



MCC FAMILY DISCIPLE MAKING PLAN

Partnering Church and Home

LOVE GOD, LOVE OTHERS, MAKE DISCIPLES

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Intro

It is our heart to walk with families as they experience some of the great joys and challenges of growing children. Raising children to know Christ requires a prayerful and intentional plan for parents. Millcreek Community Church envisions a church and family partnership that leads to the making of disciples for the glory of God.

The MCC Family Disciple Making Plan partners home and church in 4 simple stages from birth to college, as we together seek to Love God, love others, and make disciples. It is our desire to see this plan offer understanding in implementing spiritually healthy, Christ honoring change. This partnership will be evident in the following objectives:

- Communicating well with parents.
- Training and resourcing that equips parents for disciple-making.
- Corporately celebrating milestones with families.
- Integrating youth into Sunday morning services.
- Aiming children and teens to understand and live the Discipleship Pathway.



**LOVE
GOD**

- > Follow Christ & be publicly baptized as a believer
- > Complete the Membership Matters course



**LOVE
OTHERS**

- > Serve others at MCC & everywhere God leads
- > Join a Community (C) Group



**MAKE
DISCIPLES**

- > Join a Discipleship (D) Group
- > Complete the disciple-making course to be equipped to see people love God & love others

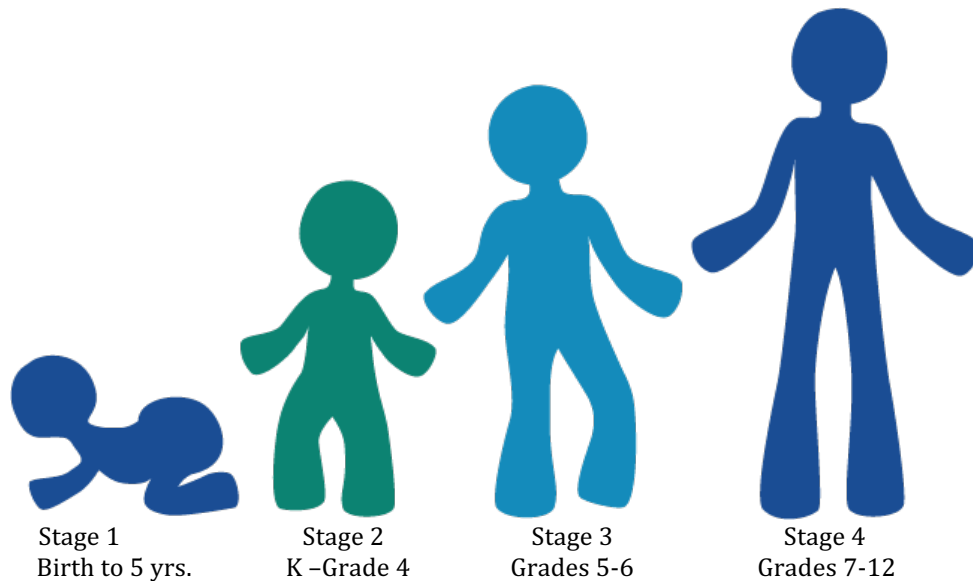
Our Aim

What is a Family disciple making plan? The plan is our aim to see a partnership of church and home to make disciples. At Millcreek Community Church, we desire for people to grow relationally and spiritually deep. The Discipleship pathway aims individuals and also families towards making disciples. *Disciple-making is an intentional investment in peoples' lives to see them love God, love others, and make disciples.*

The Pathway is a restructuring of the churches processes to expect discipleship at every level; and this includes within the home. Deuteronomy 6:5-7 gives a clear call to teach and model the gospel to the next generation. At MCC we see family as a community designed by God to declare His name great among the nations. Our desire is that our church and our homes reflect the glory of God and are environments in which disciples are made.

We recognize that in God's sovereignty individuals come into saving grace at varying ages and stages in their lives. For this reason, the Family disciple making plan addresses Baptism, Communion, and Worship. It is a guide to encourage Parents to be prayerful and deliberate in their conversations with their children. It is designed to inspire creativity, to give practical insight to family worship, to challenge parents to live out the gospel with their children, and to bring an excitement and awe to children that faith permeates all of life. Our hope is that MCC and parents walk in obedience to proclaim the gospel to future generations as found in Psalm 78:6-7.

Proverbs 22:6 tells us to "Train up a child in the way he should go." It has often been said that identifying our target helps us to focus our aim. We want to see disciples who make disciples. Our prayer and hope through this plan is to leverage our time and resources at church and home in aiming our children towards Christ, the author and finisher of our faith. We echo the words of the apostle John in 3 John 1:4, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in truth." Prayerfully join with us as we hold this Family Disciple Making plan in an open hand before the sovereign God of the universe. It's quite the journey, but we believe that we are called together, through the power of the Holy Spirit to live in redemptive community!



4 Stages of Development

Each Stage includes: **Ministry, Primary Truths, Trainings, and Resources**

A **ministry** has been designed for each specific age group. These ministries center on God's Word and aiming our children/teens towards Christ. They take into account the developmental stage of youth, their attention spans, and learning styles.

