



# Recognizing God in a Changing World Through Milestones

By Debbie Streicher



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





Baptism



Entering  
Sunday  
School



Communion



First Bible



Beginning  
Confirmation



Confirmation



Anniversary  
of Baptism



Graduation

Faith related  
milestones  
recognize God in  
the moment.

Milestones celebrated in the  
congregation

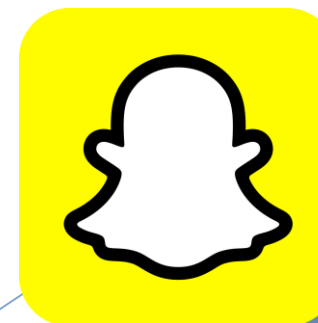


Then in 2020...

The New Reality = The New Normal



Google







Forced to think beyond programs  
happening within the walls!

Masks, Social  
Distancing,  
Technology

## Technical

- Challenges can be solved with the knowledge, skills, and tools already in hand
- Require change in one or two places

Finding ways to  
connect have  
been challenging!

## Adaptive

- Challenges can be solved through experimentation, innovation, adjustments through the organization
- Requires changes of heart and mind

How are we  
adapting to  
our lives in  
2020?

Published in Lifelong Faith by John Roberto



We are accustomed to people coming to us.  
What happens when we go to them?



# We have been adapting to faith formation happening primarily in the home.

School at home...work at home...why not church at home?



Embrace the new normal!

- The home is 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 home?
- Milestones is a good place to start!





## Milestone occasions:

- ▶ Encourage lifelong faith formation
- ▶ Focus on relationships rather than programs
- ▶ Are strategic in supporting all generations to develop rituals and traditions and encourage recognizing God's presence in everyday living.



What does lifelong faith formation look like through the milestones lens?

Beginnings and Completions



- Birth of a Baby
- First tooth
- First home
- Getting a job
- Empty nest
- Report Card
- Medicare



Getting a Driver's License



Becoming a Grandparent



Retirement

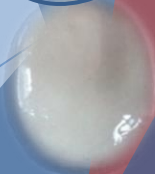


Aging Parent

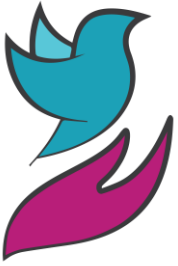


- Loss of a pet
- First Cell Phone
- Losing a Tooth
- Learning to ride a bike
- Back to School
- End of School Year
- Learning to play an instrument

????



Recognizing milestones in our homes and everyday living.



During the  
pandemic!



# Examples of Forming Faith Through Milestones

Congregation and the Home



# Congregation Example



## + High School Graduation Milestone: Equipping Graduates for the Journey

- Desired Outcomes**
- Connect a graduate's choices for an intentional faith journey with all the other new choices for his or her future.
  - Reaffirm the graduate's and his or her family's commitment to new ways of staying in touch with faith traditions at home and in the congregation.
  - Experience blessings that keep the graduate in the love and grace of family, congregation and God.
  - Receive a fun-filled laundry bag of handy items or other gifts as a practical reminder of the faith-filled community that wishes to surround the graduate in the new journeys.

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## + Confirmation Milestone: An Evening of Honor

