



Wake DISCIPLES



BAPTIZING & TEACHING



Resources and Ideas for
Renewing the Lutheran
Catechumenate

Spring 2003

Introduction

How do you instruct someone in the Christian faith who has never heard of Moses, or King David? Where do you begin with the person whose only knowledge about angels has been learned on the television show, "Touched by an Angel"? And what do you do with the person who gives you a bewildered look when you begin to explain the Ten Commandments?

We live in a world that has undergone radical change in the past generation. Some have labeled it the "post-Christian" age. No longer can we assume that the visitors who enter through the doors of our churches will have any familiarity with the Christian faith. It's a new world, one filled with both opportunities and challenges.

In many ways, our world today is remarkably similar to another time in the church's history. During the earliest centuries of its existence, the church faced a hostile world. And after the persecutions ended and the church was permitted to open its doors, it found people who were curious yet totally clueless as to what the people of God believed, taught, and confessed. In response, the early church developed an intentional model of instruction and formation in the Christian faith. That model is known as the catechumenate.

The Catechumenate

In recent years, a growing number of church bodies have begun to introduce the catechumenate. Based on ancient models developed in the third and fourth centuries, the catechumenate offers the modern church an intentional process by which new Christians are brought into the church.

In its fullest form, the catechumenate looks quite different from the practices of instructing new members that most of us grew up with in the church. Among those differences are the following:

■ Sufficient time.

In many congregations, instruction for new members is minimal. Attend classes for four or six weeks, and you're done! Some even condense this instruction into a single weekend retreat. The catechumenate, in contrast, encourages sufficient time in order to pass on the great truths of Holy Scripture. In addition, it discourages a one-size-fits-all approach. The catechumenate is especially concerned for the person who has no church background whatsoever, and therefore provides ample

time for this person to learn the great stories of the faith and to become informed concerning the teachings of the church.

■ More than just the "pastor's class."

In the great majority of our congregations, the instruction of new members is carried out almost exclusively by the pastor. In contrast, the catechumenate encourages a broader participation by the congregation, including lay catechists (teachers) who assist the pastor and sponsors from within the congregation who give their guidance and support to the candidates throughout the process.

■ Integration into the life of the congregation.

In many congregations, the instruction of prospective members is done with little or no awareness by current members of the congregation. The instruction takes place quietly between pastor and new members until the Sunday when they appear before the congregation for baptism or confirmation. In the catechumenate, the candidates are regularly acknowledged by the congregation. On several occasions they actually stand before the congregation to receive the church's blessing and encouragement.

This publication has been sent to all active pastors, Directors of Christian Education (DCEs) and Outreach (DCOs), certified lay ministers and deaconesses. If you know anyone who has not seen this publication but would benefit from it, please share your copy with them or point them to the commission's Web site where the document is located: <http://worship.lcms.org>

The Model in Detail

The modern catechumenate was recovered first by the Roman Catholic Church with its publication in 1973 of the *Rites for the Christian Initiation of Adults* (RCIA). In the past decade, a number of Protestant church bodies have adapted this model. In its complete form, the catechumenate consists of four distinct phases:

PHASE 1:

Inquiry

This phase is the most informal part of the catechumenate. This is the time for people new to the Christian faith to ask their questions. Very often lay catechists lead the discussion in this phase. When an inquirer is ready to move on to a more disciplined study, she participates in a public rite of welcome into the catechumenate.

PHASE 2:

Catechumenate

This phase begins a more intense time of instruction. Usually, it is lectionary-based, meaning that the chief biblical texts under discussion are those appointed for use in the weekly service. This is also a time to begin introducing the candidates to the teachings of the Small Catechism. This phase concludes with a public rite at which the candidate states his desire to be baptized or to profess publicly his faith.

PHASE 3:

Preparation for Baptism

The third phase includes the most intensive instruction in the teachings of the faith. Beginning a number of weeks before Easter, it once served as the origins of our season of Lent. During this time, the candidates appear before the congregation at several Sunday services in order to receive the blessings and encouragement of the congregation. This phase culminates in the baptism of new Christians at the Easter Vigil, that ancient Easter Eve liturgy at which new Christians were regularly baptized. Now, for the first time, they receive the Lord's Supper together with the rest of the congregation.