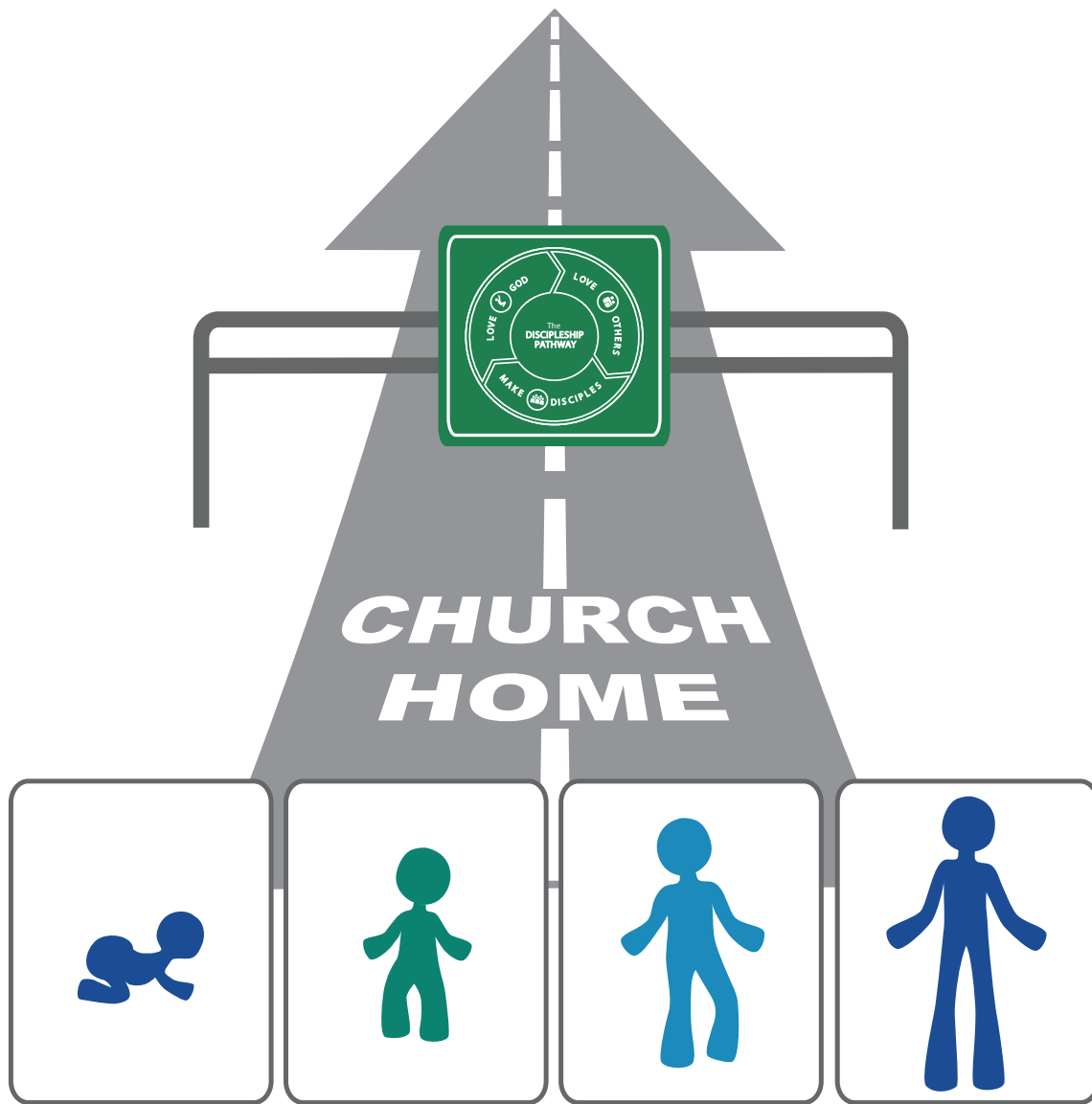
The **basic truths** focus on *The Story*; also used by adults at MCC to know and communicate the gospel. In addition to these basic truths, curriculum is also listed. Each stage communicates weekly lessons to parents through handouts, emails, and in parent trainings. God's story of creation, fall, rescue, and restoration should frame every part of a family's existence. Parents are able to see their children as sons and daughters, and as potential or actual brothers and sisters in Christ. In addition to the basic truths, MCC has an alignment in teaching from birth through the adults. Beginning in the fall of 2016, we will take a journey through the scriptures from Genesis to Revelation. Everyone will be on the same page, learning each week the same truths from a selection of scripture.

MCC makes a promise to those parents who are commissioned (formerly known as child dedications) to come alongside them and partner with them in the process of teaching

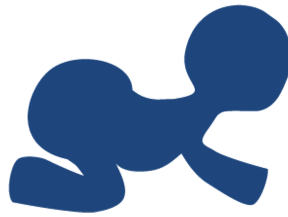
and modeling Christ. Ongoing **training** opportunities are available to equip parents through the various stages of parenthood. Each training will equip parents to live in redemptive community. In addition, many of the training opportunities incrementally integrate our children and teens into the life of the church. There are several Family Worship days and Livestreams that train students to grow in their understanding and love of corporate worship.

Parents are also able to utilize the **resources** available for these formative years of their children's lives. There are many gospel-centered resources available, and we have put together our recommendations for each stage. These resources are available for sale in the children's ministry foyer. Each quarter new resources are on display. In addition, the Family Ministry blog will highlight these valuable tools that can be used within your home.

MCC FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP PATHWAY



The Family Disciple Making Pathway is a visual reminder of our constant aim to make disciples. Together, home and church can aim children and teens alike towards Christ, making disciples that make disciples. Parents of children in all stages quickly recognize that the path is not an easy one alone, but together we can share the gospel with our children and teens to love God, love others, and make disciples. This will require MCC's parents to commit to both serve and invest into their families and also the ministries designed to serve students! So if you are reading this, ask yourself, "how can I invest into children and youth in the ministries at MCC?"



