

CHRIST LUTHERAN CHURCH *of Alamo Heights*

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CHRIST
LUTHERAN
CHURCH

Stepping Stones ministry

Come to him, a
LIVING STONE...
precious in Gods
sight, and like
living stones, let
yourselves be built
into a spiritual
house.

-1 Peter 2:4-5

Welcome!

Dear Parents,

Life transitions provide a natural opportunity for marking faith milestones. At Christ Lutheran Church, we celebrate these milestones throughout the life of children and young adults in order to support the faith life of the entire family. We do this through our *Stepping Stones Ministry*.

Stepping Stones Ministry has been at the center of our church for nearly a decade. It is our way of equipping the entire family so parents are prepared throughout the faith journey of their child. We do this by placing a strong emphasis on key faith points, then celebrating and blessing each child, provides valuable resources for parents and guardians, and calls parents back to the promise they made at their child's baptism.

These biblically-based spiritual practices happen both in the home and the congregation in order to help all generations

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recognize God's presence in our life. Christ Lutheran Church seeks to partner with families through education and a supportive community.

Each Stepping Stone marks a specific faith milestone. Parents are invited to attend a special class for their child, are provided resources for that part of the

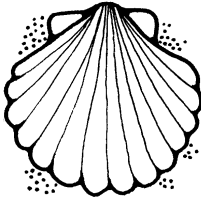
faith journey, and then the entire family is blessed during worship and given a gift to help mark the Stepping Stone.

If you have questions at anytime about the *Stepping Stones Ministry* at Christ Lutheran Church, please don't hesitate to contact the church. You can ask for our staff member, Dianna Hopkins who is the Director of Faith Formation & Family Life, or Elizabeth Diggs, the volunteer Stepping Stones Coordinator.

Much Love and Blessings,

Dianna Hopkins & Elizabeth Diggs

Baptism



Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

-Matthew 28:19

Baptism is the sacrament of grace that marks our entry into the community of faith, the body of Christ and the church. At the baptism of infants and children, parents make a promise to raise the children in the faith. This begins the faith journey which **Stepping Stones Ministry** will guide and nurture.

Age

Traditionally, we baptize infants and children. However, baptism happens at all ages!!

Event & Dates

Parents meet with the Pastor to set a date for their child's baptism, and to receive specific instructions about the baptism of their child. The Pastor will also help parents determine appropriate Sponsors (or God Parents), and what their rolls should be. Then, a class for parents is held annually for all families who have had their child baptized in the last 6 months. This class focuses on the faith development of the child, gives parents an overview of the Mile Stone Ministry, and shows how the church supports parents in their baptismal promises. Participating in the child's baptism will help parents grow in faith along with their children. This enrichment class will help parents understand the importance of nurturing the faith life of children through the divine gift of Baptism. Additionally, this is a great way to meet other families with children!

Blessing

The service of Holy Baptism brings the child and the family together at the font for the baptismal blessing. At Christ Lutheran Church, we do public baptisms during worship on Sunday mornings. The specific date is set with the Pastor in advance.

Gift

The child and the family receive a baptismal candle which is lit on baptismal anniversaries, a certificate for the family to keep, and a certificate for the sponsors.

Graduation



For I know the plans I have for you, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart."

-Jeremiah 29:11-13

Graduation from high school marks life as an independent adult, and it is a time when young adults move toward making their own life decisions. We want to help mark this joyful and difficult transition for parents and youth by helping them give thanks for each other, and looking at the road ahead for the graduate's life in the church.

Age

12th Grade

Event

Parents will attend a class in January of the senior year to talk about the first year away from home. During this meeting, families are given details and instructions about the Graduation Blessing in May.

Blessing

Graduates and their families will come forward for a special prayer, blessing, and recognition during Sunday worship. There will also be a space designated for each graduate to display awards and memorabilia, as well as a slide show for the congregation to view.

Gift

During worship, the congregation gives a gift to the graduate of a blanket to take with them. This blanket will provide warmth as well as remind them of their church home and their relationship with Christ.

Date

A parent meeting is held in January, and the blessing is in May.

Witness & Service



Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."

-Matthew 9:37-38

WITNESS & SERVICE helps youth to open their eyes and hearts to others within our community in need. Youth in this age learn more about their responsibility as a young adult in the world, and how they can make a positive impact on others.

Age

11th Grade

Event

Youth choose, plan and execute a service project for "Join Hands Day". This event is funded by Thrivent Financials for Lutherans. Youth must complete all paperwork related to Thrivent, set-up publicity, and run the event. Adult support is available, but this is a youth led project.

Blessing

Youth will come forward for a special prayer, blessing, and recognition during Sunday worship after the event has taken place.

Gift

Youth are given a mission heart pin to remind them of the service to others.

Date

Join Hands Day and the worship blessing happen in May each year.

Baptismal Birthday



There is one body and one Spirit just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.