PHASE 4:

Baptismal Living

The process continues with a period of continued instruction and formation following the baptism or confirmation of the candidates. This is a time to learn what it means to be a baptized Christian and how this impacts one's life in the world. This time concludes with a final rite, an Affirmation of Vocation, at which these new members of the church are sent out into the world with prayer and a blessing.

Opportunities for Flexibility

With only a cursory glance, it should be evident that the catechumenate is a significant undertaking, requiring participation and support from both pastor and congregation. A congregation should not embark on this course without careful planning and the long-term commitment of all involved.

Precisely because it is so comprehensive in scope, many congregations might easily be deterred from giving serious thought to implementing the catechumenate in their setting. This would represent, however, a lost opportunity, given that there are many features of the catechumenate that could be incorporated into the congregation's existing program of adult catechesis. **For example:**

- Many congregations could assign sponsors to new members who enter the church.
- In congregations where there are gifted lay people who have studied the Scriptures and are apt to teach, they may be used as lay catechists to assist the pastor.
- Since all our congregations observe Lent, why not make this a time of intensive instruction and renewal, not just for prospective members but for the entire congregation?

After several years, a congregation may find that it is ready to move on and implement other components of the catechumenate, eventually developing a local model that incorporates much of the catechumenate.

Of course, a number of congregations already use various components of the catechumenate without calling it by that name. If anything in this model is new, it is the way in which it intentionally places the process of reaching new members before the worshiping congregation. Through its prayers and blessings for the catechumens, the congregation slowly begins to see itself for what it really is: a baptizing community.

Conclusion

There are already congregations in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod using the catechumenate to one degree or another. The intention of this publication is to make you aware of this process and to give you some ideas on how your congregation might adapt the catechumenate for your local setting. Included in the pages that follow are comments from some who have studied and are using the catechumenate, resources that can be used in your congregation, and some specific scenarios that describe how you might implement components of the catechumenate in your congregation.

St. Paul Lutheran Church

Hamel, Illinois



St. Paul Lutheran Church, Hamel, Ill., is a rural/suburban church of 700+ baptized members. While Hamel was once predominantly a farming community, it has become a bedroom community to the St. Louis Metropolitan area. St. Paul's is served by a sole pastor with the help of a vicar; it also supports a parochial school for 80+ students with its sister parish, Trinity Lutheran Church.

The catechumenate was established at St. Paul as a way of integrating new Christians and members into the life of the parish. Each Sunday morning a Bible class is available for anyone who is interested in attending. Taught by a lay person, this class examines the weekly readings that are used in the service. People interested in becoming Christians or in being confirmed may join this class at any time. Those who express a desire to be baptized or confirmed are then enrolled and welcomed into the catechumenate. They are assigned a sponsor. In addition to the Sunday morning class, which they continue to attend, they also begin attending the pastor's class, where they are introduced to the Small Catechism as their prayer book for daily living. After baptism or confirmation, classes continue for several weeks as participants consider more fully the gifts that God gives in Word and Sacrament.

Robin Steinmann Catechumen

The catechumenate is a wonderful way to smooth the path for someone who is seeking answers and direction toward the church. It offers a safe place, a small group to belong to, to feel comfortable asking questions and learning about the church, doctrine, beliefs and the Bible. Having a sponsor gave me someone to talk to, someone to encourage me, and to ask questions of if I was



uncomfortable in a larger group. There were many times that we shared things about ourselves in the small group that we would never have opened up to in a regular Sunday Bible class.

Our catechist was very knowledgeable (and an excellent teacher) and understood very well the role of a catechist. If there was something that we were struggling over, the catechist asked the pastor for more information and insight.

Crystal Wagner Sponsor

When I first heard about the catechumenate, I thought it was a great way to bring new people into the church family. When our pastor asked me to be a sponsor, I no longer thought it was such a good idea. Like many people, I felt inadequate and feared I'd be asked a question I didn't know the answer to.



I met Robin at our first class and we took to each other immediately. We talked about everyday life in addition to church life. I started the classes thinking I'd be "helping" Robin to learn about why we do the things we do as Lutherans, but soon I found that I had just as many questions as she did. When she'd ask me questions, it was interesting to look at my own church through the eyes of someone who was not raised in it.