Stage 1 - Birth to 5 years

You probably hear over and over again to just enjoy this stage of life, right? It's quite common to feel that you will never make it through the extreme exhaustion of sleepless nights or a mobile toddler. Hang in there, together we can make it. At this stage of life, basic and fundamental truths are the focus as a child develops. Birth to 5 can be a strategic time to establish routines and family habits that then become the norm for future years. Introducing your child to times of prayer, Bible reading, and singing are incredibly valuable. Something as simple as a coloring page or craft can communicate big truths to a child. However, the greatest benefit for your child is for you to be maturing in your own faith. We cannot stress enough how important it is to be connected with other believers and especially other parents who are your peers and one stage ahead of you with their children. Family worship is important, but know that you can also model this to them through your personal devotions. Want to commit yourself to the process? Consider taking the Early Years class and have your child dedicated at MCC.

The early years are integral to establishing habits and patterns as parents. They are foundational for your child, but these years are also foundational for mom and dad. Take the time to dive into some resources and begin conversations about Parenting styles, discipline, and how to incorporate gospel truths in your home.

Are you connected in a C-group or D-group? Parents, your relationship with Christ will pour out into your marriage and family. Get connected to a community that can encourage and challenge as your family develops and changes.

Ministries- Nursery, Kingdom Critters

Basic Truths

1. God made me.
2. God hates sin.
3. God loves me.

4. God gave us the Bible.

Trainings-

- The Early Years (fulfills the requirement for child dedication at MCC)
- Table Talk
- Family Ministry blog

Resources-

- *The Big Picture Story Bible*
- *Praying Through the Bible for Your Kids.*
- *Shepherding a Child's Heart*
- *Raising Children God's Way*
- *Raising a Modern Day Knight, Raising a Modern Day Princess*
- *Grace Based Discipline*
- *Everyday Talk*
- *Training Hearts Teaching Minds*
- Right Now Media
- Habits at Home Training



Stage 2 – K to Grade 4

As your child develops, you may get to sleep more... you hope. In this stage, your little one has developed into a student and has more cognitive skills. One of their greatest achievements in this stage is the ability to read and comprehend. As a result, MCC recognizes the importance of Family Devotions and the importance of students reading the Bible. MCC blesses every kindergarten student with his or her own Bible. Treasuring God's Word must be practiced and modeled at home and church. Make every effort to find ways to instill a love to read God's Word in your child's heart. Searching the scriptures is a focus in Kid Connection.

Encourage your children to read the Bible on their own, but let's be honest, this is something that must be modeled to them. Family Worship is crucial for this stage. Find creative ways to open up the Bible together, discuss it, and live it out. We believe Family worship is so important that we also want to practice this together! We schedule several opportunities throughout the year to sit around tables, and to listen to the sermon. This provides a space where parents and children can engage each other about specific points from the sermon. We also utilize creative hands on teaching, and incorporate a children's note sheet that follows the sermon. In that note sheet there are activities and projects that can be used the following week for your own family worship time. As a parent, observe how your child interacts with the scriptures. Be sure to provide opportunities for questions and discuss what you experienced together. Follow up with a time around your table or on your comfy couch.

Is the Family Worship day just for parents? Absolutely not! Children will see and hear all that is happening in the service. For many students this is their first interaction with sitting through "Big church." We know the stress that can come with trying to keep your squirrely little one quiet through Sunday service. Family worship days allow your child to develop and grow in their understanding and love for worship on a Sunday

morning. This is also in preparation of the next stage where students are in the service each Sunday through the summer months!

While some parents think it's too early, we see it necessary to begin speaking about healthy sexuality with your children at this age. It's best to have multiple talks about sexuality than only the dreaded "TALK." Please don't think we are going to go there with the children at MCC, however we would like to equip you for what can be discussed at home. It's not easy, but it is a necessary conversation in your child's development, and I hate to be the one to remind you... but your child is growing and maturing. We ask for you to think this through now because before you know it, puberty will be quickly approaching. Are you prepared for the onslaught of hormones and emotions? Parents, remember, someone will teach your child about identity and sexuality if you do not! God has given you such an amazing influence in your child's life, take it, and run with it.

Ministries- Kid Connection, kidsAlive (Grover Cleveland School)

Basic Truths

1. God created me to worship Him.
2. I sin. God hates sin.
3. God sent His son, Jesus, to save us.
4. We can be with God forever.
5. God's Word is true.

Trainings-

- Early Years (fulfills requirement for child dedication at MCC)
- Open house
- Family Worship Days
- Family Ministry Blog

Resources-

- *Instructing a Child's Heart*
- *Cornerstones: 200 Questions and Answers to Learn Truth*
- *Peacemaking for Families*
- *The Jesus Storybook Bible*
- *Big Truths for Young Hearts*
- *52 Creative Family Time Experiences*
- *Dinner Table Devotions & Discussion Starters*
- *Donut Date Journal*
- Right Now Media
- Biblical Discipline Training



Stage 3 – Grades 5-6

Growing up can be tough sometimes, especially right before or around puberty. MCC has a ministry designed for what can be a pretty awkward stage of life. I think many of us hide our 5th and 6th grade pictures for good reason. It's tough feeling like you are on the line between being a kid and a teen. Anyways, this stage continues to go deeper into the scriptures. At the same time, it's important that these students develop a heart for their communities and the world around them. It is easy for any child or student to become fixated on himself or herself, and is very common at this age to be "me" focused. Our hope is to provide opportunities for this stage to serve others and to live out Matthew 22:36-40. Parents, one of our great trainings in this stage is an opportunity for you to serve in the community alongside your pre-teen. Is it just about serving? Well, that's just a part of it! After we serve together, Parents and students are invited to a meal that we discuss their experience and engage in the importance of serving locally. For many students, this is the first time they are able to tangibly help someone else. MCC is a church that loves the city of Erie, and the surrounding communities. Because our heart is to share the gospel, we also recognize by Jesus model that the gospel goes with us as we love others through acts of service. Whether it's feeding the hungry, or volunteering at a local school, we live and share the gospel!

