

MISSION POSSIBLE!

Are Schools the New Church Plant?

One of the momentous moments in my life was going to a Lutheran preschool. It altered the direction of my life. My family grew up active Southern Baptists. As I young kid, I didn't get the emotional reactions to the Word of God in the preaching. It was puzzling and intimidating. I would sit in church with my head on a swivel, waiting for the next adult to be overwhelmed by the Holy Spirit and taken out back by the ushers. This led me to tell my mother I was done with the church because, for a kid, the anxiety was just too much.

My mother honored my request, but she also enrolled me in a Lutheran preschool. The first day of school started with a chapel service. You can imagine the anxiety returned, but there was something different. There were absolutely no emotions. I joke with my Lutheran friends, I convinced my mother that Lutheranism was for me because it was devoid of emotion. What it did for me was allow me to hear the Word of God. I do not mean this as a critique of my Baptist folks. This worked for me because it helped me to hear the Good News more clearly.

I genuinely cherish Christian day schools. Schools are facing an uphill battle these days. But I wonder if they are turning a corner. The culture is creating an opportunity for parents to reassess Christian education.

Getting Back to the Base

Is this the time for churches to consider offering a Christian education? Is this the new church plant model that will attract young families? When I think about the Church, it is family-centered. If the church can take advantage of that need in our society today, we might connect with families feeling that sense of connectedness. I would encourage you to explore your community, especially with young families in your area, and see if there are like-minded families who share common values, hopes, and dreams for their children. This may start with building a like-minded community with the end goal of leading people into a richer relationship with Jesus and His Church in Word and Sacrament.

The Research

A Barna research study shows: The family continues to be the institution that most defines us. Family is ranked by American adults as more central to their identity than any other surveyed factor (i.e., being an American, faith, ethnicity, etc.). Over six in 10 (62%) also say that family plays a significant role in their identity ("a lot"). But this is changing generationally. Only slightly more than half of all Millennials (53%) say family plays a significant role ("a lot") compared to over three-quarters of Elders (76%). Despite these shifts, parents are taking their task of character building seriously. Self-control, patience, fairness, and conflict resolution are some virtues being discussed daily between parent and child.^[1]

Schools provide an opportunity for churches to use those formative years to serve the community. One question to wrestle with as a church blessed with a school is: How can we use all our resources to minister to the entire family?

Conclusion

One easy shift is to talk less about the families you have lost and ask more questions about what parents need in these changing times. What you may discover is the start of a new ministry opportunity. You may uncover common needs in the community. Parents are looking for help with character formation. Other communities have a desire for spiritual formation. In diverse neighborhoods, English as a second language (ESL) is critical. Millennial parents may connect with reverse mentoring, where different generations pour into each other. It is not rocket science; it requires us doing more listening than talking.

In the Service of an Awesome God,

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“LET US KEEP AWAKE”

People today are influenced by many errant worldviews. The next *Making Disciples for Life (MDFL)* conference, set for Oct. 10–12, 2022, in St. Louis and online, will focus on providing resources that equip Lutherans to faithfully respond to the challenges and opportunities of proclaiming God’s Word to people who have been deceived by these worldviews of our culture.

The theme for this *MDFL* gathering is “Let Us Keep Awake,” based on 1 Thessalonians 5:6. Presentations will focus on three main subject areas: awake as witnesses, awake for our slumbering neighbors and confessing Christ in a world asleep.

In-person registration

The in-person portion of the conference, which will be held at the LCMS International Center in St. Louis, is limited to 100 participants. [Registration, which is \\$69 per individual, includes meals and snacks.](#) Attendees will also have access to view recorded sessions for 60 days after the conference ends.

Online registration

Online participation is unlimited. [An online registration, which is \\$29, can be used by an individual, couple, family or group.](#) Registration provides access to view recorded sessions for 60 days after the conference ends.