

Milestones Ministry

Connecting Faith and Everyday Life



ELCA Network
Children, Youth and Family
February 2016



I wonder what your definition of
Milestones Ministry is.





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.



A milestone is one of a series of markers we encounter along our faith journey at varying intervals during our lifetime. Each milestone happens along the faith journey beginning at a fixed commencement point.

What is a 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 makes milestones a ministry?

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.

Milestones celebrated in the congregation.

Baptism

Mission
Trips

Communion

Bible

Confirmation

Blessing of
Backpacks

High School
Graduation



Do you recognize milestones
in your setting?
If so, what ones and how do you
recognize them?

The milestones we celebrate in the congregation.
Most are for children and youth.(happen inside)

Connecting these to
faith talk is a given.
They happen in the
congregation.

Ba

union

1

uation

A

of Baptism

Entering

Sunday School

But what milestones do we recognize in our homes and in everyday living?

What happens when
we recognize a
milestone in everyday
life and add
conversation , prayer
and blessing to it?

Birth

aries?

Gra

y of
?

**A moment to reflect on our own
faith journey.**

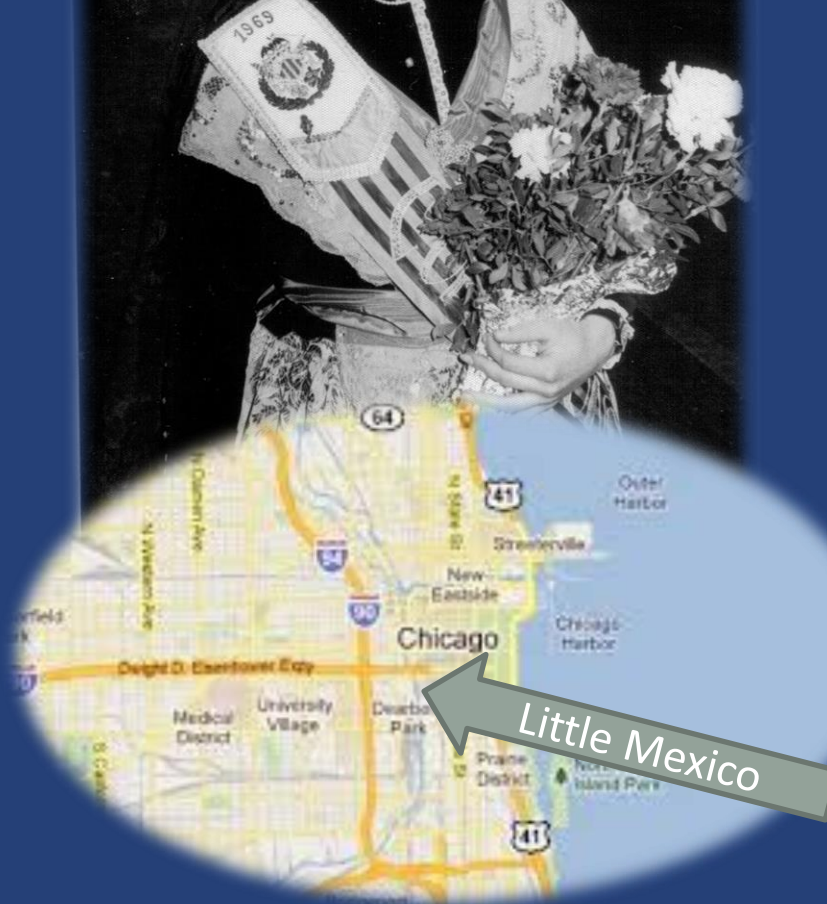


My faith journey
began here

St. John's
Lutheran
Church
WORSHIP: 9A.M.
REV. ALFRED RUGGIERO
PASTOR

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

My faith life
intersected with
everyday living...





Do we recognize
God's presence in
everyday living?



Where does your own
faith journey intersect
with everyday living?

**Reflect on your own faith journey.
What are some meaningful, life changing
moments in your own lives that could
have been or still can be recognized?**

Where do we start?

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

3. Bless it

Offer a prayer in a worship service, 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.

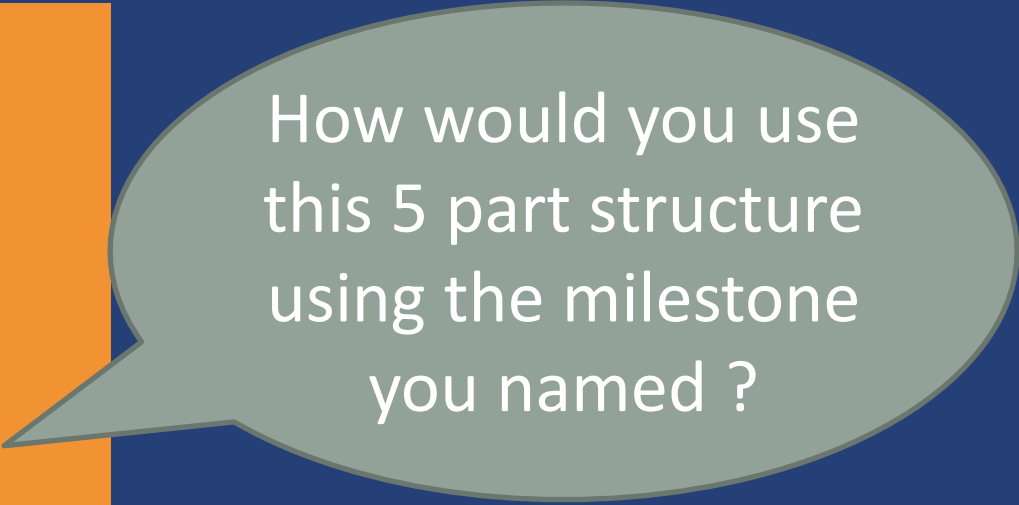
4. Gift it

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



How would you use this 5 part structure using the milestone you named ?



*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

There are 18 Child-Youth Milestone Modules:



+ Kids and Money Milestone: Good Stewards of God's Gifts

Desired Outcomes

- Teach children and families the biblical foundations of being a steward.
- Remind children and families of the source and giver of all our possessions.
- Help children and families use their resources wisely.

