

Gustavus Adolphus College

A STUDY OF YOUNG ADULT PARTICIPATION  
IN THE  
EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA

A thesis  
Submitted to  
The faculty of the Department of Religion

In Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree  
Bachelor of Arts

By  
William Kuhns  
November 30, 2005

## CONTENTS

### Chapter

1.	INTRODUCTION. . . . .	1
2.	THE THREE CONCEPTS. . . . .	2
	The ELCA. . . . .	2
	Young Adults. . . . .	4
	The College/University/School. . . . .	6
3.	THE INTERRELATIONSHIPS. . . . .	10
	College and the Young Adult. . . . .	10
	ELCA and the Young Adult. . . . .	13
	College and the ELCA. . . . .	15
4.	THE YOUNG ADULT FAITH. . . . .	17
5.	THE CRISIS. . . . .	22
	Other Factors Related To the Crisis. . . . .	28
6.	WHERE DID ALL THE YOUNG ADULTS GO?. . . . .	31
7.	HOW CAN THEY BE BROUGHT BACK?. . . . .	36
	The Mentor . . . . .	37
8.	THE UNEXPLORED WAY TO BRING THEM BACK...MOSTLY. . . . .	46
9.	CONCLUSION: WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE? . . . . .	52

### Appendix

1.	Graph, Comparing the Age of ELCA Attendees and the US Population. . . . .	54
2.	Email From King. . . . .	55
3.	Biblical Support For Non-Monotheism. . . . .	56

Works Consulted. . . . .	57
--------------------------	----

## **Chapter 1:**

### **Introduction**

When visiting an Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, (ELCA) a person may notice one very conspicuous thing. There are very few young adults in attendance. ELCA churches consist almost entirely of children, those younger than fifteen, and adults, those older than 35. Where is everyone in the middle? Where are the college kids? Why do they not attend church, what is the ELCA doing to get them back, and what more can the ELCA do to get them back? These questions will be addressed in the following pages. Before they are addressed, there are three important concepts that need clarification. These concepts are, the nature of the young adult in college, the nature of the ELCA, and the nature of college.

It is important to note that most of the research on young adult faith has been conducted on males. I have considered this fact inconsequential since contemporary scholars in the area of young adult faith believe the gender based research can be applied across gender lines. Unfortunately, that does not avoid the gendered language. Therefore, some of the language quoted by scholars when referring to young adults will be directed toward males. This language is to be considered valid for both the male and female sexes.

## Chapter 2:

### The Three Concepts

It is important to have an understanding of the young adult, the ELCA, and the college because of the importance they have in this paper. Understanding each of these three concepts will help clarify the rest of the paper by defining the three interrelated elements referred to throughout.

#### The ELCA

The ELCA is generally considered a mainstream, Christian, protestant denomination.<sup>1</sup> It has a membership base of 4,984,925<sup>2</sup> people worldwide; this makes it a moderate sized protestant church. Part of understanding the ELCA includes understanding how it compares to other Christian denominations.

Differences between Christian denominations are often measured on a “fundamentalist – liberal,”<sup>3</sup> scale. Kenneth Inskeep states in his report on the *Religious Commitment in the Evangelical Lutheran church in America*, that Jewish groups and people unaffiliated with a church are the most likely to be liberal, while Southern Baptists and the charismatic evangelical churches tend to be considered the most conservative<sup>4</sup> when talking about the social and political views of their members. When considering this spectrum, the ELCA lands almost squarely in the middle between the conservatives

---

Kenneth Innskeep. *An Analysis of the Church Attendance in the General Population*. [database on-line] Chicago: Department for Research and Evaluation, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 2002.

<sup>2</sup> *ELCA Quick Facts*, About the ELCA. <http://www.elca.org/communication/quick.html> (October, 27)

<sup>3</sup> Inskeep, *An Analysis of the Church Attendance in the General Population*.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

and the liberals, “or slightly to the left,”<sup>5</sup> in regards to the views of its members. At first glance, this indicates that people attending ELCA churches should generally be considered moderate when speaking of their social and political views. This in fact is not true. Instead, the ELCA is considered moderate because its membership, “encompasses a broad spectrum of beliefs and practices rather than because everyone is necessarily moderate.”<sup>6</sup> This means, “ELCA Lutheranism is made up of several distinct faith practice groups, each with its own way of believing and relating to the church.”<sup>7</sup> Some scholars see this acceptance of different social and political views as problematic. Innskeep and others do not believe this. They cite the ELCA’s ability to hold people together for over 30 years as proof that different social and political views are not problematic.

What ELCA members lack in similarity, in relation to social and political views, they more than make up for in how they view the ELCA. As Innskeep illustrates, “studies of religious commitment [among ELCA Lutherans] have shown that members strongly assent to the core elements of the faith.”<sup>8</sup> In his report, he also states that, “seventy-five percent of the ... respondents were very strong on the core elements of the faith.”<sup>9</sup> Almost all Lutherans accept the same things from a religious perspective. They differ slightly on the path to salvation and their views of the Bible but that is all. Other variables regarding beliefs were over 90 percent similar among ELCA Lutherans.

---

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

Another piece of information worth noting is that ELCA Lutherans are exclusive. This means, new unrelated people rarely join the ELCA. This exclusivity may be accidental but it occurs nonetheless. For example, “Three out of four Lutherans have been raised from childhood as Lutherans.”<sup>10</sup> This coupled with the fact that, “ELCA Lutherans tend to be long-term members of their congregations,”<sup>11</sup> indicates something very distinct about Lutherans. That is, most people in a congregation have been members for a long period of time, and outsiders rarely join. These things, along with their doctrinal similarities to other ELCA Lutherans, probably make them a very tight knit bunch.

From this information, we can glean that members of the ELCA are a close group with near identical religious beliefs and a wide range of social views. They have more than likely been associated with the ELCA for a long time and are unlikely, in their later years, to change churches in terms of either their denominations or parishes. Due to a wide range of social and political views the ELCA comes across as a moderate church when, in fact, it is a church accepting of a broad range of social, political, and religious opinions.

### **Young Adults**

As Parks, the author of *Critical Years*, a book on young adult faith development, points out, there is a necessity for an age group called the young adult because, “many young people are not adequately described as either adolescent or adult.”<sup>12</sup> Young adulthood may very well be the most confusing time in a person’s life; it is also quite

---

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Sharon Parks. *The Critical Years: The Young Adult Search for a Faith to Live By*. San Francisco: Harper and Row Publishers, 1986. 79.

possibly the hardest to define. Providing proof that such an age group exists at all can be difficult. Especially when, “For many working class young people, graduation from high school and/or going to work full-time has been regarded as sufficient,”<sup>13</sup> for being an adult, at least according to society. To compound this, the legal definition of adulthood, provided by the government, seems to agree. Politically, 18 years old is generally considered the age of adulthood. People are allowed to vote and can be tried as an adult when they are 18. Many scholars ask the question of whether adulthood can be definitely tied to age. The resounding answer is no.

Parks does not provide years within which to think of young adulthood. However, she does provide concepts that mark the entry into and the exit from young adulthood. In Daniel Levinson’s book, *The Seasons of a Man’s life*, a segment of years is set aside as the young adult years. Levinson says, “the process of entering into adulthood is more lengthy and complex than has usually been imagined. It begins at age 17 and continues until 32 (plus or minus two years at either end.)”<sup>14</sup> The main thrust of early young adulthood happens before a person turns 22. This coincides with the general principles laid down by Parks because she associates many of them with a young person’s transition from high school to college.

There is one other recurring aspect of young adulthood. According to the Lutheran Men in Mission, the ELCA’s men’s ministry program, “Young men recognize that they have a spiritual hunger.”<sup>15</sup> Colleen Carroll, author of *New Orthodoxy* attests to

---

<sup>13</sup>Ibid. 1

<sup>14</sup> Daniel Levinson. *The Season of a Man’s Life*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978. 71.

<sup>15</sup> Roland Martinson. *Lutheran Men in Mission Young Male Spirituality Study Summary* [database online] St Paul: Luther Seminary.



this when she says, “Young adults are not content to search forever, they want answers.”<sup>16</sup> There are also certain aspects of the young adult personality that Carroll combines. Many of these traits are often expressed in the writings of other scholars. Carroll lists these traits saying, young adults “are interested in spirituality, ignorant of tradition, and fearful of both commitment and abandonment.”<sup>17</sup> These characteristics are often associated with the idea that young people are still adjusting to difficulties they face during each new step in their lives.

In light of all this, the process of becoming a young adult is difficult to define. It is often marked by spiritual desire, and young adults exhibit certain personality characteristics. Young adult faith can be better understood if we roughly understand the social structure, they are in. For many young adults that social arena is college.

### **The College/University/School**

Post high school education in America is the destination after high school for 9,203,080 people ages 18-24, according to the U.S. census Bureau (as of 2000). This accounts for 35.5% of all people in that age group.<sup>18</sup> College obviously has a major impact on the lives of many young adults. It is also the only major actor in the lives of this age group that will be delved into in any sort of depth. This is due to the amount of time and research required to learn about the major influences on young people’s faith between the ages 18-24. College was selected because it is fairly well accepted that

---

<sup>16</sup> Colleen Carroll. *The New Faithful: Why Young Adults Are Embracing Christian Orthodoxy*. Chicago: Loyola Press, 2002. 18.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. 89

<sup>18</sup> *School Enrollment: 2000*, American Fact Finder: US Census Bureau. 2000, [http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/QTTable?\\_bm=y&-geo\\_id=01000US&-qr\\_name=DEC\\_2000\\_SF3\\_U\\_QTP19&-ds\\_name=DEC\\_2000\\_SF3\\_U&-lang=en&-redoLog=false&-sse=on](http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/QTTable?_bm=y&-geo_id=01000US&-qr_name=DEC_2000_SF3_U_QTP19&-ds_name=DEC_2000_SF3_U&-lang=en&-redoLog=false&-sse=on) (November 10, 2005)

college students, for the most part, stop attending church while at school. This is known, firstly, through my personal experience as a college student and as a result of my research. Even though students do not attend church while in college, Inskeep and others point out, “persons with college degrees are the most likely to attend church services.”<sup>19</sup> Thus, college becomes a very interesting variable. Students attending college are the least likely to attend a church service, but college graduates are the most likely to attend services later in life. Since college is such an interesting variable, it may be insightful to understand its character.

