

Ministering Effectively to the Age Group Between Confirmation and Marriage in the Decade of the 1970's

[Pastoral Conference, Dakota-Montana District, April 13-14, 1971]

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I. A Strange Insinuation

In the first chapter of his book, *Profiles of Church Youth*, Merton P. Strommen makes the following observation:

“This viewpoint (impersonalized approach to youth) was still much alive in 1937 when Kowalke, in a paper presented to the convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Joint Synod of Wisconsin, insisted that the business of the church, to tell all men what God has commanded, is accomplished chiefly through preaching. Youth organizations ought not to exist in the church. As far as is known, this remained the official position of the Wisconsin Synod in 1962.”

Slander? Misinterpretation? Sour grapes? No foundation? Perhaps. But whatever you call it, it presents a “black eye” for the Wisconsin Synod, and that on the second page of the first chapter of an important and widely-read document on the ministry to Lutheran young people. It certainly ought to sting even to know that some outsiders insinuate that this is the position of WELS.

What are we doing today to erase such erroneous impressions? If you recall your days at the Seminary you can count not the *hours* but the *minutes* you consumed learning how to deal with young people. Perhaps thirty minutes were expended listening to a classmate, just as inexperienced as you, give his Pastoral report on Youth Work. Outside of this there were those well-intended remarks: “Remember to work with the young people.” The addition of more manpower should make it possible to place more emphasis on this phase of our ministerial education. Sermonic and Catechetical methods might be enlarged to include a few methods in reaching young people with the Gospel of salvation.

Many pioneer Lutheran pastors were trained in a *depersonalized atmosphere*. They were taught not to identify themselves with their parishioners. Instead, they were taught to present themselves as a learned aristocracy. One of my observant lay-members recently said: “In the days of our youth we thought that God almighty Himself was coming when the pastor walked down the street. That would not go over very well today.” An aristocratic display of “closer-to-God-than-others” will bluntly turn off the young people of our day and endanger the thin lines of communication that do exist.

II. The Necessity For This Paper

No doubt this paper was assigned because there is the feeling that in our circles a certain vacuum exists in this work. I offer this paper neither to criticize others nor to elevate myself as the prime example of an expert in this field. All of us, young and old, have had failures in dealing with youth.

The purpose of this paper, then, will be to attempt to inspire you to do some inner reflecting on your ministry to young people so that you can expend your energies in erasing your part in the communication gap, if one exists. It should encourage you to do a little *listening* so that you *know* what your young members are thinking and saying. Believing you know what they are saying and what they are *actually* saying and thinking may be two decidedly different stories.

If you return home musing to yourself: “Dealing with youth is an ability either you have or do not have,” then this paper will have been a failure.

This past year I have heard several laymen say: “If we do not work with young people today, we will not have a growing church in the future.” Noted theologian, Dr. John Warwick Montgomery, in his recent Reformation Lectures at Bethany Luther College, emphasized: “The Gospel of Jesus Christ must be communicated in a language that the young people can definitely understand.” Both of these statements speak the truth. Will we always be 100% aware of them as we strive for an effective ministry to the age group between confirmation and marriage in the 1970’s?

III. Scriptural Documentation

Our basic *inspiration* to work with young people must come from a few of the many analogies and references of the Scriptures. In the Old Testament David prays: “Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions” (Ps.25:7). Solomon advises: “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction. My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother. For they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck. My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not” (Prov. 1:7-10). Solomon encourages: “Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them” (Eccl. 12:1). The book of Proverbs offers excellent advice in answer to many questions young people have today. Consider including this book somewhere in the course of study you work out for your youth group.

The Apostle Paul was also aware of the needs and pitfalls of the young. He reminds Titus: “Young men likewise exhort to be soberminded” (Titus 2:6). He advises Timothy: “Treat the young men as *brethren*...the younger (women) as *sisters*, with all purity” (I Timothy 5:1-2). The advice we here have is simple and direct. Too often we categorize young people as “kids” and “teenagers.” In their own minds they proceed to add the adjectives we have failed to supply—“foolish, noisy, careless, and irresponsible.” When we as adults refer to “teenagers,” nine times out of ten we classify them in terms of second-rate citizens. They want and need to be considered and treated as fellow human beings. “Brothers” and “sisters” are the terms Paul uses. When we have learned to look at young people and regard them as brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus, much ground will have been gained.

