

The State of Christian Education in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

In the Fall of 2005, Concordia University – Nebraska agreed to fund research aimed at getting a sense of the condition of religious education in the churches of the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod (LCMS). Six hundred congregations received the five-page survey instrument. We received 200 responses and compiled and summarized the data by the Fall of 2006.

We believe the findings provide a helpful picture of religious education practices within congregations of the LCMS. It is our hope that a review of the findings will provide a clearer picture of those components that improve religious education in a congregation.

CUNE has established a new institute – the Institute for Religious Education (IRE) – to work at enhancing the intentionality and effectiveness of Christian education in churches and schools. The findings from the State of Christian Education in the LCMS will help the IRE to focus resources on those areas most in need of support and which have the greatest correlation to effective educational practices.

In the next few years, CUNE and the IRE will hopefully be able to complete a companion research piece that focuses on religious education in our Lutheran schools.

The State of Christian Education in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

General instructions: Please complete all the pages of this survey as completely and as accurately as possible. Individual congregational responses will be kept confidential. Please read the instructions carefully at the start of each section.

SECTION I – Congregational Demographics

Instructions: *This portion of the survey may be completed by anyone with access to accurate data on the congregation.*

1. Number of baptized members - _____
2. Number of communicant members -- _____
3. Average weekly worship attendance (2005) -- _____
4. Average age of baptized membership -- _____
5. Net gain or loss of members in the previous reporting year -- + _____ (or) - _____
6. Number of full time paid church staff (do not include staff associated with a day school or pre school) -- _____
7. What was your congregational budget for the last budget year? _____
8. Does your congregation operate a Lutheran day school?
_____ Yes _____ No _____ Part of an association
9. Does your congregation operate a preschool or day care program?
_____ Yes _____ No _____ Part of an association
10. Does your congregation have a paid staff person(s) whose main responsibility (50%+ of time) is to coordinate educational efforts of the congregation? _____ Yes _____ No
 - 10a. If “yes” to question #10, which classification(s) most closely fit the individual(s) in this role -- _____ Pastor _____ DCE _____ Deaconess _____ Teacher
_____ Lay Minister _____ non-rostered individual _____ Other
 - 10b. If you have a staff person(s) responsible for educational ministries, what age group(s) (if any) does s/he focus the majority of his/her time (may include more than one)?

SECTION II – Parish Educational Practices

Instructions: *This portion of the survey may be completed by the individual with the most accurate data in the congregation on the subject of religious education experiences. In some congregations it might be necessary to compile the data prior to filling out the survey.*

11. Does your congregation operate a Sunday School program (aimed at elementary age children). _____ Yes _____ No
- 11a. If “yes” to the question #11, what was your average weekly Sunday School attendance in the last year? _____
- 11b. If “yes” to question #11 – what was the Sunday School attendance last Sunday? _____
- 11c. If you have a Sunday School program, what is your estimate of the percentage of the congregation’s children who regularly (at least 1/2 the time) attend Sunday School? _____%
- 11d. If you have a Sunday School program, are more than 2% of those attending non-members? _____ Yes _____ No _____ Unsure
12. Do you have a children’s confirmation program at your church? _____ Yes _____ No
- 12a. If “yes” to question #12, at what grade do youth usually complete their confirmation instruction? _____
- 12b. What percentage of eligible youth attend your confirmation program? _____%
- 12c. Please estimate the percentage of youth who are still active members of your congregation four years after completing their confirmation experience _____%
13. Does your congregation offer a midweek educational experience for children? _____ Yes _____ No
- 13a. If “yes” to question #13, what percentage of eligible congregational children attend regularly (at least half the time)? _____%
- 13b. If “yes” to question #13, what was the attendance the last time your midweek event occurred? _____
14. Does your congregation offer educational programming specifically aimed at junior high age youth other than the ones mentioned in questions 11 - 13? _____ Yes _____ No
- 14a. If “yes” to question #14, what percentage of eligible youth regularly (are there for at least 1/2 the activities) attend these educational experiences? _____%

