideas. We need to focus on people. We need to find the compassion Jesus had for individual sinners. So, in the words of the Apostle Paul, "Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because your labor in the Lord is not in vain" (1 Co 15:58). Let it be our joy to bring Jesus' saving word to all people. ✠

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Teaching Social Studies Without a Negative Paradigm

Frederick Wulff

WHEN we teach our social studies classes, do we sometimes find ourselves stressing the negatives so much that we leave the impression that we who live in the United States have little to be thankful for? Our present day United States really is not such a terrible country. The government does not dictate content of textbooks. People are not dying in attempts to flee across our borders for haven elsewhere. It cannot be denied that we have shortcomings as a nation, for we live in a sinful world. But let's look at our history in perspective. In contrast to most countries, we have, in the course of little more than 200 years, developed many liberties, rights and freedoms. Actually, we have much more than we deserve — surely where sin did abound grace did much more abound. With all the frailties of human institutions, we have been graciously blessed. We would be ungrateful if we did not acknowledge God's grace and the blessings of living in a free land, especially since the Gospel had and has free course. Constant dwelling on the negative in American history may shut out the attitude of thankfulness and praise that God rightfully deserves.

Is there a danger of glossing over the darker events in our American history? Stonewalling has happened in Japan,

and more recently in Russia. A just published high school textbook in Russia, *History of Russia and the World* by Nikita Zagladin, is virtually mute on the deportation of ethnic groups under Stalin. The omission prevents students from a full understanding of their history (Maria Danilova, "In Russia, sometimes you can tell a book by its cover: High school text glosses over abuses," AP. *Star Tribune*, August 22, 2004, p. 17). We should not advocate any such blatant coverups in our teaching, but neither should we omit our better moments. One of the strongest criticisms leveled against our country is that our society is racist. No doubt racism has been part of our history — that is sad and factual — but is that the only thread in our national fabric? Some critics delight in pointing out that George Washington and Thomas Jefferson owned slaves; and there have even been instances where school districts have changed the names of schools from the names of the Founding Fathers to distance themselves from "those racists." But to be honest and to look at the Founding Fathers in historical context, they emerge as visionaries in an age when disgusting bondage and discrimination was an unfortunate and acceptable way of life. We might concentrate also on

the courageous struggle for civil rights and the need for a positive blue print for future progress. Some noble individuals, like Martin Luther King, Jr., paid dearly for challenging bigotry and placing racism on the public agenda. Of those within the established government, John Quincy Adams deserves a bow, even though the negativists would deny him the honor. In the late 20th century, the nation itself really started to breathe the fresh air of human rights. In hindsight, it is easy to condemn even those like Harry Truman who were on the cutting edge of civil rights, simply because he used the prevailing language of his time. Keep in mind, Truman almost lost a presidential election in 1948 because his stand on civil rights alienated the Dixiecrats and some members of his own party. Let's encourage our students to continue the quest for equality and to use as models those who strove for justice and fairness in an age when it was not politically expedient.

Needed stress on a positive multiculturalism

With an increasingly smaller world brought about by easier means of travel and widespread telecommunication, our contacts with different races and cultures have shattered our parochialism. Immigration dynamics have brought a mix into our classrooms. We need to take a positive approach to those whom God has brought into our midst. The National Council for Social Studies has issued a statement that sums up the need for integrating multiculturalism into curriculums: "To build a suc-

cessful and inclusive nation-state, the hopes, dreams and experiences of the many groups within it must be reflected in the structure and institutions of society. This is the only way to create a nation state in which all citizens will feel included, loyal, and patriotic" (NCSS Task Force on Ethnic Studies Curriculum Guidelines, Curriculum Guidelines for Multicultural Education, A Position Statement of National Council for the Social Studies [Washington, D.C.: NCSS, 1976, revised 1991], p. 3).

Classroom instruction in social studies should reflect our Christian concern for a fair portrayal of contributions from other races and cultures. When we teach about the painful relocation of Japanese-Americans during World War II, let us also mention the role of the Nisei soldier in the 442nd regimental combat team and the 100th infantry battalion which was the most decorated unit in all of WW II. Asian Americans are the fastest growing population in the Midwest, and it is important for that reason to include more information about them. We could also add that nationwide, Hispanics make up an increasing portion of the population and have contributed much to our society. Inclusion of these Americans is very necessary. Most of the states in which the WELS operates Lutheran elementary schools have population centers of Native Americans, and the Synod has long had an outreach with Apache Indians in Arizona. We surely should give Native Americans emphasis in our own social studies standards. The struggle of minorities to adjust and to find a

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place in the larger society is woven with stories of people who had courage and vision.