William Weedon Pastor

The catechumenate has helped focus our congregation on outreach. Our members are more comfortable inviting friends when they know that there is a place for them to be welcomed and to learn more. Remembering the catechumens in the Prayer of the Church each week and welcoming them in the



Divine Service has helped assure that everyone knows who these new people are so that they can give them a hearty welcome. The use of a lay catechist has been a tremendous blessing. Many people seem to think that a pastor is not quite normal! They open up better in the small-group setting with another lay person like themselves. They share their heartaches and fears and joys and are delighted to discover that in the Scriptures God speaks to them!

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church

Smithfield, Rhode Island

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church in Smithfield, Rhode Island, is a young congregation of 15 years. It began as a mission congregation of St. Paul's in Providence. The initial membership of 30 people has now grown to over 400. The congregation, which is served by one pastor, holds two services each Sunday.

Several years ago, Our Redeemer changed the way it brings new members into the church. The previous approach was built around a six-week course on Christian doctrine. That has been replaced by 16 weeks of instruction, half of which is taught by the pastor and the other half by several elders. When new people express an interest in joining the congregation, they are immediately assigned a sponsor who walks with them through the entire process. The prospective members are welcomed into the congregation's catechetical program. During the four years that this process has been followed, nearly 100 new members have joined the congregation, and about ten adults have been baptized.

Aimee Debiasio Catechumen

I became a Lutheran Christian by first calling around to different churches. Eventually I spoke with Pastor Nichols, explaining that I grew up in a Reformed Jewish home. I went through the classes and was baptized at the Easter Vigil in March 2002 along with two other adults.

The Catechism Class was very informative, helpful and supportive to my beginning Lutheran Christian experience. The class was presented in a very open and relaxed atmosphere where I felt free to ask questions. I felt at ease with the other students and made friendships. Pastor encouraged this. The class helped me learn as a Lutheran. I also read through the entire New Testament soon after my baptism. It is a growing experience, and I look forward to serving Christ through my new church family.



Robert and Diana Blazek Sponsors

We have been fortunate enough to experience the program at Our Redeemer both as new members and as sponsors.

The key to the whole program is the pastor getting to know a prospective member and then matching that person with someone in the congregation with similar interests and life situations. The relationships that have grown out of our experiences have spread beyond the four walls of the church. The folks that sponsored us live in the same area as we do and have been very supportive and helpful. The couple we sponsored have become some of our closest friends. We share many things in common, including our church backgrounds as well as personal experiences. We have been able to minister to each other. They have since moved out of state, but we remain close friends. We also think the sponsor program helps the members of the church take on some of the responsibility for welcoming new members and helping folks feel comfortable.



Larry Nichols Pastor

I believe that the assigning of sponsors to prospective members has been a tremendous blessing to our congregation. Not only does it aid those who are new to Our Redeemer but it also serves to build a stronger community among those who are already members. Likewise, the use of elders as catechists has been of great benefit to me. These men are able to share their faith with the catechumens while demonstrating at the same time that you don't have to have formal instruction or be ordained in order to teach others about the Christian faith.



Bethany Lutheran Church

Naperville, Illinois

The American culture is changing rapidly around us. We now live in a post-Christian world." This came home to the pastoral staff at Bethany Lutheran Church and School, Naperville, Ill., two years ago when a woman named Rosemarie came to visit the pastor at the suggestion of her co-worker. She announced to the pastor that she was a spiritual seeker. She had grown up Roman Catholic and in the last 20 years had tried spiritual solutions as diverse as meditation and theosophy (a version of new age thought). Through private instruction and time in Bethany's former adult instruction model, Rosemarie was brought into the church. People like Rosemarie are the reason Bethany is changing the way it catechizes adults.

Bethany is a large, suburban congregation in a fast-growing community on the outer edge of the metropolitan Chicago area. The 2,500 souls of Bethany are served by three pastors, full-time directors of music, youth, and family life, and a large faculty for its parochial school of 360 students. There are four services each weekend.

In 2002, Bethany began to transform the way it instructs adults in order to follow more closely the catechumenate model of the ancient church. The catechumenate at Bethany is offered in two cycles. One starts in the fall and the other in the winter. Each cycle passes through a penitential season (Advent in cycle 1 and Lent in cycle 2) giving candidates the opportunity to reflect on the seriousness of their pending confirmation. Each cycle also culminates on a church festival of renewal and rebirth (The Baptism of Our Lord in cycle 1 and the Easter Vigil in cycle 2).

