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Correction:

The biographical note at the end of the book review (“Explore Evolution”) in Vol. 142.3 by Dr. Paul Zimmerman incorrectly lists his tenure as President at Concordia Teachers College, River Forest as 1973-1974. The dates should read 1973-1983. The Journal regrets the typographical error. (Ed.)

Here I Sit ... DCE Ministry Celebrates the Big Five-Oh!

by Deb Arfsten

Fifty years! This is a time for celebration, and a time for reflection, a time to see how far we've come, and a time to dream about what can be. It is a good time to be a Director of Christian Education.

While DCEs are engaged in a variety of ministry areas, one area that has been predominant for many is their work with children and youth. So in my curiosity to know what youth ministry was like fifty years ago (before I was born) back in 1959 when the LCMS first established DCEs as a distinctive ministry, I chatted with a friend who had first-hand knowledge. He chatted with me about Walther League, an organization whose purpose was to help young people grow as Christians through

Worship: building a stronger faith in the Triune God;

Education: discovering the will of God for their daily life;

Service: responding to the needs of all men;

Recreation: keeping the joy of Christ in all activities;

Fellowship: finding the power of belonging to others in Christ.

My friend told me that typical youth group events were led by a pastor or teacher, often including such things as monthly meetings for business and topical study, and social events such as roller skating, bowling, hayrides, and holiday parties. Apparently dancing was not allowed (although *square dancing* seemed to be the exception in some cases). Youth groups were student organized with officers, and zone rallies seemed to be common as well. I asked him how students dressed for youth group and he said they wore "school clothes" which meant no denim, and girls wore skirts. I understand there was even a Walther League songbook.

Let's fast forward a half century years to

2009. Okay, so a few things have changed. Walther League was officially over 20 years ago in 1989, and while there are still people leading youth ministry efforts in our LCMS through the Youth Ministry office in St. Louis, most of our youth ministry programs are autonomous within individual congregations. Zone rallies have been replaced with district youth events and national youth gatherings. And while activities such as bowling, movies, retreats and lock-ins are still evident in many youth ministry programs, these young people seem to be looking for more substance, both in Bible study and in service opportunities. It's been an exciting trend to watch the huge growth of servant events throughout our LCMS church body and beyond. These are young people who get excited about getting dirty—*literally*—in order to serve others in need. What about technology: iPods, texting, BlackBerries, video games, and Facebook? The list is endless. The technology that seems to keep us more easily connected to one another also seems to disconnect us more often face-to-face.

I believe the commitment to youth and children remains the same, but am also convinced that it has grown significantly over the years

But what is also interesting are those things that have *not* changed. The purposes of worship, education, service, recreation and fellowship all still exist in the mission of many church ministries, including the addition of outreach/evangelism in many settings. And while educational ministries may look a bit different, the commitment to teach God's Word in various ways to all ages is still strong.

It seems that congregations are earnestly seeking church workers who not only have a solid theological and educational background, but who also can connect with people of all ages, especially youth, and can provide activity programming as well as spiritual growth opportunities. The challenge is that many of our congregations still seek DCEs to do educational programming, and rightly so, but there also seems to be a greater desire and need to go beyond that in the faith formation of children and adults. Providing deeper substance in study and service in addition to the programmatic activities seems to be a priority.

So what does this mean about preparation of future DCEs? In the limited amount of time in our college classrooms, there seems to be so much to cover: the nuts and bolts of teaching and administering a Christian education program, how to plan and implement youth retreats and servant events, doing curriculum reviews on confirmation and Sunday school resources, learning about team ministry, writing Bible studies: the list goes on and on. However, it is also critical that time is spent in deeper study and reflection, staying current in Christian education methods and research, and seeking to better understand the needs of children and youth in this contemporary society. It is indeed a challenge.

What else hasn't changed in fifty years? Well, certainly our good and gracious God. We worship the same God with the same faith...one Lord, one faith, one baptism (Eph. 4:5). I believe the commitment to youth and children remains the same, but am also convinced that it has grown significantly over the years—something to celebrate. The five core values of Walther League really haven't changed so much either, except we've added in more of a focus on service and outreach—even *more* reason to celebrate.

As you read the articles in this specially themed issue of the *Lutheran Education Journal*, take time to reflect on the history a bit, look at DCE roles, both as generalists and specialists, consider what future DCE ministry might look like and, ultimately, I think you'll see that all the pieces come together as a foundation for faith formation. That's what we're all about. What started as education and youth ministry in a congregation setting has now grown to include DCE leadership roles at camps, universities, districts/synod, mission settings, and other ministry settings. God continues to use the gifts of His people to serve His people wherever the need exists.

A 50th wedding anniversary may be an indication that there aren't a lot of years left together, aging happens. Turning fifty years old seems to be the "new forty," but for DCE ministry, fifty years is just the beginning of a long and exciting journey of ministry in the church. Hundreds of DCEs have followed the Call of God in this ministry and shown a dedication and commitment to be in teamwork with other church workers and lay people for the sake of the Kingdom. Will there be obstacles

ahead? No doubt. But I expect we will persevere with the help of God. Indeed, DCE ministry has stood the test of time, and as a former pastor of mine used to always say, “The best is yet to come.” **LEJ**

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Directors of Christian Education: Telling the Family History

by Paul Schoepp and Thad Warren

Most people love to hear stories about their families. Chances are pretty good that you've asked or answered questions about yours as a child or have answered them for a young person you know. Our stories matter. They help define us. The history of those who have gone before shapes and molds who we are and how and why we do the things we do today. That's true for us as individuals within our families of origin. It's also true for us as individuals within a profession or, if you will, the family of Directors of Christian Education (DCEs). This article will attempt to tell some of the stories and events which have shaped and defined DCE ministry over the past fifty years.

First Teachers of the Faith

Many scholars have shown that, for centuries, the Christian faith has been shared and passed on from generation to generation finding its roots in the Jewish faith traditions and customs. In its earliest recorded history we see that faith was passed on from parents to children, from children to their children and from family to family

These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates. Deuteronomy 6:4-9 (New International Version).

Formal religious training can be traced well into the Old Testament with the prophets, priests, rabbis and even into the traditional practice of religious festivals designed to teach about the faith life of the people (Tidwell, 1982; Elias 2002). The task of Christian education also figures prominently in the New

Testament era. Christ, in addition to being Lord and Savior, also carried the title Rabbi, or teacher. The apostle Paul was also a significant teacher of the faith as he traveled around establishing new churches and providing follow up instruction about the faith through the letters that have become part of our New Testament (Lawson & Choun, 1992; Stubblefield, 1993).

Many notable authors have documented the path of Christian education from the earliest of days to the present (Furnish, 1976; Tidwell, 1982; Gangel & Benson, 1983; Reed & Prevost, 1993; Pazmino, 1997; Elias, 2002). There is little question from the literature or from Scripture itself that Christian education has a long history. The majority of the literature speaks to the philosophical and theological constructs of the profession. For purpose of this article we will be limiting our review to the literature concerning the development of the DCE profession in the Protestant Christian church beginning in the 20th century and the to the specifics of DCE history within the LCMS

History of the Protestant DCE

In England around 1780, Robert Raikes started the first Sunday school. The Sunday school was originally designed to reach out to the poor and uneducated children and youth on the streets. It was defined as a social experiment that used Christian tools for education (Reed & Prevost, 1993). The thought behind its inception came from recognizing that those who could not read and write or who were not educated had trouble succeeding in society. It was out of this societal concern that the church adopted the idea and started Sunday schools with the dual goals of educating individuals to help them advance in society and to share with them the message of faith. This movement quickly spread and was met with success among Christian churches in England. Similar Sunday schools were started in the United States but with a slightly different motivation. “Many of those who had settled in the New World came with deeply seated religious convictions. It was only natural that their concern for their children’s literacy would join with a like concern for their children’s religious training” (Reed & Prevost, 1993 p. 260). It was not long before the Sunday school became the primary teaching agency for communicating the faith in the United States among Protestant churches (Furnish, 1976; Reed & Prevost, 1993; Stubblefield, 1993; Elias, 2002).

During the early part of the 20th century a number of Christian congregations in the United States began to develop the profession of Director of Religious Education (DRE) out of a need for help in carrying out the ministry functions of the church. One of the primary reasons for the early establishment of the DRE role was to promote and administrate the Sunday school (Furnish, 1976; Stubblefield, 1993). As the Sunday school grew, more and more churches saw the need to hire fulltime individuals to administrate and manage this agency of the church. Those initially serving in this role were referred to as “director of the Sunday school” or, more often, “paid Sunday school superintendent.” Often times, if women filled the position, the title “Educational Secretary” would be used (Stubblefield, 1993).

DREs were identified in the first two decades of the twentieth century primarily in Congregational, Methodist, Presbyterian, and Baptist churches in major cities like Chicago, Pittsburgh, and Buffalo. The primary concern of these directors was religious training of children and youth (Furnish, 1968). These directors often decided curriculum, appointed teachers, and handled all aspects surrounding the administration of the Sunday school. By 1920 the director was not only responsible for the Sunday school but generally was in charge of most of the congregation’s programs related to children and youth. With the changing roles came a shift of some of the director’s titles to “education director”(Furnish, p16). Stubblefield (1993) points out that “for years the director of religious or Christian education went by the initials DRE or DCE” (p. iv).

During the next two decades, Vacation Bible Schools (VBS) and midweek schools were often added to the education director’s workload. A shift in roles was emerging from being the hands on leader and administrator to more of a leader, trainer and resource person. Along with this shift in role, came an expectation that the person serving as director be theologically trained (Schroeder 1974). In the 1960’s “denominations lifted the position of the DRE to a higher professional level and showed denominational support for their work.” (Stubblefield, 1993 p. 31). Many denominations were starting to establish standards and more formal training for those wishing to serve as Directors of Religious Education.

Furnish (1976) identifies four periods of the history of the

DCE. The first period 1906-1910 is identified as “A Profession is Born” and discusses the development of early directors and the role that the Religious Education Association, established in 1903, played in influencing the early days of the profession. The second period, 1920-1930, is identified as “The Future is Ours,” which discussed the growth of the profession and some of the struggles of standardization and issues of definition. The third period, 1930-1945, was titled “Disillusionment and Despair” and discusses more of the challenges of the profession, especially those which came as a result of the Depression and World War II. The fourth period, 1945-1965, was identified as “Recovery and Growth.” This period discussed some of the changing dynamics of churches following the war and the growth of the profession because of and despite some of these changes (Furnish 1976; Stubblefield, 1993; see also Schoepp, 2003).

