

FAMILY CATECHISM PARENT HANDBOOK

Pastor Ben Reichel- updated 6.20.25

ST. MARK MINISTRIES De Pere, WI

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INTRODUCTION

The entire message of the Bible can be summed up in one verse: ***“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life”*** (John 3:16). You may know these words from childhood, or you learned them later in life — they clearly and simply express the heart of God’s Word.

We want your family to know this message so deeply that it gives each of you—your children and the generations to come — the lasting confidence that comes from knowing **God loves you**. That confidence is what we call **faith** — trusting God’s promises and living by them.

Faith is a lifelong journey, not just for kids and not something you finish like a class. It grows and deepens throughout life. Our Family Catechism program is designed to support that growth—especially during seasons when focused, intentional learning is most helpful. It helps you guide your children through these times, nurturing their faith and confidence in God through meaningful moments and conversations.

Unlike traditional catechism or confirmation classes, our program isn’t weekly instruction at church or school taught by a minister. Instead, it’s a series of Bible studies for you to do at home or in small groups, with parents actively engaging in conversations with their children. The studies follow the outline of **Luther’s Small Catechism**, a helpful guide to the core truths of Scripture.

This handbook explains the purpose, process, and expectations of the program, and the support available to you along the way. We pray it blesses your family!

WHY DO FAMILY CATECHISM?

Many churches have a way of helping kids grow from childhood faith into a faith they personally own. Often, that includes classes to learn what their home church teaches, ending with a moment when they can publicly say, “Yes, this is what I believe, too.” In the Lutheran tradition, that’s called **Confirmation**.

The Bible says those who receive the Lord’s Supper (Holy Communion) should understand what it means, be able to examine their hearts, and be united in faith with others. Catechism classes have traditionally prepared kids for Communion, and Confirmation was the milestone where they were welcomed to the Lord’s Table.

It’s also important for us to speak our faith out loud. Romans 10:9–10 says, ***“If you declare with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved...”*** Catechism teaches the heart of what we believe, and Confirmation is when kids say, “I believe this is true.”

At St. Mark, we walk this journey through our **Family Catechism** program. While we use the term **Profession of Faith** instead of “Confirmation” for that milestone, it carries the same meaning. What

matters is helping your child be ready—ready to take Communion, ready to confidently say, “I believe this,” and ready to stand up and share their faith. This program is here to help you lead them there.

WHO IS THIS FOR?

At St. Mark, we invite families with kids in grades 6–8 to begin the Family Catechism program. Some kids may be ready a little earlier or later—and that’s perfectly okay. There’s no rush to start and no deadline to finish. We’ve simply found that this age is a great time for kids to start digging into these truths more deeply.

If you’re new to St. Mark but have a Lutheran background, feel free to jump in. If you’re newer to the Christian faith or the Lutheran tradition, we recommend going through the materials yourself first. You might come across unfamiliar ideas or questions, and we want you to feel confident as you guide your child. If that’s you, we’re here to support you—just reach out to our pastoral team for help and direction. We also offer *Online Starting Point* for families who are considering joining St. Mark.

WHY IS THIS PROCESS DIFFERENT FROM OTHER CHURCHES?

As we’ve mentioned, our approach is a bit different—rather than offering a class at church, we equip *you* to walk through the materials with your kids *at home*. This model is rooted in Scripture. In **Deuteronomy 6**, God describes passing down his Word in the context of everyday family life. **Ephesians 6** reminds parents—especially fathers—to raise their children in the Lord’s instruction. Again and again, the Bible calls *parents* to teach their kids, *not pastors* to take their place.

So why have many churches moved away from this model? Mostly, it’s tradition. In earlier generations, it made practical sense for pastors to teach children, especially when parents lacked access to resources or education. Over time, that became the norm. But only recently have churches begun to ask if that tradition is truly the best way.

At St. Mark, we believe tradition is only valuable when it serves a purpose. When we noticed that many of our students were disconnecting from the faith within a few years after Confirmation, we started asking deeper questions. We found what research consistently shows: that parents have far greater influence on their children’s spiritual lives than pastors do. The strongest influence on a child’s faith is their parents. Classroom learning isn’t enough. Faith grows best through honest, meaningful conversations at home.

That’s why we created this program: to give you the tools, support, and encouragement to lead those conversations. We believe that’s the most powerful way to help your children grow as lifelong disciples of Jesus.

BASIC PHILOSOPHY

Our Family Catechism program equips parents to raise disciples of Jesus at home, using Bible studies built around the structure of **Luther's Small Catechism**.

Our hope is for families to grow spiritually strong—where kids see home as the place faith is nurtured, and church as the place that supports and connects them in community.

Parents are the greatest influence on a child's faith. So, the best way to raise the next generation of Jesus-followers is to help parents grow as disciple-making disciples.

