

BETHEL LUTHERAN CHURCH STEPPING STONES MINISTRY

As our children progress along their faith journey, there are many constants that take place—Sunday School, Confirmation classes, devotions, worship, prayer, etc. that guide them along the way. In addition, there are several very important steps along the way that are key markers in their faith development. Our Stepping Stones Ministry intentionally observes these specific steps, recognizing their significance in a child's faith life and offering the congregation, as a whole, the opportunity to celebrate with the child and family as these steps are taken. At each of these steps their child will receive a special pottery stone to mark the occasion. Families are encouraged to find a special container in which to keep these stones and keep it in a place where the child will see it every day as a reminder of where they have been, where they are going and to whom they belong.

If you would like to purchase a pottery bowl to hold your child's faith stepping stones or if you would like to order stones for a child who had these faith experiences prior to the institution of our Stepping Stone Ministry, or who had these experiences some place other than Bethel, please fill out the enclosed order form and return it with payment to the church office. Checks can be made payable to Bethel Lutheran Church. Call Barb Farmer, Director of Youth Ministries (646-8877) or Pam Vig, Director of Children's Ministries (646-8878) or email either of them at bethelyouth@charterinternet.net with questions.

Individual Stepping stones and the pottery bowl are priced as follows:

Each stone—\$2.00

Pottery Bowl—\$7.00

BETHEL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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STEPPING STONES MINISTRY



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STEPPING STONES ON THE PATH OF CHILDREN'S AND YOUTH MINISTRY

Baptism—This stone depicts a seashell with three drops of water. It reminds us that through water and word we are baptized into God's family in the name of the Triune God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In Holy Baptism, parents and congregation partner together, promising to raise the child in the faith.

Beginning of Sunday School (Age 3)—This stone depicts one footprint placed over a cross. It represents our child's first step into formal Christian education. It is at this point in a child's faith walk that the child joins with other children of faith to receive instruction that is intended to compliment and build upon the faith instruction the child is receiving at home.

2nd Grade Prayer Class—This stone depicts a figure kneeling in prayer with a heart in the background. For four weeks in late winter our second graders and their parents participate together in a Sunday School class that focuses on prayer. During this class we talk about the logistics of prayer—when, where, how—but we also focus on prayer as conversation with God. Just as we build relationships with others by spending time together talking and listening to each other, we build our relationship with God—a relationship built on love—by talking and listening to God in prayer.

3rd Grade Bibles—This stone depicts an open Bible. On Reformation Sunday our third graders are presented with their own Bible. The students and their parents then spend the next four weeks together in a Sunday School class where they learn how to use these Bibles. The children and their parents are encouraged to make regular use of these new Bibles in their homes through daily devotions.

4th Grade Holy Worship Retreat—This stone depicts a figure with arms raised in praise. The Holy Worship Retreat is a five-hour event that occurs on a Sunday afternoon in March. Children are instructed in the significance of the components of worship as well as the significance of the church calendar and seasonal colors.

5th Grade Holy Communion Retreat—This stone depicts a stalk of wheat and a clump of grapes. It represents the earthly elements that are present in Holy Communion. This retreat takes place beginning on a Friday evening and ending on a Saturday afternoon in November. Children participate in a Seder meal and learn the significance of this Old Testament meal in light of the New Testament meal of the Last Supper. Students are instructed in the components of the Holy Communion service as well as the significance of what participating in Holy Communion means for us.

6th Grade Lord's Prayer Retreats—This stone depicts two hands raised in prayer with a red heart in the background. Three Lord's Prayer Retreats are offered as a part of the 6th Grade Connections program. They take place on Sunday afternoons during the school year. The retreats reinforce the premise of prayer as a way to build a relationship with God and examine The Lord's Prayer as our example for prayer. Each retreat focuses on a different petition of the Lord's Prayer including "Hallowed be Thy name."; "Give us this day our daily bread."; "And forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us."

The Beginning of Confirmation Instruction (7th Grade)—This stone depicts two footprints placed over a cross. As youth begin confirmation they also begin the journey toward taking ownership of their faith and learn more about how to daily walk with God.

8th Grade Mission Trip—This stone depicts a city skyline with hands outstretched to meet in the middle. The 8th Grade Mission Trip takes place in June when 8th grade youth live and work in the Twin Cities during a week of service and learning.

Christikon Trip—This stone depicts mountains and the logo of Christikon, the Montana camp through which Bethel youth just finishing 9th grade experience a hiking and backpacking trip grounded in and shaped by the Gospel of Jesus Christ. On the trip, youth are reminded of the awesome nature of God and his creation and how they fit into His overall design.

Confirmation Service—This stone depicts a figure with one upraised arm and a dove. Every fall, an afternoon service is dedicated to the Rite of Confirmation for all Bethel youth who wish to affirm their baptism (traditionally, 10th grade youth). This service takes place the second Sunday in October in the Bethel sanctuary. Youth are given the Confirmation Stepping Stone during the service to mark this significant step in their faith journey.

High School Summer Trip—This stone changes yearly to depict the nature of the summer's trip. Bethel's summer trip for youth who have completed grades 10-12 follows a 3-year rotation including an outdoor adventure trip, the ELCA National Youth Gathering and a mission trip. All summer youth trips are intended to further the connection of a youth's faith with his/her everyday life.

12th Grade Graduation—This stone depicts the palm of a hand and Jeremiah 29:11 (*For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.*) Three Senior Stepping Stones Retreats are offered during the school year in October, February and May for high school seniors and their parents. These retreats are a time for families to pause and reflect as they prepare for graduation. At the end of every school year, Bethel honors its high school seniors at a Senior Sunday worship service, which is planned by the seniors and give the congregation a chance to celebrate and affirm them as they move on to their new adventures after graduation. The Stepping Stone presented at this service represents God's continued care and walk with these students as they move into the next phase of their lives.
