

Systematic Christian Instruction and Training in the Congregation Beyond Confirmation

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by Mentor E. Kujath

I believe it was the purpose of the committee in choosing this topic for the convention essay to have it be a sequence to Pastor Clayton Krug's "Theory and Practice in Instruction and Confirmation of Children" presented in June 1965 to the Pastor-Teacher Conference of our Southeastern Wisconsin District right here in Wisconsin Lutheran High School. We all are aware that for some of the members of this year's children's confirmation class systematic Christian instruction and training have ceased. They have joined the ranks of the missing when the Bible class or junior Bible class meets. They are irregular in attendance at Sunday services. They have graduated from our Christian day schools and/or been confirmed. They think they know all they need to know. Indeed they do know Jesus as their Savior and the way to salvation. But there are so many things they do not know about life and living as Christians. They simply have not been exposed to these situations in their young lives, but they will be. And no pastor, gifted as he may be, or teacher has been able to create these situations all of them in the classroom during the few years he has had these children in instruction class or school. I feel certain that the instructors here at Wisconsin Lutheran High School meet a number of Bible illiterates in every freshman class. I am just as certain that systematic Christian instruction and training are given here at Wisconsin Lutheran High School, but not all the high school students of our congregations attend this school or others like it. And when systematic Christian instruction and training is absent during the high school years, well, ask the pastors who serve our students on the campuses of colleges and universities. They have some hair-raising but heart-breaking stories to tell of students trying to live their faith in the terms of an 8th grade level, Christian education as opposed to college level atheism or agnosticism. But this is another area. We are concerned with the people at home in our congregations in the scope of this paper.

With the advent of newspapers, magazines, radio and television into every, or almost every, home in our parishes, we find more and more people doing less and less Bible reading on their own. You have heard that the Bible is too difficult to read, too deep to understand, etc. It makes little difference which translation of the Bible is suggested for reading, the total number of Bible readers seems to be decreasing. We cannot deny the problem. Can we admit that the problem exists? It exists in our Lutheran Church, founded on the principle of "sola Scriptura" and now in danger of having a membership which is biblically illiterate.

However, looking at the other side of the coin, we do find cause to rejoice at the opportunities before us for systematic Christian instruction and training in the congregation beyond confirmation. The society in which our Church exists today has more leisure time than ever before. It is the claim as well as the hope of both management and labor that in the years ahead the amount of leisure time will even increase. I would like to believe that some of this time could well be spent in systematic Christian instruction and training. You know as well as I that many, many of our people are using this increasing leisure time to further their technical education. Why not their spiritual? In respect to this automation could well prove a blessing. The church, our Lutheran Church, certainly ought to seize this chance for additional systematic

Christian instruction and training beyond confirmation. To quote Dr. W. A. Morrison of the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., “The church engages in Christian education to equip and to release its members for their true worship of God and service of man in the mission of the church in the world. The measure of our failure as a church may well be the measure of our neglect of this kind of education.”

This is not to say that we are neglecting Christian education. That would be akin to heresy when you look at the educational budget of our Wisconsin Synod or of many of our congregations. I doubt that any one here feels that we are neglecting Christian education. I believe that every one of us feels that we are not doing all we should to provide systematic Christian instruction and training in our congregations beyond confirmation. My purpose is to have you look with me at what our congregations are doing to provide Christian instruction and training beyond confirmation. I believe this can be seen from five different points of view. Perhaps I should call them areas of activity. They are:

- I. The worship services
- II. The Bible classes
- III. The societies and organizations
- IV. The boards and committees
- V. The faculty and staff

I hope you can see with me the opportunities for systematic Christian instruction and training here. If I do not present all the problems that are faced, please feel free to make your own additions. I shall try to offer a number of solutions, which I have tried. I can only hope that you will also offer help in this area. Let us encourage and strengthen one another to provide the best possible systematic Christian instruction and training in our congregations beyond confirmation.

I.