### Desired Outcomes

- Affirm the
- service to
- Name and



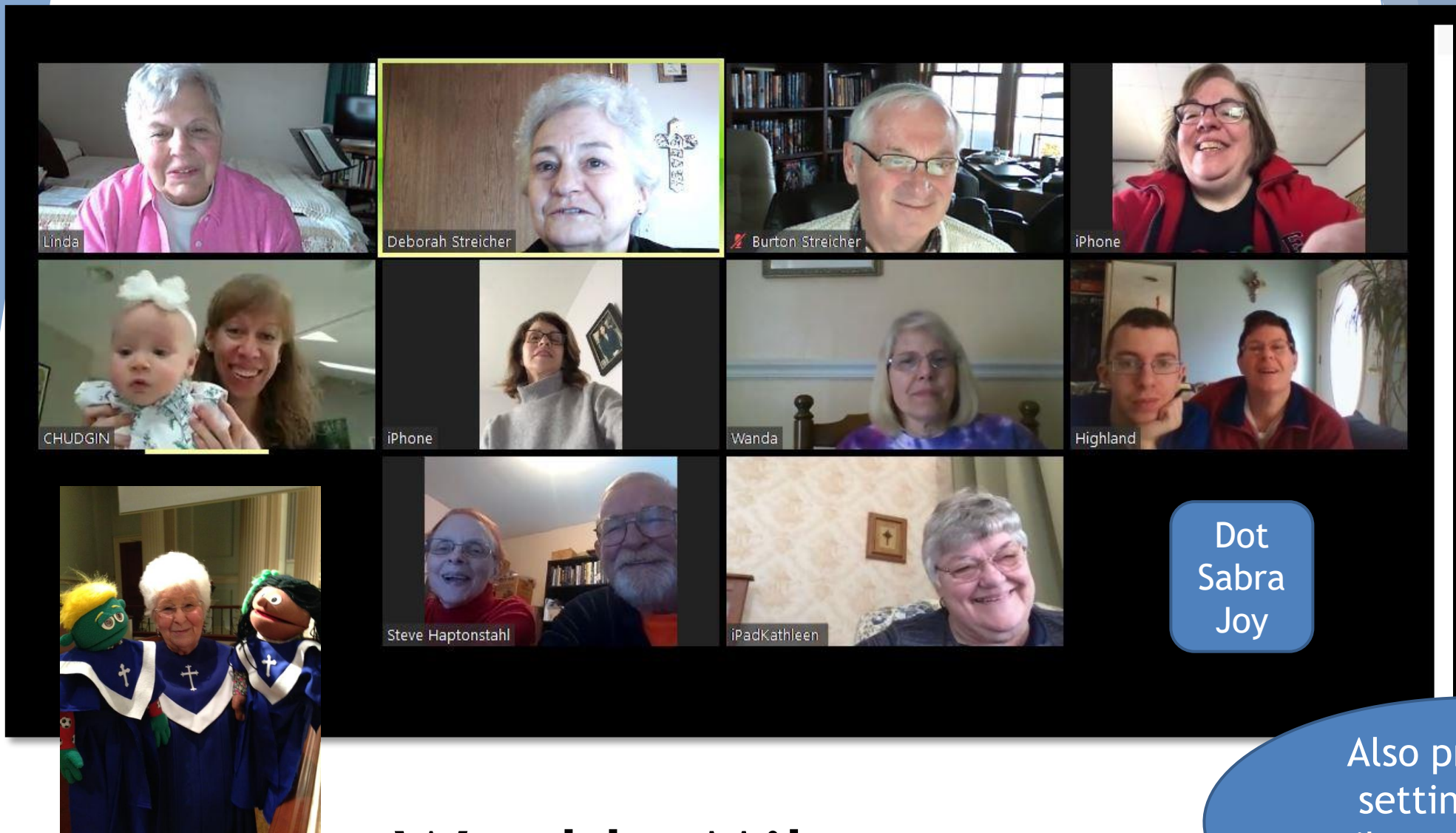
## + Communion Milestone: Learning More about the Lord's Supper

### Desired Outcomes

- Appreciate and understand more deeply the mystery of Holy Communion.
- Understand Holy Communion within the context of the Jewish Seder meal and the last supper of Jesus.
- Prepare for first communion.

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# Weekly Milestones

Also provides a setting where milestones can be recognized

# Home Example



**MILESTONES MINISTRY**

**Retirement Milestone: A Major Life Transition**

*"Retirement is not a destination, it is a journey."*  
— Richard L. Morgan

**Desired Outcomes**

- Mark and acknowledge retirement as an important rite of passage.
- Celebrate a person's contributions and work in daily life in his or her faith community.
- Name a person's gifts, skills and life experiences.
- Link God's Story with the retiree's vocational story.
- Share the retiree's wisdom and faith with all generations.
- Surround retiree with resources and support to discern God's call to continued service or "re-retirement."