As your student matures, they are able to comprehend the scriptures in a deeper way. For this reason, Club 56 students are given an ESV Study Bible. As they learn together, they are given greater insight on how to use the notes, and engage others in the scriptures. Their time together on Sunday mornings is more discussion based and models more the structure of a C-group than the prior stage. As they move closer to being teen, we want to

offer them a safe place to learn and chew on the scriptures, but also an environment that looks forward to the community that will be part of shortly!

Remember the Family worship days designed to be points of contact for your child with Sunday services? Well, in Stage 3, students are part of the praise time at the beginning of the service. This helps students to be more familiar with the songs and also scripture reading. They are also included in Livestreams which like the Family worship days is an opportunity that provides an environment for leaders to walk with students through the entire service. Club 56 students are able to ask questions, be trained to follow the note sheets for the sermon, and also engage in how the scripture is applied in their life the following week. In addition to being part of the praise time, and livestreams, Stage 3 students are part of corporate worship throughout the summer months. This is a necessary integration into the life of corporate worship. When they enter into Stage 4, they will be part of the larger body of believers on Sunday mornings!

Ministries- Club 56

Basic Truths

1. I am created in God's image.
2. We deserve punishment for our sins.
3. Jesus' blood washes away our sin.
4. Eternity with God begins the day we follow Christ.
5. God's Word is trustworthy.

Trainings

- Life of Service
- Livestream training
- Family Ministry Blog

Resources

- *Every Young Man's Battle*
- *Every Young Woman's battle*
- *Understanding Your Young Teen*
- *5 Conversations You Must Have with Your Son*
- *5 Conversations You Must Have with Your Daughter*
- *Age of Opportunity*
- *The Tech-Wise Family*
- *Tech Savvy Parenting*
- *Dedicated*
- *Peacemaking for Families*
- Right Now Media Trainings
- Sexual Purity Training



Stage 4 – Grades 7-12

Parents often feel unequipped and disengaged from their teenagers. Now more than ever, this is a stage of life where managing time becomes very difficult. It's parents in this stage that tell stage 1 parents to enjoy those little ones while you can! Teens are busy with work, school, and relationships. Establishing a family devotion time can happen, but you have to be willing to fight for it. In the chaos of this stage, there is hope. Knowing that you are not alone is an excellent first step.

Teens and parents focus on community in this stage. They need to be told that they are a vital part of their schools, homes, and churches. Community is a word that gets used quite often here. If they do not feel like they belong, they will find another place where they can fit in. We want our teens to truly be part of Sunday service and to be connected to the body of Christ. Before they leave our care, we want every teen to have experienced a healthy church, and to know the value of this community. When they head to college, it is crucial that they know to look for sound biblical teaching, Christ centered worship, a community that has a heart for outreach and missions, and the value of discipleship! Teens are also scheduled for Livestreams to discuss application of the sermon in addition to critical thinking skills for notes and follow up.

They crave relationship, and our goal is to point them to Christ and aim them towards the Discipleship Pathway. They will embark on one of their greatest adventures, going out on their own as young adults in schooling and vocations. The time we get with our children seems to fly by so quickly, so take advantage of these last few years.

Communicate well and often with your teens and provide an environment where they can be heard.

Ministries- Community Groups, Monthly Outreach Events, Service and Missions opportunities.

Basic Truths

1. God is creator of the heavens and the earth, and I am made in His image.
2. I deserve death because of my sin.
3. It is only through Jesus death on the cross and resurrection that one is saved by faith through grace alone.
4. God desires to be with His people for all eternity. His plan is for restoration!
5. God's Word guides us through life.

Trainings-

- Family Retreat
- Livestream Training
- Family Mission Trips
- Family Ministry Blog

Resources

- *31 Verses Every Teenager Should Know*
- *The Purity Principle*
- *Knowable Word; helping ordinary people learn to study the Bible*
- *Staying Connected to Your Teenager*
- *Disciple Like Jesus for Parents*
- *Walk as Jesus Walked*
- *Boundaries with Teens*
- *Crazy Busy*
- *Get Offa My Case! Godly Parenting of an Angry Teen*
- *Get Outta My Face! How to Reach Angry, Unmotivated Teens with Biblical Counsel*
- *Habits of Grace*
- *Bible Project videos, <https://thebibleproject.com>*
- Right Now Media
- College and Vocation Prep Training

Interested in other resources? Contact shawn@millcreek.org or karen@millcreek.org

College Care Ministry

In an effort to stay connected through the college years, MCC has developed a ministry that reaches out to encourage students through prayer, communication, and care packages. In addition to encouraging students, this ministry also brings together parents for prayer and encouragement. Students are encouraged to fill out a student survey to take part in this. Interested in serving or have questions? Contact Connie at cfaluszczak@gmail.com

You may have noticed that the College age students are not considered a stage or broken down into the various categories as other stages. It is important that these young adults find their place within ministry at Millcreek Community Church.

Milestones

What exactly are Milestones? Milestones are expressions of our student's growth and development. They are both moments of celebration and points of entry into a new season of life. MCC is a church that loves families and desires to partner with them, it's no surprise that we are excited to see how God is at work through the Family Disciple Making Plan. Below are detailed descriptions of each milestone that celebrates our partnership.