At the risk of sounding trite I want to say that the congregation assembled to worship presents the pastor and teacher, a qualification of pastor being—“apt to teach”—(I Timothy 3:2), with the largest student body of the week. It is a captive audience at that. What an opportunity for the pastor who has read and studied himself full of his chosen text from God’s Word, thought and written himself empty again, and prayed himself full again to stand before such a large audience to systematically instruct them in the truths of God’s Word thus training them for their Christian’ living until they meet together again to feed on the Bread of Life.

And our pastors preach well. This I do not say in deference to or in fear of my fellow clergy. I warrant that you hear better sermons in our churches than in many others. One reason for this is the training provided at our seminary. Another is that as a liturgical church we follow the system of the church year. There is systematic instruction in the sermon series for the year. Whether the pastor preaches on the Gospel, lessons appointed for the Sundays, or the Epistles, or follows another pericope perhaps from the Old Testament or uses a series of “free texts” as some of you, my elder brethren, are privileged to do, systematic instruction and training is provided. This is also for those in the audience who are beyond confirmation. And I would guess in most congregations that would be the larger part of the audience. How we pastors ought to rejoice at the opportunity to herald the good news of the Gospel to the assembled congregation in all the services throughout the year.

Yet where is the faithful pastor who has not been deeply anguished at the sight of empty pews when he enters the pulpit to preach and teach? Perhaps I should not say this, and especially right now when the summer slump has already arrived. How many congregations represented

here today have increased the number of Sunday services to accommodate larger attendances of more people who have more time this summer to spend in systematic Christian training and instruction? The summer slump in church attendance is just one of the problems in this area. Add to it the irregular attendant at church services. How systematic is his Christian instruction and training going to be? Think of the “C and E” member, the one who is present only for Christmas and Easter services. Is this systematic training and instruction for him? A more general problem is the low percentage, in my opinion, of our total membership in church on any given Sunday. As I recall from the statistics gathered at the time of the Milwaukee planning study the percentages ran from 35% to 55%. Let’s say we all average 55%. But in a congregation of 1,000 that means only 550 were in church last Sunday and will be next Sunday. What systematic Christian instruction and training are the other 450 getting? Another problem is the lecture method of instruction in the formal structure of the worship service. I don’t know that we have reached the point where on a Sunday morning one of the audience would stand to ask the pastor-teacher to explain a little more fully a point he had just made in the lecture-sermon, to say nothing of some one daring to ask a question or to speak out in disagreement. I am not advocating progression to “dialogue” (a nasty word these days) sermons or regression, as some would call it to the formal question and answer of “Christenlehre” or catechesis, although I am sure that educators would agree that both of these methods of teaching are to be preferred to the lecture method. I merely want to point out there is a problem here for the church in providing systematic Christian instruction and training in the congregation beyond confirmation when it restricts that training and instruction to worship services. Our Church has recognized that problem and has sought and found and used other means of instruction and training as answers. Some of these I listed for you before and I will discuss them later.

There are also some answers or solutions I want to offer concerning the systematic Christian instruction and training in the worship services. I read of this attempt by a congregation to make the instruction received in the Sunday sermon more meaningful and the training more valid. We might think it bizarre and call it so. In brief it was this. The pastor preached his sermon, 10 to 12 minutes in length, in which he explained the meaning of his selected text. Immediately afterwards the congregation divided into classes according to ages, each meeting in a different room with a teacher to read the sermon text from the Bible and ask questions about it. This lasted approximately 10 minutes and closed with reading again the Scripture text of the sermon. Reassembling in the church the pastor from the pulpit now made the application of the text to daily life. What do you think of it? Other congregations are making similar attempts I believe from their announcements of the church at worship followed by the church at study with classes for all ages. This could be an excellent way for the pastor gifted with the ability to correlate as well as prepare the necessary material for both his sermon and all the classes of various age levels. Certainly there would be a wonderful opportunity to give systematic Christian instruction and training in the congregation beyond confirmation. I believe that this could be done by having the sermon series follow the lesson series being used in the Sunday School and then preparing the materials for Bible class and junior Bible class. I for one would like to see it tried.

