THE FUTURE OF MILESTONES MINISTRY
AT BROAD STREET PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

A Thesis
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of Requirements for the Degree
Master of Sacred Theology

by

TRINITY LUTHERAN SEMINARY
COLUMBUS, OHIO
MAY, 2013
To:

Trevor, Sarah and Martin

and Brad,

with whom I have shared many Milestones
CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS viii

ABSTRACT ix

INTRODUCTION 1

PART I. FOUNDATIONS 4

Chapter 1. The Importance of the Home in Faith Formation 5

Chapter 2. The Church-Home Connection 12

Chapter 3. Milestones Ministry 18

The Template 18

The Four Elements of the Template 19

Scriptural Roots 20

Sacramental Similarities 22

Societal Similarities 23

The Four Keys 24

The Five Principles 27

PART II. MILESTONES MINISTRY AT BROAD STREET PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 30

Chapter 4. The Need to Strengthen the Church-Home Connection 31

Chapter 5. Use of the Milestones Strategy 33

Embracing Milestone’s Ministry: A Church’s Three Year Story 36

Chapter 6. Current Milestones at Broad Street Presbyterian Church 40

The Baptism Milestone 40

The Baptismal Anniversary Milestone 40
PART III. THE RESEARCH PROJECT

Chapter 7. The Objectives and Research Methodology

Potential Limitations of the Study

The Interview Script

Chapter 8. The Data - The Ten Questions about Milestones Ministry

The First Question: Awareness

The Second Question: Impression

The Third Question: Family Involvement

The Fourth Question: The Most Meaningful Part

The Fifth Question: What Would Make for More Meaning?

The Sixth Question: Connecting Church and Home

The Seventh Question: Possible New Milestones

The Eighth Question: Congregational Awareness

The Ninth Question: Question for 90+ Participants

The Tenth Question: Other Comments

Chapter 9. Data Analysis: Ten Categories and their Implications

Family Busyness

Family Expectations

Introducing the Church to Family and Friends
Service – Longing to do more as a Family 79
Gifts given during a Milestone 80
Equipping 81
Gifts received from 90+ Members 84
Enjoyment of Parents watching their Children Respond 85
This Church is the Children’s Church 86
Building a Culture of Anticipation 86
CONCLUSIONS 88
SUGGESTIONS REGARDING THE FUTURE 97
APPENDIX A 101
APPENDIX B 110
BIBLIOGRAPHY 112
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

What began at Trinity Lutheran Seminary as a one year master’s degree in “Preaching from the Second Chair,” became, over the last ten years, a S.T.M. degree in Christian Education, with a focus on Milestones Ministry. Thus blows the Spirit.

I could not have undertaken this sustained work over the last decade without the gracious support of my colleagues in ministry and the congregation of the Broad Street Presbyterian Church. My thanks go to pastors Amy Miracle and Emily Corzine, to the staff and the church’s leadership and to the twelve Broad Street families who kindly consented to interviews during the Christmas holidays.

For dear friends known since our days as students at Princeton Theological Seminary thirty years ago, I thank Barbara Price Martin, Jenny Rake-Marona, and Judy McBride for their ongoing, unconditional love and care.

Finally, for thesis advisor Mary Hughes and thesis reader, Diane Hymans, who together make up the Christian Education faculty at Trinity Lutheran Seminary; thank you for sharing your contagious enthusiasm for the ministry of education and for persevering alongside in the running of this race.
ABSTRACT

“The Future of Milestones Ministry at Broad Street Presbyterian Church” describes how one congregation, in Columbus, Ohio, connects church and home by using the Milestones Ministry approach in faith formation. Five milestones: the Baptism Milestone, the Baptismal Anniversary Milestone, the Bible Milestone, the Confirmation Milestone and the High School Graduation Milestone, engage parents and children in spiritual practices. A sixth, the 90+ Milestone, celebrates the legacy of older adults. The author, an associate pastor, interviews twelve intergenerational families about the meaning of these milestones in their lives, and categorizes their responses in ways revealing God’s presence in daily life. Materials from Vibrant Faith Ministries, including the Milestones Ministry template of naming, equipping, gifting and blessing, plus biblical resources and current discussions in the fields of Christian Education and faith development, provide the context for this exploration. The appendix contains a liturgy for each milestone as well as a thorough bibliography.
INTRODUCTION

On Sunday, January 13, 2013, six babies, held by their parents and accompanied by siblings and some grandparents, followed the choir and pastors during the opening hymn as they processed down the aisle of Broad Street Presbyterian Church, to be seated in the front pews as worship began. After the Passing of the Peace these families were called forward, to stand together in the chancel area in the front of the church for the celebration of the second Baptismal Anniversary Milestone.

This Milestone, inaugurated in 2012, gathers busy families and reminds them of the promises they made in their child’s baptism during the previous year, and most importantly, reminds them of God’s promises to their child and to them as well. This Milestone showers them with encouragement and care and holds up the home as a primary location for faith formation through an hour long equipping class beforehand and through the gift of a baptismal candle and the blessing of the congregation in worship as church members say together, “With a splash of water and a promise we have been called children of God.”

The Baptismal Anniversary Milestone is one of six Milestones that form Milestones Ministry at Broad Street Presbyterian Church. Since 2010 this congregation intentionally has been shaping Milestones around various turning points in family and church life in an attempt to strengthen the church-home connection. These Milestones include: the Baptismal Milestone, the Baptismal Anniversary Milestone, the Bible Milestone, the Confirmation Milestone, the High School Graduation Milestone, and the 90+ Milestone.
The purpose of this thesis is to discern “The Future of Milestones Ministry at Broad Street Presbyterian Church.” The impact of these Milestones – collectively called Milestones Ministry – in the life of the church, particularly in the lives of the families who experience them will be investigated. By exploring the history of Milestones Ministry at Broad Street Presbyterian Church, the theological and theoretical underpinnings of Milestones Ministry, and the real lives of real people who have experienced them, it is hoped that a path for the future of Milestones Ministry will become clearer, assisting leadership in deepening the connection between church and home.

Milestones Ministry is a form of Christian education that involves parents and other caring adults in the ongoing education of children and youth, while at the same time engaging them in their own adult faith formation. At the heart of Milestones Ministry is a commitment to connecting home and church, thus connecting the events of our lives with biblical stories in a way that help us realize God is traveling with us. In the broadest sense, these events may include congregational milestones (baptism, baptismal anniversary, presentation of bibles, confirmation, high school graduation, etc.,) as well as milestones in human development and daily living (birth and birthdays, beginning school, driver’s license, graduation, etc.,) and also additional civic celebrations such as holidays and historical events.

The Milestones Ministry model has four basic elements: Naming (creating and/or enhancing rituals and tradition), Equipping (providing instruction), Blessing (marking the occasion in worship) and Gifting (providing a symbol that is a reminder of the occasion being marked).
The phrase “Milestones Ministry” is most often associated with The Youth & Family Institute in Minnesota, now known as Vibrant Faith Ministries. Significant early leadership for its development came from Dr. Dick Hardel, Dr. David Anderson and Dr. Rollie Martinson.

This writer’s leadership role as associate pastor of care and discipleship at the Broad Street Presbyterian Church, a focus undertaken in 2010, has been enriched by this exploration. Sharing what has been learned through experiences at this particular church with other congregations as well as with the church at large offers a way to further maximize the potential of Milestones Ministry.
PART I

FOUNDATIONS
Chapter 1
The Importance of the Home in Faith Formation

The home has a powerful influence on faith formation, particularly the faith formation of children, youth and young adults. From earliest times the scriptures of our Judeo-Christian tradition have espoused this truth. For instance, in Deuteronomy 6: 4-9 we read:

Hear, O Israel: The LORD is our God, the LORD alone. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead, and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. (Deuteronomy 6:4-9, New Revised Standard Version, hereafter NRSV).

The first verses of this text, known within Judaism as the “Shema Yisrael,” form the centerpiece for morning and evening prayers. Parents are instructed to recite and speak words of faith, to bind and fix and write these words because they illustrate God’s claim on their lives and the lives of their children. The assumption in these instructions is that the home is the place where faith takes root and is regularly nurtured.

Likewise, in Proverbs 6:20-22 we read, “My child, keep your father’s commandment, and do not forsake your mother’s teaching. Bind them upon your heart always; tie them around your neck. When you walk, they will lead you; when you lie down, they will watch over you; and when you awake, they will talk with you” (Proverbs 6:20-22, NRSV).

In this reading the teaching and the very life of a parent is said to lead, to watch over, to actually talk with the young person who is being formed. The sharing of parental
faith guides and protects and even feeds the next generation. Proverbs assumes that in order to produce faithful children and youth, faithful adults must offer instruction. Such a life-long dialogue with God is rooted in and begins in the home.

Additionally, in Deuteronomy 4:9 we read instructions to parents, “But take care and watch yourselves closely, so as neither to forget the things that your eyes have seen nor to let them slip from your mind all the days of your life; make them known to your children and your children’s children” (Deuteronomy 4:9, NRSV).

The home is meant to be a place where parents and grandparents – multiple generations - make their faith known to their children, where they invite their children into the story of God’s work in the world. The daily nature of this call - to acknowledge our faith in the ordinary sleeping and waking moments in our lives – is reinforced in Deuteronomy 11:19, “Teach them to your children, talking about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise” (Deuteronomy 11:19, NRSV). According to Judeo-Christian scripture, the home has always been a primary locus for faith formation.

Educator, theologian and author John Westerhoff, in his book Will Our Children Have Faith?, hearkens back to the time when the educational ecology of the day – home, church, country and school - worked together to form North American citizens with a Christian identity.¹ Those days may have given parents the (false) impression that their foundational work at home was not as crucial, because faith was bolstered and shaped within a variety of institutional settings. Whether or not parents gave up their spiritual

leadership in the home during those days, a look at the current increasingly pluralistic post-modern era confirms that the former days are gone.

Today communities are diverse and secular and can no longer be counted on to transmit a particular set of understandings and ways. Public schools are now religiously neutral, as intended by the Constitution; places where at best religion is taught about and studied objectively. No longer can Christian parents depend on the community and the society within which they live to nurture their children in the Christian faith. Gradually the home is being re-valued as the first and essential partner with the congregation in the role of faith formation.

In looking to the family as the primary site for faith formation, it is incumbent upon pastors and parents to understand the new realities in families today. According to the American Religious Identification Survey and the Pew Research Center these trends impact everyone:

We see a greater acceptance of diverse family structures – married couples with children, single parents with children, same gender couples with children, same gender couples without children, and unmarried couples without children. We see fewer Americans participating in Sunday worship, as well as marriage, baptism and confirmation, across all generations, especially those aged 40 and younger. We see declining levels of family faith practice and socialization in the home. This reflects greater numbers of parents who are nonaffiliated or spiritual but not religious, as well as a lack of continuous connection to a faith community among young adults, young married couples and parents with young children.²

In the face of these trends many congregations continue to use models developed in the 19th and 20th centuries. As a result, much current Sunday school programming is based on assumptions about the world that are no longer true, such as, “Faith is still transmitted successfully from generation to generation at home and in the congregation.

Families are practicing their faith at home (reading the Bible, praying together,

celebrating Christian traditions). Families are actively involved in congregational life, especially Sunday worship.\textsuperscript{3}

These days the sobering reality is that many children in churches experience more hours of media in their homes in a single day than hours of Sunday school in a year.

In the face of such information it is all the more important to reconsider the importance and meaning of equipping parents to be leaders in the faith formation of their children in the home.

This renewed awareness is happening across denominational lines within Christianity, and has been a long time coming. In Roman Catholicism, for example, the seeds for renewal were planted back in the 1960’s, when Vatican II revived the ancient image of the family as functioning like a ‘domestic church.’ ‘The family is not merely like the Church, but is truly Church.’\textsuperscript{4}

Additionally, the U.S. Catholic bishops shared their vision in 1988: “A family is our first community and most basic way in which the Lord gathers us, forms us and acts in the world. The early church expressed this truth by calling the Christian family a domestic church or church of the home.”\textsuperscript{5}

Although Protestant leaders have not articulated the role of the family as “church,” they agree that family is integral to and an essential foundation for the church. Thus not only the daily lives of adult members, but also what happens in the home affects the church. Generally, when Protestant church leaders describe the family as the foundation for the church or as a church itself, they have tied this definition to the nuclear

\textsuperscript{3} John Roberto, “Faith Formation for the 21\textsuperscript{st} Century,” 21.
\textsuperscript{5} Ibid., 292.
family, in whatever shape that may take. It is time to turn to the nuclear family, and specifically to parents.

Much research has been done which confirms the importance of parents in faith formation. In 1990 the Search Institute published a comprehensive study entitled “Effective Christian Education: A National Study of Protestant Congregations.” This study was funded by the Lilly Endowment as well as six participating denominations; the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the Southern Baptist Convention, the United Church of Christ and the United Methodist Church.

The Search Institute’s research evaluated the power of Christian Education in congregations. Perhaps the most stunning and eye-opening conclusion was that the most important factor for faith formation did not take place in the congregation at all, but in the home. The study concluded that of the two strongest connections to faith maturity – family religiousness and lifetime exposure to Christian education – family religiousness was slightly more important. The family experiences most tied to greater faith maturity were the frequency with which an adolescent talked with his or her mother and father about faith, the frequency of family devotions, and the frequency with which parents and children together were involved in efforts, formal or informal, to help other people. Each of these family experiences was more powerful than the frequency with which an adolescent saw his or her parents engage in religious behavior like church attendance.6

Likewise, Christian Smith, in his groundbreaking book Soul Searching, observes that “…contrary to many popular assumptions and stereotypes, the character of teenage

---

religiosity in the United States is extraordinarily conventional. The vast majority of U.S. teens are not alienated or rebellious when it comes to religious involvement. Most are quite content to follow in their parents’ footsteps.\(^7\)

Smith’s analysis of the content of the faith of these teens (and their parents) is another question altogether; for the purposes of this thesis the point is the importance of the family in nurturing the faith that is there. Smith continues:

…contrary to popular and misguided cultural stereotypes and frequent parental misperceptions, we believe that the evidence clearly shows that the single most important social influence on the religious and spiritual lives of adolescents is their parents. Grandparents and other relatives, mentors, and youth workers can be very influential as well, but normally, parents are most important in forming their children’s religious and spiritual lives. Teenagers do not seem very reflective about or appreciative of this fact. But that does not change the reality that the best social predictor, although not a guarantee, of what the religious and spiritual lives of youth will look like is what the religious and spiritual lives of their parents do look like. Parents and other adults, as we suggested, most likely “will get what they are.” This recognition may be empowering to parents, or alarming, or both. But it is a fact worth taking seriously in any case.\(^8\)

Taking this fact seriously is indeed important. Additionally, *The Exemplary Youth Ministry Study*, completed in 2003, bolsters these findings. This national study of congregations in seven denominations (including the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)), funded by the Lilly Foundation, is noted in Kenda Creasy Dean’s book *Almost Christian: What the Faith of Our Teenagers is Telling the American Church*.

Dean describes the four assets of parental involvement for developing spiritually mature youth in her appendix:

1. Possess strong parental faith – Parent(s) possess and practice a vital and informed faith.

\(^8\) Ibid., 261.
2. Promotes family faith practices – Parent(s) engage youth and family in conversations, prayer, Bible reading, and service that nurture faith and life.

3. Reflects family harmony – Families express respect and love, create faith-promoting atmosphere.

4. Fosters parent-youth relationships - The congregation offers parent/youth activities that strengthen parent/youth relationships.⁹

There is a sense in which if nurture and faith formation are not happening at home then they are not going to be happening in their fullest sense in church, either. The influence of the home in faith development is essential. Whether in the biblical witness, church history, or in modern research, the evidence is overwhelming: the home is a primary sphere of influence for faith formation.

