



175th Anniversary Moment

“He who promised is faithful” (Heb 10.23)

TRAIN UP A CHILD: SUNDAY SCHOOL AS NURTURE AND MISSION WORK

The First Saint Paul’s mission statement, under the heading of “Nurturing Faith,” declares, “We provide Christian education opportunities for children and adults.” Christian education has, in fact, always been vital to our congregation’s ministry. Lutherans have historically taken seriously Jesus’ words “Permit the little children to come to me” (Mark 10:14), as well as the admonition, “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it” (Proverbs 22:6). These two Scripture passages are, in fact, cited in documents about the history of our Sunday School.

Prior to 1910, the church conducted *Christenlehre* sessions for children on Sunday afternoons. These were replaced in 1910 by a morning Sunday School. An article by G. A. Fleischer in the 1935 *Messenger*, celebrating the 25th anniversary of the Sunday School, notes some reasons for the change. One was that “the *Christenlehre*...required 7 men to be present, the pastor, the organist, the sexton, and some one to pump the wind for the organ and three to toll the bells.” A more “spiritual” rationale for morning Sunday school was its usefulness for “doing missionary work among the children of our neighborhood.” Personal invitations sent to church members brought 72 children to the first Sunday session—and 91 the following week.

By 1921, according to the 75th anniversary booklet, “the 300 children of our Sunday School are taught by about 30 Sunday School teachers.” Those familiar with our recent Sunday School classes may find these figures staggering. From this “high-water mark,” however, numbers gradually declined. The 1946 centennial publication notes that “the task of the Sunday school is a difficult one in a community where the population shifts so frequently.” Despite declines, a document from 1956 still lists the Sunday School enrollment as 120. Pictures of the 1956 students are included here. Faithful teachers (some of whom even enhanced their skills by attending the Concordia Bible Institute) helped bring many unchurched children—and their families—to know Jesus as Savior.