Stubblefield (1993) added a fifth period to the work of Furnish, 1965 to the present (i.e. 1993), referred to as “Clarification and Advancement.” The challenge of a decline in church membership is discussed along with the shift to larger multi-staff ministries. During this time denominations became more proactive in developing more specific training for DCEs using a variety of approaches including masters’ degrees. Certification became a requirement in some denominations and several other denominations attempted to “establish or revise their standards of certification for the educational minister” (p. 33).

By the 1950s, there were ...demands...that churches provide programming for youth and children.

The DCE in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

The history of DCE in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) follows a somewhat different path. While the Sunday school had some influence on the DCE profession in the LCMS, it did not define the roles and preparation of early DCEs as it did in most protestant churches. DCEs in the LCMS find their history starting in the parochial school. When Lutherans settled in the United States they developed day schools with the hopes of maintaining some of the heritage they brought with them from

Germany. These schools provided a good academic education with the added benefit of daily religious education (Keyne, 1995).

The Lutheran church was well grounded in their practice of establishing and using day schools as a primary faith shaping tool. Among some in the church there was a concern that establishing Sunday Schools might compromise the day school and their conviction that day schools were the best avenue to nurture the faith of children (Schroeder, 1974). Many congregations did however start to utilize the Sunday school in the late 1800s to supplement and/or provide Christian education to their children and youth. Lutheran churches were careful that the Sunday school be under the direction of a theologically trained or, more specifically, a synodically certified person, typically the pastor or the Lutheran day school teacher. The first Missouri Synod congregations to conduct Sunday schools also had day schools, thus there were readily available trained teachers to teach and direct the Sunday school from as early as the 1910s. It is noteworthy that these individuals were often asked to serve as organist or choir director in addition to establishing various forms of religious instruction in the parishes they served. (Griffin, 1995).

The early beginnings of DCE ministry within the Synod are sometimes difficult to trace because historical records are not clear. Often the records referenced only the Lutheran teacher, even if the teacher was not serving in a traditional classroom but, instead, in the congregation's other educational agencies. Further complicating the process, the title "Director of Christian Education" was not used extensively until the 1950's (Schroeder 1974). The first clearly recorded DCE as "teacher," A.W. Kowert, served a church in Sheboygan, Wisconsin from 1916 to 1924 (p. 33). Kowert was called to serve the church in multiple roles as: teacher, organist and choir director. Schroeder indicates that by 1940 there were at least six congregations within the Synod that had teachers serving in director roles.

Schroeder (1974) claims that the DCE profession in the Lutheran church really didn't find itself until the 1960s due to the synod's commitment to the Christian day school. Although there were some individuals serving in DCE roles, he asserts that the Synod as a whole really saw no purpose for the position of

DCE as, traditionally, the roles now assumed by the DCE were performed by the male day school teacher. Keyne (1995) affirms that the role of DCE was often seen as a threat to the day school. It was this mindset that often limited the widespread acceptance of such a position in the Lutheran church.

Griffin (1995) records that as early as 1934 the Atlantic District, in convention, voted to “petition Synod at its convention in June, 1935, to make provision at one or both of its teachers’ seminaries for the training of ‘directors of Christian education,’ who will be equipped to serve congregations that have no Christian day school, as instructors in week-day religion schools, as superintendents of the Sunday and Bible-schools, as church organists and choir directors, and as missionaries particularly to the children” (Proceedings, 1935, p. 98-99). The resolution to establish the position of DCE failed in large part due to the previously noted concerns that the position might undermine the viability of parochial schools but the matter was recommended for further study. Although the 1938 convention did not establish the position of DCE, a report came back outlining probable functions a DCE might serve and noted the status of the office as equal to that of teacher or assistant pastor. Additionally such persons should be synodically trained and should be listed on the Roster of Synod. As for professional preparation, “the training program offered by the two teachers’ colleges of Synod under the revised curriculum is adequate for specialization in the field of religious education in the local church” (Proceedings, 1938, p. 45-46). In spite of not formally adopting the position of DCE, the number of non-certified DCEs in synod continued to grow through the 1940s and 1950s.

As more churches came into existence without the connection to a day school they became inclined to search for someone with gifts and passions to help with the educational agencies of the church. By the 1950s, there were more and more demands by parishioners that churches provide programming for youth and children as congregations were experiencing the Baby Boom along with the rest of the country. These factors were instrumental in driving the church to seek a better way to meet the demands of the people with the result that the Youth Leadership Training Program was instituted at Valparaiso in cooperation with Synod’s Board for Young People’s Work, the

Walther League and the Lutheran Laymen's League (Schroeder, 1974, p.35). This program was designed to focus on the youth ministry needs of the congregation, a cutting edge idea that would serve to change the face of DCE Ministry. Since Valparaiso University was not an official training institution of the Synod, having their graduates serving congregations in the LCMS was revolutionary. With the onset of this program, more and more congregations saw the need for adding staff that might not be directly associated with the day school and might not be trained as classroom teachers.

In 1959 the LCMS in convention, passed a resolution to include Directors of Christian Education on the Roster of Synod declaring these individuals as Commissioned Ministers under the heading of "teacher." The convention resolved that "the directors of music and education who are graduates of any one of our recognized

The work of the director of Christian education is...to build one another in the Christian faith and life.

teachers colleges, or have passed colloquy (a post baccalaureate certification process), and are eligible for a call (vocational work) in any one of our schools, be considered teachers with all the rights and privileges

pertaining to this office" (Proceedings, 1959, p. 309-310). This formalized the position of DCE among the churches in the LCMS and was a starting point for legitimizing the profession. This action led to the placement of students into parishes with the title of DCE starting in 1960 (Schroeder, 1974; Griffin, 1995). It was not until the 1962 convention that the Synod passed a resolution to establish specific training programs for DCEs at two of the synodical colleges; River Forest, IL and Seward, NE (Proceedings, 1962). Of note here was the fact that these training programs would operate within the framework of the existing teacher training programs for parochial schools thus requiring DCEs to be certified both as school educators and as parish educators. Evidence of these early roots of a dual certification requirement still existed at the time of this writing insofar as there are DCEs listed on the church roster with dual certification (Lutheran Annual, 2009). Several of the Concordias that certify DCEs continue to give students a dual certification option for

their undergraduate degree (e.g. Concordia University Nebraska and Concordia University Chicago).

In 1969 the Board for Higher Education (BHE) of the LCMS commissioned Concordia College St. Paul, Minnesota with developing a training program that did not require students to obtain a teaching certificate. This, in turn, broadened the scope of the curriculum and changed what had been the norm of structuring the preparation of DCEs (Schroeder, 1974; Griffin, 1995; Keyne, 1995). Schroeder (1974) indicated that the three schools “programs differ significantly” (p. 38) with Seward and River Forest’s programs sticking with a core of traditional teacher education and St. Paul’s program taking on a broader focus in the area of parish education. This decision precipitated something of a crisis for DCE ministry since roster status was attached to teacher certification—DCE graduates of St. Paul’s program were not on synod’s roster. At the 1983 convention fourteen years later, synod passed a resolution allowing DCEs to be rostered without completing a teaching certificate. “With this resolution, the office of DCE attained full maturity as an officially recognized ministry of the Synod in its own right to be included on the official roster” (Griffin, 1995, p. 145).

Over the ensuing years, three additional higher education institutions of the LCMS have been approved to prepare DCEs for ministry: Concordia Portland, Oregon and Concordia Irvine, California joined in 1977 and most recently Concordia Austin, Texas in 1999 (Schoepp, 2003). Each of the six institutions has brought to the profession a unique set of gifts and opportunities in the preparation of DCEs.

Additionally DCE ministry made its way north into Canada. The first DCE (a teacher who was later field certified) was called into Canada in 1973 (Lobitz, personal communication, Feb 11, 2009). When in 1988 the three Canadian Districts of the LCMS became an autonomous church body, the Lutheran Church-Canada (Lutheran Church—Canada Convention Proceedings, 1988), there soon followed a decision at the second LCC convention to establish church work positions in addition to those of pastor and teacher (Lutheran Church—Canada Convention Proceedings, 1990) The position which grew out of this resolution became known as DPS (Director of Parish Services). The program is still housed at Concordia University College of Alberta in Edmonton,

preparing students to be lifespan teachers of the faith with a curriculum that parallels DCE preparation in the LCMS. LCC and LCMS have a memorandum of agreement recognizing each other's church work certifications and providing for movement of workers between both church bodies (Operating Agreement, 1987).

Other Historical DCE Developments

As DCE ministry has developed informally over the past century and formally over the past 50 years it is noteworthy to consider other factors that have been at work in the growth of the profession.

Over time there have been a number of historical markers regarding the definition of DCE ministry. After initially establishing the DCE profession at the 1959 convention, the synod's next major definition of DCE ministry appeared in 1981:

A Director of Christian Education is a professionally-trained educator called by congregation to plan, organize, coordinate, administer and promote the congregation's ministry of Christian education. As a member of the congregation's team of called ministers, the director works in close cooperation with the pastor particularly in the congregation's educational ministry. The work of the director of Christian education is in the ministry of God's people to build one another in the Christian faith and life (Griffin, DCE Bulletin, 1981—p. 2).

Then, in 1999 a more concise definition was developed at the annual DCE Summit:

A Director of Christian Education is a synodically certified, called and commissioned lifespan educational leader prepared for team ministry in a congregational setting. (DCE Summit Minutes, 1999).

A cursory review of the history of DCE ministry and these two milestone definitions highlight the importance of:

1. Training and certification for DCEs;
2. Roster status for DCEs;
3. DCE function as a lifespan teacher of the faith;
4. The reality of team ministry for DCEs;
5. The local congregation as the target for most DCE ministry.