+ Bible Milestone: Placing Scripture in Hands

Desired Outcomes

- Place Bibles into the hands and homes of children.
- Teach children and the adults in their lives how to use the Bible as a tool to nurture the Christian life and faith.
- Encourage children, parents/guardians and other caring adults to read and study the Bible regularly.
- Have a worship service that celebrates the giving of Bibles to children and the living of one's baptismal covenant by children and adults of all ages.
- Foster cross-generational faith formation in the home and the congregation.

We have named
some for you!

There are 18 Milestones Modules:



FaithChest® Milestone: Passing on Faith

Baptism Milestone: The Beginning Point of Nurturing a Faith Life

Anniversary of Baptism Milestone: Remembering Our Way of Life

Prayer Milestone: Relationships with God and Family



Welcoming Young Children to Worship Milestone: An Intentional Invitation

Entering Sunday School Milestone: First Steps for a Young Child

Kids and Money Milestone: Good Stewards of God's Gifts

Blessing of the Backpacks Milestone: A Fall Milestone for All Ages

Communion Milestone: Learning More about the Lord's Supper



18 Milestones Modules continued:



Bible Milestone: Placing Scripture in Hands and Homes



Bible Camp Milestone: Feeling God's Comfort in Outdoor Ministry

My Body, God's Gift Milestone: Sexuality as God's Good Gift

Middle School Milestone: Created in God's Image



Beginning Confirmation Milestone:

Walking with Youth on Their Faith Journeys

Confirmation Milestone: An Evening of Honor

Driver's License Milestone: Driver's License as a Rite of Passage

Mission Trip Milestone: Community Blessings at Home and Away

High School Graduation Milestone: Equipping Graduates for the Journey



There are 12 Adult Milestone Modules:



Retirement
A Major Life Transition

Desired Outcomes

- Work and achieve a sense of purpose
- Celebrate a person's work life
- Share a person's gifts, skills, and experiences
- Link God's story with the retiree's story
- Share the retiree's wisdom and experience with the community



"Somehow our society must make it right and possible for old people not to fear the young or be deserted by them, for the test of a civilization is the way it cares for its helpless members."
~ Pearl Buck

+ Aging Parent Milestone: Affirming Primary Care Givers

Desired Outcomes

- Reaffirm changes and new living situations
- Share stories from the past to affirm the caregiver's choice to care for an aging parent
- Understand how faith can be shared in the home
- Equip caregivers with a ritual/tradition as familiarity and consistency can be an important tool to reconnect with an aging parent
- Encourage the caregiver with a community of faith to graciously accept help for a much needed break from time-to-time

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Return from Military Deployment

Desired Outcomes

- Understand the challenges of returning home
- Equip the community to support the returning soldier
- Equip the community to support the returning soldier's family



Bless THIS HOME
and all who enter



"By wisdom a house is built, and by understanding it is established; by knowledge the rooms are filled with all precious and pleasant riches."
Proverbs 24:3 (NRSV)

+ New Home Milestone: Affirming the Physical, Spiritual and Emotional Transition to a New Living Space

Desired Outcomes

- Talk about changes and challenges of new living situations
- Share memories of previous homes as well as hopes and dreams for the future in a new home
- Understand how faith and worship can be practiced in the home
- Equip those in transition with a rituals and traditions for moving into a new home
- Provide resources for rituals/traditions which can be consistently practiced in the new home
- Connect ministry of the congregation with people in the community moving into new homes

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Adult Milestones

- For Caregivers of Aging Parents
- Return from Military Deployment
- Retirement
- New Home
- New Job
- First Time Grandparents
- Wedding Anniversary
- Empty Nest
- Loss of a Loved One
- Faith Community
- Becoming a Parent
- Affirming Spiritual Gifts



12 Adult Milestones Modules:

Caring for Aging Parents: affirming primary care givers

Return from Military Deployment: reuniting with family and friends

New Home: Affirming the physical, spiritual, and emotional transition
to a new living space



Retirement: a major life transition

Empty Nest

Wedding Anniversary

New Job

First Time Grandparents



First Time Parents
Joining a Faith Community



Loss of a Loved One
Connecting with Spiritual Gifts

Milestone Moments for the Home

- Broken Bone
- First Cell Phone
- Christmas Tree Blessing
- Beginning School
- Back to School



Broken Bone Milestone Moment

Milestones Ministry brings an awareness of the presence of God to individuals of all generations by recognizing the home as church, too. Milestones Ministry provides a clear and usable model for congregations, homes, and community to connect faith formation resources with daily life experiences. The rich variety of life experiences represented in Milestones Ministry does the essential ministry of the church: promoting Christian faith formation with family, friends, and others with whom we can reach.

When someone we care about has experienced the pain and anxiety of a broken bone, we want that person not only to fully heal from the broken bone, but also to experience support, peace, and hope. That is where sharing the Christian faith together with caring words, prayers, and more can bless the person with the broken bone as well as the caring community surrounding that person. The Broken Bone Milestone Moment for a Small Group or Family Gathering offers people the resources to help the injured person and his or her caregivers to experience the kind of encouragement that the Christian faith brings.

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.



Moments that cause us to pause and shift gears like a broken bone happen in our daily lives. Providing opportunities to find God's presence in these moments is important. This Broken Bone Milestone Moment incorporates a simple structure that includes:

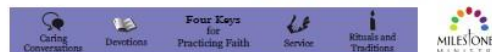
Naming – It is important to recognize the changes that may take place in the lives of the one who has broken a bone and the lives of those who care for that person.

Equipping – This Milestone Moment encourages caring conversations that draw out thoughts and concerns about changes in our lives and includes God's presence amidst the healing.

Blessing – Praying for the one who has broken a bone and for those who will help and care for this person is a great way to witness faith in action in daily life.

Gifting – Giving a tangible gift like get well notes, pictures or cards or writing a special message in a Bible are good ways to help participants be reminded of this milestone in daily life. Be creative! Gift something that perhaps will help the person while the cast is still on.

Reinforcing – It is a good idea to follow up after the Broken Bone Milestone Moment by gathering one more time after the cast has been removed to share stories about life with and without a cast on and give thanks for healing.



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First Cell Phone 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.

