



## **St. John's Discipleship Instruction**

**6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> Grade and Beyond**

### **Discipleship at St. John's toward Confirmation Day**

What are we about here at St. John's Lutheran Church?

Most simply put, we are a church that is about discipleship! Making disciples is the task Jesus gave His Church in Matthew 28:18-20, when he said, "Go make disciples of all nations, baptizing in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey all I have commanded you." This is what St. John's is about; baptizing and teaching the baptized to obey all He has commanded. Because of our desire to follow the words of our Lord, this congregation has come together under the mission statement, Connecting, Caring and Sharing in Christ. Making disciples by connecting, caring and sharing is what we are about as a congregation and in turn this is how we approach every aspect of ministry here at St. John's. The way in which we congregationally approach confirmation is one of many ways we hope to accomplish His mission for us.

So what is Confirmation?

Confirmation is a special day in the life of a Christian, but yet it is still just one day among many lived out in faith. Confirmation is a moment that most Christians eventually come to where they want to profess the faith in the Lord they have experienced and learned about. In essence confirming our faith is actually an opportunity for God to proclaim his Love through us, in response to what he has done for us in baptism, which is to proclaim His love to us.

The Rite of Confirmation, as well as all tradition associated with confirmation day, is not found in scripture. Confirmation was introduced to the life of the church as a way to celebrate a person's awareness of God's love in Jesus and his or her desire to share this love with others as members of Christ's Body. Thus an individual's personal/volitional decision to confirm their faith must be protected. We must not control or dictate when a child or adult is to confirm their faith and this personal profession must not be predicted by parents, grandparents, godparents, pastors or teachers. God's Spirit moves as He pleases according to Jesus. The timing of spiritual interest and commitment varies and St. John's discipleship training, both before and after confirmation, should support His notion. But it will also be based on recognizable benchmarks in knowledge, attitude, and behavior for a believer to confirm their faith.

Discipleship instruction, which began in your home and has continued as you have raised your child in faith will be supported and supplemented by various classes offered at St. John's for both parents and their children. A child's readiness to participate in Confirmation Day, as well as that of adults, will be determined through pastoral evaluation in three areas: knowledge, attitude and behavior. Because more than one day will be set aside for confirmation children and adults alike need not feel pressured to participate, but rather free to enter the conversation when most appropriate for themselves.

## **Laying out the plan for School-aged Discipleship and Confirmation**

What is Discipleship Instruction?

Our goal as a congregation is the same as yours as a family; we want to disciple God's young ones in faith not only in their 6<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grade years but from the moment they are born until the day they are called home to be with our Lord. This is why we are going to stop treating Instruction of the faith like a three year program that ends with a graduation day called confirmation. In our Church, which is about discipleship, we will call the time we spend with your children "Discipleship instruction." Our main goal, for this time together in instruction will be "to teach all God has commanded" by supplementing your own efforts of teaching and modeling the faith at home.

What is this going to look like?

Because St. John's desires to make disciples of all nations, we are naturally invested in assisting and guiding you in the discipleship of your Children. We want nothing more than to support your own instruction and the modeling of faith you do with intentional class room instruction and activities for both you and your children. Specifically what we will be offering is as follows:

Public School Disciples of Christ...

St. John's wants to supplement your family's instruction of the faith by giving youth a place to come to ask questions, talk about faith and explore real life issues in light of their faith. As a result 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> graders who choose to take advantage will be taught by Alan Lull in the areas of OT/NT, Introduction to Christianity, World Religions and Contemporary Issues. The 8<sup>th</sup> graders will be given an opportunity to come and learn the relevance and importance of Luther's Small Catechism taught by Pastor Guy.

Day School Disciples of Christ...

In our Day School, discipleship from Kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grade will be a goal of the teachers, principal and pastor's of St. John's. Pastor Jeff and Pastor Rob will intentionally be scheduling opportunities to teach and be interactive in the life of all grades at St. John's Day School. 7<sup>th</sup> Graders specifically will receive instruction four

times a week from Mr. Hardt, Mr. Lull and Pastor Rob on the topics of Old Testament, The Gospel of Mark, World Religions and Contemporary issues. 8<sup>th</sup> Graders will receive instruction four times a week from Mr. Wegner and Pastor Guy on The Epistles (Acts through Revelation), four major religions (Mormonism, Judaism, Islam and Jehovah's Witness') and the Small Catechism.

When will Confirmation happen?

Confirmation will happen when a student has demonstrated readiness in the areas of knowledge, attitude and behavior. Upon permission granted by St. John's pastors, the student will begin the 10 week new membership class we are calling, "Promises of Grace". By demonstrating sufficient knowledge of both the catechism and the scriptures, demonstrating an attitude that is consistent with a disciple of Christ and having shown this to be true through their actions of worship and discipleship, school aged disciples will be ready to enter the conversation of, "What am I confirming and what does it look like here at St. John's?" This 10 week "Promises of Grace" course will be offered twice a year and will ideally culminate with youth making a public proclamation of faith. If a student desires to confirm their faith at the end of the course, an opportunity to do so publically will be offered multiples times a year. Confirmation services will normally occur three times per year. The services will be during our regular Sunday morning service times and will confirm both adults and youth in the same service.

When can I be confirmed?

A student may participate in Confirmation as soon as they can demonstrate their readiness in three areas: knowledge, attitude and behavior and have successfully completed the 10 week class "Promises of Grace". The timing of participation in Confirmation will be different for every person. Confirmation Day isn't something that is assumed based on the completion of a series of discipleship instruction classes offered at the day school and/or on Wednesday evenings, but rather on the deliberate decision of the Confirmand and pastor together with the family. While some may confirm their faith in 7<sup>th</sup> grade, it will more likely occur later, maybe in high school. The desired outcome is that those confirming their faith, adult and youth, would do so fully understanding and demonstrating the promise being made to God.

*Questions or comments?* ...Please feel free to contact any of the pastors at St. John's Church office (334-4901).

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