So far at Bethany, we have initiated the following parts of the catechumenate:

Reading of the Chapter

This is an informal time once a week of reading consecutive chapters from one of the synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke). Designed for those just beginning to think about spiritual matters, the Chapter is very much inquirer-driven. There is no set agenda of doctrine to be taught. It is simply a time for reading the Word of God and then answering the questions of the inquirers.

Catechumenate Vespers

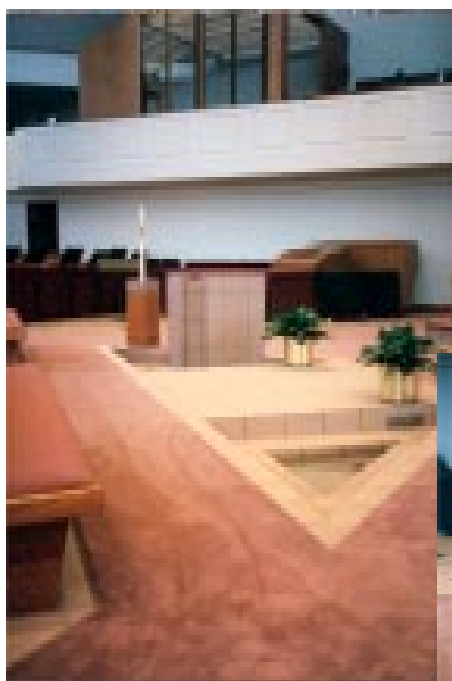
This 20-minute service is held every Wednesday night after the reading of the chapter and just prior to the catechumenate classes. Seekers from the chapter reading are invited as well as the those who have already entered the catechumenate. Bethany has also begun scheduling more church meetings and a LifeLight session just after Vespers which now has anywhere from 30 to 60 people in attendance.

Catechumenate Time

This is the time of formal instruction by the pastor occurring after the catechumenate Vespers. The Small Catechism is the chief text for the instruction. People who have attended the chapter sessions and are now ready for more in-depth instruction are welcome to enroll.

Catechumenate Dinners

Currently, a special dinner is served once a month, using a rotation of active and inactive members to prepare the meals. The purpose is to give members of the congregation a chance to share table fellowship with the catechumens. Eventually these dinners will be held every Wednesday night during the two cycles of the catechumenate.



Water flows from Bethany's three-sided baptismal font (symbolizing the Holy Trinity) into a stream below. Communicants cross over the baptism stream each Sunday as they approach the altar to receive the Lord's Supper.

In the future, Bethany will add other components of the catechumenate, such as the pairing of catechumens with sponsors. In addition, inquirers will be brought before the congregation for two significant moments: a "rite of welcome" by which inquirers are invited to continue their journey, and an "enrollment into the catechumenate" for those who wish to begin the formal preparation leading to baptism or confirmation.

Maureen Kintz Catechumen

I attended one catechumenate dinner and was very happy to get to know members from the congregation. I am very pleased with how much emphasis Lutherans place on explaining the Word of God. I've also noticed and appreciated how the Vespers service relates to the chapter reading. The Scripture reading used in Vespers is taken from the chapter reading for that night, and the prayers during Vespers' included the various groups that were meeting at the church that evening.



Dave Bodenstab Member

I recently took early retirement from the telecommunications industry in order to travel and devote more time to church. I have been to each of the catechumenate dinners and plan on attending them regularly. I really appreciate the dinners. Since I am a single member of the congregation, it's one less meal that I have to cook. Seriously, though, it dovetails nicely with the Lifelight

Bible study that I attend. Being single, it's sometimes easy to feel left out of church activities that so often focus on families with children. The catechumenate dinners are a great place for single members to meet prospective members and long-time members as well.

I also appreciate the Vespers service right after the dinner. It gets people used to the idea

that church isn't just for Sundays. It gives you a feeling of church as a home.



Bruce and Sue Hansen Members

We joined Bethany during the past year. We were some of the first members asked to help out with a dinner and have also attended the other dinners. We were glad to do it. We are relatively new to the congregation and were looking for ways to get to know others. We also appreciate the Vespers service. It serves as a nice bridge between Sunday mornings. It is good to spend time in the sanctuary with God and the members of his body.

