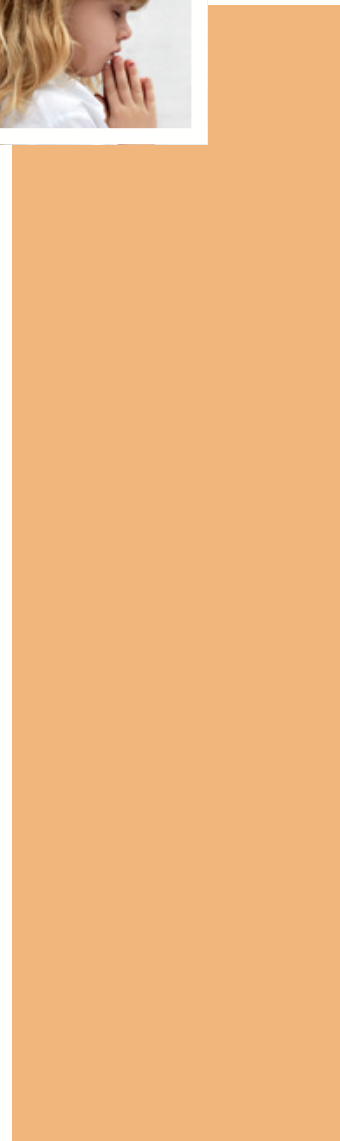


# CHILDREN & HOLY COMMUNION

ALL ARE WELCOME





### Keeping the Promise Events

Each year, Word of Peace hosts several family events designed to remind us of the important promises made to God and our children during baptism. These events partner with parents to provide them with the resources they need to grow their family's faith.

### Wonders of Worship

4-year-olds are full of questions and "why?" seems to be a favorite. During this hands-on, activity based experience learn about the wonders of worship as we explore our worship space.

### Exploring the Catechism

Martin Luther wrote the Small Catechism to help parents teach their children about our faith's traditions. Bring your detective skills as we investigate The Lord's Prayer, Creed, & Ten Commandments.

### Celebrate Communion!

Celebrate the gift of God's grace and love given to us in the Lord's Supper. During this event we will engage in the Biblical story that is ours around Holy Communion. Come for a time of hands-on activities and learn about the love and forgiveness received when we gather at the table. It's truly worth celebrating!

### Affirmation of Baptism

Students receive additional education about The Lord's Supper and the Sacraments during Confirmation.

## "LET THE LITTLE CHILDREN COME TO ME"

### Children & Holy Communion

There was a three-year-old boy named Andrew. Andrew was a son of a pastor. One Sunday when Andrew went up to the altar for communion, he reach up over the communion rail, grabbed his daddy's stole, pulled his daddy down to him and asked, "Daddy, isn't Jesus for me too?"



**"Isn't Jesus for ME too?"** That is an important question to be considering during worship. How are we communicating this message to our children? In scripture, Jesus repeatedly demonstrated his love for children, their place in the kingdom, and his desire to touch and bless them. (Matthew 19:13-15; Mark 10:13-16; Luke 18:15-17; Matthew 18:2-5)

So how do we as a church respond to this question? We start with an understanding of Jesus' love and value for children. Because Word of Peace takes seriously faith formation of ALL God's people, let's take a look at the developmental stages of faith formation:

## Developmental Stages of Faith Formation in Children

**Infant/Toddler** Rely on their parents meeting their needs, keeping them safe, secure and loved. The phrases "no" and "not for you" are part of their lives especially around things that are breakable and unsafe for the child. They learn best through imitation of what loved ones are doing.

**Early Elementary** Their faith continues to form around concrete and literal examples of the biblical stories. They are beginning to understand the concepts of sin and forgiveness in their lives, through interactions with those around them especially with guidance from significant adults in their lives.

**Preschoolers** They take in their environment to make sense of their world. Important faith concepts revolve around basic truth that God loves them and God cares for them. Biblical stories are taken in and understood according to their concerns. Often prompting questions like "Isn't Jesus for me too?"

**Late Elementary & Early Adolescence** Faith continues to form fairly uncritical acceptance of religious value taught by others. It is centered on feelings of right and wrong, especially in interpersonal relationships. Youth are beginning to connect biblical stories in their lives with guidance from those around them, especially from significant adults in their lives.

## Keeping the Promise Communion Education

*Keeping the Promise*  
Events Timeline

*Baptism Class*  
Birth — 1 year

*Splash! Celebration*  
1 — 2 years

*Sharing Stories of the Bible*  
PreK — 3 yrs.