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**MILESTONES MINISTRY**

**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 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 Christian faith together with caring words, prayers, and 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 incorporates 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.

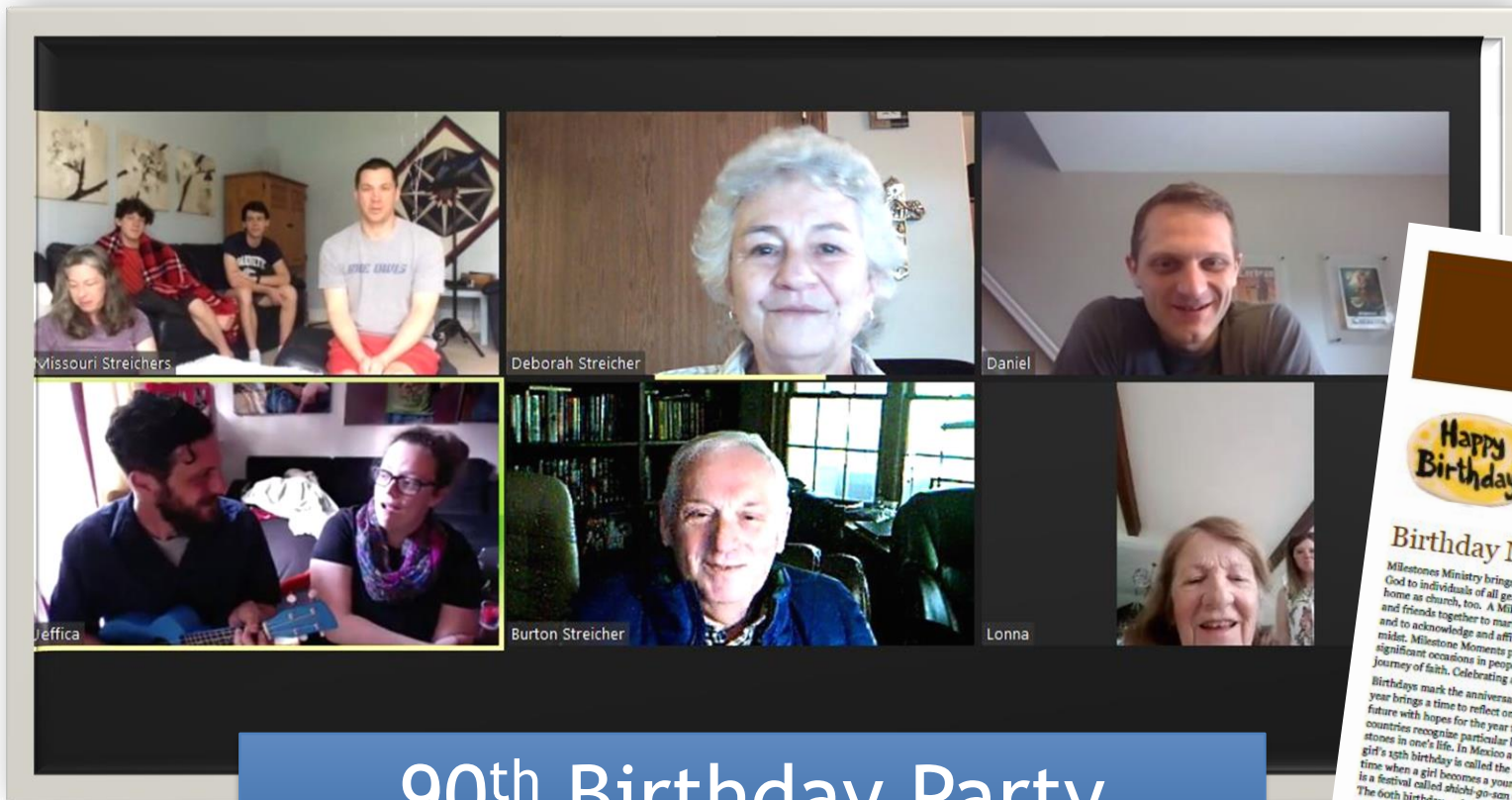
**Equipping** – This Milestone Moment encourages caring conversations that draw out thoughts and concerns about healing.