⁹ Kenda Creasy Dean, Almost Christian: What the Faith of Our Teenagers is Telling the American Church (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 214.
Chapter 2
The Church-Home Connection

Milestones Ministry began out of a felt need to rejuvenate and renew a vital church-home connection. To that end, the goal of Milestones Ministry is to provide congregations with “a means to implement a vision for passing on faith, by placing a child in the center” . . . of concentric circles “of home, congregation, community, culture and creation.”

Milestones Ministry reminds the church and its visitors that God is traveling with them on life’s journey.

While some may still assume that Sunday school and confirmation are the prime means for passing on faith, both research and observation prove otherwise. Sunday school as a stand-alone program has had limited success in the past few decades, and confirmation is more often experienced as a graduation out of Christian faith rather than a deepening of it.

As a counter to this, Milestones Ministry subtly and gently involves parents and other caring adults with the ongoing Christian education of children and youth, while at the same time engaging them in their own adult faith formation. The benefit to parents and caregivers who attend is the delight they feel as their sons and daughters receive public recognition, as well as from the blessings and love experienced from the congregation, and the receipt of a tangible gift, which is a physical reminder of the milestone and a resource at home.

---

11 John Westerhoff, 11.
12 Staats, 3.
A look back through the decades of the twentieth century confirms that the conversation about establishing a connection between church and home has been going on for decades. A library search revealed an article about the cradle roll, a list kept by churches of the names of very young children; sons and daughters of members. Although this article was not available (published in *Christian Century* in 1919 but available library resources only dated back to 1920), it gives evidence to not only the existence of but also to the importance of the church and home connection.

Likewise, conversations with colleagues revealed a number of ways in which denominations have sought to nurture the relationship between church and home. Some of those ways included family devotions, family nights at church and parenting courses. Other strategies included regular ‘children’s sermons’ at church. It was hoped that these short teaching times for the children of the church during worship would build personal bonds with the pastors as well as offer a message to both children and adults alike. In addition, denominations put their energies into publications, including but not limited to daily devotionals which still exist today as *Christ in Our Home* and *These Days*, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) quarterly devotional resources, respectively, which continue to encourage readers to live out their faith daily. Other denominational publications are monthly periodicals such as *The Lutheran* and *Presbyterian’s Today*, both of which offer denominational and world religious news as well as inspirational personal interest stories, to keep adult readers connected with denominational roots and perspective.

In an article published in 1961 in the journal *Religious Education*, Letty Russell, then a minister of the East Harlem Protestant Parish in New York City, writes “The trend
in the last ten years can be characterized as a return to involving the family in Christian Education.”\textsuperscript{13} She cites the popularity and use of the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A.’s \textit{Christian Faith and Life Curriculum}, as a good example of this.\textsuperscript{14} This curriculum, approved by the General Assembly of the denomination in 1947:

for the first time bound Church and home together and offered pupil, teacher, and parent alike an opportunity to see the story of Jesus Christ, the story of the Bible, and the story of the Church as a whole. This new curriculum, entitled "Christian Faith and Life: A Program for Church and Home," presented a new approach to the teaching ministry of the Church in its dual task of Sunday classroom instruction and rehabilitation of the educational competence of the Christian home. Distinctive features of the Christian Faith and Life Curriculum were the introduction of books into the home, the use of activity materials in most departments, the adaptability to churches of varying size, resources and equipment, and the use of graded materials.\textsuperscript{15}

Russell proceeds to make a case for the new reality of the day. Families come in all shapes and sizes, and are no longer necessarily intact nuclear families with a father, a mother and two kids.

Russell thinks that rather than trying to recover the family unit as it had been, the work of the church was to meet people in families where they were. She defines the work of Christian Education to be “the work of the church by which the life of a child or adult is made open to the call of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit.”\textsuperscript{16} Russell describes a family as Christian as those “who put their love of Jesus Christ above the love of family and thus finds all their relationships, including that of their family redeemed and restored

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 48.
\textsuperscript{16} Letty Russell, 49.
by the power of Jesus Christ. Thus a family becomes Christian “not because of any biological relationships but because the members have made Jesus Christ its head.”

Russell looks back in history to claim that the home became the basis for Christian education during the period of the Reformation. This pattern was forced into great change with the Industrial Revolution, so that “in 1780 the first Sunday School was organized for children who had to work every day but Sunday.”

At the time during which she wrote this article, Russell observes that mainline denominations were re-examining the work of the church school and moving back to the recognition “that child development begins in the home and the family must be the center of training in the formative years if the Christian faith is going to “stick.”

Russell urges the church of 1961 to avoid perpetuating “a cult of ‘family worship’”…in which “families seem more important than Christ!” Instead she calls the church to embrace “the idea of community as a center for meaning and Christian life.”

Russell recalls a program of education for sixty five junior high age students in the church. During Lent the children were urged to have worship at home and made “Lenten worship centers” to take home. Somewhat painfully, she details a boy’s desire to use the worship center at home and the hesitancy of his parent, who happened to be a ruling elder (church leader). It becomes clear to Russell that the key to parental involvement was to harness the children’s energy and to do it in community. She sees

---

17 Letty Russell, 50.
18 Ibid.
19 Ibid.
20 Ibid., 51.
21 Ibid.
22 Ibid.
23 Ibid., 52.
24 Ibid.
that expecting parents to stand alone to take spiritual leadership in the home is not realistic.

Another emphasis for Russell is the bible, which she describes as “the dustiest book of our generation…respected and closed.” Christian Education must make it “alive and relevant.” She remembers sending flannel boards home and sharing stories with the children, charging them in turn to go home to tell siblings and friends.

Russell’s journal article clearly articulates the need and desire for a strengthened church and home connection. Her passion for this area of church life illustrates a broader lack of satisfaction from results that had already been tried. During the 1960’s and 1970’s mainline denominations actively were trying to revitalize this connection.

This look back in history offers a helpful vantage point from which to understand Milestones Ministry as a viable way of renewing the connection between church and home. This ministry differs from previous historical attempts by integrating families into worship. Likewise, the four elements of the Milestones Ministry template, Naming, Equipping, Blessing and Gifting, plus the Four Keys, and Five Principles, described below, are likely to both achieve and reinforce more than any take-home magazines, family nights or parenting courses could do, in that they integrate at least two generations of people into the Christian story through relationships in community. For example, a devotional that is sent home does not necessarily have a caring conversation attached; nor does it have a blessing or a ritual associated with it, either.

The building of a living and lively partnership between the ministry of the congregation and the ministry of the home is a worthy goal and one that Milestones

25 Letty Russell, 53.
26 Ibid.
Ministry sees as a key principle for living and passing on faith. The description of the Milestones Ministry template that follows lays this out in greater detail.
Chapter 3

Milestones Ministry

The Template

In the spring of 2008 Linda Staats wrote an article for the *Lifelong Faith Journal*, entitled “Passing on Faith – Milestone to Milestone.” At that time Staats was a partner with The Youth & Family Institute (now Vibrant Faith Ministries), as well as an independent facilitator and consultant.

In her article she discusses the origins of Milestones Ministry and cites a familiar story in Genesis to provide a template for it. For her, the story of Noah in Genesis 8:8-22, 9:1-17 provides the basic ingredients for Milestones Ministry and functions as a reminder to tell the story of God’s promise from generation to generation.

She writes that in the story of Noah:

1. A significant life event, the flood, represents an ending and a new beginning. The transition for Noah and his family is named, recognized and marked. The event is memorable and transforming.
2. Noah and his family – two generations – are actively involved.
3. God’s presence is recognized.
4. An altar is built. Noah and his family express their faith and gratitude for God’s care. God makes a promise and a covenant with Noah. God further instructs Noah and his family on how to live. God blesses them.
5. There is a symbol, the rainbow that becomes a means to “remember” and tell the story again and again. The symbol imparts meaning and creates a sense of belonging to a faith community of people who trust God. The rainbow is a gift from God and a reminder of God’s faithfulness and promise in daily life.27

---

Milestones Ministry finds its template in four basic elements from this story: Naming, Equipping, Blessing and Gifting. These four elements create a vital partnership between the church and the home and can be adapted for any location or occasion.

**Naming** refers to marking both the sacred and ordinary events in the life of a congregation and in daily life. Both church leadership and parents are empowered to create rituals and traditions that provide shape and give a sense of belonging to the family of Jesus Christ.

**Equipping** is the instructional piece related to each Milestone. Equipping builds community, invites conversation, encourages storytelling, and brings at least two generations together. The inter-generational learning invites participants to learn from one another and serves as a model for faith practices in the home. Such equipping events may be a one-time gathering on a Sunday morning (such as the hour spent before the Baptismal Anniversary Milestone) or occur over a number of weeks.

**Blessing** is a way of saying that these actions are all about God. Blessing happens in worship and marks the occasion by proclaiming in words and actions that God is present in all of daily life, making the ordinary sacred and the sacred ordinary. Blessing also provides tools to take home.

**Gifting** is a tangible way to provide a symbol and a reminder of the occasion being marked. Gifting serves as a resource for the ongoing nurture of faith in daily life. Gifting is important because it is the material reminder at home of promises proclaimed.

28 Staats, 4-5.
and received in church. The deep hope is that as the gift goes home so does the potential to nurture faith in an ongoing way. Gifting may be last, but it is by no means least.

Scriptural Roots

In addition to the biblical passage about Noah cited above, other texts from scripture include the four elements of the template to greater or lesser degrees. An Old Testament passage known for its naming and blessing is the story of Jacob wrestling with an angel in Genesis 32:23-34:

Jacob was left alone; and a man wrestled with him until daybreak. When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he struck him on the hip socket; and Jacob’s hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him. Then he said, “Let me go, for the day is breaking.” But Jacob said, “I will not let you go, unless you bless me.” So he said to him, “What is your name?” And he said, “Jacob.” Then the man said, “You shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with humans, and have prevailed.” Then Jacob asked him, “Please tell me your name.” But he said, “Why is it that you ask my name?” And there he blessed him. So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, “For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life is preserved.” The sun rose upon him as he passed Peniel, limping because of his hip. Therefore to this day the Israelites do not eat the thigh muscle that is on the hip socket, because he struck Jacob on the hip socket at the thigh muscle. (Genesis 32:23-34, NRSV.)

Jacob and his brother, Esau, are deeply estranged. The night before they are to meet one another by the river Jacob has this encounter with God’s angel. There is no overt equipping, but there is a new name, Israel, and a profound blessing (that one might argue also functions as equipping) and even a paradoxical gift in the limp that Jacob will retain. Jacob goes into this encounter one person and comes out another, newly named and limping through all his future days because of God’s presence.
This story, while long on naming and blessing, is short on overt equipping and the presence of two generations. Likewise, whether one perceives the limp as a gift is debatable, as few people would actually seek out this gift or feel, initially at least, that they were gifted by this pain and new gait. Jacob himself is forever injured, and yet a stronger, more spiritually centered person because of it. Following this encounter he is able to reconcile with his brother, Esau.

A second Old Testament story of interest is the call of Moses in Exodus 3-4. God calls Moses by name in the presence of the burning bush. God makes a case for sending Moses to Pharoah. Moses poses the reasons why he cannot go:

Who am I? (Exodus 3:11).
I don’t know your name. (Exodus 3:13).
They won’t believe me. (Exodus 4:1).
I am not eloquent…I am slow of speech and slow of tongue. (Exodus 4:10).
O Lord, please send someone else. (Exodus 4:13).

The dialogue between God and Moses around these questions functions to equip Moses. He is gifted with the staff and blessed multiple times in their conversation. While aspects of the four elements are present, the intergenerational piece clearly is missing.

From the New Testament, the story of the Apostle Paul is relevant. His earlier identity was as Saul, persecutor of Christians. Acts describes Saul’s social location during his early years. When Stephen became the first Christian martyr, young Saul held the cloaks belonging to those doing the stoning (Acts 7:58).

A few chapters later the well-known story from the Damascus Road contains high drama. Saul is named as the one persecuting the Lord, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” His equipping happens on the ground after he falls to his knees. When he stands his eyes, though open, cannot see. The three days that follow are days in darkness, until
Ananias comes, lays his hands on Saul, and his sight is restored (Acts 9:1-19). One could say that the naming, equipping, blessing and gifting are components of this story as well, although again, the intergenerational component is missing.

Sacramental Similarities

A look at the stories behind Protestantism’s two sacraments, Baptism and the Lord’s Supper, reveals to what degree the four elements of naming, equipping, blessing and gifting may be present.

In the baptism of our Lord, Jesus is named “my Son, the Beloved.” He will be equipped following his baptism when the Spirit drives him into the wilderness for forty days. He is blessed by God with the words “You are my Son, the Beloved, with you I am well pleased” (Mark 1:11). He is gifted by the presence of the Spirit, descending like a dove. All elements of the template are present, except for the intergenerational piece.

At the Last Supper Jesus names, equips, blesses and gifts. In John’s gospel Jesus names the disciples, “no longer servants, but friends” (John 15:15). He equips them in his long discourse in chapters 13 through 17 of John’s gospel. He blesses them with many words, including his lengthy prayer in which he prays for God’s care of them, “protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one” (John 17:11). Here the gift is a self-offering; Jesus in his roles as teacher, Savior and Son of God, gifts them spiritually with himself through the tangible gifts of bread and cup. Once again, however, the intergenerational piece is missing.
This brief overview has examined elements of naming, equipping, blessing and gifting in scripture. While some stories, such as Jacob wrestling with the angel, the call of Moses and the conversion of Saul do not have a one to one relationship with each element as clearly as the Noah story does, two or more elements can be found in these stories and also in the stories of Jesus’ baptism and Last Supper. Thus it is reasonable to conclude that the four part template of Milestones Ministry can be said to have a general biblical basis, with the closest one on one correspondence being found in the story of Noah.

Societal Similarities

In addition to being part of the biblical tradition, these four elements of naming, equipping, blessing and gifting are familiar from daily life in community. For instance, consider the common experiences children and youth have of being part of Girl or Boy Scouts. The process of earning badges and progressing in scouting involves this experience of naming, equipping (learning a new skill or participating in a new activity), blessing (being publically acknowledged) and gifting (receiving a badge).

Likewise, the experiences of children and youth in sports or music or theatre in elementary, middle and high school share these elements to some degree. The piece that is decidedly different has to do with blessing, which in community and in sports, music and theatre is often only conferred upon the highest achievers. Besides the church, Special Olympics may be the one place where every participant’s worthiness is acknowledged and celebrated.
The four elements at the heart of the Milestones Ministry template are not new, nor are they foreign. Used in the context of congregational life, they enable the generations to rejoice together and to claim God’s unconditional promises.

The Four Keys

In her article, Staats refers to David Anderson and Paul Hill’s book *Frogs Without Legs Can’t Hear: Nurturing Disciples in Home and Congregation.* In it Anderson and Hill introduce what they call the Four Keys – “formative daily faith practices.”29 These keys undergird every milestone in church and home. They are simple, practical and foundational; they form the base upon which Milestones Ministry has been built.

The Four Keys are Caring Conversations, Devotions, Service, and Rituals and Traditions.30 These keys give vitality to the ministry of the congregation. They give it the ‘legs’ named in Anderson and Hill’s unusual book title. The Four Keys are meant to become habits of the heart. They enable individuals, homes and churches to be nurtured, strengthened, challenged and delighted by the Christian faith.

Each equipping event for each milestone is meant to be an opportunity to practice these Four Keys, so that both a model and a resource are offered for families to take home. In this way the Four Keys are meant to encourage creativity and imagination in developing other ways of celebrating faith at home and away from home.

The Apostle Paul wrote in Ephesians about his concern that the whole body “be knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working

30 Ibid.
properly, promotes the body’s growth in building itself up in love” (Ephesians 4:16, NRSV). The Four Keys provide ways for the church community to be “knit together” by the work of the Holy Spirit.31

Each one of the Four Keys deserves some description. Caring Conversations involve interactions where faith, values and care is shared, one on one. Such conversations indicate an interest in others. These conversations can happen as life-affirming parent-child conversations, which can look quite different based on the age and gender of a child.