Child Dedication/ Parent Commissioning- one of the most visible partnerships of church and home occurs at the child dedications. As a prerequisite to the child dedications, parents will be required to take either the Early Years or the Next Steps Training. This occurs typically in stage 1 or 2. Not only does this provide an opportunity to think through parenting, it gives parents moment to really dive into this plan and develop a strategy for the coming years. Both parents and MCC get an opportunity to affirm their partnership together on a Sunday morning.

Salvation/ Baptism - the first response for any student that has repented of their sins and is a follower of Christ is Baptism. MCC celebrates students that have made this commitment and bear evidence of the Spirit's work in their life. Several times a year MCC has Baptisms in the sanctuary and also at Presque Isle. This is one of our great joys, to see students identify and declare their allegiance to Jesus Christ! There is a section in the Family Disciple Making Plan devoted to Baptism and the Mentor Guide made available to parents as they walk with their students.

Student of the Word- all of the various ministries and stages at MCC center on the truth of God's Word. At an early age it is important that children are learning to open and read the scriptures. In Stage 2, students are given a children's Bible. Also when entering Stage 3 they are given an ESV study Bible. This is really important as children developmentally become students. Remind them to bring their Bibles home and open them often together. We want to celebrate with our church family Sunday morning, as they become students of God's Word.

Servant's Heart- it is easy in our culture to focus our attention on our own desires and needs. In Stage 3, students are encouraged to serve others. This occurs through various projects and interactions throughout the year in Club 56. Parents are encouraged to take part in these moments to serve, and to find ways to continue this within their own spheres of influence. This will also be celebrated at a Sunday morning service, expressing what the kids are doing in the name of Christ.

Graduation /Commitment to Purity- coming into adulthood can sometimes be a tricky milestone to celebrate in Stage 4. It is better to have many discussions while your child grows and develops than just one "talk." For this reason, there is a milestone for families to celebrate with their teens concerning purity. This will be discussed specifically in the training and is encouraged to celebrate within the family. MCC celebrates graduates on a Sunday morning. This moment of celebration recognizes all their

hard work through their schooling. It also is a moment to celebrate as they enter into a new stage of life.

Multiplier – our hope and aim is to see our students become disciples that make disciples. As we walk with them through the Discipleship Pathway we are modeling what it looks like for them to do the same. Early on parents were commissioned to raise their child to know Christ. When a student becomes a multiplier it is a commissioning for the student to go into the world to share the gospel. This is a celebration of the partnership between church and home: to love God, love others, and make disciples. At MCC, we want to see every student professes Jesus as Lord and Savior to be part of a mission's trip. We want to send students and their families to share the gospel both locally and globally, aiming students towards a lifetime of being the sent ones! Together we can celebrate the students that are passionate to take the gospel to the nations.

Your Child and Baptism

When youth become members of God's family, baptism is their celebrated response. The Bible indicates that a person must understand the gospel, repent of his or her sin, and truly trust in Christ *before* being baptized (Romans 10:9-10). As water baptism is an external sign of genuine conversion, genuine conversion must take place in the heart before a person is baptized.

However, we recognize that the Bible does not put an age requirement on baptism. We understand that the consideration of an appropriate age for a believer to be baptized is a matter not of simple obedience on an issue clearly settled by Scripture, but rather is a matter of Christian wisdom; a question that we are often asked by parents. We believe that the normal age of baptism should be when the credibility of one's conversion becomes naturally evident to the church community. This would normally be when the child/youth has matured, and is beginning to live more self-consciously as an individual, making

independent decisions, having left the child-like dependence on the parents for the God-given intended mature wisdom which marks one who has truly trusted in Christ and lives clearly to follow Christ. It is difficult to set an age requirement for baptism, but it is appropriate to consider the candidate's maturity and lifestyle.

Two very important considerations would be (1) Has the child actually rejected a worldly set of values in placing his/her trust in Christ? (2) Does he/she, on his own, seek the scriptures, desire to be with God's people and openly declare his/her love for Christ? As he/she assumes Biblical responsibilities, then part of this would be to declare publicly his/her allegiance to Christ by baptism and have a willingness to be involved in covenant community responsibility and service.

If these issues are resolved, we would then proceed to evaluate whether or not the child has an understanding of salvation by grace apart from works, and we will seek verification from others that he or she demonstrates the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22) in everyday life. The question raised by baptism is the ability of others to be fairly confident of that child/ youth has asked Jesus to be Savior and Lord of their life. We believe a child/youth who can meet these qualifications is ready to identify with Christ and His church through believer's baptism.

If you have a child/ youth that is interested in being baptized, please contact Pastor Shawn at shawn@millcreek.org to set up a time to discuss some of the above questions and scriptures. In an effort to come alongside Parents, MCC also has a Baptism Mentor Training guide available. This provides parents the opportunity to walk through Basic Principles of the Gospel with their child. This can prayerfully be used to further instruct them in scripture, providing opportunities for dialogue.

Your Child & Communion

The question:

Communion is about to be served. Your child tries to get your attention when asking, "Can I take communion today?" You have only a few seconds to respond. What do you say? Who should take communion? As parents, we must give spiritual guidance to our children by being ready to respond to their questions about communion and their desire to participate. While this scenario may play out during a worship service at MCC, it is our homes that provide a safe place for dialogue with our children about communion.

Who is invited?

A simple answer to the question of who should participate is "all Christ-followers", that is, people who "confess Jesus Christ as Lord." Children who believe and confess that Jesus is Lord have an authentic faith. However, they may have a limited understanding of the meaning and depth of communion. Though children can participate, we highly encourage parents to insure their child understands its meaning and significance.