EXPECTATIONS

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT FROM US

- **Training:** Ongoing opportunities to grow in your understanding of Scripture and how to use the Catechism.
- **Equipping:** Clear materials and guidance to help you use them confidently at home.
- **Encouragement:** Regular, Scripture-based encouragement to remind you of God's calling and your ability to lead your family in faith.
- **Support:** We're always here for questions, concerns, or direction—just reach out anytime.

WHAT WE EXPECT FROM YOU

- **Engagement:** As the parent, your commitment is key. This process works best when you take the lead.
- **Intentionality:** Set aside regular time to walk through the materials, complete each step, and create space for prayer and conversation.
- **Communication:** We're here to support you—but we can't help if we don't know what you need. Keep us in the loop so we can walk alongside you.

WHAT WE EXPECT FROM YOUR KIDS

- **Learning:** A willingness to listen, ask questions, and take these truths to heart.
- **Patience:** This journey takes time. Encourage your kids to stay engaged without rushing to the finish.
- **Cooperation:** When you say, "Let's do this," we hope they respond with, "Sounds good!" It won't happen every time—but we'll be praying for it!

THE GOAL

The Family Catechism program has three main goals:

1. To help families grow closer to Jesus and each other through Bible study at home.
2. To prepare kids to receive Holy Communion so that they know what they are receiving, can examine themselves, and are united in faith with their church community.
3. To prepare kids to publicly profess their faith, declaring with confidence, “I believe this.”

There are many ways to reach these goals. You may choose to memorize and discuss only Luther’s Small Catechism (provided for you at the back of this handbook, starting on **page 20**). You may decide to work through **Luther’s Catechism** (the dark blue book, which contains Luther’s Small Catechism and many other helps). You may even find a different catechism curriculum that you like. It is *not* our requirement that you meet these goals by going through our curriculum. Our curriculum is one tool to help you get there.

We do ask that no matter what method you use, you complete the **Communion Examination** and the **Final Wrap-Up** steps, as these help us in our duties as shepherds for your family.

THE PROCESS

Most families spend about an hour a week studying together and can finish in a little over a year, but you can move at your own pace. There is no time limit or requirement.

These are the basic steps for the Family Catechism program:

- Step 1: Attend the Orientation**
- Step 2: Work through modules 1-4**
- Step 3: Complete Holy Communion Examination**
- Step 4: Work through modules 5-7**
- Step 5: Complete Final Wrap Up**
- Step 6: Attend Profession of Faith service**

These steps are not merely a “checklist” to be marked off. They are intended to deepen faith, family connection, and an understanding of God’s grace.

Below we have detailed what is involved in each of these steps:

STEP 1: ORIENTATION

Each September, we hold a kickoff event to introduce the Family Catechism program. You'll get a full overview, receive materials, learn about available support, and have a chance to ask questions. It's also a great time to meet other families and form small groups. A shorter version of the orientation is offered in January for those starting mid-year without joining a group.

STEP 2: WORK THROUGH MODULES 1-4 (“GOD FOR ME”)

These modules focus on who God is, what He’s done for us, and what He gives us (“Justification”):

- **Module 1:** What the Bible is, how it came to be, and why we trust it.
- **Module 2:** Who the true God is, as confessed in the Apostles’ Creed.
- **Module 3:** What Baptism is and how the Holy Spirit works through it.
- **Module 4:** What Holy Communion is and how to receive it faithfully.

This section ends with a practice Communion exam.

STEP 3: COMPLETE HOLY COMMUNION EXAMINATION

Once your child completes the practice Communion exam and you believe they’re ready for Communion, schedule a meeting with a pastor or staff minister (typically Pastor Reichel, unless he’s unavailable). If they agree, your child will be invited to begin receiving Communion.

STEP 4: WORK THROUGH MODULES 5-7 (“ME FOR GOD”)

These modules focus on how we live as Christians saved by grace (“Sanctification”):

- **Module 5:** The Ten Commandments—revealing sin, showing our Savior, and guiding Christian living.
- **Module 6:** Confession, forgiveness, and the importance of being part of a church.
- **Module 7:** The Lord’s Prayer—a step-by-step look at how we pray and grow closer to God.

STEP 5: COMPLETE THE FINAL WRAP-UP

This is your child’s preparation for making their Profession of Faith. It includes:

1. A parent-child conversation
2. A personal statement of belief
3. A video of your child reading or reciting their statement
4. A parent recommendation

Details and forms are provided in the next section of the handbook (starting on page 8).