**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 help the person while the cast is still on.

**Reinforcing** – It is a good idea to follow up after the time after the cast has been removed to share stories about life with and without a cast on and give thanks for healing.

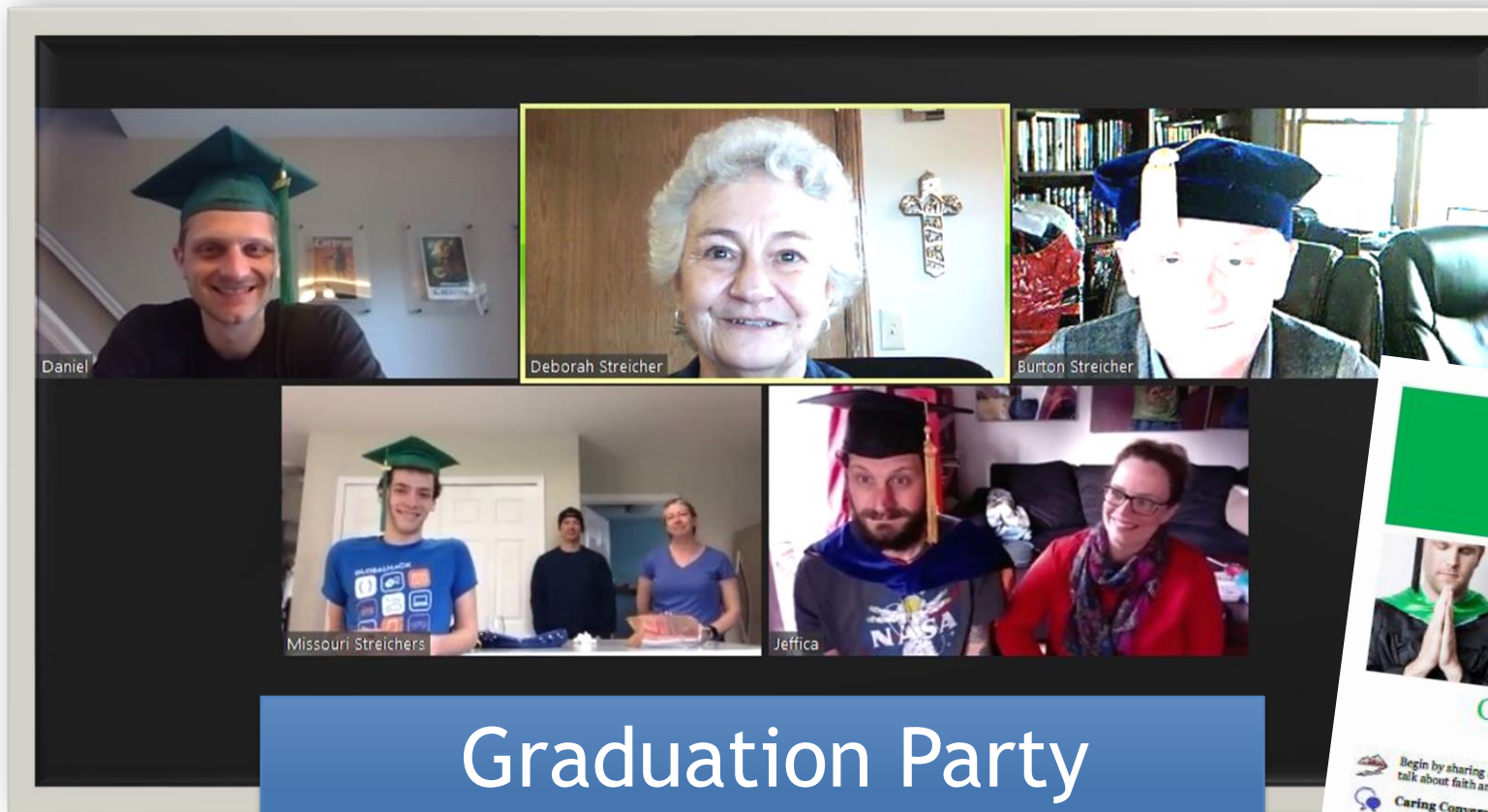




## 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday Party

- Hotspot Link
- Send Gifts
- Sing
- Virtual Card (American Greetings, 1,2,3)
- Blessing





