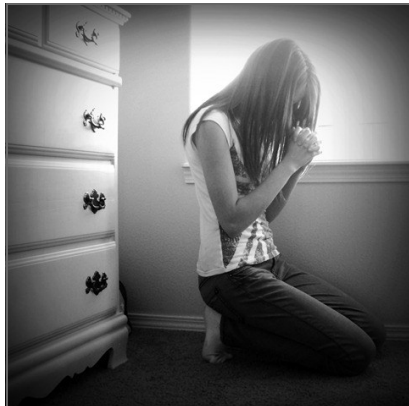


St. Mark's Middle School Ministry Handbook 2011-2012



“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.”

Deuteronomy 6:15

St. Mark's Youth Ministry exists to equip youth with God's Word, reach out with the love of Jesus, connect Christians, and challenge youth to serve and celebrate God with their lives.

What's the purpose of our youth ministry?

(St. Mark's Youth Ministry is aimed at 6-12th grade students)

ST. MARK'S YOUTH MINISTRY EXISTS TO EQUIP YOUTH WITH GOD'S WORD, REACH OUT WITH THE LOVE OF JESUS, CONNECT CHRISTIANS, AND CHALLENGE YOUTH TO SERVE AND CELEBRATE GOD WITH THEIR LIVES.

Why a purpose statement?

We need to know what we are about. Our statement explains that we want to be about discipleship (equip), evangelism (reach), fellowship (connect), ministry (serve), and worship (celebrate)!

Evangelism— “Reach”

Every day each of us comes in contact with people who need to know Jesus Christ. Their eternal destiny is at stake. Our hope is to guide students who know God to reach out with His love. We can do that in tons of ways — but one way is through our friendships and relationships. Consider inviting a friend to confirmation — that's reaching; tell someone you're praying for them (and then do it!) — that's reaching; look for opportunities to tell others what you believe. They're missing out in a BIG way if they don't know God!

Discipleship— “Equip”

Christians are called to be disciples. A disciple is a follower of Jesus who desires to learn, grow, and be stretched in their relationship with God. We are working on providing tools for young people to use in order to grow in this way. Maybe you're wondering, “If I want to read the Bible, where do I start?” or “How can I get to know God more?” We want to help students with these questions. It is our hope to provide tools that will **“EQUIP YOUTH WITH GOD'S WORD.”**

Connect— “Fellowship”

Get your Bible out . . . Check out 1 Thessalonians 2:8. The first Christians knew what fellowship was about. They got together and reminded each other that they were not alone in their faith, they enjoyed being together and having fun, they were honest and shared their highs and the lows with each other, they encouraged one another to follow God and put Him first in their lives and they treasured one another. Christians today need that same stuff. That's why we have small groups. We are emphasizing these purposes weekly as students and adults gather together in their Confirmation small groups and do all the things that 1 Thessalonians talks about. We desire to **CONNECT CHRISTIANS!**

Ministry— “Serve”

So you're thinking . . . okay, “serve”, I get it, you don't have to explain it to me . . . but before you assume you've got service all figured out . . . I have a question: “Do you know that you have been entrusted with specific gifts?” That's right. God has given you abilities and gifts that He wants you to use to impact the world for Jesus! Part of our purpose here is to help students DISCOVER what their gifts are and give them opportunities to use them! You might use your gifts by listening to a friend in need, helping repair someone's house, leading people in worship, or doing behind the scenes things to help make someone's day better. Christian teens, like all other Christians, are given the same measure of gifts as any one else, given by God so that others might know Him. Start discovering the gifts that God has entrusted to you . . . and have fun already!

Celebrate— “Worship”

Psalms 122:1 and 100:2 go something like this, “I was glad to go to the house of the LORD Worship the LORD with gladness.” Wow, that's our hope: that people are glad to come to church and have fun . . . and that we, through any style, worship God with gladness! Students have the opportunity to give God credit, love and attention (that's what worship's about) in everything they do . . . that includes playing on a sports team, singing in the choir or playing in the band, spending time talking with God privately. A relationship with God is something to celebrate!

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Only one form needs to be completed for each student

- Registration Form (for parents to complete)

Optional Forms to complete and turn in:

- Youth Quake Registration Form (early bird deadline Wed., October 12)
- Riverside Recharge Registration Form (due Wed., October 19)

Welcome to St. Mark's Middle School Ministry!