Being given a cell phone to use for the first time is on the mind of many youth as parents struggle to make a decision about what age is most appropriate for their child to have a cell phone. A cell phone signals independence and provides youth with many ways to communicate in today's world. From conversations to texts to social media, the world arrives at one's fingertips and this step in the life of a family can be a stressful one for both parents and children. The cost adds concerns and questions about the need for a cell phone. Talking about how a phone will be used is an important conversation for parents to have with their children. This Milestone Moment provides the opportunity for families to address questions, establish guidelines, and connect this new way of communicating with 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 parents deciding it is time for their child to have a cell phone happen in our daily lives. Providing opportunities to find God's presence in these moments is important. This First Cell Phone Milestone Moment incorporates a simple structure that includes:

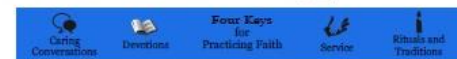
Naming – It is important to recognize the changes that take place in relationships and ways to communicate when one gets a cell phone. It is good to acknowledge how God is part of this new means to connect to the world.

Equipping – This Milestone Moment uses the Four Keys for practicing faith outline (see page 2) to connect getting a first cell phone with the life of faith.

Blessing – Praying for youth and families after this decision has been made is a great way to affirm God's presence.

Gifting – Giving a tangible gift like a special sticker for the phone or a customized case for the phone is a good way to help participants be reminded of this Milestone.

Reinforcing – It is beneficial to meet again a couple of weeks after the initial use of the cell phone has begun. Check in and see how it is being used and how life may be different. Encourage honest talk about whether or not guidelines are being followed. It is also helpful to check in with one another throughout the year. (See page 2, left column.)



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Backpack Milestone

Many congregations have found the blessing of backpacks to be a very meaningful way to mark the passage of summer. It is a helpful transition for children, youth, and adults to the new fall schedule. It is also an opportunity to discover God's presence with us at home, school and work, and to be reminded that Jesus is always with us.

Going to school for the first time or returning to school for another year carries with it the challenges, anxieties, hopes, and opportunities that fill the lives of children, parents, and other caregivers with many diverse emotions and wonderments. There is a prime time to acknowledge our fears and God's goodness and love. It can be a time to remember Jesus, "have no fear," and provide a way to begin the year and each school day with the Four Keys that nurture the Christian faith: caring conversations, devotions, service, and rituals and traditions.

We bring children, parents, and other adults together to recognize this time of the year by providing the opportunity to bless backpacks by incorporating a simple structure that includes:

Naming – It is important to recognize this time of year as the end of summer and the beginning of new, and sometimes hectic, schedules for families.

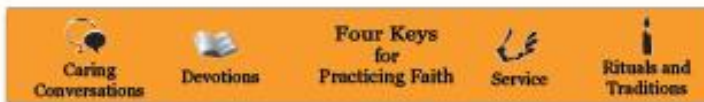
Equipping – All ages are given the opportunity to practice the Four Keys and have time to take a deep breath, exhale slowly, and claim values and faith that establish and direct our lives beyond the fears, anxieties, and pressures of life.

Blessing – The blessing of the backpacks allows us not just to imagine, but also to experience the larger picture of life—the one that says life is not dominated or formed by pressures and uncertainties.

Gifting – You may give a gift as a physical reminder of this occasion, such as a zipper pull or key chain. (See Appendix 1.)

Reinforcing – It is a good idea to follow up after the Backpack Milestone by connecting this group one more time to share stories about how their school year is going. The Backpack Milestone Follow Up is on page 7.

5 Part Structure



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

Four Keys

FOUR KEYS For Practicing Faith

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

+ Cross+Generational Event

Begin the session with an introduction that emphasizes the importance of learning for everyone, including the students beginning another year at school. Acknowledge that all people are beginning their fall schedules.

Preparation:

- Light snack of honey and crackers, and napkins
- Servers for set up and clean up
- Have some new backpacks available as gifts to children in the local community. Have gift-wrapping and/or gift note cards ready so that the groups can wrap the backpacks and/or write personal notes of encouragement to those students who will receive the backpacks.
- Nametags

Event Outline:



Caring Conversations

Ask people to have a discussion in their small groups. Complete these sentences:

- A favorite personal story of mine about school is...
- A funny or meaningful story about school I remember is...



Devotions

Read Scripture: Proverbs 9:10 (CEV)

Respect and obey the Lord! This is the beginning of wisdom. To have understanding you must know the Holy God.

After reading the Scripture, talk about how it may relate to learning and the new school year. Give honey and crackers to each small group, and have each person give another person a cracker with a drop of honey on it and say the following: *May the sweet taste of honey remind you of the sweetness of God's love and instruction for your life. As you continue to learn for a lifetime, remember that respecting and obeying the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.*



Service

- Take some time to name people who have taught you in the past. What did they teach you? Thank God for this person.
- Think of a skill you have or something you know that you could teach to someone. Plan a time to do so.



Rituals and Traditions

Gather again in circles and close by praying together: *Dear Lord, you have blessed us with many people who have taught and mentored us in life. Bless us now as we go forth from this place with an excitement for learning and a desire to use our skill and knowledge to care for people and all creation. In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.*

Bless one another before dismissing: *"May you respect and obey the Lord."*

Worship and Blessing

Choose a time during a worship service to recognize students and their backpacks. Invite all who are students, from children to adults, with and without backpacks, to come forward for the blessing.

Leader:

At this time, we are delighted to invite forward those who participated in the Backpack Milestone. We encourage them and all of us to continue the faith practices of caring conversation, devotions and service to build a ritual and tradition in all our homes as a way of life. *(Distribute additional gift, if desired, for all as a physical reminder of this milestone. See Appendix 1.)*

Leader:

Let us pray. God of all knowledge and wisdom, these students and backpacks remind us that a new school year has begun. We pray your blessing on them and upon all students, young and old, as they begin a new year. Help them discover and develop their gifts and give them. And in your wisdom, help them use their knowledge, help them show kindness and compassion, help them respect for themselves and others. We ask your blessing on teachers, school staff, and parents who care for these students. Bless these students with your support, and love. In Jesus' name, pray. Amen.

Worship Service

An important
ingredient...

