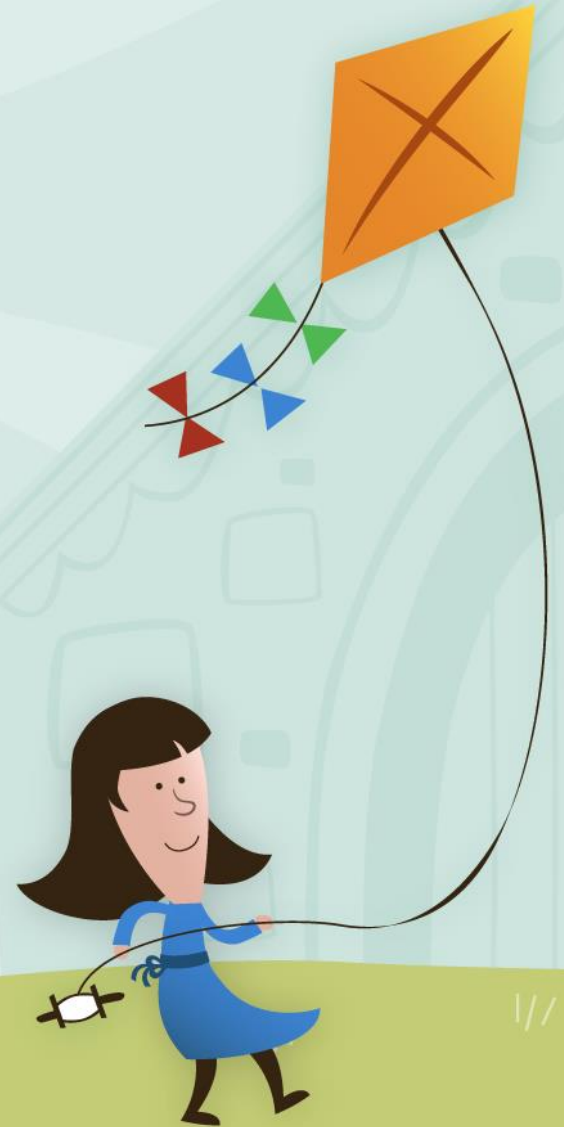


IGNITE

NORFOLK 2017

Faith Formation in Our Daily Lives

By Debbie Streicher



Introductions

What is your definition of faith formation?

Where do you see faith formation intersecting with your interaction with children and families?

*What does faith formation look like in your setting?
(prayers, chapel, connected with congregation)*



Despite many years of serving in the area of Christian education in several congregations, I am still in awe of the process of faith formation, a growth that often happens unseen – like seeds sprouting underground, nourished by the Holy Spirit.

Faith formation is different than the term “Christian education.” The focus of Christian education is narrower with an emphasis on teaching and learning. In contrast with Christian education, faith formation is broader and encompasses all aspects of the life of a congregation. Moving to a more robust understanding of faith formation is required in order for the church to thrive in a missional age.



Faith Formation in a Missional Age

by Dr. Diane Shallue

New Discoveries about Young Children's Faith Formation

Karen-Marie Yust January 22, 2017 [Faith Formation](#)

For decades, we have operated with certain developmental beliefs about preschool faith formation. Now, with the advantages of new research methods, it is time to reexamine our assumptions. Yale University's Paul Bloom and Harvard University's Paul Harris have made exciting discoveries that invite us to retool our preschool ministries. Let me share some of their findings and suggest ways their work might reframe our own efforts.

Paul Bloom studies young children's moral development, and he has noticed that infants as young as three months old exhibit signs of moral sensitivity. Analyzing videotapes of babies and toddlers watching animated and puppet scenarios involving helping and hindering behaviors (e.g. one figure helping another roll a ball up a ramp or one blocking the ball as the other tries to roll it), Bloom realized that young children prefer figures who act helpfully over those who obstruct another's actions. He observed that infants are particularly distressed by negative (hindering) behavior, suggesting that they sense the danger that "bad" behavior poses to human relationships. He concludes that young children have the capacity to make basic judgments between good and bad, and that their preference for helpers over hinderers shows signs of the same kind of "disinterested judgments" (i.e. judgments based on universal vs. individual benefits) that we thought only mature adults make.

We can nurture this moral sensitivity as part of faith formation by emphasizing helping and hindering actions in the Bible stories we tell. Many curricula for very young children focus primarily on stories about creation, children or animals, on the assumption that infants and toddlers can only grasp concrete objects. Bloom's work suggests that young minds are already intuitively exploring moral principles, and caregivers can reinforce these nascent moral judgments by acting out with play figures and puppets the wide variety of helping and hindering behaviors that are part of Bible narratives.

Bloom also studies preschool ethics. His work with children as young as fifteen months indicates that toddlers have a strong bias toward fairness, defined as equal outcomes for all. However, this natural born egalitarianism is tempered by egocentrism. A toddler is mostly troubled by inequality of outcome when it means they get less of something than someone else (e.g. getting two cookies when someone else gets three). Social networks also affect a child's ethics: toddlers and preschoolers are much more likely to share equally with people they think of as family than with strangers. And, as in helping/hindering scenarios, young children pay more attention to when others act unfairly than when they achieve egalitarian goals. Bloom explains that this is why children as young as two "tattle" about the wrong behavior of others. From the child's perspective, tattling is meant to serve two purposes: to receive adult recognition for the child's moral sensitivity to an unfair situation and to encourage vengeful punishment of wrongdoers. While adults may not want to reinforce vengefulness, Bloom thinks we need to work harder at reinforcing children's accurate moral judgments by acknowledging tattlers' correct assessments of unfairness situations.

Bloom's work points us toward another noteworthy implication of young children's moral development: the importance of hearing people outside their close family.



Co-president of the International Association of Children's Spirituality. She teaches Christian education and spiritual formation at Union Presbyterian Seminary in Richmond, VA



For decades, we have operated with certain developmental beliefs about preschool faith formation. Now, with the advantages of new research methods, it is time to reexamine our assumptions. Yale University's Paul Bloom and Harvard University's Paul Harris have made exciting discoveries that invite us to retool our preschool ministries. Let me share some of their findings and suggest ways their work might reframe our own efforts.

Paul Bloom has noticed that infants as young as three months old exhibit signs of moral sensitivity.

We can nurture this moral sensitivity as part of faith formation by emphasizing helping and hindering actions.

Paul Harris's primary research interest has been in discerning how young children learn from listening to what other people say as well as from sensory explorations.