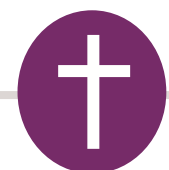
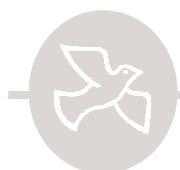
*The Wonders of Worship*  
PreK — 4 yrs.

*Prayer Party*  
Kindergarten

*Share, Save, Spend*  
Grade 1

*Exploring the Catechism*  
Grade 2

*It Only Takes a Spark!*  
Grade 3





**We want the children of Word of Peace to feel that they are fully included in the worship. If your child is asking about Holy Communion and is asking to receive it, it may be a good time for them to begin.**

## Is My Child Ready?

If you are the parent or caregiver for a young child, you may be wondering when he or she is ready to begin receiving Holy Communion. Some of us may have been raised to believe that participation in Holy Communion requires a bit more than the generous splash of baptism. We may have received our first communion right after we were confirmed and so understood it as something of a reward for making it through those years of classes. Or, tradition may have given the impression that Holy Communion was a privilege enjoyed only by those people mature enough to understand and appreciate it.

As you think about your own experiences, consider these two statements from *The Use of the Means of Grace*\*:

- Admission to the sacrament is by *invitation of the Lord*, presented through the church to those who are baptized.
- *There is no command* from our Lord regarding the age at which people should be baptized or first communed. In all communion practices, congregations strive to avoid both reducing the Lord's Supper to an act effective by its mere performance without faith and narrowing faith to intellectual understanding of Christ's presence and gifts.

Your child's readiness is best determined by you—a parent or caregiver—in consultation with your pastor and, perhaps, a children's ministry staff. Each child is different and each will pick up on the significance of the meal at a different point. One important cue for

readiness for Holy Communion is your child showing signs that they feel excluded. **If your child is asking about Holy Communion and is asking to receive it, it may be a good time for them to begin receiving it.**

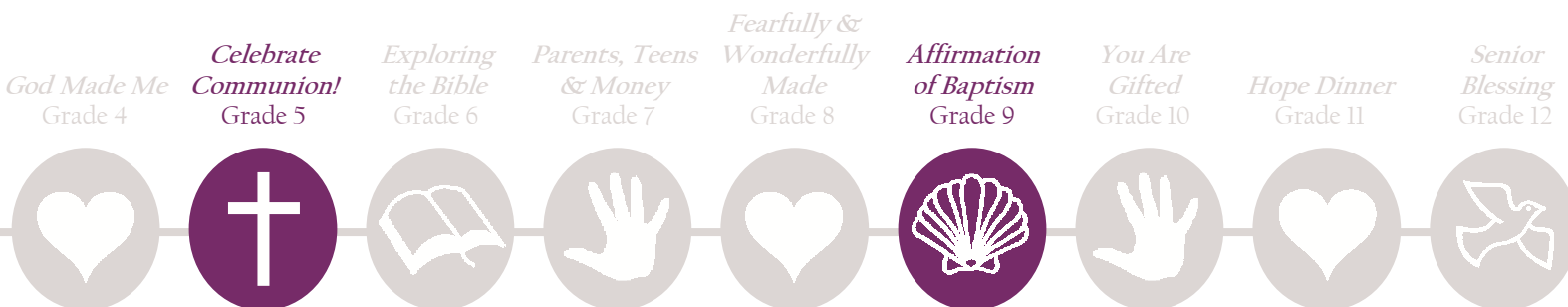
The important thing to remember is the sacraments are events of the whole church. They are events in which the complete body of Christ is to be present and acknowledged. The body of the Lord is the church, all the baptized adults and children. Word of Peace supports your decision by offering communion instruction at these ages at these parent/child Keeping the Promise Events:

The Wonders of Worship	4-years-old
Exploring the Catechism	Grade 2
Celebration of Communion	Grade 5
The Last Supper & the Sacraments	Confirmation
The Lutheran Course	Adult

In addition, Pastor Krista Strum is happy to address your questions and concerns as you make these decisions. Call 763.496.2400 or email [pastorkrista@wopl.org](mailto:pastorkrista@wopl.org)

**We want the children of Word of Peace to feel that they are fully included in worship.** We encourage parents to watch and listen to your children and when they express interest in communion. When children begin asking about and requesting communion we hope parents will prayerfully consider allowing their child to participate in Holy Communion.