The word, “college” is used because it is the best way I have found to refer to post high school undergraduate education in the college, university, or technical schools all in one word. All undergraduate studies described above will be defined as “college” for the purposes of this paper.

An easy way to understand the character of college is to view its main aspirations. According to Keniston the author of *Youth and Dissent*, the goals that colleges most often describe include the, “transmission, extension and application of knowledge, about teaching, research and public service and occasionally even about innovation.”<sup>20</sup> These are the goals colleges want people to believe they strive for. Keniston says, colleges have one more aspiration that is very important, and while it may not be a main goal of the college, it is definitely as central an activity as any of the college proclaimed main goals. The activity is that of “criticism.” Keniston believes that, “The American University has

---

<sup>19</sup> Paul Hill. *Comparing the Early Adolescent Male Study with the Lutheran Men in Mission Male Spirituality Study*, Lutheran Men in Mission. <http://www.elca.org/lmm/images/Young%20Adult%20Men%20Research.pdf> (November 3, 2005)

<sup>20</sup> Kenneth Keniston. *Youth and Dissent: The Rise of a New Opposition*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1960. 128.

already become a major and probably the major critic of American society.”<sup>21</sup> To put this into perspective, Keniston published his works in the early 60’s. Thus, by today, his ideas of the college as a critic have been proven true; thus, making Keniston pertinent to understanding colleges today. The advance of Keniston’s ideas is supported by the large number of scholars, including, Parks (2000) and Carroll (2002), who cite Keniston for his work in defining the college and some characteristics of the young adult.

Keniston’s major idea in relation to college reads, “Higher education has become the chief source of analyses, evaluations, and judgments of our society.”<sup>22</sup> It is the judgment in his idea that sets criticism apart from analyses because, without judgment, criticism is just analysis. He also thinks this criticism is a good thing.

How good criticism is, is debated among scholars. Many modern scholars believe the college criticism may have gone too far. Parks says the focus on criticism has caused colleges, “to perceive students either as conventional, dependent neophytes in need of being awakened to the complex and relative character of all knowledge.”<sup>23</sup> Carroll also supported this by citing Andy Couch an evangelical campus minister at Harvard, “Today’s postmodern academy, he said, is more like a flood: everyone is drowning in confusion, and ‘you just want to find something to hold on to.’”<sup>24</sup> Both of these scholars indicate that the critical aspect of the college may have gone too far. Thus causing students to be viewed as ignorant by their professors and overwhelmed by the flood of challenges in college. My experience in college is that this drowning feeling is generally accurate for most, if not all, college students at some point in their college careers.

---

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. 127

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. 135

<sup>23</sup> Parks, 136

<sup>24</sup> Carroll, 162

College has become, as Keniston said, the major critical structure in American society. The degree of its excess, in terms of its critique, is still open for debate and not of particular importance to this paper. What is important, is the idea of the college as a critic and the definition of a critic. According to Keniston, "A critic not only characterizes but condemns and praises according to his values."<sup>25</sup> Therefore, college is a critic, and a critic makes value judgments. These judgments apparently have no limit. Consequently, these judgments can be passed on to a young adult's faith, based on the values of professors teaching young adults. There is another important distinction. That is, to my understanding, the institution of the college is not capable of being critical. Individuals, like professors, within that institution are. Thus, individual members of the college are critical, causing the institution of the college to be viewed as critical.

---

<sup>25</sup> Keniston, 129

## **Chapter 3:**

### **The Interrelationships**

The interrelationships refer to how the three terms described above relate to one another. There are two interrelationships of greater importance; they are, the relationship between the young adults and the ELCA, and the relationship between the young adults and college. The relationship between the ELCA and the college, for the most part, happens through the young adult. Because of this, the college and ELCA have little direct contact. Their relationship should be viewed more as two separate forces acting on the same subject. When talking about the ELCA and young adults, we are talking about those young adults who have or have had a serious connection with the ELCA.

#### **College and the Young Adult:**

As previously stated, the college is a critical structure. This structure has a broad impact on all aspects of the young adult both while they are attending college and how they live after they leave the college system. One of these aspects affected by college is how young adults practice their faith. This is in large part due to the developmental phases of a young adult.

To understand the phases of the young adult I will look to Levinson because once again other scholars in the area of young adults and faith have generally accepted his methods as an acceptable model for human development. Parks named one of her books *Big Questions, Worthy Dreams*;<sup>26</sup> this name is an allusion to a part of Levinson's young adult development model. In his model, the first step an adolescent must take when

---

<sup>26</sup> Sharon Parks. *Big Questions Worthy Dreams: Mentoring Young Adults in Their Search for Meaning, Purpose, and Faith*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000.

starting young adulthood is to form dreams about being an adult. This gives the young adult something to strive for.

The part of Levinson's development that is particularly interesting is his idea of the, "early adult transition."<sup>27</sup> This transition is positioned between pre-adulthood (adolescence) and adulthood with the task of, "a developmental bridge between the eras"<sup>28</sup> . This bridging often occurs at "roughly age 17 to 22."<sup>29</sup> Levinson does allow for a 4-year margin of error in either direction on his age scale; however, he states people will generally fall between the ages he prescribes; it is the rare exceptions, which cause him to give the age flex.

The difference that sets the early adult transitional stage apart from other stages "lies in the coexistence of its two tasks."<sup>30</sup> The main purpose of these two tasks is, "to explore, to expand one's horizons and put off making firmer commitments until the options are clearer; and to create and initial adult life structure."<sup>31</sup> This purpose also illustrates a lot about the structure of life for a young adult in this stage. For example, everything in a person's way of thinking is growing, beliefs and views are expanding, new things are experienced, but nothing is made concrete.

To feel this expansion one thing in particular must happen, the student has to "move from an uncritical dependence on prevailing conventional, family, and peer group."<sup>32</sup> The student moves from this dependence to a form of independence. To do this, the student must begin two major tasks. "One task is to terminate the adolescent life

---

<sup>27</sup> Levinson, 71

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. 72

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. 71

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. 80

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Parks, *The Critical Years*, 2

... the second task is to make the preliminary step into the adult world.”<sup>33</sup> Essentially, by beginning task one (terminating adolescent life) step two begins by default to fill the void. The important area is the area that falls between the complete rejection of adolescence and complete acceptance of adulthood.

In order to take this first step, to terminate adolescent life a person must, “separate from the family of origin.”<sup>34</sup> This does not mean complete isolation from the family; however, it does mean that some separation is needed for growth to occur. The family must be moved from the center of a young adult’s life to the periphery in order for the young adult to grow into an adult.

The initiation of these two stages influence a young adult’s relationship to college as this transitional stage occurs when the young adult is in college. The early adult transitional stage provides a new gap in the developmental structure, which helps construct the young adult’s worldview. Previously, the family filled this gap, however, with the family relegated to a less central role in the formation of the worldview, there is room for a new influence on the young adult’s worldview. Part of this new room is filled by the young adult’s newfound ability to think critically about the world around them and form their own opinions. However, they do not completely fill the void created by the removal of the family. If they did they would have arrived at adulthood. Instead, the opportunity exists for the college and possibly a young adults church to fill the extra space as far as influencing the young adult’s changing worldview.

---

<sup>33</sup> Levinson, 73

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

### **ELCA and the Young adult**

We know that young adults are not attending regular services at ELCA churches because, in 2002, the ELCA's Department for Research and Evaluation conducted a survey to measure the age of attendees compared to the percentage of the population of the U.S. in that age group. The findings were predictable but dismal. The study found that in ELCA churches, less than two percent of total attendees were between the ages of 20 and 24 years old and only about two and a half percent of total attendees were between the ages of 25 and 29 years old. This means that less than five percent of church attendees were between the ages of 20 and 29. This is put into perspective when compared to the 18 percent of the national population that is between the ages of 20 and 29. These numbers by themselves would not be disturbing if they were not the glaring exception. Every age group of people 40 and over is over represented in the ELCA when compared to their percentage of the national population, the 30's are years of increased attendance in percentage.<sup>35</sup> Unfortunately, the information provided above was only collected in 2002 and not in previous years.<sup>36</sup> Due to this lack of information, there is no way to compare these numbers to previous years except by personal account. In an email from the assistant director for campus ministries at the ELCA, William H. King, I was told that the, "number [of young adults leaving the church] is not much higher than in previous generations."<sup>37</sup> According to King the real issue is, "why they are not coming back later."<sup>38</sup> This implies a change in the behavior of young adults today toward the end of their young adulthood. Perhaps it has been the norm that young adults have left the

---

<sup>35</sup> See appendix 1

<sup>36</sup> See Appendix 1

<sup>37</sup> See appendix 2

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.



church for a time. However, just because ‘young adults have always left’ may be the norm does not make it acceptable. It should not be assumed that Professor King was implying this. Either way it does not matter so long as his information is accurate and young adults are leaving the ELCA and not returning. The removal of church from the lives of young adults means the church loses the ability to influence those young adults.

So, where did all the young adults go? They definitely stopped going to ELCA churches and, according to King, have stopped coming back. If they are not in ELCA churches, there are two other places the young adults could go. The first alternative to the ELCA is another church. According to Carroll, this is definitely possible. The second possibility is that young adults stopped going to any church, which, unfortunately must be true for a large number of people.

As described above, the ELCA is not an active force in many young adults’ lives. Continuing along this line of thought it would be found that the ELCA has little direct influence on young adults. A distinction needs to be made here, simply because the ELCA has little effect on the lives of young adults is very different than the ELCA having no effect at all on their lives. Undoubtedly, the ELCA still has some amount of residual effect from the influence it had on the early lives of young adult’s. Throughout the earlier stages of development, before the young adult stage, the ELCA would have had great influence on the formation of the worldview of the child and adolescent age people who become young adults.<sup>39</sup> The church played the role of a guiding force in a young person’s life up to the young adult stage. This guiding force helped form the worldview taken with a pre young adult person into young adulthood. In this way, the

---

<sup>39</sup>Nathan Frambach. *Foundations For Youth and Family Ministries*, Youth Ministries of the ELCA. 2000. <http://ELCA.org/youth/helpsheets/foundations.html> (October 24,2005)

ELCA has some effect because it helps form the initial worldview of a person, which is reshaped during the young adult's college years.

### **College and the ELCA**

The relationship between the ELCA and the college is abstract to say the least. As stated above, this relationship is best thought of as two forces acting on the same object. These two forces do not necessarily always have to be opposing. They can be working in the same directions or pulling the young adult in opposite direction depending on the circumstances.