There are FOUR KEY faith practices that make up the lifestyle of lifelong faith formation:

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

Four Keys

FOUR KEYS For Practicing Faith

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

+ Cross+Generational Event

Begin the session with an introduction that emphasizes the importance of learning for everyone, including the students beginning another year at school. Acknowledge that all people are beginning their fall schedules.

Preparation:

- Light snack of honey and crackers, and napkins
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Event Outline:



Caring Conversations

Ask people to have a discussion in their small groups. Complete these sentences:

- A favorite personal story of mine about school is...
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Service

- Take some time to name people who have taught you in the past. What did they teach you? Thank God for this person.
- Think of a skill you have or something you know that you could teach to someone. Plan a time to do so.



Rituals and Traditions

Gather again in circles and close by praying together: *Dear Lord, you have blessed us with many people who have taught and mentored us in life. Bless us now as we go forth from this place with an excitement for learning and a desire to use our skill and knowledge to care for people and all creation. In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.*

Bless one another before dismissing: *"May you respect and obey the Lord."*

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Leader:

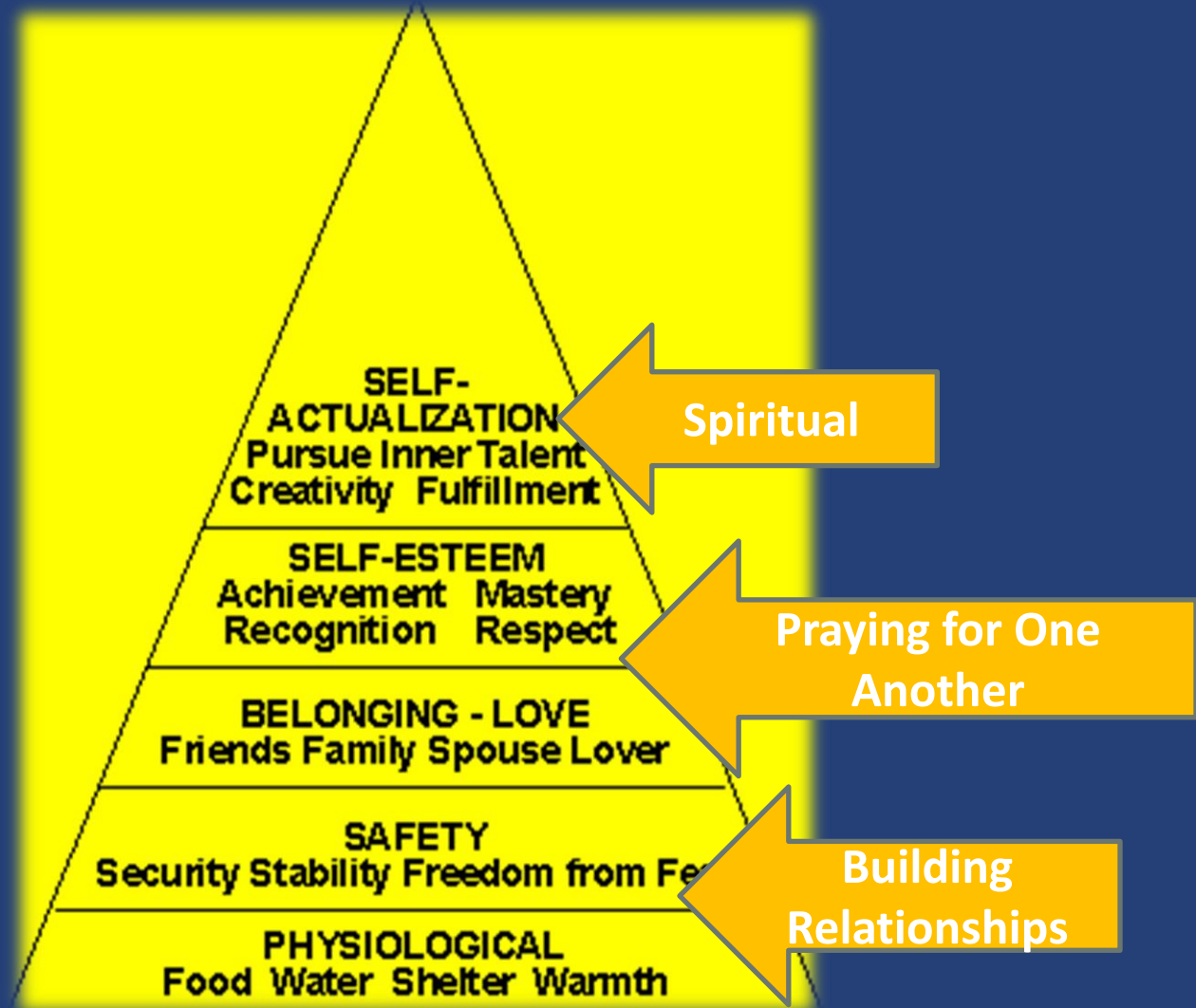
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Leader:

Let us pray. God of all knowledge and wisdom, these students and backpacks remind us that a new school year has begun. We pray your blessing on them and upon all students, young and old, as they begin a new year. Help them discover and develop their gifts and give them. And in your wisdom, help them use their knowledge, help them show kindness and compassion, and respect for themselves and others. We ask your blessing on teachers, school staff, and parents who care for these students. Bless these students with your support, and love. In Jesus' name, pray. Amen.

Worship Service

Maslow Hierarchy of Needs



For the Home

Four Keys

Milestone for Small Groups or Home

There are times when celebrating a milestone can be done in a small group setting or more intimately in homes. Take time to enjoy a meal or dessert together and to invite conversation with the following outline. You may also wish to use portions of a Milestone for Small Groups or Home Generational Event found in this Backpack Milestone.

Caring Conversations

Begin with conversation:

- One of the highlights of the summer was _____.
- Now that summer is over, I can't wait for _____.

Devotions

Read Deuteronomy 7:11 (CEV)

So be sure to obey his laws and teachings I am giving you today.

God made promises to our ancestors. He loves us and is with us always. He gave them and us a commandment to keep his words in our hearts and recite them to our children. In school, we don't have commandments. We have rules.

- What rules do you have in your school?
- What happens if you break the rules?

Service

Our lives are filled with learning. We learn through many social contacts. We learn at school, in the home, in the congregation, on the job, through various media, and in the community.