In order to inspire young people to be active for Christ in their church and in their daily lives, we have the following *examples of godly young men*: *Joseph*—“And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of the Lord is?” (Gen. 4:38); *Samuel*—(I Sam. 3:1); *David*—“And Saul said to David, Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him: for thou art but a youth,...David said, moreover, The Lord...will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine” (I Sam. 17:33,37); *Joash*—“Joash was seven years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years in Jerusalem. And Joash did that which was right in the sight of the Lord all the days of Jehoiada the priest” (II Chron. 24:1,2); *Josiah*—“Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign,...And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the ways of David his father...For in the eighth year of his reign, *while he was yet young* (teen-ager), he began to seek after the God of his father David: and in the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem from the high places, and the groves, and the carved images” (II Chron. 34:1-3); and *Jesus*—about His heavenly Father’s business, “...increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man” (Luke 2:52).

The examples of *godly young ladies* are also prevalent: the *daughter of Jephthah* (Judges 11:36); *Ruth* (1:16); *Esther* (4:16); *Mary Magdalene* (Mark 16:1); the *Virgin Mary* (Luke 1:38); *Mary of Bethany* (Luke 10:39, John 12:3); *Martha* (John 11:24); and the *daughters of Philip* (Acts 21:9).

Examples of *sinful young people* also abound in Scripture. But note that they are never elevated to be “heroes” as some today tend to kneel down and adore the Charles Mansons and the Angela Davises. We think of Cain (Gen. 4:8), Esau (Gen. 25:33, 34), the sons of Eli (I Sam. 2:12), the sons of Samuel (I Sam. 8:3), Absalom (II Sam. 15:6), Rehoboam (I Kings 12:8-14), Jeroboam (I Kings 13:33, 34), Manasseh (II Kings 21:1,2), and the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:13). The sins of youth will result in sad inheritance (Job 13:26), disease and death (Job 20:11), bitter memories (Ps. 25:7), and shame and remorse (Jer. 3:25).

Times have changed, but Scripture shows us that the *special temptations* which reach young people have not changed. *First*, there is *pleasure-seeking*. “I said in my heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth; therefore, enjoy pleasure: and behold, this is also vanity” (Eccl. 2:11. Cf. also Is. 22:13). But note that Scripture warns against these sins: “She that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth” (I Tim. 5:6). Spiritual barrenness will result: “And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection” (Luke 18:14). Romans 1 soundly condemns homo-sexualism. As pastors it will be our privilege to show that pleasures are *not* everything, that they constitute grave dangers to the soul.

A *second* temptation will be *self-indulgence*. “Come ye, say they, I will fetch wine, and we will fill ourselves with strong drink; and tomorrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant” (Is. 56:12). Many youths have been led to beer and pot parties, not just because they had a craving for these items, but because they were “bugged” by their friends to try it, and given the assurance of a “more abundant life,” as indicated in the above passage. However, instead of a more abundant life they will continue to awaken to another *headache*, another *problem*, and another *sin*. Indulging in alcohol or drugs will solve no problems. Motivate young people with the thoughts of I Corinthians 7:20: “Ye are bought with a price: therefore, glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.” Show them that in Christ they are “*new creatures*” (II Corinthians 5:17).

A *third* temptation will be *love of dress*. Too much stress on outward appearances led to God’s strong denunciation (Is. 3:16-24) of which I quote only a part: “And it shall come to pass, that instead of sweet spices, there shall be rottenness; and instead of a girdle, a rope; and instead of well set hair, baldness; and instead of a robe, a girding of sackcloth; branding instead of beauty.” For good advice on this subject let your young people read I Peter 3:3,4, where moderation and inner beauty are advocated. Today sloppiness and uncleanness are often the vogue. These may very well be signs of spiritual degradation. Concerning the *length* of hair I Corinthians 11:14-15 is relevant. One of the latest fads is the *unisex look*. God had warned against this already in Deuteronomy 22:5: “The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman’s garment: for all that do so are abomination unto the Lord thy God.”