Some colleges do have direct affiliations to denominations. My college, Gustavus Adolphus, has direct affiliations to the ELCA. This affiliation does not necessarily equate to a sharing relationship in terms of the caretaking of young adult faith. Technically the college addresses faith in its mission statement as one of the core values of the college. The mission statement says, "We encourage an honest exploration of religious faith and seek to foster a mature understanding of Christian perspectives on life."<sup>40</sup> This looks very nice on paper, but what does it really mean, and what is included in an honest exploration? If a college were critical, then an honest exploration of something would be a critical exploration. This is the relationship between college and the ELCA. College, then, provides a place for an honest, critical, exploration of young adult faith. Although it may not be as nice as that, as stated previously in the section on the college, being critical means that the personal values of the criticizer are interjected. This means that there will not always be an, "honest, critical exploration," it is distinctly possible that the interjection of personal values will lead to a biased critique of young

---

<sup>40</sup> *The Gustavus Mission, Office of the President*. 2005.  
<http://www.gustavus.edu/oncampus/president/vision.cfm> (November 18, 2005)

adult faith. Even if the critical system is uncertain, the ELCA's part remains the same.

The ELCA provides the base knowledge of the faith the college is thinking critically about. If this is true then understanding young adult faith is the key to understanding the relationship between the college and the ELCA.

## Chapter 4:

### **The Young Adult Faith**

The young adult stage in faith development occurs after the adolescent stage and before the adult stage. Narrowing the onset and exit of the young adult stage in terms of age is impossible. Levinson tries to set an age but even he admits to a certain non-specific age range in which the onset or exit from the young adult stage can occur. This range occurs because not all people develop in their faith in the same way or at the same speed. Everyone related to the ELCA should have been raised with generally the same base for their faith. By looking at childhood and adult faith, it will be possible to discern some of the characteristics of the young adult faith.

As stated in the section on the young adult and the ELCA, the young adult's faith is first formed in childhood and adolescence. During these times, the ELCA has great influence on the formation of a person's faith. The faith formed during childhood and adolescence a person brings to young adulthood. Therefore, understanding youth faith is important to understanding young adult faith. The ELCA breaks youth (child and adolescent) ministries down into several distinct focuses. Nathan Frambach, author of many of the ELCA's youth ministry *Help Sheets*, lays out six areas that need to be focused on, in order for youth ministries to be successful within the ELCA. They are,

1. Youth ministry is fundamentally relational ministry.
2. Youth ministry has an evangelical purpose.
3. Youth ministry is congregationally-owned.
4. Youth ministry is contextual.
5. Youth ministry focuses on faith formation.
6. Youth ministry demands an authentic community, perhaps now more than ever.<sup>41</sup>

---

<sup>41</sup> Frambach

These focuses, should compose the childhood faith. This youth faith then forms the foundation for what young adult faith formation will build on.

The young adult faith is built on these things from adolescence and childhood. The two most important to the actual views the young adult forms are numbers 2 and 5 or evangelical purpose and faith formation. The rest of Frambach's focuses are concerned with getting youth involved in the youth ministry programs and how to make the youth ministry programs more appealing to youth. Evangelical purpose and faith formation deal with what the youth is supposed to get out of youth ministry in terms of beliefs. Frambach defines evangelical purpose as,

The purpose of youth ministry is to tell about God's grace, the good news of the Gospel--that God has loved us with an everlasting love whose name is Jesus; that God has done for us what we cannot do for ourselves, namely, claim us and grace us with a forever love. Youth ministry is centered in the life and way of Jesus, driven by the Great Commission, and focused on growth as disciples.<sup>42</sup>

This is important because it gives a list of things adolescents are to believe. It also charges the adolescents with spreading God's word about those beliefs. Therefore, ELCA influenced young adults should bring to college an ambition to tell others what they learned about Christ and God. The second important building block of youth faith, as defined by Frambach, is faith formation. Frambach defines faith formation as, "about helping young people grow in the grace, faith and knowledge of Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18), and deepening and strengthening their relationship with God."<sup>43</sup> This seems basic. It is interpreted as the deepening of young people's understanding of Jesus with the objective of helping them grow in their faith.

---

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

When the idea above is presented with the characteristics Parks describes for adolescent faith, a picture of the beginning of young adult faith can be made. Parks characterizes adolescent faith as an “uncritical dependence.”<sup>44</sup> This is because during the youth stage of faith development, a youth is likely to depend on, “prevailing conventional, family, and peer group authority,”<sup>45</sup> to form their faith. This means a young person gets their faith by taking what other people believe and calling it their own. They do not analyze their faith critically in an attempt to find the truth. Youth believe what they are told. When this idea is coupled with the idea that youth are taught to understand God and Jesus within ELCA constructions, it signifies the young adult faith starts as a faith built dependently on the presentation of religion received from church and family. It can be concluded that adolescent faith is made up of the ELCA understanding of Jesus Christ and a sense to share this with others. This faith construction is present from the onset of young adulthood.

If a definition of the adult stage of faith is added to what was shown of youth faith, it should be possible to garner the characteristics of young adult faith. According to Parks, the adult stage of faith is marked by a person being, “less dependent upon others for the ordering of his or her own sense of value and promise ... Authority that was located outside the self, though ratified within becomes fully equilibrated within.”<sup>46</sup> A person with an adult faith can take outside stimulus, critically analyze the stimulus, and incorporate it into a faith that is their own. She identifies adulthood by looking for three things. They are, “awareness of one’s own composing of reality, participating self

---

<sup>44</sup> Parks, *The Critical Years*, 120

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. 2

<sup>46</sup> Ibid. 88

consciously in an ongoing dialogue towards truth, taking a responsibility for seeing and reweaving [in the activity of ones every day] fitting patterns of relationships between the disparate elements of self and world.”<sup>47</sup> This is done without the consultation of others and without dependence on anyone. In short, adults believe what they find to be true and right, not what others tell them is true and right.

With youth faith being dependent and adult faith being independent a gap in faith formation forms. This faith gap is filled by the immensely complex and confusing young adult stage.

Using what has been shown about the youth and adult stages of faith, a picture of the young adult stage can be formed. The most important characteristic of a young adult faith is the idea that it is a transitional stage. This transitional stage occurs in between faith being dependent (youth) and independent (adult). The transition between dependent and independent faith is incredibly confusing. Levinson’s model for entering adulthood is the easiest way to visualize this transition. According to Levinson, the beginning of the entrance to adulthood is marked by a detachment from the family and a critical examination of what shapes the worldview, eventually resulting in a new self-found worldview. When applied to faith, college supplies the critical aspect as well as the physical and emotional distance from the family. Therefore, young adult faith is the re-modeling period of youth faith with the completion resulting in adulthood. This reconstruction takes into account the new views of the world presented by college.

Parks believes a person has potential to reach adulthood in their faith at anytime in their life. According to Parks, for a long time it was believed that reaching adulthood

---

<sup>47</sup> Ibid. 6

occurred “During the college years, the student moves from an uncritical dependence on prevailing conventional, family, and peer group authority to a critically aware sense of responsibility.”<sup>48</sup> In other words, the student develops an adult faith during college. This follows what was described in the paragraph above assuming the exit from college completes the critical phase in faith formation and marks the entrance into adulthood.

Parks found this not to be true. She observed, “Students in their twenties, who, after having once achieved principled reasoning, seemed to find it inadequate and/or seemed to “regress.””<sup>49</sup> Thus, students who possessed critical faith building skills regressed to dependence upon outside sources for support. Parks also finds that, “Students who seemed quite strong in their junior year often seemed more fragile their senior year.”<sup>50</sup> Therefore, young adult faith is a transitional period; however, it is not a smooth transition, and the transition cannot be limited to the college years. For many young adults the college years provide the start of this transition because of the introduction of criticism and the removal of the family influence. This transition is unique because it is the first time in life that criticism of ideas is added and taken seriously resulting in a reworking of faith.

Young adult faith during the college years is marked by both spiritual regression and spiritual growth. Both this regression and growth can be attributed in large part to something defined by Dr. Roland Martinson as “crisis.”<sup>51</sup>

---

<sup>48</sup> Ibid. 2

<sup>49</sup> Ibid. 73

<sup>50</sup> Ibid. 74

<sup>51</sup> Roland Martinson. *Young Men's Spirituality, Lutheran Men in Mission*. <http://www.elca.org/lmm/images/11ThemesofYoungMensSpirituality.pdf> (November 3, 2005)



## Chapter 5:

### The Crisis

According to Dr. Paul Hill of Wartburg Seminary, a crisis falls into one of three categories. These categories are, “vocation/job, void after high school, and relationships.”<sup>52</sup> By breaking life-changing crisis down in this way, college becomes a unique time in a person’s life. This is because there is an opportunity for all three types of crisis to be present simultaneously or within a very short amount of time from one another. All three categories of crisis laid out by Hill indicate the presence of some significant life-altering event. According to Parks, there are certain feelings a young adult is vulnerable to experiencing at these times. She explains, “The feelings to which the young adult is therefore correspondingly vulnerable are special forms of disappointment, failure, exclusion, abandonment, emptiness, and hopelessness.”<sup>53</sup>

Despite these vulnerabilities, Dr. Roland Martinson, in his research on young men’s spirituality for the ELCA, looks at crisis very optimistically. He defines crisis as an, “occasion for spiritual growth and religious formation.”<sup>54</sup> Martinson and Hill present crisis as positive occurrences based on their belief in the nodal experience. The nodal experience occurs when “Young men’s spirituality is often enhanced by significant events and experiences that reframe their relationships with God and their world.”<sup>55</sup> Martinson sees crisis as gateways for young adults to attain mountaintop (nodal) experiences. According to Hill, these experiences, “serve as a vital bridge to a life of

---

<sup>52</sup>Hill

<sup>53</sup> Parks, *The Critical Years*. 88

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Maritinson, *Young Men’s Spirituality*

faith”<sup>56</sup> It appears he thinks that nodal experiences are requisite to finding a strong faith. Young adults can have nodal experiences in a variety of ways. Some of them “include, men’s retreats, crisis, divorce, move to a new location, new job, spiritual events, fights, awakenings, birth of a child, mission trips, opportunities to lead.”<sup>57</sup> All of these potential nodal experiences are faith building. Thus Martinson and Hill give no sign that they could be negative. As a result of Martinson and Hill’s belief in nodal experiences and their reliance on them for the re-formation of faith, they do not notice the negative aspects of such experiences, which were pointed out by Parks.

