Cooperative Catechesis: A Model for Equipping Lutheran Parents and Pastors to Catechize Children in the Christian Faith

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COOPERATIVE CATECHESIS:
A MODEL FOR EQUIPPING LUTHERAN PARENTS AND PASTORS
TO CATECHIZE CHILDREN IN THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

A THESIS PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DOCTOR OF MINISTRY DEGREE

BY
PHILLIP E. BOOE
ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA
MAY 2016
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Reverend Doctor Martin Luther wrote in his sacristy prayer,

Lord God, thou hast appointed me as a bishop and pastor in thy church. Thou seest how unfit I am to undertake this great and difficult office, and were it not for thy help, I would long since have ruined it all.¹

These words are true for me in my vocation as a parish pastor and in my vocation as doctoral student. I am so very grateful to our Lord, Jesus Christ, for the opportunity to contribute to the study of faith education and discipleship. I am thankful for his guidance through the Scriptures and for the grace he freely gives in the sacraments.

I am indebted to my advisor, Doctor Debra Moncauskas, for her patient and wise advice. Without her counsel, I would have been quite lost.

I am thankful for two supportive congregations whom I served while I completed my coursework and dissertation. First, I thank the saints of Saint John’s Lutheran Church in Perham, Minnesota and second, the saints of Christ Lutheran Church in Hebron, Connecticut.

I am also quite indebted to the support I received from the many pastors who encouraged me. In particular, the Reverends Carl Noble and Tony Cloose, who assisted with several of my projects.

Finally, I am thankful to my father, Kenneth and my mother, Cheryl, who continue to believe in me and support me every step of the way.

¹ John W. Doberstein, Minister’s Prayer Book (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1986), 130.
PREFACE

Parents catechize their children constantly. Despite the notion some parents hold that they are unable to teach, they are always teaching—good or bad. For example, consider a father who is a fan of the Green Bay Packers professional football team. Whether he realizes it or not he is catechizing his children to be Packers fans. The father does not set aside an hour of each week to teach his children about the basics of football, the importance of team loyalty, or why rooting for the Packers makes sound logical sense. He does not send his children once a week to a class taught by an assistant football coach to learn about being football fans. When his children reach a certain age, he certainly does not contact the head coach of the Packers to evaluate his children to determine if they are ready to be Packers fans.

Instead, the father simply lives out his life as a fan and models what it looks like to be faithful to the Green Bay Packers for his children. He talks about football in casual conversation. He introduces his children to watching or attending football games and sits with them as they experience it together. He answers his children’s questions about field goals, downs, and interceptions while also offering up his own commentary on what makes football and the Packers so great. As his children age, they begin to follow their father’s example. At some point they may be ready to play football, but even if not, they have grown up hearing about it and seeing their father speak, act, and even dress like a Packers fan. More often than not, because of their
exposure to their father’s dutiful and continual catechesis, his children will eventually take on more responsibility for learning about football on their own. In time, like their father, they will don the green and gold jersey as they sit with their own children and pass down what they have learned.

Analogies have limits, but it holds true that parents teach their children every day. Children learn from their parents everything from social skills to work ethics to sports fanaticism. It is time that children learn from their parents what it means to be a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ and what it means to be a Lutheran. The church is here to help, but the parents must do it. “Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it” (Prov. 22:6).

Martin Luther wrote his Small Catechism out of concern for what he described as “the deplorable, miserable condition” of Christian knowledge among common people and pastors in 1528-29 Electoral Saxony. As a pastor in 21st century America, the researcher observed that little had changed from Luther’s day—at least among common people. It seemed apparent to him that parents had abdicated to the church their divine vocation to teach their children the faith. The temptation among pastors has been to blame parents for their lack of desire to impress upon their children the tenets of Christianity, and the researcher had certainly fallen into such a vice. Yet, Luther’s own words from the preface of his Small Catechism served as Law for the researcher. Luther pleaded with pastors, “I beg you all for God’s sake, my dear sirs and brethren, who are pastors or preachers,

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to devote yourselves to your office. Have pity on the people who are entrusted to you and help us teach the catechism to the people, and especially the young.”

In casual conversations with parents over the years, the researcher discovered that there was not so much a lack of desire with parents, but feelings of inadequacy. Parents reported being unequipped to teach because of a lack of resources or simply feeling as though they were unable due to a lack of ability. That parents wanted their children to learn about their faith was apparent from the presence of children in catechesis classes and Sunday school. The researcher discovered that many parents did not know it was in their vocation to pass down the faith; they presumed that pastors and the church were more apt for the task. Conversations like these inspired the researcher to investigate how pastors might move from blaming parents to equipping them to serve as God intended.

It was in this spirit that the researcher embarked on this project. Despite the myriad of resources available for teaching children the faith, parents still felt ill-equipped. Despite most having taught their children to read, write, use a fork, walk, and a myriad of other things parents pass down to their children as they grow, parents still felt unable to teach. The researcher concluded that the church had done a great disservice to parents by enabling them to outsource an important part of their vocations. In this project, the researcher wanted to solidify what cooperative catechesis looked like. He sought to discern the biblical foundation upon which catechesis should take place and what others had to say about the matter. The researcher also wanted to gauge the attitudes and opinions of pastors and parents in

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his immediate ministry context. With this information as the framework, the researcher developed a model for cooperative catechesis to implement in his own congregation. He commends this work to others who deeply desire a revival in effective catechesis and who will, with God’s help, be able to improve upon it. The task is not easy, but it is noble.
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GLOSSARY

Adiaphora: Religious practices neither commanded nor forbidden by Scripture.

Book of Concord: The official canon of the symbolic books of the evangelical Lutheran faith. The Book of Concord includes the Apostles’, Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds; the Augsburg Confession; The Apology to the Augsburg Confession; the Smalcald Articles; the Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope; the Small and Large Catechisms of Martin Luther; the Epitome of the Formula of Concord; and the Solid Declaration of the Formula of Concord.

Catechesis: The formal instruction a Christian receives in the tenants of the Christian faith and Lutheran tradition. This term is synonymous with confirmation instruction.

Catechism: A book of questions and answers designed to communicate the basics of the Christian faith. In the context of this project, catechism will refer to Martin Luther’s 1529 small and large catechisms.

Catechist: An instructor of Christian doctrine. In the LCMS, pastors, professional church workers, or lay-instructors ordinarily fulfill this role.

Catechumen: A Christian undergoing formal catechesis.

Communicant: A member of the congregation who has completed the Rite of Confirmation.
Confirmand: A catechumen who is prepared to participate in the Rite of Confirmation.

Confirmation: In the narrow sense, Confirmation is the ceremonial rite wherein a Christian, usually an adolescent, has the opportunity to confess publicly his or her faith. This rite generally follows an extended period of study. Confirmation is sometimes used broadly to describe the entire period of catechesis in preparation for the rite.

Confirmation Instruction: See catechesis.

Divine Service: The Lutheran liturgical worship ceremony that includes a celebration of the Sacrament of the Altar, or the Lord’s Supper. The Divine Service is celebrated weekly or bi-weekly at most Lutheran congregations.

Elder: A layman in the congregation, usually elected, who assists the pastor with aspects of ministry not reserved for the pastoral office.

Lay-instructor: A trained or experienced instructor of Christian doctrine who is neither an ordained nor a commissioned professional church worker.

LCMS: An abbreviation for The Lutheran—Church Missouri Synod.

Lutheran faith: the historic Christian faith that holds the Holy Bible as the sole rule and norm for life and which believes, teaches, and confesses that the Bible is correctly exposited in the Book of Concord.

Parents: The persons responsible for the welfare and upbringing of a minor child. In the context of this project, the term “parents” was used broadly to refer to either the child’s biological parents or legal guardians.
Pastors: Pastors in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod are ordained men who have received synodical training and have received a call to the office of Holy Ministry by an LCMS member congregation.

*Quia* subscription: A basis of confessional unity in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod founded on an adherence to the Book of Concord *because* it is a true exposition of Holy Scripture. This is opposed to the alternative *quatenus* subscription, which is adherence to the Book of Concord *in so far as* it is a true exposition of Holy Scripture.

Sacraments: In the Lutheran Church, a sacrament is a sacred act that God commanded, delivers grace and forgiveness, and connects God’s word to a physical element (such as bread and wine or water).

Six Chief Parts: Luther’s Small Catechism is divided into six parts: The Ten Commandments, the Lord’s Prayer, the Apostles’ Creed, the Sacrament of Baptism, the Office of the Keys, and the Sacrament of the Altar.

Vocations: The various offices through which God calls people to serve their neighbor through good works. Vocation is more than occupational, but also includes natural order such as husband, wife, father, mother, and child.
ABSTRACT

Parents have a God-given duty to bring up their children in the faith. God calls pastors to shepherd flocks, point them to the Gospel, proclaim sound doctrine, and teach the people about the will and ways of God. The problem this project addressed was the decline of parental involvement in and responsibility for the Christian catechesis of their children in the context of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Parents have all but abdicated their responsibility to catechize their children to the church, and pastors have been complicit in allowing it. The purpose of this research was to identify the attitudes pastors and parents of the New England District held toward catechesis and to develop a new approach to catechesis.

The researcher approached this project from a postmodern theoretical perspective. Utilizing grounded-theory and phenomenological methodology, the researcher surveyed parents and pastors through an online survey and follow-up interviews.

Informed by the findings, the researcher developed a cooperative catechesis model that went beyond traditional catechesis approaches. The model emphasized lifelong catechesis beginning at birth and continuing throughout one’s life across four stages: “Equipping” for children birth to eight, “Enhancing” for ages nine to thirteen, “Exploring” for ages fourteen to eighteen, and “Engaging” for adults. In
each stage, the researcher provided guidelines for how pastors and parents could cooperate in Christian catechesis.
DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my children, Alexander and Katherine, for whom the Lord has given me the holiest of vocations: to bring them up in the Christian faith.

I equally dedicate this to my wife, Becky. Proverbs 31:10 teaches, “An excellent wife who can find? She is far more precious than jewels.” I am blessed by God to be Becky’s husband and pray that I can repay her for all the time she sacrificed for me.
EPIGRAPH

“The greatest good in married life, that which makes all suffering and labor worthwhile, is that God grants offspring and commands that they be brought up to worship and serve him. In all the world this is the noblest and most precious work, because to God there can be nothing dearer than the salvation of souls. Now since we are all duty bound to suffer death, if need be, that we might bring a single soul to God, you can see how rich the estate of marriage is in good works. God has entrusted to its bosom souls begotten of its own body, on whom it can lavish all manner of Christian works. Most certainly, father and mother are apostles, bishops, and priests to their children, for it is they who make them acquainted with the gospel. In short, there is no greater or nobler authority on earth than that of parents over their children, for this authority is both spiritual and temporal.”¹

— Martin Luther, *The Estate of Marriage*, 1522.

CHAPTER ONE: A NEED FOR REVIVAL IN CATECHESIS

The Problem and Its Context

Statement of the Problem

Catechesis, or formal Christian education, has a long and rich history in the church. The Lutheran tradition holds catechesis in especially high regard. Martin Luther penned his Small Catechism and Large Catechism for the very purpose of equipping parents to teach their children the basics of the Christian faith.1 While catechisms and catechesis are not unique to Christianity, Luther wrote his catechisms for common people and not just for theologians. In his translation of the Bible into German, Luther also sought to put the words of Scripture in the plain, common language of the people. So committed were Lutherans to Christian education, in America, new Lutheran plants would often build schools before they built church buildings. In the past, parishioners owned their own hymnals and brought them to the divine service, and they recited the catechism in homes as a part of daily devotions. In more hectic and modern times, many parents have not opened their catechisms since their own confirmation days. With hymnals neatly tucked away in the pews, few have them at home from which to sing or use at the family altar. Parents have seemingly abdicated their God-given duties to raise their children in the faith over to

1 Martin Luther, Luther’s Small Catechism with Explanation, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2011), 32.
the church and they themselves encounter the word of God but once a week at the most.

The problem this project addressed was the decline of parental involvement in and responsibility for the Christian catechesis of their children in the context of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. In response to this problem, the researcher took four paths.

The researcher:

(1) examined biblical examples of expectations for inculcating future generations in the faith,

(2) reviewed applicable literature dealing with catechesis in the church and home in both contemporary and historic contexts,

(3) interviewed parents and pastors via telephone, face-to-face, and through the use of online and printed surveys,

(4) synthesized the results to create a model of cooperative catechesis between parents and congregations for use in the researcher’s immediate ministry context and broadly to the Lutheran church-at-large.

**Delimitations of the Problem**

Data for this research project was limited to congregations of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) located in Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont, which make up the New England district of the LCMS. The research data was also limited to congregational and home-based catechesis and did not examine formal catechesis that took place in
parochial schools. The research did not explore issues relating specifically to the Rite of Confirmation that generally follows a period of formal catechesis, but was limited to the methodology and efficacy of the catechetical process. Finally, this research was limited to the faith education of children and adolescents and did not explore the catechesis of adults.

Assumptions

As the researcher began this project, he made four assumptions. The first assumption was that one may use human reason and logic ministerially, but not magisterially, to apprehend the revelations of Scripture and to understand the world. That is, one cannot affirm or deny the tenets of the Christian faith by how reasonable they seem to human logic. Instead, the assumption is that reason is used properly only in the sense that the Holy Spirit works with the faculties of the human mind to communicate knowledge. Natural reason cannot be the judge of Scripture since man’s natural knowledge of God’s will is limited (1 Cor. 2:14). The 19th century Lutheran theologian Franz Peiper wrote in his Christian Dogmatics, “Making natural reason the judge of matters religious is the attempt to set up human reason as a teacher in the Christian Church in the place of the Word of God.” The Scriptures promote the use of reason within the context of a religious worldview (Isa. 1:18, 1 Pet. 3:15), but warn against letting reason dominate over God’s revelation (Prov. 3:5, 1 Tim. 6:20-21, 2 Tim. 3:16). Catechesis is an area where reason and knowledge

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intersect with doctrine, so it was important for this project to place reason and all exercises of logic under the authority of Scripture.

A second assumption was that the Bible is best interpreted using a historical-grammatical hermeneutic that recognizes that all of Scripture points to the salvific work of Jesus. There are many ways to interpret a text. Although there may be an objective meaning behind a text, humans are unable to be completely objective in their reading and interpreting of such texts. James Voelz, professor of Exegetical Theology at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, wrote, “Interpretation is key for all people who deal with written documents. But it is especially important for all those who deal with authoritative documents, and it is particularly important for those of us who deal with the sacred Scriptures, the authoritative documents of our Christian faith.”4 Voelz contended that differences of opinion regarding the meaning of texts arise from different interpretation principles. The interpreter’s “grammatical system, theory of language, literary theory, understanding of a text’s historical setting, view of revelation, understanding the person and work of Jesus Christ, the interpreter’s own relationship to the text, and his or her view of the world at large” can all affect how he or she understands the meaning of a text.5

The historical-grammatical method acknowledges both the context in which the texts were written and the intended audiences of the authors, while respecting the divine inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible. Voelz noted that since the Scriptures

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5 Voelz, What Does This Mean?, 14.
are texts that intend to communicate a message, that communication involves three factors: the author, the text itself, and the reader.\textsuperscript{6} In addition to the meaning of the words, the interpreter must consider the intent and context surrounding the author, the significance and intentions behind the words of the text, and the original recipients of the text and how they would have understood it. Many Christians look for translations of the Bible that are “literal” according to the original texts. While there is value in accurate translation, a mere literal reading of the text would be incomplete according to the grammatical-historical method. Robert Kolb explained, “Believers must recognize the necessity of placing the text in its historical context. A literalistic interpretation of the words on the page, ignoring historical context and literary form, leads the hearer and reader far from the text. Such an approach puts the text as much at the mercy of the interpreter as do those presuppositions that deny God’s presence in the words.”\textsuperscript{7} Proper textual criticism, therefore, is important. One must approach the text without any delusion of objectivity.

The Lutheran historical-grammatical method of interpretation is not the same as other “historical-critical” methods, although they share many of the same critical approaches. For instance, textual, source, and form critical methods often employ a hermeneutic of suspicion. That is, interpreters using these methods are often looking for the “real” or “true” text not presented in Scripture. Lutherans possess a high view of Scripture because they believe it is both authoritative and normative. Lutherans

\textsuperscript{6} Voelz, \textit{What Does This Mean?}, 16.

critically examine the Scriptures as a means to understand them, not to challenge their authenticity. Francis Pieper wrote about this hermeneutic of suspicion. He contended that much of the “historical interpretation” of the Scriptures placed value on fallible human opinion over God’s revelation.⁸

The third assumption was that church tradition is helpful for understanding how Christians of all times have applied God’s Word, and that it informs current practice. Tradition is not authoritative independent of the Scriptures (2 Thess. 2:14-15, 1 Sam. 15:22, 1 Cor. 11:1-2). Instead, when judged true by the clear teachings of the Bible, church traditions, theological writings, and confessions can be useful for teaching the faith. These extra-biblical sources of Christian guidance are only authoritative insofar as they are true to Scripture. The Formula of Concord expresses this concept wherein the Lutheran fathers confessed,

> Other symbols and other writings are not judges like Holy Scripture, but merely witnesses and expositions of the faith, setting forth how at various times the Holy Scriptures were understood by contemporaries in the church of God with reference to controverted articles, and how contrary teachings were rejected and condemned.⁹

James Voelz explained that the confessions and the Scriptures work together. From the Lutheran perspective, the Bible is completely unchallenged as the sole rule and norm for life and the only source from which one may derive doctrine, but the

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confessions help clarify how to understand and apply the revelation of the Bible. In this project, the Lutheran confessions served as an explanation of God’s Word.

The fourth assumption is that without the working of the Holy Spirit a person cannot believe in the tenets of the Christian faith (Rom. 10:14-17, Eph. 2:8-10, John 6:44-45). Article XVIII of the Augsburg Confession explains,

It is also taught among us that man possesses some measure of freedom of the will, which enables him to live an outwardly honorable life and to make choices among the things that reason comprehends. But without the grace, help, and activity of the Holy Spirit man is not capable of making himself acceptable to God, of fearing God and believing in God with his whole heart, or of expelling inborn evil lusts from his heart.

Therefore, the instruction model developed by this project took into account the role of the Holy Spirit and his sovereignty.

**Subproblems**

This research addressed four subproblems. The first subproblem was to determine the biblical expectations for parents and congregations regarding the catechesis of children. The second subproblem was to explore and understand the history and development of catechesis in the Lutheran tradition and to examine the current literature regarding catechesis leading to Confirmation to compare and contrast the findings with current Lutheran practice. The third subproblem was to develop a mixed-method questionnaire research instrument to study the current state of catechesis in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, specifically within congregations found in the New England District. The researcher supplemented this

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10 Voelz, *What Does This Mean?*, 359.

data with follow-up interviews of parents and pastors. The fourth subproblem was to synthesize the data obtained to develop a cooperative catechesis model whereby parents and pastors work together in the formation of young Christians into strong disciples of Jesus.

**Setting of the Project**

The setting for the research was among congregations in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, in particular congregations in the New England District. The LCMS is a 2.2 million-member church body based in St. Louis, Missouri. The LCMS is in fellowship with dozens of international church bodies and organizations and 80 career missionaries out in the field alongside hundreds of short-term missionaries. As of 2014, there were 6,359 ordained pastors, 16,479 commissioned educators, 154 deaconesses, 540 directors of Christian education, and 23 directors of Christian outreach. These professional church workers serve in one of the 6,129 congregations, 185 campus ministries, or the more than 2,000 Lutheran parochial schools or pre-schools. The LCMS also operates ten universities and two seminaries. The LCMS is a church body that is marked by a strict adherence to the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran confessions. The LCMS’s rich historical traditions heavily influence worship and other practices within the synod.

LCMS pastors and professional church workers serve in a variety of contexts around the world. In the United States, LCMS congregations are located in isolated and rural locales and in urban inner-city communities and everywhere in-between.

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The LCMS is growing more diverse in terms of the demographic make-up of its members, but remains largely an ethnic church body with deep connections to its German roots.

LCMS congregations emphasize catechesis and faith education. Most congregations have Sunday school programs and a formal period of catechesis, or confirmation instruction. In 2010, Marvin Bergman, a professor at the synodical Concordia University of Nebraska, spearheaded a survey of 1,015 adults and adolescents between the ages of 11 and 16 in the LCMS and asked questions about the importance of confirmation ministry.\(^{13}\) The results from that survey reported that 93 percent of confirmands (245 out of 263) and 98 percent of parents (306 out of 312) stated that confirmation ministry was “important” or “very important” to them. The other 575 respondents were pastors, church workers, and high school youth who were not necessarily confirmands. At the same time, nine out of ten confirmation instruction leaders described a “confirmation is graduation” attitude in their congregations. The parents who responded also reported that only 41 percent of those whom they saw confirmed were still active as high school seniors. In this same survey, leaders also expressed that among their major challenges in confirmation instruction was the lack of parental involvement or commitment in the process. Paradoxically, parents also reported lack of parental involvement as the top issue in confirmation. Catechesis-aged children reported lack of activities and too much memorization as issues. Generally, all participants viewed catechesis favorably.

The researcher’s immediate context was Christ Lutheran Church (CLC) in Amston, Connecticut. With an average worship attendance of 80 persons, CLC fell below the 152-person average across all LCMS congregations. Part of CLC’s ministry is an accredited early childhood center (preschool) with approximately 100 students from both churched and unchurched backgrounds. CLC was located in the New England District of the LCMS, which is one of the smaller LCMS districts in that it contains only 71 congregations across Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont. Because of the close geographic proximity of these congregations, the researcher had direct access to a variety of catechetical practices to research at nearby LCMS congregations through a survey and interviews of pastors and parents.

It has been the researcher’s experience as a pastor and catechist in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod that most parishioners deeply desire to bring up their children in the faith and prepare them for living out that faith in an ever-changing world and see the importance of catechesis and confirmation ministry for achieving that goal. This research helped solidify practical ways that parents and congregations can work together to make catechesis effective.

Importance of the Project

The Importance of the Project to the Researcher

The researcher was born in North Carolina, in the “Bible belt” region of the United States. He grew up in a family that would identify itself as Christian. However, aside from occasional attendance in worship at congregations of various theological persuasions, there was inconsistency to his religious education and
upbringing. His parents rarely spoke systematically of Christian doctrine. That is, there was no intentional, organized catechesis at home. This is something the researcher observed in other Christian families as well. The researcher grew up recognizing an attitude in the community of his youth that advocated for the importance of “going to church,” but did not always insist on any particular confession aside from the most basic Christian positions.

As an adult, the researcher joined the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. The LCMS is a confessional church body that bases its unity on a quia subscription to its theological confessions found in the Book of Concord. That is, a member of the LCMS must adopt the confessions as authoritative because they are true to Scripture. This is opposed to a quatenus subscription whereby one only adopts certain parts of the confessions. Any authority the confessions possess to norm belief and behavior, however, comes from their reliance upon God’s Word, not the confession itself. The LCMS’s emphasis on confession and its rich historical emphasis on theological education led the researcher to value the importance of confession. As a pastor and catechist in the LCMS, the researcher has observed that many Lutheran parents have handed over their vocational responsibility to catechize their children to the congregation, or in some cases, the Lutheran parochial school. To exacerbate the problem of parents leaving it up to pastors and congregations to raise their children in the faith, Lutheran congregations have enabled parents by

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taking on this responsibility and by not equipping parents to be materially involved in the process.

This project promoted greater exposure to God’s Word at home with an emphasis on making faith an integral part of one’s life. Through this project, the researcher hoped that both parents and children would grow in their faith toward God and love toward neighbor. The researcher further desired that a more integrated catechesis would help form children into confident and confessional disciples of Jesus Christ. The researcher believed that if parents were more proactive in inculcating their children in the faith—with the assistance of the congregation—then the rate of dropout among young Lutherans after confirmation would decrease. Due to the narrow longitudinal scope, this study did not measure this hypothesis, and so further research in this area is encouraged.

The Importance of the Project to the Researcher’s Immediate Ministry Context

The researcher’s immediate ministry context was Christ Lutheran Church (CLC) of Amston, Connecticut. However, in terms of project importance, nearby congregations with whom the researcher worked closely will also likely benefit from this project.

CLC is a relatively young congregation both in regard to its history (it was planted in 1986), but also its demographic makeup. Only 7 percent of the congregation is older than 65 and 32 percent of members are younger than 25. This congregation’s most visible ministry to the community is in the form of an early childhood center and the members share a great interest in Christian education. CLC had an established formal catechesis program aimed at youth who were generally
between seventh and eighth grades. This project held dual importance for CLC as
both a boost to their confirmation ministry and to the potential resources many
parents of the congregation may gain from introducing the Christian faith to their
children at early ages.

The Importance of the Project to the Church at Large

This project produced a catechetical model that, when put into practice,
equips parents to become the principal faith educators of their children by helping
them work cooperatively with pastors and congregations. Current research in the
area of catechesis lacked focus on the role of the parents in faith education,
something this project helped to remedy. By providing a model for cooperative
catechesis, the Lutheran church—and perhaps any church body that includes formal
catechesis in their tradition—will benefit from this small step toward family-focused
catechesis.

Data and Methodology

Nature of the Research

This project was qualitative in nature. Field study and grounded theory
research were the main models employed. The primary tools used in this project
were surveys, questionnaires, interviews, participant description, documents, and the
observational field notes of the researcher. Primary data included the responses from
the surveys and questionnaires administered, face-to-face visits and phone interviews
with catechists (pastors and lay-instructors) and parents of Confirmation-aged
children as a part of the field research, and personal observations recorded in field notes.

Secondary data included biblical, theological, and secular literature dealing with issues relevant to the problem of this project, published and unpublished catechesis curriculum material, and outlines of confirmation programs developed by participating congregations.

*Project Overview*

First, the researcher studied key scriptural texts to determine and delineate the role of the worship community and its leaders in catechesis and the expectations for parents in the catechesis of their children.

Second, the researcher studied current literature related to the project. This included topics on the history and development of catechesis and confirmation ministry, the current state of catechesis in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, the writings of contemporary catechesis practitioners, and examples of current confirmation instruction curricula.

Third, the researcher surveyed LCMS pastors and parents across the New England District to identify needs and insight regarding parental participation in catechesis using a questionnaire.

Fourth, the researcher arranged follow-up interviews with pastors who were actively engaged in catechesis and confirmation ministry and with parents who had participated in the online survey. These interviews produced additional insight into how pastors and parents felt about catechesis and how to improve it.
Fifth, the researcher collected, analyzed, and synthesized the data from each of the preceding sources to help determine a biblically sound and practical model for equipping pastors and parents to engage in a cooperative catechesis process in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod context.
CHAPTER TWO: SCRIPTURAL FOUNDATIONS FOR CATECHESIS

Biblical and Theological Basis

The belief that the Bible is the record of God’s revelation to humankind is the foundation of this research study. God has revealed himself as Triune—one God composed of three co-equal and co-eternal persons: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Because God inspired the writers of the Bible with regard to its content (2 Tim. 3:16), every part of Scripture is authoritative and is the sole rule and norm for understanding God’s will for his creation. Only those who approach the Scriptures in faith can understand the Bible’s teachings properly and fully.

The late dogmatician Edward Koehler described the true church as being where the confession of its members is consistent with the clear teachings of Scripture. He wrote, “It is the duty of every Christian to examine for himself whether the teachings of his church agree with the plain teachings of the Bible. We may not take another person’s word for it. This is a matter of personal conviction and personal responsibility.”

Catechesis is a time of instructing children in the tenets of the Christian faith. Lutheran catechesis teaches Christianity according to the Lutheran confessions. Yet, if one takes Koehler’s assertion seriously, there must be an aspect of catechesis that

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equips young Christians to examine and explore what their church teaches according to the Scriptures. At the time of this project, the current focus in many catechetical programs was on memorizing portions of Luther’s Small Catechism and select Bible verses. This alone would seem insufficient not only according to Koehler, who was a college professor in the early 20th century, but also for today’s postmodern-minded youth. James Smith, in his book on the church and postmodernism, wrote, “We must appreciate the sense in which many advocates of postmodern theology or religion are deeply critical of a particular, determinate formulation of religious confession.”

He contended that according to postmodern thinkers like the French philosopher Jacques Derrida, absolute certainty is impossible. One may believe something, but could not be certain of it. Nevertheless, the church historically has proclaimed absolute certainty about certain doctrines and faith. Lutheran pastors expect catechumens to adhere to the “determinate” doctrine found in the confessions. Postmodern youth entering into catechesis may reject outright the idea that there is one, true church.

Smith asserted that a true postmodern church is compatible with what he called “radical orthodoxy.” He explained that radical orthodoxy is incarnational and reclaims the traditions and dogmas of the church. He concluded,

The radically orthodox church, then, is not traditionalist, even if it is traditioned; it is not a rote system of repetition but a creative repetition of the core features of what constitutes us as the people of God; it is not a nostalgic retreat into ‘the way we used to do it’ but a dynamic re-appropriation of ancient practices.

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3 Smith, *Who’s Afraid of Postmodernism*, 146.
The task of catechesis, at least in part, is to shape the emerging attitudes of today’s youth toward the church. To be effective, the catechist must not insist catechumens believe certain doctrines out of obligation, but must provide them with the tools they need to examine the church’s teaching according to the Word of God.

Although time and a radical change in society’s attitude toward the church separate the two, Smith and Koehler would concur that catechumens need to discover for themselves the truths of Christianity. Koehler made his convictions clear. He believed that one could find the true and orthodox church wherever he or she encountered the teaching and confessions of the Lutheran faith. The LCMS catechist would agree and therefore his task would be to guide the catechumen to reach the same conclusion. To reach this conclusion honestly, catechumens must be able to apprehend the clear teachings of the Scriptures since they are the sole measure of what is true.

It should not be surprising, then, that throughout the Bible, God consistently commanded prophets and pastors to share his words of revelation with others (Ezek. 3:17-19, Isa. 6:8, Mark 16:15, Acts 1:8). He also directed his people to pass down to their children both the stories of his salvific work throughout history and his teachings and statutes (Deut. 6:6-7 and 11:19, Prov. 22:6, Isa. 54:13, Eph. 6:4, 2 Tim. 3:14-15). The whole testimony of Scripture shows an ordering in the way God intended humans to pass down the stories and tenets of faith.

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God Uses Means

Through the Scriptures, God has revealed himself as the source of all faith and knowledge. He is the primary catechist who teaches all people through his Word (Gen. 6:5, John 15:5, 1 Cor. 12:3, 2 Pet. 1:21). God uses means, or instruments, to accomplish his work in this world. He uses his Word and the Sacrament of Baptism to bestow faith (Acts 2:38, 1 Pet. 3:21, Titus 3:5) and the Sacrament of the Altar to deliver forgiveness through the reception of Jesus’ true body and blood (Matt. 26:28, 1 Cor. 10:16). God’s Word and sacraments are the means through which he delivers his grace in tangible ways. The first Lutheran confessors explained in Article XIII of the Augsburg Confession,

> It is taught among us that the sacraments were instituted not only to be signs by which people might be identified outwardly as Christians, but that they are signs and testimonies of God’s will toward us for the purpose of awakening and strengthening our faith. For this reason, they require faith, and they are rightly used when they are received in faith and for the purpose of strengthening faith.5

Although God has not limited himself to these means, he has limited humankind not to expect to encounter his work outside of them. Robert Kolb described baptism and the Lord’s Supper as “sacramental forms of [God’s] Word.” He explained that Christians should practice the sacraments not only because Christ has commanded it, but also because they deliver forgiveness. Kolb wrote, “These three elements, forgiveness, external means, and Christ’s command constitute the Lutheran

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5 Tappert, *The Book of Concord*, 35-36
definition of the term sacrament. The sacraments convey God’s Word of power, the Gospel of the forgiveness of sins.6

It is not as though the sacraments dispense benefits *ex opere operato*. God works through sacraments and he alone is exercising power. Neither the holiness of the celebrant nor the worthiness of the recipient affects the efficacy of the sacrament. To receive the benefits of the sacraments, one must receive them in faith and not merely participate in them. Lutherans do not point to the sacraments to deny the Holy Spirit’s role in the dispensing of God’s gifts, but rather to indicate the instruments God had chosen to use. The Lutheran point of view is that only by the power of the Holy Spirit can one possess faith in Jesus and the Holy Spirit gives faith through the Word and Sacraments.7

The Sacrament of Baptism is the primary means through which God brings people into the kingdom. In baptism, God gives faith. He nurtures the faith he gives through the preaching and teaching of his Word. One must also understand that Baptism and teaching go together. In the Great Commission of Mathew 28, Jesus commanded a two-fold means to make disciples, baptizing in the name of the Triune God, and teaching the commands and instructions of Jesus. Thus for Lutherans, “the combination of baptism and teaching are at the heart of a theology of confirmation.”8 The Lutheran tradition does not consider the Rite of Confirmation a sacrament because God has neither commanded it nor promised to deliver forgiveness through

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it. However, the church links the rite with the sacrament of baptism, which is evident since the rite follows a period of catechesis. Catechesis, founded upon God’s Word, is part of fulfilling the second part of Jesus’ commission.

