

Living Faith

Inclusive Grace.
Contagious Love.

Reimagining Faith Formation

I saw the lightbulb come on, something clicked in his brain. We were finally speaking the same language. This congregational leader and I had been talking about Christian Education for several minutes and up until this moment we'd been talking past each other. We both seem puzzled.

Then it clicked. He said, "Wait, the whole time you were talking about Christian Education, I thought you were talking about what Shannon and Shane do. I thought you were talking about kids and youth. But, you're talking about the whole life of the church, aren't you?"

"Yes," I replied. "Yes."

Faith formation—or Christian Education, as it's often been called—involves the whole life of the church. Rather than merely being a program or department within the congregation, everything a church does seeks to grow and deepen the faith of all who are gathered. Worship, music, pastoral care, community building, and service are all done to help the congregation hear and respond to the promises of God in Jesus Christ through faith.

Far from being something for kids and youth that ends abruptly at confirmation or youth group, faith formation is lifelong. Undoubtedly, milestones like baptism, communion, and confirmation matter deeply for one's faith development. But so too do moving out of your parent's homes, marriage, having kids, retirement, and the death of loved ones. Our station in life and our faith questions change throughout the human lifespan, so faith formation is something that is never completed.

We also know that faith formation is fuller when there are intentional opportunities for inter-generational experiences, mixed-gender learning opportunities, and engagement with people different from ourselves. Faith formation is best nurtured within meaningful relationships that balance similarity and difference.

Earlier this year, our program staff gathered to begin reimagining a more holistic approach to faith formation at Faith Lutheran—one that takes seriously, both, that faith formation encompasses the whole range of activities of the church, and that it is on-going throughout the whole human lifespan.

We identified 5 Themes that are central for faith formation for Christians of all generations:

Scripture – *trusting in God's promises as encountered in the Bible.*

Sacrament – *encountering God's promises through tangible means of grace.*

Prayer and Practice – *responding to God's promises in everyday life.*

Community – *abiding in God's promises with others.*

Service – *embodying and enacting God's promises to our neighbors and the world.*



And we also began to imagine developmentally appropriate outcomes and goals for each of our themes. Working through this process, we identified objectives that we want to begin addressing:

First, we want to have greater synergy or overlap between what is being explored and practiced in worship and taught in other faith formation settings like SPARK and Ignite. We want kids and youth to be engaging similar biblical texts, actions, and topics as others in their households and communities. And we want to re-engage the assumption that Wednesday and Sunday morning are faith formation for the whole congregation, including children and youth.

Second, we want to celebrate milestones and build bridges throughout the human life-span. We want to increase our intentionality when it comes to moving from one stage to another so that all can experience Faith showing up for them and walking alongside them.

Third, we want to create more opportunities for the church to gather and grow together across differences rather than segmented by age, gender, affinity, preferred worship style, etc.

Fourth, we want to increase and diversify opportunities for post-confirmation/adult faith formation.

Implementing our themes and goals will take time, but we're going to start leaning into them this fall. There will be some changes to how things have been done in the past as we move forward. And there will be new opportunities, too.

I believe that if we invite all of our congregation in faith formation, it has the potential to form Faith Lutheran into an even more vibrant and faithful Christian community.

By Pastor Adam White



Children & Youth Faith Formation Updates

SPARK (3 year-4th Grade)

- SPARK Curriculum will share themes with worship. This gives families an opportunity for faith discussions at home.
- Wednesday SPARK will run from 5:15-6:00pm. This change is to make it easier for families to attend and that the length of SPARK will be more similar to Sunday. (No change to Sunday SPARK.)

BYG (5th/6th Grade)

- Curriculum connects our everyday lives and faith.
 - 5th Grade BYG (mixed gender) – Large Group from 7:00-7:30pm; Small Group from 7:30-8:00pm.
 - 6th Grade BYG (same gender) – Small Group from 7:00-7:30pm; Large Group from 7:30-8:00pm.
- Splitting the 5th and 6th grade large group sessions gives us better opportunities for more hands-on, interactive learning versus only being able to be lecture based.

Faith Milestones

- Provides opportunities for the congregation to celebrate and support both children and families in their walk of faith.