15. Does your congregation offer educational programming specifically aimed at senior high age youth? _____ Yes _____ No

15a. If “yes” to question #15, how many times per month are these experiences generally offered? _____

15b. If “yes” to question #15, what percentage of eligible senior high youth members regularly (at least 1/2 the time) participate in these activities? _____%

15c. If a senior high ministry is being offered, rank the following possible focus components according to which component you feel is presently the most significant focus, the second most significant, and so on (“1” indicates the most significant, “7” would be the least). If your program doesn’t focus at all on certain components, just write “N/A” in the space.

- _____ Developing relationships among youth
- _____ Religious educational focus
- _____ Entertainment (e.g., movies, miniature golf...)
- _____ Worship
- _____ Servant events
- _____ Social issues (e.g. resisting peer pressure, dating...)
- _____ Other: _____

16. Does your congregation offer religious programming aimed specifically at adults? _____ Yes _____ No

16a. If you answered “yes” to question #16, what percentage of your eligible members regularly (1/2 of the time or more) attend these learning experiences? _____%

16b. Identify the types of adult learning opportunities your congregation offers – (check those that apply and include the attendance the last time the learning experience took place)

- _____ Sunday morning studies (Attendance: _____)
- _____ Midweek studies at the church (Attendance: _____)
- _____ Studies meeting outside the church (Attendance: _____)
- _____ Retreats (Attendance: _____)
- _____ Other: _____ (Attendance: _____)

16c. Estimate the percentage of members attending adult learning experiences who currently and regularly attend more than one study at a time _____%

17. Does your congregation offer religious educational programming aimed specifically at families? _____ Yes _____ No

17a. If you answered “yes” to #17, how often are these family events offered in a typical year? _____ 1-3 _____ 4-7 _____ 8+

17b. If you offer them, what is the average attendance at family educational experiences? _____

Section III – Congregational/Leadership Focus

Instructions: *This section is to be completed by the senior pastor.*

Please use a scale rating (1-10 with 10 being high) to respond to questions 18-21.

18. Rate the degree to which you feel your congregation makes parish education a priority.

19. Rate the degree to which you are satisfied with the participation levels in the educational (all ages) ministries of the church.

20. Rate how well you feel the overall parish education programs are administered.

21. Rate your personal commitment to Christian education within the church

Complete the remaining questions

22. Approximately what percentage of the congregational budget is designated towards congregationally-based Christian educational efforts? _____%

23. Do you feel that the amount budgeted for the educational ministries of the church is appropriate, too high or too low? _____

24. Have you had college coursework that focused on learning educational methods other than those offered in your seminary experience? _____ Yes _____ No

25. Have you participated in any continuing educational experience that focused on learning educational methods? _____ Yes _____ No

26. Please describe what you see as the central purpose for educational efforts within a congregation.

27. What one area of your congregation's Christian education ministry do you feel is operating most effectively? _____

28. What one area of your congregation's Christian education ministry do you feel is in most need of improvement? _____

29. Do you have written goals specifically for the congregation's educational ministries?
_____ Yes _____ No _____ Unsure

30. Estimate the percentage of your time that is spent on Christian education (teaching, meetings, preparation...) for the congregation _____ %

31. Do you feel that your parish educational ministries are an effective evangelism tool of the congregation? _____ Yes _____ No _____ Unsure

32. What do you feel your congregation's greatest need (e.g. staffing, space, policy, finances...) is in regards to its educational ministries?

Please use a scale rating (1-10 with 10 being high) to respond to questions #33-38.