Anderson and Hill advise, “Adults who care for youth and congregational leaders need to avoid the “one size fits all” approach to Caring Conversation as a part of nurturing the faith of children and youth”32 Schools and pediatricians have advised parents to look for ‘teachable moments’ in their home lives. According to Anderson and Hill, parents also can be encouraged to recognize ‘conversational moments’ as well. After dinner, during a car ride, before bed; these times when children or youth are emotionally available can happen when adults least expect it.

While being open to spontaneous opportunities for conversation has great value, planning time together is equally important. A mixture of planned and unplanned time is vital for Caring Conversations between generations. Anderson and Hill suggest using FaithTalk cards (available through Milestones Ministry), writing personal notes, using email and having family meetings as strategies for having Caring Conversations in family life.33

32 David W. Anderson and Paul Hill, 122.
33 Ibid., 130-132.
A second key is *Devotions*, which emphasizes the church’s responsibility to “model, teach and encourage a worship life for the home.” Many people in mainline churches are inexperienced in the overt practice of a spiritual life within the home. Thus this key, encouraging spirituality grounded in a Christian devotional life, may seem the most foreign of the four keys to church members. Prayers at mealtimes and bed times and bible reading nurture attitudes, goals and behaviors. While Anderson and Hill offer no particular cookbook approach to Devotions, resources can be suggested to families, with simple table graces being a potentially non-threatening place to start.

*Service* is a third key. Through Service individuals and families put their faith in action. Service undertaken together creates stories, which enhance relationships, thus weaving a stronger web of community among the participants. As Anderson and Hill say, “Children and youth learn the faith by watching the adults they respect live the faith.” As a day to day lifestyle, a life of Service involves the generations in the faith. Whether volunteering in a shelter or food pantry, or doing chores as a family together at home, or participating in a mission trip, the reason for doing the Service must be made known. In other words, leaders cannot make the assumption that the relationship between serving Jesus by serving others is understood implicitly by participants without making it overt.

The fourth key is *Rituals and Traditions*; those patterns of behavior that give meaning to life through their regular occurrences. Routines, rituals, signs, symbols and traditions “communicate meaning, values, and relationships that exist between people and

---

34 David W. Anderson and Paul Hill, *Frogs Without Legs Can’t Hear: Nurturing Disciples in Home and Congregation*, 133.
35 Ibid., 152.
with God (including God’s created universe). In the Christian tradition table graces, bedtime prayers, weekly worship, Sabbath rest and celebrations for baptisms or confirmation or weddings are all examples of family and congregational rituals and traditions that convey deep meaning and communicate the good news of Jesus.

Together these Four Keys become powerful vehicles to translate experiences from Sunday morning into the home environment during the week. They provide a vehicle through which historic Christian theology and the traditions of the church and/or a particular denomination become linked in conscious ways with the personal spirituality of people of all ages. The Four Keys encourage faith through trusting relationships and give it legs on which to stand and grow

The Five Principles

In addition to the Four Keys, David Anderson and Paul Hill have also offered Five Principles for living and passing on faith through the generations. These principles undergird Milestones Ministry with the methodological principle and pedagogical approach of relationship and story. They are meant to offer foundations for understanding how the community of care and meaning impacts individual lives and the larger world. Having already explored the church – home connection above, these principles may seem somewhat self-evident. However, listing them is worthwhile in that

---

37 Ibid., 107.
38 Ibid., 11.
39 Ibid., 112.
40 Ibid., 98.
they illustrate other authors’ work in exploring the significance of the relationship between church and home.

The Five Principles are as follows:

1. **Faith is formed by the power of the Holy Spirit through personal trusted relationships – often in our own homes.** The emphasis in this principle is on extending welcome and kindness – hospitality – to others.

2. **The church is a living partnership between the ministry of the congregation and the ministry of the home.** Here the emphasis is on the importance of empowering adults in ministry with their children and youth.

3. **Where Christ is present in faith, the home is church, too.** This principle challenges the understanding of church as a professional, programmatic institution and suggests that instead the church lives and moves as people do.

4. **Faith is caught more than it is taught.** This theme, made popular by author and teacher John Westerhoff, is not meant to attack formal learning, but rather is meant to emphasize the way in which much learning is experiential.41

5. **If we want Christian children and youth, we need Christian adults.** Whether they are parents or not, all Christian adults teach faith, values and character formation to children and youth and young adults.42 This final principle emphasizes that the act of transmitting faith to the next generation is dependent upon the adult faith formation that takes place in the home, the extended family and the congregation.

---

42 Ibid., 83.
These Five Principles affirm the importance of the home in faith formation and the church-home connection. Together they highlight the distinction between going to church and being the church.
PART II

MILESTONES MINISTRY AT BROAD STREET PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
Chapter 4

The Need to Strengthen the Church-Home Connection

The Broad Street Presbyterian Church, which is part of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), is a progressive metropolitan congregation located at the corner of Broad and Garfield on the Near East Side of downtown Columbus, Ohio. The church has a membership of approximately 1000 people and draws approximately 350 people to worship on a weekly basis from over thirty surrounding zip-code areas throughout central Ohio. At this writing three full time pastors make up the church’s clergy staff. The author of this study is one of those pastors.

Broad Street Presbyterian Church pastors and ordained leadership (ruling elders) feel called to strengthen the connection between church and home. Pastors are aware of the degree to which many parents turn over their role in the faith formation of their children and youth to the perceived professional experts – the clergy. But pastors at this downtown church have, at best, only one hour a week with the children and youth!

Additionally, parents themselves may have had little or no experience of a Christian path themselves. Milestones Ministry is a vehicle that can address both of these felt needs – empowering parents to take ownership of their role in faith formation and in deepening their own faith development.

Discussion among pastors at the Broad Street Presbyterian Church surfaced a skill set that is noticeably absent among many adult church members; the ability of parents to speak about their faith with their children. Their hesitancy may be due to any number of factors; being out of practice in speaking about faith themselves, perceiving that a
discussion of faith depends on a more advanced knowledge of the bible then they have, or having significant unresolved faith questions, so that when an opportunity to mention God or faith arises it is either uncomfortable or unexplored. Some parents are new to Christianity and find the bible an intimidating book. Other parents of young children who do attend come only for the worship hour, so they miss out on educational opportunities for themselves as well.

At Broad Street Presbyterian Church, leadership intentionally is responding to the call to pass on the Christian faith. In this and the following chapters, the term “leadership” is broadly used to refer to decision makers in the life of the church, such as ruling elders on Session (the church’s governing body) and pastors.

Leadership is gradually realizing that Sunday school, in itself, has had limited success during the last few decades in passing on faith. Likewise, in this congregation as in so many others, confirmation has often been more of a graduation from church than a deepening of a youth’s commitment to practice faith within a particular church. Something has been missing in the church’s well intentioned efforts.
Chapter 5
Use of the Milestones Strategy

Leadership at Broad Street Presbyterian Church thinks that ‘something’ is available through the Milestones Ministry lifelong faith formation approach. This approach, which has at its core both vital church-home partnerships and intentional inter-generational relationships, creates time and space for the home and community to form disciples.

Cited above, Linda Staats’ article written in the spring of 2008 for the *Lifelong Faith Journal*, entitled “Passing on Faith – Milestone to Milestone,” was an inspiring, formative and directive piece for Broad Street Presbyterian Church. In it she states that “Passing on the Christian faith from generation to generation is at the heart of the life and work of the church.”\(^1\)

Leadership found this article to be a refreshing call to reinvigorate what is already being done, as well as an invitation to approach some potential new milestones creatively.

Therefore Broad Street Presbyterian Church has chosen to utilize the Milestones Ministry approach as a guide in lifelong faith formation - this work of shaping faith among the generations. Leadership recognizes that turning points and rites of passage are memorable moments in every Christian’s faith journey.

This approach frees leadership to come alongside milestones in life as experiences that offer opportunities to celebrate God’s presence and be reminded of our identities as children of God.

---

In the exploration of Milestones Ministry leadership continues to make good use of the *Milestones Ministry Manual for Home and Congregation*, which offers a prototype script for each individual Milestone. Each Milestone team has worked to adapt the script to the church’s own context and situation.

Milestones encourage us to bring God’s presence into the home and connect rituals of daily life with the life of the congregation. In subtle and gentle, yet persistent ways, involvement is asked of parents, which simultaneously engages them in their own faith formation even as it involves them with their children. As the congregation grows into this approach the desired effect will be to tend the baptismal journey through all ages and stages. Additionally, it is leadership’s hope that parents and other caregiving adults will come to perceive themselves as ‘essential partners’ in this journey of passing on Christian faith from generation to generation.²

As part of the church’s embrace of this approach, this pastor uses the *Lifelong Faith Journal* through Vibrant Faith Ministries, formerly known as The Youth & Family Institute, in Minnesota. This journal, available at no cost online, contains a mixture of scholarly materials and substantive articles which provide practical strategies and program models for faith formation across the whole lifespan.

Milestones Ministry is an appropriate strategy at Broad Street Presbyterian Church for several reasons. One is illustrated in this quote from David Anderson, “the little secret of Milestones Ministry is that even when it is a child’s milestone, the focus is truly more on the adults in the lives of those children.”³ Milestones Ministry recognizes

---

² Staats, 3.
that it is the adults in the children’s lives – and not a short term educational event in the congregation – that have the long-term impact on children’s faith formation.

The guidance Linda Staats offers in her article has become the church’s own: (1) leadership took an inventory of Milestones already celebrated in church life, (2) leadership chose an existing Milestone to enrich, and (3) leadership decided to add one new Milestone each year to the church calendar.

The Milestone Team’s three year story, describing the church’s discovery of and decision to embrace Milestone Ministry and to own it, giving each Milestone the church’s distinctive mark and interpretation, is below. The church’s particular personality is seen in the structure of each Milestone and the shape given to the four different elements of the template; Naming, Equipping, Blessing and Gifting.

After just over three years of following the Milestones approach, leadership is pleased to have met most of these goals. To date, six Milestones are celebrated on at least a yearly basis at Broad Street Presbyterian Church:

1. Baptism Milestone
2. Baptismal Anniversary Milestone
3. Bible Milestone
4. Confirmation Milestone
5. High School Graduation Milestone
6. 90+ Milestone

Milestones Ministry is more than a curriculum or program. It is a whole approach to nurturing homes as centers for faith formation. Every ending and beginning, every
transition, “is an opportunity to claim God’s redemptive and renewing work in the world” and in the lives of each child, youth, young adult and adult.4

Embracing Milestones Ministry: A Church’s Three Year Story

In March, 2010, the newly formed Grow Council of the Broad Street Presbyterian Church convened for the first time. A restructuring of the church’s governance model had led to the creation of the Grow Council, whose initial task was to coordinate and encourage spiritual growth, pursue evangelism and to foster dynamic educational ministry.

At the first meeting much conversation occurred about how to address those tasks. The pastor knew of a congregation in another denomination with an energetic children’s program. The Council decided to follow up, interviewed the staff person and discovered that they used the Faith Inkubators program, designed by Rich Melheim.

Investigation led the group to move away from the perceived ‘cookie cutter’ nature of Faith Inkubators, to discover Vibrant Faith Ministry, which seemed more easily adaptable in particular congregations.

Presbyterians are not known for moving quickly. By July the Grow Council was ready to order the Milestones Ministry Manual. A Milestones Team was created, with two church members and an associate pastor. It was decided that the first ‘reinvented’ milestone would be the Third Grade Bible Milestone. The initial intention was that a different Milestones team would be created for each individual milestone so as not to burn out any one team.

4 Staats, 8.
The Bible Milestone Team met and reworked existing curriculum in preparation for the Bible Milestone in October. The lessons were streamlined into three weeks about the Old Testament, the New Testament Gospels and the Epistles. Together with their parents, seventeen children attended the equipping sessions and received bibles, enjoying the new format.

By January, 2011, the existing Milestones Team decided to create a new milestone – the Baptismal Anniversary Milestone. They also decided to focus on baptism. They discussed how to deepen an existing sacrament. In March they sought an appropriate gift to be given at each upcoming baptism.

In April they thoroughly evaluated the way those turning age 90 would be celebrated in August. They decided to add an interview and to share highlights of the person’s life with the congregation as a way of honoring the person and equipping the congregation with the gift of his or her story. In this way people of all ages would be invited to see beyond wrinkles and disability to the fullness of the person inside. The Parish Nurses agreed to coordinate the logistics of the celebration.

In May the Milestones Team worked on the existing high school graduation celebration. They moved it to Mother’s Day, added parents standing up with their youth, and offered a congregational blessing. The changes yielded positive results but youth and parents were disappointed with the gift. It was determined that a new gift would be sought for the following year. Grow Council noticed that only two of the graduates had been active at church since confirmation, an illustration of a sad national trend.
The Milestones Team tackled the logistics of the Confirmation Milestone and made decisions regarding age of youth (8th graders), length of class for parents (two weeks), model for teaching (retreat based).

In May the team also started implementing the newly reworked Baptism Milestone. The new plan involved ministers meeting with the family in their home ahead of time. Additionally, a gift book would be given during the baptism in church.

The Team looked ahead and selected the date for the first Baptismal Anniversary Milestone, on the Baptism of the Lord Sunday in January, 2012.

In November, 2011 the Team realized that while Milestones Ministry was understood as occurring with individual milestones, the overall concept was still vague to the congregation. More publicity was needed. Plans continued for the first Baptismal Anniversary Milestone in January, 2012. Fourteen families were invited to celebrate. Elders who participated in the baptisms were invited to participate in the equipping class before worship.

The first Baptismal Anniversary Milestone occurred on January 8, 2012. This first newly created Milestone received positive reviews from the congregation, participants and family members. The Team met in February and considered creating another milestone, but no decision was made.

In April the Confirmation Milestone consumed time and energy. One elder said, “Working as a mentor with these youth is the most meaningful thing I’ve done in church life.” Another said, “This is big!”
In May the High School Graduation Milestone occurred with new gifts for the graduates – brown fleece blankets with the embroidered church symbol and the words “BSPC – Go with God.”

In the fall of 2012 the reworked Bible Milestone occurred for second graders. Reviews were mixed as some children were weak readers and struggled to keep up. Other parents really liked the change. The Confirmation Milestone moved ahead with thirteen 8th grade youth involved in this retreat based model.

The second Baptismal Anniversary Milestone occurred on January 13, 2013, with six of the fifteen families participating. The Milestones Team was disappointed at a turnout less than fifty percent, but enthusiastic about the families who did attend. The Team noticed that families may think of their presence is a gift to the church, (i.e. something they are being asked to do as a favor to the church), rather than a gift to themselves and the community. This was evident in a comment from one family. The Team will discuss and clarify.

Even now the Team is pondering what new milestone is ahead. Consideration is leaning toward children leaving preschool and heading into kindergarten – perhaps a prayer and worship/singing milestone that recognizes the move to kindergarten and also teaches parents and their children about worship and song. The team will continue in its work.
Chapter 6

Current Milestones at Broad Street Presbyterian Church

The Baptism Milestone

The existing sacrament of Baptism has always represented a significant marking point in the spiritual lives of parents and their children. When looking at the sacrament as a Milestone, however, the team decided to enhance both the equipping and gifting aspects of what was already being done. The team asked the ministers to figure out among themselves a protocol for enhancing equipping. The ministers decided to make home visits before the baptism a high priority. At the very least the family would come to the church for a visit at the font. These visits have proved to be meaningful for all involved; they enable a conversation using religious language, they build relationships and they acquaint children (and re-acquaint parents) with the theology behind baptism.

Regarding gifting, the Milestones Team looked at a number of possible gifts and chose Sophie Piper’s *My Baptism Book*. This little book adapts itself well to children aged infant – 5th grade and offers a message about God’s enduring love and care. This book is presented as the final part of the baptismal liturgy.