Hi, I'm Jody Skogen, Director of Youth Ministries, and I feel so privileged to be a part of something as fantastic as young people growing in their relationship with God—or beginning that relationship for the first time. God is in the business of changing lives here—and I'm eager to see what He has ahead of us this year! This year is especially exciting as we will have many more new locations for our small groups to meet and opportunity to have more space as we open the new building! Let myself and your child's small group leader(s) know how we can be a blessing in your life. <>> jody

"The Basics" of Confirmation at St. Mark's

1. Confirmation is for 6th, 7th and 8th graders. Teens in each grade will be divided into gender specific groups of five to nine. One or two trained small group leaders will guide each group, facilitating discussion, sharing, and prayer.
2. We recognize three basic needs of young people:
 - The need for an understanding of self-worth and personal identity.
 - The need for relationships.
 - The need for a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.
3. The Bible and Luther's Small Catechism will remain the core of the curriculum. **Each student should bring a copy of Luther's Small Catechism and their Bible each week.** We will provide each 6th grader or new student with a copy of the Small Catechism and a Bible which is designed for teens.
4. We will seek the participation and support of parents and other significant adults in the student's life.
5. We will strive to develop a healthy community life among teens in order to provide a safe, positive learning environment and sense of identity with the church.
6. We will challenge our middle schoolers to begin to shape their lives as servants of Christ through worship, study, service, and building a nurturing community. Our underlying theme will be to "connect faith and life."
7. During the 2011-2012 school year, we will focus on The Apostles' Creed, Stewardship, Sacraments (Baptism and Communion), Friendships, and more . . .

Our Curriculum

Our Confirmation Curriculum is designed to blur the lines between education, service, and fellowship. It blends the best of fellowship created in youth group with a “back to the basics” approach to Christian education. Theme nights, service, and fellowship become the three legs of the stool for the adolescent faith journey. Classrooms give way to community. Kids have fun, bond together, and learn at the same time.

Theme Nights. The objective of a theme night is to teach the theme with a team using a variety of creative approaches and small group participation. Theme events enthusiastically pack upbeat music, interesting presentations—using art, video, and drama—and quality Christian thought into a large group experience. It is planned and presented in a way that engages the imagination through a barrage of multi-sensory methods that punch a theme from the head to the heart. Students also meet in small groups to share with one another and unpack that night’s theme together.

Each week each student will be given a **take home handout called, “The Family Discussion Challenge” to be completed with their parents.** (more info on page 11.) These are also available to be sent via email if this is helpful!

Service Projects. The objective of a Service Project is to experience joy and bonding through participating in God’s care for the world and others. Small groups choose their group’s service project, make their plans, and complete the project. A service project moves faith into action.

Activity Nights. The objective of our Activity Nights is to build identity, trust, care, and healthy relationships between young people and small group leaders so middle school small groups grow into high school small groups. These nights build unity, friendship and trust while the group has fun and serves God and others together.

These may be either on- or off-campus activities that support the themes of fellowship, ministry and service. It is critical that students come on these nights. They are an essential part of our curriculum.

Family Night (generally once per month) Please see the schedule on the last page of this handbook. This is an opportunity for your family to grow together in faith and understanding. We do not meet this night. Families will be given suggestions for faith-building activities and family devotions (see “Family Night Questions and Answers” page 12).

When St. Mark’s students were asked to describe their small group, here’s what a few said . . .

“ . . . it was cool!”

“It meant good times learning about God. We could talk about anything we want to talk about...”

“Talking about God with your friends... Being able to celebrate God and practice prayer.”

“It was a time to talk about our highs and lows of the year.”

“What do we want to retain on confirmation day? A few facts in a kid’s head? The kid? If we are going to retain both information and the teen, we’ve got to shift from a focus on information to a focus on faith formation and from teaching classes to building communities of faith. It’s time we head to the heart.”

Faith Inkubators

Confirmation Details

2011-2012 Calendar: Please note the Middle School Ministry Calendar on the back of this handbook.

The “Theme Night” weekly schedule:

5:30 pm	Fellowship Meal
6:00 pm	Large Group Time in the Worship Center
6:55 pm	Small Group Time
7:30 pm	Dismissal

Free-Will Donation

We ask a free-will donation of \$25 be made for each child in Middle School Ministry. This offsets the cost of special events, activity nights, supplies, curriculum, materials, etc.