STEP 6: ATTEND PROFESSION OF FAITH SERVICE

Once all Final Wrap-Up steps are complete, submit everything via the Google Form that is found on the Family Catechism website (<https://stmarkministries.com/familycatechism/>). You’ll choose a Bible verse, upload a photo, and register for a service. Profession of Faith services are held quarterly, typically on the first Sunday of the month during the 10:30 service at our De Pere campus. During that service, your child will stand with you to publicly declare their faith.

FINAL WRAP-UP PROCESS

The **Final Wrap-Up** was created in place of a traditional examination and includes:

1. **Parent-Child Conversation:** We provide you with a set of questions that cover all the truths of Scripture summarized in Luther’s Small Catechism. You may walk through each question individually, or you can use them as a starting point to have a conversation with your child. Record a video of this discussion and submit it on the Google Form. The questions can be found toward the back of this handbook (pages 10-11).
2. **Personal Statement of Faith:** Your child will write a short statement of their beliefs (usually 1 page), including a meaningful Bible verse, and submit both the **written** version and a **video** of them reading it out loud. The rubric, a “Very Important Chapters” list, and a “Very Important Passages” list are provided in this handbook on pages 12-18.
3. **Parent Recommendation:** You will complete a Parent Recommendation Form (available online, and on page 19 of this handbook) to indicate why you believe your child is ready to stand up and make a profession of their faith.

All the documents are on pages 12-19 of this handbook and can be uploaded through the Profession of Faith Google Form on our website.

SUPPORT

This program is designed to be an at-home Bible study, led by you as the parent. You’ll set the schedule and guide your child through the materials in conversation-based sessions. The goal is to grow in faith together as you talk through the lessons—not to complete assignments independently. But you’re not in this alone.

We’ll send weekly emails with encouragement and updates to keep you informed and supported. You’re also welcome to join a small group—either by forming your own or joining one led by a trained parent volunteer. If you need more help and support, our pastoral staff is always ready and available. We’ll support you however we can.

MATERIALS

Our materials are designed for conversation and activity together as a family. They were written by members of our pastoral staff with your family in mind. They follow the outline of **Luther’s Small Catechism**, but we chose to present them in an order that we feel better emphasizes God’s grace in Jesus.

The program is broken up into 7 modules. Those modules are as follows:

- Module 1: The Bible
- Module 2: The Apostles’ Creed
- Module 3: Baptism

- Module 4: Holy Communion
- Module 5: The Ten Commandments
- Module 6: Keys and Confession
- Module 7: The Lord's Prayer

At the Fall Orientation you can pick up a binder containing all 7 modules and supporting documentation. You can also download all the materials from our church website in PDF form.

Each module asks you to go into the Bible, answer some questions together, and do some application activities. There are also QR codes that link to videos that will help you better understand the materials – but if you would prefer to go tech free, the videos are optional. Each module will also include a knowledge check – a quiz – with an answer key in the back. You don't have to turn these quizzes in, but they are helpful for you to make sure you and your child are understanding the information.

In addition to the module packets, we ask you to have on hand a few books:

- A Bible – (NIV, ESV, EHV, or CSB)
- Luther's Catechism (dark blue book from NPH.net)
- Luther's Large Catechism (maroon book from CPH.org)
- *Praying Luther's Small Catechism* (provided for free from the St. Mark Church Office)

SMALL GROUPS

Your family can join a small group, either one that you organize and lead or one led by one of our parent volunteers. If you wish to form your own small group, the only thing we ask from you is to let us know who you are meeting with and who is the main point of contact. If you would like some help finding people to join your group, we are happy to work with you.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Over time we will be adding other resources to help you as parents be more successful in raising disciples of Jesus, and to help your family grow deeper in faith and knowledge. Those resources can be found on the website (<https://stmarkministries.com/familyresource/>), and we encourage you to explore them. Many of them can be used as alternatives to the modules if they work better for your family.

Eventually we will put all these materials into an online "classroom" which will help us facilitate and support families as they work at their own pace. More information about this online class will be shared as it becomes available.

EXAMINATION CONVERSATION

Directions: As a family, talk through the following questions. The first section is for parents to ask their student. The second section is for students to ask their parents. We would like you to take a video of the conversation. You can use a laptop, a phone, a tablet, or whatever else works for your family. Please find a place to record your conversation that has decent lighting, and little or no background noise (this will just make it easier as we review your video). If possible, please try to make sure everyone in the conversation is in the video.

While we want you to talk through all the questions, this is not a “right answer/wrong answer” situation. You might not know the answer to everything, but we hope to hear your heart of faith shining through the answers you give.

FOR STUDENTS TO ANSWER:

About God:

1. Who is the true God, and what do you know about him?
2. Is the Father God?
3. Is the Son God?
4. Is the Holy Spirit God?
5. How many Gods are there?
1. Jesus once asked his disciples, “Who do you say I am.” Who do you say Jesus is?
2. How do you know that Jesus was truly a human?
3. How do you know that Jesus was truly God?
4. Why did Jesus have to be true man and true God to save us?