The foregoing are just a few of the Scriptural references in regard to youth. Before we can teach and counsel effectively, we pastors must be diligent students of that Word. We will approach the word with the definite conviction that it is just as relevant for the teen-ager of our day as it is for the middle-aged bread winner and the age-old grandfather and grandmother. We will look for direct references to youth. But we will also show that *all* of Scripture has something

to say to them. We will make appropriate illustrations and applications in our sermons so that each of our young people can *definitely* say: “God is speaking to *me*. He *loves* me. He *saved* me. He *challenges* me.” Rest assured that the young person who makes such a Spirit-motivated confession will become an interested, dedicated, enthusiasm-filled worker in the church, an effective witness for Christ, and a real source of inspiration to you personally.

IV. Reaching Young People

Why are many of today’s young people mysteriously attracted to godless Communism? Certainly not just because they are rebellious by nature. For many of them Communism represents a system and a cause which demand 100% allegiance and dedication. Christianity certainly represents a much *greater* cause, challenge, and dedication.

The trouble is that many of our young people will never know this if the language of our sermons and daily conversation is filled with terms and classifications dear and meaningful to us because of our much study, yet dropping an aroma of stale sacristy air to them. If our faith in Christ Jesus and our theology are really meaningful and important to us, we will also be ready to take the time to express ourselves in terms and illustrations that will readily be understood. I recall the day in our Quarta religion class when the good professor handed out a sheet of paper and told us to write down what the terms “Justification” and “Sanctification” meant to us in our lives. He was aghast with horror when at the next class he reported on the jumbings, and mish-mash, and misconceptions he had received. Over 90% of that class had parochial school education, coupled with two years of instruction at NWC, plus morning and evening chapel services where these two terms were often used. What I am trying to say is this: “How do we expect the young people of our District, 90% of whom perhaps have had no parochial school education, to be thoroughly edified and motivated by a diet of words filled with theological terms which they do not fully understand in the first place?” *Sometimes “listening” but not “hearing and understanding” is not the fault of the listener.* Care should be used in relation to complex, theological terms. Before taking for granted that everyone knows what they mean, use them in a class where they can be thoroughly explained and reviewed.

Striving to *communicate* God’s Word is the all-important step. And it will not just “happen” by itself if we do not know what our young people are thinking and how they are talking. This does not mean that your *new pulpit tone* should be one pitcher after another of the slang of the Hell’s Angels. Such experiments would proceed swiftly to the place where they belong—counter-clockwise down the drain! Young people do not wish to be catered to or set apart from the rest of the congregation. All they ask is that you be clear, concise, crisp, and organized with honest and meaningful language, illustrations, and applications. True, the Word of God will accomplish that which it pleases. But let’s be careful not to allow our personal hang-ups to *stand between* the Gospel and its hearers. Like Paul we should be the first to admit that we would rather speak five words that people can understand than ten-thousand words which they cannot understand (I Cor. 14:19). “Unless the bugle note is clear, who will be called to arms” (I Cor. 14:8—Phillips)?

V. Listen (“Shut Up?”)

Learning to *understand* youth is of prime importance for an effective ministry to them. This will require greater efforts in the simple art of *listening* and *counseling*. Dictating and domineering will not help us understand them. Soon we would be dictating to empty pews and/or empty hearts.

A *communication gap* between pastor and young people can develop easily. That pastor who expounds on the background to the origin of the Nicene Creed while riding between places for YPS Christmas caroling will know what a communication gap is at the next YPS meeting when no one comes. By his actions he will have made himself unapproachable. Another fatal mistake is the repeated referral to “the good old days.” “Say not, ‘Why were the former days better than these?’ For it is not from wisdom that you ask this” (Eccl. 7:10).

We adults, who have already overcome the frustrations of learning responsibility and of deciding on our vocation, tend to have brief memories. If we would recall the days of our own youth, some of the problems *we* faced, the questions *we* had, the attitude toward adults *we* possessed, we would know better how to reach young people today.

The other side to the communication gap is that young people often look at things from their own level and perspective only. This creates a type of idealism that is often frustrating. They must be taught to remember that as Christians they are new creatures, new creations. As such they ought to be looking at things from a *higher level*, the level of association with the Gospel of Jesus. If they keep that in mind, they will not judge so hastily. They will learn to look at all sides of a matter before making a judgment. This is not something they learn by nature. It must be taught to them. You will have splendid opportunities to do so as you lead studies of the Word.

