it is located.

Several of the contributors, especially Don Hoekstra, Tom Wray, and Jane Richardson stress that it is now important for the Sunday School to be the discipleship school of the church. The Sunday School or its successor should be the time and place where Christians, young and old, are equipped to act out the meaning of the gospel. While Hoekstra stresses this so strongly that his article sounds as though he is only for “doing,” his solid and thorough work as a church educator supports his concern for “being” as well. He thinks that it is important for Christians to know, but he also sees that the knowledge is in order to faithful discipleship.

Surprisingly, none of the contributors mentioned the role and influence of media for the Sunday School of the future. So, I mention it here. The Sunday School increasingly will be utilizing television and other media as a substance for reflection and response. Films such as those offered by “The New Media Bible” and video recordings will also be a part of study sessions.

Most of the writers have a vision for the Sunday School moving more towards education with adults and that education will be for mission. There is an expressed hope in Don Hoekstra’s article that families will carry a major responsibility for the nurturing of children. Perhaps, he envisions a rather radical departure from the old Sunday School model.

A common theme which comes through is that quality will be first and numbers secondary. Both Tom Wray and Jane Richardson emphasize that. I dare say, however, that Ken Van Wyk, would find that quality and quantity are not antithetical but that a faithful Sunday school will cause God’s people to rejoice in the numbers which participate in it.

The Sunday School in the Reformed Church is far from finished! This decade will see new life and new support.
As I try to conceive of the future of the Sunday School in the Reformed Church in America as we move into its third century, I do so with the intense hope for a perceived and, even more so, experienced reality of the kingdom of God in our midst. Two thousand years ago, our Lord, Jesus the Christ, came proclaiming and providing an experience of the kingdom of God to the people with whom He talked, walked, and lived. He called twelve men unto himself, gave himself, and invited—even commissioned—them to spread his kingdom by continuing to live it out in their world as he had done. The good news was finally actual and needed only to be actualized by the hearers and followers of Jesus and his disciples to be made real for them. So, too, will it be, I dare say, in the next century of the Sunday School in the Reformed Church in America; the kingdom of God will become real.

Just as Jesus of Nazareth called men to follow him as his disciples, commissioned them and sent them out as disciple-makers, so, I believe, will men and women begin to do in our congregations of the Reformed Church in America. Old Sunday School formats and programs will graciously be left to die in order that new ones can be born and made to live. In spite of its fascination and already almost faddish quality, discipleship does loom large on the horizon of tomorrow for the Reformed Church in America as both the message and medium for ministry in its now-called Sunday School.

Pastors and teachers in the Reformed Church in America will increasingly spend their lives on the multiplication and reproduction of themselves in others according to the biblical model of Jesus the Christ. Bible studies, fellowship, prayer, and worship will be some of the means by which this ministry of the church will be expanded and carried on in the world through those people who are in the world but not of it, the Christian laity. But what then of the Sunday School?

Whereas in many congregations, the Sunday School of today is primarily a children's program, the Sunday School of tomorrow will be a fundamentally adult experience in study and learning together. Classes held to increase the quantity of cognitive content will increasingly give way to groups of concerned Christians gathered to explore the needs for ministry in their own lives and in the world of which they are a part and then to plot strategies for ways to minister to each other's needs, and, in turn, to the needs of the communities where they reside. Training in ministry skills and the undertaking of ministry tasks will replace the preponderance of "talk-it-over" times and "waiting-until-the-kids-are-done" classes. "Doing" the church will begin to assume more importance than "being" the church, and the Sunday School of the future will help the doers.

Family life training will increase for husbands and wives, fathers and mothers, as the social demands and pressures continue to increase in their daily lives. Exploring and deciding upon acceptable and effective how-to's will gradually take over the relative indifference and resultant helpless-hopelessness so common in many families today. Intergenerational events will pass through the fascination-and-imitation phase and will finally become a meaningful reality. The smallest social structure known to humankind will continue to be by far the most important, and the Sunday school of
tomorrow will help this family unit to survive and thrive.

But what then of the children for whom the Sunday School has been best known and deemed most important? The Sunday School will finally grow up, and along with it, it’s understanding of the children who now significantly comprise it. The schooling function will return home to the place it probably should never have left. Christian education will again become “homemade.” Fathers as priests and mothers as priestesses will lead their children, help them grow up, to God. The faith we hoped would be taught in Sunday School will now begin to be caught at home. Moving from “something you know” to “something you do,” the Reformed Church in America will find its Sunday School less and less necessary in its present form and function, but more and more important as a potential vehicle for training and equipping its laity to live ministering lives. And that will include our children too as they begin to experience ministry as a way of life for them, as well as for the “big people” in their lives.

The Sunday School has done much, both positively as well as some things regrettable, to help the Reformed Church in America find its place in the sun today. Our place in the sun tomorrow will not be solely because of, or in spite of, the Sunday School; but it will definitely be determined in part by it. In a church which is Reformed and ever reforming, can we expect less of our Sunday School? The future of the Sunday School in the Reformed Church in America is tied intimately to its ability to keep on reforming. By his grace may we do so.

New Life in the Church School:
The Future of the Local Sunday Church School in the RCA

PETER J. THEUNE

I believe in the Sunday Church School. For years I have had the privilege of working with church schools in Michigan, New York, New Jersey, and Iowa and to consult with countless other pastors, superintendents, Christian education committees, and teachers. Each school has enjoyed a variety of people—young people, older adults, single adults, parents, and children. The church school provides a wonderful opportunity for discovery, dialogue, and a place to experience a rich Christian fellowship.

The key to a successful Sunday Church School program has been, is, and will continue to be the classroom teacher. The effective teacher is the one who understands, believes, and practices the idea that being a good church school teacher is to be involved in ministry. Such persons are sensitive to the fact that they can make a difference in a person’s life in the name of Christ. There are times when it is hard to