

Faith Formation at Journey of Faith Christian Church (2015-16)

We are honored to serve you and your children. We count it as a privilege. We think the spiritual relationship that parents and children share are at the heart of God's calling for families to be the primary spiritual influence in a child's life. We are intentionally pro-family and strive to support parents as they pursue this important calling. We're passionate about students learning and seeing Jesus in ways they understand. All students can experience a world where they meet Jesus on their level. Our goal is to get students talking and thinking about God throughout the week.



Overview of the Faith Formation Program at Journey of Faith Christian Church

Christian Education is one of the most important practices within a congregation's life for helping people grow in their faith. Done well, it has the potential beyond any other congregational influence to deepen faith and commitment. We're using a "community of faith-based approach" to Christian Education. This approach works to surround children with fellow Christians as peers, mentors and co-learners. It assumes you are a Christian because you know Christ, not just by what you know. The ultimate purpose of Christian Education is to lead people to a relationship with Jesus Christ. There are several key components to our program:

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Good to Know

Check-In: Begins 15 minutes before the worship service. We encourage you to arrive early in order to get your child checked in.

Parent or Guardian Permission and Medical Release Form: A parent or guardian signs this form to give permission for a child or youth to participate in a church activity, especially when it involves travel around and outside the local area or staying overnight. The parent or guardian gives their consent by signing the form; providing the necessary medical information; and authorizing adult leaders to give emergency treatment for any illness or injury. Release forms are available at: <http://a2disciples.org/for-kidsx/>

Illness/Sick: If your child has displayed any of the following symptoms in the previous 24 hrs., please do not allow them to participate in the faith formation program: fever, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, pink eye or drainage/discharge, persistent cough, and/or sore throat, or a persistent rash.

Special Needs: If you have a child who has special needs or would benefit from one-on-one attention, please let us know and we'll be happy to talk with you about how we can best serve your family.

Check-Out: It would be helpful to have parents pick up their children from their classroom by 12:00 after the worship service ends. We do a fair amount of clean-up after classes to get the space ready for use next week, as well as, making sure we're leaving the site "clean and ready to use" by our renters.



Safety and Security

Volunteer Checks: Our adult team members are screened and “background checked.” Volunteers have participated in training sessions for their role.

We May Need Your Help: If your child exhibits crying or extreme behavior and we are unable to calm him/her within 10 minutes, we will seek your assistance. If you decide to keep your child with you for the remainder of the time, please feel free to continue to participate in the worship service

Injury: Children who have received an injury which is obviously minor will be given first aid as needed at the time of injury. First Aid kits are available in all classrooms and fellowship areas. The child’s parent or guardian will be notified of the minor injury and receive a written “accident report” of the incident when they pick up their child. Any injury which may require medical treatment beyond simple first aid will be given immediate attention. A parent or guardian will be immediately notified.

Emergency: If there is a need to evacuate all children in their classrooms, they will be escorted by our teachers or volunteers to the side of the church building closest to Manchester Park (see map).



Learning on Sunday mornings at 10:30

Classes:

- Faith & Play – For children up to 5 years old (*website: journeyoffaithkids.org*)
- JourneyKids – For children 6-8 years old (*website: jofkids.org*)
- Jesus & Me (J.A.M.) – For children 9-12 years old (*website: jam-ministry.org*)
- Youth Empowered to Serve (Y.E.S.) – For teenagers 13-18 years old (*website: youthempoweredtoserve.org*)

The theme for this year is *“God’s Story, My Story, Our Story.”* The stories of Bethlehem beginnings, manager miracles, fishermen friends in Galilee, the stumbles of Peter and the stubbornness of Paul – connects us, links us, bonds us to something greater than we are. This is the great promise of the Bible. It’s in Christ that we find out who we are and what we are living for. Each week’s lesson is organized around a Bible Story. Here’s what we will do with that story:

Gathering Time – On Sunday mornings, students (all ages), gather together for about 10-15 minutes to learn about worship and God’s story in a setting modeled after “Big Church”. All students participate in the large group where they sing, dance, and are introduced to the day’s Bible Story in creative ways.