What's nice about this program of receiving new members is that it involves other members of the congregation. It's a good message to send to the confirmands that the congregation is interested in them.



Resources for Teaching the Faith

Welcome to Christ

These three volumes were produced in the late 1990s as part of a Lutheran study of the catechumenate. The first volume provides an overview of the development of the catechumenate. The second gives direction on how to establish a catechumenal program. The third volume provides various rites for use in worship. (Please note that the Commission on Worship is currently developing several catechumenal rites for the new hymnal.) \$8.50 each.

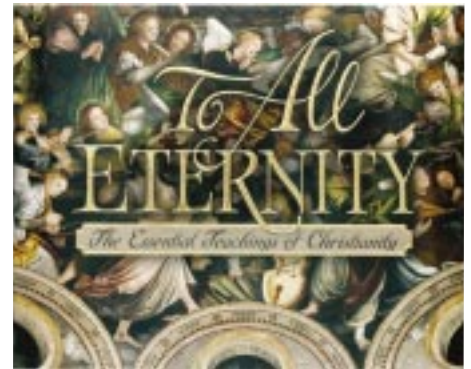
- A Lutheran Introduction to the Catechumenate (36-0301 LCB)
- A Lutheran Catechetical Guide (36-0302 LCB)
- Lutheran Rites for the Catechumenate (36-0303 LCB)



To All Eternity

This devotional edition of Luther's Small Catechism is literally a work of art. Each section of the catechism is illustrated with fine artwork (from the medieval era through the 20th century). Included with the catechism text and artwork are devotional articles on each topic and suggested Scripture readings with devotional questions for each day of the week. *To All Eternity* includes all six chief parts of the catechism, as well as the daily prayers and table of duties.

CPH 14-2126 LCB \$19.99



Luther's Small Catechism

Since the Reformation, Luther's questions and answers have been the primary text for teaching the Christian faith in the Lutheran Church. Printed here as a handy pamphlet or booklet, it can fit in a pocket or Bible. Ideal as a gift to both adult and youth catechumens.

Pamphlet CPH 22-2433 LCB \$1.75

Booklet CPH 22-2432 LCB \$3.50
(package of 12)

Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation

Even during his lifetime, study editions of Luther's Small Catechism were published. The synodical catechism, as it is sometimes called, has assisted millions of people in delving deeper into Luther's questions and answers. It also includes descriptions of the Lutheran confessional writings, the church year, and a topical index.

Pamphlet CPH 22-2332 LCB \$6.50



Readings: A Lectionary Study

This lectionary-based study focuses on the Gospel readings in the three-year lectionary. For each Sunday of the year there is a one-page study that provides context for the reading, questions for searching out the meaning of the text, application to worship, and a closing prayer.

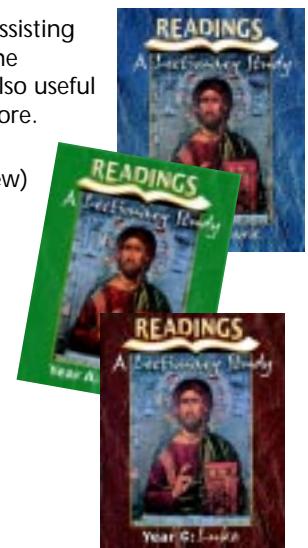
Readings is a helpful resource for assisting catechumens to dig deeper into the principle reading of the day. It is also useful for anyone who wishes to learn more. Reproducible.

CPH 22-2886 LCB (Year A: Matthew)

CPH 22-2869 LCB (Year B: Mark)

CPH 22-2887 LCB (Year C: Luke)

\$16.75 each



Luther's Large Catechism

This study edition of the Large Catechism includes several hundred study questions to this classic text of Luther. It is ideal both for class use and for personal study.

CPH 14-2021 LCB \$7.00



Reproducible: What does this mean?

Several of the resources on these pages are described as reproducible. This means that a congregation or individual, having purchased a single copy of a reproducible resource, has permission to make as many copies as needed. Whether a class is attended by two or 200, copies can be made without additional payments to CPH.