About salvation:

1. The Bible tells us that all human beings have a problem. What is that problem?
2. What did God do to solve that problem?
3. When Jesus died on the cross, whose sins did he pay for?
4. How do you personally gain the benefit of the forgiveness Jesus earned on the cross?
5. Can you do anything to contribute to the work of salvation that Jesus has done?
6. Do your good works do anything to help save you?
7. If good works don’t help to save you, then why do you do good works?
8. If you were to stand before God and he asked, “Why should I let you into heaven?” how would you answer him?

About the Sacraments:

1. What are the two Sacraments?
2. What blessings does baptism give a person?

3. Why should all Christians be baptized?
4. Why do we baptize infants? (give at least two reasons)
5. What is Holy Communion and why do we celebrate it?
6. When we take Communion, we eat bread and drink wine. What else do we receive, besides bread and wine?
7. What are the spiritual blessings we receive in Communion?
8. What is the power behind Holy Communion?
9. What questions should I ask myself before I take Communion?

FOR PARENTS TO ANSWER:

1. What is the primary purpose of a Christian church like St. Mark, why do we exist?
2. Why is it good for you to be a part of a Christian church?
3. What does it mean to be a member of a church?
4. What are some things that a church member does?
5. What are some things you want your church to do for you?
6. What is the danger of false doctrine? (Gal. 5:9) How will you help me stay away from it?
7. How do you keep a strong and regular prayer life? What advice can you give me on how to spend more time in prayer?
8. What spiritual gifts do you see in me? How do you think I might be able to use my gifts to serve others?
9. What are some ways we can serve together to help me grow in using my gifts?
10. Our church body loses about 18,000 people per year just from people leaving. How are you, as my parent, going to make sure I don't become part of this number in the future?
11. What is our plan as a family to continue growing in our faith in the future?

PERSONAL STATEMENT OF FAITH

Each Sunday at St. Mark, we share a statement of faith—whether it's our mission statement or one of the creeds. Now it's your turn to write your own—a summary of what you believe, in your own words.

It's not meant to be easy—and that's a good thing! Take your time. Think carefully about what matters most to you and talk it through with your parents. Don't rush it in one sitting. Spread it out over a few days, then revisit it a week later to make final edits. Use the prompts below to help guide what you include.

Once you've written your statement, please record a video of yourself reading it. You can do it privately or in front of your family—whichever is more comfortable. Then upload both your written statement and video together as part of the same assignment.

DO:

- Write a statement between 400 and 750 words long
- Include a favorite Bible passage or two and explain why the passage(s) help you share your faith
- Keep in mind a friend or family member to whom you would like to explain your faith
- Items to consider including (but you won't be able to include them all)
 - Jesus, his death and resurrection
 - Creation
 - The Trinity
 - Holy Communion and what it offers
 - Faith and the Holy Spirit
 - Why it's important to go to church
 - Baptism and what it does
 - The right and power to forgive sins
 - The "how" and "why" of prayer
 - The importance of confessing sins
 - How your faith helps you make decisions
- Use your parent(s) to help with spelling, grammar and clarity. This should be a completed document, not a rough draft.

DON'T:

- Use fancy church words. Keep things simple
- Copy an entire creed word for word. Go ahead and think about one of our common creeds and use it to help you, but these should be your own words.
- Do this by yourself. Get the help of your family, especially someone whose faith you look up to.

Old Testament

- Genesis 1 – *Creation*
- Genesis 2 – *Marriage*
- Genesis 3 – *Fall into Sin*
- Genesis 4 – *Cain and Abel*
- Genesis 6-9 – *The Flood*
- Genesis 11 – *Tower of Babel*
- Genesis 12 – *Abraham*
- Genesis 19 – *Sodom and Gomorrah*
- Genesis 22 – *Abraham Tested*
- Genesis 28 – *Jacob’s Ladder*
- Genesis 37 – *Joseph’s Coat of Many Colors*
- Genesis 41 – *Joseph Rules in Egypt*
- Exodus 2 – *Baby Moses*
- Exodus 3-4 – *Moses and The Burning Bush*
- Exodus 12 – *The Passover*
- Exodus 20 – *The Ten Commandments*
- Joshua 6 – *The Battle of Jericho*
- 1 Samuel 17 – *David and Goliath*
- 2 Samuel 11-12 – *David and Bathsheba*
- 1 Kings 3 – *Solomon’s Wisdom*
- 2 Kings 2 – *Chariots of Fire*
- Psalm 23 – *The “Good Shepherd” Psalm*
- Psalm 46 - *God Is Our Refuge and Strength*
- Psalm 121 – *The “Hills” Psalm*
- Isaiah 53 – *Christ Our Substitute*

