

## Stepping Stone Ministry

Stepping Stones are a series of events in your child's spiritual life from birth through graduation from high school. They are marked by bringing parent and child back to the altar and asking God's blessing for the next stage in life. In this way parent and child can see the spiritual path as they walk it together. The Congregation is witness to these events and is praying for both parent and child.

### The Stepping Stones

In the **Faith and My Infant**, Stepping Stone, God's grace is given to His child through Baptism. Parents acknowledge the child as God's own and commit to raising him or her for the Lord. All of the following stepping stones will recall God's action on this day, and the parent's commitments made in the baptism.

The **First Bible** Stepping Stone occurs when the child becomes two and can attend the Little Lambs Sunday School class which is for child and parent. Parents keep their baptismal promise to "put the word of God in their hand" as they challenge them to be lifelong learners of God's Word. The child receives an age appropriate toddler Bible.

The **Together We Worship** Stepping Stone happens as a child becomes three and has outgrown the church nursery. We use this opportunity to encourage more active participation in worship. We tour "behind the scenes" of the church, so that each child feels a part of, rather than apart from, what's going on in worship.

In the **Adventure Bible** Stepping Stone children in the second grade receive an age appropriate study Bible to encourage personal reading of God's Word. This three-week course helps the child to begin to articulate the purpose of Scripture, its main story, the division of Old and New Testaments, and a number of its key characters.

In the **Mission and Service** Stepping Stone fourth grade children will learn the importance of service and thinking beyond themselves. Children at this age can be very self-centered so it would be the goal of this faith Stepping Stone to teach world and local mission, serving others and Christian gratitude.

**Welcome to the Lord's Table** Stepping Stone is celebrated by fifth graders. In this course the students learn alongside their parents the theology and significance behind the Lord's Supper. At the completion of this course the children get to experience their first communion.

The **Journey** Stepping Stone occurs as the child enters middle school. The purpose of this course is to help the older child begin to accept responsibility for faith development. The child examines the scriptures, their identity in Christ, and the church's approach to contemporary middle school challenges such as sexual identity and honoring God with one's body.

The **Confirmation** Stepping Stone comes after two years of study beginning in September of the 7<sup>th</sup> grade year. These teachings include discipleship training, as well as Luther's Small Catechism. This process leads to the Confirmation Service in the student's 8<sup>th</sup> grade year. In the rite of confirmation, the child is *confirming* that the faith professed for him as a child is indeed his faith and the gifts promised are gifts desired.

The **Graduation** Stepping Stone is reached when the child graduates from high school. In it parents ask for a special blessing as the young adult assumes adult responsibility in all areas of life, but especially in spiritual matters and continued faith development. Christian parents always love, pray for, and influence their children for a life of Christian discipleship, but in this Stepping Stone they acknowledge that ultimately the responsibility for their child's continued faith journey, now belongs to the child whom God entrusted to their care.