

Alan Keith–Lucas and Child Welfare Practice Today

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Your Presenters:

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- ▶ Fans of Alan Keith–Lucas

Objectives for our time together:

- ▶ Be aware of the innovative, timeless wisdom of Alan Keith–Lucas in the area of church children’s home work.
- ▶ Understand the connections between current trends in child care and challenges of the past
- ▶ Apply AKL Principles to current child care challenge
- ▶ Consider the integration of faith and practice wisdom in AKL writings for staff in residential child care settings

Agenda for our time together....

- ▶ Brainstorm the challenges/questions confronting religiously affiliated children’s homes today
- ▶ Review some contributions of Alan Keith–Lucas that are pertinent to those challenges.



Disclaimer....

All of the quotes in this presentation are from the works and words of Alan Keith–Lucas. They are not our own. We have provided a list of the references from which we drew, but have not provided citations on each slide.

We won’t get to all of the material today. You have our email addresses for questions or follow–up and we will be doing a pre–conference institute for NACSW in November.

Alan Keith-Lucas: A summary of a career



- ▶ Social Worker-50+ years
- ▶ Administrator, Educator
- ▶ Author of 20+ books, 150 articles and chapters
- ▶ Consultant to more than 100 children's homes
- ▶ Teller of Uncle Remus Stories
- ▶ A friend to children

Some contributions to today's topic

- ▶ The Church Children's Home in a Changing World: 1962
- ▶ The Church's Challenge in Child Care Today: 1964
- ▶ Task and Alternatives for the Children's Institution: 1979
- ▶ Resolutions for the 1980s: 1980
- ▶ Parents as Partners: 1982

Contributing works continued...

- ▶ Manual of Procedure: Family Clarification Program: 1982
- ▶ The client's religion and your own beliefs in the helping process: a guide for believers and non believers: 1983
- ▶ So You Want to Be a Social Worker: 1985
- ▶ Essays from more than 50 years in social work: 1989
- ▶ Encounters with Children: 1991

Current Challenges and Concerns

- ▶ Audience response....

Concerns and Challenges identified by Alan Keith Lucas 30+ years ago

- ▶ We are behind several countries in proportion of our resources spent in children's health, education and support.
- ▶ 1983: The future for children's services doesn't look very bright with increases in single parenthood, breakdown of the extended family, increase in TV violence, and dilution of parental authority.
- ▶ Adolescence is a wasted time.

Challenges to Residential Child Care

- ▶ Focus on Kinship Care
- ▶ Focus on Short Term Care
- ▶ Focus on Foster Care
- ▶ Focus on Permanency Planning
- ▶ Concerns re Faith Issues...i.e. evangelism

Keith–Lucas notation of trends....

- ▶ The rescue fantasy IS a fantasy.
- ▶ We must be careful of trying to maintain a Christian atmosphere by dismissing all our sinners and keeping our Pharisees.
- ▶ A family like cottage is NOT a family.
- ▶ Not just the family with pathology, but a family with any kind of trouble needing practical help should be our focus.

Some answers according to Keith

- ▶ Advocacy for children must include a residential option for those who come out of chaos or enmeshment
- ▶ Family clarification provides planning for kinship care options
- ▶ We have a Child Welfare System but need a Family Welfare System



Moral Questions according to Keith

- These questions have to do with our attitudes toward people.
- ▶ Why in our society are we so ready to help children and to ignore their parents?
 - ▶ What is the proper role of the church when faced with the problems of family life?
 - ▶ How do we help children understand the concept of a loving Heavenly Father when they have been wounded by an earthly father?

The beginning....according to Keith

- ▶ We must not take over. We must help out.
- ▶ We must care about people...not care for them.

Applications:

- ▶ Tailor interventions to the needs. Begin with assessment.
- ▶ Families in chaos may need a "time out" or cooling off period
- ▶ Children in these circumstances do not need another competing family experience
- ▶ Families in these circumstances need services to clarify how best to be a family
- ▶ Reality, empathy and support are key

When is children's home placement appropriate?

- ▶ Group care rather than a new family is the most logical first placement away from home for the child whose family has been emotionally stressful.



Group Care Can Offer:



- ▶ A respite from family life
- ▶ The experience of group living and safety of a group
- ▶ A community
- ▶ A chance to make relationships at own speed
- ▶ Compactness with all helpers together in one place.

What do I say to an abusive parent?

- ▶ We must not ask why the abuse.
- ▶ We must say: "Given what has happened, what do you want to do now? The past is the past. We cannot judge it. We did not walk in your shoes or face the problems you faced. But life must go on. This is still your child. You are still a family or can be if you want to be. What can you do to help at this time?"

Dealing with Adolescents:

- ▶ Much behavior is not a thing in itself but a symptom.
- ▶ Behavior is not as important as we have thought it to be.
- ▶ In adolescence, you do not learn much from punishment except perhaps how not to be caught.



On discipline....



- ▶ We need to celebrate children rather than praise them.
- ▶ If I can praise, I can also blame.
- ▶ If I celebrate, I am glad for you.

An Example...