New Testament

- Matthew 5-7 – *The Sermon on the Mount*
- Matthew 10 – *The Marks of a Disciple*
- Matthew 18 – *Church Discipline*
- Matthew 19 – *Jesus on Marriage & Divorce*
- Matthew 24-25 – *Signs Of the End Times*
- Matthew 26 – *The Lord’s Supper*
- Matthew 28 – *The Resurrection*
- Luke 2 – *Christmas*
- Luke 10 – *The Good Samaritan*
- Luke 15 – *The “Lost” Chapter*
- Luke 19 – *Palm Sunday*
- Luke 22-23 – *Maundy Thursday/Good Friday*
- John 2 – *Jesus’ First Miracle*
- John 6 – *Jesus Feeds The 5,000*
- John 10 – *Jesus, The Good Shepherd*
- John 17 – *Christ’s High-Priestly Prayer*
- Acts 1 – *Ascension*
- Acts 2 – *Pentecost*
- Acts 9 – *Saul’s Conversion*
- Romans 3 – *Righteous through Faith*
- Romans 8 – *More than Conquerors*
- Romans 13 – *Government*
- 1 Corinthians 7 – *Marriage, Divorce, & Singleness*
- 1 Corinthians 13 – *“Agape Love” Chapter*
- 1 Corinthians 15 – *The Great “Resurrection” Chapter*
- Ephesians 5 – *The Roles in Marriage*
- 1 Timothy 2 – *Instructions on Worship*
- 2 Thessalonians 2 – *The Antichrist*
- Hebrews 11 – *Heroes of Faith*
- James 3 – *Taming The Tongue*
- 2 Peter 3 – *Christ’s Second Coming*
- Revelation 21 – *Heaven*

John 3:16 – *The Gospel in A Nutshell*

- “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

John 8:31 – *What It Takes to Be a Disciple*

- “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples.”

Matthew 28:18-20 – *Our Mission*

- “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”

Malachi 3:6 – *God and His Word Don't Change*

- “I the LORD do not change. So you, the descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed.”

2 Timothy 3:16-17 – *All the Bible Is God's Word*

- “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

John 20:31 – *Reason For the Bible*

- “But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”

Hebrews 11:1 – *Definition of Faith*

- “Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.”

Romans 8:28 – *All Works for God's Good*

- “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”

1 John 2:2 – *Jesus Paid for All Sins*

- “He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.”

Psalms 51:5 – *Original Sin*

- “Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.”

John 14:6 – *Jesus Is the Only Way*

- “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

Romans 10:17 – *Faith Comes from Hearing the Message*

- “Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ.”

2 Peter 1:21 – *The Inspiration of Scripture*

- “For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”

2 Corinthians 5:21 – *God's Great Exchange*

- “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”

Ephesians 2:8-9 – *Saved by Faith Alone*

- For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith— and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast.

Hebrews 10:24-25 – *Church Attendance*

- And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

1 Timothy 2:4 – *God Wants All People to Be Saved*

- “[God] wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.”

Titus 3:5 – *Baptism Saves*

- “[God] saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.”

1 Cor. 11:27 – *Receiving Communion in an Unworthy Manner*

- “So then, 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.”

1 Peter 3:15 – *Be Prepared to Give an Answer*

- “But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.”

Psalms 50:15 – *In Time of Need*

- “And call on me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me.”

James 1:19 – *Think Before You Speak*

- “My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.”

Isaiah 55:11 – *God's Word Will Always Accomplish Its Purpose*

- “So is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.”

Hebrews 4:12 – *The Word of God Is Active*

- “For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.”

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 – *Your Bodies are Temples*

- “Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore, honor God with your bodies.”

Matthew 5:28 – *Lust*

- “But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”

Hebrews 13:4 – *Marriage Should Be Honored*

- “Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral.”

Proverbs 13:20 – Choose Friends Carefully

- “Walk with the wise and become wise, for a companion of fools suffers harm.”

1 Corinthians 10:12 – Against Pride

- “So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall!”

Titus 3:10 – Warning A False Prophet

- “Warn a divisive person once and then warn them a second time. After that, have nothing to do with them.”

2 Corinthians 6:14 – Don’t Join with Unbelievers

- “Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?”

PARENT RECOMMENDATION

Dear Ministry Staff of St. Mark,

As a Christian parent, it is my desire that my child, _____, become a full member of our Christian congregation and have all the blessings and responsibilities of a member. Having taken him/her through the Examination questions, and heard his/her statement of faith, I believe that my child shows a true Christian faith and is prepared to make a commitment to membership at St. Mark: *to grow in maturity of faith, to share his/her faith and invite others to hear the Gospel, to pray for our church leaders, to submit to the biblical authority of our church, to receive Communion, and take on all other responsibilities of membership.*

I believe he/she has demonstrated this in the following ways:

I intend to continue to take responsibility for my child's spiritual welfare and commit myself to standing by him/her in walking through the next stage of spiritual maturity. Based on this, my recommendation, please consider my child, _____, prepared for membership.