What does communion mean?

As Christ-followers, to participate in the Lord's Supper is to declare that God's gift of grace and forgiveness has been accepted and a personal relationship with Christ has been established. Participants have a 360-degree perspective of salvation. Looking back, we are able to remember God's plan of salvation described in scripture, and our personal salvation story. Looking to the future, followers of Jesus anticipate Christ's triumphant return. Participating in the Lord's Supper expresses that memory and anticipation. In 1 Corinthians 11:23-26, the apostle Paul describes, "For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.' For

whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes."

How can I take communion?

The common items to use for communion are grape juice and bread. Oftentimes the bread is in the form of a cracker. When a family is ready to take communion within their home, they can purchase the juice and crackers at a local grocery or convenient store. The crackers and juice are not the actual body and blood of Christ, but rather represent this. This is a common question from young children as they process communion.

How often should we take communion?

MCC offers communion every first Sunday of the month during both services. At the same time, communion can be taken at Community groups, and by families in their home. This can be done often, as it is a celebration and remembrance of Christ!

What is taking communion in "a manner that is worthy"?

While understanding that the meaning of communion involves a look backwards and forwards, it also involves a good look at the present. Paul writes further in 1 Corinthians 11:27-29, "Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself." As Christ-followers, we are called to reflect upon the condition of our relationship with Christ and even our relationships with others (see Matthew 5:23-24). This involves self-examination, confession of sin and the recognition of forgiveness received.

Do I have to be baptized to take communion?

No, baptism is not required to participate in communion. As a church, we recognize the importance of believer's baptism as a testimony to others of the individual's desire to be a Christ-follower and the change in their life. In the New Testament a confession of faith was typically followed by immediate baptism (Acts 8:12; 16:29-33). We encourage every

Christ-follower to follow Jesus Christ's example (Matthew 3:13-17) in obedience by being baptized as an outward sign of the inward change in their life.

Giving guidance to our children

There are times in life when the best learning experience is participation. Communion is a celebration that may be enriched by opportunities to learn before participation. The following are some basic steps to assist you in preparing a child for communion. They move through three stages: observation, involvement and participation. The following diagram illustrates this progression.



Observation

The most basic form of participation is watching others take part in communion. The observation stage engages children by raising questions (Exodus 12:26-27). Observation may occur during a Sunday morning service at MCC, within a Community group, or also within your own family. Believing parents are able to serve communion to each other during a time of family worship. This environment demonstrates the priesthood of all believers (1 Peter 2:9-10) and provides an opportunity to share what communion means to God and to you. Single parents that are believers may also teach their children about communion by taking the bread and juice while teaching through Jesus' words at the last supper.

Involvement

As observation increases understanding, the desire to participate may also increase. Make it a point to involve your children as they continue to learn. Before communion, lead

them through a time of personal reflection just as you would engage in self-examination to prepare your own self. Help them understand both the seriousness and the celebration of thankfulness that accompanies forgiveness. Encourage them to ask questions to other Christians such as pastors, teachers, and grandparents. Read the story of Jesus' Last Supper (Luke 22:7-20) and communion scriptures in the New Testament with them (1 Corinthians 11:11-22).

Our homes are a great place to have conversation about communion and the time of reflection and prayer that occurs before receiving it. Here are a few questions and thoughts to have your children ponder in this time.

- How am I loving God this week?
- How have I loved others? My family, friends, neighbors?
- Have I hurt anyone with my words or actions?
- Is there sin that needs confessed? Forgiven?
- Take some time to pray about the above questions.
- Remember Jesus' sacrifice and how we can be forgiven of our sins!

Participation

A child who has been involved in the previous stages will have shown whether they are ready to participate. The question, "Can I take communion today?" will not come as a surprise. You will be able to respond with confidence that your child has understood the significance and meaning of communion. At MCC, in a community group, or within the home, *the invitation to participate in communion is open to all Christ-followers, young and old.* You are best suited to determine if your child is genuinely trusting in Christ as their Savior and Lord. As parents, take the initiative to serve your child. Be sensitive and recognize that peer pressure may be a factor in wanting to participate, both for your child and other children. This is something that one must also be sensitive to within the home. Just because they have taken communion before does not dictate whether they should take it this time.

How do you know your child is ready for Communion?

- Has your child confessed that Jesus is Lord of their life? (Romans 10:9)
- As a parent, you can judge a tree by its fruit. What evidence is there in their life of the Holy Spirit and the transformation that He brings? (Luke 6:43-49)

Prayerfully ask for the Spirit's guidance in this process as you walk with your children. Answering questions can be difficult, but is crucial as your children are aimed towards Christ in the remembrance and celebration of His sacrifice and defeat of sin and death.

Family Worship

Accomplishing God's greater goal for your family can oftentimes be difficult and will come with conflict. This will require parents to be ever mindful of living out the gospel at church and home. In addition, your life at home should match your life at church. Children and teens need to see individuals, specifically their parents strive for obedience and live in redemptive community. The message that aligns with one's day to day practice is a very powerful one.

So when is a good time to bring my child into Sunday morning corporate worship? The answer is – Any time! We believe that family worship happens at church and home. It is important that families acknowledge that exposure to a Sunday service may depend on the child's attention span. However, we do recognize that it is good for children to experience what it is like to worship with other believers. So where do you begin? Plan ahead and talk to your child the night before about joining you for a worship service. Explain to them the different things that might happen such as praise music, prayer, reading of the scripture, and listening to God's Word from the Pastor. Explain to them that there is a note sheet so they can write or draw pictures of what they hear. On Sunday, plan on sitting towards the back so you can quietly explain things as they are happening. If your child is unable to sit through an entire service, it's ok! Please feel free to walk them over to the children's ministries. Remember that this will take time and may develop gradually.