When God decided the time had come to redeem his chosen people from slavery to the Egyptians, he did not compel the heart of Pharaoh to soften, but used Moses to bear witness as an intercessor (Exod. 3). When the people of Israel hungered in the wilderness, God did not simply remove their hunger pangs instantaneously with a command, but provided food for them (Exod. 16). He even used the kingdoms of the Assyrians and the Babylonians to discipline his people through conquest and exile (2 Kings, Dan., and Esther). Instead of proclaiming unmitigated absolution over the wickedness of humankind, God established the system of sacrifices to remind people of the grievousness of their sin and to point forward to the ultimate sacrifice that Jesus would bear (Heb. 10). Although God remains the power behind these intercessions, he used the people and things of his creation as instruments to accomplish his work on Earth.

Regarding communicating his will, God has conveyed his Word to the world through intermediaries. One example is that God deigned to use human language to deliver his message. Instead of bestowing his will directly into the hearts and minds of people by his power, God spoke authoritatively to the world through the prophets, apostles, evangelists, and pastors. Even these intermediaries spoke only what they had heard from God either directly or through the Scriptures, with the ultimate authority of prophecy resting in Jesus (Heb. 1:1-2).
The theological foundation of this project was that God continues to use his revealed Word and the people who preach and teach it as the means through which he brings others to faith and instills in them the discipline of being followers of Jesus. The Scriptures revealed God’s two primary vocations to accomplish with this work: spiritual leaders who catechize the faith community as a whole and parents who are to be the primary catechists for their children. Kurt Marquart wrote of pastors,

The task of the public ministry of the Gospel is clear: public preaching and teaching, granting and withholding absolution, and administering the holy sacraments. … Ministers are not of course proprietors of the salvific treasures of the church but are rather stewards of them. Nor have they a monopoly of the faithful teaching, confession, and transmission of the evangelical truth.

Quoting Luther’s sermon on the first commandment, Marquart continued, “Every house-father and house-mother is to be bishop and bishopess ‘that you help us exercise the preaching office [Predigtamt] in [your] houses, as we do in the church.’”

The Scriptures bear this out in examples from both the Old and New Testaments.

**Old Testament Catechesis Imperatives**

The Old Testament provides an account of how God created the universe. It shows the rebellion and resulting sinful condition of fallen humankind. It points forward to the redemption of all creation through a coming Messiah. It is the testimony of the in-breaking of God into human history to preserve his Word repeatedly against the continual rebellion of his fallen creatures. Therefore, one may

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not be surprised to discover that the Old Testament contains a clear revelation of God’s means to catechize future generations through both spiritual leaders and parents.

**Spiritual Leaders and Community Catechesis**

The very first spiritual leader was also the first man, Adam. God gave his law directly to Adam (Gen. 2:16) before he created Eve. Adam and his wife were to live according to that law for their own benefit. In the garden, when Satan tempted Eve to doubt God’s Word, Adam was with her (Gen. 3:6). God held both Adam and Eve responsible for their sin. Eve had sinned against God’s command, but Adam had failed in his vocation as the spiritual leader of his family. The Bible explains that Eve was deceived, but Adam was not (1 Tim. 2:12-14), yet God proclaims Adam as culpable for the fall of all humankind (Rom. 5:19). His failure was twofold: he sinned against God by breaking the command and he did nothing as Satan led his wife away from God’s truth into temptation (Gen. 3:17). Luther pointed out that God gave the command not to eat of the tree in the midst of the garden directly to Adam and he, in turn, delivered the Law to Eve. Adam, therefore, was not Satan’s target, but Eve, who God called to trust in Adam’s headship. Adam was the first spiritual leader of a faith community, albeit a very small one, and the first to fail miserably at the task. The temptation of the serpent was an invitation to Eve and Adam to doubt God’s Word, “Did God really say?” The doubting of God’s revealed Word is an instrumental cause of sin today and the basis for apostasy. This event underscores

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why God is so adamant about faithfulness to the Word in his commands to the leaders and parents who came after the Fall.

Where Adam failed, God called others to be faithful and, until Christ, none were. From Abraham, the first man God called “prophet” (Gen. 20:7) to the apostles and the pastors they trained to follow in their footsteps (2 Tim. 2:2), God entrusted the proclamation of his Word to the leaders of the various faith communities he established. Accompanying this noble task (1 Tim. 3:1) was a great responsibility. God charged each of his emissaries to remain faithful to his instruction.

God established spiritual leaders to safeguard his statutes and deliver the message of hope to the faith community as a whole. Prophets served as those charged with speaking on behalf of God to the people. A continual exhortation from the lips of the prophets throughout the Old Testament was, “Hear the Word of the LORD!” God called prophets to testify against the transgressions of humankind and to point them to the redemption found only through God’s intervention (Amos 3:7, Hosea 12:10, Rom. 1:1-2). God also established other offices, including judges and kings, to rule over the people. To Aaron and the priesthood, the instructions from God through Moses were clear, “You are to distinguish between the holy and the common, and between the unclean and the clean, and you are to teach the people of Israel all the statutes that the LORD has spoken to them by Moses” (Lev. 10:10-11).

One might describe the purpose behind all of these spiritual leaders as a call to catechize the larger congregation to keep the chain of God’s revelation unbroken for the benefit of future generations.
Moses was a leader called by God directly (Exod. 3:4) and tasked to be God’s representative to Pharaoh to bring the people of Israel out of Egypt. Moses would not speak on his own, but only what God commanded him (Exod. 4:12). Later, Moses served as the spiritual leader of the redeemed community. To him, God gave the Ten Commandments and directed him to deliver them to the congregation. In Deuteronomy 4, God prevented Moses from entering the Promised Land, but he remained the spiritual leader of the Israelites. From his own impassioned sermon, Moses was confident in his duty to teach the people the ways of God.

And now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the rules that I am teaching you, and do them, that you may live, and go in and take possession of the land that the LORD, the God of your fathers, is giving you. You shall not add to the word that I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God that I command you. See, I have taught you statutes and rules, as the LORD my God commanded me that you should do them in the land that you are entering to take possession of it. (Deut. 4:1-5)

Moses, in this same message, later pointed to the duty of parents to take that same unadulterated Word of God and deliver it in the framework of their families.

To the people of Israel, God promised a prophet to replace Moses. He fulfilled this promise by the incarnation of Jesus of Nazareth. Knowing that many would arise claiming to be prophets, God was clear about the accuracy he expected from his representatives, “The prophet who presumes to speak a word in my name that I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, that same prophet shall die” (Deut. 18:20). God warned Ezekiel,

Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel. Whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me. If I say to the wicked, “You shall surely die,” and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, in order to save his life, that
wicked person shall die for his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand” (Ezek. 3:17-18).

Several times God urged his people to not “go to the left or to the right” of his teachings and commands (Deut. 5:32, 28:14, Josh. 1:7, Prov. 4:27). The prophets and other spiritual leaders, such as the Levites, were God’s means to provide instruction to the faith community. Horace Hummel wrote,

All the evidence we have indicates that in addition to their liturgical responsibilities, it was the priests’ obligation to “teach,” or, literally, “cause [people] to know” Yahweh’s Torah. The pedagogical duties of the priests come through clearly at points: Lev 10:11; Deut 33:10; Hos 4:6; Hag 2:11; Mal 2:6–8.11

The role of the spiritual leader was to be faithful to God’s revealed will, which demonstrates that God considered doctrine important as well as the duty to pass it down to future generations.

Parents and Family Catechesis

The importance of the priest and prophet for delivering and safeguarding God’s Word cannot be underestimated. However, nowhere in Scripture does God command parents to leave the spiritual training of their child up to the faith community or the spiritual leader. Instead, God commanded parents to raise up their children to treasure the history of his activity on earth and strive to walk according to his will and ways. In the fourth commandment, children are commanded to obey their parents (Exod. 20:12, Eph. 6:1). When one understands the role of parents as representatives of God to their children, the fourth commandment becomes all the

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more noteworthy. In *The Large Catechism*, Luther touted the special distinction parents have in their vocation to raise up children in the faith. Luther explained that God has directed children to revere parents because mothers and fathers are his representatives.12

Franklin Painter, in his book *Luther on Education*, wrote that since parental authority comes from God, he holds them accountable for how they raise their children. He explained that Luther saw the primary function of parents was to train up children to be good citizens and faithful Christians.13

Moses directed the people of Israel as their ordained spiritual leader to learn and obey the statutes of God. He also reiterated something the Israelites already knew: parents have the duty to teach God’s Word to their children (Deut. 4:1-9). In this passage, there is not only the command for parents to take responsibility for catechizing their children, but also the reasoning behind it. God chose parents to pass down the faith to assure that there would not a gap in the teaching of his revelation. Individual spiritual leaders would come and go, but the family made up the basic building blocks of life.

One of the clearest examples of God’s will for parents to pass down the faith comes from Deuteronomy 6:4-7:

> Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your

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house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.

Chapter 11 repeats this. One further observes that religious training does not take place only during morning devotions, or just before bedtime, but is a continual process that should permeate every aspect of family life.

In verse seven, the word translated “diligently” comes from the Hebrew word sha-nan and contains the nuance of repetition as from sharpening a knife on a whetstone. The parental duty to teach children about the faith God bestowed upon them in their baptisms happens through example and direct and repetitive teaching. In verse 20, Moses prepared parents for the time when children would want to know more. He wrote, “When your son asks you in time to come, ‘What is the meaning of the testimonies and the statutes and the rules that the LORD our God commanded you?’ Then you shall say…” One inference here is that children would not have known to ask about the deeper meanings of the commands and statutes if their parents had not exposed them to God’s teachings in the first place. Furthermore, children will be looking to their parents to provide the answers and God, through Moses’ instruction here, expects that parents will be able to answer.

By the time of Martin Luther, the general population—and even many priests—had been ignorant about the tenets of the faith. In his preface to the Small Catechism, Luther wrote, “The deplorable conditions which I recently encountered when I was a visitor constrained me to prepare this brief and simple catechism or

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Luther suggested a catechetical style that mimicked the repetition encouraged in Deuteronomy 6:4-7. Luther also promoted the concept that a time would come for parents to inject meanings into previously memorized word and concepts as illustrated in Deuteronomy 11:20. Luther wrote,

> Begin by teaching them the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Lord’s Prayer, etc., following the text word for word so that the young may repeat these things after you and retain them in their memory. … In the second place, after the people have become familiar with the text, teach them what it means. For this purpose, take the explanations in this booklet, or choose any other brief and fixed explanations which you may prefer, and adhere to them without changing a single syllable, as stated above with reference to the text.16

Even in the context of God’s judgment against Sodom and Gomorrah, the reader hears God describe Abraham as being set apart to pass down the faith.

> The LORD said, “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I have chosen him, that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice, so that the LORD may bring to Abraham what he has promised him.” (Gen. 18:17-19)

In this example, the inclusion of both the “children and household” of Abraham may represent both his biological children and servants, but also point forward to all the children of God to whom Abraham will serve as a spiritual leader and father in the faith.

In Joshua 4, God provided not only the command to parents to teach their children, but even provides them a physical means—the twelve memorial stones—as a reminder. In verses 21 and 22, Joshua emphasized the command, “And he said to


the people of Israel, ‘When your children ask their fathers in times to come, ‘What do these stones mean?’ then you shall let your children know.”’ Commentator Adolph Harstad wrote,

Joshua 4:21 reiterates Joshua’s earlier command to teach children the meaning of the twelve-stone memorial (4:6–7). The repetition underscores the critical need for continuing catechesis in the saving acts of the Lord. There dare be no gaps in the chain of teaching lest there be a lost generation that has not been taught to fear and love their Lord. The stone memorial will endure for years as a visible teaching tool, but its stones themselves will be silent. Parents must do the talking!17

Proverbs 1:7-9 also serves as a beautiful example of not only how believers are to view God’s instruction, but also how children are to learn from their parents. It teaches, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction. Hear, my son, your father’s instruction, and forsake not your mother’s teaching, for they are a graceful garland for your head and pendants for your neck.”

Likewise, Proverbs 22:6 is well known, “Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.” This verse speaks not only to the duty of parents, but also the efficacy of God’s Word (Isa. 55:11).

This theme is also present throughout the Psalms. In particular, Psalm 78 provides a vivid rationale for passing down the instruction and the history of God. The first eight verses speak directly about the duty of fathers to pass down the faith to the coming generation. This Psalm not only points to the necessity for fathers to

teach their children, but the act of the Psalm itself is an act of a faith community leader inculcating those under his care. Allen Ross explained,

Asaph called the people to hear his instruction (v. 1) about the Lord’s deeds, power, and wonders (v. 4) that He would make known to his generation. Earlier generations handed these down as God had commanded. The LORD planned this so that the nation might trust Him and obey the Law (v. 7), not stumbling in unbelief and rebellion like their unfaithful forefathers.18

These passages represent the larger testimony of God throughout the Old Testament that witnesses to the duty of parents to be the primary catechists for their children—supported by spiritual leaders and encouraged through the faith community as a whole. Unfortunately, parents today are not fulfilling their responsibilities. This has been the concern for quite some time. In 1951, Arthur Repp wrote,

It is a deplorable fact that even Christian homes are not showing the expected interest in their children during confirmation instruction. Perhaps the church should re-emphasize the fact that the home has the primary responsibility in the education of the children and that the church has no intention of replacing the home. But the home needs help from the church in seeing its responsibility.19

**New Testament Catechesis Imperatives**

Just as the Old Testament points forward to the promised Messiah, the New Testament points back to Jesus of Nazareth, who was revealed as the Christ, both God and man (John 20:31). The message of the New Testament is to proclaim how God fulfilled his promises through Jesus and to bring all people to faith through the

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message of Christ’s vicarious atonement (Rom. 10:17). The New Testament also records the history of the early Christian church and contains the inspired writings of the apostles and evangelists whose purpose was to continue to catechize the church-at-large.

**Spiritual Leaders and Catechesis**

Frequently, Jesus chastised the religious leaders of the day for failing in their duty to preserve the Word of God and to teach it properly. In Matthew 23, Jesus delivered seven woes against the Pharisees for their dereliction of duty. In verses 2 and 3, Jesus said, “The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses’ seat, so do and observe whatever they tell you, but not the works they do. For they preach, but do not practice.” The teaching authority of the spiritual leader is evident in this admonishment. To sit on Moses’ seat was to serve as Moses did: as a representative and spokesperson of God. Jesus upheld the office of spiritual overseer while condemning the abuse. When Nicodemus was confused about the language of being “born from above,” Jesus replied, “Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things?” (John 3:10). Beyond illuminating the failure of the Pharisees and Sadducees, Jesus’ concern demonstrated that it is God’s will for spiritual leaders to teach and that correctly.

In Paul’s discussion of the importance of the variety of spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12, he wrote, “God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers.” It is this third office, teaching, that most connects to today’s pastoral office. In his commentary on 1 Corinthians, Gregory Lockwood explained the difference between the three offices. He wrote that unlike apostles who
walked physically with Jesus and prophets who received direct revelations from God, he calls pastors teach and preach according to his special revelation found in the Scriptures. Lockwood also emphasized that, according to 1 Timothy 3 and 2 Timothy 2, pastors must be “apt to teach.” Furthermore, the pastor must also be able to read and expound on the scriptures publicly (1 Tim. 4:13). This was especially important when people were unable to read the scriptures for themselves.

In the general and pastoral epistles, God has provided direction for spiritual leadership. Paul described the pastoral task as a “noble” one (1 Tim. 3:1). Perhaps because of the failures of Adam as the spiritual leader of his household, God commanded through Paul that a pastor “must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God’s church?” (1 Tim. 3:4-5). According to Paul’s letters, a pastor’s job is to “guard the deposit” entrusted to him (1 Tim. 6:20) and “teach sound doctrine” (Titus 2:1), to “rightly handle the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15), and to “preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching” (2 Tim. 4:2). In other words, the task of the pastor as a spiritual leader is to catechize the faith community.

Just as Moses commanded obedience to his teaching because it was not his own but the Word of God, Paul urged the same regarding spiritual leaders in the

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21 Lockwood, *1 Corinthians*, 453.
New Testament church: “Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you” (Heb. 13:17).

Jesus equipped his disciples with the Holy Spirit who empowered them to be his representatives to the world (Acts 1:8). Just as God warned against prophets speaking words he had not given them, he tasked pastors with the duty of remaining true to God’s revelation and teaching. Just as the people did not always receive God’s prophets enthusiastically, especially when they carried a message of judgment, the first century disciples faced a world in which human reason began to be elevated above God’s Word. The Pastoral Epistles addressed to Timothy and Titus are direct about the pastor’s responsibility to be faithful to the message-as-taught. While the eternal fate of the human is outside of a person’s ability to judge (James 4:12), one’s confessed doctrine is open to scrutiny. So, Paul wrote to the young pastor Timothy, “If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing” (1 Tim 6:3–4). Paul further explained that the “man of God’s good work” is teaching, reproof, and correction according to the revealed Word of God (2 Tim. 3:16). To Titus, Paul urged that pastors “must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it” (Titus 1:9). Moreover, Paul reminded Timothy, “As I urged you when I was going
to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that you may charge certain persons not to teach any different doctrine” (1 Tim. 1:3).

In the early 21st century, there are still those with “itching ears” who seek after new and novel teachings. Thus, it is all the more important that the Christian leader understand how important pure and unadulterated doctrine is to God. It is evident from Scripture that God called prophets, apostles, and pastors for the very purpose of safeguarding the truth and perpetuating—aided by the Holy Spirit—the Gospel, which God uses to bestow faith. This is consistent with Article V of the Augsburg Confession, through which the first Lutheran confessors taught,

To obtain such faith God instituted the office of the ministry, that is provided the Gospel and the sacraments. Through these, as through means, he gives the Holy Spirit, who works faith, when and where he pleases, in those who hear the Gospel. And the Gospel teaches that we have a gracious God, not by our own merits, but by the merit of Christ, when we believe this. Condemned are the Anabaptists and others who teach that the Holy Spirit comes to us through our own preparations, thoughts, and works without the external word of the Gospel.22

God knew that there would be much resistance to the truth as time marched forward and the end drew closer (2 Tim. 4:3-4). While pastors bear the burden of catechizing the faith community as a whole, the New Testament speaks to the role of parents as well.

Parents and Catechesis

The account of Jesus in the temple when he was twelve (Luke 2) is the only biblical account of Jesus as an adolescent. After staying behind, much to the worry of Mary and Joseph, Jesus seemed unconcerned about the stressful ordeal his mother

and guardian endured. Instead, he replied in verse 49, “Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?” In this statement, the reader learns something about Jesus’ divinity and his cognizance of it. Yet, Jesus surprises the reader again when Luke reveals in the next two verses that even though Mary and Joseph did not understand what Jesus had meant, he became submissive to them as his parents. Luke wrote of the result in verse 52, “And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.” Arthur Just wrote in his commentary on Luke, “And so the infancy narrative ends with Jesus now living in the proper order of relationship, ‘being obedient’ (ὑποτασσόμενος, as in Titus 3:1; cf. ὑπακούω in Ephesians 6:1) to his parents and in Nazareth, advancing in wisdom and stature and grace before God and people.”

Paul pointed to the influence of Timothy’s mother and grandmother: “I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, dwells in you as well” (2 Tim. 2:5). Paul explained,

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus (2 Tim. 3:14-15).

This passage is illustrative of how God uses parents, and sometimes grandparents, to raise up believers through their own acts of catechesis.

In his Treatise on Good Works, Martin Luther wrote, “The first work is that we should honor our own father and mother. This honoring does not consist in

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merely showing them all deference. It means that we obey them, have regard for what they do and what they say, esteem them highly, give way to them, and accept what they say.”

Another sedes doctrinae for understanding the godly relationship between children and parents is in Ephesians 6. Immediately following Paul’s instructions that followers of Christ are to “walk in love,” he applied this to the family unit, first to husbands and wives and then to children and parents. Paul wrote,

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. “Honor your father and mother” (this is the first commandment with a promise), “that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.” Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. (Eph. 6:1-4)

The word translated “discipline” in verse four is the Greek word παιδεία, which indicates “chastisement for improving behavior” when used in Hebrews 12:5, 7, 8, and 11. The English Standard Version rendered the related noun paidarion “young child.” The verb is included in connection with nouthesia and is translated as “instruction.” A closer look at this combination indicates a “word of admonition which is designed to correct while not provoking or embittering.” That is, parents are to train up their children and correct both wrong belief and incorrect behavior according to God’s Word. This stands in contrast to the increasingly more common laissez-faire approach parents take that allow children to “make their own choices.”

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On the contrary, God expects parents to raise children in the one, true faith. The concern expressed that fathers should not “provoke their children to anger” is not an argument for avoiding correction. Parents must correct in such a way that the child sees that the parent’s discipline and instruction is out of love. Such godly parents earn the children’s honor commanded by God.

The Special Status of Children

Children hold a special place in the heart of God. God created marriage to bring children into the world and the family to surround the child and nurture him or her into being a faithful servant of God (Gen. 1:28). Psalm 127:3-5 provides a poetic encouragement for parents,

> Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord,  
> the fruit of the womb a reward.  
> Like arrows in the hand of a warrior  
> are the children of one’s youth.  
> Blessed is the man  
> who fills his quiver with them!  
> He shall not be put to shame  
> when he speaks with his enemies in the gate.

These verses are only the last half of the psalm. The psalm begins, “Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain.” Whether the house is the house of God, which David had dared to build until God declared him unworthy (1 Chron. 28) and passed the duty on to Solomon (1 Kings 5), or it is the house a father builds for his family, God and his Word must be the foundation (Matt. 7:24-27). Some scholars have contended that the “children” referred to in this passage are grown

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adult children. They point to the phrase “children of one’s youth” to support this interpretation. Nevertheless, it is reasonable that these grown children had parents who catechized them well in the instruction of Torah throughout their childhood. As Proverbs 22:6 instructs, “Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.”

The “children of one’s youth” are intrinsically valuable because they are God’s gifts. They were also useful to their parents and to society as a whole as they grow into well-rounded adults. Keil and Delitzsch rendered this phrase, “sons begotten in one’s youth” in keeping with the Hebrew. The original readers would likely have recognized the military imagery and how sons would be useful in the defense of their family and country during the time of the psalm. In Psalm 127, the author described children as a heritage, followed by the analogy that children are “like arrows in the hand of a warrior” and the man who has many will “not be put to shame when he speaks with his enemies in the gate.” While “sons” makes sense in the historical context of this passage, “children” is appropriate according to the sense. Children are gifts from God then and today because of their usefulness to a stable society. Marcia Bunge pointed to the various vocations that children would grow to have as logical evidence of their importance to the community.

Just as God used the marital relationship to illustrate the relationship between God and his people (Eph. 5:32), he used the analogy of children to provide an


exemplar for saving faith. The synoptic gospels reveal that Jesus extolled parents to bring their children to him, even in the face of the disciple’s hesitation. Jesus said, “Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea” (Matt. 18:6). The “little ones” of this example were likely not young children but those who have humbled themselves like children.30 Jesus’ focus on children, who are less skeptical and more open to faith, illustrates God’s favor upon them. The faith of children is special because they, unlike more worldly adults, are less likely to reject what they receive from God. Marcia Bunge pointed to Jesus’ words in Matthew 21 where he quoted Psalm 8:3, “Have you never read, ‘Out of the mouths of infants and nursing babies you have prepared praise for yourself’?”31 Jesus acknowledged that God is the giver of faith and that children are capable of saving faith. Jesus also rebuked his disciples who would have prevented children from approaching him. The synoptic gospels attest to this. Mark describes Jesus as being “indignant” about this exclusion of children (Mark 10).

Although the Scriptures testify that God favors children, this does not mean that children are favored because of some presumed immunity to sin. People are born with original sin and concupiscence from the moment of their conception. David, in Psalm 51, wrote of his sinfulness even from birth. Verse 5 is particularly clear,


“Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.”32 In Psalm 58:3, David reiterates the idea: “The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray from birth, speaking lies.” Reason also holds that if children were sinless, they would not be subject to death. The Scriptures are clear that death is the result of sin (Gen. 3:22-24, Rom. 5:12, 6:23) and, unfortunately, children do die. This undergirds the Lutheran practice and emphasis on baptism, especially paedobaptism. Children, from infancy, are able to possess saving faith. This is because faith is a gift of God, not something the child must do at some certain point of maturity (Eph. 2:8-10). The parents’ duty to catechize their children is a responsibility with implications greater than what the child cognitively knows about his or her religion, but it is by the Word that the faith given to a child in his or her baptism grows and matures.

**Biblical and Theological Summary**

God uses means such as the proclamation of Scripture and the administration of his sacraments to bestow and nurture faith in people. Likewise, God uses human language and people to spread the message of his Law and Gospel for the benefit of the world. Throughout the Old Testament, God tasked prophets and other spiritual leaders with inculcating the larger faith community, while parents were to teach their children about God’s will and ways.

In the New Testament, God’s plan did not change. Christ fulfilled perfectly the prophetic office, and he established the pastoral office to safeguard and teach this

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32 The text of the New International Version is here because it better reflects the understanding that it David’s sinful nature that came about at his conception, not that his mother somehow sinned in the act of his conception.
finalized Word of God to the churches. Parents remained the primary catechists of their children. The challenge going forward was to determine how and why things changed from God’s design. Are parents aware of their vocation to be catechists in their own household? How can pastors and congregations work cooperatively with parents to fulfill their God-given vocational catechetical roles?
CHAPTER THREE: REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

The Focus of the Literature Review

In this chapter, the researcher reviewed relevant theoretical and research literature regarding catechesis and the instruction of children in the faith by pastors and parents. This literature review was limited to four distinct areas. First, the researcher investigated the history and development of catechesis in the church. Second, he explored the current state of catechesis in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod through two broad but key research studies on the topic. Third, the researcher consulted the writings and research of contemporary catechesis practitioners. Fourth, the researcher analyzed examples of published Lutheran confirmation instruction curricula to identify strengths and weakness for use in a cooperative catechesis model.

History and Development of Catechesis in the Church

To know where one is going, one must first know where one has been. This was the impetus behind the researcher examining the history and development of catechesis throughout church history. The researcher considered sources from a variety of church traditions to understand the multiple influences on catechesis.

In the context of catechesis in the church, the researcher must first make a clear distinction. In the Lutheran Church, parishioners often consider catechesis and confirmation instruction as synonymous. Although catechesis in its simplest form
means to instruct, a period of formal catechesis ordinarily takes place in the years leading up to and culminating in a young person’s participation in the rite of confirmation. Hence, “confirmation instruction” and “confirmation ministry” have arisen around the task of preparing children for this rite. There is no shortage of debate on the origins, necessity, and effectiveness of the rite of confirmation. As stated in the delimitations, this project is unconcerned with the specifics regarding the rite of confirmation. This project focused only on the preparatory and instructional efforts. Authors have written much on the history of the rite of confirmation and while pertinent elements appear in this chapter, the primary concentration was how pastors and parents have taught Christian children the faith throughout church history.

**Early Church and Roman Catholic**

*The Early Church.* While a systematized method of catechesis was absent from the New Testament-era church, the Scriptures make it clear that doctrine and teaching were important to the early Christians. Formal catechesis began in response to persecution that later arose in the church’s history and out of fear that spies and hypocrites would attempt to infiltrate the church during periods of tyranny. The editors of the *Christian Cyclopedia* explained that prior to a rise in persecutions around 200 AD religious instruction was informal. The systematization of church doctrine became more important as the church developed a cautious attitude when accepting new members. The writings of Origen reflect the creation of the “catechumenate” where not only formal Christian instruction but also an investigation into the catechumen’s character and life took place prior to acceptance
into the church. Christian instruction waned again between the seventh and the twelfth centuries due to mass numbers of baptisms and conversions, the logistics of which made systematic catechesis difficult.¹

Clinton Arnold in his article “Early Church Catechesis and New Christian Classes in Contemporary Evangelicalism” wrote about the Early Church’s emphasis on training new believers. He described a three-year period within which Christian education took place. Arnold explained there was a focused effort to instruct new converts. He postulated that a “two ways” tradition appeared in the early catechumenate that had roots in the Jewish system of training proselytes. Citing the Apostolic Tradition, the Apostolic Constitutions, and the Testamentum Domini, Arnold demonstrated that a three-year period of catechesis was well attested.²

In the Early Church, formal catechesis took place for youth and adults prior to baptism and then continued informally as they grew in maturity. For those baptized as infants, formal catechesis would follow their baptism. Massy Shepherd noted that by the mid-second century, baptisms took place annually during the vigil of Easter. These baptisms followed a period of instruction and investigation into the life of the catechumen.³ D. H. Williams compared the catechumenate to an Early Church version of Sunday school with the goal of leading new believers to a deeper


understanding of their faith. He explained that the process was rudimentary and variable across Christendom.4

As the church grew and began to encounter novel and sometimes heretical ideas about the faith, the need for thorough and systematic catechesis continued to grow. Many of the doctrines outlined in the catechisms and canons of the church arose out of a need to defend the faith against heresy. As a result, the teachings and tenets that set the Christian faith apart from others increased in complexity. Williams wrote that, among other things, debates about the Holy Trinity and the nature of Christ gave rise to both sophisticated doctrine and generations of highly educated Christian thinkers. These erudite leaders then created more systemized procedures for teaching the faith to converts.5

Everett Ferguson, who has also written much on the life of the Early Church, wrote about the content of catechetical instruction. He affirmed that a dramatic shift occurred in the fourth century. Ferguson contended that in the first three centuries after the New Testament church catechesis focused less on doctrine and instead aimed to initiate coverts into the Christian way of life.6 The rapid growth of the fourth and fifth century church brought with it a change in catechetical focus. Ferguson wrote that Cyril in Jerusalem and Ambrose in Milan concentrated on expositing the creed prior to baptism and afterward engage in mystagogy, or the act

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5 Williams, *Evangelicals and Tradition*, 41.

of leading the catechumen into the “mysteries” or sacraments. Augustine’s
catechetical materials also dealt primarily with doctrine, although training in morals
and Christian living was a component. Edward Smithers also commented on the
content of catechesis in the Early Church period. He explained that many new
believers were given moral instruction because they had been previously pagan.
Over time, the focus of pre-baptismal catechesis was on teaching the Nicene Creed
and, in some communities, the Lord’s Prayer, and the meaning of the sacraments—including baptism, chrism, and the Eucharist. He also noted, “Given the significant
number of treatises and sermons devoted to catechesis in the patristic period,
including manuals written to train and equip catechists, it is quite evident that
teaching new believers both before and after baptism was a priority for the Early
Church.”

From the fourth to seventh centuries, the catechetical focus continued to
change as infant baptism became more prevalent. Kevin Lawson explained that the
rapid growth was a result of Christianity’s transition from a tolerated and sometimes
persecuted religion to one of great favor within the Roman Empire. As infant
baptisms increased, the opportunity for pre-baptismal instruction waned and as a
result, more responsibility fell on parents for teaching their children the faith.
Lawson contended that as the early Christians moved toward a more solidified

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understanding of original sin, and infant baptism became preferred, the catechumenate entered into decline. Catechesis thrived, but it was now for teaching the faith after baptism as opposed to in preparation for it.  