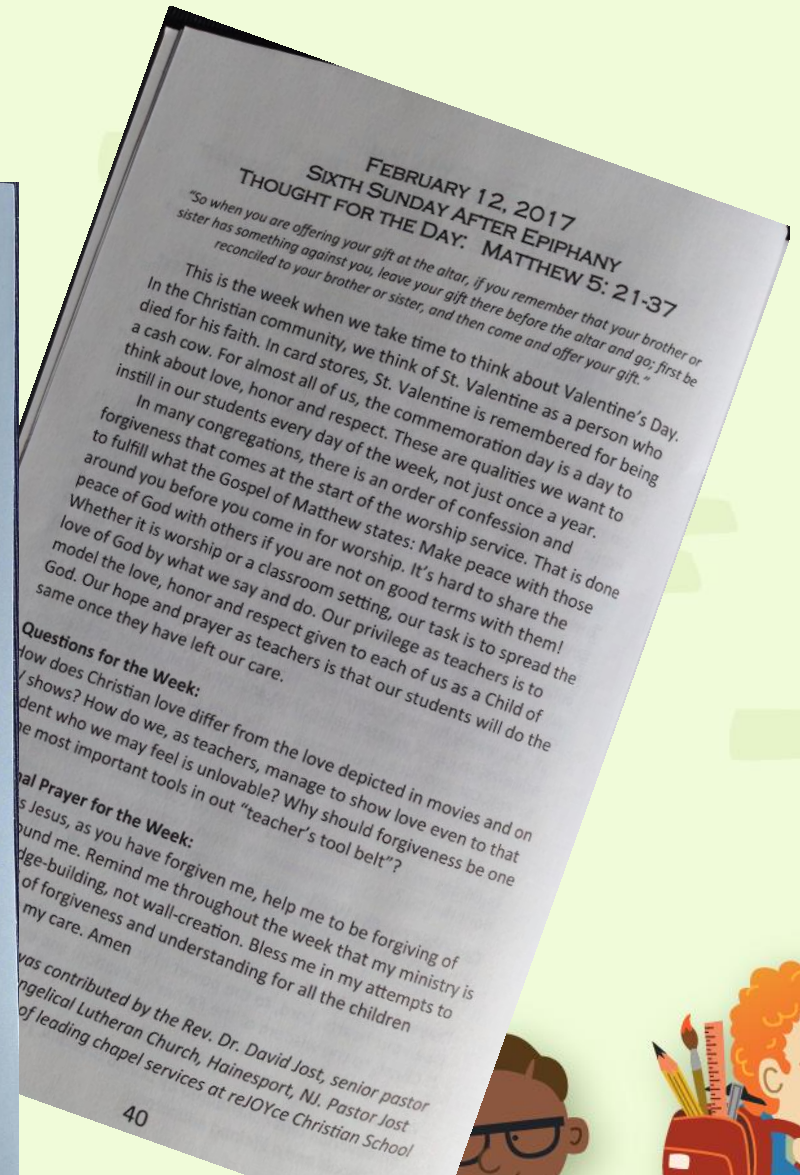
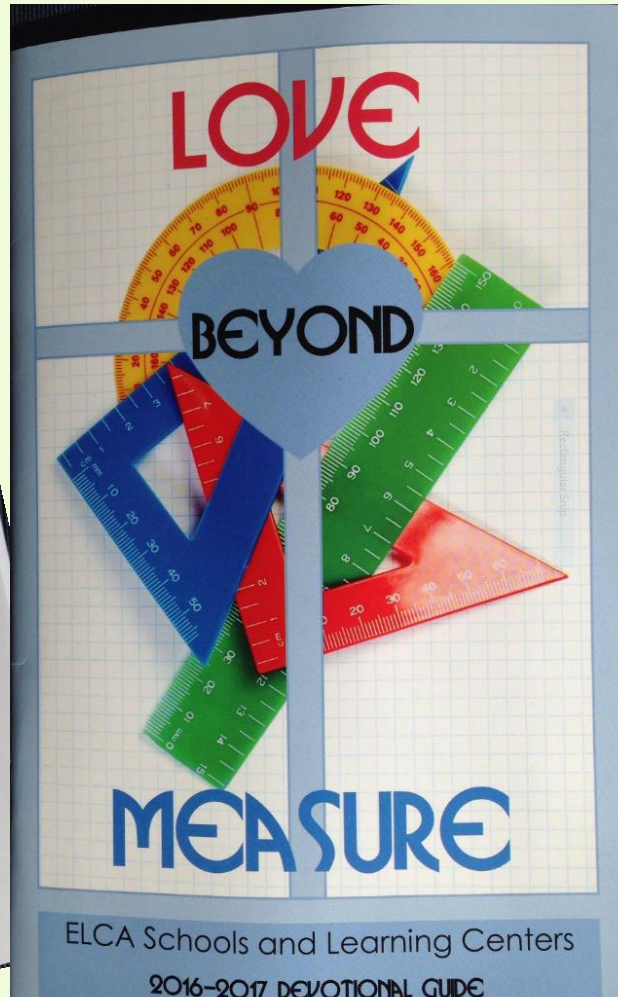
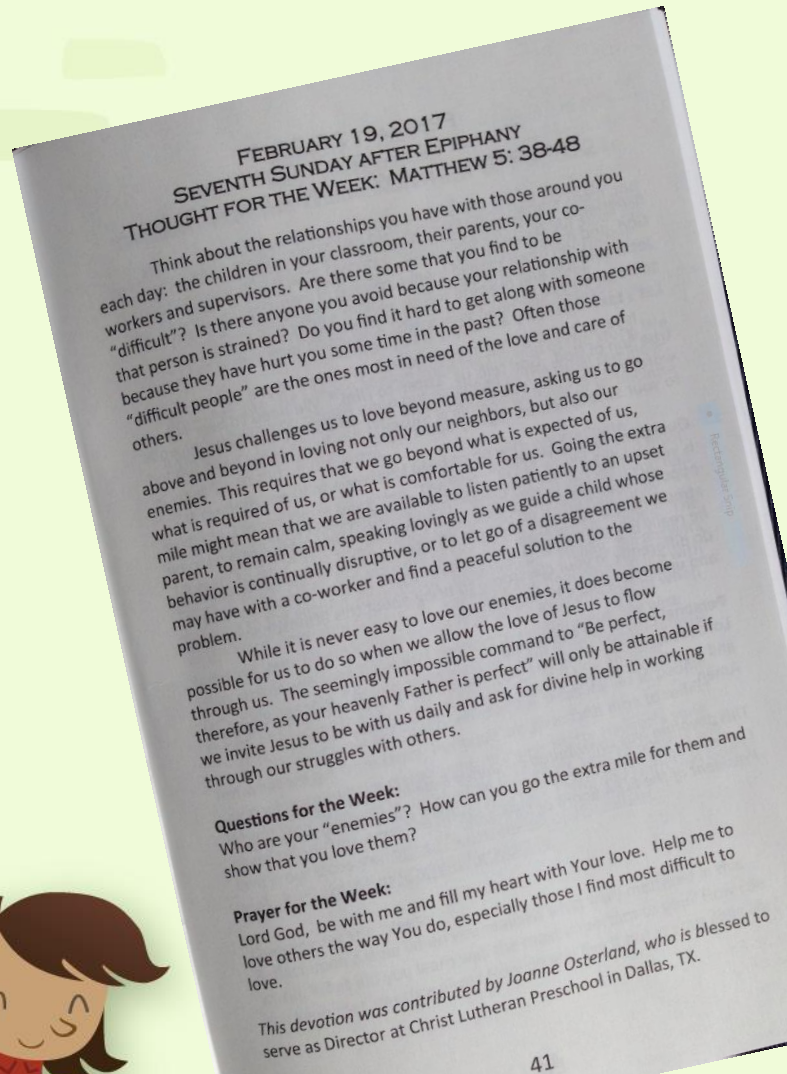
Harris also has found that preschoolers will imitate social conventions when they are invited to do a task an adult has demonstrated. Even when children can see no useful reason for certain actions, they assume the demonstrator has some invisible but important cultural knowledge.

Harris's findings remind us that we need to provide regular demonstrations of religious practices as part of young children's faith formation.



*Harris's findings remind us that we need **to provide regular demonstrations of religious practices as part of young children's faith formation**. Demonstrations encourage children to develop testimony-based understandings of what Christian people do and say. Preschoolers will be quick to imitate adult faith practices because they trust that adults know what those actions mean even if the child does not. Furthermore, young children need adult prompting to see God's presence in the world, since "God" is not a concrete object they can observe.*

Let's think about our faith practices.



What faith practices do we do in our own lives?



Let's process these questions...

- What role do you play in faith formation?
- What role does the school play?
- What role do parents play?
- How does chapel interface with school activities?



Why aren't we all in the same place in our faith journeys?



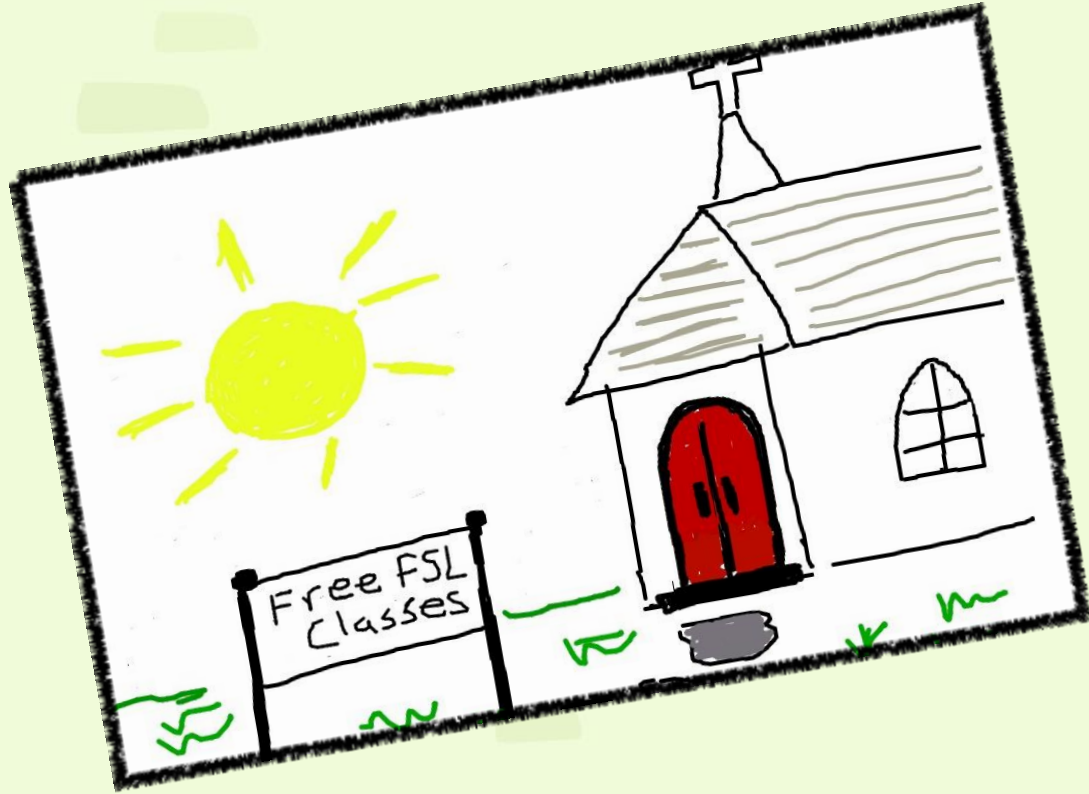
- Faith Formation is like learning a language
- Not everyone is fluent because they haven't been immersed in it
- One hour a week does not do it



Faith as a Second Language

By Debbie Streicher

*Lifelong faith formation
through the lens of becoming
fluent in a language.
It begins in the home!*



And we need to help our
parents understand this!