7th, 8th, 9th & High School Youth Group

- 7th grade small groups will be mixed gender. 8th grade will continue with their same small groups.
- Shane will be doing additional guide training.
- Pastor Katie will lead/teach 8th grade confirmation.
- 9th grade will continue to meet every other Sunday evening and part of our time will overlap with the high school youth group. (Sundays 5-6:30pm)
- Pastor Adam, Pastor Katie, and Shane will share high school youth group leadership. (Sundays 6-7:30pm)
- We will have additional opportunities for high school students to connect and lead, including new programs and the National Youth Gathering (summer 2024).

Journey of Faith

“You can’t end your faith formation at confirmation. If I think of my kids, they are so young. They are just scratching the surface, barely scratching. Most of my own faith journey has happened since confirmation, like 95% of it.” – Kristin Johnson

Kristin Johnson and I sat down to talk about the many ways she is connected at Faith Lutheran and the importance of opportunities for adults to experience and grow their faith. From Bible studies to the Moms Connect small group, to leading a BYG small group, to Faith Choir, and council, Kristin is deeply involved in the life of Faith.

Last Advent, Pastor Adam offered a bible study on the monsters of the book of Revelation. We also did a sermon series on Revelation, but a bible study allows more time for examining the historical contexts, the many ways a text has been interpreted, and digging deeper into the biblical text. Kristin said, “I love learning. With the history, the Bible comes alive. It makes my faith more exciting. The history makes the Bible more real.”

The Revelation Bible study drew participants from many people across demographics. One of the gifts was the difference in the ages of the participants. “I loved the varied ages of people in attendance. I like hearing the questions the people older than me had to ask, what knowledge they have, or realizing I have the same question,” Kristin shared.

I discovered that both the Bible study and Moms Connect small group were safe spaces to ask questions. “We have questions,” Kristin said, “there is so much we don’t know.” The journey of faith involves learning, questioning, and experiencing God.





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Kristin manages the email prayer chain and regularly sends out prayer requests. Prayer is an important part of her spirituality. For Kristin, prayer creates a space for her to meet God and invite the Holy Spirit in with hope for healing, comfort, and guidance. Prayer becomes a place to turn over our concerns to God instead of leaving them to our anxious minds and worried hearts.

Kristin says, "In Moms Connect, we go around and share prayer concerns. Then we pray the exact same things that were just said. But for me, it is so moving. To transform it from a spoken concern to something we invite God into, something shifts, to know you've offloaded it somehow. Having the chance to pray for people at Moms Connect, feels like a privilege. What else in our life does something like that? Where else do you feel that?"

In light of all that we had shared in our conversation, I asked Kristin if she felt like she was growing in her faith. She quickly answered, "Am I growing? Yes. How is harder to answer." Instead of an end goal or destination, Kristin believes growth is a gentle cultivation that requires a curious mindset. "Rather than something I'm reaching for, this is something I hope I will always do."

This mentality carries over to the faith formation she hopes for her children. "I would love for them to grow in their faith, to explore what God means in their life. I want them to discover themselves because it is such a personal journey." In the end, Kristin turned the questions back on me and asked what I would tell adults who are on the fence about joining a bible study or small group. For me, it brings us back to the beginning.

If you imagine faith formation stops at confirmation or high school, think about your own faith. Did it stop at confirmation or high school? I'd wager the majority of your faith development, experience, wrestling, hardship, and spirituality have happened after that. At least, that is the truth for me. Rather than let life happen around you, choose to engage, choose to check out a bible study, a small group, Dinner for 8, to deepen your faith and connection with this community.

By Pastor Katie Escalante



Finding Faith's Fertilizer

Craig knew he needed something if he wanted his faith to continue to grow. He didn't know what, but that didn't stop him from looking for it.

Craig Stanton and his wife Linda joined Faith some thirty years ago. His life and faith journey have gone through many seasons since then. They liked Faith and even raised their daughters here, but a few years ago, they realized something was missing. Their faith was strong, but it wasn't getting all of the nutrients it needed to continue to grow. So, they went looking for soil that would feed them.

They found a new church home. The preaching was fabulous, and the teaching was solidly grounded in the bible. Craig felt his faith beginning to grow again. But still, something was missing.

Last year, Craig's mother-in-law, who still attended Faith, heard about the Tuesday Theology Tours. She personally invited Craig to join them. At first, he was hesitant because he had always been reluctant to get into small group bible study. But Craig decided, "Hey, I can just attend one and never come back if it doesn't fit."