The tumultuous Early Church required a strong emphasis on catechesis, even if its content varied. Teaching took place both before and after baptism through both formal and informal catechesis and was important for assimilation into the life of the church. Defined roles for parents in the catechetical process in the Early Church were glaringly absent from the literature. This was unexpected considering how the Bible emphasizes the role of parents in bringing up children in the faith.

*The Roman Catholic Church.* The nexus between baptism and catechesis is evident in the contemporary Roman Catholic confession. It also prescribes an understanding for the role of parents and the church community. For Roman Catholics, catechesis teaches doctrine with the intent to strengthen the catechumen’s faith. It connects the catechumen to Christ and his Word. Because God has given faith to those who are baptized, the Roman Catholic Church calls baptism a “sacrament of faith” citing Mark 16:16. They contend that this faith is “imperfect” and catechesis is required to nurture it. Their catechism states,

> Baptism is the sacrament of faith. But faith needs the community of believers. It is only within the faith of the Church that each of the faithful can believe. The faith required for Baptism is not a perfect and mature faith, but a

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beginning that is called to develop. … For all the baptized, children or adults, faith must grow after Baptism.¹²

They outline a role for parents, too. Their catechism states,

For the grace of Baptism to unfold, the parents’ help is important. So too is the role of the godfather and godmother, who must be firm believers, able and ready to help the newly baptized on the road of Christian life. Their task is a truly ecclesial function (officium). The whole ecclesial community bears some responsibility for the development and safeguarding of the grace given at Baptism.¹³

In her discussion of the history of the sacrament of confirmation, Sandra DeGidio wrote that the entire community of believers has a duty and responsibility to be involved in the catechesis of others.¹⁴ DeGidio pointed out several ways that the parish community could get involved, which included being daily witnesses, sharing gifts, serving as mentors, and praying for catechumens.

Baptism, Confirmation, and the reception of the Lord’s Supper constitute the initiation rites for the Roman Catholic Christian. Their catechism states, “The sacrament of Confirmation is necessary for the completion of baptismal grace. For ‘by the sacrament of Confirmation, [the baptized] are more perfectly bound to the Church and are enriched with a special strength of the Holy Spirit.”¹⁵ They draw this conclusion from the ancient practices of anointing and the laying on of hands. The Roman Catholic Catechism states both, “confirmation is necessary for the completion of baptismal grace” and, “baptismal grace is a grace of free, unmerited

election and does not need ‘ratification’ to become effective.”

God desires that all grow in their faith in him and love toward others (1 Pet. 2:2, 2 Pet. 3:18). Since God has chosen his word to increase a person’s faith, the catechetical relationship is of utmost importance for spiritual maturation.

This researcher did not find very many parental directives for teaching their children in the first four centuries of the Early Church. If the absence of information is evidence, it could have something to do with church authority. For Roman Catholics, church tradition is as authoritative as the Bible. Chantal Epie wrote, “If we want to be faithful to God’s word, we have to accept both the written revelation and this other part of revelation that was handed down to us by word of mouth and preserved for all generations in the Tradition of the Church.” She pointed to 2 Thessalonians 2:14 as a proof where Paul wrote, “So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by our spoken word or by our letter.” She explained that the Bible serves only as a summary of God’s teaching and the Church Authority functions as the final interpreter and judge of the Bible. The Roman Catholic catechism confirmed, “The task of interpreting the Word of God authentically has been entrusted solely to the Magisterium of the Church, that is, to the Pope and to the bishops in communion with him.” The Roman Catholic catechism also quoted Augustine to support this idea, “But I would not believe in the

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Gospel, had not the authority of the Catholic Church already moved me. This attitude toward the exclusivity of the church authority to judge doctrine may have resulted in a low emphasis on the parental role in catechesis. This Roman Catholic understanding is in contrast to the Lutheran understanding, which views church tradition as valuable for understanding how Christians interpreted and applied the Bible throughout history, but not as authoritative.

**Lutheran Tradition**

According to Kevin Lawson, the responsibility for the instruction and spiritual nurture of children fell primarily to the parents instead of church leaders and this early understanding continued into and through the medieval period. The church emphasized the role of parents even more in the late medieval period during the Reformation. Richard Osmer explained that the Reformers objected to the Roman Catholic Church’s tradition and hierarchy, which they felt kept laity out of the Bible and captive to the church’s interpretation. In response, catechesis emerged during the Reformation as an empowering tool for the laity. Catechesis was a way in which laypersons could not only learn more about the teaching of Scripture, but also have an active participation in the life of the church.

It was through catechesis and, in particular, Martin Luther’s small and large catechisms that the Reformation finally took hold among the common people.

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20 Catholic Church, *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 34.


Charles Arand wrote that Luther’s *Small Catechism* secured the revolution for the reformer. He wrote, “Following its publication, the *Small Catechism* was the most used pedagogical, theological, and confessional text among Lutherans for the next 450 years.”

Luther, who wrote his *Small Catechism* to aid parents and teachers in passing down the basics of the Christian faith, understood it as his parental duty to teach the catechism to his children. He also considered himself a lifelong student of it. He wrote, “I, too, am a theologian who has attained a fairly good practical knowledge and experience of Holy Scriptures through various dangers. But I do not so glory in this gift as not to join my children daily in prayerfully reciting the Catechism.” Likewise, he commended the teaching of the catechism to pastors as a glorious work. He wrote, “Those should be regarded as the pick and as the best and most useful teachers who are able to drill the Catechism well. … One must necessarily forever hammer home these brief lessons to the common people.”

Luther chastised pastors who did not appreciate catechetical sermons, but he also understood well that sermons alone were not the answer. He remarked, “Ah, doctrinal sermons in the church do not edify young people. But quizzes at home, definitions in the Catechism, and questions concerning the confession of faith are of

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much greater benefit.” This task was no easier in Luther’s day than it is today. He continued, “They are, of course, troublesome; but they are very necessary.”

In the catechetical practices of Luther, he was not doing anything new. Arand concurred with other sources that the Ten Commandments, the Apostles’ Creed, and the Lord’s Prayer formed the foundation upon which the church had established catechesis since the fourth century. What was not widely accepted was how the church should deliver these teachings should to the people. Luther’s catechism helped to guide catechetical methodology. Arand explained that these key texts of the faith appeared in many forms. The church taught these tenets using books, sermons, prayers, and pictures. Luther drew inspiration from all of these sources in the creation of his catechisms. Ultimately, Luther’s Small Catechism drove the message of the Reformation into the hearts and minds of the people.

Arand pointed out that the literacy rate throughout the Holy Roman Empire during the Reformation was about five percent. To combat this, reformers directed the catechisms to those that could read, the teachers and preachers of the day. The teachers and preachers were then encouraged to pass along the information orally. The catechism itself adopted this strategy. Luther wrote the catechism to be heard, rather than merely read.

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29 Plass, What Luther Says, 125.
30 Arand, That I May Be His Own, 57.
31 Arand, That I May Be His Own, 57.
32 Arand, That I May Be His Own, 92.
Luther emphasized cooperation between parish pastors and parents from the beginning of his reforms. Pastors were the first to learn the catechism to be equipped for catechizing youth.\(^3\) Although Luther’s immediate target audience may have been pastors, he considered the head of the household as the primary teacher. Arand explained that Luther’s focus on the family was consistent with the concept of domestic catechization. That is, the church of the middle ages expected parents to teach their children the faith.\(^3\)

Luther envisioned a person employing his catechetical method throughout his or her life. Instruction in the Christian faith did not end with a person’s reception into the congregation or acceptance to the communion table.\(^3\) A person progressed through catechesis by three broad stages. The first stage was for the catechumen to learn the text and basic tenets of the faith by heart. Memorization was key in Luther’s method. In the second stage, pastors led the catechumen to attach meaning and significance to words, phrases, and verses that he or she had memorized by rote.\(^3\) Hence, the catechism is a list of questions and answers. The catechumen memorized the words only to learn what they meant later. The final stage continued throughout the life of the Christian as they put the basics into practice. Luther himself, in the Large Catechism, set an example for others to follow. He wrote, “Every morning, and whenever else I have time, I read and recite word for word the

\(^3\) Arand, That I May Be His Own, 93.

\(^3\) Arand, That I May Be His Own, 95.

\(^3\) Tappert, Book of Concord, 359.

\(^3\) Arand, That I May Be His Own, 100.
Lord’s Prayer, the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Psalms, etc. I must still read and study the catechism daily.”

Thomas Korcok wrote that Luther envisioned the catechism to be “the Bible of the laymen” because within it all the essential Christian beliefs were present. Korcok contended that Luther was not being arrogant in his reasoning, as one might conclude, but that when Luther spoke of the catechism, he meant the parts of it derived directly from Scripture: the Ten Commandments, the Apostles’ Creed, and the Lord’s Prayer.

During Luther’s time, the sacrament of confirmation, as understood by Roman Catholics, had fallen completely out of use among Lutherans. In the early days of Lutheranism, there was an outright rejection and opposition to all things Roman Catholic. After Lutherans reduced the number of sacraments to Baptism, Confession, and the Lord’s Supper, the previous sacrament of confirmation found no place in Lutheran congregations. In his book, Confirmation in the Lutheran Church, Arthur Repp explained that the reintroduction of the confirmation rite was slow and uneven and it occurred for several reasons. The major reason for the renewal of the rite of confirmation was to signify that one knew the basics of the faith and was prepared to receive the Lord’s Supper.

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37 Tappert, Book of Concord, 359.


The prototypes to catechesis prior to the confirmation rite returning to the Lutheran tradition were ordinarily in the form of short catechetical sermons designed to instruct those who wished to partake in communion. Repp noted that pastors intended these sermons for the entire congregation, not just the youth. He added that the pastor would also read from the catechism during the service, before the Gospel reading, to familiarize the congregation with the text.40

One proponent of catechesis, and especially its connection to the rite of confirmation, was Martin Bucer. He became known as the “Father of Protestant Confirmation.”41 John Brenner wrote that Bucer was very concerned with Christian discipline. In response to Anabaptists teaching that one must make a public profession of faith and “surrender to Christ,” Bucer influenced the rite of confirmation as a way to both honor infant baptism while also providing an opportunity for a Christian to profess his or her faith in Christ publically.42

Maxwell Johnson illustrated Bucer’s commitment to catechesis by citing a quote from a translation of Bucer’s 1551 Censura,

Such an occasion [bishop’s visit], when the churches are thus visited and renewed in the religion of Christ would be particularly suitable for the solemn administration of confirmation to those who had reached that stage in the catechizing of our faith. Such care on the part of bishops would go a long way to arouse the people to make progress in all true and effective knowledge of Christ. … The last of this series of instruction is a warning that no-one is

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40 Repp, Confirmation in the Lutheran Church, 318-319.
to be admitted to Holy Communion unless he has been confirmed. This instruction will be very wholesome if only those are confirmed who have confirmed the confession of their mouth with a manner of life consistent with it and from whose conduct it can be discerned that they make profession of their own faith and not another’s.  

Bucer represented many of his contemporaries who desired that Christians not merely undergo ceremonies but also learn and grow in their knowledge of Christ. 

Brenner also pointed to Martin Chemnitz, known in Lutheran circles as the “Second Martin” after Luther. Although catechesis and confirmation practice in the 16th century varied widely, Chemnitz also called for a focus on instruction. Brenner wrote that Chemnitz refuted the Council of Trent’s pronouncements on confirmation and wrote what he considered was a proper understanding of the process. He connected confirmation to baptism, rather than the Lord’s Supper, and called for instruction in doctrine, a public profession of faith, and involvement by the worship community.  

In the late 1600s, the reformer Philipp Jakob Spener held catechesis instruction for children and adults. The regular addition of adults was fairly novel. Conrad Bergendoff explained that Spener’s practice of teaching the catechism to youth was for the purposes of converting them and leading them to make a public confession. Spener’s efforts revived the otherwise fading confirmation rite in many Lutheran churches. He also gathered adults together for regular study of the Scriptures. For his efforts to invigorate the congregations to holy living, Spener

43 Johnson, Sacraments and Worship, 165.


would later become known as the “Father of Pietism.” Never a pietist himself, Spener had a profound role in reinstating the rite of confirmation in Lutheran churches. Bergendoff explained that congregations who believed the Bible was the sole authority for doctrine and life must have some process by which they can teach it to their children. He wrote, “In his program for reform Spener made the practice of instruction a regular preparation for Communion and the rite of confirmation a desirable one.”

From Spener’s insistence on an educated Christian population, empowered by Luther’s reforms and catechisms, the Lutheran Church reinvented the rite of confirmation to be a time when a child could “confirm” that he or she had received faith during baptism. It was also an opportunity for a young Christian to profess an intent to continue in a lifelong process of catechesis.

According to Arthur Repp, Lutherans have taken several approaches to confirmation since its second advent. Six stand out among them, but they were not always mutually exclusive categories. The first was “catechetical,” which was instruction for the Lord’s Supper. The second was “hierarchical” which focused on a confession of faith indicating surrender to Christ and submission to the church. Third was “sacramental,” which supported the implication that the Holy Spirit is given in the laying on of hands and stresses that confirmation confers a new or fuller church membership. Fourth was “traditional,” an approach to confirmation as a public confession of faith by children who have been instructed in the faith. This approach linked confirmation to baptism and not the Lord’s Supper. The fifth was “pietistic,”

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46 Bergendoff, *The Church of the Lutheran Reformation*, 293.
which focused on confirmation as a renewal of the baptismal covenant with emphasis on conversion experience and regeneration. The sixth approach was “rationalistic,” which considered the confirmation rite to be a coming of age celebration with emphasis on examination, ceremony, and sentimentalism.47

The Roman Catholic Church’s position on confirmation’s status as a sacrament changed over time. The sacrament of unction, the practice of laying on hands and anointing with oil, accompanied the confirmation rite into the Middle Ages. Eventually, the Roman Catholic Church considered it an official sacrament. Brenner, citing Luther’s Babylonian Captivity, wrote that Luther was against viewing confirmation as sacramental. Luther said that it was “invented to adorn the office of bishops that they may not be entirely without work in the church.”48 Luther objected to the pretense of confirmation but thought the rite might be useful if it were merely a ceremony to examine and mark a completion of catechesis. Brenner quoted Luther from a sermon on marriage published in 1522, “I would permit confirmation as long as it is understood that God knows nothing of it, and has said nothing about it, and that what the bishops’ claim for it is untrue. They mock our God when they say that it is one of God’s sacraments, for it is a purely human contrivance.”49 In another sermon Luther said, “Confirmation should not be observed as the bishops desire it. Nevertheless, we do not find fault if every pastor examines the faith of the children to see whether it is good and sincere, lays hands on them, and confirms

them.” Brenner explained that Luther was always more concerned about instruction in God’s Word and the sacraments than he was about particular rites or ceremonies.

In time, Lutherans began to face more detractors and the contents of the catechism grew. Brenner made a critical observation,

Luther’s *Small Catechism* with its succinct summaries of the chief parts of Christian doctrine was augmented by expositions, which included rather complete outlines of Christian theology. Children memorized questions and answers through constant repetition. Poor educational methods with little application of scriptural truth to daily life, however, made catechetical instruction rather tedious for many students.

Arthur Repp wrote extensively about the variety of confirmation practices within the Lutheran church both in history and among congregations today. In his article, “The Theological Implications of Confirmation,” he explained that the lack of biblical command for confirmation allowed churches to employ a variety of different practices. Writing in 1960, he criticized the inconsistencies between Lutheran congregations as the cause of much confusion regarding the role of confirmation and called for a reform of Lutheran confirmation practice. Repp’s view was that catechesis is necessary for the church to fulfill Jesus’ command to teach in Matthew 28:20. He also wrote that catechesis is a joint effort by the parents and the congregation.

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54 Repp, “Theological Implications of Confirmation,” 172.
Catechesis in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

In 1842, C. F. W. Walther, the first president of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod preached, “It is, of course, beyond dispute that, above all others, a pastor has the duty to lead souls to Christ. … It is furthermore true that parents have a special responsibility to lead their children to Christ and raise them in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” Walther went on to proclaim that parents had a duty to introduce their children to tenets of the Christian faith at an early age. He described parents as pastors of the home. Arthur Repp also asserted that successful Christian education programs must gain the cooperation of the family.

The primary question this project addressed was how can pastors and parents work together to bring up children in the faith? To answer that question, the researcher investigated the current state of catechesis in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod using two key synod-wide research projects on the topic.

Attitudes toward Catechesis and Confirmation in the LCMS

The most recent survey of attitudes regarding catechesis and the rite of confirmation in the LCMS was a 2008-2010 study sponsored by Concordia University of Nebraska and the Nebraska District of the LCMS headed by Marvin Bergman. The report, “What’s Happening in LCMS Confirmation? A Summary of Findings Based on Nine Populations,” was a thorough examination of nine...
populations with a sample size of 1,094 leaders, parents, and adolescents between the ages of 11 and 16.57

The results from that survey reported that 93 percent of confirmands (245 out of 263) and 98 percent of parents (306 out of 312) stated that confirmation ministry was “important” or “very important” to them.58 The other 575 respondents were pastors, church workers, and high school youth who were not confirmands. At the same time, 91 percent of pastors (196 out of 215), 92 percent of Directors of Christian Education (33 out of 36), and 75 percent of parents (234) described that a “confirmation is graduation” attitude is at least somewhat visible in their congregations.59 The most responses for how to change the “confirmation is graduation” attitude according to leaders was to involve parents in confirmation ministry.60

This study covered a wide range of topics related to confirmation ministry in LCMS congregations. Of particular interest to the researcher were responses to questions about the method and content of instruction and the role of pastors and parents. In this survey, leaders expressed that among their major challenges in confirmation instruction was the lack of parental involvement or commitment in the process. Forty-four percent of pastors and 44 percent of DCEs reported a low level of

58 Bergman, What’s Happening in LCMS Confirmation?, 4.
59 Bergman, What’s Happening in LCMS Confirmation?, 28.
60 Bergman, What’s Happening in LCMS Confirmation?, 29.
satisfaction with parent participation in catechesis. Parents also reported lack of parental involvement as the top issue in confirmation. When asked about their frustrations with being involved with catechesis, 54 parents pointed to time and schedule conflicts, while the next highest response (18) was youth apathy.

Question 13 asked respondents for the number one reason they were in confirmation. The overwhelming majority of catechumens (an average of 76%) responded, “To grow in faith and in living as a Christian.” Fewer than three percent reported, “To please my parents” and approximately 16 percent reported, “To get confirmed.”

Question 14 inquired about the level of satisfaction parents and leaders had with confirmation ministry. The responses were significantly in the moderate to high levels. Notable was question 16, which identified variables related to leader satisfaction. The three most significant variables related to a high level of satisfaction among leaders were:

1. Importance given by leaders to confirmation ministry;
2. Satisfaction with parent participation in confirmation ministry;
3. Positive parent attitudes toward their own participation in confirmation ministry.

Regarding content, the six chief parts of Luther’s *Small Catechism* unsurprisingly rated the highest concerning how much attention various topics received in catechesis. In question 18, 90 percent or more leaders reported paying

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62 Bergman, *What’s Happening in LCMS Confirmation?*, 27.
64 Bergman, *What’s Happening in LCMS Confirmation?*, 7.
major attention to the Ten Commandments, the Apostles’ Creed, the Lord’s Prayer, Holy Baptism, and Holy Communion. Seventy-eight percent reported giving major attention to the topic of Confession and Absolution. Other topics that more than 40 percent of leaders reported as a major part of their curriculum were making moral decisions; people, events, and teachings of the Bible; and the biblical foundations of the six chief parts.65

Question 22 asked, “How do you rate the importance of each of the following goals?” and provided a list of twenty possible answers. The goals that received the highest number of leaders indicating as “very important” were:

1. Help to grow in faith (84%)
2. Affirm Scripture as source and norm of faith (78%)
3. Worship and commune faithfully (78%)
4. Live daily in the light of one’s baptism (67%)
5. Prepare to receive Holy Communion (65%)
6. Declare to live as Christ’s servant (63%)
7. Make a public confession of faith (60%)66

Seventy-two percent of leaders reported as “somewhat important, important, or very important” the goal of confirmation is for confirmands to “receive the Holy Spirit by laying on of hands.” This is interesting when one considers the history behind the rite of confirmation in the Lutheran church and how Luther fought against the sacramental understanding of the rite. Additionally, such an understanding is contrary to Lutheran theology.

Questions 31, 32, 33, and 34 addressed leaders and their perspective of confirmation.67 Question 31 asked, “In your confirmation ministry, what are two


frustrations which you have experienced?” The top three responses were “lack of commitment by parents to confirmation ministry, schedule conflicts and time constraints, and frustrations related to parents.” Question 32 asked, “What are two issues related to confirmation which have come to your attention?” Again, the top two responses were parent-themed. The top three responses were, “parent issues, parents’ lack of commitment, and cultural/moral issues.” Question 33 asked, “What are two changes in confirmation ministry that are needed?” The top three responses were, “more parental involvement, seeing confirmation as a time to grow in faith as part of lifelong learning, and development of more resources.” Question 34 asked, “Five years from now, what do you see as two challenges in confirmation?” The top three responses were, “greater parental involvement, schedule conflicts and time pressures, and post-confirmation lack of involvement.”

Parental responses reflected an understanding of the influence they have on the faith of their children. Question 40 asked parents about who has the greatest impact on the growth of their child’s faith. Seventy-five percent of parents responded “a parent,” while the remainder identified the pastor (18%), a teacher (4%), the congregation (1%), or their child’s friends (2%). When parents were asked in question 44, “what two changes in confirmation are needed?” the top three responses were, “a greater involvement and commitment by parents, more applications in the

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68 Bergman, *What’s Happening in LCMS Confirmation?*, 17.
lives of young people and less memorizing, and greater involvement by youth in the congregation and in leadership roles.\textsuperscript{69}

Question 60 sought to identify what the expectations were of parents by leaders and youth. Eleven percent of pastors indicated they required parental involvement in classes and 54 percent encouraged the practice. Likewise, of directors of Christian education (DCEs), 20 percent required parents to come to class and 51 percent encouraged the practice. When High School youth were asked, 11 percent said it was a requirement and only 29 percent specified that the practice was encouraged.\textsuperscript{70}

Question 64 asked leaders about their frustrations working with parents of confirmands. The top response was that parents expressed “a low interest in confirmation and Christian education.” The next two highest ranked responses were, “parents who do not worship with their confirmands or participate in Bible classes and busy schedules which interfere with confirmation ministry.” Issues surrounding parents, priorities and schedules reoccur throughout the survey.\textsuperscript{71}

Question 72 asked parents about their attitude toward being involved in confirmation ministry. The vast majority of parents reported having positive or very positive feelings about it. Question 75 mitigated this encouraging response by asking respondents to predict frustrations around parental involvement. The top three

\textsuperscript{69} Bergman, \textit{What’s Happening in LCMS Confirmation?}, 18.

\textsuperscript{70} Bergman, \textit{What’s Happening in LCMS Confirmation?}, 23.

\textsuperscript{71} Bergman, \textit{What’s Happening in LCMS Confirmation?}, 24.
responses were, “time and schedule issues, youth apathy regarding confirmation, and parent apathy and non-involvement.”

This exhaustive assessment surveyed respondents on 376 questions regarding confirmation ministry and catechesis. After questioning leaders, parents, and youth about their opinions and attitudes regarding confirmation and catechesis, the study goes in depth to explore specific opinions regarding points of doctrine, faith practices, and the use of technology.

*Confirmation Instruction and Student Congregational Connectedness (2010)*

From his own research into confirmation instruction and student retention, David Rueter noted that from 2002-2005 there were 102,838 catechumens confirmed in the LCMS. Of those, only 44,620 (43.39%) were still participating in high school Bible classes after confirmation. Rueter’s research utilized, in part, Marvin Bergman’s survey questions. Of particular interest to this project were results about parental involvement. Rueter observed,

> What is interesting is to note that despite the emphasis given by participants on the critical nature of parents’ participation, only eight programs made a deliberate structural commitment to involving parents in the process. There seem to be two likely reasons for this: 1) parents lack the congregational commitment to parental involvement or 2) a lack of vision on the part of the catechist to formulate an instructional approach to confirmation that engages parents as co-catechists.

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73 David Rueter, “An Analysis of Confirmation Instruction and Student Congregational Connectedness in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod” (Ph.D. diss., Biola University, 2010), 6.

74 Rueter, “An Analysis of Confirmation Instruction and Student Congregational Connectedness in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod,” 231.
Rueter admitted that there are other factors at stake, too. Many parents disconnect from the life of the church until their children reach the age at which they can enter the catechesis program. Rueter’s research into post-confirmation connectedness identified this as a problem. He wrote,

Students who were from families engaged at a greater depth within the life of the congregation are more likely to maintain that connection following confirmation. On the other hand, students who became connected to or reconnected with the congregation at the time of confirmation instruction were far less likely to remain following the rite of confirmation.  

The literature reviewed demonstrates the need for meaningful parental involvement in the catechesis of their children.

_A Study of Youth Confirmation and First Communion (1998)_

The researcher examined a secondary report, “A Study of Youth Confirmation and First Communion in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.”

The LCMS Department of Youth Ministry and the Board for Congregational Services spearheaded this study. This report preceded the larger “What’s Happening in LCMS Confirmation” study and is much narrower in scope. It collected a random sampling of responses to 45 questions about youth confirmation practice from 364 congregations. Of that sample, the researchers completed a second random sample asking for longer answers to 16 “essay” type questions.

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75 Rueter, “An Analysis of Confirmation Instruction and Student Congregational Connectedness in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod,” 280.

76 Terry Dittmer, _A Study of Youth Confirmation and First Communion in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod_, (St. Louis: Board for Congregational Services, Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1998.)
Unlike the larger 2010 study, the authors of the 1998 study reported several conclusions from their results. Common to both studies was that the top identified need in catechesis was the involvement of parents in the process. The authors began their summary by stating, “Greater parental involvement was the universal cry of the instructors. Many felt that the often negative attitudes of their students too often reflected the attitudes of their parents.”\(^\text{77}\) The study indicated that conflict over schedules, length of instructional periods, and parental involvement were high on the list of pastoral concerns. The results also showed a noticeable resistance from teachers to making changes in their confirmation programs.

Ninety percent of congregations (238 out of 364) reported that confirmation instruction began between fifth and seventh grade and continued for either a two or a three-year period. Fifty-nine percent reported that catechesis began for students in the seventh grade and 92 percent confirm children in the seventh or eighth grade. Ninety-seven percent of the responding congregations identified pastors as the primary catechists. Additionally, 44 percent reported that they want more curriculum material for confirmation instruction.\(^\text{78}\)

There were no specific questions that addressed parental involvement in catechesis. The fact that the authors led with the conclusion that parental involvement is a serious need for pastors suggests that they received this information unsolicited.

\(^{77}\) Dittmer, *A Study of Youth Confirmation and First Communion*, 3.

Contemporary Catechetical Practitioners

The researcher discovered several confirmation ministry models, catechetical techniques, and various educational methodologies when it came to inculcating adolescents. To cover all of them is beyond the scope of this project. Since catechesis is simply instruction of the Christian faith, contemporary research from both secular and theological perspectives can be helpful in how to develop a model for faith instruction. In the first section, the researcher briefly examined historical catechetical thought but primarily focused on the literature of current religious catechetical practices, especially if they significantly involved parents. In the second part, secular sources were included to explore additional approaches to adolescent instruction.

Religious Catechesis with Parental Interaction

Historical Perspective. The researcher defined “contemporary” practitioners as those who implemented their methods in the past 50 years. For the purposes of contrast and comparison, the researcher first explored two historical views of catechetical methods. The first was from the Early Church catechumenate and the second from Lutheran catechesis in the early twentieth century.

Clinton Arnold researched catechesis in the Early Church with the intent of applying what he learned to his evangelical context. In his report, he identified four key features from the catechumenate of the Early Church. The first was immersion in the Word of God. Teachers in the Early Church sought to expose catechumens to the whole council of God through the Scriptures. Over the course of three years, teachers may have covered the entire Bible. The second feature was to teach the central
doctrines of the faith. In addition to the Scriptures and salvation history, the Early Church indoctrinated catechumens in the key doctrines of the Christian faith, such as the creeds. The third feature of catechesis was spiritual and moral formation. Teachers touted repentance and walking in a Christian manner as a part of catechesis in the Early Church. Finally, the Early Church viewed catechesis as a “deliverance ministry.” A daily exorcism took place through the laying on of hands to deliver catechumens from the power of the devil. The church expected catechumens to renounce the works of Satan.79

According to Harold Dorn, the favored method of instruction in Lutheran churches has been the Socratic method of asking questions and soliciting answers.80 Luther encouraged this style evidenced by his *Small Catechism*’s question and answer organization. In the 1920s, this was seen as the only proper method of catechesis in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. It is still in use today, but already in the 1950s catechists were using “psychological, unit, project, scientific, and problem solving”81 techniques. The use of the *Small Catechism* was universal, often supplemented by the hymnal, liturgy, and historical books. In his 1954 survey, Dorn noted that pastors were trying to solicit help from parents. Less than half used any type of workbook for their catechesis and 15 percent of them created their own. Catechists held memorization of the catechism in high esteem and 90 percent of the

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81 Dorn, *Confirmation Instruction*, 178.
pastors Dorn surveyed reported requiring catechumens to memorize fifty or more Bible verses. Note that Dorn did not include the total numbers of those he surveyed.

*Dorn’s Biblical Techniques.* Dorn proffered his own example of how pastors could revive their catechetical instruction. Based on the Bible, he suggested 14 techniques:

1. Visualization. The use of objects, handwork, flowers, and concrete material real to the life of a child, are invaluable in the learning situation.
2. Story. Illustrations, not only from the Bible, but also from daily life experiences such as newspaper clippings, rightly used, are much worthwhile.
3. Lecture. Occasional talks to explain, apply, and inspire are not outside the province of the catechist. Sometimes it is the only way.
4. Observation. Planned observations of actual life situations sometimes leave deeper impressions on the minds and hearts of children than a million words.
5. Excursion. Occasional excursions with the confirmation class… often arouses interest.
6. Development, Questioning, Psychodrama. Where Socratic questioning deals largely with the intellect, Jesus tactfully appeals to mind, heart, will, soul, all at the same time.
7. Scientific Research. Children like to find out things for themselves. The desire for new discovery is a basic urge in every human being.
8. Problem Solving. Most children are already familiar with [thought problems], and the technique is particularly well adapted to applying doctrinal truth to life situations confronting the child.
9. Reports. Reports may be written or oral; they may take the form of outside speakers, e.g., a Christian public school teacher testifying to divine creation over evolution; or they may be letters from mission fields read to start out a unit on the Third Commandment, and the like.
10. Free and Open Discussion. Many of our children are already familiar with the discussion technique learned in public school, and the Catechist may be surprised to find that most children are capable of taking a challenging statement, carry on their own discussion, evaluate their own ideas, and draw their own conclusions on the basis of Biblical truth, with only an occasional suggestion by the pastor here and there.
11. Buzz-Group. This method has the special advantage of allowing students to think and discuss on their own, to digest certain facts
mentally, to seek solutions according to their own ability, before they get further help.

12. Demonstration. Demonstration may proceed on the basis of other motives, such as the desire to imitate.

13. Project. What could be better than a little project on the side where children report their contacts, discuss objections, successes and failures, and from time to time are given opportunity to evaluate their own reaping of the fields white unto the harvest.

14. Units. [Utilizing a variety of these techniques.]82

Dorn did not include any specific methods that included parents in the teaching process.

Memorization. To find the origin of requiring catechumens to memorize the catechism, one does not need to look further than Luther’s Small Catechism itself. Luther was certainly not the first to have catechumens memorize creeds and passages from the Bible, but in the preface to his catechism, he explained how he expected readers to use the document,

Begin by teaching them the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Lord’s Prayer, etc., following the text word for word so that the young may repeat these things after you and retain them in their memory. … In the second place, after the people have become familiar with the text, teach them what it means. For this purpose, take the explanations in this booklet, or choose any other brief and fixed explanations which you may prefer, and adhere to them without changing a single syllable, as stated above with reference to the text.83

Daniel Olson, an LCMS pastor, researched memorization and the retention of knowledge the catechumens of his congregation. At Olson’s congregation, Concordia Lutheran Church in Geneseo, Illinois, he expected catechumens to memorize the six chief parts of the Small Catechism and supporting biblical

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82 Dorn, Confirmation Instruction, 187-192.
He wrote that he expected his catechumens to have some understanding of the material as they memorize them and that retention of the information should go beyond a final examination, something that he had not observed in his parish.