My faith journey
began here



Keep these words...
Deuteronomy 6:6-9



My faith life
intersected with
everyday living...





=

Debbie's
Language
Analogy

+



Where does your own
faith journey intersect
with everyday living?



The analogy:

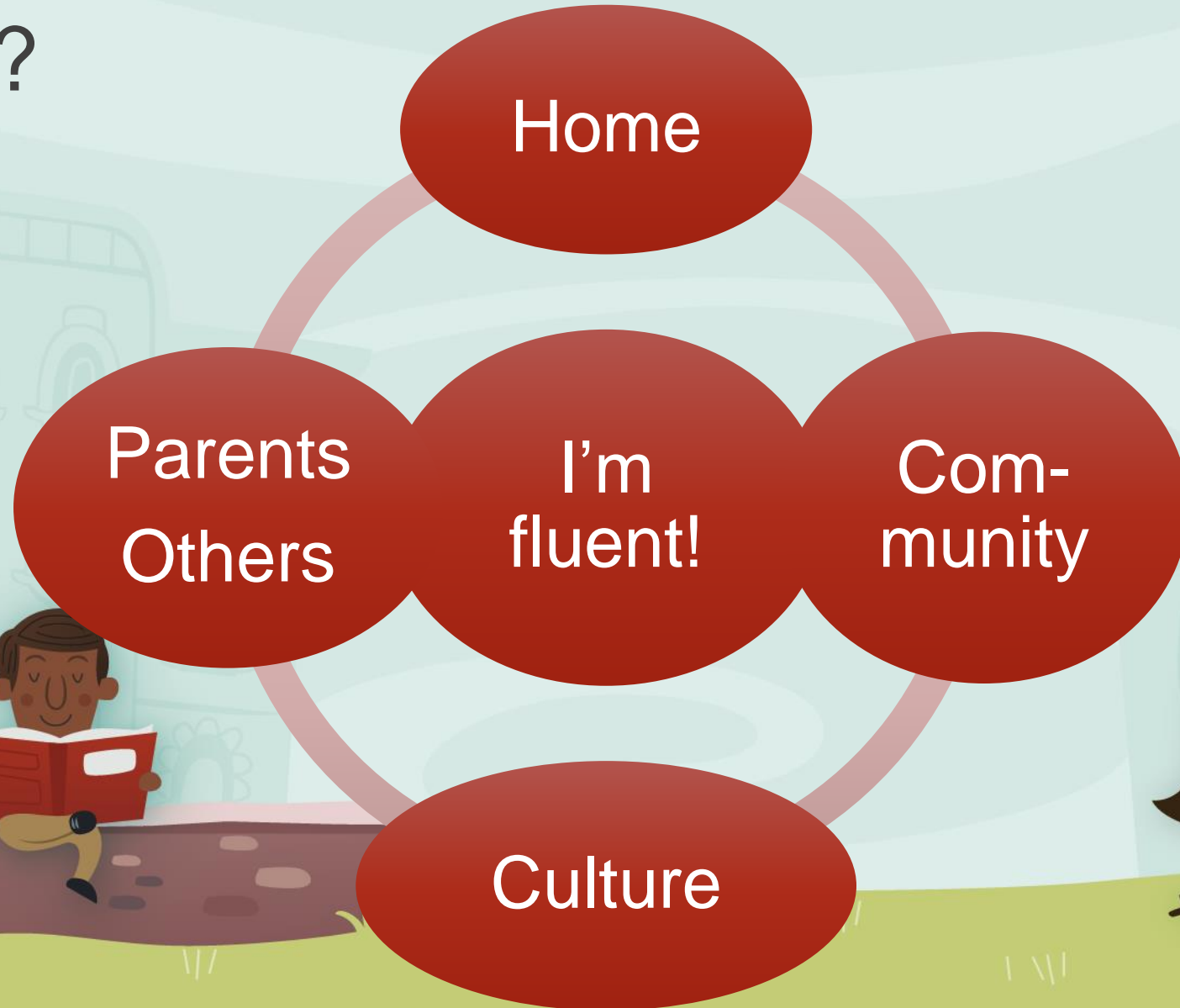
**English as a
Second Language**



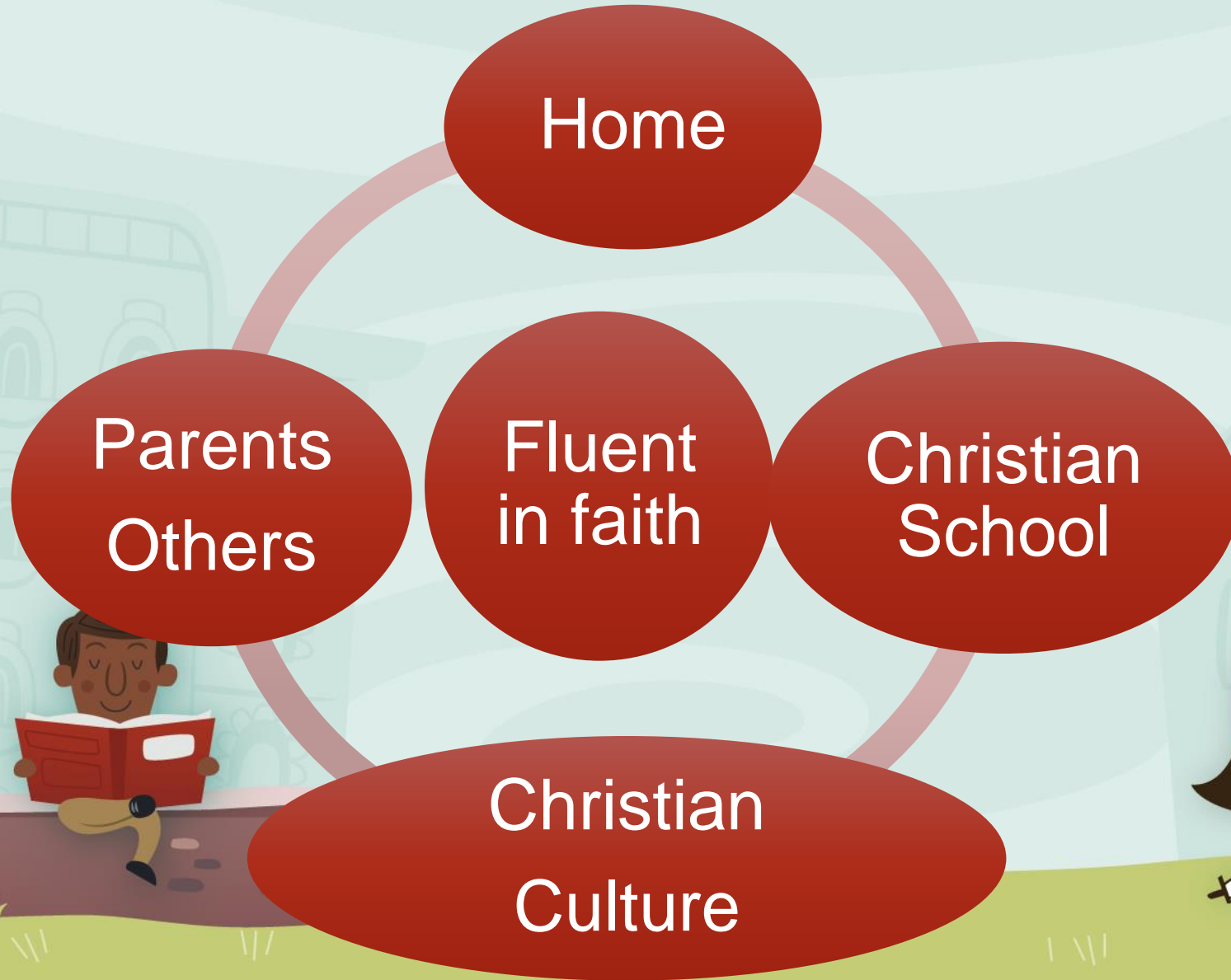
**Faith as a
Second Language**



Are you fluent in another language?