- Make a commitment in the next month to be of service by helping someone else learn.
- Be a "book buddy" at school or help somebody learn how to run a computer program at work or develop a skill with a tool.

Rituals and Traditions

Prayer:

Lord, you have blessed us to be a blessing to others and grow in wisdom. Help our lives to reflect your grace and will as we serve you. We ask this in your name. Amen.

Bless one another: "May you obey His laws and teachings."

Blessings in home and congregation with intention to do outreach

4 Key Faith Practices Mat



Place a candle in the center

Place a blessing bowl in the center



Add a milestone to the bowl to encourage caring conversations





Backpack Milestone Follow Up

Encouraging a time to check in

An important step after role modeling the Four Keys in a cross-generational or small group setting is to bless and equip families to continue practicing faith by using the Four Keys in their homes.

Approximately one month after the initial event, bring students and families back together for a follow up to continue building relationships and facilitating the Four Keys as an intentional step to encourage faith traditions in the congregation and at home.

Four Keys

Caring Conversations

After school has begun, gather once more for a special time.
Begin with conversation:

- My favorite part of the school day is _____.
- Something I like about my teacher is _____.
- Something I look forward to in school this year is _____.

Devotions

Read Luke 2:52 (CEV)

Jesus became wise, and he grew strong. God was pleased with him and so were the people.

- Jesus became wise and strong. How do you become wise and strong?

Service

- Talk about children who may not have backpacks, lunch money, and school supplies. Go together as a family or group and buy supplies and donate to a local shelter.
- Pray for children who do not have the benefit of an education that they find a means to grow in their knowledge and faith.

Rituals and Traditions

Pray together:

Dear God of knowledge and wisdom, as we are given the opportunity at school to learn something new each day, we ask for your blessing. Help us to develop and grow the gifts you have given us. Remind us that wherever we go, you are always with us. Amen.

Bless one another by making the sign of the cross on one another's foreheads and say, "Jesus goes with you wherever you go."

Reinforcing

Let's take a look at First Cell Phone...



First Cell Phone 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.

Being given a cell phone to use for the first time is on the mind of many youth as parents struggle to make a decision about what age is most appropriate for their child to have a cell phone. A cell phone signals independence and provides youth with many ways to communicate in today's world. From conversations to texts to social media, the world arrives at one's fingertips and this step in the life of a family can be a stressful one for both parents and children. The cost adds concerns and questions about the need for a cell phone. Talking about how a phone will be used is an important conversation for parents to have with their children. This Milestone Moment provides the opportunity for families to address questions, establish guidelines, and connect this new way of communicating with 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 parents deciding it is time for their child to have a cell phone happen in our daily lives. Providing opportunities to find First God's presence in these moments is important. This First Cell Phone Milestone Moment incorporates a simple structure that includes:

Naming – It is important to recognize the changes that take place in relationships and ways to communicate when one gets a cell phone. It is good to acknowledge how God is part of this new means to connect to the world.

Equipping – This Milestone Moment uses the Four Keys for practicing faith outline (see page 2) to connect getting a first cell phone with the life of faith.

Blessing – Praying for youth and families after this decision has been made is a great way to affirm God's presence.

Gifting – Giving a tangible gift like a special sticker for the phone or a customized case for the phone is a good way to help participants be reminded of this Milestone.

Reinforcing – It is beneficial to meet again a couple of weeks after the initial use of the cell phone has begun. Check in and see how it is being used and how life may be different. Encourage honest talk about whether or not guidelines are being followed. It is also helpful to check with one another throughout the year. (See page 2, left column.)



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+ First Cell Phone Milestone Moment For a Small Group or Family Gathering

+ Grow the Church by Growing People in Faith

A follow up for the First Cell Phone Milestone Moment can be done with about how the phone is being used, not, and how having a phone has changed relationships. It also gives to share their own stories and be another along the way. This follow up is best done periodically throughout the year as a check-in.

An important step after experiencing the Four Keys for practicing faith is to continue to practice the Four Keys on a regular basis. Engaging in caring conversations, devotions, service, and rituals and traditions promotes lifelong faith formation in the home.

A suggested resource for continued caring conversations:

Taking Faith Home
Build/Think Cards

Additional Milestones and Milestone Moments can be found at:
www.milestonesministry.org



At the heart of equipping people for their lifelong faith formation are the Four Keys. These faith practices are central to every Milestone and integrated into people's daily lives as well as the life of the larger church. These four daily faith practices are simple, doable, and practical: Caring Conversations, Devotions, Service, and Rituals and Traditions.

Faith in Jesus Christ is at the center of our lives, including the lives of children and those who care for them. Gather together for a meal or snack.

Use this Four Keys for practicing faith outline:

♥ Caring Conversations

Discuss the following questions:

- Parents: What are your concerns about getting a first phone for this young person? Youth: Why is it important to have a cell phone?
- Talk about what would happen if the phone is lost. What steps will be taken by both parents and youth?
- Take time as a family to establish a list of guidelines for using the cell phone. Make a copy of the list and post on the refrigerator or other visible place to be revisited during a follow-up conversation.

📖 Devotions

Read Psalm 19:14 (CEV)

Let my words and my thoughts be pleasing to you, Lord, because you are my mighty rock and my protector.

What we say and how we respond to others makes a difference. In what ways do we reflect God's love through our conversations and thoughts? How can a cell phone be used as a tool to please the Lord?

👤 Service

Many organizations now collect and recycle old cell phones. As a family, collect cell phones not in use from family and friends and deliver to a recycle location.

✝️ Rituals and Traditions

Pray together: *Dear God, help us to trust one another and be honest in our conversations so that our words and thoughts may be pleasing to you. In Jesus' name. Amen.*
Gather as a family and bless one another: *May the Lord bless you with the wisdom to speak pleasing words and show God's love in all the ways you connect with others.*

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Caring Conversation...

Parents: What are your concerns about getting a first phone for this young person?

Youth; Why is it important to have a cell phone?