Craig describes his first experience, "It is a cool format. Let people talk; no question is too simple. Everyone gets the opportunity to ask a question then the group decides which ones to wrestle with that night. Some questions are basic, and some are not as basic as we thought."

He has been regularly attending the Tuesday Theology Tours and learning that Adult Faith Formation doesn't have to be uncomfortable. He is even starting to figure out that lots of people are at the same place in their faith journey. Craig realized that even a "smart theologian," like Pastor Adam, has questions about their faith that can take a group to wrestle with. But the thing that has stuck with him most is that if you really want to learn about faith, you need a group that doesn't judge.

He and Linda quickly decided to return to Faith. They have been enjoying the feeling of "coming home." Craig found what the last missing piece was; connection. Growing in faith and honestly sharing the journey together has made all the difference.

Craig and Linda have loved the Apostles' Creed sermon series. Hearing three different voices breaking down the words bit by bit has made Craig think differently about it as he speaks the words in service. The theological depth in sermons, worship, and study has given the roots of Craig's faith enough room to continue to grow.

Through this experience, Craig has realized two things. First, to help it grow, his faith must be fed regularly with worship, theology, and learning. Second, the people growing alongside him are just as important.

NEW ways to grow your faith:

Woodworker's Group

Age Range: Teenager-adult

Days/Times: TBD

Glow Youth Group

Age Range: 9th-12th Grade

Days/Times: Sundays 6:00PM

Belonging Bible Study

Age Range: Teenager-adult

Days/Times: Various times
beginning in October

Evening with Karoline Lewis

Age Range: Teenager-adult

Sunday, October 8

By Jesse Norman Bergstrom



Evening with Karoline Lewis

On the evening of Sunday, October 8, Faith will welcome Rev. Dr. Karoline Lewis, author of *Belonging: 5 Keys to Unlock Your Potential as a Disciple*, for a keynote address and book signing. The event will start at 6:00pm with a potluck. Dr. Lewis' address will begin at 7:00pm. The event will also serve as a launch for Faith's small group book study on Dr. Lewis' *Belonging*.

An ordained pastor in the ELCA, Dr. Lewis is the Marbury E. Anderson Chair in Biblical Preaching at Luther Seminary, St. Paul, MN, where she has taught since 2007. The author of several books, book chapters, and articles, she is a highly sought-after scholar on John's gospel, preaching, and women in ministry. Dr. Lewis is a gifted and engaging preacher and speaker.

All are welcome for this special gathering!



Pause: Sermon Series

Our lives are busy. We live in a culture that tells us that we cannot slow down. Everything is accelerating. There is always more to do. The urgency of whatever is next is a constant source of anxiety in our lives.

Amidst this crowdedness, where is there space for faith? If church is just one more must-do thing, one more block in our Google calendar taking up space, isn't it just making this problem worse?

This fall at Faith, we're inviting you to Pause. Through our 6-part sermon series, Pause, we'll explore how faith can be a counter-cultural way of being that pushes back against the narrative that we need to do it all and do it now. We'll rediscover the practices of Sabbath, waiting, and resting in the peace of God. And we'll imagine how to deepen our encounters with God and one another.

9/17 & 9/20

Pause: Deuteronomy 5:12-15 & Luke 23:54-56

9/24 & 9/27

Wait: Luke 12:22-40

10/1 & 10/4

Encounter: John 4:1-42

10/8 & 10/11

Abide: John 15:1-9

10/15 & 10/18

Resonate: Luke 24:13-35

10/22 & 10/25

Shalom: Numbers 6:22-26 & John 14:25-27



Evolving Faith Conference

We're all looking for belonging. Many of us have found our way to Evolving Faith because we're looking for healing spaces, longing for fellow sojourners, and needing room to exhale all of our questions and doubts. We yearn to be more connected and less alone, and we're reaching out for others who feel the same.

This is why Evolving Faith exists: to cultivate hope and love in the wilderness. We know we're not alone, and neither are you—and we're ready to welcome you to our little outpost so that you can rest, laugh, grieve, create, hope, and know that you are loved, through and through.

You're invited to join us, a bunch of folks from Faith and all over the world who are making our own beautiful, diverse, and messy table in the wilderness.