The three problems Olson identified as barriers to long-term retention of the material were poor teaching techniques, no aids to assist in memorizing the Small Catechism, and the lack of parental involvement. In his project, Olson provided catechumens with parts of the catechism set to music. This, he reasoned, would assist catechumens with memorization and retention. He also provided case studies and questions alongside Bible verses he expected them to memorize. Additionally, Olson provided activities intended for the catechumen and his or her parents to complete together. These activities involved discussion around biblical or theological topics and he designed them to encourage parental involvement in the teaching process.

Olson reported that he utilized a variety of active learning techniques such as games and activities in his teaching style. Olson wrote that catechumens completed assignments and memory work at an unprecedented rate. In terms of examinations, he discovered that analytical learners did far better than other types of learners with his new methods, but all the catechumens had fared better than previous classes. Olson stated that the music CDs did not improve memorization or retention as he had postulated. He surmised that this was because the catechumens failed to use the CDs.

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85 Olson, The Recovery of Memorization in Confirmation, 1-2.

86 Olson, The Recovery of Memorization in Confirmation, 56-62.

87 Olson, The Recovery of Memorization in Confirmation, 72-74.
Olson did not stipulate the particular reason for the catechumens not using the CDs. He suggested that it might have been out of disinterest. Most catechumens reported that they did not like the musical style.\textsuperscript{88} Regarding the family activities, Olson reported,

\begin{quote}
The family activities were seen by both parents and students alike as having the greatest impact on the students’ memorization. The parents said that it did indeed make them much more aware of whether or not their child had really completed the memory work. … The parents also reported they had a much better understanding of what the students were doing and why.\textsuperscript{89}
\end{quote}

He stated that parental attitudes toward the requirements of catechesis improved because of the family activities. Finally, Olson described that catechumens were receptive to the case studies provided with Bible memory verses. They did not participate as fully as he intended, but catechumens reported that the real-life examples helped them to consider the meanings of the verses beyond simply memorizing them.\textsuperscript{90}

\textit{Early childhood catechesis and four dimensions of confirmation ministry.}

Craig Nessan of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America wrote of the importance of acquainting children very early with the tenets of the faith.\textsuperscript{91} Essential to this method’s success is teaching parents that they are the primary catechists. To aid in this vision, Nessan suggested including younger children in classes designed to help parents fulfill their baptismal vows and including parents in catechesis classes.

\textsuperscript{88} Olson, \textit{The Recovery of Memorization in Confirmation}, 80.
\textsuperscript{89} Olson, \textit{The Recovery of Memorization in Confirmation}, 81.
\textsuperscript{90} Olson, \textit{The Recovery of Memorization in Confirmation}, 82-83.
Nessan also encouraged using Sunday school classes to teach children Bible stories as a foundation upon which later catechesis could expand upon. He noted that elementary-aged children are capable of memorizing the Ten Commandments, Apostles’ Creed, and the Lord’s Prayer.\textsuperscript{92}

Nessan went on to differentiate between four dimensions of confirmation ministry:

1. The Intellectual Dimension – Students are capable of higher thinking and engaging in more intellectually challenging questions that most catechesis supposes.
2. The Emotional Dimension – Puberty and other changes are challenging to adolescents. The instructor should be affirming and flexible to the students’ existential questions.
3. The Social Dimension – As teens begin to differentiate themselves from their family systems, the confirmation class becomes yet one place of social experimentation. Social behaviors and issues can be used to further point students in a direction that is God pleasing.
4. The Spiritual Dimension – Since catechesis is essentially a calling upon the Holy Spirit to grow the faith in a young person, spiritual aspects are important to include in confirmation ministry. Singing and praying together are important, as is inclusion of catechumens into the worship life of the congregation.

\textit{A vocational model of confirmation.} Jana Strukova of the Slovak Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Augsburg Confession reported that in his country and church body the changing political landscape had led to a burgeoning Christian population. Baptisms and confirmations grew, but Strukova reported that his church was not immune to the post-confirmation exodus as experienced by other churches. Among other influences, Strukova founded his vocational model upon the theology of vocation advocated by Martin Luther.\textsuperscript{93} In response to monasticism, Luther

\textsuperscript{92} Nessan, “Confirmation as Youth Ministry,” 217.

\textsuperscript{93} Jana Strukova, "The Vocational Model of Confirmation," Journal of Youth Ministry 6, no. 2 (2008): 77-78.
purported that all stations in life were God-given vocations that served as the context in which a person was to serve his or her neighbor. Strukova explained that the vocational approach to confirmation involved guiding catechumens to take ownership of their faith, exercise membership in the body of Christ, and serve one’s neighbor and the world through a sense of citizenship.\footnote{Strukova, "The Vocational Model of Confirmation," 79-81.} Strukova’s model disconnected confirmation from the rite, making it a continual process rather than a one-time event. Its focus was on the catechumen’s behavior and response to faith. Strukova hoped that these three foci would help youth live out active faith lives, emphasize service to God as service to one’s neighbor, and point youth to the Holy Spirit as their guide through life and the giver of spiritual gifts. Strukova’s article spoke nothing of involving the parents in the catechesis of their children, but pointed out the need for youth to be equipped to not only know about their faith, but also exercise it in both the left and right hand realms of God’s earthly kingdom.

\textit{A motivational model for catechesis.} Navy Chaplain Dennis Kinlaw wrote about several hypotheses regarding human motivation as they applied to catechizing children. He explored four observations,

1. Human beings are self-motivating.
2. The way to change attitudes is by changing behavior.
3. The degree of commitment to a learning objective directly related to the participation and investment of the individual in the setting the objective.
Kinlaw experienced that in the catechesis classes he taught, the catechumens were largely unaware of the purpose for their participation and what, if anything, they wanted to gain from the experience. Students had simply understood catechesis, and the rite of confirmation that followed, as something that to do according to tradition. Kinlaw further discovered that the catechumens knew that the pastor would permit them to receive communion after confirmation, but they were unable to articulate why they would want to receive it. Kinlaw then assessed which aspects of the church the youth enjoyed and those they did not. Passive activities were the least enjoyed by the youth: “sermons, sitting in church, singing hymns, listening to adults talk, and being quiet.”96 Youth most enjoyed “going places in groups, talking back to the minister during the youth sermon, playing games, and attending service at which there were lots of candles and music.”97 The implications were that while adults may be able to curb their desire to be active for the sake of learning, catechists might have more success engaging youth through kinesthetic learning activities. Kinlaw’s conclusions suggested that if the catechist allowed catechumens to help set the goals and objectives, they would be more committed to the outcome. Likewise, the “pleasure factor” also is important to consider. Catechumens may be likely to retain better and be more patient during the less interactive portions of the program if they generally enjoy the teaching methods.

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96 Kinlaw, “Preparation for Church Membership,” 203.
97 Kinlaw, “Preparation for Church Membership,” 203.
Emerging models for catechesis. In his doctor of philosophy dissertation, David Rueter identified three emerging models for catechesis. The first model was the “systemic model” developed by Kevin Wyssmann. This model is more fluid and allows catechumens to begin catechesis in the fifth grade with no predetermined date for completion.

The second model Rueter identified was the “delayed instruction” model. Many catechists have debated the value in beginning catechesis later, such as in high school, rather than in the fifth, sixth, or seventh grade. Pros and cons abound. Rueter pointed to William Knippa, a pastor who held a Ph.D. in psychology, who had cited advanced conceptualization abilities of older catechumens as the impetus behind starting confirmation instruction later. Margret Krych also supported this concept. She wrote,

“Luther knew nothing of research into cognitive development as we know it today. … Probably most teenagers will be ready for the Small Catechism at about 13 or 14 years of age (roughly 8\textsuperscript{th} or 9\textsuperscript{th} grade). The later you begin instruction, the faster the students are likely to learn because they will have more opportunity to practice the abstract thinking required to work well theologically.”

The third emerging model Rueter identified was the “large group-small group” model, best illustrated by the Faith Inkubators program. This model involves contemporary topics and lessons beyond the Small Catechism in a large and small group discussion format.

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An evaluation of 50 U.S. Catholic Dioceses. Lutherans are not the only ones struggling with the future of catechesis and confirmation. In “What is Successful in Catechetics and What Isn’t?” Wilfrid Paradis surveyed 50 Roman Catholic congregations across the United States. Paradis reported that the most successful programs were those that involved parents in a variety of ways. Also helpful were methods that involved the larger parish community in the catechesis. Paradis also reported that because of these parent-inclusive efforts, the number of adult instruction classes increased as well as adult participation in the faith life of the community. Teacher training programs, various youth ministry programs, and access to new instructional resources also topped the list of indicators of successful programs. Paradis wrote that high school programs fared worse than elementary age programs, but he discovered limited success in programs that provided electives, involved a limited commitment of time, and included elements of service.

Enjoyment of religious instruction is a factor. Much of the literature reviewed thus far called for parents to be more involved in the catechetical process. One longitudinal study provided a different perspective. This study surveyed 206 people across Baptist, Roman Catholic, and Methodist backgrounds who researchers interviewed at age 16 in 1976 and again at age 38. The researchers expected that parents would have a strong influence on the spirituality and rate of return to church of these adults later in life. Instead, they concluded, “Church involvement is mostly


determined by adult experience, not earlier religious upbringing, practices, or beliefs. The study concluded that of all the variables tested for at 16, only one was predictive of a return to church activity as an adult: youth participation in the life of the congregation. This research indicated that parental involvement alone is not the deciding factor for dropout rate among post-confirmation youth.

In 2001, Dean Hoge and Gregory Petrillo researched church participation among high school youth. They studied four factors they determined others most often attributed to high levels of participation and a positive attitude toward church. These were family, peer group, program, and belief factors. They determined that among all the factors they tested for the primary factors were relationships with other people. Relationships with their peers and church leaders had a large impact on the attitudes youth had toward church. Parents also had a strong influence on their children’s attendance, but not attitudes toward church. Additionally, they found a strong connection to how youths experienced their religious education. They concluded that increased levels of enjoyment or satisfaction that the youth experienced in their religious education determined higher participation later in life. Those who rejected church did so largely because of unpleasant experiences with

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104 Hoge and Petrillo, “Determinants of Church Participation and Attitudes Among High School Youth,” 731.
church or church leaders as a child. Factors such as enjoyment and the catechist’s attitude are as important as right doctrine and parental participation.

Secular Approaches to Adolescent Instruction

There is much to learn from the efforts of the church and through theologians and dogmaticians. However, God also blesses his creation in the secular realm through the fields of education, psychology, and other non-theological disciplines. The researcher found it prudent to investigate the ways these fields may be able to contribute to the practice of catechesis.

The flipped classroom approach. Michelle Pacansky-Brock in her book, Best Practices for Teaching with Emerging Technologies introduced the “flipped classroom” model of instruction. Pacansky-Brock presented the topic by covering the generational shift that has occurred in the way students of the past and students today consume information. The ability to access multimedia content has gone from having to rent videos and wait for the commercials to go to the bathroom to YouTube, on-demand media, and DVRs that can record, pause, fast-forward and rewind live TV. She reported that contemporary students are dissatisfied with current teaching methods.

Pacansky-Brock cited Professor Howard Rheingold as her inspiration, who provided his lectures online for students to consume in their own time and presumably at their own pace, which freed up classroom time for more active and lively discussion. Pacansky-Brock explained how unforeseen circumstances forced her into rethinking the way she taught at the university level. She reported that she abandoned lectures in class, began to emphasize the central role of community for
her students, and provided her class with online lectures coupled with pre-class and post-class assignments.¹⁰⁵ She found this method successful in her context.  

**Learning styles.** Marlene LeFever’s book, “Learning Styles: Reaching Everyone God Gave You,” revolved around four not-so-distinct styles that students are more apt to learn from.¹⁰⁶ The four types of learners she discussed were the imaginative, analytic, common sense, and dynamic learner. LeFever explained that an individual rarely learns in just one way but many students will be able to identify with one style to a greater extent than the others. Analytic learners learn by watching and listening, receiving information, and then processing and synthesizing that information. LeFever explained that teachers generally prefer this type of learner. She contended this is because analytic learners excel in the traditional Western education system where a teacher lectures and students take notes.¹⁰⁷ According to LeFever, the imaginative learner thrives by listening and sharing ideas with others in relationships.¹⁰⁸ The common sense learner is interested in the here and now. They learn best when they are able to take ideas and put them into practical use to determine their viability. This type of learner in a religious context would want to know more about how his or her faith affects his or her daily life.¹⁰⁹ The dynamic learner is the hands-on learner. This style of learning involves experiment, hands-on


activities, and learning through trial and error.\textsuperscript{110} LeFever suggested incorporating each of these styles in every lesson to ensure that the catechist reaches as many students—in their preferred style—as possible. She further suggested that instructors develop an all-inclusive curriculum in view of the four styles.\textsuperscript{111}

LeFever distinguished the four learning styles from modality and methods. Modalities are the more familiar: auditory, visual, and tactile learning modes that differ among learners. Methods, according to LeFever’s definition, are the nearly infinite ways to engage the student in content. Methods could be anything such as a reading assignment, watching a video, role-play, photographs, painting, games, and the like. The author warned against using the same method or methods repetitively.\textsuperscript{112}

\textit{Multiple intelligences}. In 1993, Howard Gardner published \textit{Frames of Mind}, a book challenging intelligence tests such as the Intelligent Quotient (IQ). He devised a theory of multiple intelligence that at first included seven but now eight (and possibly nine) intelligences make up the Multiple Intelligences Theory.\textsuperscript{113}

According to Thomas Armstrong, multiple intelligences seek to map out the wide variety of abilities possessed by humans. He explained that the eight intelligences are:

\textsuperscript{110} LeFever, \textit{Learning Styles}, 67.

\textsuperscript{111} LeFever, \textit{Learning Styles}, 25.

\textsuperscript{112} LeFever, \textit{Learning Styles}, 95.

1. Linguistic. The capacity to use words effectively, whether orally or in writing.
2. Logical-Mathematical. The capacity to use numbers effectively and to reason well.
3. Spatial. The ability to perceive the visual-spatial world accurately and to perform transformations upon those perceptions.
4. Bodily Kinesthetic. Expertise in using one’s whole body to express ideas and feelings and facility in using one’s hands to produce or transform things.
5. Musical. The capacity to perceive, discriminate, transform, and express musical forms.
6. Interpersonal. The ability to perceive and make distinctions in the moods, intentions, motivations, and feelings of other people.
7. Intrapersonal. Self-knowledge and the ability to act adaptively on the basis of that knowledge.
8. Naturalist. Expertise in the recognition and classification of the numerous species—the flora and fauna—of an individual’s environment.114

In addition to the intelligences themselves, Armstrong provided four key points to consider. First, he contended that each person possesses all eight intelligences. Second, he postulated that most people can develop each to an adequate level of competency and higher. Third, Armstrong explained that intelligences usually work together in complex ways. Finally, he explained that there are many ways to be intelligent within each category.115

*The adolescent brain.* In *Teaching with the Brain in Mind*, Eric Jensen explored where pedagogy, psychology, and the physiology of the brain intersect. Jensen contended that human brains are constantly changing, interconnected, and very complex. The complexity of the brain is evident in the intricate ways it receives,

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learns, and processes new information. Jensen illustrated the selective nature of the brain during learning. He wrote,

The frontal lobes hold much of the new data in short-term memory for 5 to 20 seconds. Most of the new information is filtered, dismissed, and never gets stored. It may be irrelevant, trivial, or not compelling enough. If it’s worth a second consideration, new explicit learning is routed to and held in the hippocampus. There the information is processed further to determine its value. If the new learning is deemed important, it will be organized and indexed by the hippocampus and later stored in the cortex.  

Jensen wrote about the adolescent brain and provided several practical applications for teaching youth. These tips included being succinct, serving as a coach, and being understanding and tactful. He also suggested that instructors use modeling that engages youth.

Jensen described that there is both explicit and implicit learning that takes place for students and 90 percent of learning is implicit. He suggested that in a typical classroom setting, an instructor needs to gain and keep the attention of the student for deep learning to begin. Jensen identified seven brain-oriented factors that influence learning and practical suggestions for instructors to use to help the student along. The seven factors were engagement, repetition, input quantity, coherence, timing, error correction, and emotional states. According to Jensen, the appropriate amount time for direct instruction was 12-15 minutes at a time. Jensen, like many other researchers, encouraged connecting lessons to the lives of the students. It is crucial to account for the way adolescents learn when developing a catechetical

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118 Eric Jensen, *Teaching with the Brain in Mind*, 37.
curriculum. Although the content and doctrine of catechesis has remained the same, how one applies it to the life of the student and how the students apprehend the doctrines of the church have certainly had evolved through time. It would be arrogant not to learn from new ways of learning and teaching and use this knowledge to catechize.

A Review of Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod Catechesis Curricula

The researcher examined four primary catechesis curricula published for use in Lutheran congregations. The materials consulted were those currently in print and available for purchase from Concordia Publishing House (CPH), the publishing arm of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Every resource published through CPH undergoes doctrinal review by the synod to ensure that it meets the confessional standards of the LCMS. The curricula surveyed were *Luther’s Small Catechism with Explanation* (2011); *Partners in Learning* (2001); *Applying Luther’s Catechism* (2012); and *Catechetical Helps for a New Day*. The researcher examined each curriculum to answer the following questions:

1. How is the material presented?
2. In what way does the material use Luther’s *Small Catechism*, the Bible, and other confessional documents?
3. Which types of learners does the material appeal to the most?
4. How does the material connect the lesson to the catechumen’s daily life?
5. In what way does the material involve parents in the teaching process?
6. What type of teaching style does the material lend itself to best?

*Luther’s Small Catechism with Explanation (2011)*

Martin Luther wrote his little book of Christian instruction in 1529. The catechism text examined for this study was from a 1986 translation of Luther’s *Small Catechism*. This edition also included an explanation section. The addition of commentary or explanation to Luther’s catechisms was common practice early in Lutheran history. The explanation included in the CPH version of the *Small Catechism* was first written in 1943, updated in 1965, and again in 1991. This part makes up the bulk of the book and is a collection of 306 questions and answers and 974 Bible citations.

The first part of the book, Luther’s *Small Catechism*, is divided into four sections. The first section covered the six chief parts of the Christian faith: The Ten Commandments, the Apostles’ Creed, the Lord’s Prayer, the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, The Office of the Keys, and the Sacrament of the Altar. The second section contained daily prayers, the third contained a table of duties for Christians to follow according to their vocation in life, and the final section was a list of questions to guide Christians in preparation for the Lord’s Supper.

Luther taught the six chief parts in the catechetical style of questions and answers. For example, the catechism presents the first commandment in this manner:

The First Commandment.
You shall have no other gods.
*What does this mean?*

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119 Martin Luther, *Luther’s Small Catechism with Explanation*, 45.
We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things.\textsuperscript{120} Luther expected catechumens to recite the meaning of the commandment when the catechist asks, “What does this mean?” Thus, the style of learner most benefited by the catechetical style is an analytical learner with a strong logical intelligence. Students memorize the words first and later they learn the meaning behind the words.\textsuperscript{121}

Luther’s explanations presented the material in such a way as to communicate doctrinal positions. He offered very little application to catechumens’ life in the treatment of the six chief parts. In the third section on the “Table of Duties,” scriptural quotes provided advice to Christians according to their vocations. Luther listed duties for pastors and parishioners, government and citizens, and for husbands, wives, and children. He also addressed workers and employers, youth, widows, and everyone in general through selected Bible citations.\textsuperscript{122}

Although Luther’s \textit{Small Catechism} did not present guidelines for how parents would teach their children, Luther did expect that they would. Five of the six chief parts began, “As the head of the family should teach it in a simple way to his household.”\textsuperscript{123} The part on confession began, “How Christians should be taught to

\begin{footnotes}
\item\textsuperscript{120} Luther, \textit{Small Catechism}, 11.
\item\textsuperscript{121} Arand, \textit{That I May Be His Own}, 100.
\item\textsuperscript{122} Luther, \textit{Small Catechism}, 35-39.
\item\textsuperscript{123} Luther, \textit{Small Catechism}, 11, 15, 18, 23, 30.
\end{footnotes}
confess.” Section two on daily prayers begins, “How the head of the family should teach his household to pray morning and evening.”

The explanation to the catechism added by the LCMS continued in the question and answer style. It asked 306 questions according to the six chief parts and various Christian beliefs followed by a succinct answer and supporting Bible verses. Again, there were no directives on how to teach the material. In February 2014, the LCMS began a process to revise the explanation section of the Small Catechism with input from pastors. This effort is a response to the need to update the catechism to reflect and address the attitudes of modern society. The Small Catechism with Explanation is an established textbook for catechesis that has lent itself to many types of teaching methods.

Partners in Learning (2001)

Partners in Learning described itself as “a family confirmation approach” and organized its material into 35 lessons across six units. The authors of the curriculum offered three ways to utilize the material: one-on-one, in a small group, and in a traditional classroom setting. The one-on-one method included the use of a teacher and mentor, preferably one or both of the child’s parents. The small group method also included a teacher and mentor where the mentor connects to a group of

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124 Luther, Small Catechism, 26.
125 Luther, Small Catechism, 32.
catechumens. The traditional classroom approach did not call for the use of a mentor. The material drew its content from the six chief parts of Luther’s *Small Catechism*. The stated goal of the program was to teach the *Small Catechism* and avoid turning catechesis class into either a dogmatics course or merely a time of socializing. The material referenced no other confessional documents.

Each lesson is divided into different sections aimed at reaching different types of learners. A session begins with a prayer, followed by a focus activity that draws the catechumens in. The focus activities were mostly kinesthetic endeavors that loosely related to the topic of the lesson. These would appeal to dynamic learners. Following each focus activity was a “table talk” which used stories and narratives to illustrate the topic, followed by a discussion. This part of the curriculum would appeal to imaginative and common sense learners who possess stronger linguistic and interpersonal intelligences. Each session continued with a Bible study and a journaling session. Both the Bible study and journaling portion of the lesson involved a parent or mentor. Each lesson ended with a review drama where catechumens could act in a skit intended to drive home the point of the lesson. Overall, the curriculum appeared to engage multiple learner types in its design.

Through storytelling and the parent/mentor relationship, the authors of this material intended to connect the lessons to the daily life of the catechumen. Although anyone could serve as a mentor, the curriculum suggested that parents should fulfill this role. Because of the multiple approaches one could take with the material provided, this curriculum could fit into multiple teaching styles.

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Applying Luther’s Catechism (2012) was a 60-lesson curriculum, divided into five units: God’s Will, God’s Love, God’s Invitation, God’s Gifts, and God’s Grace for a New Life. These units covered the six chief parts of Luther’s Small Catechism, including a unit on the meaning of confirmation and the “Table of Duties” located in the catechism. The editors intended for this curriculum for use in Lutheran parochial schools.

Each lesson began with a brief Law and Gospel focus statement that introduced the general theme of the lesson. Instructors were to share the lesson objectives with the catechumens followed by a devotion. Students followed along with the main content of the lesson in the student workbook. The main content had three parts: an introduction, lesson material, and a student response.

The material would appeal to analytic types with developed linguistic and logical intelligences. The lessons presented textual information and Bible references and asked the catechumen to contemplate and comment upon the information presented.

The teacher’s edition provided additional information for instructors to extend the lesson and tips on involving the catechumen’s family, but otherwise it did not attempt to connect the lessons to the daily lives of the catechumens in an overt way. The “involving the family” tips included having catechumens complete activity sheets at home with their parents, leading a devotion based on a hymn or Bible verse, or asking their parents certain questions. Although this material covered Luther’s
Small Catechism, instructors would best utilize the material in the environment for which the authors designed it—the traditional classroom in a parochial school.

Catechetical Helps for a New Day (2014)

First published in 1935, Catechetical Helps had gone through many revisions leading up to the current edition. The 2014 edition, Catechetical Helps for a New Day, stayed true to the original style of providing practical illustrations and descriptions for the articles of doctrine contained within Luther’s Small Catechism. This curriculum presented the material in 26 chapters that followed the six chief parts of the catechism. Each chapter began with a citation from the Small Catechism that catechumens were to commit to memory. Explanations followed each citation in the form of charts, images, stories, and explanation. In addition to the teachings of the catechism, numerous Bible passages supported the assertions. The lessons ended with a short summary, a hymn, and a prayer. There were also Bible passages for catechumens to look up and review questions conclude each section.

The format of this material would appeal to analytical learners who have well-developed logical and linguistic intelligences. Nothing was presented that would appeal to imaginative or dynamic learners. The simple illustrations presented complex concepts in easily digestible ways, but did not attempt to engage the learner beyond the cognitive level. This curriculum provided no overt suggestions or methods to involve parents in the catechetical process. It would be most suitable for the traditional lecture instruction method.

Summary of the Literature Review

The literature review was highly enriching for the completion of this project. In the Early Church, the church instituted formal catechesis over time through years of confusion around the rite of confirmation and because of the increasing need to defend the faith. During the Reformation, Lutheran catechesis was born and came of age because of Luther’s catechisms. The review attested well to the necessity of parents to engage in the catechetical process. Finally, with the content of what to teach decided, the methodology of inculcating youth with the faith evolved throughout history and continues to stir debate.

There is no doubt that catechesis in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod today is in need of a significant revival. The basic content found in Luther’s Small Catechism is still sufficient as an outline of religious instruction but, just as the changing society forced the church to defend certain teachings over others, catechists in the LCMS may have to consider supplementing the catechism in their curricula.

There is much to learn from religious and secular resources about how adolescents approach church, how they learn, and what might be useful in reaching them with the teachings of Christ. The one key factor that the researcher could not overlook from the literature review was the necessity of including parents in the catechesis of their children.
CHAPTER FOUR: PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND RESEARCH METHODS

Introduction

This research project addressed the decline of parental involvement in and responsibility for the Christian catechesis of their children in the context of the Lutheran Church. The researcher explored the attitudes of parents regarding catechesis and their views toward the role they and pastors serve in the instruction process. The researcher surveyed parents to determine what barriers they felt prevented them from full participation in catechesis as well as what goals and expectations they had for Christian education prior to the Rite of Confirmation. In addition to an online survey, the researcher interviewed willing participants to explore these issues further. In these interviews, the parents also provided feedback on possible catechetical models. From the information learned through the survey and interviews, the researcher developed a model of catechesis to be implemented at Christ Lutheran Church in Hebron, Connecticut and commended to all Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod congregations, both in the New England District and beyond.
Study Design and Research Method

Subjectivist Epistemology

To determine the methodology and data-gathering methods for this project, the researcher first sought to determine from what epistemological point of view the research would take place. According to David Gray, epistemology provides a foundation upon which knowledge can be determined to be legitimate and adequate.¹ The researcher considered that because God is wholly other, and the author of all things, that objectivism, which holds that reality exists independent of our perceptions, would be the most beneficial approach. Yet, though God’s creation and revelation do exist objectively apart from a person’s experience of them, the researcher decided to approach the issue of catechesis from a subjectivist’s point of view. Subjectivism derives knowledge not from attempts to access objective truth, but rather from imposing meaning onto reality guided by the sum of one’s experiences.² The researcher determined that this subjective perspective was important because the project dealt with issues of how parents and pastors could work together to pass down the tenets of the faith to children. Experience and the literature review demonstrated that all people experience and learn about the world around them in different ways. Therefore, there is no single, objectively true way to teach or learn, even if the content of the instruction is objectively true. The goal of this project was not to create the perfect model with which to teach catechesis in any


² Gray, Doing Research in the Real World, 17.
and every situation, but to create a model that was influenced by the needs and objectives of a particular subset of Lutheran congregations, in particular the researcher’s own ministry context. The model was flexible so that any community that wished to adopt it could adapt it to meet the needs and concerns of their own context.

**Postmodern Theoretical Perspective**

Once the researcher determined an epistemological approach, he explored several theoretical perspectives to help lead to the most appropriate methodology and methods for this project. From a subjectivist point of view, people determine what is right and suitable for them based on how they have experienced life. Their life experiences, what they have learned, and their preconceived notions about knowledge color the lens through which they experience the world. For example, Jesus said, “I am with you always until the end of the age” (Matt. 28:20). These words are objectively true, but how one experiences the perlocutionary force of this phrase varies from person to person. A woman, who believes that Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection have fully paid for her sins, welcomes the ubiquity of Christ in her life. Conversely, a man who believes in Jesus, but focuses on his impending return to judge the living and the dead, may shudder at the fact that Jesus sees all and knows everything about him. The truth remains, but how it is experienced differs between persons.

Postmodernism, as a research theory, also seeks to move beyond the categorization and description of problems to participatory action research that
effects change. Therefore, the researcher determined that postmodernism offered the most appropriate theoretical foundation upon which to base the project. While scriptural testimony pointed to the objective command of God for parents to raise their children in the faith, postmodernism allowed for opposing positions on what that looks like. From a pre-modern view, opposing positions could not coexist as both being valid, but postmodernism suggests that both might be true for each according to how a particular person engages the world. The choice to establish postmodernism as the theoretical basis for this study also allowed the researcher to acknowledge that ever-changing cultural and societal shifts will prevent any one true method of catechesis from emerging. Although the doctrine taught in catechesis is not subjective, the approach one takes to inculcate that doctrine in others is.

*Grounded Theory and Phenomenological Research Methodology*

David Gray pointed out that several considerations factor into choosing a research methodology. Particularly, whether the researcher should take an objectivist, subjectivist, or constructionist approach and whether the research will move forward deductively or inductively. An inductive approach allowed a model to emerge from the data whereas a deductive approach would have required the researcher to begin with a theoretical model in mind. Initially, the researcher sought to examine established catechetical models against the needs and objectives of his study group in a deductive manner. Although he considered elements of established

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curricula, ultimately the researcher worked inductively to develop a novel instruction design that emerged from the data.

Gray also explained that research tended to be truth seeking or perspective seeking. Truth-seeking methodologies include experimental research that search for mostly objective, quantitative data. Perspective-seeking methods, such as phenomenology, tend to be subjectivist and look for qualitative data from the perspective of the research subject. The researcher determined that a mixed-methodological approach was in order. The project drew from grounded theory research and phenomenological research.

Clark Moustakas described grounded research theory as an inductive methodology where one develops a theory as data emerges. The benefit of grounded theory was that instead of imposing a theory on a group, the researcher was able to investigate the experiences and felt needs of the subject group to arrive at a theory. Grounded theory was especially prudent for this project since it is a process for discovering theories rather than imposing preconceptions. The researcher was also a pastor and catechist and therefore brought to the project many presumptions. Grounded theory seeks to build substantive theories, which are localized and deal with concrete life problems. The researcher had to set aside his own preferences and defer to the data.

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5 Gray, Doing Research in the Real World, 33.


7 Merriam, Qualitative Research in Practice, 7.
Phenomenology is unstructured and Gray explained that critics cite it for not being open to broad generalizations, thus limiting its application.\(^8\) The benefit of phenomenological research is its inductiveness that relies on the subjective experiences of research participants.\(^9\) One can generalize for the subset under investigation. This made it very suitable for this project because the researcher wanted to build a cooperative catechesis program based on the experiences of parents and pastors. Phenomenological research also involves the life of the researcher. As it moves from description to reduction of the data to interpretation, the process immerses the researcher in a reflective way.\(^10\) Regarding phenomenology, Moustakas summarized, “The empirical phenomenological approach involves a return to experience in order to obtain comprehensive descriptions that provide the basis for reflective structural analysis that portrays the essences of the experience.”\(^11\) The idea is that the person who experiences the phenomena is in the best position to describe it. The researcher concluded that only parents would be able to describe accurately the obstacles they faced in participating in catechesis. For these reasons, the researcher chose both grounded theory and phenomenological research as methodologies. The next step was to determine which particular research methods would generate the most reliable data while building upon the epistemological, theoretical, and methodological groundwork.