When both sides have learned to talk *with* each other and not *at* each other, the communication gap will have come a long way toward being bridged. When you recall your high school and college days, you are apt to talk about the professor in whose class you “pulled” things or the professor who conducted his class with austere Roman authority. But perhaps the professor you respect most was the one who showed a personal interest in you, the one who occasionally had a little time for you outside of class, the one with whom you could talk, the one in whose judgment you placed great confidence. In the 1970’s more of this personal counseling is being done at our Synod’s schools. For the future of our church it ought also to be done in our local congregations. This means that the pastor will have to be a person who is *available* and ready to listen before making a ready-made answer to a particular problem.

In general, then, we must learn to love our young people as Christ expects us to love all of those whom He has called us to serve. If our young have experienced our personal concern, they will pour out their problems and confessions to us without fear of being trounced upon. And if it must be done, the “thou art the man” approach of Nathan will also be *respected* in proper humility. If young people stay away from us because they fear us, how can we be for them what God has called us to be for them?

Be the one who takes things seriously, even if the problem seems minute. Know the individual in his uniqueness. Consider him not as an object to be manipulated but as a subject who needs to be loved and understood. Then, if you can reach that individual with the Gospel of God’s redeeming love, you are fulfilling your Christ-given mission.

VI. Getting to Know Youth

Pardon a personal example. As a Seminary graduate with one year’s tutoring experience, I expected to have no trouble in dealing with a YPS organization. So I had the big push in the bulletin for that first meeting. When the hour came, only *one* person showed up. The following Sunday’s bulletin followed suit with the traditional (but ineffective) item of admonishment. *No one* came to the second meeting. In the future meetings they started to come, but most of them in body only. Preparing for such meetings was sweat-producing drudgery. Half way through the

next year something happened to change that. Some activity in the conference brought me home much later than I had anticipated. I had no time to finish preparations for the YPS topic for that evening. Unprepared, I went to the meeting and opened it with prayer. We sat down and had a bull-session. They had questions and I had questions. It started with generalities to clear the air. After they realized that I was a human being who could also laugh, we wound up in particulars. I then had opportunity to ask questions such as: 1) What gripes you most about a pastor? 2) What traits do you look for in a pastor? 3) What is the most important message the church has to offer? 4) How can pastors best bring that message to people of your age? 5) What do you want *from* the church? 6) What do you want to do *in* and *for* your church and Christ? That evening all of us learned a great deal. Things changed for the better after that.

I am not recommending this format as the basis for regular meetings. For me it helped to break the ice. Since then I have used the procedure once a year early in the year. You might have other methods that work for you. Use them! You have to be yourself. If young people recognize you as being honest and fair, they will be more eager to join you in laying more emphasis on Bible study and mission work in and through your church.

The book, *Profiles of Church Youth* (1962, CPH), by Merton P. Strommen, is of value in helping one understand young people. This book presents a fact-finding report of a four-year study of 3,000 Lutheran high school youth of the Midwest. Sorry to say, the young people who participated in this survey were drawn from the Big Three Synods only. However, our young people are not *drastically* different from them, so we can learn some things from this survey. You may *sift* from these gleanings those items which may be helpful to you in making your ministry more effective. Chapter headings mark the beginnings of the paragraphs.

“*Beliefs of Lutheran Youth*”—Youths see God as One who controls the future and intervenes in the lives of men. Embedded in their faith is a keen awareness of God’s forgiveness and love. But *approximately half* did not fully understand the Lutheran position of justification by faith alone. This should serve as a strong incentive to us not to take it for granted that everyone is thoroughly acquainted with this all-important doctrine. The best defense against the social-minded approach of many churches today is a clear understanding of justification by faith. An intensified program of religious education will make its impact in stronger faith and more clarity regarding God’s grace.

“*Values*”—Young people give top priority to matters of social acceptance, health, and religious values. In the 1970’s, however, many rebel against social acceptance because their parents overdo themselves in pushing their children to be the shining lights of society. Also of interest is the following quote: “Religiously unresponsive youth (disinterested in such activities as Bible reading, prayer, giving, and church attendance) show a greater than average interest in achieving status and a less than average interest in a life of service and personal happiness.”

“*Family*”—Statements like these were revealing: “I wish that my mother and father would go to church. Mom really wants to, I think, but she won’t go unless dad does.”—“I would feel closer to my dad if he would show me how much he really believes.” In general, young people *want* that which we have always stressed—family worship and a common awareness of faith, and to be united in church activities. “Adults vastly underestimate the severity of these feelings and tend to minimize youth’s distress over these matters. Apparently their image of youth does not include a youth who desires a home where it is natural to pray and discuss one’s faith.” Young people are not pleased when they recognize the lack of a unifying faith in their home. They are also more disturbed over family discord than adults realize. Also of interest is

that adults far overestimate youth's irritation over parental authority. Young people ask only for a reasonable approach.