The perversion of multiculturalism

Unfortunately, there has been a trend among some well meaning but misguided educators, historians and political activists who have turned the noble endeavor of multiculturalism into a travesty that really has only hurt the cause of minorities. Syndicated columnist Thomas Sowell, an African American, laments this tendency. He believes that one of the reasons our children do not measure up academically to children in other countries is that “too much time is spent in American classrooms twisting our history for ideological purposes... Propaganda has replaced education as the goal of too many educators.” Too often these kinds of teachers “look at the past with the assumptions—and the ignorance—of the present.” “The best way to counter this kind of teaching is through a better understanding of historical perspective (Thomas Sowell, “Twisted history,” *New Ulm Journal*, December 19, 2003). Postmodernist thought has demoted the quest for truth and objective scholarship and has substituted in its stead a shallow acceptance of politically correct propaganda.

Some students in college history classes are taught we are an evil nation with a history dominated by villains. Here in Minnesota, Professor Mato Numpa of Southwest State, Marshall, wants children of kindergarten age taught that Columbus deliberately practiced genocide on Native Americans and that con-

tagious diseases were only part of his devious plan. Furthermore this same professor compares the government of Abraham Lincoln with that of the Nazis and leaves no room for debate. He states unequivocally that Lincoln’s military in Minnesota gave inspiration to Hitler for his policies of the Holocaust. Those who disagree with him in this assessment are brushed off as either “racists” or “in denial” (Staff writer, “Southwest State University professor says Hitler patterned torture after U.S. genocide techniques,” *New Ulm Journal*, November 9, 2002). Surely, Native Americans were grossly mistreated in Minnesota and in the nation as a whole, thus fabrication is unnecessary. The historical records are clear and the truth speaks for itself. The Native American cause does not need reinvented history because truthful history is on its side. Many current leaders concentrate on hate mongering to garner support for their leadership positions rather than working for the betterment of their ethnic or racial base. (Frederick Wulff, “Bipolarizing American History,” editorial, *New Ulm Journal*, November 13, 2002). The ranting of militants, with their politically correct distortions, should not deter us from the legitimate need for multiculturalism.

Critical thinking or negative agenda?

Should we encourage critical thinking in our social studies classes?

Definitely! We need our students to be well informed and to evaluate differing viewpoints in order to become discerning citizens. History and studies in

current events help students to see through shallow and stilted reasoning, even when it comes from “scholarly” college professors. Again, here in our region, a Minnesota State University, Mankato professor made a public statement in New Ulm that the only free press left in the world is Al-Jazeera. Are students led to believe that the press in authoritarian Muslim Arab countries are free to express dissent while the American press hides the truth? Rather, this shallow comment about the Arab press reflects a commonality with those who hate our country and believe we are “evil.” The assumption is that if our country would turn from its evil foreign policy, terrorists would not have targeted us. Here again a little investigation would show that Muslim fundamentalists target many areas outside American influence where they simply strive to impose a Muslim dominated society. Consider Indonesia, the Philippines, Chechnya (Russia), Algeria, Chad, Nigeria, etc. We have to guard ourselves against those who believe that if an account is hateful about our country, then it must be good reporting.

We should resist a “critical thinking” which seems to be just a criticism of anything done by our country. Those who use this criticism paradigm exclusively often start with stereotypes of “Euroamericans,” a racist term intended to be derogatory. From this premise they place themselves in the pitfall of forcing history into a preconceived pattern. Where is the critical thinking if uninformed students merely parrot predetermined negative responses?

Imagine taking a course from a teacher or professor who is locked into this negative framework mentality, and see how much critical thinking is allowed those students who do not accept his/her pronouncements. If the instructor has no use for objectivity, how many students would sacrifice their course grade, or standing in the class, to offer a different viewpoint or to point out contrary evidence?

Responsible instruction

Of course, there are many respectable and responsible professors and teachers who do attempt to provide a positive atmosphere of objectivity and foster a climate that encourages free debate without intimidation. Most minorities do not agree with radical self-appointed or self-serving leaders who are of a rigid mindset mentality. Katherine Kersten, board member of the Center of the American Experiment, says, “Most Americans view the United States as a noble experiment which, despite its flaws, is eminently worthy of their love and loyalty. In a 1998 Public Agenda poll, 84 percent of parents agreed that the United States is a unique country that stands for something special in the world.” Eighty-three percent of parents overall and 81 percent of African-American parents reported that they would be upset or somewhat concerned if their children were taught that America is a fundamentally racist country” (Katherine Kersten, “Critics would teach about an oppressive America,” *Star Tribune*, November 9, 2003).