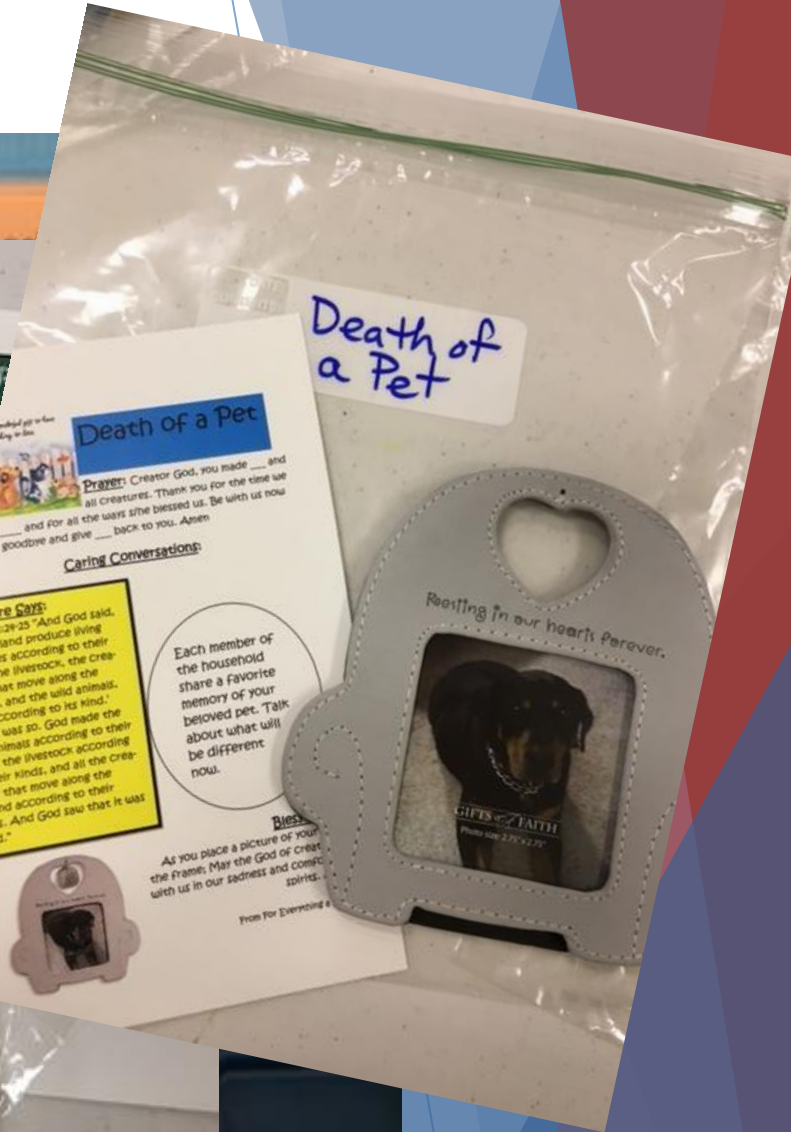
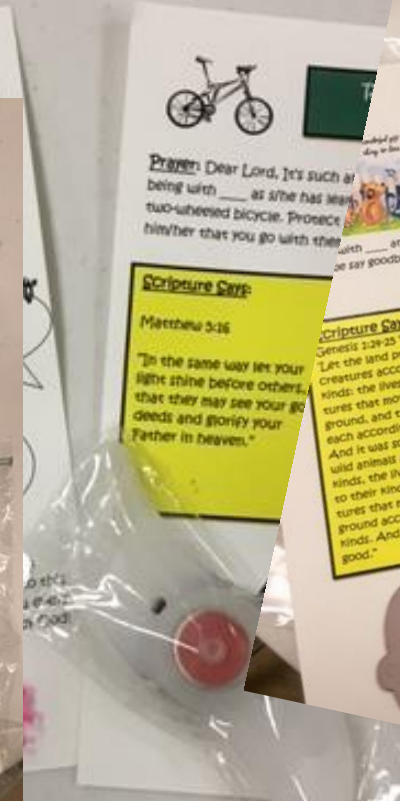
# Graduation Party