DCEs have always been collaborative in nature and joined

together with others who share similar ministry responsibilities. There have been various professional organizations, such as the PEDDA (Pastors and Education Directors Association) established in the 1950's in the Midwest. In 1967 this organization merged with LEA (Lutheran Education Association) to form DPDCE (Department of Pastors and DCEs). In 1973 the name changed to TEAM (Theological Educators in Associated Ministries). In 2001 LEA restructured itself into a series of networks and TEAM became LEA-DCEnet (Lutheran Education Association-DCE Network). At the time of this writing another variation of the DCE professional organization is in the works and will be unveiled at the National DCE Conference in Dallas in April of 2009, annual gatherings that have occurred since 1988. Further, the annual DCE Summit has brought together DCE leadership

KINDLE has been a significant development in the history of DCE ministry.

from congregations, the synod and the Concordia University System program directors since 1990. All of these organizations and professional conferences have continuously operated in one way or another with the intent of supporting, providing

resources and setting direction for DCEs. (Schoepp & Warren, personal communication, February, 2008)

The Karpenko Institute for Nurturing and Developing Leadership Excellence (KINDLE) has been a significant development in the history of DCE ministry. Pioneered in 1999 it has been providing opportunities since 2002 for experienced field DCEs to gather for a year of extensive training and accountability “to enhance the church by fostering and multiplying servant leaders” (<http://kindledce.org/>). There have also been various informal DCE clusters in some LCMS districts that have provided regular opportunities for face-to-face encouragement and equipping. Throughout their history DCEs have learned to connect through writing and conversation in various formal and informal ways.

Print resources related to DCE ministry have developed over time too. In 1965 the Board established *DCE Bulletin* for Parish Services of the LCMS. It ceased publication in 1990 and was replaced by TEAM with *DCE Directions* until approximately

2002 after which *Network DCE* took up the task of providing print resources and written communication for DCEs. Since 2007 *Christian Education Leadership* has been published as a quarterly electronic newsletter as a cooperative effort of LEA-DCEnet, the DCE program directors at each of the Concordias and as well as KINDLE (Schoepp & Warren, personal communication, February, 2009). *Ethical guidelines for Directors of Christian Education*, published in 2002 by the Lutheran Education Association has provide another significant benchmark resource for the development of DCE ministry was the. These guidelines clearly articulate the values of DCE ministry and the principles of sound doctrine, a life above reproach, and competency in practice.

The LCMS has certified 1,756 directors of Christian education for the church since the inception of this particular office. Of that number, 630 are currently serving in DCE ministry in a congregational context. That number is significant because, in a synod of just over 6,000 churches, it can be stated that DCE ministry is currently impacting only about 10% of the church body in practicing quality Christian education and equipping others to effectively share the Gospel.

So now you know a little bit more of the DCE family history. It's an exceedingly large family that has been on a long and eventful journey to this point. Our family journey promises to continue offering opportunity and challenge as we engage in the task of teaching the faith across the lifespan. **LEJ**

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Christian Faith Formation for the 21st Century: A Renewing Way

By Steve Arnold and Kevin Hall

Is it time to climb, somewhat reluctantly, into the metaphorical ministry lifeboat? With sweeping cultural and economic changes rippling through society, the prospects for the Church, from the perspective of many Christian educators, may appear grim. With families today finding themselves overcommitted, fragmented, and stretched to the breaking point, many within the Church struggle to maintain their ministry equilibrium. While it is true that our old approaches have worn thin, the Church does have the opportunity to respond with refocused and renewed vigor. Our changing culture provides new opportunities for Christian nurture that requires a focus on relationships, faith formation, and the family, all within the context of God's Word and the Christ-centered faith community.

While the whiffs of cultural change drifted through the organized church with little notice, our families live, work, and raise their children, in a changed world. Moving from a culture that valued rationality, structure, and authoritative voices, our transitioning culture readily finds its meaning in relationships, personal truth, and a vague and fluid spirituality. We in the Church spend a fair amount of time denying the reality of this changed ministry context. Or, if we do recognize these changes we respond by retreating back to Christian education approaches applicable to a different context. It is time for renewed look at our educational assumptions and approaches.

Our increasingly relativistic culture challenges core assumptions of confessional Christianity. We can no longer assume that people look to the Church as the source of Truth. This new epistemology looks for and values multiple sources of Truth. The younger generations today only know an information world where they are a Google search away from contesting Truth claims. Immersed with information, youth and young adults increasingly selectively accept information that fits their

evolving personal understanding of faith and spirituality. The Church becomes yet one more contested channel of information to ignore or process.

The implications for the church, not surprisingly, are readily apparent in the lives of Americans today. Kosmin & Keysar (2009) reported that in 1990, 86% of Americans identified themselves as Christians. In 2008, the percentage of self identifying Christians declined to 76%. This same study reported that the greatest challenge to Christianity does not come from other religions, but “rather from a rejection of all organized religions” (p. 3). While the decline of mainline denominations is old news, the researchers found that since 2001 there has been a significant fall in the numbers. Reflecting the increasingly relativistic culture, the researchers found “that among the Christian groups the tendency is to move either to a more sectarian or a more generalized form of Christian identity at the expense of denominational identity” (p. 6).

Stepping back a bit more may be helpful to provide yet more context to our current challenges. While it may seem as if we are in uncharted territory, the Church does have a history of responding creatively, and at times, radically to its cultural context. In her recent book, Tickel (2008) explored the cyclical dance between a transforming culture and a responding Church that is evident through the past two millennia. According to Tickel, to understand the challenges and turmoil facing the Church today, it is essential to recognize that the broader culture is in the midst of resetting its epistemological bearings. This epistemological “do over” presents the church with an ongoing swirl of challenges and opportunities. While some may desire further dialogue about Tickel’s assumptions and resultant implications, we ignore the larger cultural context at our peril.

Another nuanced look back at the Reformation may help inform the Church’s response to the present day challenges. As Lutheran educators it is easy to view the changes brought about by Martin Luther and the reformers solely through our theological lenses. Unfortunately, we do this at the expense of a larger understanding of wider historical forces at work within this system. The Church, in the decades leading up to the Reformation, languished under corrupt leadership that valued the accumulation of wealth, abusive political hegemony,

and blatantly immoral pursuits over the spiritual care of its people. Local congregations were seen as profit centers rather than ministry centers. This context—with a people hungry for spiritual care—provided the larger context for theological and organizational reform. These reforms, empowered in part by wider availability of information through the invention of the printing press, reached all the way to families and their renewed role in faith formation. This call to structural reform and how to teach the faith through the family resonates today.

The reality is that families, especially parents, make daily choices within our fluid culture. Parents will tend to make choices that fit the vision and dream that they have for their family, and they almost always have the best interests of their child in mind. The Church can work to understand why families make the choices they do and then offer other viable options. Options like those that will lead families to understand the family's role in the faith nurture process along with making choices that will support that faith nurture.

Families are making choices in a culture that has become relativistic in thinking and behavior. The absence of the Church's leadership in providing meaningful

The Church can work to understand why families make the choices they do.

alternatives that meet the needs of families has created a climate where the culture defines the choices made by families rather than the historic options offered through the Church. The Church tends to reconstruct models developed in the early 20th century (e.g. graded Sunday School and/or graded Mid-Week Schools). The Church may place a new veneer that gives a temporary spark, but essentially, the model, adopted from the public school system, continues to predominate. Participation in these programs continues to decline as families go elsewhere to meet what they think are the needs of their family.

Alienation from the Church and decreased faith maturity are not far behind. Often the faith system remaining revolves around a Law rather than a Gospel orientation. As reported by Smith & Denton (2005) in *Soul searching: The religious and spiritual lives of American teenagers*, a work summarizing the early findings from the National Study of Youth and Religion,

the American form of religious formation produced a generation that describes faith in terms that are moralistic and that revolves around a therapy-focused construct of God; not in any way reflecting confessional Christianity. In a related study, 15% of older adolescents appear to be alienated from organized religion (Smith, Faris, & Denton, 2004). Interestingly, this same study found that two-thirds of adolescents closely agree with the religious beliefs of their parents. The question is: what beliefs are they learning?

The Church's response to these challenges often defaults to the tired schooling model of Christian education. But other approaches to Christian education do, and have for centuries, exist to teach the Christian faith. Seymour & Miller (1982), for example, offered the following typology of Christian education approaches: religious instruction, faith community, spiritual development, liberation, and interpretation. While a full exploration of this typology may be instructive, the key point here is the recognition that multiple and valid approaches of Christian education do indeed exist. Using this typology, the Church continues to rely primarily on the religious instruction approach to pass on the faith. The main goal of this approach, also known as the schooling model, is to transmit Christian beliefs and practices through structured learning environments. This approach does have tradition on its side and allows for control of the learning environment and information.

New approaches are needed in new times: old wineskins will not hold the new wine. Those involved in nurturing faith development need to come to grips with the fact that the paradigm has shifted, and, that the shift brings wonderful new opportunities for nurturing faith. Resorting blindly back to approaches that worked decades ago is no panacea. Those still advocating 20th century forms of Christian education within the schooling model look for answers from a model that speaks less and less to today's culture. Insanity, as attributed to Albert Einstein, is to continue to repeat the same activity while expecting different results.

The schooling model has lost its meaning, but a renewing school of Christian formation (that began with the reforms of Vatican II) began to spread throughout Christian faith communities. The formational model focuses upon the broader

perspective of instruction, education and formation with a shift from an exclusive classroom model to a formational model that involves whole life shaping and forming in the Christian community. This alternative, deliverable by the Church, is to do what we have historically done best, engaging people, gathered around the Word, in forming the faith through loving, caring relationships through the power of the Holy Spirit. The model, a renewing of the process of formation utilized in the early Church, offers a viable option to the schooling model so prevalent in the Church today.

The premise of the formational model is that faith is more caught than taught and that this “catching” happens through caring and loving relationships between one who is newer in the faith and one who has greater maturity in the faith. Thus, the formational model seeks leaders who demonstrate faith maturity and a willingness to work with others in the discipleship function. The formational model intentionally seeks leaders who may be equipped to take leadership in the formation of others, as well as working with adults within families who take leadership for faith formation for the next generation.

The primary location of the formational model is in the home. The formational model is a return to what Martin Luther intended when he wrote the Small Catechism on posters that were to be on the kitchen wall. The heads of the household then follow the premise of Deuteronomy 6 as the truth of God is written on their own hearts and then is taught to their children as the family sat around the dining table.