Love and understanding brings true

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healing. The Gospel can and does provide us motivation to treat others as we would be treated. All races and minorities are of one blood and all have been redeemed by the blood of the Savior. Mistreatment of others, throughout history, should provide lessons so that injustices are not repeated. History can give us hope and a personal understanding that the actions of all people, even the ungodly, will ultimately serve God's purpose. This makes the past meaningful.

Current events – history in the making

We can take a positive spin on current events by encouraging objectivity in the discussion of daily news reports. Instead of seeing political parties and their candidates in an oversimplified context as good versus evil, we can foster the notion that there are honest differences of opinion on how the citizenry may best be served by elected officials. There really are candidates of both parties that are honorable. We should encourage students to avoid demonizing the opposition. This is a real challenge for teachers because we live in an age when crude nastiness often prevails during election years. Many say that bitterness and invective thrives because the press contributes to this mentality with its disrespectful coverage of our presidents—both Democratic and Republican. If elections tend to center on defamation of character rather than an important differences on issues, we might want to encourage letter writing which threatens withholding support from candidates whose cam-

paigns engage in character assassination. Try to have your students concentrate on real issues. Help them to see the differences of the political parties and their formulas for dealing with the economy and social concerns. Promote the gathering of as many facts as possible to clarify issues. Then have open discussions on why people develop strong differences on those issues. Historical perspective can also give tremendous insights into the understanding of current problems.

In conclusion

Because of sin, we do not live in a perfect world. Government officials and their policies are often flawed despite good intentions. One of the ways God blesses us is through government which provides a semblance of order in a world of disorder. It is that stability that allows us to preach the Gospel and to maintain our Christian institutions free from chaos and harassment. Pray for our elected officials and stress the importance of well informed voters. Avoid the negative paradigm that fosters hopelessness and stifles voting participation. Strive for civility and fairness in our classes with a respect for historical truth, warts and all — while being mindful that we should not be an ungrateful and thankless people.

In all things, give thanks! ✨

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If Not I...Who?

Mark Lenz

Hand in hand...father and son
Curly hair...winsome smile...even walk the same...
"I'll let him decide for himself later on."
I wonder...
Does he know about millstones... drowning... what it means to "offend one of these little ones?"
Does he know that Jesus took them in His arms? That He wants them in His Kingdom?
Who will tell him?
If not I... Who?

Happy, carefree...solemn, pensive
Sometimes a little lady... sometimes a little girl...
Changes... "Who am I?" peer pressure... "What shall I do?"
I wonder...
Death... It happens... Is she prepared?
Does she know that Jesus once took the hand of a girl like her...?
"Maid, arise!" Does she know that power?
Who will tell her?
If not I... Who?

Spend it all... have some fun...
"You only go around once in life..."
"Haven't got time now."
I wonder...
Has he ever thought about husks for swine?
Will he ever know about the Father's ring and fatted calf?
Who will tell him?
If not I... Who?

Fine lace... The pleasant creak of a rocking chair...
Cookies and milk in the kitchen
Photos... memories... tired now... stiff joints
I wonder...
On what is her hope based?
Will she see the Christ-Child before she departs?
Who will tell her?
If not I... Who?

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Come and Peek: Musings on Summer Session

Alice Danell

COME AND peek inside my box, you'll see I've books and ants and rocks.

Here we have maracas, whistles and tambourines, paper tubes, cups, balloons, and strings; sound can be discovered with all of these things.

Then there's a pinwheel, just watch it spin. And here's a bug book, a jar to keep bugs in. A book about animals and poisonous creatures. Here are some tips for each of us teachers.

A leap-frog game about our digestive system—do you think they have one about wisdom?

What's left? Tweezers, scoop, magnet, and a light bright pen. Experiment books – there are at least ten.

What will I do with all this new knowledge that I learned this past week at Martin Luther College?

When I signed up, the dates were just right. And my principal wanted me out of his sight.

I said, "Oh, Denise, do you mind if I go?" She said, "Of course not, no! Come along. If it's a class with Carla, you can't go wrong!"

I thought, "My science is set. I probably won't learn anything, I bet."