- Caps
- Highs and Lows
- Send Gifts
- Video of Years
- Memories
- Prayer and Blessing

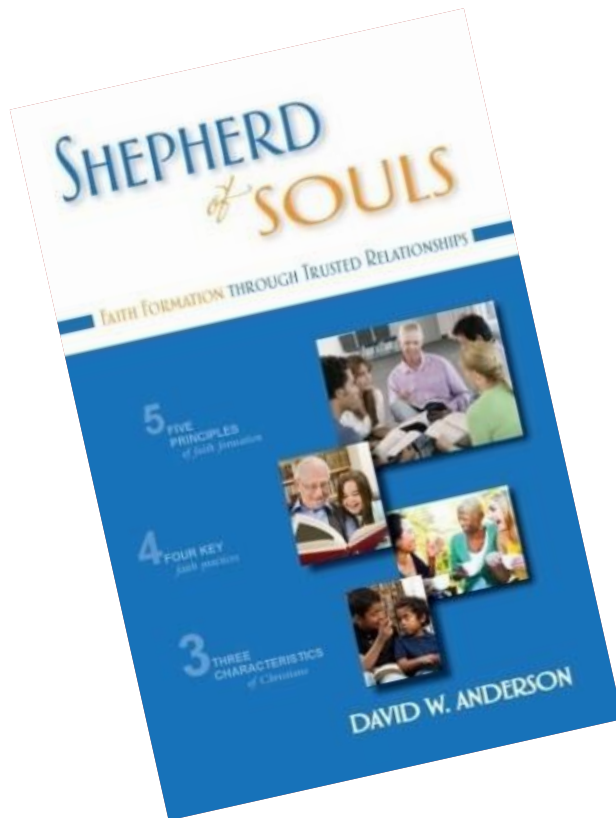




# Packets for the Home



# Where do we start?



- Name it
- Equip it
- Bless it
- Gift it
- Reinforce it

Chapter 6:  
Milestones Ministry: A Model for  
Shepherding





# Name it!



Name a meaningful moment in one's life as a faith moment.



# Equip it!

Equip participants with the Four Key Faith Practices so that it becomes a faith formation experience.





# Bless it!

Bless the people with prayers that name the moment as an occasion to receive the love of God in Christ and the love of others from the body of Christ.



# Gift it!



Gift the recipients of the milestone moment with something visible to help them recall the event as a special time to connect daily life experiences with the word of God in order to nurture the Christian faith.





# Reinforce it!

Reinforce the milestone by reconnecting with the participants in the milestone event to help them continue the journey of faith formation. Checking in with people is key to both effective milestones ministry and to shepherding souls.



Name it

First Cell Phone

Mountain Highs and Valley Lows  
Caring Conversations related to the event.

Equip it

Bless it

Prayer and Blessing

Give a cell phone case, Bible App, or cell phone  
holder

Gift it

Reinforce it

Schedule a monthly call or text to check in with  
one another





# Milestone Moment

MILESTONES  
MINISTRY

"You are not only responsible for what you say, but also for what you do not say."  
— Martin Luther



## 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 decide it is time for change happen in our daily lives. God's presence in the Cell Phone Milestone structure that includes:

**Naming** – It is in the taking place in relation to one gets a cell phone part of this new

**Equipping** – Faith Practice cell phone with

**Blessing** – blessing after affirm God

**Gifting** – phone or help pay

**Reinforcing** – weeks, check, difficult, guide, with

Four Key Faith Practices

Caring Conversations

Devotions

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MILESTONES  
MINISTRY

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Four Key Faith Practices

## First Cell Phone Discussion Guide



Begin by sharing a recent mountain high and/or valley low in your lives and then use the discussion guide to discuss use and responsibilities when getting a cell phone.