It is possible that nodal experiences, particularly crisis experiences, present the opportunity for the exact opposite of a positive building reaction. As was shown in the young adult faith chapter, in addition to growth, young adults also regress in faith. A crisis in college could allow young adults to regress in their faiths because, as Levinson said, “All terminations bring a sense of loss, of grief for that which must be given up.”<sup>58</sup> Two of the three types of crisis are caused, at least in part, by losses. In addition, as Parks and Levinson point out, young people are particularly vulnerable to certain negative emotional reactions when faced with losses.

Each of the three kinds of crisis can be looked at individually. Doing so will help explain exactly how such crisis can affect college students.

Of the three, the first crisis, vocation and job, is the hardest to connect with college. This is because, while in college, students do not normally have full-time jobs, and many are not employed at all. Some college students view in college as their full-

---

<sup>56</sup> Hill

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Levinson, 75

time job. They view college as their job in preparing for their future. Job/vocation also has a connection to college because college is the first time that most students begin thinking about full-time employment. This is especially common with students during their junior and senior years. A person's job search can cause an incredible amount of anxiety for a young adult.

Next, the void after high school is described by Hill as, "a time of limbo and drifting."<sup>59</sup> It is caused by, "the dislocation of school community, the departure of friends to college, tech schools, or entering the military and new jobs."<sup>60</sup> Generally, the void after high school is caused by an overarching upheaval in a person's life. This upheaval, while necessary for a person to grow in their faith, is very traumatic. Even so, it is necessary because as was shown previously, there needs to be a disconnect between the young adult and his or her old support structure particularly the family. The void after high school is an indicator that this disconnect has occurred.

The last form of crisis is the relationship crisis. Hill cites several causes of relationship crisis when he write, "the death of a loved one (often a grandparent, parent or mentor), the break up with a girl friend, or their own divorce."<sup>61</sup> In addition to these, some mundane examples of relationship crisis could be included, such as: being away from one's parents for an extended period of time for the first time in a person's life, the departure of friends, and the introduction of and interaction with new and unfamiliar people. All of these examples occur in relationships and they all cause crisis in college students. There are very few college students who are not familiar with, "that guy," who

---

<sup>59</sup>Hill

<sup>60</sup>Ibid.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid.

went home every weekend for the first two months of school, spent many hours on AOL instant messenger talking to their high school friends, or hid in their room because they were terrified to meet anyone new.

All three forms of crisis overlap one another in some way. For instance, the void after high school is caused partially by relationships because job anxiety relates to a fear of a void after college that closely resembles the void after high school. Showing the negative side of these crises does not mean they are not important. The purpose of pointing out their potential negatives is to establish that crisis is not always positive, as Martinson and Hill believe.

Fowler, the author of *Becoming Adult, Becoming Christian* points out why crisis points are important, "At each of the crisis points of our lives and at each of the expected or unexpected turning points of our lives, we face a time when our ways of making meaning and patterns of our trusts and loyalties are subject to testing and change."<sup>62</sup> This change is important for developing an adult faith. Unfortunately, the current state of the college does not always foster a complete transition. As Parks states, "The tenets of modern scholarship have lead also to the muting of the professor, the impoverishment of the vocation of higher education, and the abandonment of the young adult searching for a fitting orientation to ultimate reality – a faith."<sup>63</sup> The tenet of modern scholarship that sets the modern college apart from the historical college is criticism. Young adulthood provides unique circumstances in the young adult psyche when concerning criticism. This is because of the major characteristics and vulnerabilities associated with the young

---

<sup>62</sup> James Fowler. *Becoming Adult, Becoming Christian: Adult Development and Christian Faith*. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1984.

<sup>63</sup> Parks, *The Critical Years*. 136

adult. Carroll summarized these characteristics previously. The characteristics she found were, interest in spirituality, ignorance of tradition, and fear of commitment and abandonment. When these characteristics are placed in a critical setting, coupled with crisis and the vulnerabilities of the young adult, shown by Parks, these characteristics become problematic.

Such problems occur because young adults are ill prepared to deal with the criticisms they will be presented with in college. Carroll makes this clear when she characterizes the young adult as, “ignorant of tradition.” It was shown that adolescents go into college with an ELCA-built faith structure. Unfortunately, this faith structure cannot stand up to the critique of college. This is especially true when the young adult has not been forced to critically examine his or her beliefs before entering college. Such a lack of prior critical thought causes young adults to enter college unprepared to defend their beliefs. This is because they were merely taught the belief itself and not the background behind the belief. Such blind acceptance typically occurs during childhood. When these childhood beliefs are questioned by the college critique, a unique crisis arises.

This crisis can be visualized by thinking of young adult beliefs as a seatbelt, faith as the car, and college criticism as a car accident. The young adults use seatbelts (beliefs) to keep them safe. Adolescents enter young adulthood with a non-critical faith. This means they lack a deep historical understanding of their beliefs. This is like having the seatbelt over their lap but not buckled. This is because young adults have their beliefs but do not have the ability to use them to their fullest potential. When the young adult is hit with the college criticism, he or she may be thrown from the car (faith) and may or

may not recover enough to ever get back in. If the young adult had a historical developmental understanding of their beliefs, it would be the equivalent of buckling the seatbelt. When the car gets in the accident and a person is wearing their seatbelt, the person might be hurt or shaken-up, but they would most likely remain in the car. According to Parks, most young adults go into college unbuckled. Being unbuckled causes such young adults to have their faith potentially damaged beyond repair in a car accident (critique). The use of the car accident is not perfect in that it does not allow for a change in the seatbelt or faith. When college critique is considered a crisis, it should have the ability to change the faith of the young adult experiencing it. This is the nature of crisis. The use of the car accident as an example does not supply the ability to have this change. It does illustrate the serious harm that the college critique can have on an unprepared young adult faith. In turn, showing how harmful crisis can be.

Once the young adult has been thrown from the car, after the first critical assault, the young adult is vulnerable. This is the point in time that decides if a young adult will be able to incorporate the ideas presented in the crisis into their faith. During these times of tribulation, car accidents/criticisms, the young adult is vulnerable to those emotions laid down by Parks at the beginning of the chapter. All of these feelings are dangerous to young adult faith. Thus, the future of the young adult faith depends largely on how that young adult deals with such car accident situations.

Fowler shows how hard it is for a young person to hang onto their faith in college when he cites testimonials from young adults saying, "I'm trying to achieve integrity in my faith, it's not so easy. And a lot of people think that I'm crazy to hang in with religion. Others in my church think that I raise too many questions and rock the boat too

much.”<sup>64</sup> This young adult is receiving support from nowhere; she is criticized by her church for, “rocking the boat” and by the school for, “hanging onto her religion”. Amidst all this criticism, it seems only natural that a person would fall away from their faith, especially if they were receiving no support from their church. Typically the young adult has not helped themselves in the area of receiving support from their church. This is because becoming a young adult involves the young adult distancing themselves from such things that were authoritative during their adolescent life. The unique nature of ELCA members also hinders the young adult. As was shown before, the nature of people in the ELCA involves being very loyal to their home congregations. When a young adult leaves for college, they are often forced to leave their home congregations. This takes them out of their faith support systems and, since they are ELCA Lutherans, they do not seek out a new congregation.

### **Other Factors Related To The Crisis:**

Time management is one of the largest problems facing college students as, “the allocation and management of time is a critical struggle for these young men.”<sup>65</sup> How can young adults fit faith in to their lives when they are, “juggling their time among jobs, school, friends, significant relationships and sleep?”<sup>66</sup> In college, young adults are busier than they have ever have been before. Their course loads are heavier, and there are more opportunities to become involved in extracurricular activities. Overall, it is much harder to find time to develop a faith. Some professors force young adults to think

---

<sup>64</sup> Fowler, 63

<sup>65</sup> Martinson, *Young Men's Spirituality*

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

about faith by, “actively undermining the foundations of orthodoxy.”<sup>67</sup> This added pressure from professors makes their crisis worse since, “young men also find it difficult to find time for themselves.”<sup>68</sup> A common misconception young adults have about going to college is that they will have more freedom and more time to do what they want. In reality, the young adult ends with increased freedom but, instead of this freedom creating more time, it creates choices between doing what the young adults need to do for school and having time for themselves. Most young adults inevitably choose working on school or extracurricular activities and leave little time for themselves. This is definitely true during weekdays. However, during the weekends, young adults may have more time for themselves. This weekend time is still limited by social constraints.

For example, in high school I was a voracious reader. I read, on average a book a week. Reading is what I engaged in when I had time for myself. Once I got to college, I stopped reading recreationally. I found it was not practical to spend an hour a day reading a recreational book when I had 100+ pages to read for class. The pressures of college drastically cut down the time I spent on myself. This is a common occurrence among college students. With the time pressures placed on college students it is no wonder, “it is difficult for them to find volunteer time or worship time,”<sup>69</sup> and get involved in a structure that supports their faith.

Other things listed by Dr. Martinson as influencing young adult’s spirituality include: sports, service, relationships, and nature. None of these things add to crisis like time management does with the exception of relationships. Relationships have already

---

<sup>67</sup> Carroll, 173

<sup>68</sup> Martinson, *Young Men’s Spirituality*

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.



been discussed in the young adult section and the faith development section so only a brief overview will be given here.

The importance of relationships largely resides in severing them. The importance of severing relationships is seen most acutely when the relationship between the young adult and their parents is viewed. The severing of this relationship can be particularly unsettling for the young adult. However, Levinson and Parks have shown, it is required for the transition into young adulthood in terms of faith and life from adolescence. This unsettling separation coupled with the distance from close friends can add substantially to a young adult's crisis in the early years of college. This is due to the lack of a strong, faith support system.

Crisis can be caused by one or several of any number of variables, according to Martinson and Hill, all crisis will be faith formative and cannot be negative. However, Parks and Levinson point out several ways these crises could cause young adults to leave the ELCA. With this assertion Parks and Levinson have made it impossible for the ELCA to view crisis in a totally positive light. This means, the ELCA must deal with the negative effects of crisis in the lives of its young adult members.