Are you fluent in the language of faith?



Learning a Language:

- Be immersed and surrounded by the language in the home or live in the country where the language is spoken.

**By the age of
13!**

- Become familiar with rituals and traditions.



Providing Tools:

- Action and hands-on involvement . The result? It sticks!
- Common words to describe core rituals and traditions is key.
- Embedding faith practices intentionally.

Fluency results
in a way of life!



Immersion:

**We make
assumptions!**

- Immersion leads to learning about the culture of a community. Every faith community has a culture.
- If you gave a survey and asked people in to identify Christian traditions, could they do it ? Do they have them in their own homes?



Fluency:

- It doesn't happen in 1 hour week. In fact it doesn't happen in 5 hours or 10 hours a week!
- It leads to thirsting to gather with those who speak the language.

My Mom
prays
every
night with
me!



You mean we should
do this in school and
at home?



My
parents
are not
going to
like this!



What does faith formation look like in the classroom

How is the language analogy I just gave relevant to what happens every day in the classroom?
What struck you as interesting?
How can we make a difference?



“Cultures are what make countries unique.”

A culture is passed on to the next generation by learning, whereas genetics are passed on by heredity.



Built into daily life,
rituals and traditions
become a way of life.



Defining a basic culture:

1. Caring Relationships
2. Rituals
3. Traditions
4. Values

We pray every
time in chapel!

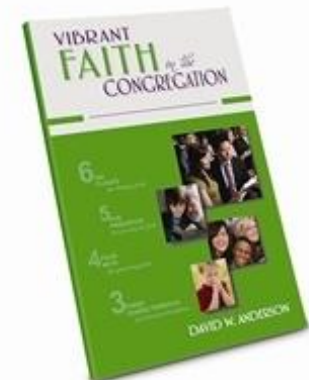
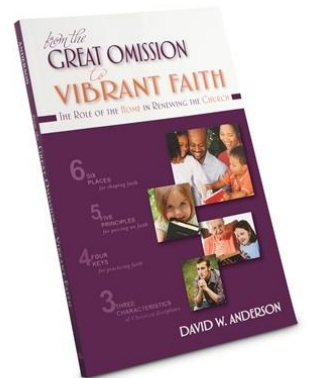
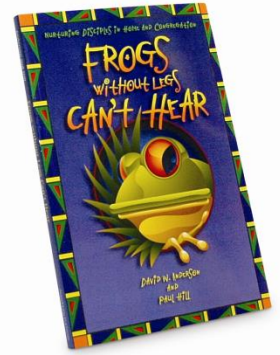


Love me as
you love
yourself!



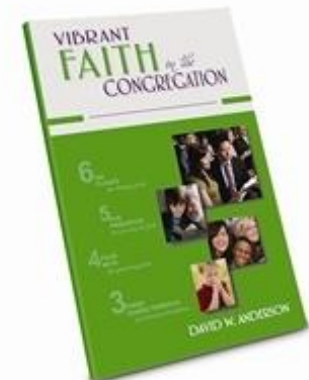
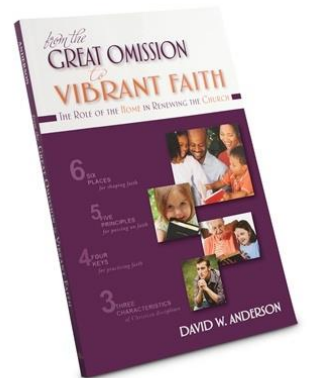
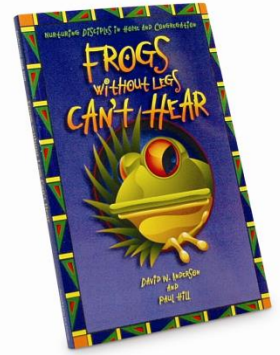
Five Principles for *living and passing on faith (living into...)*

- Faith is formed by the power of the Holy Spirit through personal, trusted relationships often in our own homes.
- The church is a living partnership between the ministry of the congregation and ministry of the home.
- Where Christ is present in faith, the home is church too.
- Faith is caught more than it is taught.
- If we want Christian children and youth, we need Christian adults.



Five Principles for *living and passing on faith (living into...)*

- Faith is formed by the power of the Holy Spirit through persons...and can be role modeled at school times.
- The church is a living partnership between the ministry of the congregation and ministry of the home.
- Where Christ is present in faith, the school is church too.
- Faith is caught more than it is taught.
- If we want Christian children and youth, we need Christian adults.



If we would like to view the faith community through a cultural lens, we need to be honest with one another and open to truthful, caring relationships.



We need to be intentional !



Debbie's 3 Tips for Leadership

Be Intentional

Set Expectations

Plan for
Accountability



Why is it important for faith formation role modeling to happen in the school and the home?



- The faith community and the home are an essential part of our faith formation.
- Like learning a language, it is where we are immersed in it
- How do we encourage faith formation in the school and the home?



Suggested steps to be intentional about developing a plan for practicing faith daily when at home and when away (school):

- Make time for caring conversations
(Caring Conversations)
- Read scripture *(Devotions)*
- Serve one another *(Service)*
- Pray for and bless one another
(Rituals and Traditions)



Four Key Faith Practices

Let's
do it!



Caring Conversations



Devotions



Service



Rituals and Traditions



Connect, Develop, Inspire

*“Promoting and supporting quality,
Christ-centered schools and early
childhood programs of the ELCA.”*





RICK REINHARD

One result of the ELCA Call to Discipleship is family prayer time at the Back home in Burke, Va. Lighting a candle signals prayer time for Riley, 4; Mark; Charlie, 3 and Barbara Back.



What is the reality of household doing religious practice? What role does the school play in this?



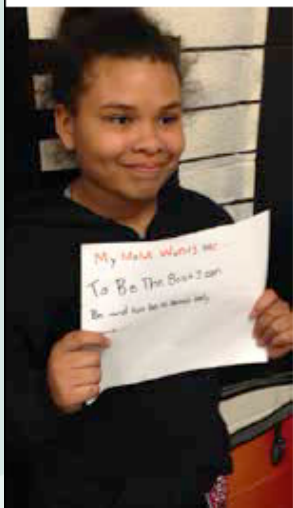
Debbie's three stages...

Be Intentional

Set Expectations

Plan for
Accountability





A. Trends in Families and Society:
How Do We Interpret & Respond?

B. Six Critical Shifts

- ① Toward strengths and resilience
- ② Toward relationships in families
- ③ Toward "living into" faith
- ④ Toward relationships with families
- ⑤ Toward empowering families
- ⑥ Toward community-center ministries

2

What We Hear

- Families are broken, dysfunctional
- 64% of parents say: Families have declined

What We Experience

- Families are the most important part of life
- 75% of adults say: They are very satisfied with family

In Summary

Today's families are really messed up.

Nothing is more important to me than my family.

4



Eugene C. Roehlkepartain,
Ph.D. - Vice President,
Research and Development

We are seeing evidence of families changing everywhere:

- Interracial and inter-religious families
- Families being “spiritual” but not always “religious”
- Families taking in other kids
- Dads at the bus stop
- The growing prominence of pets
- Blended families becoming even more blended
- Single parents linking with other single parents

Pathologize, Idealize



Strengths, Resilience

Parenting Strategies



Relationships in Families

“Passing on” Faith



“Living into” Faith

Reach thru Programs



Reach thru Relationships

Serving Families



Empowering Families

Congregation Centered



Community Centered



These six shifts are needed to create a new narrative that can more effectively guide how we understand and engage families as the center of faith formation in the twenty-first century.

Search INSTITUTE > 40 Developmental Assets® for Early Childhood (ages 3 to 5)

Search Institute® has identified the following building blocks of healthy development—known as Developmental Assets®—that help young children grow up healthy, caring, and responsible.