In Christ,

(name of parent)

(name of parent)

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

As the head of the family should teach them in the simplest way to those in his household.

THE FIRST COMMANDMENT

You shall have no other gods.

What does this mean?

We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things.

THE SECOND COMMANDMENT

You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God.

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God that we do not use his name to curse, swear, lie or deceive, or use witchcraft, but call upon God's name in every trouble, pray, praise, and give thanks.

THE THIRD COMMANDMENT

Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God that we do not despise preaching and his Word, but regard it as holy, and gladly hear and learn it.

THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT

Honor your father and mother, that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth.

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God that we do not dishonor or anger our parents and others in authority, but honor, serve, and obey them, and give them love and respect.

THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT

You shall not murder.

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God that we do not hurt or harm our neighbor in his body, but help and befriend him in every bodily need.

THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT

You shall not commit adultery.

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God that we lead a pure and decent life in words and actions, and that husband and wife love and honor each other.

THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT

You shall not steal.

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God that we do not take our neighbor's money or property or get it by dishonest dealing, but help him to improve and protect his property and means of income.

THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT

You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God that we do not tell lies about our neighbor, betray him, or give him a bad name, but defend him, speak well of him, and take his words and actions in the kindest possible way.

THE NINTH COMMANDMENT

You shall not covet your neighbor's house.

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God that we do not scheme to get our neighbor's inheritance or house or obtain it by a show of right, but do all we can to help him keep it.

THE TENTH COMMANDMENT

You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, workers, animals, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

What does this mean?

We should fear and love God that we do not force or entice away our neighbor's spouse, workers, or animals, but urge them to stay and do their duty.

THE CONCLUSION

What does God say about all these commandments? He says, "I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments."

What does this mean?

God threatens to punish all who transgress these commandments. Therefore, we should fear his anger and not disobey what he commands. But he promises grace and every blessing to all who keep these commandments. Therefore, we should love and trust in him and gladly obey what he commands.

THE CREED

As the head of the family should teach them in the simplest way to those in his household.

THE FIRST ARTICLE (CREATION)

I believe in God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

What does this mean?

I believe that God created me and all that exists, and that he gave me my body and soul, eyes, ears and all my members, my mind and all my abilities. And I believe that God still preserves me by richly and daily providing clothing and shoes, food and drink, house and home, spouse and children, land, cattle, and all I own, and all I need to keep my body and life. God also preserves me by defending me against all danger, guarding and protecting me from all evil. All this God does only because he is my good and merciful Father in heaven, and not because I have earned or deserved it. For all this I ought to thank and praise, to serve and obey him.

This is most certainly true.

THE SECOND ARTICLE (REDEMPTION)

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty. From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

What does this mean?

I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the virgin Mary, is my Lord.

He has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all sins, from death and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver, but with his holy, precious blood and with his innocent suffering and death.

All this he did that I should be his own, and live under him in his kingdom, and serve him in everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness, just as he has risen from death and lives and rules eternally.

This is most certainly true.

THE THIRD ARTICLE (SANCTIFICATION)

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

What does this mean?

I believe that I cannot by my own thinking or choosing believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him.

But the Holy Spirit has called me by the gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith. In the same way he calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith.

In this Christian Church he daily and fully forgives all sins to me and all believers.

On the Last Day he will raise me and all the dead and give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ.

This is most certainly true.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

As the head of the family should teach them in the simplest way to those in his household.

THE ADDRESS

Our Father in heaven,

What does this mean?

With these words God tenderly invites us to believe that he is our true Father and that we are his true children, so that we may pray to him as boldly and confidently as dear children ask their dear father.

THE FIRST PETITION

Hallowed be your name.

What does this mean?

God's name is certainly holy by itself, but we pray in this petition that we too may keep it holy.

How is God's name kept holy?

God's name is kept holy when his Word is taught in its truth and purity, and we as children of God lead holy lives according to it. Help us to do this, dear Father in heaven! But whoever teaches and lives contrary to God's Word dishonors God's name among us. Keep us from doing this, dear Father in heaven!

THE SECOND PETITION

Your kingdom come.

What does this mean?

God's kingdom certainly comes by itself even without our prayer, but we pray in this petition that it may also come to us.

How does God's kingdom come?

God's kingdom comes when our heavenly Father gives his Holy Spirit, so that by his grace we believe his holy Word and lead a godly life now on earth and forever in heaven.

THE THIRD PETITION

Your will be done on earth as in heaven.