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\(^9\) Merriam, *Qualitative Research in Practice*, 7.

\(^10\) Merriam, *Qualitative Research in Practice*, 117.

Specific Research Methods: Survey and Field Interviews

This research into the role and responsibility of parents for catechizing their children in the faith was one that delved beyond just religious education classes and into the personal lives of real people. Rather than creating a descriptive study with a limited view of only detailing a particular problem or an explanatory study that only recorded correlations between different variables, the researcher designed an exploratory study to know more about how parents perceived catechesis and how they might be able to contribute to a better instruction method.12

Just as the researcher used a mixed-methodology, he employed a mixed-methods approach to gather the necessary data. In the survey, he took a concurrent approach, asking both quantitative and qualitative questions simultaneously.13 Although many questions the researcher wanted answered he obtained through this online survey, he considered that due to the limited amount of open-ended questions respondents might have more to offer if he interviewed them. Therefore, to obtain a deeper understanding of what parents faced, and to solicit answers to questions that the researcher did not yet know needed asking, he used field interviews with parents who agreed to participate. The researcher likewise conducted interviews with pastors to understand better both their current catechetical practice and how they would incorporate parents into that practice. Since the interviews followed his analysis of the survey results, this was a sequential approach to his collection of data.14

12 Gray, Doing Research in the Real World, 32
14 Creswell, Research Design, 16.
Research Instrument and Data Collection

Online Survey of Parents and Pastors

The researcher decided that a survey would be the most efficient way to solicit responses from parents and pastors across the large New England territory. He asked pastors at each of the 71 congregations of the New England District of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod to complete an online survey and invite parents in their congregation to take the survey.

Online Survey Design

A survey is a systematic collection of data from a specific population to generalize about that population. The researcher chose to use a survey as one means of data collection because of its potential to reach a larger pool of parents and pastors than could be profitably accomplished through interview alone. He employed a cross-sectional survey with cluster sampling based on particular criteria. Gray contended that there are two broad types of surveys: analytical and descriptive. Analytical surveys attempt to test a particular theory by collecting data based on particular variables and examining the results. Descriptive surveys are more inductive and researchers used them to discover respondents’ mindsets and opinions regarding a particular subject. Johnny Blair and Ronald Czaja recommended a five-

17 Gray, Doing Research in the Real World, 102.
18 Gray, Doing Research in the Real World, 100.
stage process to design and complete a survey.\textsuperscript{19} Gray presented a simplified process adapted from Blair and Czaja’s work. The first stage was to specify a research problem, establish the types of information needed, and identify an appropriate sample and sampling frame. The second stage was to create and pretest the survey. The third stage was to revisit and revise the survey based on the feedback received from the pilot testing. The fourth stage was to create the main survey and, if necessary, train interviewers or send an explanatory letter. The fifth and final stage involved coding, tabulation, and analysis.\textsuperscript{20} This section detailed the first four stages. The next section and chapter five discussed the fifth and final stage of data analysis.

\textit{Stage 1: Preliminary Planning.} Since the research question had been determined previously, the next step was to determine the period in which the survey would take place. The researcher determined that a snapshot of the parents’ and pastors’ opinions and attitudes regarding catechesis was sufficient for moving forward with developing a model for cooperative catechesis. For this reason, he did not seek to create a longitudinal study that could have measured change in responses over time. Instead, the researcher chose a period of approximately two-months within which participants could complete the survey.

The selection of the sample and the sampling frame are especially key to a valid survey.\textsuperscript{21} To determine the desired and appropriate sample, the researcher


\textsuperscript{20} Gray, \textit{Doing Research in the Real World}, 104.

\textsuperscript{21} Gray, \textit{Doing Research in the Real World}, 105-106.
narrowed the location for this survey down to congregations in the New England District of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. This consisted of 71 different congregations from which to draw potential participants. The project concentrated narrowly on pastors and parents within those congregations, which further focused the desired sample pool. The sampling frame is the source from which potential participants are gathered.22 This cluster method of sampling limited the possible number of responses, but the researcher determined that the information obtained would be more relevant.23 The researcher used mailing address and email information provided by the New England District office to contact pastors within the district.

Because of the prevalence of Internet access and the ease with which he could create, disseminate, and analyze a survey, the researcher chose to make the survey available primarily online. A printable version was available for participants who desired to use that option. In addition, it was cost and labor efficient to utilize the online survey method. The researcher chose to create a mixed method, self-report survey and used Qualtrics survey software to develop, distribute, and collect the results of the survey.24 To take the survey, respondents followed a direct-link URL provided by Qualtrics that took them to a dedicated webpage for the study. The survey had no time limit and participants were able to take the survey in one session or return to it later.

22 Gray, Doing Research in the Real World, 105-106.
23 Creswell, Research Design, 158
24 www.qualtrics.com
Stage 2: Drafting and Pre-Testing. A 2010 confirmation instruction study spearheaded by Marvin Bergman at Concordia University in Nebraska inspired many of the preliminary survey questions. The report, “What’s Happening in LCMS Confirmation? A Summary of Findings Based on Nine Populations” was a thorough examination of nine populations with a sample size of 1,094 leaders, parents, and adolescents between the ages of 11 and 16. 25 In designing the survey questions, the researcher took into consideration certain pitfalls that might produce invalid responses. These included prejudicial language, imprecise wording, leading questions, double questions, assumptive and hypothetical questions, and questions that the respondents may not be knowledgeable enough to answer. 26 Pastors and laypersons selected from outside of the sample location pilot tested the preliminary survey for this project. These pilot testers provided feedback that included recommendations for question construction, grammatical issues, software usability, and survey accessibility. The researcher reevaluated and revised the survey in light of the extensive feedback received.

Stage 3: Final Survey Design. The revised and final survey consisted of 59 questions divided into three sections (see Appendix A). The first section asked 21 demographic questions, including questions about the respondent’s family, faith life, employment status, and children. The first section also asked respondents if they would be willing to participate in a follow up interview if selected. The second


26 Gray, Doing Research in the Real World, 198-190.
section consisted of 19 questions designed to gauge the respondent’s attitude and opinions about catechesis in general. This included questions about who has the responsibility to instruct children in the tenets of the faith, the structure and timing of catechesis, and several open-ended questions for participants to give detailed responses. The third section also consisted of 19 questions that more directly probed the respondent’s opinion about parental involvement in the catechesis process. This section also asked opinion questions about the content of catechetical instruction. Each of the three sections contained both closed and open-ended questions that resulted in a mixture of quantitative and qualitative data.

Stage 4: Data Collection. To obtain responses for the survey, the researcher first mailed a letter in February 2015 to each of the district’s congregations introducing the project to the pastors (see Appendix B). This letter also informed the pastors that they would receive a packet later asking for their help to encourage the parents of their congregations to take the online survey. In August 2015, the researcher mailed the packet to each of the district’s congregations. This packet contained a letter with information on who should take the survey, the Internet address to access the survey, and a request for pastors to pass along the names of any exemplar parents they felt might be willing to participate in a follow up interview (see Appendix C). Exemplar parents were defined as simply as anyone the pastor felt did an above average or exemplary job actively participating in catechesis or Christian education of their children. The packet instructed pastors to complete the survey as well. The packet provided 25 business cards with information about how to take the survey for the pastors to distribute as needed. The survey was available as a
paper option for participants who chose not to complete it online, no one chose this option. October 18, 2015 was the deadline for online surveys to be completed. This provided over two months for pastors to disseminate the information to their congregations and for participants to complete the survey. In addition to the introductory letter and the packet, the researcher also contacted each pastor in the district utilizing an email mailing list provided by the district office with the same information.

Field Interviews with Parents and Pastors

The second stage of data collection involved field interviews with parents and pastors. An interview is essentially a recorded encounter between the researcher and a subject. Gray explained that interviews are an appropriate technique when research is exploratory and the researcher wants to access the subject’s feelings and attitudes.27 For this project, the researcher conducted all interviews in-person, on the telephone, or via video conferencing on Skype. Each interview was audio recorded with the express permission of the subjects. The researcher derived the sample for the interviews from participants of the survey and it resulted in a convenience sample since he selected subjects based on their willingness to participate.28 There are many complexities to the deceptively simple process of interviewing. Important considerations include which questions to ask and how, how to solicit honest


feedback, and in what way might the interview process shape the data obtained.²⁹
Before any interviews could take place, the researcher first had to determine the
number that would suffice, who would be selected, and where would the interviews
take place. Finally, the researcher had to determine how to structure the interviews
and the questions or topics that they would cover to obtain the most useful data.

**Interview Selection and Process**

There was no straightforward way to determine how many interviews would
need to take place to obtain enough valuable qualitative data. If phenomenological
research is a movement from description to reduction to interpretation, it is difficult
to determine when enough description has taken place and reduction should begin.
The transitions happen organically and one cannot plan for them.³⁰ The researcher
began with an arbitrary goal of interviewing ten parents and ten pastors. Preferably,
the parents would be representative of a variety of different family structures.
Likewise, the pastors interviewed would represent different ministry contexts within
the district. The researcher remained open to the potential need for additional
interviews as the data emerged.

The sampling frame for potential interviewees was the online survey. Using
the demographic information in the first section of the survey, the researcher
contacted, by phone and email, participants who indicated they were willing to allow
the researcher to interview them. At first, he carefully chose interviewees that could

Publications, 2009), 43.

³⁰ Merriam, *Qualitative Research in Practice*, 117.
represent a diverse point of view. When the researcher observed that many individuals were no longer interested in being interviewed, or failed to reply to solicitations, he requested interviews of all those who completed the survey and indicated they would be willing to participate. The interviews took place in December 2015.

**Interview Structure and Credibility**

The researcher used two approaches in the field interviews: focused and semi-structured. The first was a focused approach to follow-up with the subject’s survey responses. Focused interviews are useful when the interviewer possesses prior knowledge about the subject’s opinions.31 The researcher utilized the interviewee’s survey responses to introduce the topic, gather more information from the respondent, and direct the conversation toward particular issues. By beginning with a focused approach, there was an added benefit of allowing the interview to become comfortable with the process. Responses and clarifications that he obtained during this first part of the interview process he later updated into the interviewee’s survey responses and analyzed together.

The second approach was to engage in a semi-structured interview where the researcher asked additional questions about catechesis. He prepared a list of questions to ask each interviewee, but permitted variations in ordering and allowed for follow-up questions based on the direction each interview took. These questions included topics on the positives and negatives of the classroom approach to teaching.

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the use of technology in catechetical instruction, how children should be evaluated prior to confirmation, and how the church could help equip parents to teach their children. Because semi-structured interviews are not rigid in design, they are apt for gathering qualitative data. The informal structure allowed the conversation to stay on topic, but the researcher was able to permit the discussion to veer in other profitable directions.32

Validity and reliability are essential in any data collection method. Interview techniques that are more likely to acquire valid data are those that allow the respondents to answer openly and honestly. Likewise, allowing interviewees enough time and encouragement to expand on their thoughts are also keys to validity.33 The researcher was concerned with external validity, or the ability to generalize the findings of this study. To help address the small sample size used in the interview phase, he measured interviewee responses against the collective survey responses to ensure that the study included a sufficient diversity of perspectives.34 The researcher also wanted to avoid interviewer bias and ensure reliability. To minimize the amount of bias, standardization of the interview structure and behavior of the interviewer is necessary. The researcher worked to ensure that the interviews were consistent and accurate, and that he remained as neutral as possible in the data collection process.35

33 Gray, Doing Research in the Real World, 219
35 Gray, Doing Research in the Real World, 220.
Data Analysis Methodology

The majority of the data collected between the online survey and the interviews was qualitative. However, the mixed-method approach the researcher employed produced some quantitative data from the online survey.

Interpreting the Survey Data

The online survey produced mostly categorical data, with once instance of quantifiable data. Categorical data is that which one cannot measure numerically, rather the interpreter separates it into nominal sets or ranks as ordinal data. Quantifiable data is more precise because it deals with numerically defined ratios or intervals.36 Categorical data, on the other hand, can often be analyzed using simple frequency charts.37

The first section of the survey, which dealt mostly with demographic questions, resulted in nominal categorical data. The researcher analyzed this data by creating a simple frequency count to understand the household context of the survey respondents. The second section, which asked general questions about catechesis, also resulted in categorical data, mostly nominal. The exceptions were questions 2.2, 2.9, and 2.9 that were ordinal data. The researcher analyzed this data by frequency to determine if any prevailing trends emerged. The third section, which focused more on the role of parents in catechesis, contained questions that produced nominal categorical data, except for questions 3.3 and 3.4, which resulted in ordinal data. Question 3.6 was the only quantifiable question the survey featured. He presented

36 Gray, Doing Research in the Real World, 286.
37 Gray, Doing Research in the Real World, 287.
the data analysis descriptively and inferentially to illustrate the researcher’s conclusions.\textsuperscript{38} The open-ended questions contained in the survey resulted in qualitative data comprised of short free-form answers from the respondents. The researcher applied descriptive codes to this data by making inferences about each response’s content and systematically homogenizing them with similar responses.\textsuperscript{39}

\textit{Interpreting the Interview Data}

The interview process produced additional qualitative data for this project. Interview sessions lasted between 20 and 60 minutes one hour and took place in person, over the phone, and over Skype. Many interviews occurred over the telephone or through video conferencing due to the distance between the researcher and the subject. During the interviews, the researcher took field notes and audio-recorded the sessions. At the time of analysis, the researcher reviewed the recordings and created additional descriptive notes based on the conversations.

Due to the semi-structured and narrative nature of the interviews, the researcher coded the responses so that he could analyze and interpret the information. He first used descriptive coding to summarize the responses and solidify relevant data. Descriptive coding produced manageable data the researcher could later analyze.\textsuperscript{40} Coding is about data reduction, but in qualitative research, coding is also essential to data retention.\textsuperscript{41} Descriptive coding was only the first step

\textsuperscript{38} Gray, \textit{Doing Research in the Real World}, 293.

\textsuperscript{39} Gray, \textit{Doing Research in the Real World}, 328, 331-332.

\textsuperscript{40} Richards, \textit{Handling Qualitative Data}, 99-100.

\textsuperscript{41} Richards, \textit{Handling Qualitative Data}, 93-94.
because it allowed for a foundation upon which the researcher could conduct a deeper analysis.\textsuperscript{42} Instead of determining criteria of what data was important in advance, the researcher used a grounded theory approach and inductively created analytical codes based on the descriptive data.\textsuperscript{43}

The researcher manually coded the data with analytical codes and used the coded data to discern patterns and synthesize the information. This information contributed to the development of the catechetical model, which is the focus of this project.

\textsuperscript{42} Gray, \textit{Doing Research in the Real World}, 327.

\textsuperscript{43} Gray, \textit{Doing Research in the Real World}, 328.
CHAPTER FIVE: ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

In this chapter, the researcher analyzed and evaluated the data from the online survey and from follow-up interviews with selected survey participants. The researcher examined the quantitative and qualitative data resulting from the study. The first section explored the online survey responses. The second section was an analysis of responses from the interviews. The researcher used descriptive and analytical coding to illuminate emerging themes from parents and pastors that would help contribute to the creation of a novel cooperative catechesis model.

**Online Survey Responses**

The researcher contacted pastors at all 71 congregations in the New England District through the mail and email. He requested they solicit parents in their congregations to take the online survey. Participation was voluntary and completely dependent upon the support of the congregational pastors.

Forty-five participants took the survey, out of which 80 percent \( (n = 36) \) completed it in its entirety. All 45 participants completed the first section. Section two contained responses from 41 of the respondents and 36 respondents completed section three. There were fourteen congregations from the New England District represented in the results. The majority of respondents identified Christ Lutheran Church of Hebron, Connecticut as their home congregation. This is the researcher’s immediate ministry context.
Table 5.1 Congregations Represented

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Congregation</th>
<th>Parents</th>
<th>Pastors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Christ Lutheran Church, <em>Hebron, Connecticut</em></td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bethany Lutheran Church, <em>West Hartford, Connecticut</em></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saint Luke’s Lutheran Church, <em>Dedham, Massachusetts</em></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trinity Lutheran Church, <em>Clinton, Massachusetts</em></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Redeemer Lutheran Church, <em>Gorham, Maine</em></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Lutheran Church, <em>Boston, Massachusetts</em></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Our Savior Lutheran Church, <em>South Windsor, Connecticut</em></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trinity Lutheran Church of the Way, <em>Raynham, Massachusetts</em></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lutheran Church of Our Redeemer, <em>Enfield, Connecticut</em></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faith Lutheran Church, <em>Groton, Connecticut</em></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christ Lutheran Church, <em>Niantic, Connecticut</em></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hope Lutheran Church, <em>Storrs, Connecticut</em></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lutheran Church of Madison, <em>Madison, Connecticut</em></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, <em>Coventry, Connecticut</em></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Responses | 32 | 13

The researcher suspected that the lack of promotion by parish pastors combined with the subject matter and length of the survey contributed to the low response number and the 80 percent completion rate. He rounded all percentages to the nearest whole number.

Section 1 – Demographics

Of those who responded, 71 percent \((n = 32)\) were lay parents, and 29 percent \((n = 13)\) were pastors who had children. No pastors without children or professional church workers completed the survey. Ninety-three percent \((n = 42)\) of the respondents identified as belonging to a two-parent household with seven percent \((n = 3)\) indicating a single-parent household.

When asked if the respondent had ever taught a catechesis class before, 69 percent \((n = 31)\) replied that they had not. Four percent \((n = 2)\) indicated that they had taught as a lay instructor and 27 percent \((n = 12)\) specified they had taught catechesis as a pastor.
Question 1.8 asked, “Which of the following best describes each person’s faith life?” The responses indicated that the majority of participants were active Christians. Some families contained either inactive Christians or, as in one case, an unbeliever.

Table 5.2 Faith Life of Parents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Father</th>
<th>Mother</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Does not believe in Christ”</td>
<td>“Does not believe in Christ”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Inactive Christian”</td>
<td>“Inactive Christian”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Active LCMS Christian”</td>
<td>“Active LCMS Christian”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active other Christian”</td>
<td>Active other Christian”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 1.9 asked respondents to indicate the frequency with which family members attended worship, either separately or as a family. The majority of participants stated they attended worship every week. While 67 percent \( (n = 30) \) of fathers, 73 percent \( (n = 33) \) of mothers, and 71 percent \( (n = 32) \) of children attended every week, only 53 percent \( (n = 24) \) reported that they attended worship every week as a family.

Table 5.3 Worship Attendance Frequency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>A Few Times a Year</th>
<th>Once A Month</th>
<th>2-3 Times a Month</th>
<th>Every Week</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child(ren)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Together as a Family</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 1.10 asked about the frequency of attendance in Sunday school or Bible study. Compared to the frequency of attendance, fewer respondents indicated regular attendance in Sunday morning Christian education. When compared to the
worship attendance results, the roles were reversed between fathers and mothers with more fathers, 51 percent ($n = 23$), attending Bible studies every week, but only 33 percent ($n = 15$) of mothers. Fifty-eight percent ($n = 26$) of children are in Sunday school each week according to the results of this question, with 29 percent ($n = 13$) attending as a family.

### Table 5.4 Sunday School or Bible Study Attendance Frequency

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>A Few Times a Year</th>
<th>Once A Month</th>
<th>2-3 Times a Month</th>
<th>Every Week</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child(ren)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Together as a Family</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Questions 1.11 and 1.12 inquired about the employment status of the parents and their levels of education. Most of the respondents, 71 percent ($n = 32$) of fathers and 53 percent ($n = 24$) of mothers, worked full time. Responses indicated that 29 percent ($n = 13$) of mothers were full-time homemakers. Seventy-eight percent ($n = 35$) of fathers held a college degree and 76 percent ($n = 34$) of mothers held a college degree.

### Table 5.5 Employment Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Is Not Employed</th>
<th>Part-Time (&lt;30 hours/week) Not in the Home</th>
<th>Full-Time (30+ hours/week) Not in the Home</th>
<th>Works Part-Time from Home</th>
<th>Works Full-Time from Home</th>
<th>Full-Time Homemaker</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Questions 1.13 and 1.14 asked the participant how many minor children lived with them and how many of those children, if any, were in a catechesis program at the time of the survey. Five respondents, or 11 percent, indicated that they had zero children in the home. Four were pastors and one was a parent. Five, cited by two percent of respondents ($n = 1$) was the highest number of minor children living in the home. The number of respondents that reported no children in catechesis at the time of the survey was 17, or 38 percent. Thirty-three percent ($n = 15$) reported that one child was currently involved in catechesis and seven, or 16 percent, reported that they had two children in catechesis.

**Table 5.7 Number of Minor Children Living in the Home**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Children</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respondents</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 5.8 Number of Children Involved in Catechesis**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Children</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respondents</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 1.15 asked parents to indicate their children’s educational environment. The majority, 80 percent ($n = 36$), indicated that their children attended
a public school. Seven percent \((n = 3)\) of respondents stated their children were in a parochial school, two percent \((n = 1)\) was in a non-religious private school, and 11 percent \((n = 5)\) were homeschooled.

**Table 5.9 School Environment Distribution**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Public School</th>
<th>Parochial School</th>
<th>Non-Religious Private School</th>
<th>Homeschooled</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respondents</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Questions 1.16 and 1.17 asked parents with children between the ages of 12 and 16 to estimate the amount of time per week their children spend doing extracurricular activities and homework assignments. Question 1.18 then asked parents to estimate how much time each week they thought their children should dedicate to growing and maturing in their faith. All 45 participants answered this question. Although based on previous answers, the researcher is certain that not all 45 had children between the ages of 12-16. He surmised that parents without children in this age range left the responses at zero, instead of blank. This was a design flaw of the question as zero was the default answer. Therefore, many answers of zero were factored into these results. With no way to determine the ages of the children in each respondent’s home to eliminate false responses, the usefulness of these results is dubious.

The average of all participant responses indicated that their children spend an average of three hours and fifty-four minutes each week in extracurricular activities and four hours and forty-eight minutes doing homework. The average of all participant responses indicated that six hours and forty-two minutes should be spent helping children grow in their faith.
Questions 1.19, 1.20, and 1.21 asked about the participants’ Internet usage. Question 1.19 revealed that 98 percent ($n = 44$) of respondents had high-speed access to the Internet and two percent ($n = 1$) indicated they connected using a dial-up service. Question 1.20 showed that families had multiple devices for connecting to the Internet. Even two households, who reported using public computers, also indicated they have multiple computer devices at home. This suggested that the use of public computers represents just one option in addition to having Internet at home.

### Table 5.11 Devices Used to Access the Internet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Shared Laptop or Desktop</th>
<th>Individual Laptop or Desktop</th>
<th>Tablets with Screens 7” or Larger</th>
<th>Cell Phones or Tablets 7” or smaller</th>
<th>Public Computer</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Responses</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 1.21 determined that 62 percent ($n = 28$) of the respondents had children who used the Internet to complete educational assignments and 22 percent ($n = 10$) used it as a supplement to their education. Only 16 percent ($n = 7$) indicated they did not use the Internet for educational purposes.
In anticipation of performing follow-up interviews, the researcher asked participants to provide contact information and to indicate whether they would be interested in an interview. Over half, 56 percent \((n = 25)\) said yes, 13 percent \((n = 6)\) said yes, but only over the phone, and 31 percent \((n = 14)\) declined.

**Section 2 – Catechesis in General**

The second section of the online survey focused on the respondents’ opinion and attitudes regarding catechesis in general. Forty-one respondents completed section two.

Question 2.1 asked who in the respondent’s congregation was the most responsible for catechesis. The majority of respondents, 68 percent \((n = 28)\), indicated that a pastor was solely responsible for confirmation instruction. Seventeen percent \((n = 7)\) indicated parents and instructors shared responsibility. Twelve percent \((n = 5)\) reported that a lay instructor alone bore responsibility for catechesis and only 2 percent, one person, indicated that in their congregation a pastor and lay instructor shared responsibility equally.

**Table 5.13 Responsibility for Catechesis**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pastor</th>
<th>Lay Instructor</th>
<th>Pastor/Lay Instructor</th>
<th>Parents</th>
<th>Parents/Instructors</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respondents</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 2.2 inquired about the participant and his or her child’s level of interest in catechesis. Twenty-seven percent \((n = 11)\) reported that their children did
not, or had not yet, participated in catechesis. Seven percent \((n = 3)\) reported that they themselves had not participated and two percent \((n = 1)\) reported “not sure.” The responses showed that 38 percent \((n = 15)\) of parents and children were “moderately interested.” Participants reported that seven percent \((n = 3)\) of their children found catechesis somewhat interesting and the same number were not interested. More parents were “somewhat interested” at 15 percent \((n = 6)\) while only two percent \((n = 1)\) reported being “not interested” in confirmation instruction.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5.14 Level of Interest in Catechesis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not Sure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 2.3 explored whom participants viewed as having “the most responsibility” for teaching their own children the basics of the faith. Overall, 59 percent \((n = 24)\) said that pastors and parents share responsibility equally and 27 percent \((n = 11)\) placed responsibility on parents or guardians. Only 15 percent \((n = 6)\) indicated that pastors were primarily responsible. The researcher separated the responses of pastors from parents. He observed that pastors favored parents as having the primary responsibility to teach their own children, 54 percent \((n = 7)\), and parents leaned toward pastors and parents sharing that responsibility, 68 percent \((n = 19)\).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5.15 Primary Responsibility for Teaching Children the Faith</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pastors/Catechists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Formal catechesis in the Lutheran Church generally lasts between one and three years as determined by the local tradition of the congregation, with a two-year program being most common.  

Question 2.4 asked participants for what length of time they would prefer for the program. The majority, 59 percent \((n = 24)\), chose two years, which is the most common length. Twenty-two percent \((n = 9)\) indicated a preference for a one-year program, 15 percent \((n = 6)\) for a two-year program, and five percent \((n = 2)\) chose four or more years. Although pastor and parent responses were similar, no parents selected four or more years and only one pastor chose one year as a preferred length for catechesis.

Table 5.16 Preferred Length of Formal Catechesis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>One Year</th>
<th>Two Years</th>
<th>Three Years</th>
<th>Four or More Years</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respondents</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pastors Only</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents Only</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 2.5 asked about their preferences regarding catechesis class schedules. The researcher provided several options and allowed participants to suggest their own. Most participants, 80 percent \((n = 33)\), selected the traditional schedule of once per week during the school year. Seven percent \((n = 3)\) indicated a preference for three times per week during the summer and one respondent for a one

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1 Bergman, *What’s Happening in LCMS Confirmation?*, 32.
or two-week “intensive” camp. Parents and pastors both supported a once per week schedule, but no pastors preferred summer classes.

**Table 5.17 Preferred Catechesis Schedule**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Once/Week during School Year</th>
<th>Three Times/Week during Summer</th>
<th>Every Day for One or Two Week Camp</th>
<th>Another Schedule</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respondents</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pastors Only</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents Only</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Optional question 2.6 asked participants to suggest other possible catechesis schedules (See Appendix D). Three parents responded. One parent indicated that Sundays prior to church were preferable. Two preferred classes in the summer. Five pastors responded, two of whom affirmed the traditional school year schedule and two who sought more parent involvement. One pastor suggested a once per week, year-round program.

Question 2.7 asked parents to identify who in their child’s life had the greatest impact on his or her faith. Eighty-five percent (n = 35) of respondents said that parents had the most impact. Pastors, teachers, and peers tied for five percent (n = 2) of responses. When the researcher separated the responses of pastors and parents, he observed a similar trend.

**Table 5.18 Who Has the Greatest Impact on Children’s Faith**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pastor</th>
<th>Parent</th>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Congregation</th>
<th>Friends or Peers</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Question 2.8 asked participants to rank seven activities according to which has the most and least impact on their child’s faith development. Participants ranked each activity by assigning it a number between one and seven, with seven representing an activity that they believed was most impactful on their children’s faith. Based on an average of all responses, the researcher determined what represented the overall ranking from all participants. He then separated the responses between pastors and parents. Worship services ranked highest among all participants with an average ranking of 5.02 and with pastors at 5.46. Parents ranked Sunday school as having the most impact at 5.32. For parents, home devotions came in fifth most impactful with 3.07 whereas pastors ranked it as a close second to worship services at 5.23. Across the board, mission trips and servant events ranked as being least impactful for child’s developing faith with each coming in at 3.04 or under.

**Table 5.19 Activities Ranked from Most to Least Impact on Children’s Faith**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All Participants</th>
<th>Parents</th>
<th>Pastors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Worship Services (5.02)</td>
<td>Worship Services (4.82)</td>
<td>Worship Services (5.46)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunday School (4.98)</td>
<td>Catechesis (4.86)</td>
<td>Home Devotions (5.23)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catechesis (4.71)</td>
<td>Worship Services (4.82)</td>
<td>Catechesis (4.38)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Devotions (3.76)</td>
<td>Youth Group (4.00)</td>
<td>Sunday School (4.23)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth Group (3.76)</td>
<td>Home Devotions (3.07)</td>
<td>Youth Group (3.23)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mission Trips (3.00)</td>
<td>Mission Trips (3.04)</td>
<td>Mission Trips (2.92)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Servant Events (2.78)</td>
<td>Servant Events (2.89)</td>
<td>Servant Events (2.54)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Responses = 41</td>
<td>Total Responses = 28</td>
<td>Total Responses = 13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 2.9 asked participants to indicate their level of satisfaction with the catechetical program in their congregation. Twenty-nine percent \( n = 12 \) reported high satisfaction with catechesis in their congregation. Thirty-nine percent \( n = 16 \) percent
indicated only moderate satisfaction and five percent \((n = 2)\) reported a low satisfaction. Those who had no opinion were 27 percent \((n = 11)\). A lower percentage, 15 percent \((n = 2)\), of pastors indicated a high satisfaction with catechesis, when compared with 36 percent \((n = 10)\) of parents who reported the same.

**Table 5.20 Level of Satisfaction with Formal Catechesis**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>No Opinion or Don’t Know</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respondents</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pastors Only</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents Only</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In questions 2.10 and 2.11, the researcher invited participants to share two things they found satisfying about catechesis in their congregation and two things they found frustrating. These questions were optional. Some respondents provided more or less than two. Since the responses were open text, the researcher coded the results to identify overarching themes.

When asked to identify those elements of catechesis the respondent was satisfied with, parents identified the positive engagement and attitude of the pastor most often. Parents also cited varied teaching methods, flexible schedules, and a nurturing environment as reasons for satisfaction with catechesis. One person pointed to the small class size and another to the personalized approach taken by the pastor as reasons for their satisfaction. Pastors most identified an engagement with the Bible and the Small Catechism as reasons they were satisfied with catechesis. They also pointed to parental involvement, small class size, and personalized instruction as positives.
When asked to identify aspects of catechesis that frustrated them, parents identified the lecture-style of instruction and anxiety related to the final questioning prior to confirmation. One parent pointed to the small class size, another to lack of pastor participation, and a third to the lack of participation in Sunday school as reasons they felt frustrated with catechesis. The negative issue pastors overwhelming identified was with the lack of parental involvement in catechesis. One pastor pointed to an issue with conflicting school and sports schedules and other pointed to the small class size.

Memorization has been a part of catechesis at least since Martin Luther penned the Small Catechism. Question 2.12 asked participants for their opinion regarding memorization. Most respondents, 54 percent ($n = 22$), reported that they believed memorizing Bible verses and portions of the Small Catechism were necessary. Twenty-two percent ($n = 9$) said that rote memorization was not important. Twenty-four percent ($n = 10$) of participants’ opinions fell somewhere in between. The majority of parents and pastors found memorizing Bible verses and the Small Catechism important; however, pastors were nearly unanimous in this opinion with all but one choosing this answer.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>All Respondents</th>
<th>Pastors Only</th>
<th>Parents Only</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Memorizing Bible verses and portions of Luther’s Small Catechism are necessary for quality catechesis.</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s important to memorize portions of Luther’s Small Catechism, but not Bible verses.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s important to memorize Bible verses, but not Luther’s Small Catechism.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s only necessary to memorize the 10 Commandments, Apostles’ Creed, and Lord’s Prayer.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rote memorization is not important. It’s only necessary that students learn the concepts being taught.</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 2.13 invited participants to provide comments about memorization. Since the responses were open text, the researcher coded the results to identify overarching themes. The prevailing idea parents expressed was they believed memorization to be an important skill, but useless without understanding the concepts behind what they memorize. Two parents responded they thought memorization held little value and one pointed out that children do not know how. Regarding what children should memorize, many parents specifically mentioned the Small Catechism, in particular, the Commandments, Apostles’ Creed, and Lord’s Prayer. All the pastors who provided additional responses indicated they believed memorization was a useful skill. Two specifically mentioned that the meanings of the concepts memorized must follow. Three pastors also noted that children do not know how to memorize and two pointed to a failure by schools to use memorization as a teaching tool.