External Assets	Support	<p>1. Family support—Parent(s) and/or primary caregiver(s) provide the child with high levels of consistent and predictable love, physical care, and positive attention in ways that are responsive to the child's individuality.</p> <p>2. Positive family communication—Parent(s) and/or primary caregiver(s) express themselves positively and respectfully, engaging young children in conversations that invite their input.</p> <p>3. Other adult relationships—With the family's support, the child experiences consistent, caring relationships with adults outside the family.</p> <p>4. Caring neighbors—The child's network of relationships includes neighbors who provide emotional support and a sense of belonging.</p> <p>5. Caring climate in child-care and educational settings—Caregivers and teachers create environments that are nurturing, accepting, encouraging.</p> <p>6. Parenting approach—Parents use a variety of strategies to guide their children's behavior.</p>
	Empowerment	<p>7. Community connections—The child has access to a variety of community resources and programs.</p> <p>8. Children's sense of family—The child has a strong sense of family and belonging.</p> <p>9. Service to others—The child has opportunities to help others and feel valued.</p> <p>10. Safety—The child feels safe and secure.</p>
	Boundaries & Expectations	<p>11. Family boundaries—The child has clear boundaries and expectations within the family.</p> <p>12. Boundaries in the community—The child has clear boundaries and expectations in the community.</p> <p>13. Neighborhood safety—The child has a sense of safety and security in the neighborhood.</p> <p>14. Adult role models—The child has positive role models in the community.</p> <p>15. Positive expectations—The child has high expectations for themselves and others.</p> <p>16. Positive challenge—The child has opportunities to face and overcome challenges.</p>
	Constructive Use of Time	<p>17. Play and creative activities—The child has daily opportunities to play in ways that allow self-expression, physical activity, and interaction with others.</p> <p>18. Out-of-home and community programs—The child experiences well-designed programs led by competent, caring adults in well-maintained settings.</p> <p>19. Religious community—The child participates in age-appropriate religious activities and caring relationships that nurture her or his spiritual development.</p> <p>20. Time at home—The child spends most of her or his time at home participating in family activities and playing constructively, with parent(s) guiding TV and electronic game use.</p>
Internal Assets	Commitment to Learning	<p>21. Motivation to mastery—The child responds to new experiences with curiosity and energy, resulting in the pleasure of mastering new learning and skills.</p> <p>22. Engagement in learning experiences—The child fully participates in a variety of activities that offer opportunities for learning.</p> <p>23. Home-program connection—The child experiences security, consistency, and connections between home and out-of-home care programs and learning activities.</p> <p>24. Bonding to programs—The child forms meaningful connections with out-of-home care and educational programs.</p> <p>25. Early literacy—The child enjoys a variety of pre-reading activities, including adults reading to her or him daily, looking at and handling books, and exploring letters and sounds.</p>
	Positive Values	<p>26. Caring—The child shows concern for others and acts kindly.</p> <p>27. Equity—The child understands and respects differences.</p> <p>28. Integrity—The child tells the truth and does what is right.</p> <p>29. Honesty—The child is open and truthful.</p> <p>30. Respect—The child shows respect for others and their property.</p> <p>31. Self-control—The child manages emotions and behaves appropriately.</p>
	Social Competencies	<p>32. Problem-solving—The child identifies problems and finds solutions.</p> <p>33. Interpersonal skills—The child cooperates, shares, plays harmoniously, and comforts others in distress.</p> <p>34. Cultural awareness and sensitivity—The child begins to learn about her or his own cultural identity and to show acceptance of people who are racially, physically, culturally, or ethnically different from her or him.</p> <p>35. Resistance skills—The child begins to sense danger accurately, to seek help from trusted adults, and to resist pressure from peers to participate in unacceptable or risky behavior.</p> <p>36. Peaceful conflict resolution—The child begins to compromise and resolve conflicts without using physical aggression or hurtful language.</p>
	Positive Identity	<p>37. Personal power—The child can make choices that give a sense of having some influence over things that happen in her or his life.</p> <p>38. Self-esteem—The child likes her- or himself and has a growing sense of being valued by others.</p> <p>39. Sense of purpose—The child anticipates new opportunities, experiences, and milestones in growing up.</p> <p>40. Positive view of personal future—The child finds the world interesting and enjoyable, and feels that he or she has a positive place in it.</p>

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Where do we start?

A suggestion:
Recognize God's
presence in daily life
through milestone
moments.



What is your definition of a milestone?



A milestone is one of a series of numbered markers placed along a road or boundary at intervals of one mile or occasionally, parts of a mile. Mileage is the distance along the road from a fixed commencement point.



What is your definition of a faith connected milestone?

A milestone is a meaningful, memorable moment in the lives of individuals and communities.



Milestones in our lives can be life changing. Some are happy. Some can be sad and fearful times.



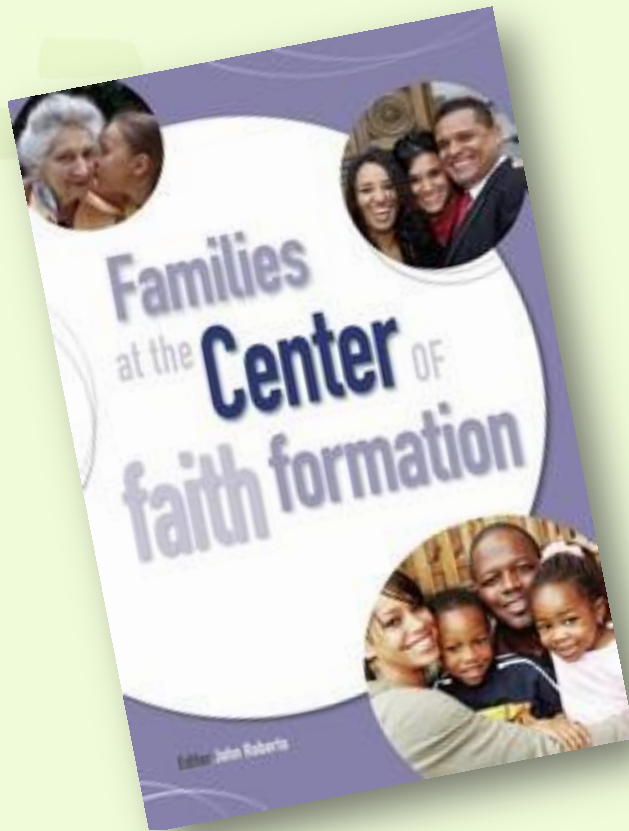
What does it mean to form faith through milestones?

Connecting the meaningful, memorable moments in our lives to God's presence in those moments.



Adding scripture, prayer, and a blessing makes this a faith formation moment and becomes part of our faith journey.





“A milestone is an action or event marking a significant change or stage in development. These life and faith markers can provide important times for engaging families when they are most open to change and growth.”
– John Roberto



Milestones celebrated in the congregation

- Baptism
- Communion
- First Bible
- Confirmation
- Beginning Sunday School
- Graduation



What milestones do we recognize in our homes and in everyday living?

- Getting a Driver's License
- New Home
- Family Reunion
- Loss of a Pet
- First Cell Phone
- Birthdays



What milestones do we recognize in the setting of our schools?

- Beginning School
- Learning Alphabet
- Last day of preschool
- ????
- ????



Five Steps to begin...

Name it!



1. Name it

Identify a moment as significant to one's life and faith directly related to the name of the Milestone Ministry event.

2. Equip it

Provide support, modeling, and resources to help people experience a milestone in life as an opportunity to again embrace the grace of God in Christ

Opportunity!



3. Bless it

Offer a prayer during Chapel time, cross+generational event, and/or the small group or home event to embrace people's lives with the grace, mercy, and peace of God in Christ.

4. Gift it

Provide a gift to help the participants recall a particular milestone in their lives with faith, hope, and love



5. Reinforce it

Offer a follow up event to help deepen the faith formation impact of the Milestone Ministry experience. Encourage and support faith practices recommended at the initial Milestone event and, when helpful, explore new ones.

1. Name it
2. Equip it
3. Bless it
4. Gift it
5. Reinforce it





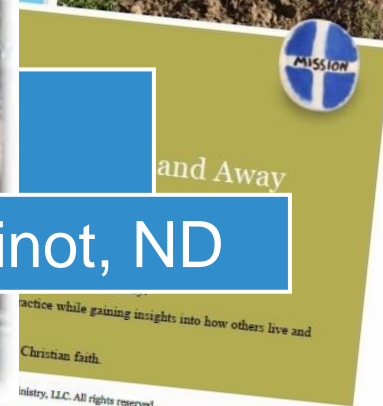
Examples of Forming Faith Through Milestones

Congregation, Community, Home, and Digital World
School!

Congregation



First Lutheran, Minot, ND



Community Example



All Saint's Day

Caring for Aging Parents and Spouses



Home Example





Once again Jesus spoke to the people. This time he said, "I am the light for the world. Follow me, and you will have the light of life."

Christmas Retirement

Milestones Ministry brings God to individuals of all ages in their homes as church, too. Milestones is a simple and usable model for creating a community to connect people through life experiences. The rich traditions represented in Milestones Ministry of the church provide a way to connect with family, friends, and others.

The season of Advent signals the beginning of a new year and gives a wonderful opportunity for a congregation to help families establish traditions to be handed from one generation to the next. An Advent wreath provides a visual reminder in the home of Jesus birth and His coming again. It is a good time to introduce faith practices in the home through reading scripture, prayer, and lighting a candle each week. The Christmas tree is another visual reminder. The custom of the Christmas tree was introduced in Germany in the 16th century. Legend tells that the evergreen was chosen and decorated with candles to represent God's creation and the gift of God's Son as the Light of the World. This tradition is continued today as we use evergreen trees, strings of lights, and ornaments to decorate the tree in our homes.