This is open to anyone interested in attending. We'll hear from a variety of speakers on topics relevant to exploring and growing in our faith.



Evolving Faith Conference

October 13, 6:30pm - October 14, 6:00pm

Faith will be purchasing In-Person Ticket + Digital Access at a group rate. Register on our website.

If you'd like to stay overnight, please make arrangements on your own. More information here: <https://evolvingfaith.com/conference/faqs#travel>

God Meets You Where You Are

A few months back, I and my wife Jayne, along with our two sons were going through some really trying times. I don't think our difficulties were much different than those experienced by other families in similar circumstances. However, the stress of fighting battles on multiple fronts was really starting to weigh on me.

First, Jayne and I were both trying to navigate the winding roads of figuring out what is best for our aging and widowed mothers. Both live a couple hours away, and of course in different directions. My mother was experiencing significant depression symptoms—to the point we were trying to seek professional care. However, she was fighting us at every turn. Multiple visits and phone calls with her doctors, new doctors and her pastor seemed to be getting us nowhere.

Then, factor in raising two teenage boys. Sure, there are the normal stressors of parenting. However, during this same timeframe, we were seeing symptoms of anxiety and depression in one of our kids. Again, we were embarking down another uncharted path with lots of doctor visits, meetings with the school, coaches, etc. All just to keep this young and vulnerable child of ours safe while he wanted nothing to do with the help we were offering.

As long as we are piling it on, let's talk about the full-time job I had to manage during this same time period. Things at work, where I have been for 23 years, were not going well. Constant pressure from my boss to make quarterly financial goals was wearing on me. Especially since I don't work in manufacturing or sales. My job has always been to ensure my employer is following applicable regulations. Now suddenly I am being pressured to work in an environment I am not familiar with, all while trying to manage multiple personal battles. I was certain I was going to be fired.

I was on the verge of collapse myself. Jayne was doing everything she could to keep the peace at home and reassured me that everything was going to be fine.





Then it hit us. Literally. Jayne and I, along with one son, were coming back to Waconia from visiting my mom. Jayne was driving, I was in the passenger seat and my son was in the back seat. Living in the metro area, we've all seen this before. Driving on Interstate 494, traffic comes to a sudden stop and bang. The car behind us drives right into us, never touching their brakes. The cab of the car held up nicely. My son barely knew what happened. He was fine, thank God. Besides an instant headache, I was fine. Jayne appeared ok but didn't feel well. We took her to the emergency room.

At the emergency room, Jayne was placed in a neck brace and of course told to wait in the waiting room. It was in this waiting area where our lives took a turn for the better. We were sitting together, talking about what had happened and out of the blue, Pastor Katie (yes, the Pastor Katie from our church) turns around from a chair behind us and asks if we need any pastoral care. She let me know she just happened to be there to have a family member that wasn't feeling well checked out by a doctor.

All this time, I never spoke to anyone about my struggles. For some reason, right there in that hospital waiting room, it all came out. I was at rock bottom. It felt so good to talk. In very simple terms, Pastor Katie told us to give our problems to God and let God sort them out. Then, we went our different ways to receive medical care. Most importantly, after getting checked out by a doctor, Jayne was going to be fine.

That night, before falling asleep, I had some especially long prayers of thanks. We had a tough day, but all ended as good as it could – we were all safe at home. I proceeded to ask God to help me sort out and process everything going on. Could I handle everything going on in my life, and now adding in insurance companies, getting a rental car and buying a new car (all within the timeframe the insurance company allows, of course)?

This story ends well. With God leading the way, our problems didn't go away, but they became manageable. We found a great program for my mom and she has responded very well to treatment. We found a great doctor for my son and she has done wonders helping us navigate teenage anxiety and depression. My job, while still stressful, seems much more manageable now. And yes, we found out we have a great insurance agent that helped us handle the accident, getting it resolved in a matter of weeks.

I am so thankful for that chance encounter in the emergency room waiting area. God truly met me where I was at.