33. How would you rate the overall effectiveness of parish Christian education of children in the LCMS as a whole? _____

34. How would you rate the overall effectiveness of parish Christian education of youth (7th-12th grades) in the LCMS as a whole? _____

35. How would you rate the overall effectiveness of parish Christian education of adults in the LCMS as a whole? _____

36. How would you rate your own congregation's effectiveness of parish-based Christian education of children? _____

37. How would you rate your own congregation's effectiveness of parish-based Christian education of youth (7th-12th grades)? _____

38. How would you rate your own congregation's effectiveness of parish-based Christian education of adults? _____

39. In your opinion, has parish education effectiveness in the LCMS as a whole improved, remained the same, or diminished in the past 15 years? _____

General comments:

Thank you for your time in completing this survey. Please return this completed form in the self-addressed, stamped envelope as soon as possible. You will be contacted within two weeks if we have not received your survey.

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DATA SUMMARY (descriptive)

General instructions: Please complete all the pages of this survey as completely and as accurately as possible. Individual congregational responses will be kept confidential. Please read the instructions carefully at the start of each section.

SECTION I – Congregational Demographics

Instructions: *This portion of the survey may be completed by anyone with access to accurate data on the congregation.*

(R – Range; N – Number responding; Na – Not applicable)

1. Number of baptized members – 428 (R= 10-2838 – N=197)_
2. Number of communicant members -- 336 (R= 11-2228 – N=197)_
3. Average weekly worship attendance (2005) -- 171 (R=10-961 – N=199)_
4. Average age of baptized membership -- 44 (R=6-72 – N=142)_
5. Net gain or loss of members in the previous reporting year - +2(or) - (R=+133 to -234 N=185)_
6. Number of full time paid church staff (do not include staff associated with a day school or pre school) -- 1.9 (R = 0-12 N=190)_
7. What was your congregational budget for the last budget year? \$289,140(R=7300-1900000 N=186)_
8. Does your congregation operate a Lutheran day school?
(8=na) 33 Yes 156 No 3 Part of an association
9. Does your congregation operate a preschool or day care program?
(8=na) 88 Yes 101 No 3 Part of an association
10. Does your congregation have a paid staff person(s) whose main responsibility (50%+ of time) is to coordinate educational efforts of the congregation? 52 Yes 148 No
 - 10a. If “yes” to question #10, which classification(s) most closely fit the individual(s) in this role -- 19 Pastor 19 DCE 2 Deaconess 5 Teacher
2 Lay Minister 10 non-rostered individual 1 Other
 - 10b. If you have a staff person(s) responsible for educational ministries, what age group(s) (if any) does s/he focus the majority of his/her time (may include more than one)?
”11-18” (2); 4-18; “Adult”(3); “0-31”; “All”(5); “0-18”; “12-Adult”; “children and adult” _

15. Does your congregation offer educational programming specifically aimed at senior high age youth? 135 Yes 65 No

15a. If "yes" to question #15, how many times per month are these experiences generally offered? 3.56 (R=0-20 N=135)

15b. If "yes" to question #15, what percentage of eligible senior high youth members regularly (at least 1/2 the time) participate in these activities? 42.24%
(R=0-100 N=135)

15c. If a senior high ministry is being offered, rank the following possible focus components according to which component you feel is presently the most significant focus, the second most significant, and so on ("1" indicates the most significant, "7" would be the least). If your program doesn't focus at all on certain components, just write "N/A" in the space.

2 2.26 Developing relationships among youth (N=122)

1 2.13 Religious educational focus (N=123)

5 4.25 Entertainment (e.g., movies, miniature golf...) (N=118)

3 3.79 Worship (N=114)

4 3.90 Servant events (N=116)

6 4.39 Social issues (e.g. resisting peer pressure, dating...) (N=108)

Other: _____

16. Does your congregation offer religious programming aimed specifically at adults?
189 Yes 11 No

16a. If you answered "yes" to question #16, what percentage of your eligible members regularly (1/2 of the time or more) attend these learning experiences?
20.87%

16b. Identify the types of adult learning opportunities your congregation offers - (check those that apply and include the attendance the last time the learning experience took place)