Living Luther's Catechism

This resource provides a fresh look at Luther's Small Catechism, demonstrating how the ageless truths of Holy Scripture apply to our lives even today. It contains 52 one-page devotionals based on the six chief parts of the Small Catechism and can be used either individually or in small groups; reproducible.

CPH 20-2723 LCB \$10.50



Dying to Live: The Power of Forgiveness

In this book, Harold Senkbeil explores how Christians are conformed to Christ through death and resurrection in Holy Baptism. While thoroughly Lutheran in content, the book is devoid of theological jargon, making it ideal for those who are new to the faith. It is also an

excellent resource to give catechists a deeper understanding of the faith.

CPH 12-3225 LCB \$14.99

Living Scripture's Story

Similar to Living Luther's Catechism, this resource provides 52 one-page devotions based on key stories in Holy Scripture. This resource is ideal for catechumens whose knowledge of the Bible is limited. It serves to increase biblical literacy as well as demonstrate how God is at work in our daily lives; reproducible.

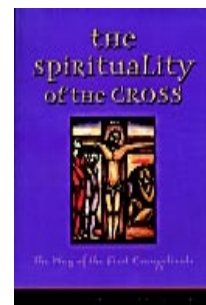
CPH 20-2724 LCB \$10.50



The Spirituality of the Cross

This book by Gene Edward Veith presents an autobiographical description of the Lutheran faith. It focuses on our understanding of the theology of the cross, with an emphasis on the sacramental life.

CPH 12-3371 LCB \$8.99



Short Story Bible Study Series

Author Donald Deffner has written short stories that lead to a deeper understanding of biblical truth. Topics include forgiveness, thanksgiving, loneliness, servanthood, trust, pride, parenting and more. These stories are ideal as discussion starters for use with inquirers. CPH. \$5.50 each.

- The Perfect Couple
(Study Guide: 20-2413 LCB;
Leader's: 20-2414 LCB)
- The Bright Red Sports Car (Study Guide: 20-2415 LCB; Leader's: 20-2416 LCB)
- The Unlocked Door and Other Stories (20-2620 LCB)
- The Secret Admirer and Other Stories (20-2621 LCB)



Meaningful Worship

A Guide to the Lutheran Service

This book, written by James Brauer, is an excellent introduction to Lutheran worship. Following two introductory chapters, the Divine Service (Service with Holy Communion) is examined in 11 brief chapters. Each chapter concludes with suggested readings from Holy Scripture. The book concludes with a helpful glossary of worship terms.

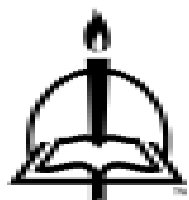
CPH 12-3223 LCB \$9.99



Above All Else: What the Bible Teaches

This 80-page book contains a brief summary of Christian doctrine and could serve as an ideal reference resource for lay catechists.

CPH 22-2550 LCB \$8.00



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www.cph.org

Where do I go from here?

The resources listed here are described on pages 8-9 of this brochure. While there are other resources that will work as well, these are suggested here to give you an idea of how they might be used.



Perhaps you're wondering what you're supposed to do with all this information! Your days are already too short and the stacks on your desk too high. The last thing you need is another program.

While your congregation could adopt the catechumenate as a new program for receiving adults into your congregation, it doesn't have to be that complicated. As the preceding comments from members of three different congregations demonstrate, the catechumenate lends itself to a great deal of variety and adaptation.

What follows are a number of scenarios describing situations that exist in many of our congregations. Perhaps one of these approximates your current situation. The suggestions that are given are by no means the only way of responding to these challenges. They are provided, however, to give you a sense of how various aspects of the catechumenate can assist your congregation in being more intentional in leading the unchurched to the waters of Holy Baptism.

THE PRESENT SITUATION

A husband and wife in your congregation have both been active over the years, teaching Sunday school and maybe even a few Bible classes. They love to teach and interact with people.

A First Step

Ask this couple if they would be willing to open their home for a weekly class designed for people who have some interest in church membership but have been reluctant to take a first step. This might include recent visitors, spouses of current members, and other acquaintances of members. Make it clear both to the class leaders and participants that this class isn't necessarily leading toward church membership; rather, it simply offers them an opportunity to explore the Christian faith, asking questions and searching together for answers.