Inclement Weather Policy

The Wednesday night Christian Education programs will not be held when Linn-Mar schools are cancelled, or have early dismissal due to unsafe road conditions because Linn-Mar’s weather decisions most closely reflect the weather and road conditions at the church.

However, if the schools cancel classes because of a reason specific to only one school (i.e. broken water heaters) we will meet. If Wednesday Night programs are not canceled, however parents are concerned regarding safe travel, they are encouraged to use their best judgment as to whether or not their child will attend programs that night.

If there are circumstances that interfere with your student’s ability to attend regularly, please contact the Director of Youth Ministries, Jody Skogen, so other arrangements can be made.

Fellowship Supper

The fellowship supper is a vital key in building Christian fellowship. Youth have an opportunity to talk with others at their table, get to know each other, learn what is happening in each others' lives, and develop friendships within the church community.

Meals are prepared by a volunteer food team. Confirmation students will eat at 5:30 pm.

Parents, if you are not serving in another capacity on Wednesday nights, you are asked to sign up to help serve the meal 3 times during the year.

This is an approximately hour and a half time commitment—from 5:00 pm to 6:30 pm. You will receive a reminder phone call prior to the night you serve. Childcare for the children of volunteers will be available beginning at 5:15 pm.

The meal cost for the year is \$75 for the first child, \$40 for each additional child(ren) in the same family who is involved in Children's Ministry or Confirmation. These funds are used to help defray the cost of the weekly meals. Scholarships are available for meals. Students may also bring a sack lunch from home if they prefer to do so. *We ask that students do not bring fast food meals.*

Those willing to help supervise the meal time (As Meal Time "Deck Hands") from 5:30—6:05 p.m. the fellowship center, talking with students and guiding them to act appropriately.

Pop policy: No pop will be allowed outside of the Fellowship Center.

Instructions for Volunteers Serving Meals

Please arrive promptly at 5:00 pm.

Instructions for serving meals are posted in the kitchen. Members of the Food Team will be on duty to assist you and answer your questions.

Parent volunteers are responsible for:

- Setting the dining and serving tables before 5:30 p.m.
- Assisting the food team with final food and beverage preparations.
- Assisting in the serving lines for confirmation and children's ministry between 5:30-6:10 p.m.
- Washing and putting away the cooking and serving items after supper.
- Cleaning the dining tables and removing trash.
- Storing left over food.
- Cleaning the kitchen.

Parents will be able to eat in the kitchen on the evenings they serve.

IMPORTANT—If you cannot help on an evening you are signed up for, you should attempt to find a parent to exchange dates with you. *If you are unable to find a substitute*, please call Jodi Weiss at 319-431-2420 and she will assist you.

Confirmation Expectations

1. Wednesday Evening Attendance

Students are expected to attend and participate regularly. Please make every effort to support this policy.

2. Behavior

We will honor the community values of **caring, honesty, respect and responsibility** in St. Mark's confirmation ministry. Students are expected to treat each other, their leaders, and church property with respect.

It is our goal that no student "gets in the way of" another student growing in their relationship with Jesus. Therefore, if behavioral issues arise, we will take action to warn a student appropriately and if that student chooses not to participate in a positive way, a parent will be notified.

Parents are asked to agree to partner with St. Mark's and it's volunteers relating to student behavior. The following is the statement that parents are asked to agree to on the registration form in relation to this policy:

"I understand that my child is expected to behave in such a way that allows other students the opportunity to grow in their faith in Christ. I understand that if my child is acting in a way that is distracting to him/herself or others that he/she will receive an initial "warning" (we will certainly do this in a way that is respectful and yet firm.) If the student continues distracting behavior, a second warning will be given. If a third warning is warranted, I understand, as a parent, that I will be contacted and be asked to pick up my child early that evening. At this point, there would be constructive conversation between the ministry leaders, parents and student in order to find a positive solution together." Your signature validates this policy.

3. Cell Phone Policy

Cell phones are to be neither seen or heard (so that means they should be put away and turned off — not just to vibrate because that would be a temptation to answer a text or call).

Then if they are seen or heard, they get a first warning...then they get taken until 7:30 p.m. when the student can pick it up.

After 3 times of having it taken away, there will be a conversation with the parent.

"Our baseline is to be faithful to scripture and the understanding of grace through faith."

Pastor Perry Fruhling

"Brennon Manning says the journey from the head to the heart is perhaps the longest journey of all. Let's keep that journey at the center of all we do. Let's love them into the kingdom."