A more mundane solution to the common problem of slumping attendance in summer is a series of sermons on one of the six chief parts of the catechism for those Sundays. I have been rewarded in doing this to the extent of having people ask for a copy of last Sunday’s sermon which they missed regretfully because they were vacationing. Another suggestion I offer is a series of sermons during the summer based on some of the more favorite but less liturgical

hymns. The hymn used could also be the sermon hymn that Sunday in the liturgical form. Please do not think of these suggestions as gimmicks. It is the Word alone which has the power to draw men and women to hear it, and to want to learn more and more of it. And when you stop to consider that the amount of systematic Christian instruction and training that can be given in a worship service amounts to at most one hour a week, and if we take only the sermon it is even less, then that is not very much. There are too many people who are satisfied with this amount or even less. They do not read their Bibles or study the Scriptures at home. But there are also others who desire more as did Mary who sat at Jesus' feet hearing His words at every opportunity. The congregation that fails to offer more opportunities for systematic Christian instruction and training beyond confirmation is remiss in its duty to its members.

II.

Many of our congregations do offer such opportunities in their Bible classes. I am not prepared to say how many congregations because until 1965 this question was not even included in the statistics questionnaire for the year, and I have not seen to date the published statistical report of that year. Recalling the practice of the early Christians at Berea who "studied the Scriptures every day" (Acts 17:11-Phillips), I believe that the Bible classes offer a wonderful opportunity to provide systematic Christian instruction and training in the congregation beyond confirmation. The number of Bible classes provided can be geared to the age levels of the congregation membership from immediately after confirmation through the golden age or senior citizen category. The number of Bible classes can be determined by interests at various age levels—teenage interests vary from those of their parents or grandparents. Bible classes can be established by the time when the members can come to the class, Sunday morning between services seems the best time, but there are six other days and evenings during the week. To be and remain a doctrinally pure and confessionally strong church we must have a membership systematically instructed in God's Word and trained to live in witness of the Living Word.

The Bible classes also offer a splendid forum for discussion, the give and take which brings crystallization of thought and lucidity of expression. Here is a place and time for the people to ask the pastor and/or teacher about a statement in his sermon, to discuss the religious news headlines of the past week, or to pose the problem which faces them as a congregation or individuals in the community in which they live. All of these, of course, are in relation to God's Word which is being studied in the Bible class, and studied systematically. By this I do not mean that when the first session of the class is held, it begins its study with Genesis 1:1 and continues class after class, year after year, until it has read and "studied" through the entire Bible. Unless the pastor-teacher is extremely gifted this monotony is deadly and will cause an early demise of the class. It is not enough to announce that you are going to have a Bible class or classes, pastors, and hope that some one will show up only to be disappointed when so few do. People, you have the right to expect a Bible class lesson as well prepared as the sermons are which your pastor preaches. The qualification, "apt to teach", most assuredly applies in post-confirmation instruction as well as to pre-confirmation training. The young men graduating from our Seminary ought to have as much opportunity to practice teaching a Bible class as they do teaching a confirmation class. When you stop to think of it, the number of people to be instructed and trained in the Bible classes is far greater than that of children and adult confirmation classes combined. The Bible classes, in my opinion, should be the continuation of systematic Christian instruction and training begun in confirmation classes—children's or adult's.

In eighteen years in the parish ministry next to preaching, I enjoyed most the teaching of Bible classes. Perhaps this was because through the Bible classes I was reaching the second largest group of my people for systematic Christian instruction and training beyond confirmation. This is not to say that I found no problems connected with Bible classes. There are problems and I will name three to you very quickly—attendance, ability to read, qualified teachers. There are many more, but let me expand on these three.

How does one get people to attend Bible classes? Well, how do you get people to come to church? The problem is the same. The excuses used for not coming are just about the same. There just may be something in the time of day or week when we hold our Bible classes that adds to the problem of attendance. We have to reckon with the fact that today's Christian is a child of convenience. However, most people will suffer a bit of inconvenience for something they want to have or believe to be worthwhile. Now Christian instruction and training is certainly worthwhile and not only for this life, but for that which is to come. We might do well to examine our Bible class time schedule and the contents in seeking a solution to the attendance problem.