The Baptismal Anniversary Milestone

The Baptismal Anniversary Milestone occurs on the second Sunday in January, on the day traditionally celebrated as the baptism of Jesus.

This Milestone brings together all those who have been baptized during the previous year, plus the elder who stood up with each family at the baptism. In 2012, for
instance, each newly baptized was either an infant or toddler. So on January 13, 2013, parents, some grandparents and their little ones gathered to meet one another. Photos were taken of each family grouping, with their respective elder standing beside them. An invitation for infants and toddlers to use the nursery/toddler area was given and some parents decided to use the childcare at church for the first time.

When all were settled the adults reconvened in small groups. Facilitated by elders, the group then talked about their experiences of their own baptism (if they had been baptized) and also shared what their particular child’s baptism meant to them. This conversation was rich and full and offered support. Toward the conclusion of this small group time packets was distributed which contained resources to encourage faith practices at home, in an effort to continue strengthening the connection between church and home. As class ended instructions were given about the worship service to follow. Families retrieved their children and gathered at the back of the sanctuary. These family groupings then processed into worship, as described in the introduction, and then stood up front for blessing: “With a splash of water and a promise we have been called children of God,” and the gifting of a baptismal candle.

The Milestones Ministry Team has thought through each of these details carefully, and yet every year necessitates changes in order better to adapt to peoples’ needs. For instance, feedback has been received that a two hour block of time on Sunday morning is too much for parents with infants and young children. So next year the plan may vary to start with worship and have class – during a lunch – afterwards, based on the assumption that all need to eat.
Following this Milestone, families were contacted via email and asked what worked and what did not in the experience. Those responses have been received and noted. Those parents who were effusive with praise were asked if they would allow their comments to be quoted in next year’s advertising for the Baptismal Anniversary Milestone.

The Bible Milestone

The Bible Milestone at Broad Street Presbyterian Church is for children in second grade and their parents. During October they are invited into a three week equipping process. In this class two parents, who happen to have young children themselves, teach children about the contents of the bible and also about the importance of the church’s book in their lives as Christians. Clearly, this message is for the parents in the room as well. Throughout this class learning happens at two different levels, one for parents and one for children.

Additionally, the families build relationships with one another. Parents who may not have spoken to one another before are interacting with one another and their children, building community. Also, the language of faith is spoken in and with the class, with the intention that some of this will go home. An older adult comes as a special guest in each class, sharing a faith experience in relationship to his or her own appreciation for and use of the bible through the years. Having three generations engaged in this Milestone models lifelong learning. Finally, the blessing and gifting that occurs in worship introduces these families to the rest of the congregation. Afterwards, the congregation is invited to celebrate with them.
It is the church’s custom to present the bibles during the first week, so that these new books can be opened and used during the final two weeks of class.

As noted above, the gift for this Milestone is the hardcopy children’s New Revised Standard version of the bible.

The Confirmation Milestone

Confirmation is the longest, most time intensive Milestone of all six, extending from September to April, with eight classes running January through April. It is also full of spoken and unspoken expectations for youth, their parents and the congregation. Gathering information from a variety of sources, Broad Street’s Youth Team continues to adapt this Milestone to incorporate the latest understandings of Christian Formation. For instance, the Milestone team is using a retreat based model.

Youth in Confirmation are asked to read the Gospel of Mark and answer questions about it. They are asked to attend worship twenty times during the season of Confirmation, and to fill out at least ten worship/sermon outlines, during which they interact with the content of worship presented through music, scripture, sermon, prayers, etc. They are also asked to memorize the Lord’s Prayer, the Apostle’s Creed and Galatians 5:22-23: “…the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.” Additionally, each youth is also assigned a Session member as his or her mentor.
The youth in Confirmation attend two one day retreats in the fall plus a larger weekend Presbytery retreat (regional Presbyterian Churches combine for a group of 160+).

The reality that only around twenty five percent of those confirmed actually continue to show up in church life after the Confirmation Milestone challenges leadership. The Team hopes that by deepening relationships and experiencing God enough of a bridge will be built to continue engaging these young people.

Milestones Ministry is a template for the whole process of Confirmation. Outreach and hospitality are overarching themes as teachers welcome some teens who are new to church life. Additionally, follow-up is a critical step, as is checking in to learn how participants respond to events. Focusing on essentials and releasing the stress of the rest, particularly in the face of high expectations of parents - for both academic knowledge and faith deepening - are worthy goals for leadership. Parents attend two Parent Meetings specifically designed for them so that they, in turn, through their relationships, modeling and teaching, might touch the minds and hearts of their youth.\(^5\)

The gift for this Milestone in April, 2013 was *The Presbyterian Handbook*, a combination of “reliable, historical, and theological information alongside some fun facts and very practical tips on being a churchgoing follower of Jesus Christ, all presented in that oh-so-Presbyterian, down-to-earth, tongue-in-cheek sort of way.”\(^6\)

---


The High School Graduation Milestone

The High School Graduation Milestone is the least demanding of the milestones. On Mother’s Day, in May of every year, all that is asked of the new high school graduates is to show up! There is always a sense of poignancy for both pastors and congregation in seeing a young person whose last visit to church may have been four years ago on Confirmation day. This reality motivates leadership to want to work the milestone process more fully.

Prior to the day of this Milestone, however, there is much behind the scenes communicating with families in trying to write up a description of each high school senior for the church bulletin. A goal is to capture their interests and also share their intentions after graduation. Many among the last several years of graduates have been academic and athletic standouts – to the point that an ‘average youth’ might feel intimidated by the strength of some of these peers, let alone a youth who, for whatever reason, is taking a different path than college.

The gift for this Milestone is a brown fleece blanket with the church logo and “Go with God” embroidered on it.
The 90+ Milestone

During the 90+ Milestone, the people who turned age 90 during the year are honored in worship and at a reception following. In worship a short synopsis of the person’s life is shared. Church members have expressed their thanks for sharing these stories while the person is still alive. In this Milestone, the benefit for the person being honored is a deeper sense of being known and valued in community. The benefit for the congregation is their sense of marvel at and gratitude for these unique and long lived church members, whose legacy of faith strengthens their own. Care and concern for one another within the congregation increases as well.

The gift for this Milestone is an angel figurine.
PART III

THE RESEARCH PROJECT
Chapter 7

The Objectives

The desired objectives of this research project were to reflect upon and better understand Milestones Ministry from the perspective of church members’ experience as individuals and families, to propose a strategy for Milestones Ministry at Broad Street Presbyterian Church for the next five years, and to gain a deeper theological understanding of the purpose and potential of Milestones Ministry in the church.

Research Methodology

This research was accomplished through a series of interviews held with families and individuals who had participated in one of the six existing milestones at Broad Street Presbyterian Church since its inception in 2010 – 2012.

Using www.random.org, a staff person chose two family groupings to represent each of the six Milestones. She numbered all the participants in each milestone over the last three years, and then randomly chose numbers, which then identified the names. This process was quick and yielded a truly random sampling of two individuals/families for each milestone, a total of twelve families.

Each family unit received an email invitation to participate in the thesis research. All twelve family units were willing. However, one was heading out of town, so a replacement was randomly generated, again using www.random.org. Finding time over
the Christmas holidays became the next challenge. Between December 11, 2012 and January 3, 2013, all twelve interviews occurred, averaging nearly an hour each.

Nine families preferred to meet in their homes. Two preferred to meet at Starbucks and one preferred meeting at church after worship. Up to one hour was spent in conversation. Each family was asked to sign the sheet approved for signature by the Human Research Review Panel (see Appendix B, page 110 for direction to use such a document and page 111 for the document itself). Those interviewed were told how what they shared would be used. For instance, no recordings of the interviews occurred, but the researcher did take notes on the conversation. It was agreed that they could be quoted, but that no name would be linked to that quote. If a personalized quotation was desired later, permission would be sought.

Nine out of twelve families had least two generations present for their interviews. One young adult preferred to meet alone. Another’s spouse was working long hours over the holidays. One had a spouse who was not a member of the church. In other words, each had a reason for why the meeting did not include another family member.

Research occurred in the church in which the writer currently is serving as an associate pastor. Corrine Glesne, author of *Becoming Qualitative Researchers: An Introduction*, offered advice and counsel regarding this decision. Glesne is understandably generally hesitant to bless “backyard studies,” as she calls them.¹ She urges one to be fully aware of the possible problems generated by one’s involvement in and commitment to one’s familiar territory. Possible role confusion is the biggest

---

potential drawback. “When you add on the researcher role, both you and those around you may experience confusion at times over which role you are or should be playing.”

To this end, a fitting – and somewhat humorous - response was to wear a Trinity Lutheran Seminary t-shirt to the interviews. This seemed to work, both by generating a chuckle and also by making the point that the researcher had a different role in this situation.

Glesne’s more substantive caution involves the risk that a series of interviews could uncover “dangerous knowledge” or information that is politically risky to hold. In a church setting this did not seem to be an immediate threat. Furthermore, Glesne acknowledges that certain kinds of backyard research do work. She says the situation is different in ‘teacher research’, where, typically, a teacher studies his or her own classroom with the purpose of improving schooling experiences for students. This kind of research removes the confusion over role as, in this case, the role was agreed upon by colleagues and leadership as an important role for the congregation.

This research was undertaken with the purpose of improving experiences for children and families in both educational and worship settings as shaped by Milestones Ministry. In this case, the backyard setting may actually have been preferable.

This author, conscious of potential pitfalls, entered into these conversations with a heightened awareness of potential difficulties and/or confusion.

Data analysis was made through vigorous exploration of the collected data, including identifying both common and divergent themes and working toward well substantiated conclusions and strategies.

---

2 Corine Glesne, *Becoming Qualitative Researchers: An Introduction*, 41.
3 Ibid., 42.
4 Ibid., 43.
Another outcome of this research involves sharing conclusions and strategies with the larger church. Perhaps this may mean speaking at a presbytery meeting or with smaller groups of clergy and other people working to bridge the church-home gap. Additionally, this may involve writing an article for a church publication such as *Congregations* or offering to present a workshop on Milestones Ministry at a national gathering such as The Association of Presbyterian Church Educators.

Potential Limitations of the Study

When discussing methodology, it is important to acknowledge the potential limitations of this study. First, it remains an open question as to what degree peoples’ responses may have been shaped by the writer being in a pastoral role in her own ‘backyard’. However, families’ willingness to accommodate interviews over the holidays may have only been possible because of the existing pastoral relationship.

Some may consider the sample size of twelve families to be a limiting factor. However, in the field of qualitative research that size of sample is not unusual.\(^5\) Additionally, the actual number of people interviewed in family groupings was thirty, which is a sizeable number.

Likewise, some may find fault with having used just a single site. However, the research question itself is focused upon that single site, so it is more than appropriate. Overall, quite a diversity of age ranges and relationships was noted and achieved. There is a sense in which any perceived limitations of the study, when weighed with its apparent strengths, may balance themselves. For the purposes of enhancing ministry at

\(^5\) Corrine Glesne, 46.
Broad Street Presbyterian Church, the results received were both compelling and revealing.

The Interview Script

The following script was used for interviews with all twelve family groupings. The script clarified the researcher’s role, established consent, and presented questions.

You know me as a pastor at Broad Street Presbyterian Church. But today I am wearing another hat. I am meeting with you in my role as a student at Trinity Lutheran Seminary. I am working on a degree there, and am focusing on our mutual experience of Milestones Ministry as the topic for my thesis. The actual working title is “The Future of Milestones Ministry at BSPC.”

So today I want to talk with you about your experience of Milestones Ministry. I will not be recording our conversation, but I will be taking notes. If I do use your responses in my thesis, I won’t identify you; I will protect your privacy. I would now ask you to sign a written consent form, the one I emailed you earlier, which is a permission slip required by Trinity Lutheran Seminary. (Share form and collect signatures.)

So back to Milestones Ministry: as of now we celebrate six Milestones each year: Baptism, the Baptismal Anniversary Milestone, the Bible Milestone, the Confirmation Milestone, the High School Graduation Milestone and the 90+ Milestone.

One of the purposes of Milestones Ministry is to strengthen the connection between church and home.
One thing I’m wondering about is how well we’ve been doing in helping the congregation be aware of Milestones Ministry and that particular purpose. Getting the word out is our work. So I’m wondering what Milestones Ministry means to you.

1. On a scale of 1-10, how aware are you of the concept of Milestone’s Ministry?
2. If you are aware of Milestones Ministry, what impression do you have of it?

Let’s talk about the experience you and your family had with the **name** Milestone on **date**.

3. Which members of your family participated in, and/or witnessed this Milestone?
4. For you, what was the most meaningful part of this Milestone experience?
5. What could have made the Milestone experience more meaningful?
6. It is challenging to live as God’s people in the world and to raise our children with the self-identity as Christians. How do you think Milestones Ministry may have supported your family’s faith journey in connecting church and home?
7. We’re thinking there are other Milestones to add in church life. As you think of your family and your own life, what other life experiences would it be helpful to have marked by Milestones Ministry?

8. A measuring question: Now that we’ve talked about your specific experience, we’re wondering about congregational perception of the kind of job we’re doing. Do you think, in our congregation, that there is high awareness, medium awareness or low awareness of Milestones Ministry?

9. A question for those in the 90+ category only: Given your experiences in life, what do we need to consider when it comes to Milestones Ministry?

10. As we end this interview, do you have any other comments you would like to make?
The collected data was organized in the following ways. In order to maintain confidentiality, families were assigned a letter and a number. The letter corresponds to their particular milestone:

- A = Baptism
- B = Baptismal Anniversary Milestone
- C = Bible Milestone
- D = Confirmation Milestone
- E = High School Graduation Milestone
- F = 90+ Milestone

Their number was either a 1 or 2, as there were two family groupings representing each milestone. In addition, within families, each member of the family was assigned a number, with the child whose milestone it was receiving the number 1 and the other family being numbered as well.

The size of the family groupings ranged from one person (three adults and one 19 year old respondent), to six people. Listed below are the numbers of those present for the interviews.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of people interviewed</th>
<th>Number of family groupings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One person interviewed</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two people interviewed</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three people interviewed</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Four people interviewed 2
Six people interviewed 1

It should also be noted that three groups had within it at least two generations, with two groups having three generations present.

During the interviews the researcher asked questions from a script (immediately preceding this section) and jotted down notes as people spoke. Each interview was conducted according to the script. Following the interviews, the handwritten notes were added to the computer file and then put into a larger spread sheet compiling all the data.

Overall, ten questions were posed:

1. Awareness of Milestones Ministry.
2. Impression of Milestones Ministry.
3. Family Involvement: Who among the family grouping witnessed and/or participated in Milestones Ministry –
4. The most meaningful part of Milestones Ministry.
5. What would make for more meaning?
6. How Milestones Ministry supports the family faith journey in connecting church and home.
7. What other milestones might be celebrated?
8. Perceived level of congregational awareness of Milestones Ministry.
9. Special question for 90+: What needs to be considered to strengthen Milestones Ministry?
10. Other comments.

These ten questions guide the presentation of data that follows.
The First Question: Awareness

The first question had to do with the Awareness of Milestones Ministry. The question was asked in this way: “On a scale of 1-10, how aware are you of the concept of Milestones Ministry?” Responses covered the waterfront, from 0-10. Interestingly, families involved in the Baptism, Baptismal Anniversary Milestone and Bible Milestone all claimed a high awareness of Milestones Ministry (one 4 and the rest 6-10). By way of contrast, those families involved in the Confirmation Milestone claimed to know the least about Milestones Ministry (one 0, three 1’s, three 2’s, two 3’s and one 4). This seemed ironic because the Confirmation Milestone is the most lengthy and involved Milestone, stretching over a period of nine months! The families in the High School Graduation Milestone responded in the mid-to higher range (two 5’s, two 6’s and one 7). This Milestone requests the least involvement; families are simply asked to show up to worship on Mother’s Day, during what is generally a very busy time with many graduation related activities in the community. Finally, the responses of those in the 90+ category averaged a 6, but were a widely divergent 2 and 10, respectively.