+ First Cell Phone Milestone Moment

For a Small Group or Family Gathering

+ Grow the Church by Growing People in Faith

A follow up for the First Cell Phone Milestone Moment can be done with caring conversations and prayers about how the phone is being used, whether or not guidelines have been met, and how having a phone has changed relationships. It also gives others in the family the opportunity to share their own stories and be present to guide and support one another along the way. This follow up is best done periodically throughout the year as a check-in.

An important step after experiencing the Four Keys for practicing faith in a small group or family gathering is to continue to practice the Four Keys on a regular basis. Engaging in caring conversations, devotions, service, and rituals and traditions promotes lifelong faith formation in the home.

A suggested resource for continued caring conversations:

Taking Faith Home
BibleTalk® Cards

Additional Milestones and Milestone Moments can be found at:
www.milestoneministry.org



At the heart of equipping people for their lifelong faith formation are the Four Keys. These faith practices are central to every Milestone and integrated into people's daily lives as well as the life of the larger church. These four daily faith practices are simple, doable, and practical: Caring Conversations, Devotions, Service, and Rituals and Traditions.

Faith in Jesus Christ is at the center of our lives, including the lives of children and those who care for them. Gather together for a meal or snack.

Use this Four Keys for practicing faith outline:



Caring Conversations

Discuss the following questions:

- Parents: What are your concerns about getting a first phone for this young person? Youth: Why is it important to have a cell phone?
- Talk about what would happen if the phone is lost. What steps will be taken by both parents and youth?
- Take time as a family to establish a list of guidelines for using the cell phone. Make a copy of the list and post on the refrigerator or other visible place to be revisited during a follow-up conversation.



Devotions

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Debbie's 3 Tips for Leadership

Be Intentional



Set Expectations



Plan for
Accountability

How realistic is it that we can equip homes for faith formation and spiritual growth?



And why is follow up important?

faith formation for all ages and generations



Lifelong Faith

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Journal

Initiatives

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LifelongFaith Associates is committed to helping congregations develop lifelong Christian faith formation for all ages and generations, increasing the capacity of leaders and communities to nurture faith growth in everyone.

<http://www.lifelongfaith.com/>

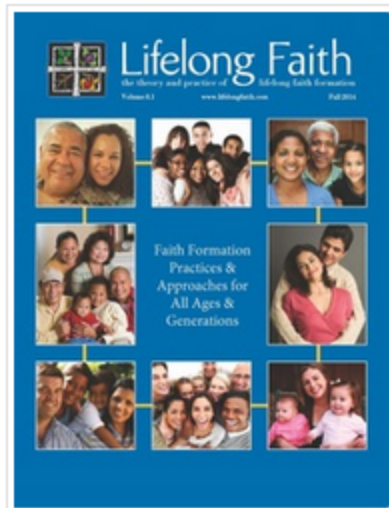
Lifelong Faith Journal

We are providing all issues of the Lifelong Faith Journal as a free service - new issues and back issues. We want every congregation, and individual leaders and students, to have access to the Lifelong Faith Journal. We will continue to produce the Journal with the same great content we have provided for the past seven years—the best thinking and practice in faith formation across the whole life span. Each issue will continue to focus on a particular aspect of lifelong faith formation and include major articles by national experts, book reviews, and practical strategies and program models. Everyone on the Lifelong Faith mailing list will get notices when the new issue is available. Be sure to join the mailing list.

Fall 2014 Lifelong Faith Journal

The Fall 2014 issue of the Lifelong Faith journal presents a variety of articles on "Faith Formation Practices & Approaches for All Ages & Generations." Included in this issue are the following articles.

1. Building Blocks of Faith - Laura Keeley and Robert J. Keeley
2. Children's Faith Formation at Church and Home: Birth to Age 5 - Jolene R. Departain
3. The "Identity Crisis" of the Youth Minister - Lee Yates
4. Responding to the Diversity of Today's Adults - Janet Schaeffler
5. Milestones Ministry: An Effective Model for Lifelong Faith Formation - Debbie Streicher
6. The Intergenerational Top Seven: What You Must Know and Do to Be Successful at Intergenerational Ministry - Jim Merhaut
7. Digital Media for Ministry Brief: Communications and Evangelism - Kyle Matthew Oliver
8. Story and Christian Formation: Using Movies, Video, and Music - Shannon Kelly
9. Down from the Mountaintop: Sustaining the Church Camp Experience at Home - Marlene Bogard



Download your free copy!



Milestones Ministry: An Effective Model for Lifelong Faith Formation

Debbie Streicher

A faith milestone is a marker along life's journey that says, 'This is something important and God is here, too.' It is a faith formation practice for both home and congregation that helps all generations recognize God's presence in everyday life.

David Anderson

In theory, Sunday school is a good model to teach the Christian faith. However, in many congregations across the country, attendance is low and leadership is thirsting for a magic pill to make it all better and move back to the success of the past. We try name changes. We try time changes. We try weaving Christian education into worship services. Across denominations, we have shown concern and been in conversation about the need to revisit the way we plan and execute Christian education programs for more than a decade. *The Teaching Church* by Eugene C. Roehlkepartain and *Educating Congregations: The Future of Christian Education* by Charles Foster were written in the mid-90's. Both are relevant today and are being used by leaders to help re-evaluate the way we do faith formation.

Debbie Streicher is a member of the Milestones Ministry Team serving as a writer, developer, and coach. She also serves as President of the Christian Education Network of the ELCA. Over the past 25 years, Debbie has served in the role of volunteer and on staff for all aspects of Christian education in a congregation. She has facilitated, overseen, organized, and developed faith formation programs from infants through adults. She worked intricately with Faith Incubators resource development and has consulted and led events for congregations using these materials for over 15 years. Debbie has held volunteer leadership roles in education and evangelism at synod and national levels for 12+ years. Her vision is to involve all ages in faith formation, strengthen family relationships through spiritual growth, and empower God-given gifts to do ministry.

Lifelong Faith Fall 2014

New Job	Teen-Adult	Jan
Empty Nest	Adult	March
Prayer	All Ages	April

All milestone (both congregational and daily life) events include the entire family, friends, and relatives. They happen in large gathering settings and in the home. We recently celebrated my husband's retirement in our home. We invited friends, family, and neighbors.