But let us say for the moment we have solved the attendance problem, there remains that of reading ability or perhaps I should say the different levels of reading ability found in the members of the Bible class. I can recall one Bible class which I taught where 55 of a total of 65 confirmed members of this mission congregation were present. The attendance wasn't the problem at first. With little experience in Bible class teaching this young pastor thought only of the ability to read which the most recent confirmands had. There were in the same class grandmothers and grandfathers. They were literate and were not my problem. But there were several couples who had been in this country from European countries 10 years at most in the class. Their ability to read English left a lot to be desired. Foolishly I just went down the line asking everyone to read a verse of St. Mark's gospel which we were studying. In spite of the fact that I had supplied various English translations for the reading, including "The New Testament in Basic English" which is extremely simple, there were problems. Fortunately that first Sunday only about 20 people were asked to read aloud. The next Sunday I noticed some missing and by the third Sunday I had enough sense to read myself or to ask only those to read aloud who were able as well as willing. There are some concomitant problems here in this area. I mention the size of type which far too many of our Bibles have, difficult to read even with 20-20 vision which most Bible class members do not have. The lighting in the room where Bible class is held is not always sufficient for even the average eyes. A Bible class too many in number or located in too large a room, say the nave of the church, can have auditory reading problems as well as visual.

Yet the pastor-teacher who has large Bible classes taught by him personally knows these problems and the others I mentioned first-hand. I would say the ideal size for Bible classes is the same as that for any other class subject. Most of you teachers will agree, I am sure, that 30 is a maximum and 25 in a class is even better. But now comes the problem of splitting up a large Bible class, say of 100—and I don't think we have too many that size, and finding qualified teachers for the resulting 4 classes. In a large congregation I suppose we could say the pastor will take one, the vicar another, the principal of the Christian Day School or the Sunday School Superintendent the third, but that still leaves one without a teacher. So what happens, the pastor takes two classes combined in one and pretty soon they are back to one Bible class taught by the Pastor. Now before you pose other problems which I did not mention, let me offer some solutions to those I did mention.

First of all for attendance, which I believe still to be the primary problem, the solution or solutions are not so easy. Let me offer some helps I have found useful but with the understanding

that this attendance problem is one that needs constant work for solution. First I believe the pastor-teacher has to be enthusiastic about Bible classes and Bible study himself. Enthusiasm is catching, and nothing succeeds like success. Attendance at the junior Bible class can be encouraged all through the years of confirmation instruction. If you emphasize to the children and re-emphasize to them in the years you have them in instruction class that confirmation is not graduation from systematic Christian instruction and training but only the beginning, their appreciation of Bible class and desire to take part in it will certainly be increased. But let me add right away then that junior Bible class had better offer something more than a re-run of confirmation instructions. I think the same advice should be given for the freshman religion course in any of our Lutheran high schools. The solution to the problem of attendance is not in getting them there in the first place, but in keeping their interest and then naturally themselves there in junior Bible class. The same holds true for a senior Bible class, but the older members of a congregation are more tolerant of the teacher's shortcomings in Bible class.

Some of you have just experienced a large Bible class enrollment as a part of a total stewardship effort. Many people promised to come and many did come, but not all. Next year the number may decrease unless you do something about it. One good source of recruits for the Bible class is the adult confirmation class or classes of the year. However, in looking at the 1964 statistical report I found that the 506 adults confirmed in our entire Southeastern Wisconsin District averages out to about four per congregation. Those four persons are not going to increase the size of your Bible class very much. There have to be other sources. One which I found well worth the effort to exploit was the church council. It can be expected, I believe, that members of a congregation elected to office in that congregation ought to lead the congregation in Bible study participation. The average church council has at least six members or maybe even more. Including their wives would give you the possibility of 12 new members of the Bible class next year. Then there is your Christian Day School faculty and Sunday School staff. These certainly ought to be found present and participating in Bible classes. Then finally there is the solution of evangelical persuasion practiced so well by Philip on Nathanael saying, "Come and see," John 1:46. The button-holing approach is the most effective means of Bible class recruitment.