Milestones incorporate a simple structure that includes naming, equipping, blessing, gifting, and reinforcing so that the Milestones Ministry Moment has a greater chance to take deeper root in lifelong faith formation.

Caring Conversations

Devotions

Four Keys for Practicing Faith

Service

Rituals and Traditions



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Digital Example



Skype
Google Hang Out
Face Time



School Example





MILESTONES
MINISTRY

*Milestones Ministry is a
faith formation practice
for both home and con-
gregation that helps all
generations recognize
God's presence in
everyday life.*

Five Steps:

Name it -
identify meaningful,
memorable moments

Equip it - provide
faith practices

Bless it - offer a pray-
er and a blessing

Gift it - give a visual
reminder

Reinforce it - follow
up to firmly root faith



Let's
do it!

1. Name it
2. Equip it
3. Bless it
4. Gift it
5. Reinforce it



How will you form
faith through
milestones?





What does it
look like?

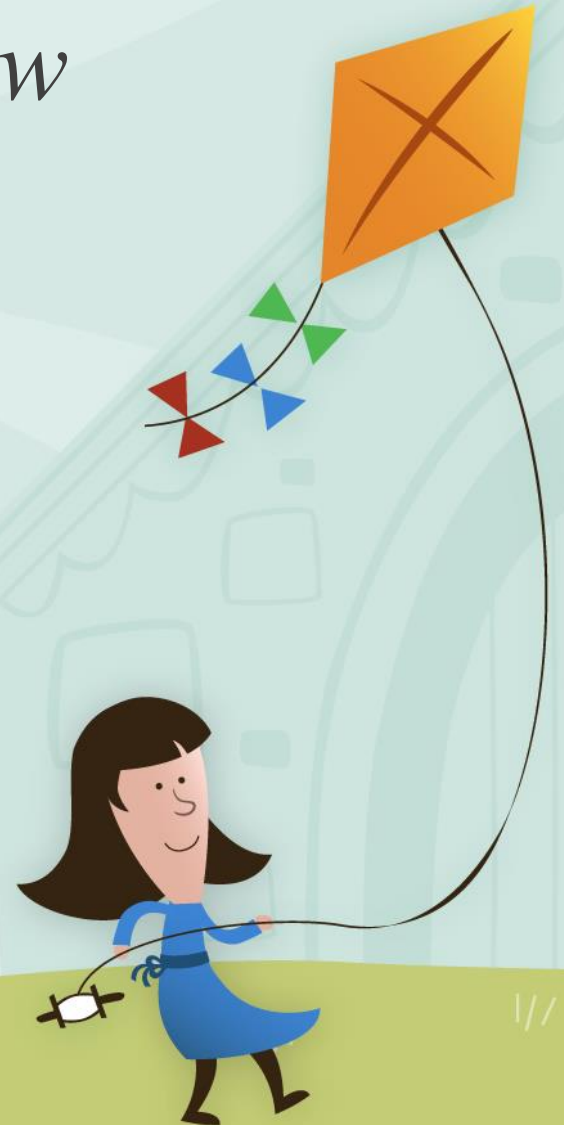
How does it
connect to the
classroom?



*“Parents don’t care how much you know
until they know how much you care.”*

- Theodore Roosevelt/John C. Maxwell

“Nobody/People/Children.”



An important
ingredient...establish
faith practices!

Four Key Faith Practices

1. Caring Conversations
2. Devotions
3. Service
4. Rituals and Traditions

FAITH5

1. Share
2. Read
3. Talk
4. Pray
5. Bless

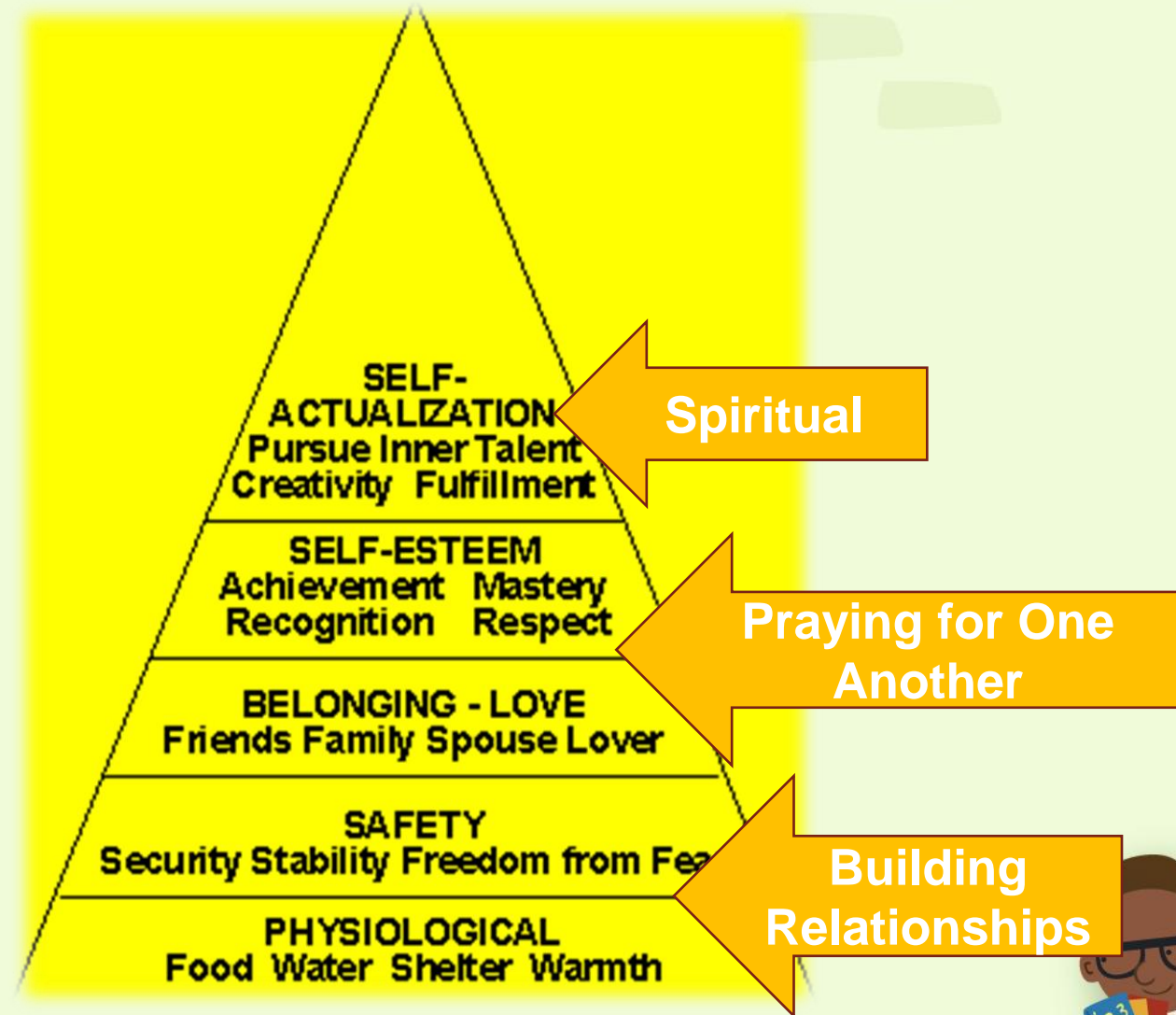
ELEA: Devotional Guide

1. Scripture
2. Thought for
the Week
3. Question
4. Prayer

They carry us from milestone
to milestone!



Maslow Hierarchy of Needs



The Goal:

- Lifelong Faith Formation
- Relationships over Programs
- Be Strategic for the World



Connect, Develop, Inspire

“Promoting and supporting quality, Christ-centered schools and early childhood programs of the ELCA.”

How do you view these in the context of faith formation in the school setting?



*“Promoting and supporting quality,
Christ-centered schools and early
childhood programs of the ELCA.”*

Connect: With parents/grandparents through caring conversations

Develop: Faith formation resources and tools for the classroom that can be recognized at home too!

Inspire: By recognizing milestones in chapel and sending prayer and blessing home.

NOVEMBER 27, 2016
FIRST SUNDAY
OF ADVENT

taking
faith
home

Advent is a season for waiting and watching.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

These passages are related to the Lectionary texts for this Sunday

Sunday	Matthew 24:36-44	The sudden coming of s
Monday	Matthew 24:3-14	Persevere to the end
Tuesday	Romans 13:11-14	An urgent appeal
Wednesday	Matthew 24:45-51	The faithful servant
Thursday	Luke 17:22-37	The coming of the s
Friday	Joel 3:14-21	The day of the Lor
Saturday	Psalm 122	A song of praise
Sunday	Matthew 3:1-12	Prepare the way

SCRIPTURE VERSE FOR THIS WEEK

(Jesus said) "Always be ready! You don't know w
come." Matthew 24:44 (CEV)

PRAYERS AND BLESSING

A Prayer for the Week:
Lord Jesus, may our faith in you keep us ready for your ret
love and peace. Amen.