## Chapter 6:

### **Where Did All The Young Adults Go?**

Laid out above are the issues faced by young adults in college. The ELCA must be aware of these issues because one of the ELCA's jobs is to help its member through tough times in their lives. Crises associated with college qualify as one of these tough times. As was stated near the beginning of this paper, there are two ways young adults can deal with their crises other than returning to the ELCA for support. The first alternative to returning to the ELCA is for the young adult to stop attending or practicing in their home church altogether. The second is for the young adult to change from the ELCA, to another denomination. Inskeep has shown that ELCA members are unlikely to change churches within their own denomination. Therefore, it is more likely ELCA members who leave their home church will change to an alternative denomination rather than joining another ELCA church.

Carroll supports this with her book, *The New Faithful: Why Young Adults are Embracing Christian Orthodoxy*. To properly understand Carroll's book there is one major issue with her definition of the words orthodox and conservative that needs to be explored. This definition issue occurs because she uses the words orthodox and conservative interchangeably.

This is problematic because Lutheranism is the oldest protestant religion and is considered traditional. The word orthodox can be interpreted as anything that is traditional. According to this historical definition, Lutheranism is orthodox. However, as shown before, Lutherans are not conservative. This means there must be a distinction

between the historical definition of orthodox and Carroll's definition of orthodox.

According to Carroll's definition of orthodox, Lutheranism is excluded because it is not conservative.

The traditional definition of orthodox, while not wrong, does not coincide with the popular culture's sense of orthodox, which is, "churches that preach the hard gospel or cling to time tested teaching."<sup>70</sup> Popular culture equates orthodoxy with those religions previously defined as conservative. This popular culture definition is what Carroll refers to when she uses the word orthodox. Generally, the Baptists and the Church of Christ, among other evangelical and non-denominational churches, are considered orthodox by popular culture's definition and conservative by Innskeep's. Popular culture's orthodoxy is concerned with how much the denomination emphasizes a hard line interpretation of the Bible. This sheds light on why young adults would shift from liberal or moderate churches to conservative churches. In the ELCA, children are taught that to understand God we have to know the Bible. We know that conservative churches proclaim a more biblically based religion. Therefore, if a young adult were regressing in their faith, they would regress back to a church that would most strongly affirm their childhood belief system.

It is popular culture's form of orthodoxy that Carroll is referring to when she says, "The renewed vigor of organized religion is concentrated in its most traditional forms."<sup>71</sup> According to Innskeep, this is because conservative Christians have accepted a changing role in terms of how their churches interact with young adults. That role is "to enlist the

---

<sup>70</sup> Carroll, 75

<sup>71</sup> Carroll, 4

aid of the church as an extension of the family.”<sup>72</sup> The conservative Christians have embraced what Vitek proclaimed in his book, *A Companion Way*, which is, “Individual faith, for Christian persons, is initiated and sustained by the community’s faith, faith story and vision.”<sup>73</sup> Inskeep illustrates in depth, this conservative approach of acceptance to young adult relations:

One alternative, often embraced by the most conservative religious groups, is to enlist the aid of the church as an extension of the family. Religious choice on the part of the adolescent is assumed, but the church is asked to work with the family to control the options of choice. Most often this is done by controlling the nature of contacts with the "outside" world.<sup>74</sup>

In this model, the conservative church takes a more direct role in influencing the choices of the young adults, even to the point of limiting their stimulus, thus, impairing the young adult’s ability to think and analyze their faith critically.

The effectiveness of the new conservative approach, coupled with the problems associated with the Protestant liberals, places the ELCA in a difficult position. This is because of the unique characteristics exhibited by the ELCA. The most important of these characteristics is that the ELCA is accepting of a large number of social and political views and historically traditional. The ELCA’s position as a moderate church could work to its advantage or hinder its growth. Carroll’s view that young adults “feel strangely liberated of orthodoxy’s demands of obedience,”<sup>75</sup> is most likely to hinder the growth of the ELCA if true. For this reason, the ELCA does not place a large number of

---

<sup>72</sup> Kenneth Innskeep. *Religious Socialization*. [database on-line] Chicago: Office of Research, Planning and Evaluation, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 1988. Available from <http://www.elca.org/re/reports/relsoc.pdf>; Internet. 4.

<sup>73</sup> John Vitek. *A Companion Way: Mentoring Youth in Searching Faith*. Winona: Saint Mary’s Press, 1998. 8.

<sup>74</sup> Inskeep, *Religious Socialization*, 3

<sup>75</sup> Carroll, 91

demands on its members, as do the conservatives. The acceptance of all people, which made the ELCA such a unique denomination, could also be its demise, since “Many young believers were raised in churches that prized tolerance and acceptance above the search for truth. Still scarred by the theological confusion that approach engendered, they are deeply suspicious of a relativistic ecumenism.”<sup>76</sup> This means that accepting churches like the ELCA cause confusion for young adults when they are presented with critical faith questions. In these situations, it becomes impossible for young adults to follow the accepting example of the ELCA. Especially when the young adults are presented with numerous ideas, which cannot co-exist in their faith. Thus, the young adult is pushed away both from the confusing new idea and from the church that caused the confusion.

Carroll typifies young adults as wanting to be told what is right. She says that, young adults want definite answers, which the conservative churches are providing. She says that unlike the last generation, which felt constrained by the conservative churches, modern young adults find it refreshing when religious leaders demand sacrifice, service, and renunciation of consumerism.”<sup>77</sup> Carroll rejects Inskeeps idea that a conservative church could some how keep their youth from critical stimulus. She believes that “Today’s young Americans, regardless of their religious formation, have never had the luxury of accepting orthodoxy without critical reflection.”<sup>78</sup> Conservative churches offer a new potential end point for disillusioned ELCA youth which, could explain why

---

<sup>76</sup> Ibid. 266

<sup>77</sup> Ibid. 91

<sup>78</sup> Ibid. 11

William H. King made the observation that it is unusual that the young adults are not coming back to the ELCA.

This entire argument leads me to believe there is some combination of religious, social and cultural influences leading young adults to the conservative churches. This new influence could be the increasingly strong critique given by college of young adult faith. In retaliation to this critique, the young adults may seek out those churches that will uncritically re-affirm their childhood beliefs. There is research available on the issue of young adults leaving for conservative churches. The impact of the increasingly critical college, young adults not coming back to the ELCA, and the fact that young adults are joining conservative denominations in droves, all indicate this shift is happening. The next question that begs answering is, now that we know the nature of the young adult, the nature of the major influences on them and where they are most likely going (nowhere or to other denominations), what can the ELCA do about it?

## Chapter 7:

### **How Can They Be Brought Back?**

In order to keep young adults from leaving the ELCA, the ELCA could adopt a policy similar to that of conservative denominations as described in the previous chapter. This would prevent young adults from leaving the ELCA because, as Inskeep points out, “groups that have best come to grips with their particular role in the development of children and adolescents in this society stand the best chance of competing successfully in the religious marketplace.”<sup>79</sup> In this way, conservative groups currently stand the best chance of attracting young adults because they have embraced their place as a community for young adults. The “religious marketplace,” refers to the ability of modern, young adults to participate in religion shopping. Religion shopping occurs because young adults identify with their religion differently than their parents and grandparents did. This is because,

They used to function very much like the family in the formation of identity, but now they are more like the workplace. In the not so distant past, a Finnish family and the Lutheran church worked together to leave their mark on a child for life. A person was Finnish and Lutheran in much the same way they were white. No part of the identity was chosen nor could any be forsaken. But the grandchildren of these Finnish Lutherans come into contact with their Lutheranism in a different way. In their case Lutheranism is a part of their identity (at least until shortly after confirmation), but it is a chosen part and one that can be put on or off. One could just as easily be a Presbyterian, or not religious at all. This fact provides the over arching context of all religious socialization in the late 1980s, and the changing role of the church in its relationship to the family should not be forgotten. No longer do the family and the church serve the same identity function in the lives of children and adolescents. This is not as true, however, among the most conservative religious groups. They continue to use the church as an extension of the family and as a result are able to shape their children in their own image.<sup>80</sup>

---

<sup>79</sup> Inskeep, *Religious Socialization*, 3

<sup>80</sup> Inskeep, *Religious Socialization*, 2

This passage illustrates the main argument of this section thus far. That is, there is a changing role the church has to play in the development of young adult faith, and conservative churches are succeeding in filling that role. The ELCA has yet to directly follow in the footsteps of conservative churches, they have begun to implement a more personal community plan. This plan relies heavily on individual mentors that are responsible for helping young adult through transitional periods. The goal of this plan centers on developing an adult faith in young adults. However, this mentoring plan is still very unfocused and is only defined in a few of pieces of ELCA literature.

### **The Mentor**

The importance of mentors centers on their ability to help young adults recompose their faith life. This is because, “To become a young adult in faith is to discover the limits of one’s assumptions about how ‘life will always be’ –and to recompose a meaningful sense of self and world on the other side of that discovery.”<sup>81</sup> This re-composition generally happens when, “Human beings self-consciously or unselfconsciously compose a sense of the ultimate character of reality...higher education is a primary institution from which the culture expects assistance with this task.”<sup>82</sup> As was shown before, higher education, college, is the main force in creating this re-composition because of the critical process it forces its students to undergo. Unfortunately, the critical process alone is not enough as, “Typically a critical awareness and a single mentoring figure are by themselves insufficient to reorder faith itself. Rather, it is the combination”<sup>83</sup> This is because,

---

<sup>81</sup> Parks, *The Critical Years*, xii

<sup>82</sup> Ibid. 16

<sup>83</sup> Ibid. 88



Amid the guerrilla-war atmosphere of academia [young adults] still must contend with secular campus life. Whether taking courses from professors who actively undermine the foundations of orthodoxy or living with students who mock their morality, Christians on campus quickly find that their faith cannot survive without spiritual support.<sup>84</sup>

According to Parks and Carroll, critical thought alone will cause many young adults to ‘give up’ on their faith. To combat this, the ELCA, Parks, Levinson, Carroll, Fowler, and Vitek all believe there needs to be a mentor in combination with critical thought.

The mentor and critical evaluation need to be in combination because, without the addition of critical thought, there would be no confusion for the young adult. Thus, in such circumstances there would be no need for a mentor. However, when a critical influence is present, a mentor is necessary to help with the young adult’s formation of a church inclusive worldview. Why the college is critical and the effect this has on young adults has already been described. Even so, how a mentor balances the critical influence of the college still needs elaboration.

