

## **Celebrating milestones with children, youth and families**

*A NWC Children & Family Ministry resource, based on a discussion among children and family ministers from the Northwest Conference. Below are some ideas that NWC churches do to connect with families at key moments, as they journey with their kids in faith.*

### Celebrating the birth of a child

- Families are given a gift:
  - Handmade quilt
  - diaper bag
  - box or dresser full of supplies
  - personalized baby blocks ([craftefamily.com](http://craftefamily.com) )
  - blanket
  - book or cd
  - a plant
- Post a picture of the new baby in the nursery and/or on the screen during worship
- Offer a class for new parents (to talk about parenting, baptism/dedication, children's ministry offerings, introduce new parents to each other)
- Flower in the sanctuary during worship
- Baby shower: host one or two per year for all babies, or do individually. Opportunity for the whole church to celebrate new life.
- Someone coordinates meals ([www.takethemameal.com](http://www.takethemameal.com))
- Invitation to join MOPS or other mom's group for moms of young kids

### Baptism/dedication

- When? 4x/year, once a month, or on an individual basis during worship
- Offer class for families participating in dedication/baptism with intro of children's ministry and personal connection with staff
- One-on-one meeting with families – also a great time to talk about spiritual goals for families
- Class for parents and kids, in partnership with senior pastor
- Special hymn “ Children of the Heavenly Father”
- Sing a blessing: “The Lord Bless you and Keep you”
- Gift for family: a candle to be lit each year, a lamb stuffed animal
- Give a certificate
- Opportunity to explain covenant positions on baptism/dedication in worship
- Allow family to share publically about child's name

### Giving of Bibles

- Have staff members underline favorite passages
- Distributed in worship service with prayer for kids
- When are Bibles given?

- 1<sup>st</sup> grade in the fall, during worship
- graduating 1<sup>st</sup> graders or beginning 2<sup>nd</sup> grade as they begin to “read to learn”, parents write a message in the cover
- Also given on confirmation Sunday in May, or before the start of confirmation so students can use them during confirmation.
- Choosing developmentally appropriate bibles, see [Bibles for Kids-Teens resource](#)

#### Transition to Kindergarten

- Opportunity to connect with moms in touch, pray for schools
- Hold “Bless our schools” Sunday in the fall

#### New Life in Christ

- Celebrate in worship service with a flower, then collect all flowers to keep in a basket to display in worship
- Recognize in worship, offer a certificate, devotional
- Match this person with a mentor for 6 weeks

#### First Communion

- Offer a class for parents and kids with information, invitation in worship. Co-lead with senior pastor
- Infant baptism and dedication brochure, produced by the Evangelical Covenant Church: <http://www.covchurch.org/resources/infant-baptism-and-dedication/>
- Offer grapes and/or a blessing for kids who come forward. Communicate instructions/rational for this clearly from the pulpit

#### Confirmation

- Use The Journey Discipleship/Confirmation curriculum <http://www.covchurch.org/resources/the-journey/>
- Offered in 7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> grade, either all year or shortened schedule (Jan-April, every other week.) Great time to pair with mentors from church community
- Offer 9<sup>th</sup> grade discipleship year to ease transition to high school
- Confirmands share faith story with congregation, either in worship or at special event
- Assign prayer partners with regular meetings throughout the year
- Social event with confirmands, parents, mentors
- Invite parents to take confirmation classes with students
- After Confirmation, offer invitation for baptism, church membership

#### Transition to middle school

- Diploma or certificate from children’s ministry
- Give a gift: Devo book

- Use the event MUUUUCE as a segue event to youth ministry  
<http://northwestconference.org/children-youth-family/muuuce>
- Host a dinner for incoming middle schoolers
- Invite youth pastor to speak to the group about upcoming transitions
- Educate parents about the transition to middle school
- “Impact ramp” event in partnership with youth ministry to welcome students
- Quest retreat (April) for parents/children. How to navigate change and establish relationship
- Begin confirmation classes

#### Drivers License

- Encourage parents to celebrate with their child and talk about being responsible
- Pray over the car!
- Host a “blessing of the drivers licenses” event
- Offer a gift of air freshener/key chain with printed reminder to keep in the car about responsibilities of driving

#### Transition to high school

- Host event with opportunity for college scholarships
- Promote VIVE, a college-readiness event sponsored by North Park.  
<http://www.northpark.edu/Admissions/Undergraduate-Admissions/Pastors-and-Churches/VIVE>
- Rite of passage events for girls/guys. Include parents.

#### Transition out of high school

- Graduation Sunday: celebrate all grads
- College students are given a handmade quilt
- Care packages with college devo book, snacks, letters of encouragement. Line up boxes in church hallway for all to include items, or have different groups “own” this. Include as part of children’s Sunday School, 5<sup>th</sup> Wednesday in youth group or invite senior adults to write notes during their gatherings.