There has been a great concern, on the part of some, to preserve and rebuild the system of parish religious education built on the schooling model. The schooling model, based upon the development of public education in the early 20th century, focused the religious education process on an educational psychology model that included structured lessons and grade level divisions. Religious education took on the form of academics, and the movement worked hard to “professionalize” the lay teachers to make them more effective within the schooling model. This happened in both Lutheran schools and parish education agencies. The schooling model places a heavy emphasis on educational process and tends, in practice, to not place emphasis upon the formational aspects of faith formation.

Adoption of this model led to the development of Sunday School and Mid Week programs that looked much like the school classrooms (whether public or Lutheran) where students were living in the other days of the week. The schooling model provided some positive results over the years and attendance remained strong for about 60 years. The culture supported the concept, and, parents would be sure to have their children enrolled in a Sunday School or other religious education agency. In this process, the church moved the responsibility for faith formation from the home to the church school classroom.

Then, shifting cultural patterns that began in the 1960's put the schooling model to the test as families developed lifestyle patterns that conflicted with the Sunday School and Mid Week school pattern. Weekend family travel or shared custodial parenting resulted in children being in Sunday School only one or two Sundays per month. Mid Week school enrollment dropped as other activities took over family time. The schooling model began to show signs of disintegration as attendance patterns dropped in almost every denomination. Chandler (1992) noted that Church school participation in mainline denominations declined an average of 55 percent between 1970 and 1990. Not all of this can be attributed to demographics.

So what is the role of the Christian educator within this process? Osmer (1990), in his writings about the functions of the teaching office of the Church, believes the Christian educator plays a pivotal, but often underdeveloped role in determining the direction and scope of Christian education programs and learning environments. He describes that the one function of the teaching office is to explore appropriate and meaningful delivery systems for each generation. One test of a meaningful delivery system is the extent that learners grasp the norms and practices of the Church at a rich and personal level. An instructional model that worked for one generation may not work for the next generation; thus, the emphasis upon knowing the context in which formation is happening and working accordingly is necessary. Existing in this new era is the invitation to work with a model that is more in tune with the current culture.

As leaders look to move from one Christian education approach to another, questions arise about how to make such a seemingly radical change within a tradition-bound system.

One place to start with reframing our approaches to Christian education is to reframe, or at least reflect upon, our conceptual framework about how organizations function. Organizational change, in large part, flows from our operative metaphor for how organizations work. Our organizational metaphors provide us with a structure to interpret the present organizational environment and inform our view of the future (Morgan, 2006). For example, the “organization as machine” metaphor guides the leader to make certain assumptions about how to address problems and implement new programs. The machine metaphor helps leaders view people as replaceable or repairable parts to be replaced. The focus of this model tends to be more on inputs and less on organizational outcomes. If leaders operate out of only one metaphor they limit their capacity to creatively solve problems.

Quite often the metaphors we adopt remain unconscious and, as a result, remain unexamined. However, assumptions implicit in organizational metaphors limit an organization’s ability to respond to a changing world. For example, if we only view our organizations as an organism (a popular metaphor within the Church) we easily slip into a survival mode that focuses on doing only what it takes to survive as an institution. This metaphorical viewpoint also has the tendency to view outside forces as alien and worthy of attack. There is a tendency to defensively isolate the organization from its surround environment. Change through this metaphor comes only slowly and is fraught with hardship.

Metaphors are one tool that leaders use to reflect on their leadership constructs and to develop quality organizational decisions (Morgan, 2006). Within the Christian education environment it is critical that these decisions flow from the mission of the congregation. If our approaches and metaphors limit our ability to make disciples is it not time to consider new possibilities? It is time to pilot new models, new ways of thinking, and new Christian education initiatives.

The process of Christian education in the 21st century needs a model that focuses upon relationships. Those who lead the formational process ought to work with adults to help them become fully formed in the faith. Pastors, teachers, Directors of Christian Education (DCE), and other leaders who work with parents, grandparents, sponsors and other caring adults should

teach them how to walk in faith relationships with children, youth and adults who are new to the faith. In this relational ministry model, dialogue takes place as mentors gather in small groups to study Scripture and to focus upon the teachings and practices of the Church. The process includes prayer and discernment as formation happens under the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

In place of graded Sunday School that divides the ages, there is opportunity to have a congregational breakfast with discussion around faith topics or Scripture readings with discussion questions that can be done within the family and faith community. If the breakfast doesn't happen at the church, the questions can be handed out to families with encouragement to use them at home or at a restaurant. Whatever format the process might take, the process needs to be one that works relationally in the setting where the faith dialogues happen.

In this relational ministry model, pastors and DCEs will spend more time equipping spiritually mature leaders to be in homes so that they can sit with families around their table at home, lead family devotions and engage in faith talk. The pastor or DCE equips the spiritually mature leaders and the leaders, in turn, equip the families.

It is time for an approach that involves forming faith mentors who can walk with people who are new in the faith. It is the faith mentor who studies, prays and supports the faith journey of the new Christian of any age. For professional Called leaders, the shift is to faith formation and the training of additional leaders. Called leaders will benefit from coming to know and understand the process of faith formation that comes through the nurturing process.

The schooling model has seen its day. The renewing formational model fits the current culture in a meaningful and positive way that brings about the teaching of Deuteronomy 6, what the Church has seen historically as a meaningful way to pass on the faith through loving and caring relationships as the Holy Spirit works through those relationships. It is a new day that calls for a new style as the Holy Spirit leads the Church in the faith formation process through loving caring relationships between those with faith maturity and those who are new to the faith. **LEJ**

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DCE: Generalist or Specialist... Revisited

By Mark Blanke

I wrote an article entitled “DCE: Generalist or Specialist?” for the March/April 1995 edition of *Lutheran Education Journal* (LEJ). The premise presented in that article was that the DCE was both generalist and specialist. A “specialist” in that the focus of DCE ministry is specifically in the area of religious education and a “generalist” because we must make use of a variety of skills, some seemingly unrelated to education and which require some level of expertise, in carrying out Christian education in the church. So, the DCE who carries out religious education specifically aimed in youth ministry may find herself counseling a teen experiencing the death of a friend, managing a budget, coordinating a sporting event, writing a worship experience for use on a retreat, and publishing a monthly newsletter. This variety of responsibilities is one of the joys of DCE ministry, but perhaps it also poses a threat.

After writing the LEJ article I received more angry mail than for anything else I have ever written. The main theme in these letters was that I was being too narrow in my understanding of DCE ministry. Writers felt that DCE was their title, but it was their job to do whatever the church wanted them to do and that they may be a “DCE who doesn’t do education.” One writer indicated that I was diminishing his role in music ministry by saying that the 1.5% of the DCE population (in a 1990 study) who didn’t participate in parish education are “either not operating within a parish or they are not DCEs, despite the certification they hold.” (Blanke, pg. 197) He felt he was merely operating in the tradition DCEs have been known for—the malleable generalist able and willing to help the church wherever needed.

Today I believe even more strongly that the DCE is a religious education specialist first and foremost. Unfortunately, I have yet to see the clear emergence of the DCE as a religious education specialist in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod

(LCMS). I have not seen the DCE profession step forward to “claim” the responsibility of being *teachers* of the faith. I have seen the quality (and quantity) of religious education falter in our church body. I have seen the increase in the number of DCEs serving in our congregations and yet have not seen a renaissance in Christian education in the church. I have not seen the importance of religious education elevated as a priority in the church as a whole. Major educational ministries of our church—confirmation, Sunday school, Midweek, youth ministry, VBS, adult education—still have significant foundational problems that aren’t being addressed by DCEs in a way that enhances these ministries in the church as a whole. Many DCEs continue to deliver a “programming” model that we know doesn’t adequately equip disciples. We haven’t emerged as advocates for education in our church at a level of real influence. While it may sound harsh, from what I have seen I can come only to the conclusions that DCEs either do not own the understanding of themselves as educational specialists, do not have an adequate power base to influence change, or do not have the necessary operational expertise and dedication to effectively carry out transformational educational ministry.

Educational ministry in the church isn’t an option. Focusing resources to prepare disciples through education isn’t *adiaphora*. When Jesus outlined the Great Commission to his disciples, he told them to make more disciples by baptizing them and teaching them. We have a directive and it is clear: Teach people to obey what God has commanded so that they are able to carry out His work on earth. Why DCEs have been unable to elevate the importance of this ministry in our 50 years of existence is a mystery—perhaps it is because we have strayed from the role that we were intended to fill when our synod established our profession—that of a congregational Christian education specialist.

In 1959, the LCMS established the position of DCE. The resolution passed by convention reads as follows:

Whereas, The development of an organized and systematic program of Christian education is a necessity in every congregation; and

Whereas, Many congregations would benefit from the services of a director of Christian education who would assist the

pastor in providing the professional leadership for the Sunday school, Saturday classes, and other educational activities of the congregation; therefore be it

Resolved, That congregations be encouraged to analyze their parish education program and, where needed, to establish the office of “director of Christian education” in order to provide additional leadership for the educational program of the congregation. (Proceedings, pg. 224)

Another resolution was passed in 1962 which designated the two teacher training schools of the time (Concordia, Seward and Concordia, River Forest) as the institutions responsible for the training of DCEs. The choice of these two schools was not an arbitrary decision. “The question of the 1920s had finally been decided. Those best suited for DCE ministry came from a teaching background, not the pastoral background. This decision grounded the director of Christian education in education theory rather than in theology, an important determinant in how the DCE’s education would be constructed.” (Keyne, pg. 131)

It is obvious from reviewing these documents that the intent our synodical leaders had in developing the position of the DCE in our church body was to enhance the ministry of Christian education in our church. “So what?” some of you might say. “Things change.” “I can do multiple roles and not diminish my effectiveness or the perception the church has of DCEs.” “Shouldn’t our call to be servants supersede our particular focus on a specialization?” First and foremost we must retain the clear understanding that the church must carry out Christian education. We are not just risking some affront to our profession, we risk diminishing the importance of our task. History also provides some clues as to how a disregard for our role as religious education specialist might also risk our profession.

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In 1995, Lisa Keyne submitted her doctoral dissertation entitled “Who do you say that I am? The Professional Identity of the Director of Christian Education in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod.” In it, she identified six characteristics that

needed to be present for an occupation to be considered as professional. The characteristics were: a common theory base, a distinctive culture, a code of ethics, involvement of the professional school, clarity of function and mission, and power. Dr. Keyne concluded that DCEs did not have enough power to make decisions about their future and, therefore, could not be considered fully professional. I believe that, because so many of us see ourselves as generalists, we also fail to fulfill the characteristic of having clarity of function and mission. Too many of us fail to aim clearly at our role as Christian education specialists, and that hurts our profession.