"Boy-Girl Relationships"—Three of four are troubled about marriage possibilities. Their concerns relate less to dating and more to questions about marriage. A young person has the haunting fear that he or she will never be wanted as a marriage partner. Of interest for our District may be the report that in this field the greatest adjustment is found in home of professional people and least adjustment is found in *farm homes* and families ruptured by internal dissension.

"Self-Acceptance"—Three of four are troubled to some degree by their awareness of emotional immaturity, social ineptness, and academic pressures.

"Acceptance by Others"—“Lack of acceptance is felt with special reference to teachers and school classmates. Feelings of rejection by teachers increase as youth feel increasingly inadequate academically. And likewise, feelings of rejection by classmates increase as they feel increasingly inadequate socially. This means that with heightened academic standards and greater sensitivity to social skills, the need for acceptance in small groups will increase. (If this acceptance is not found at school or church, it may be found elsewhere, even though this may require deviant behavior.)” Again, of interest to work in our District is the following statements “Youth who are less bothered by these worries over acceptance are *urban youth* who participate in congregations size 500—999...”

"Personal Faith"—Adults underestimate youth's concerns, such as worry over doubt, personal assurance, feelings of guilt, and the desire to witness. A clear communication of the Gospel will become increasingly necessary.

"Conflict of Standards"—Young people are well aware of the battle of the flesh against the spirit. They express great criticism toward those who give their age-group a bad reputation. Nine of ten are troubled by sins of speech—cursing, filthy stories, and malicious gossip.

"Guilt, Criticism, and Vocation"—Young people are often disappointed in congregational adults. “They expect much of these people, and they are correspondingly critical when behavior seems inconsistent with profession. They assume that adults *can practice what they teach* even as they assume this for themselves. When the behavior of adults is disappointing, the youth are often resentful.” *Rural youth express more critical attitudes toward congregation adults.* “This contradicts the image of rural youth as being young people who meekly accept whatever is the pattern of congregational life.”—Young people have feelings of guilt when they see that they have not lived up to the standards they have adopted for themselves. They want to be personally consistent. They are also greatly concerned about what God wants them to do in life. They look for help in how to witness to “unsaved kids.” *Sound* evangelism efforts and training will be appreciated.

"Help Desired"—Young people are eager for help from the church in all areas referred to in this paper, especially in understanding their Bible, knowing God's guidance, sharing their faith, and being guided to an assurance of salvation. For these we have the necessary Tool!

"Local Congregations"—“Lurking as a problem is the pastor's hesitancy to give help where adolescent emotions are involved. Yet young people wish they would. Underneath a facade of activity and joviality, there are often deep feelings of aloneness—aloneness from the adult world and God. Some of these feelings are effectively masked by a demeanor that leaves the opposite impression.” Young people give strong evidence of desire for *closer contact* with their pastor. Strommen concludes that the individuality of youth finds its expression more often

in a demand to be heard than in a rebellion against authority. As young people increase in age they show more sincere appreciation of any pastoral help received.

“*Youth Groups*”—Sixty percent of group members ranked devotional emphasis as a strong feature of their meetings. Not regarded too highly are programs that primarily give information, that do not inspire members to dedication, or encourage them to serve others, or help them with their personal problems. An outstanding feature is that the formulation of a group provides an opportunity for young people to be with one another. If they enjoy being together, they will also enjoy learning and serving together. Disappointing to many groups is the lack of fellowship in *song*. In congregations where there is adequate leadership, a youth choir can be very effective.

VII. Youth Groups

In my research on this subject I discovered that most authors take it for granted that *lay adults assist* the pastor widely in the area of youth work. To my knowledge this is almost foreign to us in our circles, perhaps because our groups are generally small in size. One is hesitant, therefore, even to make a recommendation. Such lay leadership would have to be trained thoroughly. If you are so blessed, parochial school *teachers* might be willing to serve as helpful assistants. Take care, however, not to overload them with responsibilities that will take the edge off of their primary field of work. A selected *church council member* might also be present occasionally to keep the young people aware of church objectives, goals, and activities. He might seek interest in youth participation. Your *personal obligation* will be to lead your group to the conclusions we have through a study of the Word. Don't just lecture and say: “I have all the answers.” Lead them to find the answers you have found through your study.