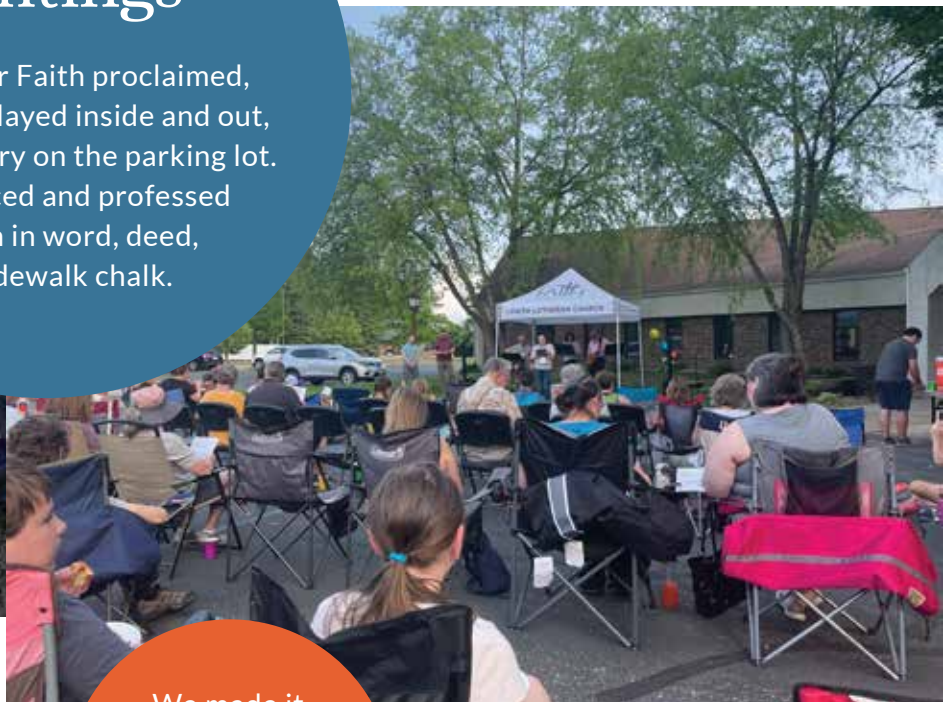
By Pat Butler





Summer Sightings

This summer Faith proclaimed,
prayed, and played inside and out,
in the sanctuary on the parking lot.
We practiced and professed
our faith in word, deed,
and sidewalk chalk.



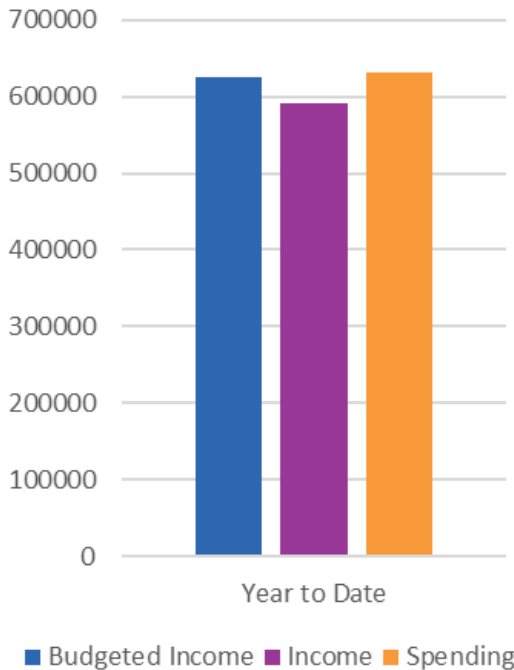
We made it
out to the
llama farm and
Rutz Lake Cemetery,
too.



Financial Update

Through July, we've received \$34,604 less than we planned to receive, and we've spent \$15,002 less than we planned to spend.

2023 Year to Date



Monthly Income & Spending



Income as shown does not include \$85,916 from the Employee Retention Tax Credit the church received this fiscal year.

Come Worship with us!

Sundays @ 9 & 10:30am (begins Sept. 10)

Prime Time Wednesdays @ 6pm (begins Sept. 13)

www.waconiafaithlutheran.com

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FAITH
LUTHERAN

 FAITH LUTHERAN CHURCH
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FALL KICK-OFF

SEPTEMBER 10
WORSHIP AT 9 & 10:30AM

OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES 10AM

DEL SUR EMPANADA FOOD TRUCK

DUNK TANK

YARD GAMES / SIDEWALK CHALK

MYSTERY BINGO

CRAZY HAIR / FACE PAINT

LIVE MUSIC

FISHING GAME...AND MORE!