### 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 the following: *Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.* Psalm 19:14 (NRSV)

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 in a way that is acceptable to 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 acceptable words and show God's love in all the ways you connect with others.*

## Cell Phone Milestone Moment

Group or Family Gathering

At the heart of equipping people for their lifelong faith formation are the Four Key Faith Practices: Caring Conversations, Devotions, Service, and Rituals and Traditions. They provide an opportunity for people to learn, experience, and grow in their faith together. The next page is a discussion guide to assist with the conversations.



As you gather together, begin by sharing a recent mountain high and/or valley low in your lives and then use the outline below to discuss use and responsibilities when getting a cell phone.



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Name it

End of Chemo

Mountain Highs and Valley Lows  
Caring Conversations related to the event.

Equip it

Bless it

Prayer and Blessing

A bell with name engraved on it.

Gift it

Yearly cards and check in.

Reinforce it



Name it

First Instrument

Mountain Highs and Valley Lows  
Caring Conversations related to the event.

Equip it

Bless it

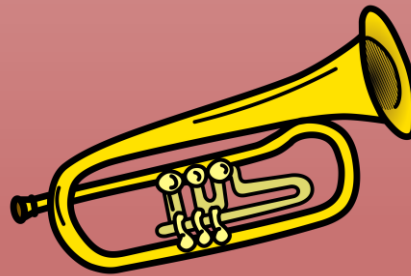
Prayer and Blessing

Give a music stand, name tag, etc.

Gift it

Check in: what are you learning?  
Opportunity to play faith-filled music?

Reinforce it



*Ideas submitted :*

- Birth of a Sibling
- Going Off to College
- Learning to Ride a Bike
- Spring Cleaning
- Engagement
- Getting a New Instrument
- Spring Planting
- Beginning of Sport Season
- Losing a Tooth
- Kiss-Off Chemo

- New Pet
- First Paycheck
- Closing of a Workplace
- Getting Braces
- Critical Illness/Cancer
- Change of Job
- Adoption
- Miscarriage
- New Sibling

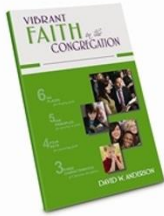
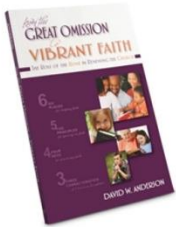


*“Milestones Ministry is filled with ingredients that promote shepherding souls: Scripture, faith traditions, caring conversations, blessings, and prayer - all put together in a bowl that looks a lot like community life that seeks to support and care for one another for a lifetime. As such, the result of this recipe for ministry helps people move from the more passive and silent life of a Christian to the more active life of a Christian missionary who knows how to speak the faith out loud.”*

David W. Anderson, author  
Shepherd of Souls: Faith Formed Through Trusting Relationships

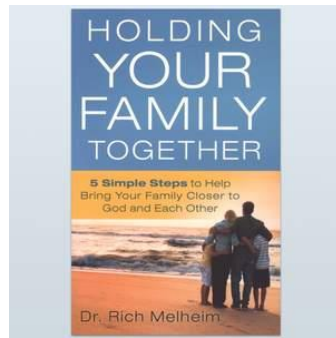


An important  
ingredient...establish  
faith practices!



## Four Key Faith Practices

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

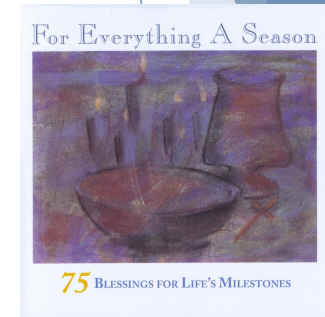


## FAITH5

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

## For Everything a Season

1. Welcome
2. Prayer
3. Bible Reading
4. Reflection
5. Ritual Action



Common  
Language

Mountain Highs  
and/or Valley Lows

Devotions

Rituals and  
Traditions



Do not worry  
about anything, but in  
everything by prayer  
and supplication with  
thanksgiving let your  
requests be made  
known to God.  
— Philippians 4:6

## Coronavirus Conversations Discussion Guide



Begin by sharing a recent mountain high and/or valley low in your lives, then use the outline below to talk about faith and God's presence in this moment.