In a review of the history of the Minister of Education (M.E.) in other denominations (it is interesting to note that Stubblefield (1993) says that jokes about the initials “M.E.” often focus on the M.E. as “ministers of etcetera”), Stubblefield writes of a period of decline that took place for M.E.s starting during the Great Depression, referring to this as the period of “Disillusionment and Despair.” This decline was partially due to a lack of a clear understanding of the work of religious education. Stubblefield states, “They [church leaders] expected the director to be involved in areas of the church that did not relate to educational training or specialization” (Stubblefield, pg. 28). He goes on to state that “the educational minister has always struggled with being required or assigned duties other than education...once additional duties were added to the educational duties, it became almost impossible to escape from them...” (pgs. 29, 30)

In speaking of the perception of M.E.s today, Stubblefield states that, “Many M.E.s are seen by their pastors, the church and themselves in roles other than that of educator.” (Stubblefield, pg. 166) He attributes this misperception to the fact that M.E.s oversee work in areas other than education and, further, stresses that we should heed a warning made years ago by W.L. Howse (n.d.) who cautioned that, “care must be taken in enlarging the supervisory activities of the minister of education so as to not weaken his opportunities for maximum service in his major field.” (Howse, pg. 7) Emler (1989) states that the DCE is a professional who is “in a specialized ministry of the church. The specialized ministry is the field of religious education in which the framework is education rather than religion or theology.” (pg. 83)

In essence, our synod has developed a system of rostered

positions that is predicated on an assumption of specialization. The “alphabet soup” of those in public ministry in our church has grown dramatically in the past 50 years. DCEs, DCOs, FLMs, Lay Ministers, Deaconesses, LTDs, Parish Assistants, Parish Workers, DPMS, all are eligible for rostering within our church body. The intent behind the development of each of these positions was to fill a specific congregational need, to provide an individual with specialized preparation to carry out specific ministries.

What does a fractured commitment to the role of Christian education specialist look like? It is first and foremost found in a diminished commitment to the art and science of being an educator. As counter-intuitive as it may seem, the so-called “soft science” of education may be a much more complicated endeavor to master than the “hard sciences” of physics, chemistry, and the like. Education attempts to manage a process that is as complicated, and unpredictable, as the people it seeks to serve. Researchers and academics spend careers trying to understand every minutia of how to best manage the educational experience. This has been going on since before Socrates, and yet we remain but novices in our efforts to master the mysteries of how to educate. How to educate is indeed a daunting task, but add to that the primary responsibility of the DCE to use education to help make disciples—to help facilitate the process of sanctification that is Spirit-led, unable to be measured, and not truly completed until one receives their final reward—and one can truly see how challenging is the role of the religious education specialist. DCEs who add responsibilities outside of their calling as religious education specialists risk diminishing the difficult task of doing education effectively. For example, if a DCE is asked to assist the pastor in leading the congregational worship experience, he should consider doing so provided he felt like he had fully mastered the role of religious educator and could continue to effectively develop disciples while focusing on these other significant responsibilities.

Too many in our church (including DCEs) see education as an art, a gift that some have and some don’t have. They fail to also see the science behind the educational role, a science that demands our undivided attention and dedication—no matter how gifted one is as an educator. Often times, while other educators focus professional conferences and in-service efforts

on enhancing personal teaching skills, DCEs will often focus on a broad range of learnings more or less related to congregational ministry. At a recent professional DCE conference, only six of the sixteen sectionals focused in any substantive way to enhancing educational competencies.

Of much more importance than the risk that we take on our profession by ignoring our primary role as Christian education specialist is the risk that we take on the mission of the church by diminishing the church's effectiveness in the task of preparing disciples. We shouldn't fear the possibility of sinking our profession into a state of "disillusionment and despair," we should fear that our inaction may lead to a church body that is even less effective in fulfilling the Great Commission.

Chaucer wrote, "The life so short, the craft so long to learn." This reminds us that we all need to continually focus on improving how we ply our craft—our vocation. DCEs who are asked by their congregations to move to a more generalist role need to ask themselves, "Do I practice my craft (carrying out religious education in the parish) adequately enough to devote energies towards an additional ministry area?" The need in our church for competent Christian education specialists has never been greater—my prayer is that all DCEs are seeking to enhance their competencies first and foremost in this vital role—the generalist responsibilities are of a lesser concern. **LEJ**

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DCE Ministry 2009: Is It Time to Face the Tides of Change?

By Jim McConnell

Paying close attention to current trends seems to be vital to the success of most organizations and in most occupations in today's world. Marketing and advertising show us what we all need in order to work and live in the 21st Century. In business, trends can boost profits or—more recently—serve as the harbingers of potential financial disaster. Investing time and attention to trends in planning and production can greatly affect how preparation for the future. In the field of education, however, we often seem wary of new programs or trends and often stick with the “tried and true” traditional format that has worked well for us in the past. What about DCE ministry? Have we sought to read and research trends we are seeing and hearing about in parish education and youth ministry in order to equip our current and upcoming DCEs with the best preparation for the times?

According to Dr. Lisa Keyne (1995) in her dissertation titled *Who do you say I am? The professional identity of the Director of Christian Education in The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod*, The Reverend William H. Luke, hired to serve the LCMS as Superintendent of Sunday Schools, encouraged the Board of Parish Education to consider promoting the DCE profession. Luke emphasized that this position would complement the pastor's ministry by emphasizing the educational ministries of the church which, at that time, included Sunday School, weekday school, summer Bible school, Saturday school, confirmation, Walther League or young people's society, as well as men's and women's groups. (Keyne, 1996) Luke, however, died in 1932 at age thirty-six from Hodgkin's Disease and, for many years, this proposal fell on deaf ears.

In 1959, some twenty-seven years later, the convention of The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod finally, formally approved the creation of the position. Congregations engaged

full-time professional educators to help them plan and oversee comprehensive, high quality programs for children. As the baby boom generations matured into adolescence, a youth emphasis and culture emerged. This trend gave impetus to the “birth” and growth of the DCE profession. In many instances DCEs became identified more as being “youth workers” than as educators. (Griffin, 1995) While there were definite attempts to clarify the role of the DCE and promote the new position after its approval, many issues developed that confused the identity of the DCE. Early DCEs did not have position descriptions and many serving in this role did not use the same title, leading to considerable ambiguity. In addition, since this was a new occupation, there were no “pioneers” who had served long term providing a “map” for the profession and its membership. Was DCE ministry a transitional position, leading to something else?

When the Synodical convention of 1962 approved Concordia, River Forest and Concordia, Seward as the institutions to equip and train DCEs, the faculty of these schools approved curricula for the preparation of DCEs. Those programs required a bachelors degree in education, completion of student teaching, a major or minor in religion, and a parish internship. In 1969, Concordia, St. Paul developed a program that did not require the student to obtain a teacher’s certificate which led to significant implications for future DCE training. As Concordia Portland, Concordia Irvine and Concordia Texas joined the group in offering DCE training, an agreement of providing a “Generalist” degree emerged from the six universities, seeking to clarify the professional preparation and role of the DCE. Yet today, many of the same questions confronting DCE ministry at its inception 50 years ago, still go unanswered today. I am not inferring that DCE ministry has not made headway in being recognized as a vital profession in our Synod. However, my question is, have we worried for too long about defining DCE ministry into a “black and white” statement that we can all agree on? Or, perhaps the beauty of our ministry is that we are constantly morphing and changing, depending on the need of the congregation and culture of the times.

I have been a DCE for over thirty-two years, with twenty-three of those years serving in the parish as a DCE. As I have re-read several articles written by my predecessors over the past three decades about DCE ministry, I am amused that they read

somewhat like the agendas of a church council, for example, I observed in my last parish that we seemed to review church policies every five to seven years. We'd look at our wedding policy, our constitution and other business issues and make changes. Some of those changes are minor; others were major and required months, if not years, to accomplish. We then complied without much thought until, some five to seven years later, we'd revisit them.

Without appearing offensive, I would like to suggest that we have done the same with many issues relating to DCE ministry. We made changes to clarify a DCE definition ten years ago in an attempt to define exactly what a DCE does. Many of us in the academic field of DCE ministry have completed research on our profession; what does or doesn't make it a profession; what roles and sub-roles we fill; how satisfied DCEs are in ministry and how likely are they to leave; what our training and certification as a DCE looks like and, recently, a study on the career path of a DCE. Yet, what have we really done with that information except file it away only to review it, perhaps, some years later. In the end, we have the same questions we did some fifty years ago. Can we live with these questions? My concern is that we have allowed these unanswered questions to become the center of our attention, while the crucial issue of preparation for ministry to meet the demands of the world today and DCEs for tomorrow, should take center stage.

“The church, as a boat, must move... ahead of the tide.”

All of this information has helped form the framework of *who* we are, but we must also be aware of *what* is occurring in congregations today, *what* is being planned for the future which must include being prepared to embrace the future. As Leonard Sweet (1999), author of numerous books on evangelism and church growth states, “the church, as a boat, must move not against the tide, not with the tide, but ahead of the tide.” So what does that mean for DCE ministry?

While we worry about the issue of “alphabet soup” (DCE, DYM, DFL, FLM, MYE), job titles that are very different and which depend on the congregation and who occupies them, perhaps we should rejoice in the diversity and flexibility that our

ministry possesses. In those 23 years of service as a parish DCE, I was never called a DCE. While my differing job descriptions included parish education and youth ministry, my roles and sub-roles changed about as often as my hairstyles, depending on my congregation and its needs. I never really worried much about whether I was fulfilling the definition accepted in 1999. In fact, being in the field, I really didn't even know such a definition existed. I was grateful, however, that my ministries offered me a chance to try new things and embrace the changes of the 1970's, 80's and 90's, as well as the diversities of the various geographical areas in which I served. On the other hand, I am not so sure that I really knew how to address these changes and, in fact, most of that learning occurred through trial and error. While I was, and continue to be, thankful for my Concordia education and training in DCE ministry, it didn't, and perhaps, could not have fully prepared me for the future.

