

## Children and Families at FLC

Children and their families are central to the life of Faith Lutheran Church.

The median age of our membership is 34. We know what joys and what challenges parenting can bring. So, we have developed a series of ministries that are designed to help children grow with solid values and a deep faith and parents be the best that God has called and equipped them to be:



### Faith Stepping Stones

Faith Stepping Stones is a ministry pioneered by Faith Inkubators that has been adapted and localized at Faith Lutheran Church. It involves parents and children coming to the altar together for a blessing and for prayer at seven significant times between baptism and graduation from high school. The children's sponsors (or, godparents) at baptism, or mentors who are chosen after baptism also take part. A gift is often given as a token of the event.

The seven events are:

**Baptism:** children are given delivery from sin, death and the power of the devil, and everlasting salvation to all who believe what God has promised. Gifts: certificate, cloth and candle.

**Beginning of Sunday School:** children begin their active life of learning. Gift: varies.

**First Bible:** children learn the basics of the Bible with their parents over three classes and their parents are given the Bible used in those classes and they give it to their child or children. Gift: a Bible.

**First Communion:** children receive one class of instruction with their parents. Parents are given the elements and then give first communion to their child or children. Gift: certificate and nail necklace.

**Beginning of Confirmation:** young people begin a two-year time of service and instruction in the basics of the Christian faith. Gift: The Small Catechism by Martin Luther.

**Affirmation of Baptism (Confirmation):** young people affirm their faith before the congregation. Gifts: short stole (as sign of readiness for greater service), book (gift Bible, study Bible or gift edition of worship book), necklace or pin, and certificate.

**Graduation from High School:** Parents and young people bless each other. Gift: a hand-made quilt on which members of the congregation have outlined their hands and signed them with messages of encouragement.

### During Worship Services

We encourage the presence of children with their parents for its modeling value.

We provide crayons and weekly activity sheets, available at the usher's desk. A "Children's Sermon" is offered at Sunday Services. Children who would like come forward and sit with the pastor to receive a brief statement of the teaching for that service in language they can understand, usually using some physical object. Here's a secret: adults often get a lot out of "overhearing" these messages, as do the children.

We also recognize that there are times when parents would like to put their children in a clean, professionally staffed nursery; that is provided in the parish hall. And, for those

temporary meltdowns, we provide a “Cry Room” at the back of the worship area with a view of the worship area and the sound piped in.

## **During the Week**

Confirmation: The two-year program starts as early as 7<sup>th</sup> grade depending on parents’ view of readiness and is usually held on Wednesday afternoons. Arrangements with teams and activities can be made. Lots of learning and lots of fun, trips, custom T-shirts and hoodies, church and community service.

Faith Lutheran Youth (FLY): A high school group organized around learning and community service. Currently this group gathers around service projects and recreation.

Faith Lutheran Church Pre-school and Day Care (you already know about that!)

## **During the Summer**

Summer Sunday School: K-6 classes shift to a one-room-schoolhouse mode.

Vacation Bible School: one week of crazy fun in the mornings and a closing program on Friday evening for youth going into grades K-5.

## **My children are bored in church. I don’t want them to get a negative impression by making them go. Should I force them?**

Yes. Here’s why.

Young children, even children in middle school, model their behavior after what they see is important to their parents.

What do you already force your children to do? Eat healthy foods? Get enough sleep? Bathe? Do their homework? Go to school? Be home by certain times? Avoid bad influences? Hang out with positive people? Are you concerned that they might later rebel against your values? Of course you are. But, you encourage them anyway, because you know you are right in encouraging them and that, after they rebel, they will likely return to those values.

Going to church is no different. Children will model your beliefs and your behavior. Talk with them about why worship God is important, and what it means to you. One way to instill your values is to say, in words and deeds, “We are going to church. This is who we are.”

Worship every Sunday you are not sick or out of town. When you have out of town guests, bring them. Make worship an event. Dress up. Have a special meal before and/or afterwards as a family. Make your own traditions. Traditions that are meaningful have a lasting positive impact in the lives of children and families.

If you tell them that you want them to decide for themselves, children will figure out that church is not really important to you, and they will model that value.

At the same time, young children may need some time and some help. See the “During Worship Services” section above for idea. Children will be fussy, even noisy. Don’t worry about it. Most of us have been there and FLC is full of former fussy children. Be a gentle guide. And don’t forget to pray.

## **Bring your family to worship this Sunday at either of our two services:**

Traditional Blend Worship (8:30 a.m.) is a traditional service that blends in visual technology.

Ancient-Future Worship (10:00 a.m.) is a concept originating with Prof. Robert Webber. It brings together the ancient worship practices of the Church with contemporary music and innovative audio and visual technology. Children go to Sunday School during this service and free-professional child care is available.