Was I mistaken! There was a philosophy to discover. I sighed and said, "Oh, brother!"

Now I have to start over; I don't know a thing. But I was surprised; there was a lot I could bring.

My way of teaching science will have to change a little. How I can have a table right in the middle. For each new lesson we can work together, to ask questions like, "What is that feather? Where did it come from? Is it big or small, or fat or skinny or long or tall? Could it be from a bird or come from a duck? We could match a picture – oh what luck!"

I will have to work on the classroom teacher, asking questions will be a new feature. The POE chart is something new; this year I will shoot for two. I know that I must take it slow, but my age is creeping up you know. The time that God grants me I accept with joy, because I will do this for each girl and boy.

Through science they learn of the marvelous One, who created our world – earth, sea, sky, and sun.

His answers to questions provide wonderful knowledge. How glad I am I came back to college!

I thank Miss Melendy and the others here, you've all helped me get ready for science next year. ✨

Alice Danell teaches at St. John Lutheran School, Red Wing, MN.

Shurley English Program

Sandra Enter, Christine Rau

SHURLEY ENGLISH, a program for K-8, was developed by Brenda Shurley, Ruth Wetsell, and Teddy Faye Raines, three classroom teachers who became frustrated when traditional methods of instruction failed to reach their students. The Shurley Method has since been adopted by school districts, individual schools, and home schoolers. It also boasts success with ESL students, and we can attest from our own experience that dyslexic students also learn using this method.

Concepts of English grammar, punctuation, and even composition are taught from scripted lessons, employing direct, explicit instruction couched in a lively, enjoyable format. According to the Shurley home page (shurley.com), this format is “founded on the principles of retained learning.” Once a concept is taught, it is never dropped from the lessons. The method includes teacher modeling, student practice using prepared materials from Shurley, and original student-generated material, followed by testing and in-class correcting.

A typical lesson begins with “jingles,” catchy little poems that incorporate rhythm and movement to teach basic

definitions and functions of parts of speech, sentences and rules of the language that students speak, read and write every day. The teacher then models a specific grammar concept, and the students practice using a “see it, say it, write it, do it” activity. (This simultaneous, multi-sensory class practice is one of the strong points of Shurley English, as it is difficult for a student to remain passive and unengaged. Again, it is also an effective method for ESL and learning disabled, dyslexic students.) As the main part of this oral class activity, students learn a “question and answer flow” which enables them to identify the part of speech of every word in a sentence and to categorize and classify the entire sentence by type, (e.g., declarative, interrogative), as well as by pattern. Shurley teaches five basic sentence patterns: 1) subject noun/verb; 2) subject noun/verb-transitive, direct object; 3) subject noun/verb-transitive, indirect object, direct object; 4) subject noun/linking verb, predicate noun; 5) subject noun/linking verb, predicate adjective. While emphasis is placed on the function of each individual word within the sentence, students also learn to recognize that the sense of the sen-

tence depends upon the relationship between those words. Adverb exceptions, complete subject and predicate, and natural and inverted word order are also taught as part of the question and answer flow. The typical lesson then moves its focus to a specific rule of English such as double negatives, subject-verb agreement, pronoun-antecedent agreement, indefinite pronouns, and much more. Class time is used for more group activities, and then further practice is given when students compose their own sentences, edit, and improve them.

Lessons are usually presented in two- or three-day rotations or cycles with a test given for evaluation and further review at the end of each rotation. Journal writing is also incorporated into lesson rotations. Each unit has a writing section which exposes students to a different type of writing. Again, direct, explicit instruction is used with teacher modeling as the children write original compositions using a finite template that teaches correct paragraph and essay construction.

As was stated earlier, simultaneous, multi-sensory practice is one of Shurley's strong points. The repetitive review that is built into the lessons is another. Unit One is by far the longest in the book. In it students work with the most basic sentence pattern and they learn the question and answer flow. The next four chapters then introduce the other four patterns one at a time. However, the pattern(s) learned previously are never left behind. Because the basic question and answer flow never

changes, it is only modified and expanded to accommodate the other patterns. It becomes ingrained and automatic, again allowing most learning disabled and dyslexic students to use it successfully. Consistency and repetition develop a certain "comfort factor" that is helpful to language impaired students. They develop a "can-do" attitude towards grammar that enables them to grasp new and more sophisticated material without the anxiety that produces an "I can't" response.