Faith Inkubators

4. **Worship Attendance**

Confirmation students are expected to attend worship.

5. **Sermon Notes**

Confirmation students are expected to complete a pre-determined number of sermon notes by May of 2012. We ask that parents and students talk together and set a realistic goal for the number of notes that can be accomplished throughout the year (10 is the minimum) and fill out a “Sermon Note Commitment” which is included on the Registration Form. After determining this number, we will keep track of the completed sermon notes. A letter or email will be sent to the parents mid-year to apprise them of their progress toward meeting this goal.

Students are asked to complete the following questions on their sermon notes:

1. What is the main point(s) of the message?
2. What question do you have about today’s message?
3. What would you tell a friend about today’s message?
4. What was your favorite song?
5. Do you have a prayer request?

If your student should attend another church, he or she may turn in the bulletin with a few sentences of reflection about the sermon heard at that church in lieu of sermon notes for that Sunday.

The sermon note forms are available at the south welcome center. **They are to be returned to the sermon notes organizer in the same location when they are completed.**

Sermon notes are read by the small group leaders or other confirmation leaders for each grade and recorded, then referenced during small group time. This provides the opportunity to discuss the message, to let the small group leader know what the students found helpful, and to answer questions about things the students did not understand.

Sermon notes are returned to and sent home with students on Wednesday nights.

Sermon notes give you a chance to really think about the Sunday morning message, to listen for the key points, and to apply the message to your life.

They encourage you and your family to attend worship regularly — to celebrate your relationship with Jesus, to grow in your faith, and to fulfill your family’s Baptismal promise.

Faith Inkubators

Special Opportunities

Fall Riverside Recharge * November 4-6, 2011 (**NOTE:** This date is updated from first printing of this handbook) The weekend recharge is held at Riverside Lutheran Bible Camp in Story City, Iowa (north of Ames). This is an opportunity for an off-site, faith-nurturing time together with an opportunity for fellowship, fun and Christian growth. **The cost is \$105.** A \$35 deposit and registration form (attached at the end of this packet) is **due by Wednesday, October 19, 2011.** Transportation: Our hope is to offer bus transportation for this weekend. If we are unable to arrange for reasonably cost transportation, \$35 will be refunded to you. 6th Grade Families: please note that Sunday, November 6 is First Communion Sunday, so we either encourage 6th graders to attend a different Recharge go to www.riversidelbc.org or have their first communion on Sunday, November 20 at 8:30 or 9:45 a.m..

Youth Quake * January 6-8, 2012 (Embassy Suites, Des Moines, Iowa)

The Youth Quake involves Christ-centered music, speakers, workshops, small groups, and other fun things to do. At this event, God builds caring Christian community among youth and adults, personal faith in Jesus Christ, and positive relationships among peers. Transportation is included in the cost of the trip. The early-bird cost is \$180-185. Early-bird registration will be due by Wed. Oct. 13. Students can sign up after this early bird deadline for an additional \$15.

First Communion Sunday for 6th graders and new students

Sixth grade students will receive special instruction on the sacrament of Communion. We will offer two classes: **Thursday, October 27, 5:30-8:30 p.m. and Saturday, October 29, 9 a.m.-12 p.m.** Students and their parents are expected to attend one of the two sessions. First Communion is a significant event in a confirmand's faith walk. The church will celebrate this sacrament on Sunday, November 6, at any of the three services.

Confirmation Day

Youth at St. Mark's are confirmed the fall of their freshman year of high school after completing this three-year experience. Confirmation Day occurs on the Saturday of Labor Day weekend each year. Newly confirmed 9th graders will become a special part of high school ministry. *Confirmation Day is just the beginning!*

*** Scholarships**

If finances are the reason a person (members or friends) is unable to attend, we want to make it possible for you to participate. Scholarships are available for all of our events, meal cost and materials fees. Please complete a scholarship request form (can be found on the website at www.faith-life.org or at the information centers) and email or bring to the church office.

Note to 8th Graders and Parents!