For the problems in reading I can think of only two solutions and both are rather self-evident. One is to have a number of Bible classes graded on age levels which will usually mean reading ability level as well: In addition the pastor-teacher ought always feel free to do most of the reading aloud himself in class. Let the class do their reading at home. The class participation will probably be best in questioning. An ample opportunity should be granted to ask questions in any way religiously oriented. Here you can learn what your class is really seeking to know. This will help you to plan for future more systematic instruction and training. The difficulty of the too-small print in many Bibles used can be overcome by the church supplying the necessary equipment, or by the pastor advising when Bibles are bought—usually as a confirmation or graduation gift—that one be purchased that has very readable type. There is much to be gained by class members always using the same Bible, for both reading and study. The problems of lighting, acoustics, etc., are building problems with mechanical solutions. Most of our congregations have adequate facilities which pose none of these problems.

The qualified Bible class teacher is another problem with a solution less easy to find. Right here and now I would like to encourage our Seminary faculty to do everything humanly possible to train their students in this area which offers so much in the way of systematic Christian instruction and training in the congregation beyond confirmation. I feel certain that you, revered professors, will not take it amiss that I do this. I speak from my own frightening

feeling of inadequacy in this field as I entered the ministry. With a pastor who is apt to teach, the chances of having qualified teachers for all Bible classes are much better. Congregations employing a vicar should make it possible for him also to gain experience in Bible class work. You, teachers in our Christian Day Schools, are for the most part an untapped source of supply of teachers for the Bible classes. I think that by training and experience you are superbly qualified for helping the pastor provide systematic Christian instruction and training in the congregation for adults as well as for children. This latter you do extremely well. Still if a congregation was to provide the opportunity for this systematic training and instruction to the extent that I think it necessary today and used the pastor and its entire Christian Day School faculty, there still would not be enough instructors. We shall have to find ways and means to train other members of the congregation to do this. There have been such attempts made by other church bodies on a national scale, "The Teach Two" program for example. There is even a somewhat commercialized venture originating in Madison, Wisconsin, called the "Bethel Bible Series" which has much to commend it. With the facilities and staffs of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Milwaukee Lutheran Teachers College and Wisconsin Lutheran High School within our own District, I propose that we begin now to set such a program in motion, that is if we believe that Bible classes are among the best means of providing systematic Christian instruction and training in our congregations beyond confirmation. I do so believe. Do you?

III.

Another area for systematic Christian instruction and training in the congregation beyond confirmation which I would like to explore with you is the program of the various organizations and societies within the congregation—ladies aid, ladies guild, men's club, couple's club, young people's society, etc. Many of our congregations have most of these societies. Sometimes I believe we are over-organized. I would gladly trade all these organizations for a good Bible class, or better Bible classes. However, one works with what is there. A very realistic appraisal of the total membership in all the societies within your congregation will show, I believe, that here are many people to whom you can give Christian instruction and training in a systematic way. So first of all the number of people to be reached in this area makes it mandatory that we use it for instruction and training. How many pastors have not wished that they had some more of this when a critical situation arises in the men's club or ladies guild. Then too these organizations meet regularly, usually at least monthly, throughout the year except for a summer month or two. This schedule is geared to systematic training. Most of these organizations and societies have a stated purpose in their constitutions or by-laws relative to having Christian instruction as a part of their meeting. I think you know that it is usually the pastor who is asked to provide "the program" as some of the good people call it. Almost everything points to making extensive use of the meetings of organizations and societies within the congregation to provide systematic Christian instruction and training beyond confirmation.