The scripted lessons make this consistency easy for the teacher, yet they still leave room for flexibility. It is quite easy, for example, to insert good old fashioned diagramming into the program. And since writing is taught in conjunction with each unit, but is not integrally connected to the grammar program, a teacher could easily substitute another composition program instead.

One final strength of the Shurley Method is that it is comparatively inexpensive. There are no student texts for grades K-6, only a folder containing references printed from blackline masters that make up a "handbook" of sorts. Tests are also reproduced from blackline masters, or there is the option of consumable student workbooks that contain the tests and the references. Students provide their own spiral notebooks for journal writing and compositions.

There are, of course, some features of the Shurley Method that could be considered drawbacks. Vocabulary building is rather haphazard and is not connected to either the grammar or composi-

tion part of the program. New words are introduced with a definition, sample sentence, synonym and antonym. However, students are not encouraged to analyze how the word is used or what part of speech it is. Sometimes the synonym or definition doesn't even match the part of speech in the sample sentence. Nor are students led to explore other uses of the word, different forms of the word, or related words. And finally, although the method of introducing new vocabulary words is always the same, the idea of consistent review is not applied here. Again, teachers may choose to incorporate a better, separate vocabulary building program. It wouldn't be difficult.

But it is Shurley's rigid, structured approach to composition that will no doubt raise the most controversy. The templates that are presented to students will no doubt be seen as stifling and unacceptable to some teachers. However, there are others of us who view them as the first steps that enable students, especially those who are "language-challenged," to walk in comfort before attempting to run with the writing process.

It may seem to some after reading this that if so much of the Shurley program could/should be replaced or modified, it would simply be better to use a different series in the first place. However, we feel that the core tenets and the advantages afforded by a direct instruction method far outweigh the disadvantages and weaknesses mentioned above. As phonics teaches children to attack a word by taking it apart, breaking it into

individual sound units, and then to put the word back together again by blending those sounds, so Shurley teaches students to make sense of sentences by taking them apart, analyzing the individual parts within, and then putting them back together again. At the same time though, just as individual sound units or even isolated words don't have complete meaning without context, Shurley teaches the individual components of English as parts of a whole, thereby enabling students to understand the underlying relationships between the parts, and so comprehend or express full meaning.

If you'd like more information on the Shurley Method, including how to get a free, no-obligation nine week trial kit to use in your own classroom, check out their web site at www.Shurley.com. ☛

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The Divine Call: Is It Still the Same?

Wayne Mueller

THE QUESTION itself seems almost sacrilegious, doesn't it? If a call is divine, it is from God. And, since God does not change, how can his call into the public ministry change?

Recent events in the ministry of the WELS, however, have raised questions in the minds of the faithful. A dozen world missionaries, twice as many ministerial education professors, a few home missionaries, and some administrators lost their called positions in the wake of severe budget cutbacks a couple of years ago.

Leaders were careful not to vacate called positions on the basis of individual performance. The ministry positions, not called workers themselves, were evaluated on the basis of priority in maintaining the area of gospel ministry they served.

But that gave little comfort to those who were uprooted. Families and extended families were affected. Housing, financial, and schooling plans had to be altered in a relatively short period of time. Although cuts were carefully planned and forewarned, many sensed a certain unfairness about the process.

Recourse

Staff and maintenance workers were

as much hurt by their terminations as the called workers. Yet they had no recourse but to accept with godly resignation the fallout from hurting budgets.

Many displaced called workers, however, sought recourse in the nature of their divine call. "Isn't the call permanent?" they asked. "If the call is divine, how can mere humans set it aside with their decisions?" Has the call or our practice of the divine call changed?

The Scripture

When we look to Scripture, we may be surprised at how little the Bible actually says about the divine call into the public ministry. Christ's commission to preach the gospel to all the world (Mt 28:18-20; Mk 16:15; Jn 20:21-23; Ac 1:8; 1 Pe 2:9) is his instituting command for all gospel ministry. This general gospel command applies to every believer as a member of the universal priesthood.

The Bible also says that the public ministry is a part of the general gospel ministry Christ instituted. Our formal teaching states, "The public ministry is a special, God-ordained way of practicing the one ministry of the Gospel" (WELS Doctrinal Statements 49).

Although it never says in so many words that God ordained the public ministry, Scripture affirms this truth axiomatically. From Moses to Paul, God

chooses, trains, sends, inspires, establishes, and supports his public ministers of the Gospel. In the Bible, it is a given that God ordained the public ministry and calls ministers to serve in it. So our WELS statement on the public call firmly holds, "It would be wrong to trace the origin of this public ministry to mere expediency" (50).

