

Stepping Stone #4: **BEGINNING CATECHESIS**

What is it?

'Catechesis' means: 'instruction given in preparation for confirmation.' This lively, three year process begins in the 6th grade. Classes are on most Sundays during the school year.

What is the purpose?

As they approach adolescence, a child's faith transitions very significantly, from mirroring what they see in their parents, to something they own for themselves. Catechesis (i.e. confirmation class) informs and empowers this transition.

How do we take this step?

Parents take a short course called 'Getting Started', made up of four, ninety minute classes held on Sundays over the lunch hour, which equip them to be Christian mentors in their child's life during the coming three years. Everyone gets acquainted with each other, and we include practical information regarding the spiritual formation of kids at home in the high tech, social media society we live in. Then, on a special Sunday, students enroll for catechesis in a ceremony at Church and receive a Small Catechism (i.e. Lutheran instruction book).

Who should I contact with my questions?

Ryan Howard, Director of Christian Education Ryan@stjlc.com

Stepping Stone #5: **FIRST COMMUNION**

What is it?

In the 7th grade (the 2nd year of the Confirmation process) the students prepare to receive Holy Communion (also called 'the Lord's Supper') for the first time, which is the Body and Blood of Christ given for the forgiveness of sins.

What is the purpose?

That the students get to be 'at table' with the whole church family, receiving Jesus Himself in a special way, enjoying the 'feast of victory for our God'.

How do we take this step?

In preparation, parents and students attend a retreat together to learn about the Lord's Supper. Parents always give us positive feedback about how much they themselves learn. First Communion is then celebrated the first Sunday after Easter.

Who should I contact with my questions?

Ryan Howard, Director of Christian Education Ryan@stjlc.com



Stepping Stone #6: **CONFIRMATION**

What is it?

Following three years of classes spanning the 6th to the 8th grades (see above, #4, Catechesis), students publicly confirm before God and the Church what they themselves believe. Hands are laid on them with prayer to the Holy Spirit to sustain them in this holy faith, and they receive a personal Confirmation verse as well as a cross.

What is the purpose?

Recalling the gifts and promises made to them when they were baptized, the students (or 'confirmands'), now of an age to speak on their own behalf, publicly reaffirm and own God's gifts and promises for themselves. In Confirmation they commit to walk with Jesus for the rest of their lives.

How do we take this step?

Once catechesis is completed at the end of the 8th grade, a date is set for the class to be confirmed at a special Church service early in the Fall, i.e. just after they've started 9th grade. Before this, parents come to a one hour class called, 'Surviving Adolescence', in which we help them understand how societal pressures and support structures are different than they were a generation ago.

Who should I contact with my questions?

Ryan Howard, Director of Christian Education Ryan@stjlc.com

Stepping Stone #7: **GRADUATION**

What is it?

At a church service in the early summer, the students with their parents are gathered, their achievements are recognized by the congregation, they are asked about where they are headed next, they are prayed for, and also given a scholarship.

What is the purpose?

The summer after our students graduate from high school marks a huge step and transition. No matter what is next for them, whether college or career, etc., they need to know that God will continue to be with them, supporting them through every challenge, and that their Church remains their family.

How do we take this step?

Students should contact the Church indicating they would like to receive the scholarship. They attend (and their parents are invited to join them) a one hour class which discusses some of the challenges to their faith they are likely to encounter. Resources are recommended for encouraging Christian faith while at college, etc. The Sunday to receive the scholarship at Church is set.

Who should I contact with my questions?

Ryan Howard, Director of Christian Education Ryan@stjlc.com



FAITH STEPPING STONES

OVERVIEW

Support, Guide, & Gift Parents

Faith Stepping Stones is a path for family ministry which unfolds in stages (or 'stepping stones') over the course of a child's life. Faith Stepping Stones is a way that the Church supports, guides and gifts parents in their role of primary faith mentors for their own children in their own home.

Faith 'incubation' doesn't happen in a vacuum. It doesn't happen suddenly, over-night. It must be nurtured over time. Faith Stepping Stones is a process that bonds parents and children into the loving, living, presence of Jesus, in the community of His Church, making age appropriate adjustments as to how this is practiced as the children grow. Each stage in the child's life has its own Faith Stepping Stone.

Faith Stepping Stones supports parents in fulfilling their promise, made at Baptism, to incubate faith in the children God has given them. In a world with much uncertainty and change, practicing God's love and presence together can wonderfully ground children and their families.



Stepping Stone #1: **HOLY BAPTISM**

What is it?

Baptism is something essential that God does. Using simple water and His Word, God the Father adopts a child to be His own, connects him or her to Jesus Christ, and gives the faith-creating Holy Spirit.

What is the purpose?

To receive from God our true identity as His precious, forgiven child. Baptism saves a child by putting him or her into the arms of the Savior. It is the beginning of spiritual growth, a wonderful, life-long journey in relationship with God.

How do we take this step?

Begin attending Church and request Baptism for your child. Parents are then given materials to read which will be discussed during a home visit. When everyone's ready, the Baptism will be scheduled.

Who should I contact with my questions?

Carol Mittelstaedt, Director of Young Family Ministries CarolMittel@aol.com

The *beginning* of
**SPIRITUAL
GROWTH**



Enjoying *Church* as the **FAMILY OF GOD**

Stepping Stone #2: **STARTING SUNDAY SCHOOL**

What is it?

It is spiritual education. When a child starts Sunday School they begin to learn a lot of important, foundational things about God. It is also relationship building, enjoying Church as the family of God.

What is the purpose?

For children to be grounded securely in the truth of God, especially His love and acceptance, from the earliest age, and in the community of His people.

How do we take this step?

Parents bring their children to the 10:00 am Sunday worship service. The first 15 minutes are especially for the kids, and then they go downstairs with their teacher for an age appropriate Bible lesson. Parents themselves attend a one hour class when they first enroll their children to equip them to protect and spiritually parent their children at home. For example, we teach how to do a bedtime blessing with your children, and how to make use at home of a superb book called 'Little Visits with Jesus'.

Who should I contact with my questions?

Carol Mittelstaedt, Director of Young Family Ministries CarolMittel@aol.com

Stepping Stone #3: **MY BIBLE**

What is it?

In the 3rd grade, when most children have developed some reading skills, the Church gives a child their very own story Bible.

What is the purpose?

There's nothing so good as reading the Bible together at bedtime. Our 3rd graders delight to read out loud with Dad or Mom when they're in their jammies, and questions get asked, and prayers get said, and faith grows.

How do we take this step?

Parents come to a one hour class where we teach them how to do bedtime Bible time, equipping them to handle some of the questions that come up when children start reading God's Word. We also teach how to say a prayer about the day and get the kids to do the same. Following the class, participating families will be given an age appropriate Story Bible.

Who should I contact with my questions?

Carol Mittelstaedt, Director of Young Family Ministries CarolMittel@aol.com

Reading the *Bible*
TOGETHER
at bedtime