These findings lead to some initial thoughts. For instance, the Confirmation families sometimes come specifically for Confirmation and frequently have not been involved much in church life prior to this experience. Perhaps the families of the younger children actually are attending or at least paying attention when they are in worship. The diversity among the 90+ responders may signify personal uniqueness among those two regular attenders, as much as anything else.
Digging deeper, one respondent’s comment helps unpack these diverse opinions. One father said, “We knew about this Milestone (that we were involved in) but we didn’t know it was a coordinated program” (D-1-4). This perspective is echoed and unpacked in responses to question 8, below on page 69, regarding their perception of the level of congregational awareness of Milestones Ministry. Another adult, a mother, acknowledged that the Baptismal Anniversary Milestone was new to her (C-2-3). So while the phrase Milestones Ministry may be recognized to some degree, the awareness that it is like an overarching umbrella under which there are six specific milestones is not well understood.

The Second Question: Impression

The second question posed was this, “If you are aware of Milestones Ministry, what impression do you have of it?” Responses varied through the age groups. The parents of the youngest babies, who experienced the Baptism Milestone, were quite enthusiastic. Their comments ranged from “our child’s baptism was a positive fun celebration that we looked forward to,” (A-2-1) to “It is a pathway to introduce our children to the church” (A-2-2). Likewise, others found meaning in having the minister walk the baby down the aisle, appreciated receiving a gift book, and liked having an elder assigned to their family (A-1-1).

Those who participated in the Baptismal Anniversary Milestone commented how important it was for their children to grow up to look forward to the other milestones ahead (B-1-1). Another said that “Milestones serve the community; they evoke nostalgia,
sentimentality and recognition of ritual; different things in different phases of life” (B-1-2). Still another acknowledged thinking at first that “Milestones were a little hokey, but I appreciate the reminders” (B-1-3). One praised the intergenerational nature of milestones, saying that “Milestones seem to be more about connecting with others in the congregation than with the home” (B-1-4).

Another family noted how the Baptismal Anniversary Milestone was “an important benchmark for our spiritual life” (B-2-1). “Just like little kids have developmental check-ups, these seem to be spiritual check-ups” (B-2-2).

The children who experienced the Bible Milestone in the second or third grade offered their impressions, “A milestone is like a new chapter. You step up to a new level” (C-1-1). Another child who received a bible said “It reminds me of a timeline in first grade and also of a real stone” (C-2-1). Yet another child said, “This reminds me of a milestone project at school. Milestones are important parts of our lives” (C-2-2). One parent commented that the experience of the milestone was “connecting, warm and meaningful” (C-1-2). Another parent agreed but took issue with the title Milestones Ministry, saying “the use of the word ‘ministry’ sounds like preaching” (C-2-3).

Those who experienced the Confirmation Milestone did not have much of an impression to share. One associated the word milestones with weddings and anniversaries (D-1-3). Another saw it as growth and development (D-2-1), another as a rite of passage (D-2-2), another as a process of joining (D-2-3).

When asked about their impressions of Milestone Ministry, those who experienced the High School Graduation Milestone did not have much to add. It is an “accomplishment” (E-1-1), and a ‘nice tradition’ (E-2-3). One mentioned that family
expectations to participate in this Milestone might be a barrier to some. This concern will be more fully addressed later on page 77.

The 90+ responders again shared a diversity of responses to the question asking for their impression of Milestones Ministry. One said “It made me feel old” (F-1-1). Another said “I was gratified at the recognition” (F-2-1).

The Third Question: Family Involvement

Family involvement in Milestones Ministry, either as participants or witnesses, was the third question posted to the participants. Typically, immediate family was present. Baptisms tended to draw the largest crowd, with multiple generations coming to witness the sacrament. Grandparents, nieces, nephews, in-laws, and significant others combined to create festive large groups. One family told the story of having grandparents there who were themselves celebrating a significant anniversary. A few weeks later, one of these elder spouses died. Because the baptism was the last time the entire family had been together that event has taken on a deeper meaning for all involved.

Because the Baptismal Anniversary Milestone is so new, families do not yet realize how meaningful it would be to invite grandparents to witness it. Going forward it will be important to emphasize the spiritual significance that grandparents and other family may find in witnessing this milestone. Generally, parents were present for this Milestone, although within this group one parent was paged and had to leave for work.

The Bible Milestone asked for parental involvement in a three week class following the presentation of the bibles in worship. Both parents of the children
interviewed did their best to attend these classes. In the case of one family, both parents were able to attend all classes. The other had unavoidable conflicts on two Sundays. The good news in this was that the child felt included by the families who did attend. On a different subject, one of the other children noted that it was “tough to be in front” of the church to receive the bible (C-2-2).

The Confirmation Milestone celebration begins with a breakfast with extended family, including siblings and grandparents, elder-mentors, other Session members (ruling elders of the church) and ministers. Both sets of families interviewed regarding Confirmation had grandparents present on that special morning. Historically, the Confirmation Milestone draws as many extended family units as baptism.

Like the Confirmation Milestone, the High School Graduation Milestone also drew a number of extended family. Given the time of year, families are going from celebratory event to celebratory event. Church leadership is glad that the church can have a role in those events, and hopes to hold up the uniqueness of each young person, in his or her own right.

Those involved in the 90+ celebration only had spouses present. While they told their adult children about the event, they live out of state and did not come. This seemed understood and accepted by each of those interviewed. This non-attendance is dealt with further on page 99.
The Fourth Question: The Most Meaningful Part

The researcher asked, “What was the most meaningful part of this Milestone experience?” Responses to this fourth question were personal and powerful. Those experiencing Baptism discussed the meaning of sharing the sacrament with both sides of the family. “For once it wasn’t a decision we had to talk about. It was so nice not to disagree with my spouse on this” (A-1-1). Having worked through challenging issues in the past, this Milestone was an opportunity to choose to do something together. Another family who experienced Baptism said, “This was a nice way to introduce our family to the church and to share the church with our multi-generational family” (A-2-1). A father said, “During the reception after church other church members offered to hold our baby – they got to see how our life is” (A-2-2). A mother said, “It was so moving when the pastor asked a special question to the children who were watching the baptism. I didn’t know those children then, but because I am teaching Sunday school I do now” (A-2-2). These comments illustrate how the Baptism Milestone integrates families into the community of the church, and how the congregation feels permission and encouragement to relate to the families of the newly baptized.

The Baptismal Anniversary Milestone provided reflective time for both parents and grandparents. One parent said, “You realize how far you’ve come with your child” (B-1-1). Another said, “I felt connected with the other families and it was nice that the elder was there, too” (B-1-2). One grandparent mentioned that “It helped me to review the whole year and to reminisce about the baptism” (B-1-4).
Another family was inspired by “Meeting other families and receiving guidance to celebrate our spiritual birthdays by lighting a baptismal candle” (B-2-1). Likewise, another parent said, “We didn’t know what to expect. We knew it was special because we were the first ones. We liked the Alpha and Omega candle” (B-2-2).

The children who experienced the Bible Milestone had much to say. One liked “getting a bible that was a real Bible, not a picture bible. I liked having my friends (names friends) there, too” (C-1-1). Others mentioned the sentiment that getting their own bibles was very special. Parents commented on the experience of doing this in community, “Sharing experiences with other families make us feel like part of an extended family. I enjoyed the teachers and the special visitors” (C-1-2). Another parent said, “The intergenerational aspect of the experience was important to me. Also having both parents present, to focus on one child at a time was a rare experience of parenting!” (C-2-3). Additionally, the discussions that arose at home, both between adults themselves as well as between children, were described as helpful (C-2-3).

Those who experienced the Confirmation Milestone also had thoughts to share. One newly confirmed youth said, “Confirmation helped me become more involved in church. I actually enjoy church (laughter). I moved from ‘I have to go to church’ to ‘I get to go to church’” (D-1-1). Another recently confirmed youth said “I liked becoming part of the church and becoming part of the community” (D-2-1).

Family members shared what was meaningful to them as well. One parent valued the multigenerational approach, particularly because a grandparent served in a special role with the confirmation youth. (D-2-5). Another valued the “discussions, shared feelings and thoughts about God. I loved watching (our youth’s) growing understanding
of religion and church” (D-1-3). One younger sibling said enthusiastically, “Before Confirmation we were Christmas and Easter Christians. Confirmation set me up for when I get confirmed. I am kind of looking forward to it!” (D-1-2). Some older siblings remembered their own experiences of Confirmation, from the writing of a faith statement to the presence of other youth from their school in the class (D-2-2&3). One parent appreciated having the whole family together for confirmation and the substantive conversations about world religions and politics that stemmed from it (D-1-4).

The High School Graduation Milestone functioned as an important rite of passage into adulthood for one new graduate, “I finally felt like an adult in church” (E-2-1). Parents tended to agree, and to appreciate the expressions of support and affection from others, “We received so much unconditional church love” (E-2-2). One graduate talked about the fleece blanket that was given as a gift to each graduate. It was brown, with the phrase “Go with God” embroidered on it, along with the church logo. This graduate said, “The blanket is so useful. I love it – right now it is on my bed in my dorm room!” (E-1-1). (Parenthetically, the fact that that blanket is on that undergraduate’s bed is cause for rejoicing – that is just what the church wants to do – go to college with the graduates!)

One participant in the 90+ age group said that the Milestone was meaningful, but that it was also a reminder of the aging process. Another person said the experience was gratifying and that it prompted a life review.

When I review my life I wish I’d done better. There’s a sense in which I am discontented with every aspect. I wish I’d been better than I was. Some days I would drive to work rehearsing my angry resignation speech… I do have things that I am proud of. But I wish I’d done better. I don’t actually know how I could have, but I wish it (F-2-1).
These two experienced the meaning question in personally evaluative ways – one regarding the length of one’s lifespan, and the other in terms of generalized regret. While having things to be proud of, this person also wishes much could be done over. These honest sentiments here and in other parts of the interview made the conversations with the 90+ individuals particularly meaningful.

The Fifth Question: What Would Make for More Meaning?

While a few respondents claimed the experience of their milestone was wonderful and they would not change a thing, a majority of people, both children, youth and adults, had suggestions as to how the experience of Milestones Ministry might be more meaningful.

One person who celebrated a Baptism wished more family could have been there (A-1-1). Regarding the Baptismal Anniversary Milestone, one said the burning baptismal candle was a dangerous distraction when families were standing up front holding their wiggly children (B-1-1). Another parent suggested that the church provide a base for the Baptismal candle, with room for a date, so that it could be displayed and the date actually remembered. That same parent asked for help in remembering the date of their children’s baptismal anniversary and wondered if church might email reminders a week or so ahead of time (B-2-2).

When asked how Milestones Ministry might be made more meaningful, the children responded in intriguing ways. One child who had received a bible shifted the conversation away from self to talk about the 90+ Milestone. “I wish the 90+ people got
to come forward and receive a gift. I wish you let them tell their story themselves” (C-1-1). (The current practice is that a minister interviews them and shares a brief synopsis of the person’s life with the congregation on a Sunday morning.) This young person very much wanted to hear from the 90+ people directly, and to make sure that they received a gift. (They do, in fact receive a gift, but that gift is presented quietly during the reception time after worship.) The child who brought this up clearly feels part of what goes on in church; that this is ‘my church’ and that one’s voice can make a difference.

Another child expressed a wish, “I wish both the minister and my grandparents would have presented the bible to me, together” (C-2-2). This wish again expresses a sense of ownership – this is my church – and also a great sense of respect for and inclusion of grandparents. The generational piece is strong here.

Parents of those receiving their bibles commented that inviting grandparents would have made the experience more meaningful (C-1-2). Another parent suggested presenting the bibles at a different time, not on the first Sunday of class, but on the last Sunday of the completed class, to emphasize the experience of ‘earning’ the bible (C-2-3). This parent’s point is well taken. However, such a rationale is not one with which leadership agrees. The last thing the church wants is for children to get the idea that they earn their bibles, any more than they earn the love and grace of God.

As youth move into their teens more opportunities vie for their time. In the responses received about both the Confirmation and High School Graduation Milestones the busy lives of families were expressed as issues. Confirmation youth regretted missing class to keep up with sports commitments (D-1-1, D-2-4 & 5). Ironically, their families also asked for more service opportunities to work both with their own family and others
(D-1-2 & 3, D-2-3 & 6). Theoretically the desire is there, but the practical move to the calendar makes such involvement less likely. Even so, the desire is to be celebrated. This raises a question, to be explored later: what enables some busy families to get and stay involved in service and education, and not others?

Finally, one parent of a confirmation youth wished that the youth had more understanding of how the church works (D-1-4).

The young adults celebrated during the High School Graduation Milestone made some simple yet concrete suggestions – put pictures taken on that Mother’s Day on the flat screen T.V. in the church narthex. Pair a photo of the graduates with a photo taken from their Confirmation day. All involved felt the days were too hectic to add any more planning to the existing Graduation Milestone.

Those involved in the 90+ Milestone spoke poignantly about their experience. “I felt connected to those in my 90+ group. But now two of the four are gone” (F-1-1). This sense of loss is both real and inevitable. How can the church provide meaningful support in the midst of it?

The Sixth Question: Connecting Church and Home

The sixth question invites participants to share how Milestones Ministry might support their family faith journey in connecting church and home. The question evoked a number of responses peppered with personal stories. One parent of a newly baptized baby said,

I felt supported by going through the process (of Baptism), and look forward to telling my child why I did it. It is a hard struggle to get to church with a new
baby, especially when my spouse stays at home. When I get there it is hard to justify putting my baby in childcare, because my baby is in childcare all week! (A-1-1).

Another parent said the Baptism “strengthened my faith by being an active member. It carries over, not just Sunday, but every day. It helps guide us” (A-2-1). Another parent added, “The Baptism helps ground parents” (A-2-2).

Parents who participated in the Baptismal Anniversary Milestone had much to say about how the Milestone supported their experience of the church and home connection. One father said, “This Milestone was a good, touching moment a year later. It provided a gut check. The refocus was helpful” (B-1-2). A grandparent added, “Without the milestone the baptism is in the past” (B-1-3). That provocative comment challenges leadership and all who have been baptized to consider how to enable everyone’s baptism to feel both current and relevant.

Another family talked about sharing the experience of the Baptismal Anniversary Milestone with family who live out of state. They noted that the trick was to remember to celebrate the annual baptismal anniversary. They said, “We need a little notice – an email a week ahead of time would help. This crowded craziness is our life” (B-2-2). Except for those who are 90+, each participant commented at some time on the over full schedules and busy lives they lead. One family expressed appreciation for the church’s steadiness in the midst of the turmoil, “The church provides positive influences touching the lives of our family” (B-2-2).

Parents of those who participated in the Bible Milestone had some suggestions as well. One commented that “Whenever we bring anything home it helps. It would have been nice to receive a guiding email once a week for the first month after receiving the
new bible” (C-1-2). Another parent added that the Milestone “helped us make decisions and has pushed us to make conscious decisions about church” (C-2-3). One child who received a bible said, “I connected church and home through my reading of my bible at home” (C-2-2).

The two families representing the Confirmation Milestone had somewhat contrasting views on how that Milestone may have supported the connection between church and home. One family felt that the Milestone started conversations at home and was instrumental in creating other lessons in their home, for example a helpful conversation about some relatives who have different religious viewpoints (D-1-1 & 2 & 3). In the other family the youth who went through Confirmation admitted feeling like the process fulfilled a family expectation (D-2-1). Other family members remembered back to their experiences in confirmation, with one hearkening back to a time of desiring to defy authority and another saying that the experience is always in the back of the mind, impacting other relationships (D-2-2 & 3). One parent said about the connection between church and home, “We don’t discuss faith at home” (D-2-5).

High School graduates remember the Milestone being an oasis during a busy month that “grounded us as a family” (E-2-2).