The Bible lists qualifications for public ministry. Yet proper qualifications, training, and experience do not make one a public minister in God's church. "No one may assume the functions of the public ministry except through a legitimate call" (49). A legitimate call is one that is extended in an orderly way by any group of Christians gathered around the gospel. "The authority to call is implied in the authority to administer the Gospel given to the Church" (49). The Scripture records several different procedures for extending a call, but commands none.

By giving the gospel ministry to his church, God also gave to his church authority to define the forms of ministry it needs to serve the gospel in varying circumstances. With this authority comes the right to extend calls to fill those positions. "It is the Holy Spirit who through the gift of their common faith leads the believers to establish the adequate and wholesome forms which fit every circumstance, situation, and need" (50). God extends his divine calls through mere men in the church.

Our practice

When we speak of a "permanent" call,

we must define what we mean. A divine call is not permanent in the full sense of the word. We know divine calls are terminated because ministers are no longer able to meet the requirements for their positions. Death, retirement, physical or mental disability, false teaching, moral indiscretion, or inability to teach may end a minister's call through willing or forced resignation. Holding a permanent call does not mean a calling body cannot terminate it. It means that the calling body may not capriciously terminate a divine call merely to save money or because it does not like the minister's personality.

Without reference to the called servant, a calling body may also vacate a called position when the circumstances that led it to extend the call change. These circumstances include legitimate financial constraints, decreased enrollment, loss of members, or other changed ministry needs. The same calling bodies with God's authority to create forms of ministry also have his authority under the gospel to alter or vacate those forms (positions) in changed circumstances. "Mere humans" may terminate a divine call, because the Divine gives mere humans this right as his representatives in gospel ministry.

The number of cuts within a short time in synod level positions elevated the question, May a calling body terminate a position without reference to the called minister? Yet there is a long history of WELS calling bodies doing just that. Such terminations take place regularly, with scriptural warrant and without raising eyebrows.

Mueller

Every year about a half dozen WELS congregations permanently close their doors. Their pastors' calls are vacated because of changed circumstances. About a half dozen faithful pastors a year lose their positions through no fault of their own. Because of declining enrollment or budget problems, teacher positions in our elementary schools and area high schools are vacated every year too.

The fact that there is no Scripture that allows or commands the vacating of called positions may cause some uneasiness. That queasiness we address with the confession of our recent forefathers: "Christians must guard against the idea that they may follow a certain course of actions only if a Bible passage permits it, or must avoid a certain practice because there is no Bible passage which allows it. Such thinking does violence to the whole cause and nature of Christian liberty" (1978 WELS RTTD, 5).

The call has not changed

No, the call has not changed. God and his Word do not change. Our gracious God has kept us faithful to him and kept our practice in line with his Word.

But there have been some changes in me. Recent cuts have impressed on me that my own service in the public ministry is a privilege, not a right. I rise now each day more eager to make the most of this privilege before God passes it to another. I am more conscious that my service in the ministry is an underserved gift of God (Ephesians 3:7), not an irre-

vocable entitlement. I am humbled and more grateful.

Through the anguish I shared with brothers and sisters whose positions were vacated, God also created in me a greater love and appreciation for their service. I have greater personal respect for all called workers. I pray prayers of thanksgiving like never before for all the gifted people God sends out to serve his church. I ask God to sustain them and their ministries.

I've also changed how I regard personal stewardship of my material blessings. To blame the current synod-wide budget shortages on 9-11 or the weak economy misses the point. If I suggest only that "my members" should learn to give more, I forget the very nature of public service in the church. My personal monetary gifts to God express my own thanks for his double grace: the grace of salvation (Eph 2:8) and the grace of public ministry privilege (Eph 3:7,8). Called servants not only support the ministry they represent with their material blessings; their sacrificial, proportional gifts set an example for those in whose name they serve.

God does not want us to change our teaching or practice of the divine call. But I know he welcomes these changes in me and all his called servants. ✠

Wayne Mueller is the first vice-president of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

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Below you will find the purposes for *The Lutheran Educator*.

- A. To provide for continuing growth in understanding Scripture.
- B. To further the understanding of the philosophy, purpose, and goals of Christian education and the basis of that education in Scripture.
- C. To encourage teachers to fulfill their ministries faithfully.
- D. To report the results and application of research, conducted both within and without the synod.
- E. To explain sound theories of learning and teaching and the appropriate practices which follow from these theories.
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