This paper will not treat exhaustively the work of YPS organizations. The scope of that subject is wide enough to consume a separate paper. Your library should contain sources that will guide you in this work. For helpful tips one of the best sources is the book *Youth and the Church*, edited by Roy G. Irving and Roy B. Zuck (Moody Press, 1968.—available through NPH @ \$5.95). Another well-prepared treatise is the paper: “How to Develop, Promote, and Maintain Interest in Young People's Societies,” by Pastor Elwood Habermann, presented last fall at the Eastern Pastoral Conference. These sources show that hit and miss programs will frustrate both you and your young people. You need *objectives* in your program, not only for the individual meetings, but also for the entire year, yes, even for a four-year period. Young people want to know what aims you have in mind. This will mean careful planning already in the summer. Your objectives should be to enlarge on 8th grade knowledge (to strengthen) and to inspire young people to direct their lives toward extension of the Kingdom of Christ. It would be helpful if our Synod's Board for Parish Education would work out an outline for yearly study, keeping in mind such objectives, patterned, perhaps, after the course of study presented at our synodical and area high schools and colleges. Recommendable for Old Testament study are the outlines prepared by Darrel Kautz, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. These are well-outlined, intellectually challenging, yet easy to read, and doctrinally sound.

How often should you meet? That depends on local circumstances. Sunday morning Bible study on a regular basis is recommendable. But the fellowship and problematic studies of youth organizations should not be overlooked. Personally, I feel that if you meet only once monthly, your group will lose continuity, inspiration, and goals.

As an example of a four-year program, I wish to offer one of Pastor Habermann's suggestions for your digestion:

1. Study the introits, graduals, & collects for the church year. Discuss how they fit in with Epistle, Gospel, and sermon text. Concentrate on a study of the Epistle or Gospel for the day. If Epistle is studied, present eisagogical and exegetical materials. Modern translations may be read and compared (J.B. Phillips, Beck). Center discussion around these questions:
 - a) What does the text say?
 - b) What does the text mean?
 - c) How does the text apply to me?
2. Study and compare the different religions of the world today.
 - a) Christian
 - b) Non-Christian
 - c) Ecumenical movement and its aims

Center discussion around how these affect their life in high school, college, military service, and marriage. (Remember, most churches have changed from their traditional stands of only a few years ago. This require up-to-date research.)
3. Read a book of the Bible. Use KJV and compare modern translations. Start with a study of the canon. Follow with eisagogical material for the book to be read. Romans, I Corinthians, Timothy, Daniel. Apply as under No. 1. As extra-curricular, read for enjoyment Ruth, Jonah, etc., to build up Bible reading at home.
4. Church history from Pentecost to modern day developments. Acquaint with congregation's constitution, Synod—general and district levels—show arrangement and purpose.

After four years this may be revised and repeated. Indoctrination is definitely the purpose here. An occasional party or social activity may be arranged from time to time in the local group and with neighboring groups. A regular testing of the participants in which they check the papers themselves and keep scores can be beneficial to keep the challenge before the group and maintain interest.

VIII. Organized to Serve

If your meetings serve to fulfill the above-mentioned objectives, your young people will soon be looking for *involvement* in church activities. No effort or program in Evangelism or Stewardship is complete unless it is also carried out among your young people. The blessings of witnessing and giving and serving must be learned, the sooner, the better. Find your leaders, respected and energetic. Their influence will spread. Their enthusiasm can be shared. *Reach out to youth through youth!*

The study of God's Word will accomplish that which it pleases—*faith* in Christ and the desire for Christian *service*. Let the young people show by their service that they have faith! Let them learn to put into practice that which they believe. They want to be involved. They want and need constructive suggestions concerning the "how" of serving. Their enthusiasm can also be an inspiration to the rest of the congregation to accomplish things while there is still time. Browse over the list of projects here suggested and select those most appropriate for your group and congregation. Most of the selections come from the book *Youth and the Church* (p. 275). (J—Jr. High; S—Sr. High; O—Older)

- Assist with church janitorial work. (JSO)
- Assist the pastor with personal chores to give him more time for church work. (JS)

