

Child Discipleship

Bible Passages:

Deuteronomy 6:1-2, 6-7 “These are the commands, decrees and laws the LORD your God directed me to teach you to observe in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess, so that you, your children and their children after them may fear the LORD your God as long as you live” ... “These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.”

Matthew 19:14 “Jesus said, ‘Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.’”

Objective:

To nurture the children in our family of believers to know and to live according to the Word of God.

Rationale:

We live in a world that cares for children and seeks to protect them. At the same time today’s society gives children more freedom and choices than previous generations experienced. Satan works on children also, tempting hearts to sin, rebel, and question God, His love and His ways. That is shown in a congregational survey taken in August 2000 in which less than 11% of our children (ages 1-19) worshipped more than once a month.

Christian parents need assistance in raising their children. (Cf. Adult Spiritual Growth) As Christian parents and as a congregation, we take seriously God’s commands to teach children and guide them as they grow.

We gratefully thank God for the blessing of a strong Lutheran Elementary School, and the congregation’s committed support of the school demonstrates the deep concern of its children. But only a small percent of our children make use of our Lutheran School. While we promote the benefits of the Lutheran Elementary School we must still provide a strong Christian education for **all** of our children.

During the next 7 years:

1. We envision that each baptism continue to be a special celebration in the worship service as the means through which each child is brought into the family of believers.
2. We envision an active Cradle Roll overseen by the Parent Teacher Organization.
3. We envision the development of a church database as a beginning of a system, which tracks our children.
4. We envision implementation of a Preschool (1-3 days a week, 1-3 hours a day) to help member families grow in a new phase of family life, and as a method of outreach to those in the community who need and desire such a service. (Cf. Outreach 8b)

To make this vision a reality:

- a. The pastors will strive to meet with parents and godparents to review the blessings of baptism.
 - b. The Altar Guild will continue the use of the baptism banner to make the service special.
 - c. The pastors will introduce the newly baptized member to the congregation to welcome them to the family of believers.
 - d. We recommend moving the baptismal font to a more prominent location. (Cf. Worship 5e)
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- a. The pastors will make an early visit to explain the Cradle Roll and encourage baptism.
 - b. The Parent Teacher Organization will arrange for prompt enrollment in the Cradle Roll and church database.
 - c. The Parent Teacher Organization along with the Teacher's Aide will frequently update a congregational bulletin board with pictures of children in the Cradle Roll.
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- a. The church's administrative secretary will initiate and keep this database.
 - b. This information will be used as a resource for Kindergarten Roundup, Preschool, Children's Bible Study, Pioneers, Junior Choir, Confirmation class, and other activities as needed.
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- a. We recommend establishing a group of concerned adults to develop and oversee such a program.
 - b. We recommend developing a program called "First Children First"ⁱ
 - c. We recommend enrolling parents in a Bible Information Class.
 - d. The Committee of Christian Education will review the possibility of starting a child day care.
 - e. We recommend a facility capable of conducting a quality preschool program.

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5. We envision a strong series of parenting classes. (Cf. Group Life/ Fellowship 2d)
 - a. The Committee of Christian Education will continue to update and promote the current 17-week parenting class and offer it on an annual or semi-annual basis.
 - b. The Committee of Christian Education will develop a curriculum of brief parenting classes (1 or 2 sessions) based on specific ages, including a “First time Parents” class.
 - c. The pastors will establish support groups for parents. (Cf. Group Life/ Fellowship 2d 6)

6. We envision improving worship attendance among families with children.
 - a. The Church Council will provide a staffed nursery during worship. (Cf. Worship 5d)
 - b. The Church Council will provide a convenient “mother’s room”.
 - c. The Church Council will establish an ongoing task force of parents with children birth to 8 years, to make recommendations on how St. John’s can become a more family-friendly church.

LUTHERAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

7. We envision the quality of our Lutheran Elementary School being comparable to, and hopefully exceeding the area schools.
 - a. The congregation will encourage the faculty to continue their education.
 - b. We recommend upgrading our facility. (Cf. Appendix 1)
 - c. The Committee of Christian Education will annually evaluate staffing needs. (Cf. Appendix 2)
 - d. The faculty will conduct ongoing curriculum review.
 - e. The Committee of Christian Education will encourage interaction with the local public school district with appropriate concerns. (Specifically regarding achievement testing)
 - f. The principal will be provided adequate administration time as mutually agreed upon with the Church Council.

8. We envision increased use of the Lutheran Elementary School by members of the congregation.
 - a. The faculty will attempt to conduct an annual visit to every member family with elementary school aged children.
 - b. The Committee of Christian Education will promote our school among members. (Through means such as Cradle Roll, advertising, direct mail, Kindergarten Roundup, video presentation, internet web page)

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9. We envision making use of the Lutheran Elementary School to reach the unchurched in the community. (Cf. Outreach 8a,b,c)
 - a. We recommend that outreach become a priority for the Lutheran Elementary School.
 - b. The Outreach Team will present a strong promotion of our school especially to new families. (Using means such as Community Hostess, Yellow Pages, newspaper, radio, word of mouth, Chamber of Commerce link, and canvassing)

10. We envision a new school, adequate to meet the needs of elementary school children.
 - a. We recommend a Building and Building Finance Committee be re-established **immediately**. (Cf. Appendix 1)
 - b. We recommend fund raising begin **immediately**.

CHILDREN'S BIBLE STUDY

11. We envision that 60-70% of all member children attend Children's Bible Study with an increasing percentage each year.
 - a. The Church Administrative Secretary will keep an updated database on all children in the congregation.
 - b. The Committee of Christian Education will select a curriculum, which avoids repetition of Lutheran Elementary School lessons.
 - c. The Committee of Christian Education will carry out an aggressive effort annually to invite the children of members, and others to register and participate in Children's Bible Study.

12. We envision an exciting, annual Vacation Bible School program that attracts children and parents of the congregation and the community to provide spiritual growth and fellowship for our members and as an outreach effort to the community.
 - a. The Outreach Team will annually plan for Vacation Bible School far in advance so that it may be well promoted in our congregation and in our community.

13. We envision other activities including fellowship, singing (Cf. Worship 6d,4e), and community events.
 - a. The Committee of Christian Education will plan two to four activities a year, designed for children, particularly to help students from the Lutheran Elementary School and public school get to know and enjoy each other. (Continued on next page)

- b. The Committee of Christian Education will continually improve and support programs already in place, like Lutheran Pioneers and Junior Choir.
 - c. The Fellowship Committee will plan opportunities for intergenerational activities so that all congregation members become familiar with one another. (Cf. Group Life/ Fellowship 1a,b)
14. We envision continued high expectations of Confirmation Class students and their parents.
- A) This includes memorization of Luther's Small catechism, Bible verses and hymn verses.
 - B) There will be reasonable time spent on application of Scriptural principles to daily life.
- a. The Committee of Christian Education will make sure that Catechism instruction includes all students grades 5-8 in Lutheran Elementary School and Children's Bible Study.
 - b. The pastors are encouraged to be involved to some degree with all students in this age group.
 - c. The pastors will include in their continuing education, methods and information that will help these young people grow in faith and Christian living.
 - d. The pastors will meet semi-annually with the parents to review the congregation's expectations of Catechism class regarding memory work, attendance, etc.
 - e. Parents will take responsibility for their child's Catechism assignments, and church attendance

ⁱ "Experience in the WELS is quickly telling us that very active work with families with children has to begin with the birth of the first child. The patterns that parents set with the coming of their first child tend to be the patterns for all and for life. This makes early contact and involvement of the parents key to future discipling success." Excerpt taken from Consultants' Recommendations written by Dr. Ron Heins, Pastor Paul Soukup and Principal Stephen Schaefer.