What does this mean?

God's good and gracious will certainly is done without our prayer, but we pray in this petition that it may be done among us also.

How is God's will done?

God's will is done when he breaks and defeats every evil plan and purpose of the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh, which try to prevent us from keeping God's name holy and letting his kingdom come. And God's will is done when he strengthens and keeps us firm in his Word and in the faith as long as we live. This is his good and gracious will.

THE FOURTH PETITION

Give us today our daily bread.

What does this mean?

God surely gives daily bread without our asking, even to all the wicked, but we pray in this petition that he would lead us to realize this and to receive our daily bread with thanksgiving.

What, then, is meant by daily bread?

Daily bread includes everything that we need for our bodily welfare, such as food and drink, clothing and shoes, house and home, land and cattle, money and goods, a godly spouse, godly children, godly workers, godly and faithful leaders, good government, good weather, peace and order, health, a good name, good friends, faithful neighbors, and the like.

THE FIFTH PETITION

Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.

What does this mean?

We pray in this petition that our Father in heaven would not look upon our sins or because of them deny our prayers; for we are worthy of none of the things for which we ask, neither have we deserved them, but we ask that he would give them all to us by grace; for we daily sin much and surely deserve nothing but punishment.

So we too will forgive from the heart and gladly do good to those who sin against us.

THE SIXTH PETITION

Lead us not into temptation.

What does this mean?

God surely tempts no one to sin, but we pray in this petition that God would guard and keep us, so that the devil, the world, and our flesh may not deceive us or lead us into false belief, despair, and other great and shameful sins; and though we are tempted by them, we pray that we may overcome and win the victory.

THE SEVENTH PETITION

But deliver us from evil.

What does this mean?

In conclusion we pray in this petition that our Father in heaven would deliver us from every evil that threatens body and soul, property and reputation, and finally when our last hour comes, grant us a blessed end and graciously take us from this world of sorrow to himself in heaven.

THE DOXOLOGY

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.

What does this mean?

We can be sure that these petitions are acceptable to our Father in heaven and are heard by him, for he himself has commanded us to pray in this way and has promised to hear us. Therefore we say, "Amen," "Yes, it shall be so."

THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY BAPTISM

As the head of the family should teach them in the simplest way to those in his household.

THE INSTITUTION OF BAPTISM

First: What is Baptism?

Baptism is not just plain water, but it is water used by God's command and connected with God's Word.

Which is that Word of God?

Christ our Lord says in the last chapter of Matthew, "Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit!"

THE BLESSINGS OF BAPTISM

Second: What does Baptism do for us?

Baptism works forgiveness of sin, delivers from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe this, as the words and promises of God declare. What are these words and promises of God? Christ our Lord says in the last chapter of Mark, "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned."

THE POWER OF BAPTISM

Third: How can water do such great things?

It is certainly not the water that does such things, but God's Word which is in and with the water, and faith which trusts this Word used with the water. For without God's Word the water is just plain water and not baptism. But with this Word it is baptism, that is, a gracious water of life and a washing of rebirth by the Holy Spirit.

Where is this written?

St. Paul says in Titus, chapter 3, "God saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life." This is a trustworthy saying.

THE MEANING OF BAPTISM FOR OUR DAILY LIFE

Fourth: What does baptizing with water mean?

Baptism means that the old Adam in us should be drowned by daily contrition and repentance, and that all its evil deeds and desires be put to death. It also means that a new person should daily arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever.

Where is this written?

St. Paul says in Romans, chapter 6, "We were buried with Christ through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life."

THE MINISTRY OF THE KEYS AND CONFESSION

As the head of the family should teach them in the simplest way to those in his household.

THE KEYS

First: What is the use of the Keys?

The use of the Keys is that special power and right which Christ gave to his church on earth, to forgive the sins of penitent sinners but to refuse forgiveness to the impenitent as long as they do not repent.

Where is this written?

The holy Evangelist John writes in chapter 20, "Jesus breathed on his disciples and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.'"

THE PUBLIC USE OF THE KEYS

Second: How does a Christian congregation use the Keys?

A Christian congregation with its called servant of Christ uses the Keys in accordance with Christ's command by forgiving those who repent of their sin and are willing to amend, and by excluding from the congregation those who are plainly impenitent that they may repent. I believe that, when this is done, it is as valid and certain in heaven also, as if Christ, our dear Lord, dealt with us himself.

Where is this written?

Jesus says in Matthew, chapter 18, "Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

CONFESSION

First: What is Confession?

Confession has two parts. The one is that we confess our sins; the other, that we receive absolution or forgiveness from the pastor* as from God himself, not doubting but firmly believing that our sins are thus forgiven before God in heaven.

Second: What sins should we confess?