\*A statement on the practice of word and sacrament that was adopted for guidance and practice by the Fifth Biennial Church-wide Assembly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, August 19, 1997



# Welcoming Children to the Holy Communion Table by Pastor Krista Strum

*Don't children need to be old enough to understand what Holy Communion is all about before they receive it?*

## Faith Given and Strengthened

Don't children need to be old enough to understand what Holy Communion is all about before they receive it? Those who argue to exclude infants and young children from the sacrament have used this question. However, it does not suggest a very Lutheran understanding of what takes place in the sacraments. In a sermon Luther preached in 1528 on the sacrament of Holy Baptism he made a key comparison between two sacraments. He insisted that neither is dependent on the faith of the recipient; both are based on the Word of God. In baptism it is the Word with water; in communion it is bread and wine with the Word. What we know and believe has no bearing on this gift of God's grace.

What God required of us (faith) for

receiving the sacrament, God also gives to us. In Holy Communion God not only strengthens faith but God awakens faith. That is, the faith God gives to us by grace, God brings to our awareness as well. Faith is listed as one of the gifts of God in Paul's letter to the Romans, chapter 12. Our faith is initiated and strengthened in the sacraments. Worthy reception of the sacrament of Holy Communion does not depend on our faith; rather our faith grows by receiving the sacrament.

Clearly Christ invites all to his feast, his table. We come as beggars, not as persons who in any way deserve this marvelous gift from God. We come as persons who are tainted and unworthy. And even as adults we come without a clear understanding of how this grace of God is given to us in and through the sacraments.

## God Comes to Us

Lutheran theology affirms that there are no prerequisites for the reception of the sacraments. They are not dependent upon one's age or faith. Nothing of one's own makes anyone a worthy recipient of either Holy Baptism or Holy Communion. In the sacraments God comes to the recipient. The one being baptized or communed receives the benefits of forgiveness, life, salvation, and faith through God's grace in the sacraments. We receive these benefits passively and respond to them actively through service to others. As the baptismal liturgy says, "Let your light shine before others" (Evangelical Lutheran Worship, p.231). This takes place through acts of love on the part of children as well as adults.

The Word of God made flesh in Jesus, the Word of God proclaimed

in the Bible, brings faith to believers. The sacraments are truly dependent upon the Word of God. Without the Word, the elements of the sacraments are only elements of the earth—water, bread, and wine. With the Word attached to them they become the life-giving water that washes the baptized clean and the body and blood of Jesus in, with, and under the forms of bread and wine. Word and sacraments together shape the lives of believers, creating faithful individuals called to loving service for others.

*"...there are no prerequisites for the reception of the sacraments."*

In the final analysis, the sacraments are events of the whole church. They are events in which the complete body of Christ is to be present and acknowledged. The body of the Lord is the church, all the baptized, adults and children. This needs to be recognized, acknowledged and celebrated as well.



## CELEBRATE COMMUNION!

Children receive educational opportunities about Communion through church school and a variety of parent-child *Keeping the Promise* events, including *Celebrate Communion!*

*Celebrate Communion!* is what many would refer to as a child's "first communion." During this event your child will participate in several experiential learning activities that enable children to understand that we remember Jesus through the sacrament of Holy Communion. They learn about sin and how it hurts us and our world. And finally, they learn and experience the forgiveness we receive through Jesus.

To register your child for *Celebrate Communion!* or to receive additional information about any of our *Keeping the Promise* events, please contact any member of our education staff below or call 763.496.2400.

Pastor Krista Strum	P: 763.496.2400	<a href="mailto:pastorkrista@wopl.org">pastorkrista@wopl.org</a>
Kristin Skare	P: 763.496.2404	<a href="mailto:kskare@wopl.org">kskare@wopl.org</a>
Lisa Buck	P: 763.496.2405	<a href="mailto:lbuck@wopl.org">lbuck@wopl.org</a>
Rachel Smith	P763.496.2423	<a href="mailto:rsmith@wopl.org">rsmith@wopl.org</a>

## CELEBRATE COMMUNION! CLASSES

<b>FALL SESSION 2011</b>	November 6, 2011 2—5 pm
<b>WINTER SESSION 2012</b>	January 19, 2012 6—8:30 pm
<b>SPRING SESSION 2012</b>	March 25, 2012 2—5 pm