This does not say that there are no problems connected with this procedure. Just to start with there is the scheduling. Ladies aid meets on the first Thursday of the month; men's club on the third Tuesday; guild on the second Monday; young people's society on, well any day, etc. Then there is the question of the suitable program. Does the program for ladies aid fit the schedule for men's club because, and this I don't have to tell you, there is a great difference in their preferences. How much time does the average parish pastor have to prepare this variety of materials? What helps and aids are available to him or the program committee of the society? Would you like to add a few more problems just to make it difficult?

I really do not believe that this is as difficult as have made it sound. I say this in spite of the fact that for six years on the Audio-Visual Aids Committee of the Synod I heard week after week the pleas of pastors for something that would be good for showing to their men's clubs, ladies aids, guilds, etc. I was happy if we could help them out. In my present position I am just as happy to have them invite me to speak to any one of these organizations about welfare work in general or specifically about the agency which I represent. Still a guest speaker now and a film or film-strip then does not provide the systematic Christian instruction and training in the congregation beyond confirmation with which we are here concerned. Let me address myself directly to the problem, and offer the solution which I found very workable with variations in my parishes.

You can call it program planning or by any other name. I was introduced to it through an article in the magazine "Advance" which I have subscribed to since the first issue. The program as proposed in the June 1966 issue is very detailed. Let me simplify it as I first heard about it, studied it together with four other missionaries in another district of our Synod, and then practiced it in a mission congregation, a self-supporting congregation of average size and a large congregation. The only difference was the number of societies involved. The plan suggests that a program be planned during the summer months for the coming year's activities beginning in September and continuing through the following August. The pastor could do this himself or in conjunction with leaders from the various societies. However, he would be the one to choose the emphasis for each month. Let's say the month of January has as its chosen emphasis, world missions. In planning for it the same materials could be used for every society with but slight variations, to suit the different membership. If it is a talk on world missions by the pastor, he can use the same material for all the societies varying it as he sees fit. If there is to be a film-strip or movie this can be shown to all the organizations at their various meetings or at a joint meeting sponsored by all and with the entire congregation invited. A guest speaker could probably be invited to preach in the Sunday morning service or services immediately preceding the first scheduled society meeting of the month. Then in all the meetings the speaker's message could be discussed and questions answered. Or maybe the total number of societies will want to join together to sponsor a mission fair featuring the world missions of our Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. As you can see the possibilities are many for solutions to the problems facing us.

I do deplore one lack which is evident in the last four of the areas which we are viewing. Systematic Christian instruction and training in the congregation beyond confirmation needs printed materials as guides and helps. My last fifteen years in the parish ministry I wrote my own, begged, borrowed, or stole (the literary word is plagiarized) the materials I had need of to carry on the planned program of systematic Christian instruction and training in the congregation beyond confirmation. I enjoyed doing it, but I do not know whether I can ever justify the time it took away from my family. These things were done besides the regular duties, and usually in the hours after midnight or during the summer vacation. How many times would I not have rejoiced to find materials already prepared for my use. How many of you, my fellow-pastors, have had this same experience? So because time does not permit or you feel that you have no talent or ability for this, we use materials from other sources which far too many of us use negatively or in a very unsystematic way to provide some small measure of Christian instruction and training in our congregations beyond confirmation, besides that offered in every worship service. In this day and age this is not enough. I can only hope and pray that the expansion in man-power granted in the office of the executive secretary of the Board of Education will begin to provide materials for

these areas of systematic Christian instruction and training in our congregations. These areas, Bible classes-societies-boards and committees-faculties and staffs, are not part-time educational agencies. Through them every congregation reaches far more of its people of post-confirmation age than in any other way. If we are convinced that this systematic Christian instruction and training beyond confirmation is needed, and I believe we are agreed, then let's provide materials for this as speedily as possible. I might add that this will not be done by committee work or on a volunteer basis if you want them like the day before yesterday. Having digressed, I hope you will pardon it and I now return to the subject and another area of concern.

IV.