- Help direct traffic in church parking lot. (JS)
- Operate projection equipment, and be responsible for its care and maintenance. (SO)
- Provide transportation to church for invalids or children. (SC)
- Assist teachers. (SO)
- Provide flowers for the church, and distribute them to shut-ins following the service. (JSO)
- Care for hymnals, Bibles, and other worship equipment. (JS)
- Assist with the secretarial work of the church. (SO)
- Publish a church newspaper. (JSO)
- Contribute to scholarship fund for a deserving college or seminary student. (SO)
- Keep in touch with men and women of the church who are members of the armed forces. (SO)
- Visit the young newcomers in the church. (SO)
- Provide ushers for church services. (SO)
- Operate a baby-sitting service for parents so they can attend adult functions of the church. (JS)
- Form a youth choir. (SO)
- Sponsor a mission project, and assist at a mission fair. (JSO)
- Paint and distribute signs and posters for the church. (JSO)
- Compile a church directory. (JSO)
- Canvass community. (SO)
- Evangelism calls among lapsed youth of church. (SO)
- Take tape-recorder to shut-ins. (SO)
- Keep up a church bulletin board. (SO)
- Decorate Christmas tree, and fill sacks. (JSO)
- Build nativity scene. (JSO)
- Organize sporting teams and leagues with other WELS youth groups. (JSO)

IX. A Few Connected Concerns

A few words in regard to your relationship with college students are in order. Some students act as though their ties with the home congregation have been severed. This creates embarrassing situations for campus pastors. Feelings of severance will not be prevalent if in their pre-college days students have felt to be a *part* of the congregation. Therefore, the congregation should keep up some contact. A student-directed newsletter may be of value. Problems like fraternities and close communion should be aired out before they leave. An August meeting (church or picnic setting) may serve as an opportunity to give extra confidence and direction. Students should know exactly where they are to attend church, go to communion, and which organization they are to join. Obtain their names and addresses and send them both to the campus pastors and to the LSWC. In past years students did not receive *Meditations* and *The Northwestern Lutheran* unless their names had been sent in by the *home pastors*. If you cannot obtain the names and addresses, let a reliable student do it for you. Throughout their years of study show your interest. Be ready to serve as a reference. When the time comes that they must decide on a place where they will practice their profession, they will come to you and inquire concerning the location of WELS churches. Souls will be conserved. In the future souls will also be gained. So continue to make yourselves available to your college students.

What about the *drug scene*? This, too, merits the attention of a special paper. It is a problem that will become increasingly tense. You might be surprised at the number of those in your congregation who have already experimented with drugs. Like it or not, you will be called to give more personal counseling in drug cases. Acquaint yourselves with drug *terminology*. Various pamphlets are available. Pray that your young people will realize that it is *not* “in” to be a part of the drug scene.

What about the *18-year old vote*? This question may well come up in the 1970’s. If younger people will be allowed to vote in state and national elections, they will soon be asking why they cannot be voting members of the church. This subject should be discussed in our circles so that similar guidelines are followed. Disadvantages in such a system would be lack of experience in doctrinal matters and disciplinary cases. Advantages would lie in the practical field. The voting meetings might take on new life.

Is *pre-marital counseling* necessary? True, you may have discussed Christian marriage in your youth organization. But the topic “What Makes a Christian Marriage?” will be more meaningful to a couple on its threshold. Wedding sermons rarely pierce through the starry eyes and distant thoughts of the bride and groom. However, the pastor is not the one who should be the sought-after expert on birds & bees sex techniques, etc., in his pre-marital counseling. Your intentions could be meaningful, but the results could be disastrous.

Youth work will be exhilarating at times, frustrating and depressing at other times. Don’t lose your sense of humor over it. If you are not a joke-teller, don’t try. There is nothing worse than an old, stale joke memorized by someone who cannot tell it. If you can’t tell an occasional joke, learn to see humor in situations. Comment on them in asides and insertions. On the other hand, if you have joke-telling ability, don’t *over-do* it. It would not be too flattering if your young people remember you *only* for that. Above all, be yourself!

Last spring this paper was chosen out of a group of *historical* selections. Since it refers to the 1970’s, I feel that it is more *prophetic* in nature. And since I do not have the gift of prophecy, you will have to use those parts of it that are meaningful in a small way to your ministry. In all of your endeavors, teach your young people to realize with St. John: “The world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever” (I John 2:17).