- ♦ **Naming:** This was a time to recognize my husband's retirement and transition to a new lifestyle.
- ♦ **Equipping:** We enjoyed dinner together, showed pictures of his work history, and engaged in caring conversations.
- ♦ **Blessing:** Each person present passed a stone with retirement written on it and gave a wish about my husband's retirement and gave him a blessing. We said a prayer.
- ♦ **Gifting:** The gift was the stone as a remembrance of the occasion.
- ♦ **Reinforcing:** The stone is a reminder every day of this special time. We often reflect on the stone and plan to intentionally revisit the topic of retirement and talk about how life has changed at the end of the year.

I asked our pastor how many have retired in our congregation in the past year. The answer was 15 or more. I have begun to think about those 15 and about their friends who may have retired also. What milestones can be recognized in your own congregation and community this year?

Milestones Outside the Church Walls

It is not unusual to recognize baptism, first bibles, a mission trip, or entering Sunday school, but I invite you to think beyond these and consider how to recognize other

milestones in the lives of those in our communities.

Is there a middle or high school nearby? Is there a nursing home in the area? Is there a military base close by the church? What are the needs of these people? What would invite them into a relationship with Christ? What would make them want to give their time?

Is the church near a nursing home?

Celebrate 70, 80, and 90 year old birthdays. Go to them or invite them along with their families to come to you. Or honor and bless caregivers for those individuals. Both family and staff are caregivers. Those in their 70's, 80's, and 90's are the ones who filled our churches over the years. How can we recognize this?

Is the church near a middle school?

Celebrate birthdays for the month. Post a banner outside the church and name one day each month where you have a party for teens. Invest in a large TV and updated video games. Provide free internet service, or invite one of the high school or middle school bands or musicians to participate. Take time for a blessing and prayer. Equip families with ideas and tools to celebrate their own teen's special day in their home with a prayer and blessing.

Is the church near a military base?

Families are constantly in transition on a base. There are some leaving for deployment and others returning. Recognize both occasions and invite families and singles for a time to be together and celebrate this significant time in their lives.

A New Venture

This past August, David Anderson and I were asked to manage Milestones Ministry (www.milestonesministry.org). David's wife, Gloria, and my husband, Burt, complete the team in our new venture together. We are committed to practicing these milestones

Lifelong Faith Fall 2014



Passing on Faith—Milestone to Milestone

Linda Staats

*In the future, when your children ask you, "What do these stones mean?"
Tell them... (Joshua 4:6-7)*

Julie and her peers at All Saints were called forward during worship to receive a blanket as a high school graduation gift from the congregation. These were not just any blankets; each young person's name was embroidered on one corner, and a symbol of the cross and the words *All Saints* appeared on the other. As the blankets were wrapped around the shoulders of Julie and each graduate, a blessing was given: "The arms of the congregation are wrapped around you as you go out into the world. This blanket is a reminder of our love for you, and that you are covered in God's grace and wrapped in the arms of Jesus. You are God's child and marked with the sign of the cross forever." There wasn't a dry eye among those assembled during this service, which is a highlight of the year for the congregation. But there was also a twinkle in the eye of the small group of wise elders known as the Cat Ups, whose experienced hands and hearts lovingly contributed their time, talents, and prayers to making each blanket.

But this is not the end of the story. In the fall, Julie wrote to me:

Dear Linda,

Months have passed since I graduated and left for college. I want to thank you for coordinating the graduation milestone. The blanket lies on the end of my bed. It does more than add color to my room and keep me warm. The adjustment to college has not been easy, finding new friends and freedom from the watchful eyes of my parents—and you! Every time I have a tough decision to make about what to do or how to fit in, all I need to do is look at the blanket and I remember who I am and whose I am. I am reminded of all who care and pray for me.

Gotta go!

Love, Julie

Linda Staats is the Director of HomeGrown Faith Ministries. With an M.S. in Human Development and the Family from the University of Nebraska, Linda brings a life span approach to ministry and a passion for passing on faith through a vital partnership between congregation and home. Linda provides vision and leadership for faith-based organizations, incorporating the gifts and stories of all generations. Prior to serving as a partner with The Youth & Family Institute and independent facilitator and consultant, Linda served as Assistant to the Bishop, Minister for Faith Formation, for the ELCA Grand Canyon Synod. The author may be contacted at lstatts@tyfi.org.

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A Milestones Focus on Adults: Replacing Programs with Relationships

Debbie Streicher

If we want Christian children and youth, we need Christian adults.

In our urgency to 'grow the church', we look around and see an aging congregation and jump to the conclusion that by adding a staff person or a volunteer position to specifically work with youth, our problems are solved. Surely adding someone on staff to help with youth or finding a new program to address declining numbers will make a difference. Time and time again we are finding these are false assumptions. There is no magic pill. As leaders in the church, what are we to do? I believe it is time to embrace the reality in our congregations. In

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Lifelong Faith Spring-Summer 2015

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Milestones as a Means to Empower and Equip Lives of Faith

Debbie Streicher

A milestone is an action or event marking a significant change or stage in development. Birthdays, anniversaries, new homes, new jobs, getting a driver's license, learning to ride a bike, and graduating from high school or college are all examples of times of significant change in our lives. But how many of the events listed are used as opportunities to help empower and equip children, youth, and adults with the ability to grow in their faith? Empowerment leads to spiritual growth and engagement in a faith journey.

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Faith Markers Ministry: Marking Each Child's Faith Journey

Mennonite Church

Faith Markers Ministry honors a child's steps along the pathway toward believers baptism and church membership. Children are already in relationship with God and capable of growing in faith. Faith Markers are significant for the children and youth, their families, and the church community. A ritual of blessing reminds children that they are an integral part of the faith community. Faith recognition reminds parents of their role in shaping faith in their children at home. And the church community affirms its promise to be partners in forming faith in all ages.

Faith Milestones as a Tool to Grow Relationships Debbie Streicher

Celebrating a milestone in our lives is important. Birthdays, anniversaries, graduations, and the list goes on. We can all think of a time when a milestone in our life was uplifted by our families with a party where friends and relatives gathered to honor important times in our lives. We received gifts and felt loved. It is good to be surrounded by many people who care about our lives and are with us for those special times. These times in our lives bring us together in an intergenerational setting where memories are made. We seldom forget about them and often seek to gather again with the same group of people to celebrate other milestones for ourselves and for others in the group.