Question 2.14 asked respondents to choose from a list of possible classroom formats for catechetical instruction. Participants could also provide additional comments. Most respondents, overall and when divided between pastor and parent
responses, selected a traditional classroom format. That is, 54 percent \((n = 22)\) of all respondents, 46 percent \((n = 6)\) of pastors, and 57 percent \((n = 16)\) of parents preferred that “students meet weekly for class and most instruction takes place in class, with some homework.” The second most preferable choice, supported by 24 percent \((n = 10)\) of respondents, was similar to the weekly class schedule except that catechumens would interact with the material prior to class. The researcher modeled this choice after the “flipped classroom” approach that allowed parents more involvement in the catechesis process.² The other choices involved meeting fewer times than once per week and were not as popular among parents or pastors who responded.

Table 5.22 Most Effective Catechesis Format for Your Child

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Format</th>
<th>All Respondents</th>
<th>Pastors Only</th>
<th>Parents Only</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students meet weekly for class and most instruction takes place in class, with some homework.</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students explore the material at home prior to class through workbooks or online and meet weekly in class to discuss what was learned.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students explore the material at home through workbooks or online and meet monthly to discuss what was learned.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students explore the material at home through workbooks or online and meet with the pastor only when needed or when ready to be examined for confirmation.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students meet during the summer, or at other times, for week-long intensives instead of weekly and throughout the year.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have other thoughts, explained in the next question.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 2.15 invited participants to provide additional comments on catechesis formats. Since the responses were open text, the researcher coded the results to identify overarching themes. Among all parent comments, the researcher

² Michelle Pacansky-Brock, Best Practices for Teaching with Emerging Technologies, 12.
noted that parents desired weekly classes, pastor involvement, and a lot of discussion. These three themes recurred throughout the responses. Parents also mentioned homework, parental involvement, and memorization as important aspects they wanted included in catechesis. Respondents also pointed to their preference for a mixture of teaching styles and, in some cases, one-on-one instruction. When reviewing the pastor responses, the researcher noted that parental involvement was the primary theme. At the same time, three pastors expressed concerns that parents were either unwilling or unable to be involved. Another theme that emerged from the pastor responses was their desire to have catechumens engage in catechesis at their own pace. One pastor suggested a novel “university style” approach where classes were elective and catechumens would be eligible for confirmation after completing a certain number at their own pace.

Question 2.16 asked respondents to comment with specific things they would like to see catechesis accomplish. Since the responses were open text, the researcher coded the results to identify overarching themes. Parents overwhelmingly indicated that they hoped catechesis would strengthen the faith of their child. From their responses, the researcher also noted a desire that their children would be able to internalize what it means to be a Lutheran, self-identify as a Christian, and form a foundation of knowledge upon which to build a lifetime of learning. Parents also noted a desire for their children to be equipped to defend their faith and evangelize others. Likewise, the pastors who responded to this question pointed to the desire that catechesis would strengthen a young person’s faith. Another theme that emerged
from the pastor’s responses was a hope that catechesis would provide children foundational knowledge for lifelong catechesis.

Question 2.17 asked participants to identify any catechesis in which their children engaged outside of the congregation. The majority overall, 68 percent \( (n = 28) \), reported no formal catechesis outside of the congregation. Only 15 percent \( (n = 6) \) of all respondents reported their child was involved in formal catechesis at home. One respondent, a pastor, reported his child was involved in a one-on-one program with a tutor. No respondents indicated that their child attended a parochial school. Although the question did not specifically state schools of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, the researcher noted that in the New England District there are 23 synodical preschools and only five elementary schools. There are no other LCMS parochial schools in the district, despite the Lutheran school system being the second largest parochial system in the United States.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5.23 Catechesis Outside of the Congregation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respondents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pastors Only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents Only</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 2.18 inquired about other ways participants encouraged their children to grow in their faith from a list of possible activities. Participants could choose as many as applied. The researcher invited participants to provide additional comments in the following question. Despite most respondents previously identifying parents as having the most impact on their children’s faith, home Bible
study and family devotions ranked the lowest at 22 percent \((n = 9)\) and 29 percent \((n = 12)\) respectively. Daily prayer and discussing Sunday school lessons with their children both tied for the highest position at 71 percent \((n = 29)\).

**Figure 5.1 Other Means Parents Employ to Encourage Children’s Faith**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>All Participants</th>
<th>Pastors Only</th>
<th>Parents Only</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We pray daily as a family or one-on-one.</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We have family or one-on-one devotions.</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We engage in Bible study at home.</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We discuss what they learn in Sunday School.</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My child reads Biblical/Christian children’s books.</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My child attends a Christian school.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 2.19 asked respondents to comment on any other ways they encouraged their children in the faith. Since the responses were open text, the researcher coded the results to summarize the results. Parents mostly pointed to prayer, taking their children to worship and Sunday school, and home discussions about the faith as how they encouraged their children’s faith. Two parents also noted they continued to learn through Bible study to be prepared to answer their children’s questions. Two parents wrote about teaching their children to do good works for others. Only four pastors left additional responses, and these focused on discussing
the faith and participation in Bible study or Sunday school. Two pastors also pointed to teaching their children to do good works to help others.

Section 3 – Parental Involvement in Catechesis

The researcher narrowed the focus in this section to gauge participants’ attitudes toward parental involvement in catechesis. In this section, there were 36 respondents. Question 3.1 asked whether parents should have an active or limited role in catechesis. The majority of respondents, 72 percent ($n = 26$), indicated that parents should have an active and involved role in catechesis, while 28 percent ($n = 10$) reported that parents should have a limited role. One hundred percent ($n = 10$) of pastors who answered this question concurred parents should have an active role in catechesis.

Question 3.2 asked participants to share ways they believed parents should be involved in shaping what their children believed. Since the responses were open text, the researcher coded the results to identify overarching themes. From the parent’s responses, the researcher noticed that leading by example was the prevailing theme. Second to that was answering their children’s questions and discussing the faith. Parents also included worship, prayer, and Sunday school in their responses. Pastors also wrote that parents should lead by example, but also mentioned home devotions, prayer, and teaching their children at home about the faith.

Questions 3.3 and 3.4 asked participants to select five topics from a list they felt most important and least important to cover in catechesis. Although the list was far from exhaustive, it was a representation of the topics generally covered by the
researcher in his own catechesis instruction classes. The researcher analyzed the results and determined that, overall, the five topics considered most important were:

1. The six chief parts of Luther’s Small Catechism \( (n = 31, \text{ 86 percent}) \)
2. Making moral decision \( (n = 20, \text{ 56 percent}) \)
3. Apologetics and defending the Christian faith \( (n = 17, \text{ 45 percent}) \)
4. Dating, family, and marriage \( (n = 16, \text{ 44 percent}) \)
5. People and events of the Bible \( (n = 13, \text{ 36 percent}) \)

The least important topics participants identified were:

1. Demons, ghosts, and the supernatural \( (n = 28, \text{ 78 percent}) \)
2. Drug and Alcohol Abuse \( (n = 22, \text{ 61 percent}) \)
3. Other Religions \( (n = 19, \text{ 53 percent}) \)
4. Other Christian Traditions \( (n = 18, \text{ 50 percent}) \)
5. Sexuality and Gender Identity Issues \( (n = 18, \text{ 50 percent}) \)

Question 3.5 asked participants to share additional topics they felt were essential for children to learn. Since the responses were open text, the researcher coded the results to summarize the results. Several participants wrote something to the effect of, “the list above is sufficient.” These responses were not included in the analysis. From the parent responses, additional topics included:

   Rightly dividing Law and Gospel
   Reformation History
   Stewardship
   Home Devotional Life
Respect

Congregational Life

The pastors who responded added these additional topics for consideration:

How to Study the Bible

How to Pray

Spiritual Disciplines

Evangelism

Biblical Literacy

Question 3.6 asked parents to estimate at what age their children were, or would be, ready for certain theological teachings and practices. This question helped the researcher understand when parents might feel comfortable introducing certain concepts to their children in catechesis. Respondents gave a wide variety of answers. For each teaching or practice, the researcher identified the lowest and highest ages reported, the most frequently reported age (mode), the median age, and the average age. One respondent entered zero for every concept. This indicated that the participant likely did not want to answer this question. The researcher came to this conclusion because some choices necessitated that the child be able to read, therefore an answer of zero would appear to be a non-response. Because of this, his or her responses were not included in this analysis. In another case, a respondent answered several with a question mark. The researcher did not include these particular responses in the analysis. In two instances, the respondent answered “baby.” The researcher included these responses as zero. In two other instances, respondents
provided a range of ages such as “3-5.” In these cases, the researcher considered the higher end of the age range.

**Table 5.24 Readiness for Selected Teachings and Practices by Age**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concepts</th>
<th>Minimum Age Reported</th>
<th>Maximum Age Reported</th>
<th>Mode Age</th>
<th>Median Age</th>
<th>Average Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To learn that there is a God.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To learn about Jesus, the Son of God.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To hear stories from the Bible</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To hear passages from the Small Catechism.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>5, 6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To pray with.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To pray by themselves.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To begin family devotions.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0, 3</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To learn simple prayers.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To memorize simple Bible verses.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To read a Children’s Bible</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To read a Simplified Small Catechism.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To read a standard Bible.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To read Luther’s Small Catechism.</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To memorize portions of Scripture.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To memorize portions of the Small Catechism.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To ask serious questions about their faith.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>5, 10, 12</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To express doubts about their faith.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To enter catechesis (confirmation instruction).</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To undergo the Rite of Confirmation.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To understand and participate in the Lord’s Supper.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 3.7 asked participants to describe ways they believed parents should be involved in catechesis classes. Since the responses were open text, the researcher coded the results to summarize the results. Many responses were vague and to the effect of “attend class” or “participate in class.” Others responses as they had
previously by stating that parents should have discussions about the faith and what children are learning. Many respondents wrote about “encouraging” their children and helping them with their homework. Overall, parents seemed interested in helping but could not articulate any concrete ways they might be able to help aside from ensuring their children are in class and do the required homework and memory work. Pastors noted that parents should be teaching at home, supporting and encouraging their children, and attending classes. One pastor, however, wrote that parents should not attend class. He did not elaborate.

Question 3.8 asked participants to describe specific ways they had been active in their children’s confirmation classes. Again, since the responses were open text, the researcher coded the results to summarize the results. Several participants responded with a comment such as, “my child is not old enough for confirmation yet.” The researcher treated these responses as if the participant had not answered the question. Responses included going to class with their children, ensuring they completed their homework, and discussing what their children had learned. The pastors’ responses included that they taught the class and helped their children at home with assignments.

Question 3.9 asked if parental participation was required, encouraged, or unexpected in their congregation. This question measured the current situation in the respondent’s congregation, not his or her preference. Seventy-five percent (n = 27) of all respondents indicated that parental participation was encouraged. Eleven percent (n = 4) reported that participation by parents was unwanted or unexpected and 14 percent (n = 5) said that it was required. Parents and pastors did not differ
significantly on this question when the researcher separated and compared their responses.

Table 5.25 Congregation Expectation of Parental Participation in Catechesis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parental Participation is:</th>
<th>Required</th>
<th>Encouraged</th>
<th>Unwanted or Unexpected</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respondents</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pastors Only</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents Only</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 3.10 asked parents, if they would be willing to attend either a special class for parents to refresh their own knowledge of the faith or attend catechesis with their children if their congregation offered such opportunities. Twenty-two percent ($n = 8$) responded that they would attend a class especially for parents. Twenty-five percent ($n = 9$) indicated they would attend alongside their children. The majority, 39 percent ($n = 14$) responded that they would like to do both, whereas 14 percent ($n = 5$) indicated they would do neither.

Question 3.11 asked participants to provide any additional thoughts or comments they might have had regarding parents in confirmation. Since the responses were open text, the researcher coded the results to identify overarching themes. Several participants responded with a comment such as, “no” or “no answer.” The researcher treated these responses as if the participant had not answered the question. The parents who answered this question overwhelmingly indicated that parents should attend class with their children. One parent, however, expressed concern that this might inhibit the openness of their child to ask questions. Another parent wrote that parents who attend class should be careful not to interrupt or get the class off topic and another mentioned the importance of prayer. Four
pastors chose to answer this question. Two of them wrote that parents attending classes with their children had positive and negative consequences. The other two wrote about the importance of parental involvement to support the pastor’s efforts.

Question 3.12 asked participants to evaluate whether they were able to teach their children the basics of the faith as much as they would like. It also asked them to identify obstacles that kept them from doing so. Since the responses were open text, the researcher coded the results to identify overarching themes. Nine parents replied that they were able to teach their children the basics of the faith while 12 explained that various obstacles prevented them from teaching as much as they would like. Parents pointed equally to lack of time and worldly distractions as the primary obstacle they face in teaching their children about the faith. Four cited a lack of knowledge about the faith and two wrote that their husbands did not assist them in teaching the faith. All six pastors who provided answers indicated they had the ability to teach their children the faith. As for obstacles, one pastor pointed to sinfulness and worldly distractions and another, resistance to the faith catechumens encounter in school and the media.

Question 3.13 gave respondents the opportunity to list ways the pastor or congregation could help them teach their children the basics of the faith. Since the responses were open text, the researcher coded the results to identify overarching themes. The primary themes that emerged from the 21 parent responses were the need for guidance \((n = 5)\) and resources for parents to use at home \((n = 5)\). Parents also indicated faithful worship, sermons, and classes as ways pastors could help them catechize their children. Several wrote that pastors should continue to teach adults
the basics of the faith. One parent also thought that giving youth more opportunities to serve would be beneficial. Another said that including readings from the catechism as a part of the Divine Service would help. Eight pastors responded and the theme that emerged was to encourage parental involvement \((n = 5)\). Second was the need for basic education for parents \((n = 2)\). One pastor remarked, “I would like the answer to this one.”

Questions 3.14 and 3.15 inquired about catechumen participation in worship and Sunday school and asked if it should be mandatory or merely expected. Regarding worship, 61 percent \((n = 22)\) responded that it should be expected, but not required. Thirty-nine percent \((n = 14)\) said that it should be required. There were similar results for participation in Sunday school. The majority, 61 percent \((n = 22)\), indicated that participation should be expected, while 33 percent \((n = 12)\) said it should be required. One respondent reported that congregations and pastors should not expect catechumens to participate in Sunday school. Another indicated that his or her congregation did not offer a Sunday school program.

Question 3.16 asked how active in the congregation respondents expected confirmed children to be. Fifty percent \((n = 18)\) expected no increase in the level of activity, 47 percent \((n = 17)\) expected more activity, and three percent \((n = 1)\) indicated an expectation of less activity.

Question 3.17 asked participants to rate certain expected outcomes from catechesis for their children. The responses indicated that the participants found three of the four outcomes very important. These include active involvement after confirmation, that their children have a biblical worldview, and that their children are
able to filter what they encounter in popular media through the lens of their faith.

The fourth item, that children have a non-family mentor of whom to ask questions, was not as highly rated.

Table 5.26 Importance of Selected Post-Confirmation Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Not Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Your child(ren)’s active congregational involvement after Confirmation.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That your child(ren) have a biblical worldview.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That your child(ren) are able to filter what they encounter in popular media through the lens of their faith.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>That your child(ren) have a non-family mentor to ask questions of during catechesis (confirmation instruction).</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question 3.18 asked participants to describe what they thought was the purpose of catechesis. Since the responses were open text, the researcher coded the results to identify overarching themes. Several participants responded with a comment such as, “no” or “no answer.” The researcher treated these responses as if the participant had not answered the question. Twenty-five parents answered this question. One hundred percent ($n = 25$) of parents indicated that the purpose of catechesis was to teach the faith. The next prevalent theme was that catechesis would prepare children to be more active members in the church ($n = 7$). This was second only to preparing children to be good Christians active in the world ($n = 5$). Eight pastors responded and all of them indicated that the purpose of catechesis was to teach the faith. Three noted specifically how this was a foundation for being an
active Christian in the church and the world. One pastor explained how catechesis prepares a person to share their faith with others.

Question 3.19, the last question on the survey, asked respondents to write the most important thing they wanted their child to learn from catechesis. Since the responses were open text, the researcher coded the results to identify overarching themes. Several participants responded with a comment such as, “no” or “no answer.” The researcher treated these responses as if the participant had not answered the question. Twenty-one parents responded and five main themes emerged from their comments. Most common was the desire that their children would receive from catechesis the foundation upon which to live a Christian life \( (n = 8) \). The second theme was that God loved them \( (n = 6) \). That their children would learn the tenets of the Christian faith and take to heart the Gospel of Jesus tied for third \( (n = 4) \). The fifth theme from parents’ comments was the hope that their child would learn to confess their faith \( (n = 2) \). Eight pastors responded and most of them \( (n = 6) \) wanted children to know the Gospel of Jesus. Two other themes that came from pastors’ comments were that catechumens would learn that God loves them \( (n = 2) \) and they would be able to confess their faith \( (n = 2) \).

**Field Interview Responses**

The researcher conducted 15 interviews between December 7 and 11, 2015. He interviewed six pastors and nine parents. Each interview took between 20 and 60 minutes. The researcher conducted four interviews over the phone, five in his office, four over Skype video conferencing software, and two in the interviewees’ home.
The preliminary task in each interview was to explain the purpose of the interview and how the researcher would use the information collected.³ He preceded each interview with the following statement, or something similar, which accomplished this task and included a note about confidentiality:

I am interviewing you to learn more about the ways parents are involved in teaching their children about their Christian faith. I am interested in your own personal experiences and opinions. My goal is to learn how the church can better work with parents to equip them to teach their children about their faith. I am recording this conversation for my own review. All the information I collect from you will be kept confidential. No personally identifiable information will be included in my final report. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Each interview had two parts. In the first part, the researcher reviewed the respondent’s answers from the online survey. In the second part, the researcher asked additional questions not covered by the survey. The researcher structured questions to avoid jargon, prejudicial language, and ambiguity. He also wanted to avoid leading questions.⁴ Because some interviews took place over the telephone and through Skype, the researcher attempted to employ direct questions that did not lend themselves to misunderstanding.⁵ Regardless of the means of interview, the researcher took notes to record keywords to review later. Additionally, and with the consent of the interviewee, he recorded the interviews for accuracy and later review.⁶

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³ Gray, Doing Research in the Real World, 222.
⁴ Gray, Doing Research in the Real World, 225.
⁵ Gray, Doing Research in the Real World, 232.
The first step the researcher took before analysis was to create descriptive codes of the data using his field notes and the audio recordings. For each recorded interview, the researcher reviewed his field notes and then listened to the audio recording making more notes according to the structured questions. Through an analysis of the descriptions, he established tentative analytical codes that were not so concrete as to result in a few connections, but not so abstract as to be of little value. He strived to make coding categories that were both all-inclusive, to include all possible results, and mutually exclusive, so that responses would not fall into multiple categories.\(^7\) The researcher inductively added appropriate codes and categories as the need for them arose. The researcher used these codes to expose additional themes and information from respondents that may not have been collected or discerned from the survey alone.

Each interview began by reviewing the interviewee’s survey responses with the participants. The researcher updated the survey with any clarifications participants made on their responses and that data was included in the analysis above. None of the interviewees changed their answers, but in some cases they added elements that had not before. After reviewing the surveys, the researcher posed six additional questions (see Appendix D). The researcher considered responses from pastors and parents separately.

Question 1 – Feedback on Classroom Model

The first question was, “The typical confirmation instruction model is based on a classroom model where the pastor (or lay-instructor) serves as the teacher and the students do assignments at home before and after class. What do you think are some positives and negatives of the classroom model?”

Positive Factors

In the analysis of pastor responses regarding the positive factors of the classroom model of instruction for catechesis, the researcher observed several themes. Equally represented were the benefits of competent instruction \((n = 3)\) and the ease of access \((n = 3)\) pastors have to catechumens to build lasting relationships. Pastors also noted that the classroom environment ensures that solid doctrinal content \((n = 2)\) is being taught, assuming the class is taught by the pastor or educated lay instructor. Pastors also cited the structure \((n = 2)\) classrooms bring and the familiarity \((n = 2)\) catechumens have with the classroom model as positives. One pastor pointed out the necessity \((n = 1)\) of the classroom model for large congregations.

Parents also identified the doctrinal content \((n = 4)\) and competent instructions \((n = 4)\) as positive factors. The structure \((n = 3)\) and familiarity \((n = 3)\) classrooms bring for catechumens was a factor parents also pointed to as positive. One parent cited to the access \((n = 1)\) pastors had with catechumens as positive and another remarked that access to peers \((n = 1)\) who may have similar questions was also a beneficial aspect.
Negative Factors

The second part of the question dealt with perceived negative factors with the classroom model. Pastors and parents alike were quicker to provide negative examples. The primary negative theme among pastors regarding classroom education was the lack of opportunity for interaction \( (n = 5) \). Pastors were concerned that the structured classroom model was set up for lecturing and found it difficult to personalize \( (n = 2) \) learning to individual catechumens. While one pastor mentioned that he went to the homes of catechumens and dealt with them directly, he admitted this would be impossible if his congregation was larger. Students may be familiar with school, but pastors were quick to point out the negative factor that children tend to not like school \( (n = 2) \) and could perceive confirmation as a routine \( (n = 3) \) and another “hoop to jump through.”

Like pastors, the most prevalent negative factor that emerged from parent responses was the lack of interaction \( (n = 5) \) in the typical classroom environment. The second most prevalent theme was that children did not like school \( (n = 4) \) and one parent noted that catechesis often took a back seat to school work \( (n = 1) \). The difficulty to personalize lessons \( (n = 2) \) was also a concern with parents. The researcher observed great concern from both groups that the classroom model did not engage students sufficiently.

**Question 2 – Equipping Parents to Teach**

The researcher prefaced the second question, “Deuteronomy 6 teaches that God commands parents to pass down the tenets of the faith to their children as they go about their daily lives. Martin Luther prefaced each part of the Small Catechism
with ‘As the head of the household should teach their children . . . ’” The researcher then asked parents, “In what specific ways could the church help you, as a parent, fulfill this important task?”

The number one response from parents was their need for the church to provide resources \( (n = 6) \) to parents to equip them for the task. One parent specifically said it would be helpful if the congregation taught parents \( (n = 1) \) what it expected of them at home. Parents expressed a desire for Bible studies \( (n = 4) \) that could help them know more about their faith. They also expressed the need for networking \( (n = 4) \), such as parent groups and communication between parents of catechumens, so that they could benefit from one another. Parents also said that it would be helpful if the congregation could provide service opportunities \( (n = 2) \) for their children to experience living out their faith in the world.

The researcher asked pastors specifically, “In what specific ways could the church help or equip parents to pass down the tenets of the faith to their children?”

Pastors also identified a need for congregations to provide resources \( (n = 3) \). One concrete idea included an insert in the worship bulletin that included hymns, memory verses, catechism selections, and prayers for parents to use during the week. Another was a guide for parents instructing them how to teach their children. One more idea was a devotional parents could use in their home. Pastors also suggested classes for parents \( (n = 4) \) that would educate and prepare them for catechizing their children. They also noted the importance of regular worship attendance \( (n = 1) \), Bible study \( (n = 1) \), and the pastoral duty to encourage parents \( (n = 2) \) to fulfill their
vocation. One pastor also cited the need for pastors themselves to model \( n = 1 \) the appropriate parental role for their parishioners.

*Question 3 – Use of Technology in Catechesis*

The researcher introduced the third question by asking, “Computers, the Internet, and other technologies are becoming increasingly common in secular education. Is there a role for technology in confirmation instruction?”

All the pastors and parents responded positively the use of new technologies in catechesis. One parent noted that while there was no harm in using new technologies, she did not feel as though it was necessary. When the researcher followed up with, “Do you think the church makes good use of new technologies in confirmation instruction?” All but one of the respondents were quick to reply that the church did not. The one person who answered in the affirmative was from the researcher’s congregation and referenced his own extensive use of online resources and multimedia.

The researcher then asked, “In what specific ways could technology be used to help parents teach their children about the faith?” Despite respondents being quick to say that new technologies were beneficial and that the church failed to use them sufficiently, most pastors and parents had difficulty answering this question.

One pastor responded, “The church needs to have the best of the old stuff and be familiar with the new stuff.” Another pastor explained that youth in the New England District were isolated as Lutherans and he proposed that pastors and parents could use the Internet to connect them with other Lutheran youth. Another pastor said that, although he agreed with the use of new technologies, the uneven access
children have to the Internet might pose a problem. The researcher pressed for more concrete ideas and the responses included audiovisual resources \((n = 3)\), curated websites for catechumens \((n = 1)\), a congregational application with daily devotions \((n = 1)\), and a website with confirmation assignments posted \((n = 1)\). It was apparent to the researcher that many pastors have failed to conceive of how they could use new technologies for catechesis.

The researcher found that parents were more specific about the different ways catechesis could involve new technology. Three parents postured that new technologies such as tablets and the Internet are appealing to children and hold their interest \((n = 3)\). Others said that audiovisual multimedia resources \((n = 6)\), accessed through websites or with devices like Smart Boards, would be highly beneficial. Two parents also said that allowing students to communicate with one another or the pastor online \((n = 2)\) outside of classroom time would be a great resource for parents.

**Question 4 – Catechumens and Self-Discovery**

The fourth question was, “Research has shown that children retain more of what they learn if they discover for themselves the answer, as opposed to being told, such as in a lecture. In what specific ways do you think the church and parents could help children discover fundamental Christian truths for themselves?”

Pastors pointed to either the parable style teaching of Jesus \((n = 2)\) or to guiding catechumens apply their faith to real-life situations \((n = 4)\) as a way to help children discover Christian truths deductively. One pastor described this as a return to the Socratic \((n = 1)\) method. Pastors also said that churches should make an effort to integrate and immerse children into the life of the church \((n = 3)\).
Most parents also believe that children will learn more than they are able to connect their faith to real-life experiences ($n = 7$). Likewise, parents suggested that having children do community outreach ($n = 4$) such as mission trips ($n = 2$) or volunteering in their community ($n = 2$). Two parents expressed the concern that New England children are sheltered ($n = 2$) and need exposure to the world to prepare them for living a Christian life.

*Question 5 – Evaluation Prior to Confirmation*

The fifth question the researcher asked was, “In what way and to what extent should children be evaluated prior to the Rite of Confirmation?”

One negative aspect of examining confirmands prior to confirmation that emerged from the pastors’ responses was a dislike of the written exam ($n = 2$) or a focus only on cognitive growth ($n = 2$). Instead, pastors overwhelmingly reported that they would dispense with the questions and answers format, usually done in front of the congregation, in favor of a more informal dialogue ($n = 6$) with pastors or elders. Two pastors noted that parents should be involved ($n = 2$) in the examination process. Among the pastors interviewed, the theme of separating first communion from confirmation also emerged ($n = 3$). Pastors responded that communion should be earlier, after a period of instruction, and the Rite of Confirmation should follow extended instruction. Pastors also noted the importance of some cognitive growth, particularly what is means to be a Lutheran ($n = 2$).

Parents also generally disliked the public questioning aspect, except for two who identified it as beneficial for both the child and the congregation ($n = 2$). The majority of parents were in favor of an informal dialogue ($n = 12$). Some parents
indicated this dialogue could involve parents \( n = 4 \). Cognitive knowledge \( n = 5 \) was important to parents. Some recommended a written exam \( n = 3 \) and others who insisted that the level of knowledge a confirmand should have prior to confirmation must be more than basic and distinctly Lutheran \( n = 2 \). Three parents suggested a more holistic approach to examination that evaluated a confirmand beyond what they know \( n = 4 \). Two of these thought community oriented projects \( n = 2 \) would be useful and one wanted confirmands to read a statement of faith \( n = 1 \).

**Question 6 – Importance of Church Life to Parents**

Finally, the researcher ended each interview with the question “What do you think about the statement, ‘If it’s important to the parents, it will be important to their children as it applies to attendance in worship and Bible study?’”

Pastors responded to this question overwhelmingly with the opinion that it is generally true that if something is important to parents that importance will be passed down to their children. They did note that there were exceptions and that sometimes the interest may not present itself in the child until later, but that the concept was usually true.

The issue was more divisive for parents. Most described the concept as true, even “absolutely true,” although one parent summarized the positions of the other parents. He said, “If those things are not important to parents, there’s very little chance it will be important to the child, but if the parents are interested in something it gives the child a chance.” The general theme that emerged from all the respondents was that parental interest does not guarantee that a child will also be interested, but
without parents showing the importance of worship and Bible study, it would be
difficult for the child to find value in it.

**Summary of Findings**

The researcher discovered that both pastors and parents are looking for
change in way Lutheran congregations conduct formal catechesis, or confirmation
instruction, in the New England District. There were two overarching conclusions: 1) pasts are eager for parents to be not only active, but also proactive in catechizing
their children in the faith and 2) parents feel overwhelmed and underequipped for the
task. Most view catechesis as a lifelong process and the current method of catechesis
and pre-confirmation evaluation lends itself to the concept that learning about one’s
faith is limited to a time and place. Pastors want to guide youth into a mature faith
and parents want to prepare their children to be faithful disciples of Jesus, but neither
are able to take on one-hundred percent of the responsibility.

The goal of this project was not to create a new confirmation curriculum. The
literature review demonstrated that there is no lack in this area. Likewise, teaching
abilities and access to technologies vary from person to person and congregation to
congregation. The researcher concluded there is a great desire for catechists to
employ emerging technologies in confirmation instruction. The researcher
determined that it would not be beneficial to recommend a curriculum or a specific
teaching methodology that pastors and parents could not implement universally.

The researcher identified a need for a catechetical model that addressed both
the concerns of pastors and parents. It also needed to be didactically sound and
implemented in a way that encouraged lifelong catechesis. Although no model or
method will be universally acceptable, the researcher was confident that pastors and parents could take up this model and use it as a foundation for their own innovation in catechetical instruction.
CHAPTER SIX: EVALUATION AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, the researcher presented an evaluation of the research findings in relationship to the relevant literature and biblical foundations. He included an illustrative summary of his findings from the online survey and interview phases of the project and a model for cooperative catechesis based on his conclusions.

An Evaluation of the Project Design

In the project design, the researcher intended to follow four paths including a biblical review, literature review, interviews of pastors and parents, and a synthesis of each into a model for catechesis. The researcher had expected more participation from pastors and parents than what he achieved. Out of 71 congregations in the New England District, the field research represented only 14, or about 20 percent. Likewise, the researcher sought to interview at least 20 participants, but he was only able to interview 15. Low participation in the survey was likely due to pastors not promoting it to their congregations. The lower-than-expected number of interviews might have been due to the busy Christmas season. On a positive note, 56 percent of parents who participated were from the researcher’s immediate ministry context. This was beneficial because this would be the congregation in which the researcher would implement his project.

The researcher also noted that the surveyed population might not represent parents as a whole in Lutheran congregations. This is because the field research
inherently excluded parents who were unwilling to participate in surveys or interviews about catechesis. The researcher suspected that these missing voices might represent parents who were also not very involved in the catechesis of their children.

Although the researcher pilot tested the survey, additional pilot testing might have improved the flow and readability of the questions. The overall length of the survey also proved to be a detriment to completion as some participants reported. The inclusion of a focus group of pastors and parents to consider the final model would have also improved the project. As the researcher implements the model in his congregation, he expects that constructive changes will take place.

**Revisiting the Survey and Interview Results**

Based on the majority of responses received from the survey and the interview, the researcher created an amalgamation of the family most represented. He named them the “Lehren family” for illustration purposes.