- St. Mark's has a strong tradition of encouraging exiting 8th grade students to go on the High School Mission Trip following their 8th grade year. This is an excellent opportunity for young people to get to know high school students and experience God's love in an incredible way. Info on this trip will be available this fall. Please prayerfully consider this.
- Before you know it, you'll be starting your freshman year in high school! An exciting part of that journey is standing before your friends and family and confessing your faith in Jesus! We want you to start preparing your heart for that moment! As a part of your "confirmation," you are asked to write a statement of what you believe. We call this a "faith statement." We want you to be thinking seriously about what you believe! Throughout this year, you will be asked to begin preparing your faith statement during the Lenten Season on Wednesday nights.
- **Save the Date! Confirmation Service is on Saturday, September 1, 2012. Please note that this is Labor Day Weekend.** Please begin notifying family, baptismal sponsors and friends of this important day so they "save the date!"

A Parent's Guide to Middle School Ministry!

Thanks for the opportunity to partner with you in helping your child know and have a relationship with Jesus Christ! Here are some important roles that you will play in this process and journey of Confirmation Ministry!

1. **Encouragement**—We thank you for the important role you play in encouraging your young person to be involved in middle school ministry!
2. **Involvement**—You are the key in making this program work! Please know that we need you! If you are interested in helping through small groups, activity nights, meal preparation and service, drama, multimedia, set up or anything else, we would greatly appreciate it! Quality ministry like St. Mark's Middle School Ministry is ONLY possible if people who love Jesus and enjoy young people get plugged in!
3. **Worship**—You will be an amazing advocate for regular worship attendance as well as sermon note completion!
4. **Family Discussion Challenge**—Each Wednesday night your student will come home with a family discussion guide sheet for your use as a family. This will give you and your family an opportunity to talk about life and faith. On the back side of your students note-taking sheet from that night you will find this “family discussion challenge”. We ask that you use this and have your student return it to the sermon note organizer with your signature. A fantastic prize will be given at the end of the year out of a drawing of students who take on this challenge! We will also email the Family Discussion Challenge each week.
5. **Family Night**—Generally one Wednesday night of each month (See calendar on the back of this handbook.) is reserved for you and your family to spend together. Note the ideas listed on the next page. Enjoy this amazing time with your loved ones.

Family Night Questions and Answers

What is Family Night?

Family Night is a part of St. Mark's confirmation program. It honors the parents as primary faith teachers, and brings nurturing faith into the home. One Wednesday night each month, usually the last week, families will be encouraged to spend an evening together in an activity they choose. A part of this evening should include devotions.

What do you mean by "family activities?"

These are activities that your family decides they would like to do together. Be creative! Have fun! Here are some ideas:

Go bowling	Visit someone in a care center
Visit the library	Go to a park and hike or swing
Visit the History Center	Go on a walk or run together
Play a card game, maybe "spoons"	Go swimming
Play a board game together	Find an area to clean up/pick up litter
Go ice skating	Read a book together
Take turns telling stories	Look through pictures/family videos
Make a scrapbook together	Sing or play instruments
Write letters to relatives	Visit another family in the congregation
Take a cake to a neighbor	Bake together: chocolate chip cookies?
Plan a trip together	Have a special dinner you cooked
Go out to a favorite restaurant	Attend a community program together
Camp out in the back yard	Go out and do a "random act of kindness"
Play ball	

What's a "family devotion?"

You should take time for this each Family Night. This is a time for your family to focus on God through a short scripture reading, sharing of "highs and lows," prayer and a time of blessing.

What if we do this already?

That's great! Continue! Help other families learn how this can become an important part of your life together by sharing your story. Tell others what resources you use and how you do this.

Does everyone in the family have to do it? Is it okay if the kids just do something together and the parents do something else?

That's okay sometimes, but not on Family Night. This is a special time for **family fellowship** and building bonds of unity!

Why are we doing this?

We want to support families, and know how limited our time together can be in this busy world! We value time for families to work and play together.

Final Thoughts

Confirmation is *not* like graduation. It is only another amazing event in a lifetime journey with our Lord. Following confirmation at St. Mark's, youth are involved in the life of the church through worship, service, fellowship, stewardship, in High School Ministry and involvement in the church family at large.

Information on St. Mark's High School Ministry is readily available! See any one of us or our information centers for more details!

The journey continues!

God's Blessings,

The St. Mark's Confirmation Leadership Team

Jody Skogen

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*“What is it about your
relationship with Jesus
that others cannot do
without?”*

Thomas Bandy

Pastor Perry Fruhling

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2010-2011 Confirmation Calendar

Color Code: Blue = special events, Green = Theme Night, Orange = Family Night, Purple = Lent, Yellow = Activity Night