Milestones of Faith: Creating Rhythms through Rites of Passage

Steven Johnson

What does faith development look like in our community from birth to when our kids go off to college and beyond? Conversations turned into ideas, then into small events and shifts, then moved into consistent programs, and eventually the whole church caught the vision for milestones.

One Home at a Time

Jennifer Hooks

Explore the Legacy Milestones approach that Brian Haynes and Kingsland Baptist Church use to create a common path that integrates church and home in spiritual formation through a path of seven milestones.

Through the Zone: Creating Rites of Passage in Your Church

Brad M. Griffin

What constitutes a rite of passage, and what doesn't? What is the place of rites of passage within our culture, within the church, and within the family? How can the celebration of such rites empower adolescents to transition more effectively into adulthood?

<http://www.faithformationlearningexchange.net/>

ange.net/uploads/5/2/4/6/5246709/faith_milestones.pdf

Use milestones as a powerful way to engage parishioners of all ages and stages of life in



Adult / Couple



Each season--spring, summer, winter, fall--we post more than fifty new faith-forming activities and articles. Here you will find links to all activities for Adult / Couple, current and past seasons alike.

Caring Conversation

- [Asking Questions▶](#)
- [Christmas Decisions – Bah Humbug▶](#)
- [Couples & Politics▶](#)
- [Date Night Deck of Cards▶](#)
- [Don't Tell Me Don't▶](#)
- [End of Life▶](#)
- [Fair Labor at Home▶](#)
- [Faith and Depression▶](#)
- [Fighting Fair▶](#)
- [Give Up Complaining▶](#)
- [I Do, I Do, I Won't▶](#)
- [Life without a Partner▶](#)
- [Listening▶](#)
- [Lovemaking▶](#)
- [Ordinary to Extraordinary▶](#)
- [Personality Differences▶](#)
- [Surviving a Troubled Marriage▶](#)

<http://www.vibrantfaithathome.org/>

[HOME](#)[OUR TEAM](#)[MILESTONES](#)[TAKING FAITH HOME](#)[OUTREACH](#)[COACHING](#)[STORE](#)[FAITH FORMATION IN ACTION](#)

75 Blessings for Life's Milestones

For Everything a Season written by The Nilsen Family has been a favorite resource for congregations since 1999 and been out of print in the last year.


Connect with us:

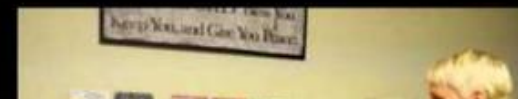


Sign Up for Enews

Milestones in Action

Watch a video about Kristen Baltrum's Household Ministry Resource Room.

Bethlehem Lutheran Household Ministry Reso... 



www.milestonesministry.org

Essential Settings:

- Home
- Congregation
- Digital World



The Goal:

- Lifelong Faith Formation
- Relationships over Programs
- Be Strategic for the World, not the Congregation

How will you.....?

Be Intentional



Set Expectations



Plan for
Accountability

Two ears, one
mouth....



Embracing
opportunities to
equip and
empower means
listening !

Reflect on what it means to :
**Be in a role to equip others to grow in
their faith..**

**Be a Christian faith role model for others.
In whose life have you and can we make a
difference?**

En"theo"asm

It begins with us!

This Pwr Pt PDF can be found at
www.milestonesministry.org
Under the Toolbox Tab



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How would I use this devotion?

APRIL 19, 2015
THIRD SUNDAY
OF EASTER

taking⁺
faith
home

The risen Jesus sends us out to witness for him.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

These readings are related to the Lectionary readings for this Sunday.
We invite you to take time each day to read the assigned Bible passages.

Sunday	Luke 24:36b-48	Witnesses of these things
Monday	Acts 1:1-8	You will be my witnesses
Tuesday	Acts 5:17-32	The apostles share the message of new life
Wednesday	Acts 10:34-43	The witness of the apostles
Thursday	Acts 13:13-31, 38-39	Paul's proclamation in Antioch
Friday	Acts 18:1-11	Paul gives witness in Corinth
Saturday	Psalms 150	Praise the Lord
Sunday	John 10:11-18	The Good Shepherd

SCRIPTURE VERSE FOR THIS WEEK

You killed the one who gives life. But God raised him from the dead.
We are witnesses of this. Acts 3:15

SAY, PRAY AND BLESS:

A Prayer for the Week:

Lord Jesus, please open our minds to understand the Scriptures, and our mouths to speak of you. Amen. (Luke 24:45,48)

Mealtime Prayer:

God bless our food, God guide our ways, God give us strength to declare your praise. Amen.

A Blessing to Give:

May the Lord Jesus give you peace, faith, and power to tell others about him. Amen.



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Written by Pr. Greg Priebbenow.

APRIL 19, 2015
THIRD SUNDAY
OF EASTER

taking⁺
faith
home

CARING CONVERSATIONS

Discuss in your household or small group:

- Who first told you about Jesus? Who and what have helped you learn about him over time?
- Jesus said that his disciples would be "witnesses" for him (Luke 24:48). What is a witness?
- In what ways are you a witness for Jesus to others? Share about your joys and your challenges in speaking to others about Jesus.

DEVOTIONS

Jesus calls his followers to be his witnesses, to share with others their faith in him (Luke 24:46-47). In your household prayer times this week, pray for relatives, friends, or neighbors who are not Christians. Ask for God's help to share Jesus with them in word and deed.

SERVICE

April 22 (Tuesday) is observed across the world as EARTH DAY. For Christians, Earth Day is an occasion to thank God for creation and reflect on how we might better care for what we have been given. Discuss ways in which your household can act to better protect the environment, such as using less power at home, recycling waste, planting trees and collecting litter. Commit to one act of environmental care this week.

RITUALS AND TRADITIONS

Psalms 4:8 says, "In peace I will lie down and sleep, for you alone, O Lord, will keep me safe." The end of the day is a good time to slow down, reflect on the day, and focus on God's place at the center of our lives. Rituals that help us do this can have a powerful "witnessing" influence in our home lives. Consider incorporating these ideas into the bedtime routine:

- Share the "highs" and "lows" from the day.
- Read a Bible story or a brief Bible passage.



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