-Ephesians 4:4-6

Baptismal Birthday is a way to mark the significance of baptism each year. On the first Baptismal Birthday, we list the child's name in the bulletin and in the prayers during worship. This is our special way of honoring your child. We hope that you will light the baptismal candle and celebrate with your child at home each year. Additionally, children and youth will receive Baptismal Birthday cards from the congregation until they graduate High School.

Age

We celebrate Baptismal Birthday's each year until High School graduation.

Event & Gift

The child's name is printed in the bulletin and said during the prayers during worship on the first anniversary of the baptism, while a "Birthday" card will come each year to the child.

Date

The celebration of the anniversary will vary depending on the child's date of baptism.

Learning Bible Stories



Your Word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path.
-Psalm 119:105

LEARNING BIBLE STORIES during early childhood is the first step children have to hear faith stories. The Bible is our lifelong source of learning, guidance, and hope. Early childhood is a wonderful time to recognize the importance of education for the child, and the role of the family in mentoring the faith.

Age

Two years old

Event

A family event during the Sunday School hour will take place annually to share Bible stories, and provide parents resources and examples of how faith formation can happen in the home.

Blessing

Children and their families will come forward for a special prayer, blessing, and recognition during Sunday worship.

Gift

A "Beginners Story Bible"

Date

The class and worship blessing are offered in March each year.

Letting Go... ...Letting God



Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

-John 14:27

LETTING GO...LETTING GOD... is a wonderful opportunity for parents to prepare for the transition graduation brings. The process of letting go starts during the 10th grade year as major milestones begin to happen, such as receiving a drivers license, classes intensifying, friendships deepening, and college preparation begins.

Age

10th Grade

Event

Two meeting events happen for this Stepping Stone. First, parents meet with Elizabeth Diggs and receive resources to help them process and cope with the coming changes. Youth meet with Dianna Hopkins, Director of Faith Formation, to talk about responsibility, and the "what now" life is offering.

Blessing

Children and their families will come forward for a special prayer, blessing, and recognition during Sunday worship.

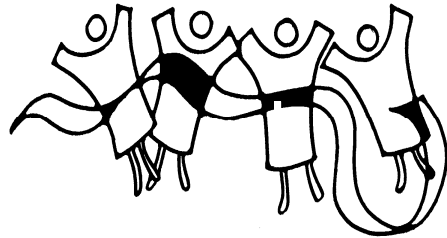
Gift

Youth are given a key chain to remind them of their connection to God as new doors are being opened. Parents are given a pocket cross to remind them of God's eternal love and support for them.

Date

The class and worship blessing are offered in September each year.

Entering High School



Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit just as you were called to one hope when you were called one Lord, one faith, one baptism.

-Ephesians 4: 3-5

Entering the High School is an exciting time for youth! It is our goal to introduce youth to a special network at church of friends & fellowship, and to provide unique opportunities to explore their faith journey.

Age

9th Grade

Event

Youth in the 9th Grade can expect to be "nabbed" by the Senior High Youth Group at some point during the summer and taken on a weekend retreat! Each youth is assigned a "big brother" or "big sister" to accompany them during the first year.

Blessing

Youth will come forward for a special prayer, blessing, and recognition during Sunday worship and then be "taken away" on their first Senior High trip.

Gift

Youth are given a youth group t-shirt, a youth directory and a gift of letters from the youth group. We honor these youth during worship and bless their families on the next phase of their faith journey.

Date

This worship blessing and retreat are typically held in June each year.

Entering Sunday School



When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

-John 8:12

ENTERING SUNDAY SCHOOL is an exciting time for young children. At Christ Lutheran Church, we welcome children who are three years old to begin this part of their faith journey. During Sunday School, we explore the Bible using lots of hands-on and discovery activities.

Age

Three years old

Blessing

Children and their families will come forward for a special prayer, blessing, and recognition during Sunday worship.

Gift

We give children with a small cross as a reminder of their new Sunday morning activities.

Date

This blessing happens in September on Rally Day.

Learning to Pray



He was praying in a certain place and after he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord teach us to pray." He said to them, "when you pray, say: Our Father, who art in Heaven..."

-Luke 11:1-4

Learning to Pray is an important way children grow in their faith and relationship with Christ. Children learn prayer through example and practice at home and at church. In addition to talking about prayer, the children learn to recite the Lord's Prayer.

Age

Kindergarten

Event

A family prayer event is offered during the Sunday School hour to learn more about prayer at home and at church. We use a prayer glove and other resources to teach children about prayer. These resources then become a valuable tool for the family at home.

Blessing

Children and their families will come forward for a special prayer, blessing, and recognition during Sunday worship.

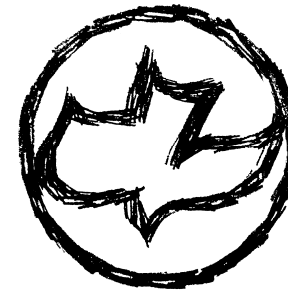
Gift

We provide each child with a book of prayers, and a "Prayer Glove."