The Lehren family was a two-parent household. They were regular churchgoers. Mother and father both worked full time, and each held a college degree. They had one or two children who attended public school. In their home, they had multiple devices that connected to the Internet and their children used these devices to complete their homework assignments. They believed that the congregation should make use of emerging technologies in catechesis, but aside from using websites or a custom application, they had little idea of what that could be.

In the Lehrens’ congregation, their pastor was most responsible for catechesis instruction, although they stated parents share that responsibility with pastors. The
pastor encouraged parental participation, but, for the most part, they did not attend classes with their children even though they believed that parents should have an active role in catechesis. Instead, they participated by praying with their children and answering their questions, when they had them. They also talked with their children about what they learned in Sunday school and the Lehren children occasionally read biblical or Christian children’s books. The Lehrens believed that parents had the most impact on their children’s faith, more than teachers, pastors, the congregation, and their peers combined. Yet, according to them, their children only participated in catechesis within the congregation. They stated that a two-year catechetical program that took place concurrently with the public school year was the ideal formal catechesis schedule. They also said that memorization of Bible verses and the Small Catechism was important. For the Lehrens, the top three topics they wanted their children to learn in catechesis were the six chief parts of the Small Catechism, making moral decisions, and defending their faith. Above all, they wanted catechesis to give their children a foundation upon which to live a Christian life and they wanted them to know God loves them.

The Lehrens generally liked the idea of having their children learn about their faith in a classroom setting, but they wanted them to experience a variety of teaching methods. They were confident the pastor could teach their children solid doctrine, but they did not want their children to be bored in class. The Lehrens thought the classroom was beneficial because the pastor could have one-on-one time with their children and could build a relationship with them. At the same time, they were afraid their children might be left behind because the classroom did not afford them a
personalized approach. In fact, it was very important to the Lehrens that their children have guided opportunities inside and outside of the congregation to serve others and to put their faith into action.

The Lehrens knew they could do more at home to teach their children, but they faced several obstacles. First, they wanted the congregation to provide them concrete resources they could use to teach their children at home. They were concerned about not having enough faith knowledge themselves to teach it to their children. They were willing to attend classes held just for parents to refresh their knowledge and they hoped that the pastor would continue to preach faithful sermons and teach Bible studies to equip them.

When it came time for the church to examine their children prior to confirmation, the Lehrens were clear: no intense public questioning. They preferred more of an informal format where the pastor and elders could facilitate a discussion with their children about what they believed. The Lehrens were not opposed to written or memory exams, but they did not want catechesis to focus only on knowledge. They believed a child is ready for confirmation based on multiple factors including what they knew and how they had grown affectively and behaviorally. The Lehrens contended that they should set a good example for their children and, in doing so, their children were likely to follow suit.

The researcher considered this representative family as he designed the cooperative catechesis model.
Summary of the Cooperative Catechesis Model

To meet the needs of pastors and parents, the researcher designed a cooperative catechetical model that began in early childhood and progressed in four stages through adulthood. In this model, pastors and parents cooperatively guided the catechumen along the way in each stage until he or she entered the fourth stage and took on personal responsibility for his or her own faith education. In each of the first three stages, pastors and parents shared responsibility for catechesis to varying degrees. Each stage was associated with a range of ages roughly equivalent to the developmental ages of a child as he or she matured. The ages were only guidelines since catechumens progressed through the model individually and according to their own developmental needs. Parents, with guidance from their pastors, would be in the best position to know their children’s cognitive, behavioral, and affective abilities. For that reason, the involvement of parents went beyond obedience to the fourth commandment “Honor your father and your mother,” and was vitally necessary for the success of this model.

Because of the cultural importance rites of passage serve in recognizing developing maturity and because various rites, such as confirmation and communion, have been in use by the church for centuries, the model recognized the progression of catechumens through each stage of with a rite of passage. The rites were first communion, confirmation, and a sending service. The last rite, the Christian funeral, was symbolic of the lifelong nature of catechesis.

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In his presentation of the model that follows, the researcher provided developmental cues for parents and pastors and outlined basic goals for the catechumen. He also included suggestions for evaluating catechumens before they moved on to the next stage.

**Figure 6.1: Cooperative Catechesis Progression**

**Stage 1: Equipping**

- **Early Childhood (0-8)**
  - Parents, aided by pastors, equip their children with foundational knowledge.

  **Rite of Passage:** FIRST COMMUNION

**Stage 2: Enhancing**

- **Late Childhood (9-13)**
  - Pastors, aided by parents, enhance the catechumen’s knowledge as they become more active in the congregation.

  **Rite of Passage:** CONFIRMATION

**Stage 3: Exploring**

- **Adolescence (14-18)**
  - Pastors and parents provide opportunities for young Christians to explore their faith and guide them as they apply what they have learned to their lives.

  **Rite of Passage:** SENDING SERVICE

**Stage 4: Engaging**

- **Adulthood (18+)**
  - The catechumen, now an adult, takes full responsibility for his or her continued faith education.

  **Rite of Passage:** CHRISTIAN FUNERAL

**Stage 1: Equipping (Early Childhood)**

Parents have unparalleled access to their children in the early years of their development. A pastor, on the other hand, might have contact with a child perhaps once per week. Catechesis classes, during which an hour of instruction might take place over the course of the school year, gives a pastor a little over one day to convey the tenets of the faith to a child. Parents, with their unlimited access and the natural trust their children place in them, are in a unique position to begin the process of forming their children into faithful disciples of Jesus. This role of parents is
consistent with God’s command in Deuteronomy 6. Yet, a parent serving as the primary catechist for his or her children does not mean there is no role for pastors or congregations. Pastors teach parents who teach their children and the pastor, in turn, supports what children learn from their parents. This cooperative relationship undergirds catechesis as a whole.

The first stage of the researcher’s cooperative catechesis model begins at birth, particularly at a child’s baptism when God implants saving faith within him or her. The researcher found this consistent with the scriptural teaching that without faith people cannot accept God’s wisdom. Saint Paul wrote, “The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor. 2:14). The researcher contended that teaching a person about a faith he or she did not possess would be futile. Godly catechesis, therefore, must build upon the faith God provided in baptism.

The researcher labeled the first stage “equipping” and designed it for the youngest of children. The focus of the equipping stage is to equip children with very basics of the faith. These basics serve as a foundation upon which further learning will take place. The primary catechists in the first stage are parents. Pastors serve in a supporting role through encouragement and providing appropriate teaching and resources. Once parents conclude that their child is ready to move on to the next stage, they consult with the pastor to discuss their options. As this point, the pastor will interview the child to determine if he or she is ready for further instruction about first communion. If so, the pastor then teaches the child about the meaning and use
of the sacrament. After he or she completes this instruction, the pastor may admit them to the table. Stage one ends around age eight with the child participating in the Rite of First Communion.

**Recommendations for Parents in Stage One**

**Ages 0 to 36 Months**

A complete study of how children grow and develop was far beyond the scope of this project. However, scientists and psychologists have made great strides in determining just how children learn. According to the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), relationships are vitally important to development.² Many parents reported they did not feel as though they were able to teach their children, yet early childhood experts claim that providing a safe space for exploration is one way a parent can allow their children to grow.³ Infants from birth to nine months need and seek security most of all. Caring parents provide children a sense of security as they build relationships with them.⁴ Security is the footing upon which an infant begins to explore. Between 8 and 18 months, infants gain the ability to move around and exploration becomes their primary focus.⁵ These infants begin to develop language, physical, and cognitive abilities that parents can use to nurture

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² Carol Copple and Sue Bredekamp, eds., *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs*, (Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2009), 53.


⁴ Copple and Bredekamp, *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs*, 54.

⁵ Gray, *Doing Research in the Real World*, 60.
strong bonds. Next comes the sense of identity that toddlers, ages 16 to 38 months, are prone to seek. The primary concern for a toddler is the discovery of who he or she is.⁶

Up to the point when a child is upright and toddling, the role of parents is to nurture the relationship they have with their child and ensure that he or she has a solid sense of security and sufficient freedom to explore his or her new world. They should introduce games, images, and other play activities that incorporate Christian and biblical themes. Parents should also begin praying for and with their children and reading to them from the Bible. Especially if one is a new parent, starting these routines of prayer and devotions early helps to set the tone for their family life.

In every stage of catechesis, modeling is important. During the early childhood stage, it is especially so. According to the NAEYC, toddlers are fascinated with the daily activities they see adults doing. “They do the things they see the important people in their lives do, or at least they try.”⁷ Once a child is in this toddler phase, the task of equipping them with Christian truths becomes more involved. Toddlers become interested in words, following simple instructions, and they are learning how to express themselves in meaningful ways. Toddlers also enjoy hearing stories, manipulating books, and engaging in imaginative play.⁸ Parents should use an age-appropriate Bible or biblical storybook, which emphasizes the importance of


⁷ Copple and Bredekamp, Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs, 66.

⁸ Copple and Bredekamp, Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs, 66.
reading the Scriptures. Dr. Ann Epstein wrote, “In addition to providing appropriate materials and varied activities for their young children, parents also serve as primary models of the kinds of adults they want their children to become.”\(^9\) When children observe their mother and father praying together and engaging in devotional study, toddlers will naturally want to imitate that behavior. Likewise, at the same time parents begin to teach their children colors and letters, they can also teach them simple prayers and tell them about the wonders and mercy of God. Because modeling is so important for a developing child, parents should bring their children into worship from the onset. They should avoid segregating them within a “children’s church” or nursery.

**Ages 3 to 5 Years**

Children between the ages of three and five begin to experience the world differently. During these ages, their self-awareness increases, relationships become more complex, and they wrestle with social and emotional issues of which they are now more aware.\(^10\) These years are when a child develops his or her interest, attitude, and behavior toward learning.\(^11\) The parents’ modeling of Christian behavior in the home through regular devotion and prayer are increasingly important. Children at these ages begin to develop “moral emotions” such as guilt and shame.\(^12\)

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\(^10\) Copple and Bredekamp, *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs*, 120.

\(^11\) Copple and Bredekamp, *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs*, 120.

\(^12\) Copple and Bredekamp, *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs*, 125.
As they begin to recognize the difference between right and wrong, parents can use this as an opportunity to point to God as the ultimate authority for Christian behavior. Until about age seven, children view morality as heteronomous or equally applicable across all people. They do not consider the intentions of others, only consequences.\textsuperscript{13} Parents can begin to teach their children not only about personal responsibility, but also about forgiveness from God and between Christians. When a parent connects confession and absolution to a child’s “I’m sorry” and bestows forgiveness with “I forgive you,” they are catechizing their children about the believer’s relationship with God. Young children already prize relationships with others, so teaching them about God’s relationship with his children makes sense. Again, the idea of healthy relationships is important. When a child has a positive relationship with his or her parents, he or she is far more likely to be willing to adopt their values and beliefs.\textsuperscript{14}

Children aged three to five are also developing an ability to organize the world around them into meaningful categories.\textsuperscript{15} According to the NAEYC, children start to develop reasoning, classification, memory, and other cognitive skills during early childhood and these mature with support. Parents support this development through cues, questions, and modeling.\textsuperscript{16} It is important that children experience an organized environment, daily routine, and opportunities for them to plan and reflect

\textsuperscript{13} Santrock, \textit{Children}, 294.

\textsuperscript{14} Santrock, \textit{Children}, 295.

\textsuperscript{15} Copple and Bredekamp, \textit{Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs}, 135.

\textsuperscript{16} Copple and Bredekamp, \textit{Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs}, 137.
on their own learning. As children begin to show more abilities to conceptualize ideas, parents should consider introducing Luther’s Small Catechism into their routine. Luther wrote his catechism in a questions and answers style, which lends itself well to children who are eager to ask and answer questions. It is also not too soon for parents to encourage their children to commit the Lord’s Prayer, Apostles’ Creed, and Ten Commandments to memory as they become able. Parents should not be concerned that the children do not know the underlying conceptual meanings behind the words they are memorizing. After all, in this first stage children merely receive the equipment they will need for later learning.

**Ages 6 to 8 Years**

Children draw near to the end of the first stage at age eight. Between the ages of six and eight they learn to read. In addition to all the fun books children naturally enjoy, parents should introduce age-appropriate Christian books that contain good theology. Children will be pleased with owning their own Bible and reading from it to their parents. Parents will inspire their children to grow in faith by recognizing and rewarding this behavior. According to Ellen Galinsky, there are effective strategies parents can employ when introducing children to books. They can use books to start conversations, ask what and why questions, and encourage children to ask their own questions. Children at this age are ready for thinking that is more critical and, if parents incorporate Christian thought into their conversations, their children’s faith knowledge will grow.

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18 Santrock, *Children*, 277.
Although these children are not quite able to understand highly complex or abstract ideas, they are getting close. At this stage of their development, they learn through experience and lessons rooted in concrete reality more than through direct instruction.19 It is also around age seven that children are able to recognize that people can have different thoughts and beliefs than others.20

By age eight, children are aware of social norms and societal expectations.21 Parents can encourage their children by ensuring they are fully participating in the worship practices and rituals of the church. With the assumption that children have been experiencing and observing their parents engaged in worship up to this point, they will be ready to move from mere imitation to full, but guided, participation.

Children aged six to eight have favorable opinions about authority and are eager to develop attachments to adults close to them.22 At this age, it is important for parents to point to the pastor as a reliable authority figure, like the child’s schoolteacher. Parents who demonstrate a respect for the church and its teachings and workers catechize their children to trust and appreciate them as well. This is important as in the next stage of the model pastors assume a more prominent role in the child’s catechesis.

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19 Copple and Bredekamp, *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs*, 272.

20 Santrock, *Children*, 274.

21 Copple and Bredekamp, *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs*, 269.

22 Copple and Bredekamp, *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs*, 265.
Recommendations for Pastors in Stage One

Pastors aid the parents in their duty to teach their children the faith by encouraging them and providing any necessary resources and training they may need. The primary way a pastor will equip parents is from a faithful proclamation of the Word in his preaching and teaching as well as rightly administering the sacraments. The pastor sets a faithful example to his congregation when he relies on the Scriptures and confessions to guide his teaching and practice.

Pastors know that the Small Catechism is an important resource for parents to use for teaching their children. Unfortunately, many parents have consulted their catechisms rarely, if at all, since they were in catechesis. Pastors should not assume that parents recognize the catechism as a resource. Likewise, pastors should not presume that because of its simplicity a parent would be able to use it effectively at home. Instead, there are many ways pastors might illustrate the importance of lifelong catechesis and the catechism as a valuable resource. First, they could incorporate selections from the Small Catechism in the Divine Service. This would help to keep the content fresh on people’s minds. Second, the pastor could produce bulletin inserts or handouts with selected readings from the catechism and the Scriptures that would provide families with a head start to that week’s devotional planning. Third, pastors could host a special class designed to refresh parents with the basic tenets of the faith. This class should also serve to educate parents on how they might employ the catechism at home. Since under this model catechesis begins at birth, the pastor should offer the class regularly. If he and his congregation are
technology savvy, he may consider social media, email, and other means to connect the catechism regularly to the lives of his parishioners.

Concordia Publishing House and others offer many age appropriate resources pastors can select to help parents with home devotions and catechesis. Parents would welcome a curated resource list prepared by the pastor. If feasible, the congregation should consider purchasing selected resources as gifts to new parents. Additionally, Lutheran pastors are also more than capable of dedicating time to writing resources for their congregations themselves. This practice is time consuming, but a valuable way to personalize resources for the ever-changing needs of a modern parish.

_Evaluation and Rite of Passage_

Because children mature at different rates, pastors and parents should take care to evaluate them when their knowledge and behavior suggest they are ready. The key to this catechesis model is an individualized approach that respects each child’s unique development timeline. When a parent believes that his or her child is ready to move from the equipping stage into the enhancing stage, he or she contacts the pastor for a discussion of the options.

At the request of parents, pastors engage candidates in an informal dialogue to determine to what extent the child understands his or her faith. In this informal and friendly discussion, the pastor will ensure children are at a level deemed appropriate by the congregational community. Pastors and parents should expect children to be able to confess belief in God and in Jesus. They should be able to convey the importance of the Bible and the benefits of prayer. At a minimum, candidates should have committed to memory the Ten Commandments, the Lord’s
Prayer, and the Apostles’ Creed. Memorizing these first three of the chief parts of the Small Catechism are essential since in the next stage the pastor and parents will work to give meaning to the words.

Should the interview with the child prove satisfactory, the pastor would then instruct him or her in the meaning and use of the Lord’s Supper. Pastors can accomplish this through individual instruction or in a classroom setting. This instruction should cover at least the following six aspects:

That through the Lord’s Supper, the Lord:
1. Offers and conveys the forgiveness of sins.
2. Offers the truly present body and blood of Christ.
3. Strengthens faith.
4. Imparts power for Christian Living.
5. Is an act of thankful adoration.
6. Is a celebration of Christian fellowship.23

Once the pastor is satisfied with the child’s understanding of the Lord’s Supper, he would invite him or her to participate in the Sacrament of the Altar. The pastor may choose to welcome children to the table individually through the Rite of First Communion at various times throughout the year or in larger groups as the church calendar and number of candidates permit.

Permitting children as young as eight to partake in the Lord’s Supper might be new to many LCMS congregations, as most are admitted only after confirmation.24 The pastor should take care to teach his congregation the importance and validity of this practice.

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23 Commission on Theology and Church Relations, *Theology and Practice of the Lord’s Supper*, (St. Louis: Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1983), 9-10.

Table 6.1: Stage One of the Cooperative Catechesis Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STAGE 1: EQUIPPING</th>
<th>Early Childhood (Infant to age 8)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Primary Focus:</strong></td>
<td>Establishing the foundations of faith as a structure around which to teach.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parents serve as primary catechists, aided by the congregation.</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parents</th>
<th>Pastors</th>
<th>Goals for Catechumens</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Establish daily prayer and devotion routines early.</td>
<td>• Proclaim the Word in its purity and administer the sacraments rightly.</td>
<td>• Know there is a God who created all things and loves them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Encourage children with age appropriate Christian media.</td>
<td>• Integrate readings from the Small Catechism (and confessions) into the Divine Service.</td>
<td>• Know that Jesus is God and saves them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Give children their own Bible and Small Catechism.</td>
<td>• Ensure parents are knowledgeable about the tenets of the faith.</td>
<td>• Develop a prayer and devotion routine.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Model a Christian ethos in daily life, including daily devotions and prayer.</td>
<td>• Train parents in the use of the Small Catechism.</td>
<td>• Explore the Bible and the Small Catechism with their parents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Attend worship and Bible study regularly.</td>
<td>• Know there is a God who created all things and loves them.</td>
<td>• Commit to memory the 10 Commandments, the Apostles’ Creed, and the Lord’s Prayer.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**EVALUATION**

At the request of parents, pastors engage candidates in dialogue to ensure they understand the significance, benefits and dangers, and fellowship issues regarding the Sacrament of the Altar prior to admission to the table.

**RITE OF PASSAGE**

Rite of First Communion

The child is to be admitted to the table when he or she is ready as determined by an evaluation and according to the will of his or her parents.

Stage 2: Enhancing (Late Childhood)

The late childhood, or pre-adolescence, years are a time of great developmental growth for children. They are maturing in their ability to process information, communicate, and make social and emotional connections with others.

The second stage of the researcher’s cooperative catechesis model begins at around age nine following a child’s participation in the Rite of First Communion.

The researcher labeled the second stage “enhancing” since it is during this stage that catechist will enhance much of the memorized material the child learned in stage one with more meaning. During this enhancing stage, pastors now serve as the
primary catechists as parents provide a support role. During this stage, a pastor might employ the traditional two or three-year catechesis program or work one-on-one with children as his time and abilities permit. Parents support the pastor’s efforts by becoming active participants in the catechesis program. The focus of the pastoral instruction will be encouraging students to build relationships with fellow catechumens, explore the tenets of the faith with critical thinking, and participate in real-life experiences that would deepen their faith. Once a child completes the requisite classes, or the pastor is comfortable that he or she were eligible, the pastor will examine the child to determine his or her readiness for the Rite of Confirmation. The examination at this stage includes another dialogue between catechumens, the pastor, and his or her parents. Catechumens then make a public declaration of faith to the congregation prior to completing this stage at around age 13 with the Rite of Confirmation.

**Recommendations for Parents in Stage Two**

During this stage, the pastor takes upon himself the primary task of providing instruction to the child. Parents, however, still have much to contribute. Children during these late childhood years have an increased ability for critical and creative thinking.\(^{25}\) Parents should take advantage of this developmental maturity by having discussions with their children about what they are learning in catechesis class. Parents should also be more open about their own thoughts, joys, and struggles as they live as Christians. Parental openness will encourage children to be reflective.

\(^{25}\) Santrock, *Children*, 384.
about their faith questions as well. Parents will not have all the answers, but they will have the pastor as a resource. When parents point to the Scriptures, the church, and its workers as resources, they are teaching their children about importance of the community of faith.

Children experience in these late childhood years an increase in long-term memory.\(^{26}\) Parents should support the teaching of the pastor by reviewing memory work and helping their children associate the concepts they learn in class to the words of the catechism and Scripture they have memorized.

The moral reasoning of children from age seven to ten is transitioning from heteronomous to an autonomous morality. An autonomous morality is the ability to see that rules and laws vary among people and groups. At age ten, they begin to judge intentions of actors in addition to consequences.\(^{27}\) In catechesis class, children will be learning about God’s Law summarized in the Ten Commandments and the concepts of Law and Gospel. By attending class with their children, parents will not only grow in their own knowledge of these important Christian beliefs but they will be able to put the concepts into practice at home.

Like in school, catechesis class presents a child with multiple opportunities to grow in their faith and achieve goals. A child’s relationship with his or her teacher and parents is linked to his or her ability to be an achiever. Parents can help by

\(^{26}\) Santrock, *Children*, 384.

\(^{27}\) Santrock, *Children*, 294.
setting short-term goals for their children and assist them in understanding priorities and keeping organized.\textsuperscript{28}

Parents should also continue to bring their children to worship and make sure they participate in the Sunday school program. Not only does this model positive Christian behavior for their children, but also it communicates to the child that his or her parents find these practices important. Parents should also attend worship with their children and attend a Bible study themselves. When parents drop off their children for worship or Sunday school without attending themselves they are teaching that church activities are not important to them, or are only for children. As acknowledged by most of the parents the researcher interviewed, “If it is important to the parents, it will be important to their children.”

\textit{Recommendations for Pastors in Stage Two}

Catechesis classes should include parents, and pastors should expect congregational participation by catechumens and parents. The pastor should begin the catechetical year with a special workshop or class for parents to refresh their knowledge of the basics. During this class, the pastor can give the parents the expectations of catechesis and solicit their support in reviewing the material at home. During this workshop, the pastor can also provide resources parents can use during this stage. The pastor should invite parents to attend the classes with their children as essential to the success of the program.

\textsuperscript{28} Santrock, \textit{Children}, 385.
The researcher previously conceded that this project would not produce a new catechetical curriculum. Nevertheless, pastors should take care to use materials that are doctrinally sound, but also engaging to children of this age. Multimedia, web-based activities, and the use of new technologies might be useful for communicating to children that the ideas may be old, but they remain relevant. Pastors could encourage children to install a Bible application and the Small Catechism on their cell phones or tablets, if they have them, and permit their use in class.

Pastors should give catechumens opportunities for service inside and outside of the congregation. For instance, in addition to acolyte duties that are typical of catechesis programs, include these children as lectors, ushers, greeters, or other roles the congregation may have. Pastors should ensure that catechumens serve their community as well. Whether they participate in mission trips or servant events, volunteering at the local food bank, or assisting at the nursing home, catechumens can put their faith into action and discuss what they have learned with one another.

**Evaluation and Rite of Passage in Stage Two**

Once a child has completed the formal classes and his or her parents also believe he or she is ready for confirmation, they enter into another informal dialogue with the pastor. This time, parents and the elders are also included. In this conversation, the pastor asks the child questions to determine to what extent they have matured in their faith since the beginning of the stage. Parents have the opportunity at this time to report on the child’s progress at home. If the pastor determines that the child has progressed enough to be confirmed, the child is then
asked to complete a project that demonstrates his or her confession of faith. This may be as simple as a written declaration of faith or a complex service project. The abilities of the child and the number of confirmands will influence the options available. The child then transitions from stage two to stage three by participating in the Rite of Confirmation.

Table 6.2: Stage Two of the Cooperative Catechesis Model

| STAGE 2: ENHANCING                             | Late Childhood (Ages 9-13) |
|                                               | Primary Focus: Building upon pre-established foundations to provide context and meaning. |
|                                               | The congregation serves as a primary catechist, aided by the parents. |
| Parents                                      | Pastors                     | Goals for Catechumens               |
| • Continue all stage 1 efforts.              | • Continue all stage 1 efforts. | • Learn concepts behind memorized words. |
| • Attend a special class designed for parents. | • Discuss with parents the expectations of the catechesis program. | • Think creatively and critically about their faith. |
| • Attend catechesis classes alongside of their children. | • Hold a workshop for parents to refresh their knowledge and provide them resources. | • Increased participation in the life of the congregation. |
| • Discuss with their children what they are learning in catechesis. | • Teach structured classes with varied teaching methods. | • Experiential learning through service opportunities. |
|                                               |                             | • Public declaration of faith or project. |
Stage 3: Exploring (Adolescence)

Undoubtedly, adolescence is a difficult developmental stage. However, it need not be a difficult stage for catechesis. By stage three, children have been participating in communion and now are communicant members of the congregation. Children enter the exploring stage after confirmation around the age of 14. The researcher called this stage “exploring” because these teenagers have been catechized enough to begin exploring their faith more deeply. As communicants, the congregation expects teenagers to be fully active in the life of the faith community and participating in a youth group and attending Bible study. Pastors and parents share catechetical duties equally during this stage. While parents continue their in-home teaching efforts, the pastor offers specific classes designed especially for adolescents preparing for a Christian life as adults. The pastor will teach the child apologetics, how to study the Scriptures at greater depth, and the doctrine of vocation. The pastor will also introduce the wider breadth of the Lutheran confessions as a resource. The child transitions out of this stage at the age of legal maturity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EVALUATION</th>
<th>RITE OF PASSAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Pastors and pastors engage candidates in dialogue to ensure they are growing in the faith and progressing sufficiently in both knowledge and maturity to transition to the next stage. This, according to the standards set forth by the local congregation. | Rite of Confirmation

The child becomes a communicant member of the congregation and begins to take on more responsibility in life and worship of the faith community. |
Ages 14 to 18 Years

Parents often fear the adolescent years because of the many negative stereotypes that accompany teens pushing boundaries and navigating hormonal changes. However, this challenging of boundaries is important as they move toward accepting parental values. In part, teenagers want to discover for themselves what to believe. While parents and pastors should not construe this as permission to endorse other religions or heterodox confessions, dealing with an adolescent’s curiosity about other faith expressions from a Christian perspective can be helpful. Adolescents express their emerging adulthood in five key ways: “identity exploration, instability, being self-focused, feeling in-between, and experiencing possibility to transform one’s life.” As with all Christians, a teenager’s identity in Christ is paramount over all others. These formative years are idea for pastors and parents to help respond to a teenager’s angst and doubts with Jesus’ love for them.

Teenagers are also struggling with issues of sexuality in a hypersexualized world. It would be presumptuous to expect that the simple lesson they received on the sixth commandment when they were eleven will cover every issue sexual they face as maturing Christians. In traditional catechesis, adolescents do not receive formal instruction during these formative years. Instead, pastors and parents often leave these teens to work out their struggles with faith and sense of identity alone.


Adolescence presents parents and pastors many opportunities to inculcate Christian values and beliefs.

At home, parents should continue to be open and honest with their teenagers about the struggles of sin and reconciling God’s will for their lives with the temptations of the world. Parents should include biblical teachings as they discuss with their teenagers’ issues surrounding drugs, God’s gift of sex, and the hazards of interpersonal relationships. During adolescence, teenagers are becoming better at making good decisions, but without life experience, they have trouble weighing all the consequences.31 This is where parental support and the good relationship developed over the years become key.

In the church, pastors should offer classes that directly address the daily lives of adolescent believers. Biblical studies on substance abuse, sexuality, pornography, and other teen issues are key. It is important that the pastor focus on topics that will help catechize this emerging adult for life outside of his or her parents’ home. As maturing believers enter college or the workforce, they will face pressures to conform to the expectations of society and abandon godly teaching. In fact, they are likely already facing those challenges in high school. This is why this stage of catechesis is about preparing teenagers to think theologically rather than simply giving them the answers.

In to think theologically, three key topics emerge as important: apologetics, study of the Scriptures, and the doctrine of vocation. By teaching the teen about apologetics, the pastor gives them the tools to defend his or her faith when necessary.

It helps them fulfill the command, “[Be] prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect” (1 Pet 3:15). Teaching adolescents how to study the Bible in more depth and how to use Bible study resources, allows them to explore their faith on their own. Finally, the doctrine of vocation teaches them that they serve God by serving their neighbor in whatever station of life in which they find themselves. Adolescents are self-serving and guidance in this area would go a long way to helping them navigate adulthood as a godly man or woman.

Evaluation and Rite of Passage in Stage Three

There is no evaluation for this stage since stage four is adulthood. Generally, the child leaving the congregation to enter college, the military, or the work force marks progression from stage three to stage four. The pastor might use a rite such as the Rite of Sending and Godspeed to celebrate the transition. Some may not leave the congregation, but set down roots locally, in which event they would “age out” of stage three into stage four.

Table 6.3: Stage Three of the Cooperative Catechesis Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STAGE 3: EXPLORING</th>
<th>Adolescence (Ages 14-18)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Primary Focus:</strong></td>
<td>Refining and solidifying beliefs to equip the believer to defend his or her faith.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents and congregations share equally the duty to catechize.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Continue all stage 1 and 2 efforts.</td>
<td>• Continue all stage 1 and 2 efforts.</td>
<td>• Full participation in the life of the congregation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Address teenager issues and concerns seriously from a biblical perspective.</td>
<td>• Focus on forming teens to think theologically.</td>
<td>• Participation in Youth Group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Help teenagers see their self-worth and identity in Christ.</td>
<td>• Teach apologetics, Bible study methods, and the doctrine of vocation.</td>
<td>• Attendance in Bible study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Apologetics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Deeper Self-Study of the Bible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Doctrine of Vocation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Students transition into the next stage when they leave the parish or reach the age of legal maturity.

Rite of Farewell and Godspeed (for those leaving the congregation) or another appropriate rite.

### Stage 4: Engaging (Adulthood)

The primary motivation behind this model is to provide guidelines for pastors and parents to work cooperatively to catechize their children in the faith. However, since catechesis is a lifelong endeavor it is important that believers enter adulthood with the understanding that they are far from done growing in faith and knowledge. The researcher added this fourth stage to the model to illustrate this fact. Pastors and parents continue to provide support and resources for the now adult believer as they always have, but the relationship will change. The person will take on complete responsibility for engaging the Scriptures and making themselves available to worship and God’s means of grace.

The goals for the believer in this stage are simple. The man or woman now is a full participant in the life of the congregation. He or she engages the world through his or her many vocations informed by his or her faith. If God blesses this person with children, he or she then continues the catechetical model with them.

The rite of passage for exiting this stage is the Christian funeral. Provided Jesus does not return first, this symbolic rite of passage emphasizes that a person never ceases learning and growing in his or her faith.

Parents will continue to love and support their children. They should also continue to be role models demonstrating a Christian marriage and faithfulness at different stages of life. Pastors should support young adults by making sure they
address their specific needs in sermons and Christian education. The pastor should also be prepared to provide resources and care for whatever journey this person takes. For instance, the pastor should consider how he would minister to this man or woman if he or she enters the work force, heads off to college, or joins the military.

Table 6.4: Stage Four of the Cooperative Catechesis Model

| STAGE 4: ENGAGING |  
| Adulthood (Ages 18+) |

*Primary Focus:* Growing in faith toward God and love toward neighbor as he or she continues to be catechized by his or her active participation in the community of believers. 