- ▶ On a visit to a children's home as a consultant, Keith attended chapel.
- ▶ "That girl has an interesting face."
- ▶ Complete turn around...
- ▶ "I must be worth something."



Family Clarification: A Program Ahead of Its Time

- ▶ Partnering with Parents
- ▶ More contact and sooner
- ▶ Establishing interim and long term goals
- ▶ Finally a plan that everyone understands



Innovative Models....

- ▶ Shared parenting
- ▶ Supplemental parenting
- ▶ Part time placements
- ▶ Agreement with Care plans
- ▶ Financial Support
- ▶ Increased Visitation
- ▶ Aftercare



Resolutions for the 80s

- ▶ Stop labeling children as dependent, neglected, pre-delinquent, disturbed, etc.
- ▶ Concentrate on the services that children and families need.
- ▶ Do not accept any more children just for care. (only if we can meet their needs)
- ▶ Be specific about our programs (define them, make them official)
- ▶ Make services match the needs of children and their families
- ▶ Don't mix services in the same cottage.

80s Resolutions Continued

- ▶ Be supplemental not substitute parents
- ▶ Stop pretending that our cottages are in any way substitute families.
- ▶ Consider calling ourselves Centers or services rather than homes
- ▶ Be both proud and honest about what we really have to give: group living, not family life

Finally, for the 80s

- ▶ Do not allow ourselves to be dictated to by our sources of referral.
- ▶ Take the initiative to declare proudly who we are and what we have to offer.



Quotes from Encounters with Children:

- ▶ It is not my function to evangelize children, although I am a Christian.
- ▶ Sometimes we feel we have to talk religion to children even when they are in no way able to understand it. We talk about a loving Father when the child's only picture of a father is someone who comes home drunk and beats her. We talk of forgiveness to a child who has never been forgiven.

Quotes from Encounters with Children

- ▶ That is surely the Christian message: not 'Behave and God will love you,' far less 'misbehave and God will punish you,' but God loves you, so behave....Love comes first, behavior second.



Quotes from Encounters with Children

- ▶ Names are a very important part of a child's identity,,,,,not "this little girl."
- ▶ We get so much involved in a child's behavior that we often fail to see the child as a unique person.



Quotes from Encounters with Children

But somehow we fall all too easily into the trap of emphasizing a child's defeat instead of celebrating his victories. Even in a Home I know uses Behavior Modification, which is supposed to accentuate the positive, I have seen posters on the wall which list actions that will cost one points, but nothing to say how one can gain them.

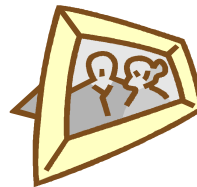
Quotes from Encounters with Children

- ▶ We sometimes forget, I think, how desolate some children can be.
- ▶ Unloved children can be quite jealous of attention shown to others.



Quotes from Encounters with Children

- ▶ Children aren't plants that can be re-potted in better soil and expected to grow unless they bring their roots with them. And they do have to face the reality of their situation. One can't protect them from it.



Quotes from Encounters with Children

- ▶ Often all one can do is be there when a child is grieving for his or her parents. Explanations, excuses for the parent's behavior, false reassurance do more harm than good.



Quotes from Encounters with Children

I have tried to show that these are the three ways in which God works with us, as Father, the One who plans the circumstances of our lives and gives us rules for living (reality); as the Son who shared our life and 'was tempted in all ways as we were' so that He understands our troubles, and as the Spirit, who is always with us.

Quotes from Encounters with Children

- ▶ Children who live in institutions have to relate to a structure in which they are relatively powerless.
- ▶ They are not on the organizational chart!



Quotes from Encounters with Children

- ▶ Executives could save themselves a lot of trouble if they would share with children some of their constraints...say "I know it's silly and unfair, but this is just one of the disadvantages of living in group care."



Quotes from Encounters with Children



- ▶ The group can be of very great help to a child.
- ▶ Sometimes, of course, the group can be very cruel to a child. This is more likely when children with very different problems are placed together.

Storytelling....

- ▶ The telling of stories is powerful.
- ▶ "As soon as I came in they demanded to be told the Tarbaby story.....on this occasion, I was careful not to pick a black child for Tarbaby. He might think I chose him because of his color...I chose a Brer Rabbit (white) and a Brer Fox (black and then asked who would like to be Tarbaby. A black hand shot up at once. "Please, sir, said its owner, 'Ain't I black enough?'"

A Keith Prayer

Oh God, whose children we are, help us to model our parenthood or teacherhood more nearly on thy love for us, that we may learn to treat our children with the respect accorded to us, as subjects of supreme importance and never as objects for our use. And this we ask in the Name of Him Who was Himself a human child, Who we know troubled his parents, but Whom they listened to and allowed to grow in grace and fulfill the destiny He had chosen—even our Lord the Christ, Jesus, son of God and Son of Man.

Conclusion

- ▶ We can celebrate his vision and his wisdom.
- ▶ We can continue to apply his teachings.
- ▶ Most of all, we can love children and love families and keep the legacy alive.