Classroom Time – After the Gathering Time, students are dismissed to their individual classes to focus on the day’s lesson with age-appropriate activities, games or crafts. The shape of each lesson has three steps: *Encounter the Story, Explore the Story and Apply the Story.*

- **Encounter the Story:** Once students return to their classrooms after the “Gathering Time, “ they are introduced to Scripture and Bible stories to help them connect to something that is truly bigger, greater and worth being a part of – *God’s Story.*
- **Experience the Story:** Students are invited to explore God’s Story in ways that they can smell, touch, taste, see and hear the world described in Scripture. The goal is to engage students’ imaginations to foster creative and personal engagement with the Bible Story – *My Story.*
- **Apply the Story:** This is the “so what?” part of the class, where students take what they learned in the Bible story, respond to it and apply that experience to their own lives. Students begin to see that the Gospel changes us.
- And, as we change, we begin to understand that God wants us to participate in His Holy work for the world with others – *Our Story.*

Communion and Closing Prayer: Near the end of the hour, all students get together to share in the communion meal (a healthy snack and water); talk about the coming week; and pray for each other. (Families are encouraged to sign up to bring snacks for the communion meal.)

Pick-up time for Children: For many busy congregants, there is a rare opportunity to connect with others after the worship service and get a respite from a hectic morning. It's an important time we have to foster community with each other, a key value for us here at Journey of Faith. So, we're hoping that parents or grandparents will feel free to pick up their children after the worship service by 12:00. Our teachers will be enjoying the company of the children until then and are glad to offer an opportunity for relaxation and rejuvenation.

"Bringing Faith Home by Linking the Church and Families": The learning experience is continued at home by downloading the week's Church School *FAITH@HOME* cards. The cards are an online resource that parents and students can use at home to reinforce the lesson throughout the week.



During the week – Parents and students are encouraged to check out the FAITH@HOME cards which provide an easy-to-use guide for children to read and study the Bible on their own (or with a parent's help). Faith@Home cards summarize the Church School lesson and outlines activities for kids and parents to do together at home.



Church School Themes for 2015-16:

Sept. 2015	God Knows You	Jan. 2016	Created for a Purpose
Oct. 2015	There's No Place Like Home	Feb. 2016	The Journey
Nov. 2015	Do Good	March 2016	Martha & Mary
Dec. 2015	Making Room	April 2016	Follow Me
Jan. 2016	You're a Sheep! What?	May 2016	The Church



Worship: The primary job of the church is to be a spiritual community that forms people in faith. Congregations are communities of faith. They center life together on rituals of meaning that are found in worship; the practice of shared religious values that inform both corporate and individual identity, fellowship and eating together. *On the 3rd Sunday of every month, all students join the congregation "to be community together" for a "kid-friendly worship service."*



Serving Others – F.I.S.H. (Families in Service Here): This portion of our program is designed to teach students, of all ages, how to be servants and give of their time, talents, and treasures. It's a way of living out what Jesus said He came to do – *"serve and not be served."*

Birth- up to 5 yrs. (Faith & Play Class) – On the last Sunday of every month, we'll work with the youngest kids to quietly and tenderly meet needs. We're looking to involve kids in service activities like making cards for home-bound church members or putting together "blessing baskets" for homeless families and children. It's a way for the youngest among us to put flesh and bone to God's great love.

6-12 yrs. (JourneyKids & J.A.M. Classes) – Elementary school students are witnessing "servant behaviors" in their world and realizing that Jesus never gave up on His mission. Sure, he got frustrated and wept for lack of understanding. Jesus did everything with great compassion. He asked us to do likewise – Take time. Be humble. Keep on. Love. Our kids aren't tracking the number of our "good works" or judging how they may seem. But, they are beginning to simply watch to see if our hands are working in tandem with our hearts. Kids in this grade have responsibility for the church's ministry to serve homeless families in temporary residence at Alpha House. (A ministry that started with small goals at this very church and grew into something much bigger.)

13-18 yrs. (Y.E.S. Group) – Serving others can help pre-teens and teenagers understand a complicated world and learn meaningful ways to contribute productively. Teenagers want to be part of something bigger and are willing to work hard to meet big goals. At Journey of Faith, teens are empowered to find innovative solutions to the world's and local community's pressing problems. Our teens partner with local agencies to help support the ministries they are involved in. (You can visit their website, youthempoweredtoserve.org for more information.) In the process, young leaders find their voice. (More information on how families can serve together can be found at: <http://a2disciples.org/serve/>)



Stepping Stones

We believe parents, are the most vital component in a student's spiritual growth. Faith matters to kids, when it matters to parents. We hope to partner with parents in our family ministry program. Stepping Stones is a ministry that bonds parents and children into the Body of Christ at eight crucial milestones in a child's life. The program also provides faith-based parenting education from birth and baby dedications to teen years and graduation from high school – to have an active role in their child's faith formation by helping to reinforce themes that they learn about through Scripture and our own personal faith stories. Each milestone brings parents and children together for fun and learning, and ends at the altar with a special blessing service.