Exposure to corporate worship is already built into several of the ministries at MCC. Club56 begins to expose them once a month on Sunday mornings to the praise and worship time. They also are part of the services throughout the summer months. In addition, Kid

Connection is part of the service for praise and worship during the summer months. Youth group is in the evening so teens can go to Sunday service every week and worship with the family. The greatest way to explain corporate worship is through your child experiencing family worship at home. Parents can explain and also demonstrate prayer, scripture reading, and singing much earlier at home due to the flexibility and informal setting. Ephesians 5:25-6:4 reminds men to embrace the truth that they have a special responsibility for spiritual leadership within their families. Father's need to take the lead in this time of family worship.

Designating a time is probably one of first steps toward family worship. Just like waking up on a Sunday morning, think through protecting a consistent day and time that your family will get together. Some of you may be wondering if that's even possible. It can be tough in today's busyness, but it is certainly worth fighting for. Remember to start small and early. Some parents do a great job with having a bed time routine, or make an effort to eat a few dinners together each week. You are on the right track. Family Worship should be part of the normal rhythm of life in your home. Begin reading scripture before or after you pray at a meal. Can it be awkward at first? Sure. What is important here is that you make the effort, and you are just as intentional at home as you would be with attending a Sunday morning worship service.

Some parents are thinking that this is just simply impossible to do with my child. One must also be aware that they may get some things wrong. Be willing to adjust to an ever-changing context and developing children. Parents, specifically fathers remain the most significant influence on children. Now for just a moment ask yourself how your family already interacts well. Is it watching a movie together? Maybe it's a craft time, or running through the sprinkler in the summer time. Whatever it may be, look for opportunities to incorporate God's Word into these activities. Older children and teenagers may be able to sit down and read some scriptures and have a time of discussion, but sometimes it's important to go the extra mile with our younger children. When you are intentional about reading scripture in your home, it begins to make sense to a child that scripture is for everyday living.

Remember that godly growth is sometimes slow, and often hidden. But it is always centered on Jesus and the gospel. Make God's word central to the teaching. Early on, narratives seem to work great, but as your child grows you will notice their ability to grasp other deeper truths. They should not be surprised that a church service centers on God's Word, when in fact worship at home does exactly the same. Other key areas to focus on are singing and a time of prayer. Including these into family worship shows a child our need and appreciation of being in His presence. When a child experiences worship at home it oftentimes makes for a smoother transition into corporate worship. It also helps students to see the connectedness of church and home; that their faith is integral to all areas of life.

Remember, Family Worship can be exciting. Understanding what interests your child and how they best communicate will help make your Family Devotions interactive and exciting. There are so many tools and resources to get you started in the right direction. In order to see church and home partnership, MCC has developed trainings for each stage that will focus on family worship/ devotions. These exciting times will be an opportunity to grow together through teaching of God's Word. There is an added benefit that you will share this training with others in the same stage of life, providing opportunities for community and connection.

Practical suggestions for making it work:

- Read in a circle (great for children learning to read)
- Be flexible and allow time for questions
- Have a plan for scripture reading. Read the Proverb that coincides with the date or read through a gospel.
- Sing together, you would be surprised how much fun this actually is!
- Encourage confession and forgiveness amongst family members.
- Give them a list to pray from. Make a prayer poster or keep a family prayer book.
- Eliminate distractions. (Example-turn off or place electronics on silent).
- Strive for consistency. Sometimes this is a time or place. It may be at a meal or dinner table.
- Keep it brief; you can always add more time as they grow.

Single Parents

Extending leadership to children that do not have believing parents is our priority, for each of us has been adopted into God's family. Sometimes single parents find it difficult to do Family Worship at home and church. Oftentimes this is the result of managing a very hectic schedule of work, school activities, taking care of the home, and giving attention to your little ones. We recognize the difficulty of being a single parent and also the obstacles that are the result of the absence of a father or mother. In an effort to continue to support families at MCC, it is clear that there are children that will require godly men and women placed in their life; they need Christ-like examples as they continue to grow and develop. Again, we cannot communicate enough the importance for adults to get connected in a community group. These small communities are able to be a great encouragement to a single parent. There are small groups that offer childcare, and provide a connectedness with gospel centered community. In this community you will be encouraged, strengthened, and challenged alongside other believers that will walk with you through the rhythms of life. We want to see you succeed in your parenting, and for this reason we have childcare at most of MCC's activities and services. It is important that you continue to grow and mature in Christ, remembering that your church family will be present as you parent. Your growth in Christ is strategic in your family's growth. Having a community that is committed to aiming your children towards Christ will be instrumental in your parenting. If you are a single parent looking for a godly man or women to disciple your child alongside you, please contact Pastor Shawn at shawn@millcreek.org to discuss opportunities to help establish this relationship for them.

Parent and Student Training

Time and training are the two biggest obstacles for parents in the disciple making process. In an effort to invest into families, there is a parent training each year that focuses on equipping parents in each stage. At these trainings, parents and families will gather and will learn how to utilize resources and tools at church and home. Specifically, these

trainings will be moments to check in with families to improve and strengthen our partnership as we aim our children towards Christ.