The mentor’s main objective should be, “to support and facilitate the realization of the dream.”<sup>85</sup> In Levinson’s book, he defines the entrance into young adulthood as the time when a young adult creates a vision or dream for the future. The mentor is supposed to help cultivate this dream before the critical forces of the college can stamp it out. For this reason, mentor relationships are important because they provide the aspect “that often makes the difference between a flirtation and a commitment,”<sup>86</sup> to the faith of young adults. This relationship occurs because, while the young adult has taken their first step to adulthood, they have not achieved it yet. In this way, “The Young Adult is...

---

<sup>84</sup> Carroll, 173

<sup>85</sup> Levinson 98

<sup>86</sup> Carroll, 173

subject to the emerging self that is yet dependent upon authority ‘out there’ to beckon and confirm its integrity.”<sup>87</sup> As was stated previously, the young adult, while having some independence to reason on their own, is still in need of guidance. Thus, the mentor provides this guidance.

According to John Vitek the Author of *A Companion Way*, a book dedicated to the structure of the mentor relationship. A mentor should be “likened to a companion. The companion is a faithful and trusted guide who is willing to befriend the young person on her or his searching way.”<sup>88</sup> In his book, Vitek creates an organization within the church with the express goal of pairing young adults with mentors. Vitek’s approach is the most direct approach to the establishment of mentor relationships I have found. His structure includes a step in which all the interested applicants from both sides, young adult and mentor, are required to fill out applications and attend pre-mentor relationship meetings. The goal of this step is for young adults and mentors to get to know one another. The pre-work in Vitek’s structure is incredibly in-depth with the eventual goal of finding a good match between young adults and mentors. This structure seems too forced and rigid to be used effectively on a changing dynamic group of people like young adults. This is especially true if the characteristics of the young adults are considered. The young adult has just begun the stage in their lives where they have the ability to consider outside stimulations and form their opinions accordingly. Vitek takes this ability formative ability away from the young adult with the rigid system he outlines.

Letting these relationships form naturally within a church parish or wider church community would make more sense. This natural formation could be achieved by

---

<sup>87</sup> Parks, *The Critical Years*, 88

<sup>88</sup> Vitek, 10

introducing the idea of mentorship to church members. Then, adults would be informed that young adults may rely on them for advice if ever they encounter faith issues.

Another way to foster a more relaxed way of building relationships is by forming young adult education. The purpose of this would be to inform young adults that it is acceptable for them to ask adults for support when they are dealing with faith crisis. If young adults were educated that it is all right to ask questions and adults were educated on how to answer these questions, mentoring relationships would develop without a rigid structure like Vitek's.

The possibility of a relaxed mentorship program like this being considered by the ELCA is unknown, because the ELCA's approach to young adult ministry is largely undefined. The ELCA maintains a very strong webpage on how to build effective adolescent and child ministries. However, once adolescents begin asking faith related questions and take their first steps toward young adulthood, the ELCA is strangely silent in terms of how to form ministries for them. To see just how voiceless the ELCA is on this issue, all a person has to do is visit the ELCA's young adult ministries website.<sup>89</sup> The website is a veritable shell of potential information. It has potential to be a place where the ELCA could provide information on building mentoring relationships, and how young adults can reach people when they have faith questions. In addition to this, the ELCA could reach out to young adults who may have strayed away from the church. On the website, there are pages set up for community, spirituality, and culture. Such pages could be used beneficially. Instead, they feature a church youth group, a band, and a list

---

<sup>89</sup> *Young Adult Ministries*, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. November 17, 2005. <http://ELCA.org/youngadults> (November 17, 2005)

of metaphors for what young adults think young adult ministry is like.<sup>90</sup> The church youth group page appears promising in name alone. However, upon closer inspection, it is only a youth group biography that is updated with a new youth group every week. There are no links to local youth groups broken down by area, or any information on how to get in touch with young adult ministries in a given area. It is disappointing that there is not more being done to involve young adults and mentors in a community of believers. Even so, the fact that the ELCA has a website devoted to young adult ministries is a good start. They just need to invest the resources to develop it.

While the ELCA's young adult ministries website is silent on the issue of young adult mentors and other ways to retain young adults, the ELCA does not ignore the issue altogether. For instance, the importance of building mentorship programs is mentioned in several ELCA publications. These references often come from publications that are meant to help churches involve high school students after their confirmations. As is illustrated in this passage from *The Confirmation Ministry task Force Report*,

Congregations should consider supplying a surrogate mentor. An increasing number of congregations have found mentors useful for all confirmands. Not only are such adults able to personalize confirmation through a one-to-one relationship with the student, but, like lay catechists, mentors also witness to the importance of vocation.<sup>91</sup>

In addition, the ELCA is not silent on the issue of mentors in an *ELCA Help Sheet*, when Frambach describes the mentor relationship, saying,

---

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Daniel Bollman; Wyvetta Bullock, Eldon DeWeerth, Rebecca Grothe, Mary Ann Moller-Gunderson, Kenneth Inskeep, Mark Knutson, Constance Leean, Susan Niemi, Marvin Roloff, and Ken Smith, Luther Lindberg. *The Confirmation Ministry Task Force Report*, Christian Education. 1993.  
<http://www.elca.org/christianeducation/discipleship/conminreport.html> (November 7, 2005)

Adolescents need "windows" through which they can see faith (spirituality) in action, and people make the best windows. In teenage spirituality, the "rubber hits the road" in and through relationships-- healthy, loving, honest, open and safe relationships. Young people need more than role models; they need adult mentors who will take them seriously--listening to them, loving them, and showing them what it looks like to live what one believes. Adolescents need to see a "full package"-- an adult who is real. That means one who is authentic, one who genuinely cares about young people, and one who has a relationship with God which defines his/her life. Young people need a "window" through whom they can see what it means to be authentically human and faithfully a child of the Triune God.<sup>92</sup>

Unfortunately, other than these abstract passages found in a few ministry guides there is little reference to the importance of mentors by the ELCA. It appears that individuals within the ELCA recognize that having mentor relationships is important for faith development of the young adult. Puzzlingly, the ELCA itself has failed to release or OK a document regarding how a mentorship program is to be achieved within the ELCA. The closest to any such document is Kenneth Innskeep's report on *Religious Socialization*.<sup>93</sup> This document's main purpose is to show what the ELCA must do to stay pertinent to young adults. While it cites mentorship relationships as a viable option it does not go so far as to outline how the ELCA could enact a policy to promote them.

The ELCA needs to take action and heed the ideas of scholars by releasing an educational document outlining what it means to be a mentor, how to become a mentor, why mentors are important, and how to get young adults to accept mentors. All of these issues have been addressed in some way previously in this paper. Young adults need mentors because, as was shown previously, young adults are still subject to an emerging

---

<sup>92</sup> Frambach, Nathan. *ELCA Youth Ministries Help Sheet, Teenage Spirituality: Not an Oxymoron, Youth Ministries of the ELCA*. 1997.

<http://ELCA.org/youth/helpsheets/spirit.html> (October 24,2005)

<sup>93</sup> Innskeep, *Religious Socialization*, 3

worldview that relies on outside authority for its formation. They need an authority figure, mentors, to guide them. The definition of the mentor used by the ELCA can be as simple as Levinson's, when he writes, "He fosters the young adult's development by believing in him."<sup>94</sup> Similarly, Carroll describes what it means to be in a mentor relationship when she says, "The key to teaching today's young adults is to help them grow – not just make them comfortable."<sup>95</sup> Becoming involved in a mentoring relationship does not have to be an elaborate scheme like the one Vitek lays out. Instead, it can be a relaxed system designed by the church to promote voluntary participation.

The information supporting an active mentor program is out there; all the ELCA has to do is form a plan for implementing one. People within the ELCA recognize mentorship programs as effective, Inskeep points this out saying,

Particularly in late adolescents issues of faith, social and personal conflict, even a critique of religion itself may be far more effective methods of dealing with this period or adolescent rejection of the religion of their parents than personal moral arguments.<sup>96</sup>

Since the critique is already happening in college, the ELCA needs to find a way to direct the critique so that, in the end, young adults can incorporate their ELCA based faith into their worldview. The use of mentors is an incredibly effective way to do this.

While mentors are considered by most scholars to be positive, many of them believe there can be negative ramifications for the young adult from a mentor relationship. Levinson, one of the largest mentor proponents, says, "An intense mentor relationship ends with strong conflict and bad feelings on both sides. The young man may have powerful feelings of bitterness, rancor, grief, abandonment, liberation and

---

<sup>94</sup> Levinson, 99

<sup>95</sup> Carroll, 85

<sup>96</sup> Inskeep, *Religious Socialization*, 6

rejuvenation.”<sup>97</sup> According to Levinson, the feelings of liberation and rejuvenation are present because a mentor relationship typically ends when a young adult has grown beyond their reliance on others. Parks both supports this and refutes it when she describes the transition into adulthood, saying,

the adult, is less dependent upon others for the ordering of his or her own sense of value and promise and has become strong enough to let the mentor be other – even to have feet of clay; the mentor becomes peer. Authority that was located outside the self, though ratified within becomes fully equilibrated within.<sup>98</sup>

According to Parks, when the mentor relationship is over the mentor becomes a peer instead of an adversary. Both Parks and Levinson agree that when a young adult has grown beyond their need for the mentor, the young adult has gained the ability to analyze their situation and create their own worldview without an external authoritative influence.

The problem described by Levinson stems from the sense of bitterness felt by a young adult after the mentor relationship terminates. In such a situation, a young adult may be able to deal with this bitterness, rancor, grief, and abandonment if they have made the transition into adulthood. As Parks points out, mentor relationships do not always end when the young adult passes onto adulthood. Instead, sometimes they are cut short. For example, “The young adult will make do without a mentor rather than betray the integrity of the emerging self”<sup>99</sup> To illustrate this further, if the mentor is trying to exert undue influence in order to form the young adult’s worldview, that young adult could grow resentful of the mentor and abandon them.

---

<sup>97</sup> Levinson, 100

<sup>98</sup> Parks, *The Critical Years*, 88

<sup>99</sup> Ibid. 87

Another reason a young adult could abandon a mentor is described by Inskeep when he writes,

If the church is to maintain a relationship with older adolescents it must in some way carefully distance itself from parents who look to it for help in controlling their children. In the mainline religious groups a religious identity is something that can easily be put on or taken off. Adolescents have to be convinced by the church in new and innovative ways they have good reason to put it on.<sup>100</sup>

If the church wants to be successful with young adults it needs to distance itself from parent(s). This is because the young adult will typically conclude that anything related to their parent's worldview is suspect. Thus, a mentor becoming too parental is just as dangerous as a mentor that is overbearing. This is because a mentor that is too parental may have the same result as the overbearing mentor, causing the young adult to either regress in their faith or turn away from the ELCA and distrust the church.