**Person becomes wholly responsible for his or her own lifelong catechesis.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parents</th>
<th>Pastors</th>
<th>Goals for Catechumens</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • Continue to be role models for their Christian children.  
• Serve as resources as their children encounter the joys and difficulties of life. | • Continue to proclaim the Word in its purity and administer the sacraments rightly.  
• Offer sound Christian education in the parish.  
• Help young adults find roles inside or outside of the church through which to engage their faith.  
• Provide resources specific to the person’s life journey. | • Continued participation in the life of the congregation.  
• Begin the catechetical process with their own children. |

| EVALUATION | RITE OF PASSAGE |
Conclusion

This cooperative catechesis model is appropriate for the Christian family and dedicated pastor who wish to train up disciples of Jesus Christ. Yet, there are limitations. For instance, the teaching in this model is cumulative. It assumes that a person begins the process in stage one as a young child and continues until the last stage. Some provisions need to be made for those who enter or leave the congregation at different times. In the same way, the catechesis of those who come to faith later in life as teenagers or adults may not fit perfectly into this model. Additionally, as with anything new in the church, it is improbable that a pastor could implement this model over the course of a few months. It may take the pastor many years of teaching before the congregation would accept or understand the rationale behind this model. Variables like local traditions, aversion to early communion, and unmotivated parents might call for extended discussions. The researcher highly recommends that pastors use this model as a foundation or inspiration for creating their own cooperative catechesis program.

A Plan for Implementation at Christ Lutheran Church

The following is an outline of how the researcher intends to implement this catechetical model in his immediate ministry context over the next two years. He may have to delay implementation if, after initial investigation, he determines that additional teaching is necessary for the congregation to appreciate and take ownership of the new method.

Phase One: Introduction
a. **February 2016** – Introduce the concept to the Board of Elders.
   
   i. The goal is to secure their support for the catechesis program and particularly for the practice of First Communion practice.

b. **March 2016** – Begin developing parental resources and curriculum.

c. **April 2016** – Teach congregational class on confirmation & communion.

d. **June 2016** – Begin a four-week preaching series on confirmation & communion.
   
   i. Implement catechism readings into Sunday worship liturgy.

e. **July 2016** – Begin annual parent workshops/classes on teaching at home.
   
   i. Class for parents with children in stages one, two, and three.
   
   ii. Augments resources and curriculum based on parental needs.

f. **August 2016** – Congregational presentation on new catechesis method.

2. **Phase Two: Legacy Class**

a. **August 2016** – Begin accelerated one-year catechesis for children entering 7th grade.
   
   i. Covers Luther’s Small Catechism and prepares children for confirmation in the old manner.
   
   ii. Held from August until Palm Sunday, April 9, 2017. Ends with Rite of First Communion & Confirmation.

3. **Phase Three: Implementation**
a. **January 2017** – Biannual class for children whose parents desire they participate in early communion (a move to stage two). Ends with Rite of First Communion.

b. **April 9, 2017** – Confirmation Sunday for legacy confirmands.

c. **May 2017** – Biannual class for children whose parents desire they participate in early communion (a move to stage two). Ends with Rite of First Communion.

d. **June 2017** – Workshops for teenagers in stage three.
   
   i. Topics: Studying the Scriptures, Apologetics, Doctrine of vocation, etc.

e. **July 2017** – Begin annual parent workshops/classes on teaching at home.
   
   i. Class for parents with children in stages one, two, and three.

f. **August 2017** – First stage two classes begin for children post-first communion.
   

4. **Phase Four: New Normal**

   a. Biannual classes (January and May) for children in Stage One prior to First Communion.

   b. Annual (July) parental workshops/classes on teaching at home.

   c. Weekly Catechesis (August to February/March) over two years for children in Stage Two prior to confirmation.

   d. Summer workshops for teenagers in Stage Three.
CHAPTER SEVEN: REFLECTION

When I first began this project, I naively had the idea of creating a one-size-fits-all approach to catechesis. It is not as though I failed to recognize the different variables between congregations or the variety of situations found in households. It was just that I thought there would be waiting for me, just beyond my research, a common denominator about why parents were not being proactive in teaching their children the faith. To tell the truth, I thought that the problem would be that parents simply did not think it was their duty or that they thought it was unimportant. Although that was part of what I discovered, I was surprised to learn, at least from the parents I surveyed, their real concern was they felt unprepared and unsupported by the congregation. At some point along the way, parents learned to treat catechesis like any other school subject, outsourcing it to the pastor to teach, instead of a way of living and growing in the Christian faith.

I have been discussing the issue of parental involvement in catechesis with other pastors for years and it seemed as though most of us agreed that parents had abdicated their catechetical responsibility to the church. What I failed to recognize was that we had enabled parents to do this by over functioning for them in this responsibility. I simply found it easier and more expedient to teach the children myself than to teach parents how to teach their children. This, and the congregational
expectation that pastors are completely responsible for catechesis, made it difficult for me to effect any real change in my congregations.

Throughout the journey of this project, I have grown in my appreciation for the struggles that both parents and pastors face in catechizing children. As both a parent and a pastor, I desire that my children grow up in the faith and I can empathize with parents who feel underprepared. Even my advanced training in doctrine and theology has not prepared me specifically for teaching the faith to small children. I am thankful for my wife who is often more faithful in this endeavor than I am.

Likewise, I have concluded that the Rite of Confirmation has too much gravitas in our church body, especially since it is an adiaphoron that serves more as a graduation from learning than a recognition of one maturing in his or her faith. I came into the Lutheran faith later in life and so I never experienced the Rite of Confirmation. Unfortunately, parishioners are quite nostalgic about confirmation. The image of Lutheran children all lined up donning their white robes and confessing their faith in Christ is a romantic idea that the congregation is not quick to retire even though in practice many children are pushed through confirmation before they are ready or sit bored in class considering it a necessary hoop through which to jump before admission to the Lord’s Supper. Therefore, throughout this process, I searched for a way to continue the Rite of Confirmation, while separating it from first communion and the idea of graduating from learning.

I also had the audacious idea to write a curriculum for catechesis. However, I learned through my research that there is no shortage of curricula. For decades, the
church has produced many varieties of instructional materials and each one nothing more than a reinvention of the proverbial wheel, the Small Catechism. I came to see that Luther’s Small and Large Catechisms are woefully underused in my own parish practice and in my personal life.

The idea of lifelong catechesis was important concept to me before this project began, but it was simply that, a concept. I know that much will change with the model of catechesis I presented within this project as I seek to implement it, but I believe this project represents a significant step toward guiding my congregation toward not only realizing the importance of lifelong catechesis, but putting it into action.

As I think of future research questions, many come to mind. First, there is need for a study that can address the voices my project missed. My project applies to those who are willing to participate in catechesis, but do not know how. The attitudes and opinions of those who did not step up to participate and those who are inactive in the church are missing. A second research question might be to narrow the focus to college students and how congregations can support their continuing catechesis. A third research question I am interested in exploring is, how can the church engage in effective adult catechesis of new Lutherans?

The study of catechesis is nothing new and the potential for research is nearly endless. I have grown considerably in the pursuit of this Doctor of Ministry degree and I am thankful for the experience.
APPENDIX A:

ONLINE SURVEY QUESTIONS
Cooperative Catechesis Survey

Q1.1 YOUR INPUT IS IMPORTANT!
Thank you for agreeing to participate in this survey. Please answer ALL of the questions honestly and to the best of your ability. All of your responses will be kept confidential.

This survey is for parents who are members of a Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod congregation in the New England District who have minor children living with them. Your responses will be used (confidentially -- your name will not be used) in a doctoral project focusing on catechesis (confirmation instruction) in the LCMS.

If you’re here, it’s likely because you were invited to take this survey by your pastor. Thank you and thank him for caring about the future of confirmation ministry and the faith formation of young Christians.

The survey is broken into 3 sections. Section 1 contains demographic questions. Section 2 asks you about catechesis in general. Section 3 asks you about parental involvement in catechesis. The survey takes between 25 - 35 minutes, on average, to complete. Please make sure you have allotted enough time to complete it. (There is a red progress bar across the top of your browser window.)

NOTE: Once you click the red button (>>) at the bottom of each section your answers are saved. You can close your browser and return at a later time to complete the next section.

SURVEYS MUST BE SUBMITTED ON OR BEFORE SUNDAY, OCTOBER 18, 2015.

Thank you again, and God’s Blessings to you!

Q1.2 Section 1 of 3 - There are 21 Questions in this section.

Please begin by choosing which best describes yourself:

- I am a Parent (layperson)
- I am a Pastor (no children)
- I am a Pastor (with children)
- I am a Church Worker (not a pastor, no children)
- I am a Church Worker (not a pastor, with children)

Q1.3 What is the NAME (along with City and State) of the congregation where you attend most regularly?

Q1.4 If you are a PASTOR or CHURCH WORKER, please estimate the number of family households in your congregation that have children under 18 living in them.

Q1.5 Have you ever taught a catechesis class before?

- Yes, as a lay-instructor.
- Yes, as a pastor or professional church worker.
- No

Q1.6 Which of the following BEST describes your family?

- Two-Parent Household
- Single-Parent Household
Q1.7 NOTE: For the purposes of this survey, the terms “Father” and “Mother” may also represent grandfathers and grandmothers or male guardians and female guardians depending on your unique family situation.

Q1.8 Which of the following BEST describes each person’s faith life?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Father</th>
<th>Mother</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Does not Believe in Christ</td>
<td>Does not Believe in Christ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inactive Christian</td>
<td>Inactive Christian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active LCMS Christian</td>
<td>Active LCMS Christian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active OTHER Christian</td>
<td>Active OTHER Christian</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q1.9 How often do the following members of your family attend worship services?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Father</th>
<th>Mother</th>
<th>Child(ren)</th>
<th>Together as a Family</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Few Times a Year</td>
<td>A Few Times a Year</td>
<td>A Few Times a Year</td>
<td>A Few Times a Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once A Month</td>
<td>Once A Month</td>
<td>Once A Month</td>
<td>Once A Month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-3 Times a Month</td>
<td>2-3 Times a Month</td>
<td>2-3 Times a Month</td>
<td>2-3 Times a Month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every Week</td>
<td>Every Week</td>
<td>Every Week</td>
<td>Every Week</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q1.10 How often do you attend Sunday School or Bible Study? (Not including confirmation classes.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Father</th>
<th>Mother</th>
<th>Child(ren)</th>
<th>Together as a Family</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Never</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Few Times a Year</td>
<td>A Few Times a Year</td>
<td>A Few Times a Year</td>
<td>A Few Times a Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once A Month</td>
<td>Once A Month</td>
<td>Once A Month</td>
<td>Once A Month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-3 Times a Month</td>
<td>2-3 Times a Month</td>
<td>2-3 Times a Month</td>
<td>2-3 Times a Month</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every Week</td>
<td>Every Week</td>
<td>Every Week</td>
<td>Every Week</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q1.11 Which of the following BEST describes each person’s employment situation? (This question concerns WHERE you work, whether self-employed or not.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Father</th>
<th>Mother</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is Not Employed</td>
<td>Is Not Employed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-Time (30+ hours/week)</td>
<td>Part-Time (30+ hours/week)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-Time (30+ hours/week)</td>
<td>Full-Time (30+ hours/week)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Works Part-time from Home</td>
<td>Works Part-time from Home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Works Full-Time from Home</td>
<td>Works Full-Time from Home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-Time Homemaker</td>
<td>Full-Time Homemaker</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q1.12 What is the highest level of education that each person below has completed?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Father</th>
<th>Mother</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did Not Complete High School</td>
<td>Did Not Complete High School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School or GED</td>
<td>High School or GED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some College</td>
<td>Some College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associates Degree</td>
<td>Associates Degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s Degree</td>
<td>Bachelor’s Degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s Degree</td>
<td>Master’s Degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>Doctorate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q1.13 How many minor (<18 years old) children do you currently have living in your household?
Q1.14 How many of your children are currently in catechesis (confirmation instruction), or have been in the past 2 years?

Q1.15 Which of the following best describes your children’s educational environment?
- Public School
- Parochial School
- Non-Religious Private School
- Homeschooled

Q1.16 ANSWER ONLY IF YOU HAVE CHILDREN BETWEEN THE AGES OF 12-16
If your child(ren) are involved in sports, arts, or other extracurricular activities estimate how many hours per week (after-school or on weekends) they spend engaged in such activities. (Choose ‘0’ if your child is not involved in such programs.) If you have more than one child, enter an estimated average.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hours</th>
<th>Monday - Friday</th>
<th>Saturdays</th>
<th>Sundays</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Q1.17 ANSWER ONLY IF YOU HAVE CHILDREN BETWEEN THE AGES OF 12-16
How much time each week your child(ren) spend doing assigned homework.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hours</th>
<th>Monday-Friday</th>
<th>Saturdays</th>
<th>Sundays</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Q1.18 How many hours each week do you believe is an appropriate amount of time for your child(ren) to dedicate to activities that help them grow and mature in their faith?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hours</th>
<th>Weekdays</th>
<th>Saturdays</th>
<th>Sundays</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Q1.19 Do you have Internet access at home?
- Yes, high speed.
- Yes, dial up.
- No.

Q1.20 How does your family access the internet? (Choose as many as apply).
- Through a shared family desktop or laptop.
- Each person has their own desktop or laptop.
- Through tablets with screens 7” or larger (like an iPad).
- Through cell phones or tablets with screens smaller than 7”.
- At the Library, internet hotspot, or other public place.
- We do not have access to the internet.

Q1.21 Do any of your children access the internet from home for their education?
- Yes, regularly to complete assignments and/or access readings.
- Yes, but only occasionally or to access a particular subject of interest.
- No or very rarely.

Q1.22 Please complete the following information. (Every blank must be filled. If you do not have a piece of information, enter the word ‘NONE’)
- Father’s First & Last Name
- Mother’s First & Last Name
- Mailing Address
- City, State, Zip
- Phone Number
- eMail Address
Q1.23 If selected, would you be willing to participate in a follow-up interview (either in person or by phone)?
- Yes!
- Yes, but only by phone.
- No, thank you.

Q2.1 Section 2 of 3 - There are 19 Questions in this section.

In your congregation, who is the MOST responsible for catechesis (confirmation instruction)?
- A Pastor
- A Lay Instructor
- Pastor/Lay Instructor Equally
- Parents
- Parents working with a Pastor/Lay Instructor

Q2.2 Consider the following questions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How interested is/was your child in catechesis (confirmation instruction)?</th>
<th>I’m Not Sure</th>
<th>Not Interested</th>
<th>Somewhat Interested</th>
<th>Moderately Interested</th>
<th>Highly Interested</th>
<th>Did Not Participate in Catechesis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How interested were YOU in catechesis (confirmation instruction)?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q2.3 When it comes to Catechesis (Confirmation Instruction), who do you believe has the MOST responsibility for teaching your child(ren) the basics of the Christian faith?
- Pastors / Catechists
- Parents / Guardians
- Both Pastors and Parents share equal responsibility

Q2.4 How long do you believe that formal catechesis (confirmation instruction) classes should last?
- One Year
- Two Years
- Three Years
- Four or More Years

Q2.5 Which of the following catechesis (confirmation instruction) schedules seems the most appealing and appropriate for your child(ren)?
- Once a week during the traditional school year.
- Three times a week for 3 months during the summer.
- Every day for a one or two-week intensive ‘camp’.
- Another Schedule (explain below)

Q2.6 (OPTIONAL) For my child(ren), the following schedule would be best:
Q2.7 In your perspective, who has the greatest impact on your child(ren)’s faith?

- A Pastor
- A Parent
- A Teacher
- A Congregation
- Friends/Peers

Q2.8 Rank the following activities from those you believe have (or would have) the most LEAST (1) to the MOST impact (7) on your child(ren)’s faith development. 1 = LEAST IMPACT    7 = MOST IMPACT

1. Worship Services
2. Sunday School / Youth Bible Study
3. Youth Group
4. Catechesis (Confirmation Instruction)
5. Mission Trips
6. Servant Events / Trips
7. Home Devotions

Q2.9 What is the level of your satisfaction with formal catechesis (confirmation instruction) at your congregation?

- High
- Moderate
- Low
- No Opinion / Don’t Know about Catechesis at my congregation

Q2.10 (OPTIONAL) List TWO ways that you were very satisfied with the catechesis (confirmation instruction) experience of your child(ren)?

Q2.11 (OPTIONAL) List TWO possible frustrations you had with the catechesis (confirmation instruction) experience of your child(ren)?

Q2.12 Regarding memorization, with which of the following statements do you MOST agree?

- Memorizing Bible verses and portions of Luther’s Small Catechism are necessary for quality catechesis.
- It’s important to memorize portions of Luther’s Small Catechism, but not Bible verses.
- It’s important to memorize Bible verses, but not Luther’s Small Catechism.
- It’s only necessary to memorize the 10 Commandments, Apostles’ Creed, and Lord’s Prayer.
- Rote memorization is not important. It’s only necessary that students learn the concepts being taught.

Q2.13 (OPTIONAL) Do you have any other thoughts on memorization and catechesis?
Q2.14 Which catechesis (confirmation instruction) format do you believe is, was, or would be most effective for your child(ren)?

- Students meet weekly for class and most instruction takes place in class, with some homework.
- Students explore the material at home prior to class through workbooks or online and meet weekly in class to discuss what was learned.
- Students explore the material at home through workbooks or online and meet MONTHLY to discuss what was learned.
- Students explore the material at home through workbooks or online and meet with the pastor only when needed or when ready to be examined for confirmation. (Student are confirmed at their own pace)
- Students meet during the summer, or at other times, for week-long intensives instead of weekly and throughout the year.
- I have other thoughts, explained in the next question.

Q2.15 Here is how I believe formal catechesis (confirmation instruction) classes should be conducted:

Q2.16 List several specific things that you hope catechesis (confirmation instruction) will accomplish for your child(ren)?

Q2.17 Does your child(ren) engage in catechesis (confirmation instruction) outside of the congregation? (Choose all that apply, SKIP this question if none apply to your situation.)

- Yes, in a Lutheran parochial school.
- Yes, at home with parents (with no congregational or pastoral involvement).
- Yes, with a one-on-one tutor.
- No, only in a congregational program.

Q2.18 In what others ways do you encourage your child(ren) to grow in faith? (Choose all that apply.)

- We pray daily as a family or one-on-one.
- We have family or one-on-one devotions.
- We engage in Bible study at home.
- We discuss what they learn in Sunday School.
- My child attends a Christian school.
- OTHER (See Below)

Q2.19 (OPTIONAL) Here are other ways I encourage my child(ren) to grow in faith:

Q3.1 Section 3 of 3 (Last Section) - There are 19 Questions in this section

Choose which statement BEST reflects your views?

- I believe that parents should have an active and involved role in catechesis (confirmation instruction).
- I believe that parents are wise to let the pastor / instructor teach catechesis (confirmation instruction) and parents should have a limited role.

Q3.2 In your opinion, in what ways (if any) should parents or guardians be involved in shaping what their children believe?
Q3.3 From the list below, choose FIVE (5) topics that you believe are the MOST IMPORTANT for your child to learn in catechesis (confirmation instruction). You may find more than five important, please do your best to choose only 5.

- The 6 Chief Parts of Luther’s Small Catechism
- Church History
- Creation / Evolution Issues
- Sexuality / Gender Identity Issues
- People and Events of the Bible
- Lutheran Confessions
- Worship Liturgy / Hymns
- The Christian Vocation
- Making Moral Decisions
- Sharing One’s Faith with Others
- Ethical Issues
- Dating, Marriage, and Family
- Drug & Alcohol Abuse
- Demons, Ghosts, and the Supernatural
- Other Religions
- Other Christian Traditions / Denominations
- Apologetics (Defending the Faith)

Q3.4 From the list below, choose FIVE (5) topics that you believe are the LEAST IMPORTANT for your child to learn in catechesis (confirmation instruction). You may find them all important, please however choose 5 that you believe could be skipped in a catechesis curriculum, if necessary.

- The 6 Chief Parts of Luther’s Small Catechism
- Church History
- Creation / Evolution Issues
- Sexuality / Gender Identity Issues
- People and Events of the Bible
- Lutheran Confessions
- Worship Liturgy / Hymns
- The Christian Vocation
- Making Moral Decisions
- Sharing One’s Faith with Others
- Ethical Issues
- Dating, Marriage, and Family
- Drug & Alcohol Abuse
- Demons, Ghosts, and the Supernatural
- Other Religions
- Other Christian Traditions / Denominations
- Apologetics (Defending the Faith)

Q3.5 What others topics, not mentioned above, do you think are ESSENTIAL for young Christians to learn about in catechesis (confirmation instruction)?

Q3.6 At what age was/were your child(ren) ready for the
To learn that there is a God. __________
To learn about Jesus, the Son of God. __________
To hear stories from the Bible __________
To hear passages from the Small Catechism __________
To pray with. __________
To pray by themselves. __________
To begin family devotions. __________
To learn simple prayers.
To memorize simple Bible verses.
To read a Children’s Bible
To read a Simplified Small Catechism.
To read a standard Bible.
To read Luther’s Small Catechism
To memorize portions of Scripture.
To memorize portions of the Small Catechism.
To ask serious questions about their faith.
To express doubts about their faith.
To enter catechesis (confirmation instruction).
To undergo the Rite of Confirmation.
To understand and participate in the Lord’s Supper

Q3.7 In your opinion, in what ways should parents or guardians be involved in catechesis classes (confirmation instruction?)
Q3.8 In what ways do you actively participate (now or in the past) in your child(ren)’s catechesis classes (confirmation instruction?)
Q3.9 What kind of participation by parents in catechesis (confirmation instruction) is expected in your congregation?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parental Participation is…</th>
<th>Required</th>
<th>Encouraged</th>
<th>Unwanted/Unexpected</th>
</tr>
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</tbody>
</table>

Q3.10 If offered by your congregation, which of the following would you be willing to be involved in?
- Attending catechesis classes alongside my child(ren) to learn or refresh my own understanding of the basics of Christian faith.
- Attending a class especially for parents (without my child(ren)) to learn or refresh my own understanding of the basics of the Christian faith.
- Both
- None of the above.

Q3.11 Do you have any other thoughts or comments regarding parents in catechesis class?

Q3.12 Are you able to teach your child(ren) the basics of the faith as much as you would like? If so, in what specific ways do you accomplish this? If not, what obstacles stand in your way?

Q3.13 In what specific ways could the pastor or congregation help you, as a parent or guardian, to help teach your child(ren) the basics of the faith?

Q3.14 Should participation in Worship be expected/required of the student in catechesis (confirmation instruction)?
- Students should be required to attend worship each week (unless excused).
- Students should be expected, but not required, to attend worship each week.
- Students should not be expected or required to attend worship.
Q3.15 Should participation in Sunday School (if offered) be expected/required of the student in catechesis (confirmation instruction)?
- Students should be required to attend Sunday School each week (unless excused).
- Students should be expected, but not required, to attend Sunday School each week.
- Students should not be expected or required to attend worship.
- Sunday School is not offered in our congregation.

Q3.16 After Confirmation, how active in the congregation do you expect your child(ren) to be?
- More Active
- Active at the Same Level as Now
- Less Active

Q3.17 For you, how important are the following?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your child(ren)’s active congregational involvement after Confirmation.</th>
<th>Not Important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Somewhat Important</th>
<th>Very Important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>That your child(ren) have a biblical worldview.</td>
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<tr>
<td>That your child(ren) are able to filter what they encounter in popular media through the lens of their faith.</td>
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<tr>
<td>That your child(ren) have a non-family mentor to ask questions of during catechesis (confirmation instruction).</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Q3.18 In your own words, describe what you believe is the purpose of catechesis (confirmation instruction)?

Q3.19 What is the MOST IMPORTANT thing you want your child to learn from going through catechesis (confirmation instruction)?
APPENDIX B:

PROJECT INTRODUCTION LETTER
February 3, 2015

Dear Brother,

Thank you for taking the time to read my letter. I’m sorry for the form letter, but I’m sending a lot of these out. I’m now to the New England District. I was installed in July at Christ Lutheran Church in Amston, Connecticut. Before serving here at CLC, I spent four years at St. John’s Lutheran Church in Perham, Minnesota, which was my first call out of seminary (St. Louis, 2010).

I’m writing because I am currently finishing up a Doctor of Ministry program through Bethel University / Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota. I am working on my dissertation and I need your help!

My dissertation is titled, “Cooperative Catechesis: A Model For Equipping Lutheran Parents And Congregations To Catechize Children In The Christian Faith.” Catchy, eh? Despite the cumbersome title, I believe that my research is very important for the church today. I want to discover how we as pastors can reenergize and equip parents to take ownership of one of their most sacred vocations: teaching their children the faith.

WHAT DO I NEED FROM YOU?

1) Soon I will be sending out questionnaires to pastors across the NED. I am looking for insight regarding parental participation in catechesis. I pray that you and any confirmation instructors in your congregation would complete one and that you would pass along another questionnaire designed for parents to those with minor children. There will be both paper and electronic versions available.

2) I would also like to sit down with many of you who have active catechesis programs and speak with you about your methods (in person, or perhaps by phone or Skype). During those meetings, I hope that you might put me in contact with parents in your congregation who you feel do a good job catechizing their children at home so that I might interview them as well.

Ultimately, I hope to collect, analyze, and synthesize the data to develop a biblically-sound and practical model for equipping pastors and parents to engage in a cooperative catechesis process in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod context.

Contact me if you have any questions or if you would rather not be contacted again regarding this project. I have included my card and you may email me at pastor@clchebron.org or call me on my cell at (860) 837-3188.

Thank you in advance,

Phil
APPENDIX C:

SURVEY INVITATION LETTER
August 10, 2015

Dear Brother,

Greetings again in the name of Jesus! Several months ago, I sent you a letter introducing myself and my Bethel University research project on catechesis. I am writing you again to ask that you help me with my field research for my Doctor of Ministry project by asking parents in your congregation to take my survey.

Here’s what I need:

**SURVEY PARTICIPANTS:**

Please pass along the enclosed business card to the parents in your congregation and encourage them to go online and complete the survey. The web address for the survey and other information is printed on the card. I am only looking for parents with children who currently live with them and are under 18 years old.

Please also complete the survey yourself, the link for all participants is:

https://bethel.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_9T40K9zKBNYB5at

or

http://tinyurl.com/booesurvey

If anyone is unable to complete the survey online, but still wants to participate, please make a copy of the enclosed survey form. These forms can be mailed back to me at

Rev. Phil Booe – DMin Research
Chriat Lutheran Church
330 Church Street
Amston, CT 06231

**ALL SURVEYS MUST BE COMPLETED BY OCTOBER 18, 2015**

**EXEMPLARY PARENTS NEEDED:**

Also, please identify parents in your congregation that you feel do an above average or exemplary job activity participating in the catechesis and/or Christian education of their children.

Ask these parents if you may pass their contact information along to me as I may be interested in interviewing them, either on the phone or in-person. They will also have an option of “opting-in” when taking the survey.

Thanks in advance and God’s Peace!

Phil Booe
APPENDIX D:

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. The typical confirmation instruction model is based on a classroom model where the pastor (or lay-instructor) serves as the teacher and the students do assignments at home before and after class.
   a. What do you think are some positives and negatives of the classroom model?

2. Deuteronomy 6 teaches that God commands parents to pass down the tenets of the faith to their children as they go about their daily lives. Martin Luther prefaced each part of the Small Catechism with “As the head of the household should teach their children…”
   a. (Parents Only) In what specific ways could the church help you, as a parent, fulfill this important task?
   b. (Pastors Only) In what specific ways could the church help or equip parents to pass down the tenets of the faith to their children?

3. Computers, the Internet, and other technologies are becoming increasingly common in secular education.
   a. Is there a role for technology in confirmation instruction?
   b. Do you think the church makes good use of new technologies in confirmation instruction?
   c. In what specific ways could technology be used to help parents teach their children about the faith?

4. Research has shown that children retain more of what they learn if they discover for themselves the answer, as opposed to being told, such as in a lecture.
   a. In what specific ways do you think the church and parents could help children discover fundamental Christian truths for themselves?

5. In what way and to what extent should children be evaluated prior to the Rite of confirmation?

6. What do you think about the statement, “If it’s important to the parents, it will be important to their children” as it applies to attendance in worship and Bible study?
APPENDIX E:

YEARLY CATECHISM READING PLAN
## Church Year Catechism Reading Plan

(Just the Catechism itself. Not a thick explanation of the Catechism.)

*As the head of the family should teach it in a simple way to his household.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Reading Plan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advent 1</td>
<td>1st Commandment and Meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advent 2</td>
<td>2nd Commandment and Meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advent 3</td>
<td>3rd Commandment and Meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advent 4</td>
<td>4th Commandment and Meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christmas 1</td>
<td>5th Commandment and Meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christmas 2</td>
<td>Duties - To Bishops, Pastors, and Preachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1 Timothy 3:2-4, 1 Timothy 3:5, Titus 1:9)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Epiphany 1</td>
<td>Duties - What Hearers Owe Their Pastors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1 Cor. 9:14, Galatians 6:5-7, 1 Tim 5:17-18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epiphany 2</td>
<td>Duties - What Hearers Owe Their Pastors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1 Thess. 5:12-13, Hebrews 13:17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epiphany 3</td>
<td>Duties - Of Civil Government (Romans 13:1-4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epiphany 4</td>
<td>Duties - Of Citizens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Matt. 22:21, Romans 13:5-7, 1 Tim. 2:1-3)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Epiphany 5</td>
<td>Duties - Of Citizens (Titus 3:1, 1 Peter 2:13-14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfiguration</td>
<td>6th Commandment and Meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Septuagesima</td>
<td>7th Commandment and Meaning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sexagesima</td>
<td>8th Commandment and Meaning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quinquagesima</td>
<td>9th Commandment and Meaning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lent 1</td>
<td>10th Commandment and Meaning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lent 2</td>
<td>Close of Commandments and Meaning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lent 3</td>
<td>Review of Ten Commandments</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lent 4</td>
<td>First Article of Creed and Meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lent 5</td>
<td>First Article of Creed and Meaning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Palm Sunday</td>
<td>Second Article of Creed and Meaning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Easter</td>
<td>Second Article of Creed and Meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easter 2</td>
<td>Third Article of Creed and Meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easter 3</td>
<td>Third Article of Creed and Meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easter 4</td>
<td>Introduction to Lord's Prayer and Meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easter 5</td>
<td>First Petition and Catechism Questions</td>
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</table>

Easter 6 Second Petition and Catechism Questions
Easter 7 Third Petition and Catechism Questions
Pentecost Fourth Petition and Catechism Questions
Trinity Sunday Fifth Petition and Meaning
Trinity 1 Sixth Petition and Meaning
Trinity 2 Seventh Petition and Meaning
Trinity 3 Conclusion of Lord’s Prayer and Meaning
Trinity 4 Sacrament of Baptism - First Questions
Trinity 5 Sacrament of Baptism - Second Questions
Trinity 6 Sacrament of Baptism - Third
Trinity 7 Sacrament of Baptism - Fourth Questions
Trinity 8 Confession - What is Confession?
Trinity 9 Confession - What sins should we confess?
Trinity 10 Confession - Which of these?
Trinity 11 Confession - What is the Office of the Keys?
Trinity 12 Confession - Where is this written?
Trinity 13 Confession - What do you believe according to these words?
Trinity 14 Sacrament of the Altar - What is the Sacrament of the Altar?
Trinity 15 Sacrament of the Altar - Where is this written?
Trinity 16 Sacrament of the Altar - What is the benefit of this eating and drinking?
Trinity 17 Sacrament of the Altar - How can bodily eating and drinking do such great things?
Trinity 18 Sacrament of the Altar - Who receives this Sacrament Worthily?
Trinity 19 Duties - To Husbands (1 Peter 3:7, Colossians 3:19)
Trinity 20 Duties - To Wives (Ephesians 5:22, 1 Peter 3:5-6)
Trinity 21 Duties - To Parents (Ephesians 6:4)
Trinity 22 Duties - To Children (Ephesians 6:4)
Trinity 23 Duties - To Workers of All Kinds (Ephesians 6:5-8)
Trinity 24 Duties - To Employers and Supervisors (Eph. 6:9)
Trinity 25 Duties - To Youth (1 Peter 5:2-6)
Trinity 26 Duties - To Widows (1 Timothy 5:5-6)
Last Sunday Duties - To Everyone (Romans 13:9, 1 Timothy 2:1)
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