### Caring Conversations

Discuss these thoughts and questions:

- What concerns you about the coronavirus pandemic?
- With restaurants, gyms, and theaters closed, how do you spend your time?
- When worship services are canceled, in what way can you worship from home?



### Devotions

Read the following:

*Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? Matthew 6:25-30 (NRSV)*

- What message do you hear in this reading related to the affect the coronavirus has had on our lives?
- How has the coronavirus impacted your faith life?



### Service

There are many who are elderly or immune compromised. During this time of the coronavirus pandemic, it is important they stay at home and be quarantined from others. In what way can a neighbor who may be in need of food or supplies at this time?



### Rituals and Traditions

Pray together: The Lord's Prayer.

Conclude by blessing one another:

*May God take away your worries and fill you with peace through Christ our Lord.*

Caring  
Conversations

Service





Child  
&  
Youth  
Milestones

18 Modules



Adult Milestones

12 Modules

HOME ABOUT MILESTONES TAKING FAITH HOME BOOKS COACHING FAITH STORIES TOOLBOX STORE

# What if you want to design your own?

Recognizing God's presence in the home

Free Downloadable Resource for Social Distancing Covid-19- (partial November)

new third page. We have been listening and appreciate your feedback!

The third page is the discussion guide and outline for use in small groups or the home.

\$39.95

*Where Christ is present in faith, the home is church, too!*

View the "how to" videos

Milestone Moments provide a model for



Milestone  
Moments

35 Moments

[www.milestonesministry.org](http://www.milestonesministry.org)

## For Everything A Season



**75** BLESSINGS FOR LIFE'S MILESTONES

Available in digital format as individual or multiple copies for congregations.

Mary Ylvisaker Nilsen, Rev. Per Nilsen,  
Rev. Kai Nilsen, Linnea Nilsen Capshaw,  
Rev. Solveig Nilsen-Goodin,  
and Rev. Erika Nilsen

Each ritual has a welcome, prayer, time for reflection, suggested ritual action such as lighting a candle or passing a blessing cup, and a closing blessing. They can be done by families, other groups, or by someone alone. These accessible blessings help to transform ordinary moments in time and space into holy moments of timeless grace.



[www.familiesatthecenter.com](http://www.familiesatthecenter.com)

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





## Adult / Couple

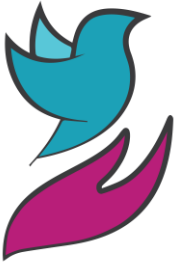


Each season--spring, summer, winter, fall--we post more than fifty new faith-forming activities and articles. Here you will find links to all activities for Adult / Couple, current and past seasons alike.

### 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/>



## Debbie's Leadership Tips:

Be Intentional



Set Expectations



Plan for  
Accountability

In the context  
and setting of  
our changing  
world.

# Let's Do It

## Follow-up Conversation

- Name it
- Equip it
- Bless it
- Gift it
- Reinforce it







Tell about existing milestones in your setting and how you have been doing them.

Tell us what your own milestone design looks like as we learn from one another.

Closing  
Thought

P: The peace of Christ be with you.  
C: And also with you!

*Paul (mentor) to Timothy (apprentice) references Timothy's mother and grandmother as faith role models.*

Rev. Caitlin Glass Kurtz

*You then, my child, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus; and what you have heard from me through many witnesses entrust to faithful people who will be able to teach others as well.*

2 Timothy 2:1-2



[HOME](#)

[MILESTONES ▾](#)

[TAKING FAITH HOME](#)

[TOOLBOX](#)

[FAITH FORMATION STORIES](#)

[COACHING](#)

[ABOUT](#)

[STORE](#)

*Growing the  
church  
by growing  
people in faith*



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