Those in the 90+ age group saw the church-home connection as somewhat irrelevant, as all family lives elsewhere. Through life experiences and faith the church and home connection seems now embodied in each of those who are now 90+. 
The Seventh Question: Possible New Milestones

The data received on this question was creative and diverse. The greatest consensus resulted in eight out of twelve families thinking that a milestone should be fashioned to celebrate marriage and committed partnerships. Details were not given for what this might look like, but the agreement was striking – those interviewed expressed a strong desire to hold up marriage and committed same gender partnerships.

Four out of twelve families mentioned creating a new milestone incorporating either retirement or turning age 65. Likewise, four out of twelve also mentioned creating a milestone around college graduation. Two out of twelve thought longevity of church membership ought to be honored in some way as well.

Other possible milestones listed once included going to kindergarten, involvement in mission, receiving a driver’s license, another celebration of baptism at five or ten years out, marking sobriety, when one’s children turn 50, when adults give up driving, and finally, an expressed wish to mark divorce, but acknowledging the delicacy and possible social inappropriateness of publically marking such an ending.

The Eighth Question: Congregational Awareness

Responses as to the perceived level of congregational awareness of Milestones Ministry could be reflected in the drawing of a perfect bell curve. Four respondents said they thought that awareness was low; thirteen thought it was medium, and four thought it was high. While the choices of low, medium and high varied, the comments made by all reflect a remarkable consensus about the issue. Bottom line, as described by the parent of
a youth in Confirmation, “There is a high awareness of individual milestones, but a low awareness of the name Milestones Ministry” (D-2-2). In other words, as another participant put it, “I don’t think the congregation perceives it as a whole piece, just parts” (A-1-1). Likewise, as a parent put it “There is a high awareness, based on the Milestone that you have experienced” (A-2-2). Another parent said, “I don’t think the congregation tracks with the whole concept. The awareness could be better. But the appreciation is deep” (C-1-2).

One parent suggested that Sunday school teachers might share the overall concept of Milestones Ministry more overtly with the children (C-2-3). All in all, it appears that the church has some significant work to do on effectively linking the name Milestones Ministry with the six well appreciated Milestones within it.

The Ninth Question: For 90+ Participants

This question was asked only of those who were 90+, with the intention of capturing their wisdom by inviting their response to the question: “Given your experiences in life, what do we need to consider when it comes to Milestones Ministry?” What happened, however, was that those interviewed responded to this question as if it were directly tied to the previous question. Both 90+ responders tried to problem solve for question eight, about the congregational awareness of Milestones Ministry, in their response to this question. Both responders suggested that the word “Milestones” be used more frequently and intentionally by leadership. Therefore this question, which intended
to ask a broader, more general question, ended up being interpreted in a very specific way in answer to one particular question.

The Tenth Question: Other Comments

This final question of the interview invited responders to offer whatever else was on their minds or hearts. The responses vary widely. One parent said, “We are at home at this church. For every big major life event the church has been there for us” (A-2-1). Another said, regarding the Baptismal Anniversary Milestone, “The gift of the candle was just right. Don’t over gift” (A-2-1). This comment followed the story of their visit to another congregation for a baptism where the family was inundated with gifts – a chest, a quilt, a book and a candle. These people remembered the couple looking overwhelmed.

One couple spoke about their busy lives and the challenge of connecting with peers. They do not have time for friends, either to cultivate old friendships or to make new ones. They feel badly about that, but also stuck. “We need help with connections. Show those to us and the interconnectedness is there” (B-2-2).

One of the children who received a bible spoke about the frustration of feeling like Sunday school teachers skipped too many bible stories. “I want to know all the stories, not just the big ones” (C-2-2). Give the church more children like that one!

One of the families involved in Confirmation reflected on Christmas Eve worship. “When those candles are lit and we sing Silent Night peace goes through you” (D-1-2).

Finally, those over age 90 spoke about being aware of life’s fragility.
In compiling and sifting through the data above, at least ten categories emerged for further investigation and integration. The order in which they are listed is arbitrary and is not reflective of their importance. They are as follows:

1. Family Busyness
2. Family Expectations
3. Introducing the Church to Family and Friends
4. Service – Longing to do more as a Family.
5. Gifts given during a Milestone
6. Equipping
7. Gifts received from 90+ Members
8. Enjoyment of Parents watching their Children Respond
9. This Church is the Children’s Church.
10. Building a Culture of Anticipation
Family Busyness

Although no direct question was asked of respondents regarding the busy nature of family life, every family grouping, including those in the 90+ category, brought up this topic as a perplexing, thwarting and limiting reality. For those 90+, the issue was not their own busyness, but that of their children, which impeded attendance at the Milestone.

One parent, who tries to live a slower paced lifestyle, said, “I feel closer to the older generation than my own generation” (A-2-1). By that this parent implied that middle aged and older adults were more adept at prioritizing spiritual development than 20-30 something aged peers. The rugged daily management of children, demanding careers and lack of time weighed heavily for all. Another parent who attends worship fairly regularly mentioned the relentless experience of each week – racing to childcare, work, back to childcare and family meal management, “It is a hard struggle simply to get to church” (A-1-1).

The juggle in balancing work and family and spiritual priorities was illustrated during the Baptismal Anniversary Milestone, when a parent was paged between the equipping session and worship and had to leave for work (B-1-2).

Interestingly, the parents who are currently most inactive in terms of church attendance tended to express the deepest perplexity regarding this issue, almost as if it is beyond their power to do anything to change it, “…this crowded craziness is our life” (B-2-2) and “the busyness of our lives got in the way of the kids’ involvement” (D-2-4 & 5). While they express a sense of regret there is also a sense of resignation along with it. The question becomes how some families are able to tackle this issue head on and others let it
overwhelm them and then become passive about contributing to their own and their children’s Christian formation.

A subset in the category of family busyness is the journey of single parents, who often are managing their children’s details alone. Among the responders was a single parent. This parent mentioned the challenge of single parenting in an indirect way when sharing what would have made their milestone more meaningful – reaching out to invite grandparents to come.

Among the parents of youth in Confirmation, regret was expressed that both youth missed retreats and classes due to conflicts with sporting events. One way church leadership has tried to continue relating to recently confirmed youth is to invite them to be lay readers in worship, which gets them to church on a Sunday morning, welcomes them into a leadership role, reminds the congregation who they are and unleashes a lovely outpouring of congregational feedback and support following worship.

Youth and families who attended the High School Graduation Milestone were already overcommitted in May. It was an excessively busy time with school concluding, graduation pending, and college plans looming. In spite of this busy swirl of events, both families responding talked about the importance of celebrating their young adult’s accomplishments and the transition from youth to adulthood they felt was embodied in that Milestone.

Another subset of family busyness has to do with the achievements that result from it. In his book Growing in the Life of Faith: Education and Christian Practices, educator and theologian Craig Dykstra unpacks the gifts within the Reformed Tradition which help people grow in faith through traditions, worship practices, education and
disciplines. He notes that throughout our lives in North American many strong socializing and enculturating forces are at work. By comparison, the formative power of faith communities can seem relatively weak, especially because congregations themselves can reflect the wider culture’s values more than the distinctive good news of the Christian gospel.  

Dykstra offers a prophetic word regarding the “achievement oriented lifestyle,” a phrase that poignantly describes a social culture like that at Broad Street Presbyterian Church. This congregation is often engaged in “socially acceptable (indeed socially celebrated) patterns of mutual self-destruction through our achievement oriented lifestyles.” Dykstra holds the realities of law and grace in dynamic tension, and writes that in and through congregational life, these patterns are at the same time being “redemptively modified.”

One example where this redemptive modification may take place is during the equipping phases of Milestones Ministry, opportunities which invite people to build relationships with one another. Community can be a means of grace God uses to open ourselves up to unconditional love, as people risk getting to know one and trust one another. In that context cultural values can be mitigated through reflective activity in community.

Historically, a particular place of struggle with this issue has to do with what is shared with the congregation about high school graduates on Mother’s Day. Over the last few years all the high school graduates have been success stories. Handsome and

---

7 Dykstra, 84.
8 Ibid., 84.
beautiful, athletes, musicians or academics or all three, the graduates are headed to Ivy League institutions or honors programs at other colleges and universities. The congregation greatly enjoys reading of each student’s accomplishments and future aspirations.

This all works until it stops working. What happens when the graduates include a young woman who is eight months pregnant, or a young man who is strung out on drugs, or a new graduate who is rebelling against mom and dad and decides not to go to college? It is the hope of church leadership to be agents of redemptive modification of existing patterns, because our theology strongly proclaims God’s inclusive love of all.

Finally, family busyness has a downside in parental isolation. It was poignantly clear, that families with children whose parents are working full time have little time to nurture relationships outside the home. One responder asked the church for help in this matter, “We are challenged to connect with peers. We need help with those connections. Show those to us and the interconnectedness is there” (B-2-1 & 2).

Such comments embody the challenges. These young parents want more social connections. But for whatever reason they are unable to come to church on any more than a very occasional basis to make them happen. They speak of these connections with longing, but their feet are not moving. May the next chronological milestone, together with its equipping session, once again get isolated parents out and help them build relationships.
Family Expectations

Three families raised the issue of family expectations in their remarks. One of them was discussing these expectations in terms of religious disagreements with a spouse. The Baptism Milestone turned out to be an important way in which this parent felt accepted and affirmed, as this was an area they had discussed ahead of time and already had worked through difficulties. Hence the day of baptism felt like a relief, “For once it wasn’t a decision we had to talk about. It was so nice not to disagree with my spouse about this” (A-1-1).

The other two families raised issues of family expectations in terms of the assumption that their youth would go through the process of Confirmation and also participate in the High School Graduation Milestone. One youth in Confirmation was dealing with legacy issues – older siblings had already made this journey. There was a sense in which there really was not a choice available, “I felt Confirmation was forced on me” (D-2-1). In the face of this reality, this youth still spoke of feeling “Pleased to become an official part of church and community” (D-2-1). One of this youth’s parents asked whether, unprompted, this youth would actually have seen Confirmation through. All family agreed, with some displays of humor, that that was a good question!

The high school graduate who spoke up about family expectations was talking about the situations of peers. This young adult, together with parents, was aware that some families put strong expectations upon their senior high students to show up for the High School Graduation Milestone. They spoke of family pressure from moms and grandmothers to come out on Mother’s Day for the family. That kind of family pressure is not necessarily a bad thing. Out of respect for the older generations a young adult
makes concessions and shows up on a Sunday morning. In return the young adult receives appreciation from family and “unconditional church love” from the congregation (E-2-2).

Introducing the Church to Family and Friends

Every family grouping but the 90+ said that their particular milestone served to introduce the church to family and to friends. Some of this is self-evident; extended family gathers to witness a baptism or confirmation, for instance. It is hoped that each milestone will eventually provide an opportunity to invite family members and friends to witness the blessing and gifting portion in worship. Likewise, it is hoped that by having a number of the milestones at specific, predictable times during the church year families could plan for them and alert relatives or friends ahead of time. For instance, with the Baptismal Anniversary Milestone, invitations are usually extended to families in October, several months before the actual day in January.

In her article called “Education and Evangelism,” Diane Hymans writes that “evangelizing is integral to the baptismal vocation of all Christians.”⁹ Like education, evangelizing is not only intentional but also relational. There is no more natural place to make the gospel known than in worship on these days when family and friends gather to share in a Milestone for a beloved grandchild, niece or nephew.

Meeting pastors and friends in the congregation and introducing one’s parents or grandparents to others builds connections and increases the sense of relational and spiritual strength released through the individual milestones.

Service – Longing to do more as a Family

Both families and youth who went through the Confirmation Milestone expressed a longing for more service activities together as a family. One actually put legs on that request and volunteered together. The other spoke of their desire but has not found time to do so. Regardless, the hope is there, of working together as a family in service to others. How that desire is harnessed and opportunities are found to fulfill it is a question for church leadership.

In addition, one parent suggested that a new milestone might be one focused on mission, designed to teach children and youth that service, “giving back” as the parent put it, is an essential part of our faith (A-2-2).

Craig Dykstra offers Broad Street Presbyterian Church religious language regarding the church’s already developed sense of mission:

We learn by going and teach by sending. To be sent is to become vulnerable. So we learn to be sent ones by going into places where we are vulnerable. When this happens we begin to need the presence of God. We must educate in this context or we cannot really educate at all.10

Given that great unanimity exists at Broad Street Presbyterian Church regarding the importance of mission, this seems to pose a timely topic. The Youth Team, for instance, has as its goal the formation of “Global Christian Citizens.”

---

It is time to consider this goal and the pathway to it, in working with the youngest children on up, integrating mission into the creation of new milestones.

Gifts given during a Milestone

Each family grouping, except for Confirmation and one high school graduate, spoke about the gifts given to them at their specific milestone as very meaningful.

The high school graduate who did not mention the gift had received a unisex gift of a Peruvian duffel bag that many, both young men and women, said they appreciated. The following year the gift was again supposed to be unisex, but it actually looked quite feminine. That year’s Peruvian shoulder bag actually was the catalyst for creating a new gift, which turned out to be the very popular brown fleece blankets with the embroidered church logo and “Go with God” on it. That new gift, which is now distributed at the High School Graduation Milestones, received high praise from a more recent graduate, above, on page 63.

The Confirmation youth who did not mention the Confirmation bible may not have found it very helpful. The idea behind it was good: the team chose The Common English Bible - a new bible in a new version. The problem was that the edition was flimsy and actually felt and looked fairly cheap! All of which is to say that the Milestones Team regularly is evaluating gifts and people’s response to them, because the point of the gifts is that they will truly be treasures, often used or at least displayed and noticed at home.
It should be noted that in interviews with the 90+ responders, both had their angel figurines displayed in their homes. (The writer acknowledges that it is possible that was done as an act of care for her.)

Comprehensive list of gifts given at Milestones:

1. Baptism
   "My Baptism Book" by Sophie Piper
2. Baptismal Anniversary Milestone
   Baptismal candle
3. Bible Milestone
   Children’s version of NRSV bible.
4. Confirmation Milestone
   "The Presbyterian Handbook"
5. High School Graduation Milestone
   Brown fleece blanket with “Go with God.”
6. 90+ Milestone
   An angel figurine

Equipping

Equipping is part of each milestone. This generally involves instruction, relationship building and faith deepening. Each milestone involves a different level of equipping.

The most rigorous, lengthy equipping takes place during the Confirmation Milestone. Youth and parents are asked to commit to a nine month retreat-based model for confirmation. Youth are asked to attend two day-long retreats in the fall as well as to attend five Sunday school classes of their choice. Classes for Confirmation occur January – April. A weekend long youth retreat in February, organized by the local
regional body called the Presbytery of Scioto Valley, is required, as well as involvement as either a reader, greeter or usher on a Sunday morning, memorization, homework (the Gospel of Mark and ten sermon/worship reviews), attendance at a Session and Deacon meeting, and service. Also, each youth has a Session mentor with whom to work when the group creates their group faith statement. Additionally, parents are also asked to attend two Parent Meetings.

It is hoped that by this immersion into the life of the worshipping community, along with the building of relationships with one another and other adults, that youth will come to experience their faith in action. This plan exists in an effort to counter act the prevailing notion that confirmation is a graduation from church life!

The next most rigorous equipping experience is the class for both parents and children for the Bible Milestone which occurred over a three week period, one hour each week. Currently taught by a couple with elementary aged children themselves, this class teaches second graders and their parents about the church’s book and how to use it. Additionally, older adults are invited into the class to share what the bible means to them. For parents who have been away from the bible for a while, this class can be a helpful refresher. For parents who are unfamiliar with the bible, this provides a gentle entry point. Parental feedback has been positive, with some wishing the classes would extend for several more weeks (C-2-3).