Mentors can be very positive in the formation of young adult faith, and building the mentor relationship should be further explored by the ELCA. Even so, mentor relationships should not be seen as the ultimate solution, they are not perfect. As was shown above, mentor relationships can cause very serious problems in the development of a young adult's faith. This is not to say that mentor relationships are not good. However, the potential problems reveal they are not perfect, and that there is a need to explore other possibilities to help keep young adults involved in the church.

---

<sup>100</sup> Inskeep, *Religious Socialization*, 7



## Chapter 8:

### **The Unexplored Way to Bring Them Back...Mostly**

As the title of this chapter implies, the unexplored way is not totally unexplored.

Inskeep alluded to it when he said,

The church should look to raise the level of discussion about the relationship of faith to life in terms other than those most directly related to moral behavior. Particularly in late adolescence issues of faith, social and personal conflict, even a critique of religion itself may be a far more effective methods of dealing with this period of adolescent rejection of the religion of their parents.<sup>101</sup>

Inskeep is suggesting that the church offer a critique of itself to illustrate the connections between faith and a young adult's life. Currently, the critique of religion is given by the college. If the church provided a limited critique of itself before college as Inskeep suggests, it could be very beneficial to the young adults. The critique provided by the church would have to be substantially different from the critique provided by the college. This is because the church does not want their critique to be as shocking as the college's critique. As often it is the college's critique that causes young adults to leave the church.

If the ELCA provided a self-critique, it would have to be very delicate when planning the circumstances the critique is presented in and presentation style of critique itself. This is because the ELCA wants the self-critique to be positive and reinforce a young adult's faith. This would better prepare young adults for college by giving them prior knowledge of conflicts within the church. More importantly, the church would be able to shape the way young adults deal with discrepancies in church beliefs doctrine and history. This kind of knowledge would have been invaluable in my own experience of going to college.

---

<sup>101</sup> Ibid. 6

To be successful, this self-critique should be done on the broadest level. To achieve this, the most basic beliefs should be considered for critique. This is because it is going to be more effective to teach a young adult how to constructively critique those beliefs that they feel are important, as compared to periphery beliefs that the young adult never thinks about. That is why the ELCA belief in the monotheism defined as, one god, shall be used as an example of how this critique could work.

The members of the ELCA church express their faith in corporate worship with one of a few creeds; the Nicene creed, for example, expresses, “We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.”<sup>102</sup> This creed says that the Lutheran church believes in one God. The idea of monotheism is a basic tenet of the Lutheran church and the Christian faith. Even the Christian’s relative, Judaism is monotheistic. Judaism, being the ancestor of Christianity, has special importance in this section. The ELCA never says, monotheism is the only system for belief in God, The ELCA does say that monotheism is the Lutheran system for believing in God. Children also see monotheism in the religions that spawned Lutheranism, such as Catholicism and Judaism. This would naturally lead children to the belief that monotheism has always been. I know it did for me.

Upon entering college, I was faced with several harsh realities that shook my faith. The most severe for me was the one that harkened back the furthest in history. It was the challenge to my assumption that monotheism had been forever. In college, I was confronted with the reality that this belief probably had not existed throughout the entire history of my church. I believed my religious beliefs should flow all the way back to the

---

<sup>102</sup> *The Nicene Creed*, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Spiritual Center. <http://www.test.elca.org/spiritual.html> (November, 5 2005)

roots of my faith, the Israelites. My assumptions were that the Jews were, and had always been monotheistic. After all, how could the nature of God change? Unfortunately, for me, it appears it did.

According to John Day, “Absolute monotheism seems to have been predominant in the postexilic period.”<sup>103</sup> This by itself is not problematic; however, when coupled with his statement, “If we are following the evidence of the Old Testament itself it would seem that the worship of other deities was quite frequent.”<sup>104</sup> Day is saying that there was a large amount of Israelite history in which, the Israelites practiced some form of religion other than monotheism. There is a dispute as to what the non-monotheistic Israelite religion was. What it was is irrelevant to this paper. All that matters is that it was not monotheism.

To my dismay, upon further research, I found that this view is fairly widely held among biblical scholars, according to Mark Smith, “monotheism was hardly a feature of Israelite early history.”<sup>105</sup> These scholars believe,

Israel started out at a primitive stage, worshiping a specific tribal or clan deity in a fully polytheistic world, then moved up to henotheism or monolatry (the worship of one god while accepting the existence and power of other deities), and from there on to true monotheism.<sup>106</sup>

This change from non-monotheism to monotheism is so dramatic because it is a change in the core elements of the faith. Even more dramatic is that it is not a change caused by a different Biblical interpretations or new evidence. In my reading, I have found only

---

<sup>103</sup> John Day. *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press LTD, 2000. 226.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Mark Smith. *The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel*. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1990. 256.

<sup>106</sup> Kugel, James. *The God of Old: Inside the Lost World of the Bible*. New York: The Free Press, 2003.193.

educated speculation, speculation with no definitive evidence, as to why this change occurred. Therefore, a core change in the Christian faith, the faith of the ELCA, happened and no one is sure why.

This is problematic because when young adults were children and adolescents, they were not taught that these basic tenets of their faith could change. Finding out that these basic tenets do in fact, change can be very traumatic to a young adult's faith. To make this situation worse, this change is documented in the Bible, (Deut 32:8, Ex 20:3, Ex 15:11.)<sup>107</sup> The change itself is not documented; however, there are verses that support the idea of the ancient Israelites not being monotheistic. The verses cited are just a few; by reading the book of Psalms, a person can find copious reference to the existence of multiple deities.

By shaking the foundation of a young adults faith, everything above it is shaken. This idea of a dynamic faith foundation is problematic. I do not propose that all young adults assume the ancient Israelites were monotheistic. In fact, I would say that most young adults probably never think about the religion of the ancient Israelites at all. Young people do have assumptions about their faith that can be associated with the history of their church. In this way, even though the religion of the ancient Israelites is not directly explored, it is encompassed by assumptions. When these assumptions are challenged and critiqued, young adults become disillusioned with the ELCA.

According to scholars, and to some extent the ELCA, mentors are the answer to these situations of critique and confusion. I agree that mentors do help; however, some young people are going to feel cheated and stop trusting the church and all things

---

<sup>107</sup> See appendix 3

associated with it, including their mentors, after they find out that there are easily accessible contradictions to their faith and that the church never presented these contradictions to them.

If these contradictions were presented to late adolescent young people, who are perhaps just making their first steps toward young adulthood the ELCA would effectively take the shock of college critique away from the college. The college critique would remain. The reaction of the young adult to the college critique would change.

The college critique is severe because it is the first time the young adults are presented with credible ideas contrary to what they had been taught about their faith by the ELCA. By presenting some of these critiques before college, the ELCA would have the opportunity to teach young people how to think about critiques, how to research them, who they can talk to when they are faced with them, and give young adults some background in thinking about their faith critically.

The nature of the young adult is the reason why churches themselves should preempt colleges with the presentation of some of these contradictions. The young adult faith is that of a spiritual hunger and uncertainty. The nature of the young adult also provides unique opportunities for a church presentation of a critique because, “they [young adults] want to engage in dialogue not monologue,”<sup>108</sup> young adults want to be able to talk about their faith, mentors can be an outlet but so could small groups focused on critical discussion lead by a pastor within the church. Paramount here is the idea given before about human development, “The patterning and re-patterning activity of meaning making occurs in every aspect of human life. Every act of perception is an

---

<sup>108</sup> Hill

ordering activity”<sup>109</sup> This idea, coupled with the young adult’s spiritual hunger and want of conversation, gives the church the opportunity to direct the re-patterning of young adult faith. The opportunity to direct the re patterning of young adult faith is an incredible opportunity for the church and one that can be achieved.

By offering a self critique, the ELCA would insert itself into the re-patterning of young adult faith. The insertion would take away the college’s position as the sole critic of young adult faith and create a dual structure for faith re-patterning. This would provide young adults with the ability to interpret the college critique within their faith. The confiscation of the college’s lone role as faith critic could be invaluable as a tool to keep young adults involved in the ELCA.

---

<sup>109</sup> Parks, *The Critical Years*, 15

## **Chapter 9:**

### **Conclusion: Where Do We Go From Here?**

Presented in this paper are models of the young adult, the ELCA, and the college. Understanding how they all intertwine in the formation of young adult faith is important if the ELCA wishes to find a way to keep young adults involved in church. Obstacles like the rejection of parental views and the college as the sole critic make keeping young adults involved very difficult. This paper presents two ideas that would help the ELCA combat these issues.

A program of mentoring is the best-researched way for the ELCA to keep young adults involved in their faith. The problems associated with mentoring by no means outweigh the potential gains in terms of helping young adults cope with difficult situations. Particularly, those situation involving the college critiques. The second option presented is the institution of a critical education program within the ELCA. In this program, the young adults would be presented with a critique of the ELCA's beliefs and traditions by the ELCA itself. By arming young adults with the ability to think critically about their faith before college, the shock of the college critique should be lessened. Thus resulting in fewer young adults becoming disillusioned with the ELCA's system of faith.