If we know that change is inevitable and will affect our ministry, perhaps we should address some of the past and present trends, in hopes of being better prepared to get ahead of the tide. One such trend is that of the gender issue in DCE ministry. While the traditional role of the DCE grew out of the tradition of male teachers in the LCMS who were expected to provide leadership in worship, including preaching when the pastor was away or during a vacancy, this was never expected of female DCEs. Consequently, one runs the risk of assuming that all women DCEs are expected to lead the Sunday School and children's ministry and can only fill a portion of the roles of a "real" DCE. In addition, the female DCE may face the decision and/or choice of marriage and a family or continued ministry, while those options are never either/or choices for the male DCE. While the field will continue to struggle with the hierarchy of tasks within the profession of DCE that separates male from female, it is important to know that in our Concordia University system today, 60-70% of the students training to be DCEs are female. What might this mean for our Synod and local congregations in the coming years? It is a trend that we are seeing, but haven't chosen to address. How do we move ahead of the tide on this one?

There are also many "myths" of DCE ministry that continue to plague us as we enter our 50th year. Some of the more prominent

ones that have survived the past years are that “most DCEs are in their twenties/DCEs lose their effectiveness once they turn 30,” “once a female DCE gets married she leaves ministry,” that “‘good’ DCEs go on to bigger and better positions after seven to ten years,” “male DCEs are ‘pastoral wannabees,’” “DCE ministry is a young person’s gig” and, finally, “DCE ministry isn’t a life-long career.” So, shall we deal with these issues and get ahead of the tide? An upcoming study on the career path issue will, hopefully, give us more insights into these issues, but perhaps the only way to end such myths, if that is possible, is to stay the course and prove these myths to be exactly what they are, questions that have become irrelevant and detrimental inaccuracies about our profession. Perhaps instead of telling our students only about the roles and sub-roles and ministry definitions, we need to address these misconceptions and prepare them with the truth. Ministry is hard and often misunderstood by many people whom we serve. Yet, it is not worth giving up. Perhaps a resurgence in our commitment to become a truly “professional” organization will provide avenues of information. While we can become angry because people don’t understand what we do or why we do it, let’s begin to educate them and become the “myth-breakers” that can help redefine who we are as DCEs.

An issue that has been becoming more significant over the last decade is the need for additional training in the area of contemporary music, multicultural ministry and ministry to marriages and to singles. These first two needs arose in a study by William Karpenko (1997) and the other two by DCE John Elmshouser (2000) in a field study that he conducted. These four areas also were listed as needed competency skills in research that I conducted in 2004 of DCEs actively serving a Lutheran congregation. It seems apparent that these trends are current today, and while contemporary music and ministry to marriages and singles are addressed in the curriculum of most DCE preparation schools, the additional fact remains that the world of today is one of diversity and multiculturalism. The DCE today needs classes in World Religion, diversity, communications, evangelism and ethnic relations to relate to and minister to our congregations and a pluralistic society. This trend is one that is here to stay and yet we seem to be more in a whirlpool of what to do, rather than riding with the tide or ahead of it. However,

this too, could perhaps be an easier “fix” by the revision of core classes in the DCE program. Yet, where do we stop when it comes to what is expected of a generalist versus a specialist?

That question leads into what expectations should one have for a student who enters his/her first call as a DCE. As stated earlier, all of the six universities that offer DCE training have agreed to graduate a generalist—a lifespan educational leader. While some of the schools offer specializations or emphases, the general education core is just that: a generalist preparation. With future DCEs facing such diverse needs in their ministries—youth ministry, parish education, mission outreach, family ministry, children’s ministry, music, and multi-cultural—is it

Can we truly become a missional church and allow these DCEs to teach our laity to model this ministry approach?

time to suggest that a minor or specialization be a requirement of all students? While there is disagreement about the value of such a suggestion, it seems apparent that these needs are being clearly stated by our churches and DCEs are often asked to take on leadership in

areas where they have no training or experience. Has the time come for a curriculum revision to address the current trends in our culture so that we can be fully prepared for ministry in a pluralistic society? Instead of a focus on being a generalist with some training in all areas, perhaps we should consider bi-vocational or multiple specializations that incorporate worship, technology or business to support those specific needs in a congregation.

Have we also considered that ministry might be best accomplished to our culture outside the church? I had three students change their major last year to behavioral science. When I asked why they decided to change, all three gave me similar answers: “Because we want to help hurting people and hurting people don’t go to church.” Should we be addressing the trend of preparing DCEs for a possible career in social services or social ministry to reach out to an unchurched, hurting world and those who may not be entering our church doors? Can we truly become a missional church and allow these DCEs to teach our laity to model this ministry approach? Another approach

might be the old “worker priest” model where ministers held a job in the community yet also served the congregation as their pastor. While these models are rarely used today, perhaps the cultural demographics and trends are giving us the opportunity to re-create and revitalize models that may be very applicable to a pluralistic society.

Another issue of importance to DCE ministry and current trends is what appears to be less of an emphasis today on the “divine call.” Because more DCEs have a specialized field, there seems to be more interviewing being done by churches today to make certain that these workers have the right personality and drive to be effective in ministry. The ability to recruit numbers for attendance and the charisma of the individual are often as important to some congregations and leaders as whether or not the individual feels truly “called” to serve God in this place. The same is true of congregations seeking a DCE intern. Many church leaders want the right to interview the individual before the intern placement to be certain of a good “fit.” While I do understand their concern about getting a proficient candidate, the DCE directors in the CUS system spend four years in teaching and assessing these students. Who better to place a student with a congregation after careful visitation, deliberation and prayer than the director? Can a thirty-minute interview take precedent over years of relationship building and mentoring? At the same time, some churches don’t realize the importance of the internship process and the value of a mentor pastor who teaches, models and practices the tremendous privilege of serving God in a congregation. After all, the best pastors were once on a vicarage, too.

Of very current interest in a hurting economy is the possibility of training DCEs to serve multiple congregations or to be employed by a District to become a consultant to several churches to keep the volunteers and staff accountable to doing the ministry. While some interns have been placed in dual parishes, such a trend may develop as a means to address issues for smaller congregations in a specific geographical area or at the circuit level to address their growing needs in some districts. While it might not be the model for many DCEs, perhaps it would open doors for the experienced DCE or one who wants to spend more time as a facilitator or equipper than a “doer.”

While there are many others issues that could be discussed regarding current trends and practices that affect DCE ministry, where does all of this lead? It is easy to find fault with systems and practices yet, easier still, to continue to do what we have always done. I am happy to say that over 1800 individuals have been certified as Directors of Christian Education since this ministry “officially” began 50 years ago. As in any other profession, some have left, some have moved to other areas of ministry, and many have remained. With changes in our culture and world, this ministry is needed more today than at any other time in our history. Yet, like any other profession, change is inevitable. Let us face the *next* fifty years as a Church ready to get ahead of the tide. We might need to row pretty hard for the next couple of years to overcome the currents of resistance, but with determination and creativity we can pull ahead and embrace this change as an opportunity to recreate ourselves and fulfill the Great Commission in new and challenging ways. **LEJ**

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Go ... and Teach! DCEs—The Lifespan Educators

by Jane Buerger

The DCE Ministry turns 50. This is indeed a milestone for our church. I hate to say that I can remember a time when Directors of Christian Education were a fairly new phenomenon. Until I joined the faculty at Concordia University Chicago, I hadn't had much experience with DCEs. Except for a few months in the mid-1970s, I've never belonged to a congregation that had called a DCE, and that one experience—in Houston, Texas—involved a DCE who was called to serve four small congregations, all at the same time.

Two DCEs, Dr. Deb Arfsten and Professor Kevin Borchers, are faculty members in the Department of Christian Education, which is part of the College of Education here at Concordia. They are a true blessing to the College. So for that reason I'd like to devote this column to Christian education—Christian education that happens in the congregation but outside the traditional classroom. Specifically I want to consider the Lutheran education that can and should happen in the home.

These days we hear about crises in the American family structure because of internal factors such as the rise in the number of single parent homes, the rise in the number of homes with same sex parents, and the general over-scheduling of both parents and children. Added to that are external factors: crime, drug and alcohol abuse, and the current economic realities. Public educators recognize the importance of early education in the home. They encourage parents to read to their children and to take time to sing songs and play games. In the same way, Lutheran educators should be encouraging and providing support for parents to teach their children about the love of Jesus.

In the first chapter of his collection of essays, *A Teacher of the Church*, Dr. Russ Moulds asks the question, "Who is a teacher of the church?" (This essay also appears in *Lutheran Education*,

141.3). This essay and the entire book provide many topics for reflection, especially for those who work in the schools, the early childhood centers, the elementary and secondary schools, the colleges and universities of the Church, but in the opening chapter Moulds claims that teaching the church is a community role (p. 4). Later he writes, “We hope to encourage those who serve in some practice of teaching *in the church* to serve also as teachers *of the church* (p. 6). I would like to suggest that the category of *teacher* should be expanded to include all those who are primary care-givers of children. For simplicity I plan to use the word *parent* when writing about these care-givers although I realize that the complexity of today’s family structures mean that children are often raised by grandparents, step-parents, foster parents, and other individuals. So I am suggesting that these parents consider themselves to be teachers—teachers of the church. Leaving religious education to the schools or the church means relinquishing a role that is established and commanded by God (Jahsmann, pp. 25-26) and that can lead to true joy and personal spiritual growth.

Understandably, some parents may feel reluctant or uncomfortable about talking about religion in the home, especially if their own childhood did not include devotions, prayers, or “Jesus-time” with the rest of their family. They may feel that such matters are better left to pastors, trained teachers, or others who are better educated in theological matters.

The truth is that all Christians have the responsibility to teach others. The Great Commission, “Go therefore, and make disciples of all nations [including children]...teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you...” (Matt. 28:19-20, NKJV) was first given by Jesus to His followers, but the words speak to all Christians in all places, for all time.

The specific responsibility of parents to provide Christian education in the home has a strong basis in Scripture and in the teachings of the Lutheran church. Moses made this clear when he explained the first commandment to the Israelites, “[T]hese words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up” (Deut. 6:6-7, NKJV). This passage also shows that teaching in the home is an activity that occurs throughout the day, not just at meals or

before bedtime.