These experiences underscore what David Anderson describes as the “little secret” about Milestones Ministry which, though billed as a child’s milestone, actually focuses more on the adults in the lives of those children. In other words, the whole
Milestones effort is more than a short term educational event in the congregation, but rather builds for long term impact on the faith formation of children and their families.\textsuperscript{11} The equipping component of the Baptismal Anniversary Milestone asks for one hour from participating parents. They come, meet one another, enjoy some food, and then are encouraged to take their children to childcare while they talk with one another as adults. Most do. Sharing flows about their experiences of their own baptism, their memories of their child’s baptism and the joys and struggles of parenting.

Both the Baptism Milestone and the 90+ Milestone involve a personal visit by a pastor. When a pastor visits the family preparing for baptism a booklet by Carol Wehrheim called \textit{The Baptism of Your Child: A Book for Presbyterian Families} is given and the meaning of baptism, as a sacrament of belonging, is shared. Details are worked out (timing, seating, and who the elder will be) and the baby or toddler or child or youth becomes better acquainted with the pastor. They pray together. If possible that visit is in the home.

The visit in preparation for the 90+ Milestone is often a true delight for a pastor. It is a chance to ask about what has been important in that person’s life through the years. Often the life story comes flowing out, as well as triumphs and regrets. The great challenge is to capture the person’s story and spirit in brief so that church members and friends can know their friend in a new way. Often people are surprised to learn new things about someone they have sat beside for several decades.

One of the children who responded asked why the 90+ folks didn’t share their story themselves. Because worship is so tightly scripted, pastors deal with time constraints. To hand anyone the microphone would be risky, let alone someone who had

\textsuperscript{11} David Anderson, \textit{Vibrant Faith in the Congregation}, 62.
90 years to share! The child also asked whether the 90+ folks get a present. The present has been given so quietly during the reception following that many clearly do not know that the special guests are receiving something. Making that more public seems like a logical next step.

Finally, the High School Graduation Milestone is the one that asks nothing of the young adults except that they show up! During the extremely busy month of May that seems like just the right expectation. It does not seem possible to ask anything else of them. To have them present is gift enough. The hope is that by offering a blanket to take to college with them, the congregation’s prayers and good wishes will be with them in all of what is ahead.

**Gifts received from 90+ Members**

What a gift the 90+ members are in the life of the community of the church. They give to others simply by being. As they are who they are they give the rest of the congregation gifts.

Since many of their children, grandchildren and great grandchildren live out of town the reality is that these seasoned citizens often live without family around them. That is where Diana Garland’s notion of “faith grandparents” may be helpful. What if those 90+ members without family near felt connected in a family at the church? This could take some gentle persuasion, but could also blossom into new relational opportunities. (It is noted that this was not actually a request made by one of the 90+ folk interviewed, but was rather generated by an observer.).

---

Another observation from the 90+ responders was the awareness of life’s fragility and the desire to have done some things in life differently. The honesty expressed in each of these comments is striking.

Enjoyment of Parents watching their Children Respond

The parents of the children who participated in the Bible Milestone seemed to enjoy watching their children being interviewed for this thesis. Parents were given the gift of seeing another facet of their child as he or she interacted with another adult. Being the third party in the room while another adult was engaging their child in thoughtful conversation seemed to offer a sense of meaning to the observing parent(s).

The opportunity for a parent to witness their child’s creativity in a one on one conversation with another adult may be an infrequent occurrence, as many parents are not able to volunteer in their child’s classroom due to work commitments, or instance, and life’s pace often prevents more leisurely time for conversation with other adults.

The children expressed thoughtfulness and creativity in their responses. What they said was descriptive but not simple, “A milestone is like a new chapter. You step up to a new level” (C-1-1) and “I connected church and home through my reading at home” (C-2-2).
This Church is the Children’s Church

As noted above, one child stepped away from the topic of the Bible Milestone in order to ask questions about the 90+ Milestone. The child wanted more information about whether the older adults received gifts and why they were not allowed to speak. This querying was inspirational. The questions and/or the tone of the interview seem to have touched the right developmental spot with this child. The child had opinions about how leadership was doing or not doing things and how leadership was caring or not caring for the oldest adults, and wanted to receive some answers. In these responses this child embodied the environment of hospitality and inclusion that has been cultivated at the church. In other words, the expectation that hospitality be extended to all equally has been internalized and is now expected. This conversation left the distinct impression that this church is, indeed, the child’s church!

Building a Culture of Anticipation

Families and individuals of all ages expressed a sense of anticipation regarding the Milestones, from parents of babies to those honored at the 90+ celebration. Two mothers of a newly baptized infants described how they are looking forward to Milestones yet to come (A-2-1, B-1-1). One pregnant couple expressed interest in again experiencing the Milestone they had just completed with the new baby they are expecting (B-1-1 & 2).
As described above, a younger sibling of a recent Confirmation student said enthusiastically, “Before Confirmation we were Christmas and Easter Christians. Confirmation set me up for when I get confirmed. I am kind of looking forward to it!” (D-1-2). Such anticipation, expressed so directly with all the eagerness of a child in elementary school builds momentum for a culture of anticipation around Milestones Ministry.

In a more restrained way, a father of a recently graduated high school senior said that the event on Mother’s Day was a ‘nice tradition’ (E-2-3). Family expectations were discussed, above, with the awareness that although some external expectations regarding attendance at the High School Graduation Milestone may have felt onerous to a high school senior they were not necessarily a bad thing.

Anticipation is, in a sense, about expectations, but the anticipation makes the event to come not dreaded but rather looked forward to with high hopes and trust in the experience ahead. This can be understood as a healthy ‘flip side’ of the expectations that were shared above.

Additionally, when one of the people who participated in the 90+ celebration said “I was gratified at the recognition,” part of receiving that recognition had to do with having witnessed earlier 90+ Milestones and anticipating the celebration to come (F-2-1).

When Milestones are perceived as positive traditions in the life of the church they carry with them the power and potential of a culture of anticipation.
CONCLUSIONS

1. *The faith formation of children, youth and their families was, indeed, facilitated, encouraged and strengthened through the use of Milestones Ministry.*

While it may seem obvious, this must be stated as a primary conclusion of the research. Whether the speaker was a child in elementary school or a youth in Confirmation or an older or younger sibling in a family or a parent or grandparent, the responses from those interviewed indicated that their faith was nurtured through the process of experiencing Milestones Ministry through the six existing milestones at the Broad Street Presbyterian Church.

Those Milestones are the Baptism Milestone, the Baptismal Anniversary Milestone, the Bible Milestone, the Confirmation Milestone, the High School Graduation Milestone and the 90+ Milestone.

This form of Christian education which involves parents and other caring adults in the ongoing education of children, youth and young adults, connects the busy lives of the generations not only within their own congregation in worship, but also with the biblical story and the Christian tradition.

Milestones offer benchmarks for the spiritual lives of families. As one parent of a child who participated in the Baptismal Anniversary Milestone said, “Just like little kids have developmental check-ups, these seem to be spiritual check-ups” (B-2-2).

Through the four part template of Naming, Equipping, Blessing and Gifting, Milestones Ministry has a powerful influence on faith formation through its focus on
connecting church and home. By using the *Milestones Ministry Manual for Home and Congregation* available through Vibrant Faith Ministries, individual congregations are able to tailor each Milestone to fit their personality as a church, thus enabling the Milestones themselves to feel home grown and authentic to those participating.

As a side note to this conclusion it must be said that Milestones Ministry can enhance and strengthen a church-home connection *when that connection is valued*. When that connection is stifled either through ambivalence, neglect, actual hostility, or for some other reason, it is harder for the connection to flourish.

In one family a parent articulated a family truth, that “We don’t discuss faith at home” (D-2-5). In the interview context it could not be discerned if that was stated more as a matter of fact, as an expression of longing, or as something altogether different.

It could be that this family lives in what educator and theologian Craig Dykstra calls the “‘nasty suspicion’ that permeates much of contemporary American church and intellectual life – the suspicion that theology is really nothing more than human subjectivity.”

What was discernible, however, was that a barrier existed, at least for this parent, between the thoughts and feelings around faith, and their articulation at home. Perhaps a discussion distinguishing between biblical and theological knowledge and the reality of how one’s faith offers traction in the world would be helpful to this parent. From Dykstra’s perspective the antidote to the “nasty suspicion” is to live and grow into the practices of the Christian faith, so that, as part of a community, one lives into such an “immediate experience of the grace and mercy and power of God that the ‘nasty

---

suspicion’…simply loses its power.”¹⁴ At this time how to engage that parent most productively is not known. What is known is that through Naming, Equipping, Blessing and Gifting, as well as through intergenerational relationships and stories, Milestones Ministry has facilitated, strengthened and encouraged the faith formation of the families who have been open to experiencing them.

2. *Milestones Ministry made a difference in how children, youth and young adults experienced the community of the church.*

Interviews with individuals and families reflected the power of Milestones Ministry to shape the church experience of children, youth and young adults. From the second graders who received their bibles to the eighth graders who joined the church through Confirmation, to the high school graduate who had the blanket from the church on her bed in the dorm room at college, children, youth and young adults are being shaped and formed by Milestones Ministry through the community of the church.

In general, these various populations felt cared for by the intergenerational nature of the Milestones. Youth and young adults were aware that participating in the High School Graduation Milestone, for instance, meant something to their parents and grandparents. Younger children were pleased when not only a mother and/or a father could be present, but when grandparents could as well. One child in elementary school requested that the bible be presented by *both* the minister and grandparents! (C-2-2).

The phrase “unconditional church love” was used by a parent to describe what it felt like to be in a faith community where one’s child or youth was cared for, mentored and

encouraged by other adults (E-2-2). This comment describes the warmth of intergenerational, extended family caring that Milestones Ministry evokes, as church members come to identify and relate to children, youth and young adults outside of their own family systems. For many who experienced a milestone, this was one of the most profound realizations: that other caring adults knew, loved and prayed for their children.

Children also enjoyed participating in a milestone with their peers. When one child’s parent was unable to attend that child still felt connected to the process because friends were there (C-1-1).

One Confirmation youth commented that, “Confirmation helped me become more involved in church. I actually enjoy church (laughter). I moved from ‘I have to go to church’ to ‘I get to go to church’” (D-1-1). Likewise, another Confirmation youth said, “I liked becoming part of the church and becoming part of the community” (D-2-1). Both youth indicated that enjoyment and belonging were important features of this milestone process for them.

Having explored the way children, youth and young adults experienced the community of the church as part of Milestones Ministry, it is helpful to look at the corollary experience and consider how this population experiences the community of the church in their homes. Some responders alluded to this. One grandparent said the baptism of a grandchild would have been in the past if it had not been for the Baptismal Anniversary Milestone, which invited parents and grandparents into celebrating the child’s baptismal anniversary every year at home (B-1-4). If Milestones Ministry takes root in that family that child will grow up celebrating both a birthday and a baptismal anniversary every year.
Likewise, the parent of a newly baptized baby said the experience of the Baptism is part of their day to day lives, “It carries over, not just Sunday, but every day” (A-2-1). Thus this child, too, may grow up sensing the church-home connection through the positive affect of a parent. Finally, the enthusiastic words of the high school graduate who took the High School Graduation Milestone gift blanket to college were, “I love it – right now it is on my bed in my dorm room!” (E-1-1).

Each of these comments illustrates how the church-home connection has been tangibly strengthened through the power of Milestones Ministry in the lives of children, youth and young adults.

3. Great potential exists to develop Milestones Ministry for the adult population of the church.

Having witnessed the power of Milestones Ministry for children and youth, leadership can see great potential to make use of Milestones Ministry in the adult population, defined as post high school. Because the church currently has only one milestone specifically for adults - called The 90+ Milestone - this is clearly an area of future growth.

Milestones Ministry made a difference in how adults – in this case, parents – experienced Christian community. After the baptism of his child, one father remarked that “During the reception after church other church members offered to hold our baby – they got to see how our life is” (A-2-2). For this father, the Baptism Milestone was an experience of becoming connected to other adults within the community of faith in new
ways that felt authentic and strong. He experienced the reality of his life with young children validated on that special baptismal day.

Author David Anderson describes such family involvement as the “little secret” of Milestones Ministry, which though advertised as a child’s milestone actually focuses on the adults in the lives of the children.15

A question arises as to which adult milestone might be created next. Eight out of the twelve responding family groupings wanted to see a milestone developed for marriage and same gender partnered relationships. This may be the next logical new adult milestone to undertake.

Regarding the existing milestone for adults, called the 90+ Milestone, some reflection from its participants is helpful. Those aged 90 or older varied in their impression of the Milestone. While one said “It made me feel old,” (F-1-1), another said, “I was gratified at the recognition” (F-2-1). Likewise, one said the Milestone was a reminder of the aging process (F-1-1) while the other participant remarked that it prompted a life review (F-2-1). One expressed the reality of living to such an old age, “I connected to those in my 90+ group. But now two of the four are gone” (F-1-1). This is one example of how Milestones connects people in community, and also how fragile life, especially at older ages, is.

It is not surprising that when the 90+ Milestone offers an opportunity for adults to reflect on the realities of their circumstances, they do so in a variety of ways. Their joy and satisfaction in living often is tempered by regret and pain. These responses do not represent two opposites but rather the full spectrum of our lives as human beings. Loss and pain are part of any life, but so is joy, and for Christians, the great promises of the

15 David Anderson, Vibrant Faith in the Congregation, 62.
gospel. This season in life juxtaposes these two; the pain and the promise, with regularity.

Adults need Christian community with other adults who are outside of their families. As the Milestones Team develops new milestones for adults, and as they are experienced through Naming, Equipping, Blessing and Gifting, this sense of knowing and caring for one another will only increase.

4. *Christians of all ages struggle with articulating faith*

Because talking faithfully is considered one important aspect of living faithfully, Milestones Ministry offers opportunities for parents to take small steps in articulating their faith. It is a reality that Christians, especially those in ‘mainline’ denominations, struggle with articulating their faith. This conclusion sheds light on the general lack of opportunity - and lack of encouragement - to practice talking about one’s faith.

A long term goal for the congregation as a whole might be to develop a greater comfort level among adults and between the generations in articulating their faith. Tom Long in his book *Testimony: Talking Ourselves into Being Christian*, offers some encouragement here, reminding readers that no one is born knowing how to talk about one’s faith. The ability has to be acquired and learned through experience.\(^{16}\) Milestones Ministry offers the opportunity for that kind of experience.

5. *Family busyness is not necessarily a predictor of a lack of a church and home connection.*

Less profound but still interesting, the interviews indicate that family busyness is not necessarily a predictor of a lack of a church and home connection. A number of busy families have developed a Sunday morning habit and are staying involved in the life of the church.

Likewise, however, some have not and while they express their longing for a connection between church and home in their lives, they seem incapable of establishing it; “this crowded craziness is our life” (B-2-2).

Diana Garland, in her book *Family Ministry: A Comprehensive Guide* notes that:

Many Christians have only a vague sense that their family ought to be doing something besides simply taking care of and providing for one another. The concept of “family calling,” that families have a purpose beyond self-care, is not familiar in our culture. Family ministry, however, includes teaching this concept and stressing (thus even bringing an added – though necessary – stress for some families) that families need to be about more than taking care of themselves.17

While these words may not offer balm to those feeling desperate for a morning to sleep in at home, they are prophetic in terms of calling busy families to find meaning and purpose in their life together through involvement as a family in the life of a church community.

6. *Milestones Ministry must be marketed as a whole.*

More publicity and conversation is needed in order for people to understand that the overarching Milestones Ministry concept is linked with each of the six existing

---

Responses were unanimous in saying that most church members do not understand that the phrase “Milestones Ministry” encompasses the individual Milestones that are lodged beneath it. People who experienced a milestone had clarity about the one part they had experienced, but did not realize that all milestones were linked as a whole and shared the common purpose of connecting church and home.
SUGGESTIONS REGARDING THE FUTURE

This thesis, although titled “The Future of Milestones Ministry at Broad Street Presbyterian Church, does not and cannot provide a detailed map regarding every next step for Milestones Ministry at Broad Street Presbyterian Church. However, the study does suggest several general principles as guides for the future.