We hope parents will read the Bible with their child and talk about the significance of the Bible story or scripture. Parents may even want to share their own perspectives or reinforce lessons with examples from their own lives. It's also important for the church to do their best to partner with parents on a regular basis; provide information about our plans in advance; and make sure we understand each family's needs related to spiritual development for their children.



Giving

We encourage children and youth to bring their offerings to God and commit to His work as part of the local church. We are never more like God than when we give. We teach kids to use their spiritual gifts to help others and to be good stewards of the financial resources that God has given them. Children are taught to: *save* some of their money for future things; *spend* a portion of it on something they want or need right now; and *share* some of their money with others by supporting local charities or the church's outreach activities. We believe that every time we make a decision to be generous, we discover that our God refuses to be out-given.



Community

During the year, we'll have fun together at painting parties, visits to museums, recreational centers, and special events just for the kids and their classmates. We believe God created us to live in relationship with one another and only then can we live the full life God intends for us. Sometimes, the best thing for kids to do is to simply have fun together. Sharing life through community is part of God's design for everyone even the youngest among us. We believe God wants in on our lives and wants us in on the lives of others.

We also want to nurture a community of believers who love, support and encourage each other. It's the main reason the church started having *Frivolous Friday events*. It's our hope that these nights will not only be a fun time for all involved but also a great event to introduce your friends or acquaintances to the Journey community. Join us every third Friday of the month at 6:00 for a fun time, good food, and fellowship for families and friends.



We Need Your Help

On the 2nd Sunday of every month, we're looking for volunteers to talk with kids about loving God; following Christ; or the importance of a faith community and the church. Children grow in faith when they're hanging out with or watching

others who are faithful. A kid's faith is shaped by connecting them to caring adults who will be present in their lives. Kids can see people who follow God. Kids can see the church. Please consider signing up for one of the most important things you can do – be someone who will talk to kids, hang out with them, and do life with them. We can help you with ideas on what to do during that period of being with kids face-to-face. And, if you would like support during this time with the kids, teachers will be in the classrooms to help.



Calendar of Events for 2015-16

Sept. 13, 2015	Fall Church School Classes Begin.	
Oct. 11, 2015	CROP Walk: Raising money to eliminate hunger in our community and world. Walk begins at Rudolph Steiner High School (1:00)	Service Project
Oct. 18, 2015	Visit to Wasem Fruit Farm (12:00-2:00). Bag lunch will be provided.	Fellowship Event
Oct. 25, 2015	Hosting Halloween Party at Alpha House with Lunch (12:00-2:00).	Service Project
Nov. 22, 2015	God's Crazy Love (church-wide event): Delivering "blessing baskets" to Salvation Army Staples Family Center.	Service Project
Dec. 1– Dec. 20, 2015	Christmas Store (after the worship service). Children can work and earn points to buy or make eco-friendly gifts for their family members or friends.	Fellowship Event
Dec. 19, 2015	Christmas Party and Secret Santa 12:00-2:00 (kids can purchase a gift or make a gift); maximum amount to spend on a gift is \$5.00. Lunch will be provided.	Fellowship Event
Dec.20, 2015	No Church School Classes.	
Jan. 9, 2015	Gracious Parenting class (10:00-12:00); lunch provided.	Special Event
Jan. 10, 2016	Church School Classes resume in the New Year. Kids serve parents and grandparents breakfast.	
Jan. 17, 2016 – March 27, 2016	Passage into Discipleship: (Baptism class study for older youth and teens)	
March 12, 2016	Painting with a Twist [11:00-1:00]. Teachers will provide lunch); parents should drop off and pick up their kids at the Painting with a Twist Studio (3143 Oak Valley Dr., Ann Arbor).	Fellowship Event
March 27, 2016	Easter Activities: Making Easter egg pancakes; egg hunt; and exploring Easter stations.	Special Event
May 22, 2016	Breakfast at Alpha House; we'll arrive on site by 8:30.	Special Event
June 5, 2016	Last day of Church School Classes.	
June 26, 2016	Summer Church School Classes Begin.	
August 20-21, 2016	Lock-in starts at 6:00 with parent pick-up at 11:30	Special Event
October 8, 2016	Dads & Daughters Dance (7:00-9:00)	Special Event



Additional Resources

- The Parent Resource website (jofandfamily.wordpress.com) includes an event calendar on activities for kids. It's also filled with ideas for family time with God, creating traditions, serving opportunities and more. Check out the website to choose from the ideas and let it inspire your own!

"May your children grow in faith as they seek God's will in their lives! Amen."