At this point, it is up to the ELCA to take action. The problem is clear the solution is not. Simply because there is no clear solution, does not mean that nothing should be done, especially in situations where there may be no absolute solution. Young adults will always question their faith. To think that the church could stop all disillusionment among young adults is arrogant. This does not mean the ELCA cannot

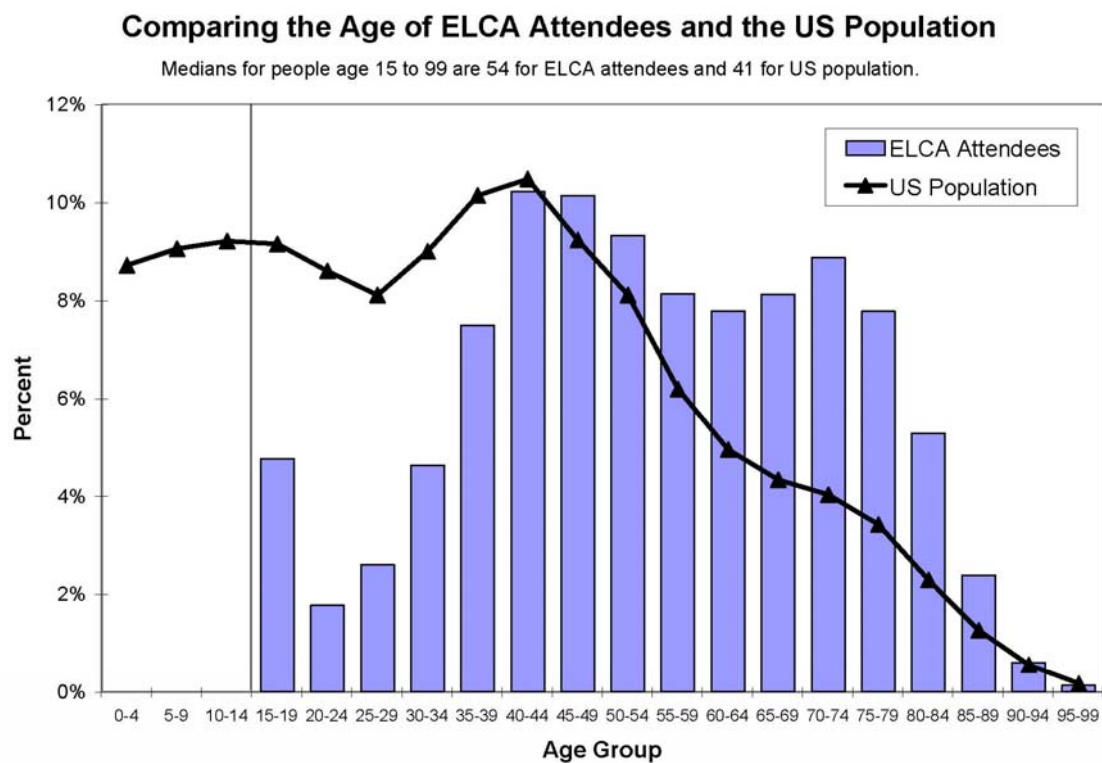
reduce the number of young adults who are disillusioned. It is possible that by enacting policies of mentoring and preemptive critiques, as outlined previously, the number of young adults leaving the ELCA could be reduced.



## Appendix 1

Appendix 1 includes a graph from the Department of Research and Evaluation at the ELCA. It illustrates the percentage of ELCA attendance broken down by age.

### Graph, Comparing the Age of ELCA Attendees and the US Population



ELCA attendees are 43,463 people age 15 to 99 who attended a randomly selected ELCA congregation on April, 29, 2001. The figures for ages 15 to 99 for both the ELCA and the US population total 100% making comparisons very easy. The figures for children under the age of 15 were added using the same scale to complete the picture of the US population.

Prepared by the ELCA Department for Research and Evaluation.

7/29/2002

## Appendix 2

Appendix two includes an email I received from William H. King.

### Email From King

"William H. King" <[kingfam@vt.edu](mailto:kingfam@vt.edu)> 11/8/2005 4:14:27 PM >>>

I have not seen data that really addresses this question, except to say

that the issue is not so much why folks are leaving (that number is not all that much higher now than in previous generations), but why they are not coming back later.

I think the answer to why they leave continues to be the one that has been there a long time--the developmental need for faith to take a new direction and expression. (See James Fowler, Stages of Faith). The more perplexing issue is why the journey does not bring them back later on.

The depressing answer is probably that the ancillary functions of religion (social life, certification of respectability, place to serve, patron of arts) are being met for many without the church. The church used to benefit from being the main game in town, and now suffers when it isn't.

### Appendix 3

Appendix 3 includes a selection of Bible verses taken from a NASB version of the Bible. These verses are meant to illustrate Biblical support for ancient Israelite non-monotheism.

#### **Biblical Support For Non-Monotheism**

Duet 32:8,  
 “When the most high gave the  
 Nation their inheritance,  
 When He separated the sons of man,  
 He set boundaries of the people  
 According to the number of the sons  
 Of Israel.”

Ex 20:3,  
 “You shall have no other God before Me.”

Ex 15:11.  
 “Who is like you Among the Gods,  
 O Lord?”

All verses were taken from:

*New American Standard Bible: Study Bible*, Ed. Barker, Kenneth; Donald Burbick; John Stek; Walter Wessel; and Ronald Youngblood. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1999.

### Works Consulted

- Adams, Gerald; Thomas, Gullotta; Raymond, Montemayer. *Adolescent Identity Formation*. Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1992.
- Bollman, Daniel; Wyvetta Bullock, Eldon DeWeerth, Rebecca Grothe, Mary Ann Moller-Gunderson, Kenneth Inskip, Mark Knutson, Constance Leean, Susan Niemi, Marvin Roloff, and Ken Smith, Luther Lindberg. *The Confirmation Ministry Task Force Report*, Christian Education. 1993.  
<http://www.elca.org/christianeducation/discipleship/conminreport.html>  
 (November 7, 2005)
- Carroll, Colleen. *The New Faithfull: Why Young Adults Are Embracing Christian Orthodoxy*. Chicago: Loyola Press, 2002.
- Cox, Kristoffer. *GenX and God: A GenX Perspective*. Chanhassen: Tekna Books, 1998.
- Damrell, Joseph. *Search For Identity: Youth, Religion and Culture*. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1978.
- Day, John. *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press LTD, 2000.
- ELCA Quick Facts, About the ELCA*. <http://www.elca.org/communication/quick.html>  
 (October, 27)
- Fowler, James. *Becoming Adult, Becoming Christian: Adult Development and Christian Faith*. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1984.
- Frambach, Nathan. *ELCA Youth Ministries Help Sheet, Teenage Spirituality: Not an Oxymoron*, Youth Ministries of the ELCA. 1997.  
<http://ELCA.org/youth/helpsheets/spirit.html> (October 24,2005)
- Frambach, Nathan. *Foundations For Youth and Family Ministries, Youth Ministries of the ELCA*. 2000. <http://ELCA.org/youth/helpsheets/foundations.html> (October 24,2005)
- Hill, Paul. *Comparing the Early Adolescent Male Study with the Lutheran Men in Mission Male Spirituality Study*, Lutheran Men in Mission.  
<http://www.elca.org/lmm/images/Young%20Adult%20Men%20Research.pdf>  
 (November 3, 2005)
- Inskip, Kenneth. *Religious Commitment in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*. [database on-line] Chicago: Department for Research and Evaluation, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 2001.

- Inskeep, Kenneth. *Religious Socialization*. [database on-line] Chicago: Office of Research, Planning and Evaluation, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 1988. Available from <http://www.elca.org/re/reports/relsoc.pdf>; Internet.
- Inskeep, Kenneth. *An Analysis of the Church Attendance in the General Population*. [database on-line] Chicago: Department for Research and Evaluation, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 2002.
- Jones, Jim. "Twentysomethings for the Lord," *Christianity Today Magazine*. December 16, 2004. <http://Christianitytoday.com/ct/2005/001/1.24.htm> (October 24,2005)
- Keniston, Kenneth. *Youth and Dissent: The Rise of a New Opposition*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1960.
- Kugel, James. *The God of Old: Inside the Lost World of the Bible*. New York: The Free Press, 2003.
- Levinson, Daniel. *The Season of a Man's Life*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978.
- Luther, Martin. *The Large Catechism*, translated. Bente, F. St Louis: Triglot Concordia Publishing House, 1921. Available at, [http://www.ccel.org/l/luther/large\\_cat/large\\_catechism.html](http://www.ccel.org/l/luther/large_cat/large_catechism.html); Internet.
- Mammana, Richard. *Orthodox Twenty Somethings: A review of The New Faithful and Younger Evangelicals, The Ooze*. July 17, 2003. <http://www.theooze.com/articles/article.cfm?id=590> (October 24,2005)
- Martinson, Roland. *Young Men's Spirituality, Lutheran Men in Mission*. <http://www.elca.org/lmm/images/11ThemesofYoungMensSpirituality.pdf> (November 3, 2005)
- Martinson, Roland. *Lutheran Men in Mission Young Male Spirituality Study Summary* [database online] St Paul: Luther Seminary
- New American Standard Bible: Study Bible*, Ed. Barker, Kenneth; Donald Burbick; John Stek; Walter Wessel; and Ronald Youngblood. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1999.
- Parks, Sharon Dolaz. *Big Questions Worthy Dreams: Mentoring Young Adults in Their Search for Meaning, Purpose, and Faith*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000.
- Parks, Sharon Dolaz. *The Critical Years: The Young Adult Search for a Faith to Live By*. San Francisco: Harper and Row Publishers, 1986.
- Ringgren, Helmer. *Israelite Religion*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966.

- School Enrollment: 2000*, American Fact Finder: US Census Bureau. 2000,  
[http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/QTable?\\_bm=y&-geo\\_id=01000US&-qr\\_name=DEC\\_2000\\_SF3\\_U\\_QTP19&-ds\\_name=DEC\\_2000\\_SF3\\_U&-lang=en&-redoLog=false&-sse=on](http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/QTable?_bm=y&-geo_id=01000US&-qr_name=DEC_2000_SF3_U_QTP19&-ds_name=DEC_2000_SF3_U&-lang=en&-redoLog=false&-sse=on) (November 10, 2005)
- Sevig, Julie. *ELCA Youth Ministries Help Sheet, Developing a Healthy Junior High Ministry*, Youth Ministries of the ELCA. 1996.  
<http://ELCA.org/youth/helpsheets/jhmin.html> (October 24, 2005)
- Sinnot, Jan. *The Development of Logic in Adulthood: Postformal Thought and Its Applications*. New York: Plenum Press, 1998.
- Smith, Mark. *The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel*. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1990.
- The Gustavus Mission*, Office of the President. 2005.  
<http://www.gustavus.edu/oncampus/president/vision.cfm> (November 18, 2005)
- The Nicene Creed*, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Spiritual Center.  
<http://wwwtest.elca.org/spiritual.html> (November, 5 2005)
- Vitek, John. *A Companion Way: Mentoring Youth in Searching Faith*. Winona: Saint Mary's Press, 1998.
- Young Adult Ministries*, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. November 17, 2005.  
<http://ELCA.org/youngadults> (November 17, 2005)