Psalms 78 includes several commands to teach the Lord's commands to children "that the generation to come might know them, the children who would be born, that they may arise and declare them to their children, that they may set their hope on God, and not forget the works of God" (Ps. 78: 6-7, NKJV). The book of Proverbs also contains a number of passages that show the value of a parent teaching a child (for example, Prov. 1:8-19, 4:1-9 and 20-23, 13:1, 22:6, and 29:17).

The Scriptures contain a number of references to teachers. Perhaps the best known example of teaching in the home is the one provided by Timothy's grandmother Lois and mother Eunice, who shared a sincere faith with St. Paul's future partner in ministry (2 Tim. 1:5).

Martin Luther reminded parents of their responsibility to educate their children through the study of Scripture and the catechism. It is interesting to note that, although parents were to lead the study of the catechism as part of the home devotions, the father was not set up as someone who had all the answers. He was to be open to the insights of even the youngest child (Harran, p. 218-220).

A presentation made by Professor William Ewald at the 2008 Lutheran Education Association Convocation in Minneapolis included evidence of the impact of growing up in a home where religion was a part of the daily routine. Ewald's paper, "Life in the Teacherage: Growing Up as a TK," included excerpts from interviews and questionnaires filled out by approximately twenty-five "TKs" (teacher's kids) who grew up in homes where one or both parents taught in a Lutheran elementary school. Ewald reports that "in many cases, the children learned positive lessons about life" from their teacher parents. When asked "What were some of the positives and negatives of being a TK?" one respondent wrote the following.

The most important positive aspect was having a father who constantly taught me that Jesus loves me. He taught me little songs (in German and English) and told me stories. Those are wonderful memories.

Other individuals remembered table prayers and looking through books of Bible stories. Ewald reports that, in spite of the economic hardships experienced by many teacher families, many of the children entered the church's teaching ministry as a

result of the positive example set by their parents.

Anderson (1999), in writing about the research conducted to explore the role of church and family on the development of a child's spirituality, reports that many parents leave the responsibility for the teaching of religious beliefs, conduct, and commitment to the churches. Research also indicates, however, that the effect of the education that a child receives in church is significantly enhanced or inhibited by the examples set in the home. A child may receive excellent instruction in a parish's Sunday school, but if the child is dropped off at the church by a parent who goes home to read the newspaper, the value of the instruction may be minimized by the behavior of the parent. On the other hand, if the parent parks the car and attends (or teaches) Bible class, the child is more likely to see value in Sunday school.

Directors of Christian Education have been described as lifespan educators, commissioned ministers that coordinate educational opportunities for parishioners from birth to the end of life. Although some of our DCE candidates do earn an elementary teaching certificate as part of their undergraduate program, the responsibilities of the DCE include the educational opportunities that the congregation provides for all its members. The congregations would do well to consider sponsoring workshops or classes where parents of young children could come together to share ideas for teaching their little ones about their loving Savior. **LEJ**

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Administrative Talk ... Martha the Principal

By Glen Kuck

I'm guessing here, but it seems to me that Martha had more principal-like qualities than her sister Mary.

You remember the story. Jesus retreats to Bethany, away from the public eye, to visit his beloved friends Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. Mary seizes the moment and sits at Jesus' feet to take in all she can from the Master. Martha, meanwhile, realizes that the visitors will need to be fed and made comfortable. She won't have time to idly sit and listen. There is work to be done. Soon she becomes resentful of her sister's lack of concern for being a good hostess. She walks up to Jesus and vents, "Lord, I'm swamped with work. Tell Mary to get to work. She can listen to you later."

If this story was transposed into a modern day school setting, it might go like this: Principal Mary listens attentively to the speaker during the chapel service. She stays after chapel to talk to the students and share her love of Christ with them. Her smile and concern for the kids help them better understand what it means to be a part of the Kingdom of God.

Principal Martha also hears the chapel speaker at her school. But her mind is on the myriad tasks that await her. Her schedule is tight. The state lunch report is due, she has a meeting at 11:00, there's a parent who's displeased with her child's teacher, and the copy machine isn't working again. When chapel ends, Martha quickly directs the students back to their classrooms so she can get to work.

Modern day Martha isn't a bad person. She's diligent, efficient, well organized, and hard working. She simply allows anxiety to crowd out opportunities to do the most important thing.

Modern day principals aren't bad people either. They work hard and want to do the things that make their schools the best they can be. However, sometimes they allow their anxieties to crowd out opportunities to do the most important thing.

A principal's mind is filled with worries. What should I say to the angry board member? Where will we get the money? Are the students learning enough? What if our enrollment falls?

When Jesus visited His friends in Bethany, He sensed the anxiety felt by Martha. He gently, compassionately said to her, "Martha, Martha. You are worried and troubled over so many things, but just one is needed. Mary has chosen the right thing, and it will not be taken from her."

Jesus' words to modern day Martha, and to us, might be something like this: "Principal, principal. You're missing the point. I know you've got a lot to do, but you're allowing anxiety to rob you of the joy of life in Me. Seize the moment; nurture yourself and the kids. Learn with them and share what the peace of the Lord really means."

The word *anxious* comes from a Greek word that means to be divided or distracted. In the case of Martha, her anxiety over the hunger and well being of her visitors distracted her from the chance to be near the Lord. In the case of principals, our anxiety over the responsibilities of running a school often distract us from doing those things that bring us, and others, into a closer relationship with the Lord.

Anxiety and worry are insidious. We know they do no good. We know they are senseless. They eat away at us. Yet we think it's part of our job to worry. We may even feel guilty when we sense that we aren't worrying enough. Someone once noted, "Worry is the interest paid on trouble before it is due." When we worry, we believe more in our problems than in God's promises. Worry betrays a lack of faith.

Martha worried too much. Yet, I must admit, I like Martha. When Jesus came to visit, she didn't convene a meeting to decide who would be in charge of preparing the meal. She didn't wait to form a committee. She didn't ask for someone else to volunteer. She just started working. Every school needs a Martha.

Principals are in charge of getting things done. They are busy people. They can't afford to waste time. They have to keep things on schedule. They need to be Martha-like. Except, that is, when their concern for getting things done becomes a distraction. Or, when their anxiety about a situation robs them of the joy inherent in working with God's children.

Principals are in wonderful positions to do things that bring

glory to God. There is meaning to their work. Their efforts aren't in vain. The long hours they invest in their schools aren't wasted. They have the privilege of working in His kingdom. It's not that they've "got" to do things, but rather, they "get" to do things that bring others closer to their Lord.

Being a principal allows the opportunity to combine the best of the two sisters: Martha's desire to serve the Lord and those who follow Him, and Mary's ability to see what was most important and to prioritize accordingly. **LEJ**

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Secondary Sequence ... “Elevating” the Mission of a Lutheran High School

by Kevin Dunning

But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect... 1 Peter 3:15

Despite the recent emphasis in education on teaming and collaboration, teaching remains a fairly insular activity. The focus that teachers have on their students may have this adverse impact: failure to see a bigger picture. As this is written, one Lutheran high school is closing and another school is delaying a plan to grow a high school. A number of Lutheran elementary schools face critical financial situations that could result in closure. Those schools employ teachers who never expected that layoffs would be part of their vocational path.

With the economy in distress and non-public school education falling into the category of disposable income, it is imperative that every teacher becomes an ambassador for their school. It is not enough that the chief administrator can speak on behalf of the ministry. Individual encounters teachers have with parents in the grocery store, Wal-Mart or church can be as critical to keeping or recruiting a student as SAT scores or athletic team success. Even more directly, every chance to interact with a current parent provides the opportunity to earn his or her endorsement for another year. Teachers who believe that public relations are not part of their job description are likely to be looking for a different job sooner rather than later.

That last statement may offend. Lutheran school teachers are in ministry; it is not just a job. While true, that attitude masks an increasingly harsh reality. If Lutheran schools cannot function as successful businesses, the opportunities to do ministry in a school setting will vanish; salaries cannot be paid, books cannot be purchased, the

lights get shut off. The task of spreading the Gospel remains, but the opportunities to do so in a school will be gone. Teachers relish the prospect of small class sizes that optimize individual attention. When most Lutheran High Schools have less than 200 students, administrators are vexed by budgets which become unbalanced when even a single student transfers.

Successful Lutheran schools are mission driven and future focused (spiritually and fiscally). Do you know your school's mission statement? Do you have an "elevator speech?" Can you tell anyone who asks why he or she should send their children to the Lutheran High School in their community? Do you know what your school does well? Do you know what your role is in improving your Lutheran High School?

Mission statements can be useful, but only to the degree they are bold, informative and can communicate the distinctiveness of a school. Schools whose mission statements feature "nurture" words may have checked the mission statement off the "to-do" list, but they have missed an opportunity to make a strong testimonial to the community. While mission-critical, simply telling people your school is Christian or faith-based is probably insufficient. In most places large enough to support a Lutheran High School, other Christian schools are present, and they are looking to maintain or build their student bodies as well. The number of places is diminishing where being distinctively Lutheran is an asset. It cannot be coincidence that in recent years the largest and fastest growing Lutheran High Schools minister to an increasing number of non-Lutherans.

An individual teacher may not have much influence over the school mission statement, but identifying three powerful words that encapsulate the distinctiveness of your school is good preparation for those moments when you are called to speak for your school. Once identified, these words can also form the outline for your elevator speech. An "elevator speech" is a brief, well thought-out explanation of the mission or purpose of your school. It answers the questions "What's different about your school" and "Why should I send my student to Lutheran High?" It should be brief enough that it could be delivered in about the amount of time you might spend in an elevator.

Thinking about an elevator speech sharpens your focus. It enables you to communicate quickly what makes your school

distinctive and worthy of parents making the sacrifices necessary to pay tuition. Most importantly it provides the opportunity for you to reflect on your role in fulfilling the school's mission. It can be a personal statement: "I teach at Lutheran High because..."