I want to speak now of the boards and committees functioning in a congregation by election or appointment by the voters' assembly. We might refer first of all to the voters' assembly itself, where there is the opportunity to reach perhaps the largest number of the men of the congregation. There are regularly scheduled meetings, monthly, bi-monthly, quarterly, or whatever the constitution demands. Here it seems to me is a golden opportunity for systematic Christian instruction and training. These men are all beyond the age of confirmation. The boards and committees also offer ample time for this training in their meetings. They also have the added advantages of a smaller number of people which tends to make discussion more free and open, more frequent regularly scheduled meetings which make for more systematic instruction and training, and more definite aims and purposes for their work in the Christian congregation which offer the best possible Christian setting for this systematic instruction and training.

Again there are problems to be faced, but not insurmountable ones. Recall the last voters' assembly you attended. How much time was spent, just for example, in the treasurer laboriously reading his financial statement for the past period of reporting, a report which has been printed and distributed to the members present. They can all read, I would assume. Then how much time was given in this same meeting to Christian instruction and training for work in the Kingdom? I think the same comparison could be made for the meetings of the various boards and committees of the congregation. There is no denying that there is business which has to be transacted, but much of this could be expedited when dealt with in its proper order in the framework of instruction and training from God's Word.

Another example: What training or instruction is given to the men who are serving your congregation as elders, trustees, etc.? Does this training pay-off when these men leave office to resume the role of just Mr. average voting member? Perhaps the training received "on-the-job" just makes the man effective when his term expires and he is not eligible for re-election. What materials are available to help the already-busy pastor in providing this training? When can time be found to prepare his own materials or to hold orientation meetings for new members of boards and committees? I think you can see that there are problems.

Let me propose some solutions. Every voters' assembly ought to set aside time in its regularly scheduled meetings to hear about missions (both world and home), educational institutions of the church, and charities (Christian welfare agencies). In those meetings where there is no report to be given in one of these areas of the church's work, the time could well be spent in studying the biblical "whys" and "wherefore" of this work in Christ's kingdom. Such instruction and training carried out systematically can only result in a voting membership which is knowledgeable and understandably so. I might add that as a by-product there will be a better attendance at these meetings. This is the Father's business. It demands the best of us, and in giving our best we will find that there are very many minor items which used to take so much of

the time and caused so many irritations which now are quickly resolved in the interest of promoting the work of the kingdom.

I recall reading in a Sunday bulletin of a local congregation that the Board of Elders would meet on Tuesday at 7:30 p.m., with the reminder to bring their Bibles and be prepared to discuss chapter 3 of the Book of Acts. How many of you include Bible study in your elders' meetings, or meetings of the trustees, board of education, etc.? Let me use the board of elders again as an example of how systematic Christian training and instruction can be provided. Every board of elders is faced, with church discipline matters. Knowing this would it not be well to have) the members of this board thoroughly instructed in this matter before beginning such action? This could be done through Bible study in their meetings before such action is contemplated.

Many of you have stewardship and evangelism committees active in your congregations. Fortunately the Board for Information and Stewardship and the Commission on Evangelism of our Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod have provided excellent manuals to help you instruct and train the members of your committees. These manuals drive you to a study of the Scriptures. That is good! They can be used again and again as the membership of your committees changes. But there is a dearth of materials to use in the training and instruction of the members of other boards and committees. Perhaps you will want to do what I did, write your own. It's work, but it is worth it.

You will also have to find time to do the training and instructing. Here I am thinking of the new members of the boards and committees before they assume their duties, because once they have begun to serve, the routine matters will occupy much of their time. A printed outline of their respective duties would seem to be a very necessary tool to use in training. Then, the church can learn from the business world which today provides instruction and training for its leaders through seminars. A large amount of education and instruction and training is given in a limited time. Just ask any of the men who have attended such seminars. Couldn't the congregation do the same instruction and training only in its own sphere of Christian activity in the same limited time, say the Sunday afternoon and evening before the men assumed office. I know one of the Districts of our Synod has tried this on a district-wide basis. I believe that several congregations could do this jointly, or as, circuits, or even by conferences. Since there are many common problems to be faced this combined effort would seem best. It would also permit the use of the most qualified instructors to give this systematic Christian training and instruction.