Date

The class and worship blessing are offered in February each year.

Confirmation



Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father & of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

-Matthew 28:19-20

CONFIRMATION is a central part of our heritage of faith formation. In order to begin the process, parents and youth meet together to learn about confirmation, how our program works, and how families share in the ministry. **Affirmation of Baptism** is the rite we observe at the completion of confirmation instruction. It is the opportunity for youth to profess their personal faith, and is the marking of early adulthood in the church.

Age

Typically we confirm youth in the 8th grade. However, youth may be confirmed at any time during High School.

Classes & Event

Parents and youth attend an orientation meeting in August and commit themselves to the one year program. The program includes classes held each Sunday, a weekend retreat, assisting with Holy Week worship services, and continuing to actively serve during worship.

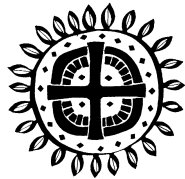
Blessings & Dates

Youth and their families come forward for a blessing and recognition during worship in August. Youth will then be confirmed during worship on the first Sunday after Easter.

Gift

New confirmands will receive a copy of the Small Catechism and other resources needed for confirmation. Then on confirmation Sunday, confirmands are given a cross necklace from the congregation.

Entering Middle School



What marvelous Love the Father has extended to us. Just look at it, we're called children of God. That's who we really are.

-1 John 3:1

ENTERING MIDDLE SCHOOL is very meaningful, but can often be an intimidating process for youth. So, at Christ Lutheran Church, we mark this milestone for families, providing resources and a wonderful way for youth to connect with their peers in the Middle School Youth Group.

Age

6th Grade

Event

Youth in the 6th-8th grades are invited to attend Summer Camp as a group at Lutheran Camp Chrysalis each summer. This week long camp is a wonderful experience for youth to bond together, share stories, and become a support for each other. We intentionally invite 7th & 8th graders to be part of this process so the younger youth are immediately bonded with the Middle School Ministry at our congregation.

Blessing

Children and their families will come forward for a special prayer, blessing, and recognition during Sunday worship on the Sunday prior to attending Camp.

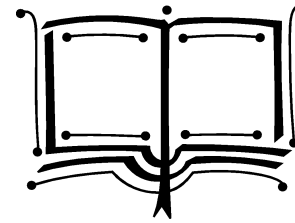
Gift

Youth are given their first Teen Study Bible and honored during worship. While at camp, youth receive a box of letters from special people in their lives.

Date

Summer Camp and the worship blessing are typically held in July each year.

First Bible



All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training...so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.

- 2 Timothy 3:16-17

The FIRST BIBLE children receive is a significant gift for children. When children are old enough to read we give each child their own Bible, and instructions on how to dive into it!

Age

2nd Grade

Event

A family event is offered during the Sunday School hour for the child and at least one parent. During this time we teach children more about the Bible, including what is in it and how to use it. Resources for parents and the child are provided and we give ideas about reading the Bible together at home.

Blessing

Children and their families will come forward for a special prayer, blessing, and recognition during Sunday worship.

Gift

We give each child their first Bible for young readers, and provide resources for parents.

Date

The class and worship blessing are offered in November each year.

Serving in Worship



*I rejoiced with those who said to me,
"Let us go to the house of the Lord."*

-Psalm 122:1

SERVING IN WORSHIP is a way for older children to help lead worship and understand what goes into making worship happen. This is often an exciting process for older children as they haven't been part of the worship service except as a participant. Going "behind the scenes" is a wonderful way for children to feel helpful and closer to God during worship.

Age
4th Grade

Event
Parents and children attend a class that includes acolyte training. This class takes time to teach children about liturgy and the church year, and gives an overview of why we do what we do during worship.

Blessing
Children and their families will come forward for a special prayer, blessing, and recognition during Sunday worship, marking the start of their acolyte service.

Gift
A pin and a book on the meaning of liturgy, worship, and the church year will be given.

Date
The class and worship blessing are offered in January each year.

First Holy Communion



*For as often as you eat this bread and
drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's
death until he comes..*

-1 Corinthians 11:26

FIRST COMMUNION is a renewing and nourishing milestone in the life of a Christian individual and world community. It is a central part of our worship and faith life. Through communion we are strengthened for service by God's abiding love, receive God's forgiveness and share in the abundance of living in a family of faith. We welcome all people to share the feast of the Lord's Supper.

Age
5th Grade

Event
Children and their parents attend a First Communion retreat. During the retreat children receive instruction about Communion, practice forgiveness together, and prepare to receive the Sacrament. Additionally during the retreat, children make communion bread that will be served to the congregation, and create a chalice set that is used to serve the entire congregation communion.

Blessing
Children and their families will come forward for a special prayer, blessing, and recognition during Sunday worship. Their First Communion will follow.

Gift
Children and parents make their own Communion Chalice and Paten as a symbol of the Lord's Supper.

Date
The class and worship blessing are offered in October each year.