MCC recognizes that the best way to see growth in your family is for parents to grow and mature in Christ. Each training is also a great way to connect with other families and to learn from God's Word the wisdom of others. This training will also focus on Family Worship strategy and resources for each specific stage. Each parent/s must ask themselves, "Do I have a plan of disciple-making?" Please consider taking the time to take part in one of our stage trainings where we will gather together to discuss, brainstorm, and develop unique disciple-making strategies for our homes.

In addition to the face to face trainings, an additional training is added to each stage in 2018. These trainings are developed through Rightnow Media and will cover specific topics that parents have brought up time and again when we have gathered. These trainings are designed to be navigated through at your own pace from the comfort of your home. In addition, they are designed with questions and interaction to encourage a continued dialogue within your home.

Stage 1- Early Years

The Early Years class is a three-week training on church and home partnership for parents.

This is the prerequisite for the Child dedication/ Parent Commissioning.

Table Talk is a personal invitation to meet with the Family pastor. This is a follow up to the Early Years class and provides opportunity for Q&A. Will it be crazy? I surely hope so! This is a great way to be challenged and encouraged, in a safe environment.

Right Now Media Training- Habits in the Home: Your kids are young, so here are several Spiritual disciplines to incorporate into your everyday rhythm of life. Family Worship can be a natural outflow of your faith, now is the time to establish healthy habits.

Stage 2- Open House and Family Worship Days

Parents are encouraged to attend a Kid Connection open house with their children. At this training, parents will be encouraged to engage their children in faith throughout the week and learn to utilize take home materials. This Training provides an opportunity for Parents to experience what Kid Connection is like for their kids each Sunday. You will get to see and be part of first hand, the singing, teaching, large group and small group time! The beauty of every age being on the same page at MCC, is that you get to take what happens on Sunday, and take it into the next week with your children. Think of what happens on Sunday as a springboard that bounces you into Family worship! Parents, you have a very special role to play as you review the lesson, go deeper, and find moments where the scriptures have application in your home.

Family Worship days are held at MCC quarterly. At these services, Parents engage their children around tables in the Family Life room. The Service is projected onto flatscreen TV's. Why not just jump right into a Sunday morning service? Well, you can certainly try that, however we recognize that attention spans and need for hands on activities is more critical at this age. We want to provide an environment where Parents can talk to their children without disruption of the rest of the sanctuary. Parents, at a Family Worship Day, it is good to lean over and ask your child, or children if they understand a certain point. Children are naturally inquisitive, and to aid in this opportunity, we provide a children's note sheet that follows along with the sermon. This provides an opportunity for engagement and interaction with children as they experience church. It is a training tool for them to understand worship and active listening for the sermons.

Right Now Media Training- Biblical Discipline: These years are formative for your child, and it is important to discipline them with Grace. Take part in this training, and use it as a launching pad for further discussion for your parenting and discipline of your young children.

Stage 3- Life of Service and Livestream training

Serve together at one of MCC's community ministries. This will encourage your family to find ways to serve together and incorporate into the rhythms of life. Join in with MCC and the ministries that they serve throughout the year in the city of Erie!

Livestream trainings are also available to Stage 3 students several times a year. The environment allows them to ask questions about the service and sermon. It is also a means to teach students how to take notes and engage with parents about the message.

Right Now Media Training- Healthy Sexuality: So, have you discussed the birds and the bees with your maturing student? So many of us heard about sex and relationships from everyone except our parents, and we simply do not know where to begin. Create an environment where your pre-teen feels comfortable asking questions about how God designed them sexually.

Stage 4- Family Retreat and Livestream training

The Family Retreat is designed to get away from the busyness and distractions of everyday life in our homes. Families will make Christ-centered memories with their teens and be equipped for family devotions at home.

We want to celebrate with families and students when students are sent out to declare the hope of the gospel. At MCC, we want to send every student on a Missions trip. There are opportunities in the States and globally, but it is our desire that every student that professes Christ is also a multiplier! We are a church that wants to see disciples that make disciples, and one of the greatest training grounds for a believer to have a heart for the nations is to be the sent one and go to the nations!

Livestream trainings for Stage 4 focus on application and how to take the scriptures and message into that week. A focus is placed on the Faith sheets and application and response to what is heard on Sunday mornings.

Right Now Media Training- Well, it's almost time for them to leave the nest. Have you made an effort to cover basic life skills with your teen? More importantly, this training covers several topics your teenager must hear before they leave home!

Please check out www.millcreek.org for more information on the Gospel story teaching schedule for all ages!

Family Ministry Blog

Did you ever think you would make it to the last page? Seriously, if you read all of this, you should contact Pastor Shawn. I am sure you should be rewarded. Anyways, in a continued effort to communicate well with Parents we are launching a Family Ministry Blog in the fall of 2018. This blog will be found at www.millcreek.org and also communicated through various social media outlets such as Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram. The blog is designed as continued training and engagement with parents each month as they disciple their children, pre-teens, and teenagers.

What should you expect in this blog? The blog will highlight various aspects of the disciple making plan to give further insight and understanding. Let's be honest, this is a large document and there are so many aspects of the plan that could easily be overlooked or forgotten. The blog will be bite-sized pieces of the Family Disciple Making plan and a good reminder of the intentionality in discipling our children and youth. In addition, there will be a team of bloggers that utilize video and written blogs covering all dimensions of family and parenting as it pertains to growing in our faith together. We recognize that there are many parents and families that have learned from great successes and failures in raising their children. At MCC, we want to utilize the wisdom of those ahead of us, as we disciple the next generation. The blogs will be both whimsical and informative; designed to both encourage and challenge families beyond the scheduled trainings outlined above in this plan. We are excited to not just offer content, but to continue to grow our partnership of church and home.