V.

Finally, I want to address a few words to those of you who are members of a Christian Day School faculty or a Sunday School staff. I know that in numbers relative to the total membership you account for a small proportion of the membership, but you are a very influential minority. You all undoubtedly receive the systematic Christian instruction and training which is given in the regular worship services of your congregation. I hope that all of you are also active in Bible classes either as students or instructors. Many of you take part in the training given in the organizations and societies of your congregations as well as that provided in the meetings of the boards and committees. I would suppose that you are also always present at the meetings of the voters' assembly. In addition you have your regular faculty or staff meetings in which you are given systematic Christian instruction and training. You are accustomed to attend teachers' conferences for the same purpose and Sunday School teachers' institutes likewise. Some very fine courses have been offered to Sunday School teachers right here at Milwaukee Lutheran

Teachers College. I only hope they continue and increase in courses offered and in people attending these classes.

So it would seem that there is relatively little more that can be done to offer you more systematic Christian instruction and training in your own congregations. Permit me to say that if you believe that, you are wrong. The fact that you may believe it is the greatest problem to be overcome in instructing you. Will you agree that most of your Sunday School staff meetings deal first of all with preparation of the lesson or lessons to be taught on the succeeding Sundays? A small amount of time is allotted for problems of records, attendance, needed supplies, picnic, rally day, etc. Hopefully some time is spent in teacher-training since most of the teachers join the staff relatively inexperienced. Where do we get the materials for this teacher-training? How much is required before you begin teaching? Most of you were probably thrown into the breach to hold the fort before you were ready. By the grace of God you survived and with constant help from the pastor or Sunday School superintendent you became a teacher doing a creditable job. But isn't there much more that you would like to know for yourself and in order to be able to pass it on to those whom you are instructing? Might not the same thing hold true of the teachers on the faculties of our Christian Day Schools? Let me share with you what I once attempted in the way of systematic Christian instruction and training for the faculty of the Christian Day School and the staff of the Sunday School. Having planned a program for the year with a special emphasis for each month, I prepared and distributed to every member of the faculty and staff a sheet on which the emphasis and theme for the month as they would be carried out in the Sunday services. This included the sermon texts, themes and brief synopses as well as the hymns for the Sundays of the month. In the faculty and staff meetings before each Sunday we discussed the goal we were trying to reach in instruction and training in this particular area. We looked carefully at the hymns chosen, studied them so that they could be studied again and practiced with the children, and provided any background material printed, visual or verbal which might be helpful in learning more about the subject. In addition the choirmaster also used this sheet in preparing music for the services as did the organists.

I believe this systematic instruction and training could also cover other areas of mutual concern. I will mention but two of them, of concern to me both as a parish pastor and as a laborer in the social welfare plot of God's vineyard: Christian sex education and the behavioral problems of children (child psychology). These subjects in turn could be of instructional and training value in say the parents-teachers organization. So one step forward in the right direction of providing systematic Christian instruction and training in the congregation beyond confirmation will lead to another and another until, "when, in the unity of common faith and common knowledge of the Son of God, we arrive at real maturity that measure of development which is meant by the fullness of Christ." -Ephesians 4:13 (Phillips)-

In summary then there is much being done, much which can be done, and much yet to be done to provide for every member of our congregations' systematic Christian instruction and training beyond confirmation. Since this is the King's business and requires haste, let us pastors-teachers-people get busy speedily. In these last days the Lord of the Church has opened many doors to us. We must be able to step through these doors with a living witness, based on knowledge-understanding-and experience, to testify of the faith that is in us. God's Word can give us all things needful. Let us read it, study it, learn it, believe it, teach it and preach it together. May God for Jesus' sake permit His Word in its truth and purity to remain ever among us.

"God's Word is our great heritage

And shall be ours forever;
To spread its light from age to age
Shall be our chief endeavor.
Through life it guides our way,
In death it is our stay.
Lord, grant, while worlds endure,
We keep its teachings pure,
Throughout all generations.”