Resources

Suggest to the leaders that they use one of the Short Story Bible Studies. They might describe the various topics that are covered and ask the participants which ones they would like to cover.

THE PRESENT SITUATION

Your congregation has not baptized or confirmed many adults in recent years, though everyone knows that the opportunity exists. Informal discussions have been held among the elders and others about the possibility of developing a more intentional approach to reaching out to new members.

A First Step

Bring together key leaders of the congregation to study the catechumenate. Be sure to include a wide representation, including several elders and board of education members, one or two from the Sunday school staff, and representatives from other organizations in the congregation.

Resources

Order copies of the *Welcome to Christ* series. You might assign different individuals to report on the various chapters. Take time to understand the process and then consider ways in which the catechumenate might be introduced into your congregation.

THE PRESENT SITUATION

You have several Sunday school and Bible class teachers who enjoy teaching but would like to be better informed.

A First Step

Invite these teachers to meet with you regularly (not necessarily every week) to study together. While your immediate goal will be simply to equip these teachers more fully, another outcome may be the training of future catechists in your congregation.

Resources

You might consider using *Dying to Live* as a discussion starter. Down the road consider the possibility of using the Large Catechism or the Augsburg Confession. A simple resource like *Above All Else* might be given to each of the teachers as a handy reference resource.

THE PRESENT SITUATION

A young man, Jim, has visited your congregation and expressed interest in learning more. He is new to the area and has no family nearby. Meanwhile, you have a young man in the congregation, Frank, who worships regularly and enjoys meeting new people.

A First Step

Invite Frank to be a sponsor for Jim. Ask Frank to sit with Jim in worship and to join him in whatever catechetical class you have. Encourage Frank to be available to talk regularly with Jim, to answer any questions he might have about the Christian faith, and, in general, to encourage him.

Resources

You might provide Frank with a copy of *Meaningful Worship*, to give him a deeper insight into how we worship as well as ideas on how to help Jim become more familiar with our worship practices.

THE PRESENT SITUATION

Your congregation currently offers a 10- to 12-week adult instruction class. You can't really envision making major changes at this time, but you would like to provide something that would enrich the class members' experience.

Resources

Consider having the congregation provide copies of *To All Eternity* for each of the participants. Following each week's class, invite them to read the pages that correspond to the topics that were covered in class. Encourage them to examine the artwork, and consider using some of the artwork during class sessions in order to draw them into the discussion.

THE PRESENT SITUATION

You have just concluded a new member class and would like to integrate the confirmands into an ongoing life of worship and religious instruction.

A First Step

At the conclusion of the class, invite the participants to continue meeting in order to continue the conversation that has just begun. If you have a lay catechist, you might ask that person to lead the group.

Resources

There are a number of resources that could be used for this ongoing instruction. If you want to broaden their knowledge of Holy Scripture, you could use *Living Scripture's Story*. Or you could review the essential teachings of the Christian faith using *Living Luther's Catechism*. Again, *To All Eternity* would be a wonderful resource to place in their hands with its high quality artwork illustrating each section of the catechism. The book *The Spirituality of the Cross* would also be a good choice.

A Word of Encouragement

We would probably all answer the question "Can our congregation improve its ministry of instructing new members?" in the affirmative. There's always room for improvement. That is the purpose of these pages—to suggest some new ways of thinking about this important task of the church. The information provided here is not meant to suggest that your congregation's approach is wrong or less than adequate. We simply wish to offer some fresh ideas.

Seven years ago the Commission on Worship and the Department of Evangelism began to study the catechumenate. At that time, we chose not to establish a synodical program on the catechumenate; rather, we believed that this model was something that congregations would need to study and adapt to their local settings. The explanations and resources in this mailing are provided with the encouragement that your congregation revisit the way in which it instructs and receives new members. It may not be necessary to make a lot of changes or to make them all at once. But if you have been encouraged to take a fresh look at your current practice, then our Lord's mandate to make disciples by baptizing and teaching them will take on a new sense of urgency in our Synod.

May the words of encouragement of the apostle Peter be yours as well: "Grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen" (2 Peter 3:18).



The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
Commission on Worship
DCS Department of Outreach
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*Looking for new
ways to seek and
save the lost?*

*How can the whole
congregation
get involved?*



NEW RESOURCES FOR REACHING THE UNCHURCHED

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