Lutheran schools change lives. They provide a fertile environment for the Holy Spirit to sanctify the redeemed and inspire faith in the lost. Teachers play an important role insuring that our schools have the students to survive and thrive. **LEJ**

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Today's Lutheran Educator ... DCE Ministry—A History of Growth

by Jonathan C. Laabs

Happy Birthday, DCE Ministry! God has richly blessed those who have served so faithfully in a calling that has been formalized with the title Director of Christian Education through the past 50 years. How the ministry has grown. Christian education at all levels has been a hallmark of our Church since Martin Luther boldly declared that “young pupils and students are the seed and source of the church.” Always with the goal of supporting the nurture of children in the home, congregations have used a variety of methods for equipping parents to study Scripture, discussing its application to the lives of family members, and laying a foundation for a faith-based life. The ministry of education quickly became more formal for youth and adults as well, and the Church took an active role in providing leaders for this purpose. It was natural that the role of DCE become an important part of the public ministry.

While defined and organized through the higher education institutions where training and supervision of emerging DCEs began to take place in the early years, support for DCEs in the field could be found at the district level, from the Synodical office, and through various formations of organizations along the way. In the early 1960s, a group called Pastors and Education Directors Association (PEDA) laid the groundwork for what was to become an ongoing entity dedicated to the support of DCE ministry through the next few decades. To formalize the position of an organized group in the Church, a move was made in 1966 to join Lutheran Education Association (at that time almost 25 years old) as the Department of Pastors and Directors of Christian Education (DPDCE). The relationship among many areas of Lutheran education ministry was highlighted within the professional organization, where professional development, visionary leadership, and team

ministry could be emphasized.

As an understanding of parish ministry and school ministry developed over the years, so grew the need to emphasize the relationship among those who served in the growing number of ministry capacities. In 1973, the LEA department DPDCE changed its name to Theological Educators in Associated Ministries (TEAM) to better reflect the inclusive nature of those in education ministry at the parish level. The acronym stood the test of time. Memberships multiplied as DCE ministry was more formally recognized throughout the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod and DCE preparation programs increased their numbers. Many who were not full-time DCEs also found benefit from the many resources and events that were planned and implemented through this branch of the broader professional organization. Team ministry was exemplified by the comprehensive planning approach taken by LEA leadership and as represented by visionary department leaders at every level of Lutheran education.

During the first years of the new century, LEA moved to a new organizational structure and began operating under a system of policy-based governance. The traditional department structure evolved to a system of networks to more specifically address the changing needs of Lutheran educators. In 2001, it was decided that the emphasis on certified DCEs necessitated a name change, and TEAM became DCenet, the name still used today as a network of LEA.

Through the many highlights and challenges of DCE ministry during the past 50 years come the promises and hopes for the future. What lies ahead for those who serve as DCEs in so many capacities throughout the world? Organizational structures, names, and titles come and go. Positions and job descriptions run their course and change in response to need. At the center of all areas of Lutheran education ministry is the unchanging Word of God and His love for His servants. May those who minister to His people and serve Him as Directors of Christian Education continue to feel God's continuing love for them.

It's time to celebrate! **Happy Birthday, DCE Ministry! LEJ**

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Multiplying Ministries ... DCE Spells PRC: Reflections on 50 Years

by Rich Bimler

Blessings and congratulations to all who have been involved in fifty years of DCE ministries to individuals, families, congregations, districts, and all people, young and old. What a ride it has been...and what a future to behold. And, congratulations also to all of you who have been blessed by a DCE through these years.

I still remember, so long ago, when I could not even spell D-C-E...and then I became one. I remember when my Mom found out I had chosen the Youth Ministry/DCE career path, over 48 years ago, and she remarked, as only Mom's can remark, "That's nice, but what are you going to do when you get older? You just can't play with the kids your whole life."

Little did Mom know then that the DCE Ministry would grow and flourish and bring new life to many congregations and communities throughout the country. And little did Mom know that there still is a huge need for adults and kids to continue to play together, and pray together, in all that we do together.

The DCE Ministry has developed into a strong, active, cutting-edge, focused ministry for children, youth and adults, in congregations and communities. Even though this ministry may still struggle now and then with a focus, an identity, and even with a comprehensive name (Is a DCE a youth worker, a teacher, a minister to families, an assistant to the pastor, a non-classroom teacher, or what?) one thing is sure: the DCE ministry has brought wholeness, focus, energies, excitement, questions, and affirmation to thousands of God's people of every age.

That's why I'd like to suggest that the term DCE can be explained and identified with three additional letters: P, R, and C.

P means *Proclaim*

The strength and calling of all ministry positions is the Proclamation in Jesus Christ. DCEs and others have continued to proclaim the Truth of God's Word and have continued to emphasize Word and Sacrament as the focus and message of the Church. The early developers of the DCE position saw the basic need in training men and women through a theologically-based curriculum. Sure, teaching techniques, community building, counseling skills, process knowledge, are all necessary tools for DCEs, but the real emphasis in developing and enabling DCEs is a strong core in theology and Biblical studies. DCEs are called to Easterize others as they relate and celebrate their faith with people of all ages.

R means *Relate*

With a strong and sound theological base, DCEs can then focus on relating and communicating this faith through word and deed to those around them. Like other church work professionals, DCEs need the "people skills" in order to rub ministry shoulders with others around them. They need to be positioned in congregations where they are seen as Relaters of the faith to all people, and not just to children, or middle schoolers, or adults, or older folks, but to all ages. It is very difficult to relate to a teenager in a vacuum. What is needed are the opportunities to bring that teenager in ministry range of others in the family and congregations, through a person such as a DCE.

One of the many blessings I had while serving as a DCE was to have a pastor and other staff around me to encourage and provide me with opportunities to be involved in the total ministry of the congregation. I was able to be visible through worship services, connected with the women's groups, invited to the pre-school classes, teach Sunday School teachers, become aware and involved in community service projects and also to be tied into district and synod opportunities and events. My role became one of encouraging, enabling, and equipping others for ministry while I was being encouraged, enabled, and equipped myself. And that's what ministry is all about.

C means *Celebrate*

I love the banner that reads, Until Further Notice, Celebrate

Everything. That should be the mission statement and focus for all DCEs. If there is anyone in this world who has something to really celebrate, it is each of us, because we know that Christ Jesus continues to love, forgive, and empower us for ministry to others. Now that's something to celebrate.

This is not to deny the challenges and a sense of a lack of hope that surrounds us. Rather, this is the way to deal with these challenges and a sense of hopelessness because we know how it all turns out. Jesus Christ is alive in us. He lives. And He continues to love and excite us for the ministry that He has called us to do, with the gifts He has given us.

Through these fifty years of the development of the DCE ministry, there have been many discussions about the "identity" of the DCE. Who is she, really? How does he fit in? What is the focus? And I, for one, have had my share of these experiences as well. However, as I look back in my DCE rear view mirror, I would need to surmise that even though these identity issues were and are necessary and revealing, the key to any ministry is not to get stuck on the Who am I as a DCE, question but rather to emphasize instead the Who am I as a person or God, and What am I doing to share and celebrate my faith with those around me? For DCEs, as well as all church work professionals, the old adage still applies: "It's not about me...it's about Him."

DCEs, as well as the whole church, have much to celebrate and affirm as we give thanks for fifty years of DCE ministries. Perhaps some of the best ways to continue the celebration for the *next* fifty years would be to:

1. Celebrate your Calling each day, if you are a DCE.
2. If you have a DCE in your congregation, take her/him out for lunch...or at least to St. Arbucks. Be a friend and support person.
3. Continue to encourage young people to consider full-time church careers, whatever their exact title or position may become.
4. Enable DCEs to be involved in the total ministry of congregations. Encourage them to become involved in continuing education ministries like KINDLE.
5. Help people of all ages to keep playing and praying together, with or without a DCE.

And above all, continue to Proclaim, Relate, and Celebrate

your faith in the Lord each day. These three aspects of a DCE's position is not their role alone: It is the focus of all of God's people.

Thanks Lord, for the ministry of DCEs around us. Help them, and us, continue to Proclaim, Relate, and Celebrate together as we Easterize the world. **LEJ**

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A Final Word ... The DCE at 50: Celebration and Challenge

by John F. Johnson

Anniversaries are wonderful events in life. Whether they be milestones in the life of a marriage, benchmarks of birth, years of service in a particular vocation, commemorations of the founding of an organization, or a congregation, anniversaries evoke a time of reflection, celebration, and thanksgiving to God for His many blessings. As this issue of the *Lutheran Education Journal* underscores, such is a time for celebration for those engaged in the ministry of Director of Christian Education in our church body. It was in 1959 that the Director of Christian Education was granted roster status and formally acknowledged as true ministers of the Gospel. Congratulations to all who serve in this capacity! We celebrate your lives and your ministry after 50 years of official existence in The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod.

To be sure, the task of education in the Church predates the ministry of the DCE. Indeed, education in the congregation is a part of the very mission of the church. In His final instructions to His disciples, Jesus mandated that they proclaim the Gospel—the good news of God’s love and to “teach all things.” In that sense, education is integral to all that the Church does. Learning happens in a variety of ways in the context of congregational life. People learn through worship, through interrelationships, and through a variety of experiences both in and out of the congregation. Christian education certainly is not a separate arm from anything else that happens; it is very difficult to find anything that is not Christian education in the church. And yet, professionally trained educators intentionally build learning experiences that help the whole people of God grow in the faith—those teachings, values and traditions that define a community of believers. Christian education is at the very heart of the church and educators are at the heart of what a congregation is. How blessed we are as a church to have professional Directors of Christian

Education to lead both young and old in becoming what God intends them to be.

But anniversaries are not merely nostalgic occasions for looking back at the past or even dwelling on the present. Anniversaries are reminders of challenges yet to come in the years ahead. This is true of the 50th anniversary of DCE ministry as well. As the colleges and universities of the Church prepare a new generation of DCEs—and here at Concordia University in River Forest we have trained some 400 of them—new issues abound. For instance, when one says “Christian education,” people often think “programs.” But programs are only vehicles; more important are goals and direction. Programs must serve purpose and direction and even those that have been a part of our tradition for so long cannot go unchanged. Or, when one says “Christian education,” people think curriculum which one has to go through or they think classroom when in reality the enterprise of Christian education extends far beyond that. In today’s culture one cannot even assume that the DCE is communicating the truth that needs to be taught—one needs to understand the questions before going to the answers and DCE ministry in our post-modern world may be radically different than it was half a century ago. These are just a few of the challenges in store for the future.

Fifty years of God’s grace to a crucial ministry of the Church is cause for reflection and celebration, most especially for God’s promise of presence and guidance for the future. **LEJ**

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