Mealtime Prayer:
Lord Jesus, please bless our Advent eating and our Ad
and faith that is steady. Amen.

A Blessing to Give:
May the promise of Christ's return fill you with ho
each and every day.



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NOVEMBER 27, 2016
HYMN OF THE WEEK
Wait for the Lord

CARING CONVERSATIONS

- Discuss in your home or small group:
- Tell about a time when you were waiting for something or someone to come.
- Jesus asks his followers to be ready, as he could return at any time (Matthew 24:42).
- How do we stay ready for Jesus?
- Tell about how the promise of Christ's second coming gives meaning to each day.

DEVOTIONS

Set up an Advent wreath to use in your home in the weeks leading up to Christmas. An Advent wreath contains five candles: four in a circle and one in the center. The circle represents the eternity of God, and the four candles are usually blue or purple. The center candle is usually white. It represents Christ and is lit on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. In the first week of Advent, light the first candle.

Say: This is the first week of Advent. Advent means "coming." We are waiting and watching for the coming of Christ. Let us light the first Advent candle, the candle of waiting. (The candle is lit.)

Read: Psalm 130.

Pray: Lord God, thank you for Advent. In this season of waiting, make us ready for Jesus to return. Amen.

SERVICE

Romans 13:13 tells us to live as people whose actions are seen clearly in the day. Those actions include deeds of love and mercy. As you prepare for Christmas, purchase or make a gift that will be given to someone in need who is not a family member or friend.

RITUALS AND TRADITIONS

- Make an Advent paper chain with a link for each day of December up to Christmas Day. Write one of the instructions listed below on each link. Remove a link each day and do what it says:
- Say what gives you peace.
 - Describe what gives you joy.
 - Share what gives you hope.
 - Give a compliment to someone.
 - Read Jeremiah 33:14-16.
 - Sing or pray an Advent hymn.
 - Tell about a Christmas memory.
 - Read Isaiah 11:1-3.
 - Say what you like about Advent.
 - Sing a Christmas carol.
 - Tell what you like about Christmas.
 - Read Micah 5:2-4.
 - Tell the nativity story to each other.
 - Make a Christmas card for someone.
 - Read Isaiah 7:14.
 - Sing another Christmas carol.
 - Do an act of service for another.
 - Make Christmas cookies.
 - Read Isaiah 9:6-7.
 - Go for a walk.
 - Draw a Christmas picture.
 - Read Luke 1:26-38.
 - Read Matthew 1:18-24.
 - Read Luke 2:1-7.

In addition to Taking Faith Home, celebrate milestones in your daily life as an effective faith formation tool. Go to: www.milestonesministry.org

So what do you
do between
Milestones?

Consistent
outline



Caring Conversations



Devotions



Service



Rituals and Traditions



Devotions

FEBRUARY 19, 2017
SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY
THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK: MATTHEW 5: 38-48

Think about the relationships you have with those around you each day: the children in your classroom, their parents, your co-workers and supervisors. Are there some that you find to be "difficult"? Is there anyone you avoid because your relationship with that person is strained? Do you find it hard to get along with someone because they have hurt you some time in the past? Often those "difficult people" are the ones most in need of the love and care of others.

Jesus challenges us to love beyond measure, asking us to go above and beyond in loving not only our neighbors, but also our enemies. This requires that we go beyond what is expected of us, what is required of us, or what is comfortable for us. Going the extra mile might mean that we are available to listen patiently to an upset parent, to remain calm, speaking lovingly as we guide a child whose behavior is continually disruptive, or to let go of a disagreement we may have with a co-worker and find a peaceful solution to the problem.

While it is never easy to love our enemies, it does become possible for us to do so when we allow the love of Jesus to flow through us. The seemingly impossible command to "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect" will only be attainable if we invite Jesus to be with us daily and ask for divine help in working through our struggles with others.

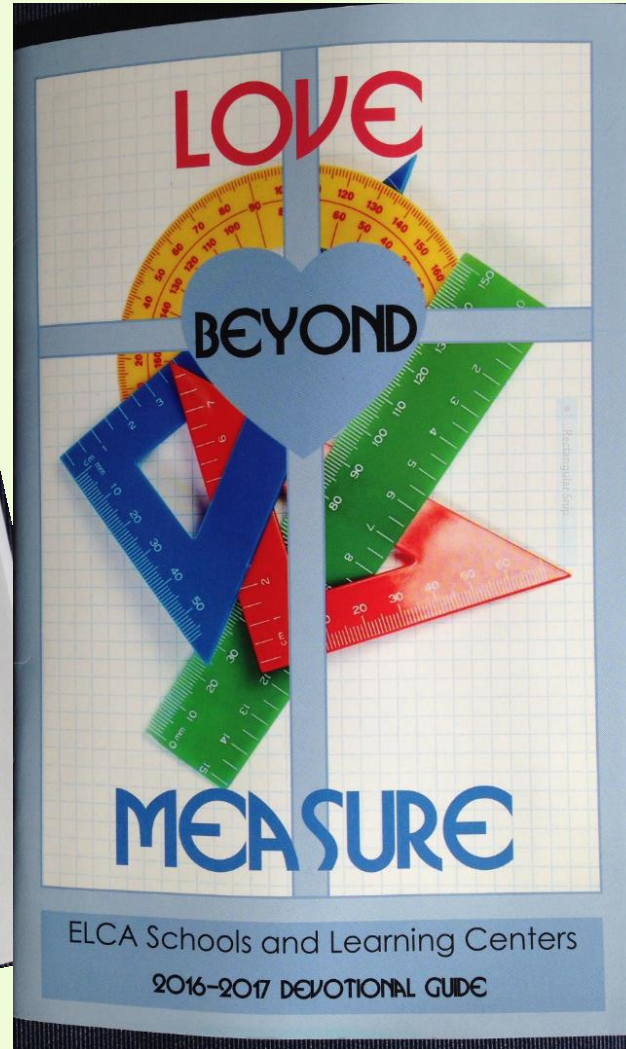
Questions for the Week:

Who are your "enemies"? How can you go the extra mile for them and show that you love them?

Prayer for the Week:

Lord God, be with me and fill my heart with Your love. Help me to love others the way You do, especially those I find most difficult to love.

This devotion was contributed by Joanne Osterland, who is blessed to serve as Director at Christ Lutheran Preschool in Dallas, TX.



FEBRUARY 12, 2017
SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY
THOUGHT FOR THE DAY: MATTHEW 5: 21-37

"So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift."

This is the week when we take time to think about Valentine's Day. In the Christian community, we think of St. Valentine as a person who died for his faith. In card stores, St. Valentine is remembered for being a cash cow. For almost all of us, the commemoration day is a day to think about love, honor and respect. These are qualities we want to instill in our students every day of the week, not just once a year.

In many congregations, there is an order of confession and forgiveness that comes at the start of the worship service. That is done to fulfill what the Gospel of Matthew states: Make peace with those around you before you come in for worship. It's hard to share the peace of God with others if you are not on good terms with them! Whether it is worship or a classroom setting, our task is to spread the love of God by what we say and do. Our privilege as teachers is to model the love, honor and respect given to each of us as a Child of God. Our hope and prayer as teachers is that our students will do the same once they have left our care.

Questions for the Week:

How does Christian love differ from the love depicted in movies and on TV shows? How do we, as teachers, manage to show love even to that student who we may feel is unlovable? Why should forgiveness be one of the most important tools in our "teacher's tool belt"?

Prayer for the Week:

As Jesus, as you have forgiven me, help me to be forgiving of others. Remind me throughout the week that my ministry is peace-building, not wall-creation. Bless me in my attempts to show forgiveness and understanding for all the children in my care. Amen

This devotion was contributed by the Rev. Dr. David Jost, senior pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, Hainesport, NJ. Pastor Jost is a frequent contributor to leading chapel services at reJOYce Christian School.



MEANING OF THE STONES



Beginnings and Completions

Examples:

Engagement • Graduation • First School Bus Ride • Driver's License • New Job • Moving Away • Retirement • Child Leaves Home

In blessing new beginnings or completions we are reminded that a God who is familiar with us meets us in unfamiliar places. The creation story in Genesis states that every day had a sunrise and a sunset, "And there was evening and there was morning."