178 Sunday morning studies (Attendance: 29.44)

146 Midweek studies at the church (Attendance: 18.12)

90 Studies meeting outside the church (Attendance: 32.57)

30 Retreats (Attendance: 42.73)

26 Other: _____ (Attendance: 25.15)

16c. Estimate the percentage of members attending adult learning experiences who currently and regularly attend more than one study at a time 19.21%

17. Does your congregation offer religious educational programming aimed specifically at families? 43 Yes 157 No

17a. If you answered "yes" to #17, how often are these family events offered in a typical year? _____ 1-3 4.7 4-7 _____ 8+

17b. If you offer them, what is the average attendance at family educational experiences? 26.79

Section III – Congregational/Leadership Focus

Instructions: This section is to be completed by the senior pastor.

Please use a scale rating (1-10 with 10 being high) to respond to questions 18-21.

18. Rate the degree to which you feel your congregation makes parish education a priority.

__6.08__

19. Rate the degree to which you are satisfied with the participation levels in the educational (all ages) ministries of the church.

__4.09__

20. Rate how well you feel the overall parish education programs are administered.

__5.95__

21. Rate your personal commitment to Christian education within the church

__8.16__

Complete the remaining questions

22. Approximately what percentage of the congregational budget is designated towards congregationally-based Christian educational efforts? __10.53%__

23. Do you feel that the amount budgeted for the educational ministries of the church is appropriate (78-45.6%), too high (4-2.3%) or too low (89-52%)? N=171

24. Have you had college coursework that focused on learning educational methods other than those offered in your seminary experience? _87 (43.5%)_ Yes _113 (56.5%)_ No

25. Have you participated in any continuing educational experience that focused on learning educational methods? _89 (44.5%)_ Yes _111 (55.5%)_ No

26. Please describe what you see as the central purpose for educational efforts within a congregation. N=175

__Primarily cognitive - 39

__Primarily affective - 8

__Primarily lifestyle - 25

__Other - 103

27. What one area of your congregation's Christian education ministry do you feel is operating most effectively? Na-14; Adult-55; Youth-16; Confirmation-25; SS-33;

Small groups-9; VBS-10; Family-0; Other 38

28. What one area of your congregation's Christian education ministry do you feel is in most need of improvement? Na-19; Adult-29; Youth-54; Confirmation-7; SS-45; Small groups-9;

VBS-3; Family-7; Other-27

29. Do you have written goals specifically for the congregation's educational ministries?

__47__ Yes __138__ No __6__ Unsure Na-9

30. Estimate the percentage of your time that is spent on Christian education (teaching, meetings, preparation...) for the congregation 22.89%

31. Do you feel that your parish educational ministries are an effective evangelism tool of the congregation? Na-12 92 Yes 54 No 42 Unsure

32. What do you feel your congregation's greatest need (e.g. staffing, space, policy, finances...) is in regards to its educational ministries?
Staffing-63; Participation-43; Space-31; Finances-25; Volunteers-15; Training-15;
Policy-9; Curriculum-1; Other-38

Please use a scale rating (1-10 with 10 being high) to respond to questions #33-38.

33. How would you rate the overall effectiveness of parish Christian education of children in the LCMS as a whole? 6.372 n=180

34. How would you rate the overall effectiveness of parish Christian education of youth (7th-12th grades) in the LCMS as a whole? 5.308 n=182

35. How would you rate the overall effectiveness of parish Christian education of adults in the LCMS as a whole? 5.555 n=182

36. How would you rate your own congregation's effectiveness of parish-based Christian education of children? 5.989 n=189

37. How would you rate your own congregation's effectiveness of parish-based Christian education of youth (7th-12th grades)? 5.175 n=189

38. How would you rate your own congregation's effectiveness of parish-based Christian education of adults? 5.958 n=189

39. In your opinion, has parish education effectiveness in the LCMS as a whole improved, remained the same, or diminished in the past 15 years? _____
N=172 Improved-30 (17.4%); Same-51 (29.7%); Diminished-78 (45.3%); Unsure-13 (7.6%)

General comments:

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