Before God we should plead guilty of all sins, even those we are not aware of, as we do in the Lord's Prayer. But before the pastor we should confess only those sins which we know and feel in our hearts.

Third: How can we recognize these sins?

Consider your place in life according to the Ten Commandments. Are you a father, mother, son, daughter, employer or employee? Have you been disobedient, unfaithful, or lazy? Have you hurt anyone by word or deed? Have you been dishonest, careless, wasteful, or done other wrong?

Fourth: How will the pastor assure a penitent sinner of forgiveness?

He will say, "By the authority of Christ, I forgive you your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen."

**The German term is best translated as "confessor," that is, the person who hears the confession.*

THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION

As the head of the family should teach them in the simplest way to those in his household.

THE INSTITUTION OF HOLY COMMUNION

First: What is the sacrament of Holy Communion?

It is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ under the bread and wine, instituted by Christ for us Christians to eat and to drink.

Where is this written?

The holy Evangelists Matthew, Mark, Luke, and the Apostle Paul tell us: Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

Then he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

THE BLESSINGS OF HOLY COMMUNION

Second: What blessing do we receive through this eating and drinking?

That is shown us by these words, "Given and poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins." Through these words we receive forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation in this sacrament. For where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation.

THE POWER OF HOLY COMMUNION

Third: How can eating and drinking do such great things?

It is certainly not the eating and drinking that does such things, but the words, "Given and poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins." These words are the main thing in this sacrament, along with the eating and drinking. And whoever believes these words has what they plainly say, the forgiveness of sins.

THE RECEPTION OF HOLY COMMUNION

Fourth: Who, then, is properly prepared to receive this sacrament?

Fasting and other outward preparations may serve a good purpose, but he is properly prepared who believes these words, "Given and poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins." But whoever does not believe these words or doubts them is not prepared, because the words "for you" require nothing but hearts that believe.

DAILY PRAYERS

How the head of the family should teach those in his household to pray morning and evening, to ask a blessing and to say grace at meals.

MORNING PRAYER

In the name of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Amen.

I thank you, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, your dear Son, that you have kept me this night from all harm and danger. Keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please you. Into your hands I commend my body and soul and all things. Let your holy angel be with me, that the wicked foe may have no power over me. Amen.

EVENING PRAYER

In the name of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Amen.

I thank you, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, your dear Son, that you have graciously kept me this day. Forgive me all my sins, and graciously keep me this night. Into your hands I commend my body and soul and all things. Let your holy angel be with me, that the wicked foe may have no power over me. Amen.

TO ASK A BLESSING

The eyes of all look to you, O Lord, and you give them their food at the proper time. You open your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing. Amen.

Lord God, heavenly Father, bless us through these gifts which we receive from your bountiful goodness, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

TO SAY GRACE

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever. Amen.

Lord God, heavenly Father, we thank you for all your gifts, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

PASTORS

A pastor [overseer NIV] must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to much wine, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. He must not be a recent convert. He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it. (See 1 Timothy 3:2,3,4,6; Titus 1:9.)

WHAT WE OWE TO OUR PASTORS AND TEACHERS

Anyone who receives instruction in the Word must share all good things with his instructor. (See Galatians 6:6.) In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel. (See 1 Corinthians 9:14.) The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, [...] "The worker deserves his wages." (See 1 Timothy 5:17,18.) Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you. (See Hebrews 13:17.)

GOVERNMENT

Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves [...] For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. (See Romans 13:1,2,4)

HUSBANDS

Husbands, [in the same way] be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers. [...] Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them. (See 1 Peter 3:7; Colossians 3:19.)

WIVES

Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord, like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her master. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear. (See Ephesians 5:22; 1 Peter 3:6.)

PARENTS

Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord. Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged. (See Ephesians 6:4; Colossians 3:21.)

CHILDREN

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother--which is the first commandment with a promise---that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth." (See Ephesians 6:1-3.)

EMPLOYEES

[Slaves] Obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men, because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does. (See Ephesians 6:5-8.)

EMPLOYERS

[And masters,] Treat your [slaves] employees in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him. (See Ephesians 6:9.)

YOUNG PEOPLE

Young men, be submissive to those who are older. Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. (See 1 Peter 5:5,6.)

WIDOWS

The widow who is really in need and left all alone puts her hope in God and continues night and day to pray and to ask God for help. But the widow who lives for pleasure is dead even while she lives. (See 1 Timothy 5:5,6.)

A WORD FOR ALL

Love your neighbor as yourself. This is the sum of all the commandments. [This is a paraphrase] (See Romans 13:8-10: Galatians 5:14.) And continue praying for everyone. [This is a paraphrase.] (See 1 Timothy 2:1.)

Let each his lesson learn with care, and all the household well shall fare.