Remembering

Examples:

Birthdays • National Holidays • Reunions • Sobriety Anniversary • Baptism Birthdays • Anniversaries • Bible Stories • Songs

We learn from the past so that we can move forward in life. Exodus 20 and in Deuteronomy 5 we are commanded to keep a Sabbath day, to remember what God has done and is doing in our lives.



Loss

Examples:

Death • Loss of Pet • Loss of Job • Miscarriage • Divorce • Loss of Health • Loss of Love • Loss of Family Farm

In our deepest pain, God graciously wipes our tears and holds us with the arms of the cross as long as we need to be held. "For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:37-39)



Quests

Examples:

Learning to Dance • Job Interview • Running a Marathon • Discerning Vocation • Engaging in Mission • Try Outs • Climbing a Mountain • Finding a Treasure

Quests are the times of wonder, stepping into the unknown, and taking the risk of exploring a new path in life. In Matthew 16:24 we are reminded that we are called to step away from our comfort zones, pick up our cross, and follow Jesus.



Blank

Examples:

Birthdays • Special Events • Unique Milestones

This stone can be used along with permanent markers to customize the stone to remember unique and special events in our lives.



Sacred

Examples:

Family Time • Wedding • Funeral • Confirmation • Baptism • Creation • Christian Holy Days • Eucharist

The holy and sacred are found in the presence of God. Symbols, rituals and traditions are sacred when we meet God there. Moses, standing before God in the burning bush, was told, "the place on which you are standing is holy ground." (Exodus 3:5)



Gratitude

Examples:

Friendships • Family • Health and Healing • Miracle • Appreciation • Prayers • Gifts • Thanksgiving Day

We applaud, whistle, shout, stomp, sing, pray, smile, hug, give. "O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever." (Psalm 136:1)



Care

Examples:

Helping Others • Supporting Missions • Prayer • Campaigning for Peace, Justice, and Mercy • Medical Assistance • Visiting • Caring for Creation

This stone represents giving and receiving care with grace and gratitude. "Who is my neighbor?" the young lawyer asked. Jesus answered with the Good Samaritan Story (Luke 10: 25-37), giving us direction for faithful living.



Mountain Highs

Examples:

Birth of a Child • Recognition • Fishing with Dad • Learning to Read • Falling in Love • Achievements • Seeing a Comet or Star • Worship

After looking at the heavens, the moon, and all the stars, the Psalmist in Psalm 121 states, "what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them?" Mountain Highs are Wow Moments!



Valley Lows

Examples:

Fired from Job • End of Relationship • Acts of Inhumanity • Recognition of Sin • Broken Trust • Failure • Destroying Creation • Depression

Having the rug pulled out from under you, having the wind knocked out of you, depleted, disappointed, distressed, and distraught describe the low experienced feelings of Valley Lows. Even though I walk through the darkest valley, no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff they comfort me. (Psalm 23)



Meaningful and Memorable
Moments Woven into a Life
Lived in Faith



*The extraordinary grace of God is hidden
in the ordinary happenings of each day.*





Consistent
outline

	Caring Conversations
	Devotions
	Service
	Rituals and Traditions





"Learn as much as you can while you are young, since life becomes too busy later."
— Dana Stewart Scott



Beginning School Milestone Moment

Milestones Ministry brings an awareness of the presence of God to individuals of all generations by recognizing the home as church, too. A Milestone Moment brings family and friends together to mark a special time in their lives and to acknowledge and affirm God's presence in their midst. Milestone Moments provide a model for connecting significant occasions in people's lives with the ongoing journey of faith.

Attending school for the first time is an important moment to connect children with family and friends in a supportive environment that brings together personal stories, hopes, fears, and the life of faith. Children and parents may both be anxious about this significant time in their lives as there will be new schedules woven into daily routines. Time with family and friends will change as a child spends a large part of the day in school now. This creates an awareness of a new beginning that needs to be marked as a time of transition for many people, not just the child who will begin school. This Milestone Moment allows for a special time to mark the beginning of school as part of the life of faith.

Milestones Ministry uses a simple structure that includes naming, equipping, blessing, gifting, and reinforcing so that the Milestone Moment will have a greater chance to take deeper root in one's lifelong faith formation.

Moments that cause us to pause and shift beginning school for the first time happen home as church, too. A Milestone Moment brings family and friends together to mark a special time in their lives and to acknowledge and affirm God's presence in their midst. Milestone Moments provide a model for connecting significant occasions in people's lives with the ongoing journey of faith.

Naming – It is important to recognize how God is part of these new routines and relationships.

Equipping – This Milestone Moment uses the Four Keys for Practicing Faith outline (see page 2) to connect the beginning of school with the life of faith.

Blessing – Praying for child/ great way to affirm God's presence at school.

Gifting – Giving a tangible special lunch bag is a great reminder of the significance of this milestone.

Reinforcing – It is important to see how the experience of school will be helpful to check in throughout the year.



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"The larger the island of knowledge, the longer the shoreline of wonder."
— Ralph W. Sockman



Back to School

Back to School Milestone Moment

Milestones Ministry brings an awareness of the presence of God to individuals of all generations by recognizing the home as church, too. A Milestone Moment brings family and friends together to mark a special time in their lives and to acknowledge and affirm God's presence in their midst. Milestone Moments provide a model for connecting significant occasions in people's lives with the ongoing journey of faith.

The beginning of a school year is an important time to connect students with family and friends in a supportive environment that brings together personal stories, hopes, fears, and the life of faith. Students and parents may be anxious and new schedules and activities may need to be clarified and woven into daily routines. Time with family and friends will often change from summer to fall schedules. All of this and more creates an awareness of a new beginning that needs to be marked as a time of transition for many people, not simply just the students. This Milestone Moment allows for a special time to mark the beginning of the school year as part of the life of faith.

Milestones Ministry uses a simple structure that includes naming, equipping, blessing, gifting, and reinforcing so that the Milestone Moment will have a greater chance to take deeper root in one's lifelong faith formation.

Moments that cause us to pause and shift gears like beginning a new school year happen in our daily lives. Providing opportunities to find God's presence in these moments is important. This Back to School Milestone Moment incorporates a simple structure that includes:

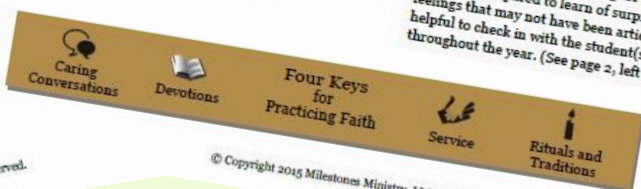
Naming – It is important to recognize the changes that take place with a new school year and to acknowledge how God is part of these new routines, experiences, and relationships.

Equipping – This Milestone Moment uses the Four Keys for Practicing Faith outline (see page 2) to connect the beginning of a new school year with the life of faith.

Blessing – Praying for student(s), family, and friends is a great way to affirm God's presence at the beginning of the school year.

Gifting – Giving a tangible gift like a card with a special note of encouragement is a good way to help participants be reminded of the significance of this milestone.

Reinforcing – It is beneficial to meet again a couple of weeks after the beginning of the school year to check in and see how the experience is going for the student(s) and family. Be prepared to learn of surprising experiences and feelings that may not have been articulated before. It is also helpful to check in with the student(s) periodically throughout the year. (See page 2, left column.)



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Caring Conversations



Devotions



Service



Rituals and Traditions



How will you ...

In the
classroom and
beyond?

Be Intentional

Set Expectations

Plan for
Accountability



www.milestonesministry.org



Rectangular Snip

HOME

MILESTONES +

TAKING FAITH HOME

TOOLBOX

FAITH FORMATION STORIES

COACHING

ABOUT

STORE

Growing People in Faith when at Home and Away

...and talk about them when you are at home and when
you are away, when you lie down and when you rise.
Deuteronomy 6:7b



Connect with us:



Sign Up for Enews

info@milestonesministry.org

or call 304-300-0836

New! Taking Faith Home Cards

Taking Faith Home Cards are designed to allow individuals and families to nurture their faith at any time and place! Each card contains a variety of faith-building activities, allowing one to pick and choose what is most beneficial in your current setting. Each of these 64 cards in Deck A are based on the Revised Common Lectionary Year A and include a scripture verse and prayer on one side and caring conversation, service

The Heart of Milestones

At the heart of Milestones Ministry are the Four Keys. These Four Key Faith Practices nurture the Christian faith, reach out to the larger world with the love of God in Christ, and bless and strengthen relationships at home and in the congregation. They are:

1. **Caring Conversations:** These conversation starters provide meaningful reflection on biblical texts and our daily lives.

Taking Faith Home

Taking Faith Home (TFH) is an annual subscription providing a weekly bulletin insert to enhance faith formation in the home!

- Offers suggested daily Bible readings.
- Gives examples of each of the Four Key faith practices (caring conversations, devotions, service,