1. Continue with Milestones Ministry.

After three years of living into Milestones Ministry, the leadership of Broad Street Presbyterian Church has begun to feel the pulse, power and potential of the Milestones Ministry approach to connect church and home. This study affirms there is value in continuing with Milestones Ministry.

Some benefits include: the connection between church and home each time a Milestone is celebrated, parents and children and youth experiencing quality time together during equipping sessions, the building of a culture of anticipation, where children and their families can look forward to the next milestone as a sign of their maturation both in age and faith, intergenerational care for one another among the larger church community as knowledge of one another grows from the public nature of the blessing and the gifting, and the ways in which caring and affirming adults surround children and their parents with new ways of knowing and belonging.

While meaningful liturgy is certainly part of each Milestone, the visual images of children, with parents, youth with parents, and 90+ folks inspire others. Following each
milestone intergenerational family photos will continue to be displayed digitally on a flat screen monitor in the church’s narthex.

2. *Introduce the Four Keys to Broad Street Presbyterian Church.*

In their book *Frogs Without Legs Can’t Hear: Nurturing Disciples in Home and Congregation*, David Anderson and Paul Hill present the Four Keys as essential for strengthening the church-home connection. The Four Keys are: Caring Conversations, Devotions, Service, and Rituals and Traditions.18 (See pages 24 and following for a description of the Four Keys.) It is possible that the use of the Four Keys could make a tangible difference in the church and home connection at the Broad Street Presbyterian Church.

Those who were interviewed offered clues as to their receptivity to the Four Keys. For instance, strong interest emerged with regard to doing service together as a family. This linked up naturally with the third of the Four Keys, which is Service. Additionally, parents expressed enthusiasm when talking about the conversations they had with their youth about religion and politics. As these conversations were described they sounded like the first of the Four Keys, Caring Conversations. These two pieces make up half of the Four Keys.

The usefulness of the Four Keys translates to church leadership as well. Goals over the next years might be to:

---

1. Orient each new member of Session (governing body) and Deacons (caring body) to Milestones Ministry and the Four Keys.

2. Invite church leadership to practice daily devotions, because as they journey spiritually they lead by example.

3. Ask church leadership to make a point of intentionally connecting with one young person, because they are role models for an intergenerational connection.

4. Provide time in leadership meetings to have Caring Conversations or otherwise work with one of the Four Keys.¹⁹

5. Introduce new members to Milestones Ministry and the Four Keys.

3. Focus on both strategic and detail work with Milestones Ministry.

As Milestones Ministry continues at Broad Street Presbyterian Church both strategic and detail work is necessary in order to fashion new Milestones, integrate new Milestones into the existing Milestone schedule, and publicize each of the six existing Milestones as part of the overarching umbrella ministry called Milestones Ministry.

Additionally, discussion about the scope of Milestones Ministry is needed. For instance, if one new Milestone each year remains a goal the church calendar could soon become quite crowded. Likewise, it is time to revisit the status of the initial vision, which called for different Milestone Teams to be in charge of planning for each Milestone.

Finally, the Team faces the challenge of continuing to incorporate good ideas into the existing Milestones. For example, what follows reflects a responder’s idea as to how to

---

¹⁹ David W. Anderson and Paul Hill, *Frogs Without Legs Can’t Hear*, 93-94.
strengthen the Bible Milestone (C-1-2). Interestingly, this same idea was also reflected in author David Anderson’s suggestions. After the Bible Milestone leadership needs to continue checking in with people. Follow up contact is critical so that what has been taught and learned actually sticks and becomes a faith practice.²⁰ Following up for a month with a weekly email that suggests a family bible reading, offers a sharing question (leading to a Caring Conversation) and a short prayer, are ideas of possible pieces which would strengthen the Bible Milestone.

Additionally, the 90+ Milestone yielded diverse and personal responses from each responder. It may be helpful for the church to invite their children and grandchildren to attend this Milestone, maybe even six months to a year ahead of time.

Also, some of the comments from the 90+ responders had to do with the value of one’s life, essentially with one’s legacy. To that end, perhaps the Milestones Team may want to reconsider the name of that Milestone. For instance, one example might be The Legacy Milestone. Perhaps that would shift the focus from chronological age to what these remarkable church members are leaving behind, or more positively, to how their lives have already blessed the future.

In the years to come, may Milestones Ministry at Broad Street Presbyterian Church not only adapt to the times but by God’s grace continue to be a vehicle that facilitates, strengthens and encourages the spiritual growth and faith formation of generations to come.

---

²⁰ David W. Anderson, *Vibrant Faith in the Congregation*, 60.
Appendix A
Chronological Listing of Milestones at Broad Street Presbyterian Church, with Worship Liturgies Included: 2010-2013

May 16, 2010, Mother’s Day
High School Graduation Milestone
Fourteen graduates were gifted with Peruvian duffel bags.

October 30, 2010
The Third Grade Bible Milestone
Third Graders who received their Bibles included five boys and twelve girls.

May 8, 2011
High School Graduation Milestone
From the church bulletin:

Congregational blessing:
May God bless you and keep you,
May God’s face shine upon you and be gracious to you.
May God look upon you with kindness and give you peace.

August 28, 2011 – 90+ Milestone
From the church bulletin: Today in worship, we will honor those Broadstreeters who have or who will celebrate their 90th birthdays in 2011. Following worship a reception will be held in the narthex to celebrate eight people. Please put a name tag on as we celebrate this milestone!

October 9, 2011 Bible Milestone
From the church bulletin:

Bible Milestone: 9:45 a.m. in the Dining Room and 11:00 a.m. in worship—Children in second and third grades will receive a new children’s Bible in worship today. In addition, each child and his or her parents will participate in a three week Bible Workshop, led by J&KC, who will teach the children how the Bible is set up, how to read it, and why it is a treasure. This morning RA and BLS will visit the class to share what the Bible means to them.

Second and third graders included six boys and eleven girls.
January 8, 2012 Baptismal Anniversary Milestone

Baptismal Anniversary Milestone Gathering: 9:45 a.m. in the Dining Room—
Includes all who were baptized in 2011, along with their parents, grandparents and families. This milestone reminds us that our baptisms are not singular events, but rather the beginning of lifelong journeys of faith.

From the bulletin:

BAPTISMAL ANNIVERSARY MILESTONE
Congregational Response: With a splash of water and a promise we have been called children of God.

Baptismal Anniversary Milestone Liturgy from Worship

Pastor: Sometimes we think of our baptism as an event that happened long ago, rather than a way of living our lives. As Christians, we try to live a baptism shaped life.

Elder: Today we have a new milestone to share. The Baptismal Anniversary Milestone invites us all to live into a baptism shaped life.

8:45 Today, on this Sunday when we celebrate Jesus’ baptism, we also celebrate the 14 infants, toddlers and children who were baptized during 2011. At this worship service we celebrate the F family and the S family.

11:00 Today, on this Sunday when we celebrate Jesus’ baptism, we also celebrate the 14 infants, toddlers and children who were baptized during 2011. Earlier in worship they came in with their parents. Now we invite them forward:

Families come forward, receive unwrapped candles from the pastor, and stand on the chancel steps.

Pastor: Today we celebrate the way God gives us new life in Christ. In the church we mark the day of our baptism; not with birthday cake, but with a baptismal candle. I invite you to light your candle from the Christ candle, symbolizing our desire to let our light shine before others so they may see the light of the world – Jesus Christ.

(Director of Christian Education takes the Christ candle to the families so they can light their candles.)

Pastor: Please join me in the congregational refrain. Together we say:

With a splash of water and a promise we have been called children of God.

Elder: Today we affirm that these children, and all of us, are on a journey of faith that continues today and for the rest of our lives. No matter our age or experience, we are beloved children of God. Together we say:
With a splash of water and a promise we have been called children of God.

Pastor: This burning light reminds us that we reflect the light of Christ and to let Christ’s light shine through us as we nurture faith in our homes and in our daily lives. Together we say:

With a splash of water and a promise we have been called children of God.

Pastor: Let us pray:
Dear God, we thank you for your promises to us in baptism – that you love us and that you will never let us go. We pray for these families and for their infants and toddlers and children – all gifts from you. Watch over them and guide them as they grow in faith together. We pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Blow out candles.

Pastor: We invite all of you, when we receive communion later in worship, to dip your fingers in the baptismal font or the bowl, as a reminder that you are baptized. One more time, together we say:

With a splash of water and a promise we have been called children of God.

2011 Baptisms included seven boys and eight girls.

April 22, 2012, Confirmation Milestone

Joint Faith Statement: 2012 Confirmation Class, BSPC

We believe in God, who loves everyone.
God created the heavens and the earth, and is master of the universe.
God is the Father of Jesus, our Lord and Savior.
Through Jesus’ life we know that God is both forgiving and the final judge.
God is real and is always present with us through the Holy Spirit, who is as close as our life and breath.
God gives us freedom to make our own decisions.

As we learn to know and love God, we have questions about God and about the church. We wonder where non-Christians fit, as well as people who say they are Christians but don’t act like it.
We wonder what the requirements are to be a Christian.
We see people suffer and wonder why.
We are curious why we as humans have faith at all.
We think about our lives and about the reasons why some things happen.
Being a Christian is challenging.
We struggle with accepting the story of the resurrection.
Among our friends at school we sometimes feel different as Christians.
We wonder how to share our faith with others.
Sometimes we wonder if God is there.
In prayer we ask for courage to act out our faith and to live it.
Sometimes it is easier to be mean than to be kind.
We wrestle with knowing what is right versus doing what is easy.

Being a Christian is a journey filled with joy.
We are thankful to belong to a faith community.
We are grateful for God’s grace.
We know we have always been children of God and now we can say for ourselves:
“God loves me just as I am.
God is always with me.”
Amen.

From the church bulletin:
**Confirmation Milestone: 11:00 a.m. in the Sanctuary**—During the 11:00 worship service we will celebrate the Confirmation Milestone for ten 8th grade students who have participated in a retreat based confirmation process.
From worship:

**CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE**

Leader: Let us welcome these young people into the worship and mission of the church.

**People:** With joy and thanksgiving we welcome you!

Liturgy from Worship:

Youth are standing with their families & mentors across the front of church.

Elder who taught Confirmation: Earlier this morning the session officially voted these young people into membership in the church. On behalf of the Session I now present them to you - the congregation. They are here to reaffirm the baptismal covenant into which they were baptized. They now desire to profess publicly their faith and to assume greater responsibility in the life of the church, and God’s mission in the world.

Pastor dips her hand in the font as she speaks…
Pastor: We rejoice that you desire to declare your faith and to share with us in our common ministry. Years ago, in baptism you were joined to Christ, and made members of his church. In the community of the people of God, you have learned of God’s purpose for you and for all creation. You have been nurtured at the table of our Lord, and called to witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Pastor: Hear these words from Scripture:

You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light so shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your God in heaven. (Matthew 5:14-16).

Pastor: We now ask you the questions of church membership, the same basic questions that your parents answered at your own baptisms:

Trusting in the gracious mercy of God, do you turn from the ways of sin and reject evil and its power in the world? I do.

Do you turn to Jesus Christ and accept him as your Lord and Savior, trusting in his grace and love? I do

Will you be Christ’s faithful disciple, obeying his Word and showing his love? I will with God’s help.

Pastor: Apostles’ Creed – Ecumenical Version

Pastor: You have publically professed your faith. Will you be faithful members of this congregation, share in its worship and ministry through your prayers and gifts, your study and service, and so fulfill your calling to be a disciple of Jesus Christ? I will with God’s help.

Elder: Remember, you are the light of the world. We now present you with a bible. It has your name on it. It is a special reminder of this journey, this day, and your future with God. We have chosen the Common English Bible, a new version that is remarkably clear in its meaning - we think this is just right for your inquiring minds. As I call your name please step over here.

Pastor invites youth to gather around the baptismal font to receive the prayer, with parents, mentors and pastors surrounding them. Parents welcome to lay hands on their children.
Let us pray.
Gracious God, by water and the Spirit you claim us as your own, cleanse us from sin and give us new life. You make us members of your body, the church, and call us to be your servants in the world. Renew in these confirmation students the covenant you made in their baptisms. Continue the good work you have begun in them. Send them forth in the power of your Spirit to love and serve you with joy and to strive for justice and peace in all the earth. Amen.

Pastor asks youth to turn around and face the congregation.

Pastor: Let us welcome these young people into the worship and mission of the church. All: With joy and thanksgiving we welcome you!

May 13, 2012 High School Graduation Milestone including nine girls and seven boys.
Liturgy from Worship:
2012 High School Graduation Milestone

Pastor: I now invite the 2012 high school seniors and their parent(s) forward. As they come up here and stand across the front, please find the insert in your bulletin.

Pastor: Graduation from High School truly is a milestone. We celebrate with you during this important season in your lives and in the lives of your families.

Pastor: We have a gift for you to take on the journey ahead. A brown fleece blanket with the words “Go with God.” We give these blankets to you as tangible reminders of two important relationships - the love of this community wrapped around you and the warmth and constant presence of God who holds us all.

Pastor: As I read your name receive your blanket from the pastor and then return to stand with your parents.

Names were read and graduates came forward with their parents.

Pastor: We offer two charges to the graduates this morning. First, to the graduates: You belong to God. God loves you. Let me say that again because it’s really important. You belong to God. God loves you. Don’t forget that. It’s really important to remember this. Doesn’t matter how things are going. Doesn’t matter whether you are doing well in school. You belong to God. And God loves you. Cherishes you. Adores you. Forgive you. You belong to God.

Pastor: Also to the graduates: We hope you take with you from this place a critical yet open mind to engage your surroundings and new ideas; an open heart to embrace new experiences and people; and new eyes to expand your vision of how God is at work in the world. God's ways are full of compassion, justice, and kindness for all people. Go with God.
Pastor: Now, a charge to the parents: Take a moment to remember back to that day when your child was baptized. Remember when you handed him or her off to the minister and then watched as your child was walked away from you, down the aisle. That was just the beginning. Being a parent is all about letting go. Today we remind you that your children are going to be OK because God will be with them every step of the way. God is never going to let them go. God will be there every step of the way, for you and for them.

Pastor: Let us offer our blessing to the graduating seniors using words from the Bible. Please stand as you are able.

Congregational blessing:
May God bless you and keep you,
May God’s face shine upon you and be gracious to you.
May God look upon you with kindness and give you peace.

August 26, 2012 90+ Milestone
Four people were present.
90+ Celebration: 11:15 a.m. in the Narthex—Join us as we honor those Broadstreeters who have or will celebrate 90+ birthdays in 2012! A reception will honor these six people... Please put a name tag on as we celebrate this milestone!

October 14, 2012 Bible Milestone
Language from the church bulletin:
Bible Milestone: 9:45 a.m. in the Dining Room and 11:00 a.m. in worship—Children in second grades will receive a new children’s Bible in worship today. In addition, each child and his or her parents will participate in a three week Bible Workshop, led by J&KC, who will teach the children how the Bible is set up, how to read it, and why it is a treasure. This morning JD will visit the class to share what the Bible means to her.
Second graders included five boys and three girls.

Liturgy from Worship:
Pastor at 11:00 - Opening and instructions
The Church believes that the Bible is the most important book in the world. In its pages we hear of God’s love for all people. Through the bible God shares stories of love and challenge with hearer and reader. The bible points us to Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.
Today we celebrate the Bible Milestone. As we call the second grade children forward, parents or grandparents, please come too. We will be giving the bible to the adult and then leading you as you give the bible to your child.

Director of Children’s Ministry calls children and parents forward. One of the elders who taught the Bible Milestone hands out bibles to parents.

Director of Children’s Ministry:
This is a special time. Reading has become an important part of your day. You are getting old enough to read the bible, to talk about it with your parents and grandparents, your friends and your teachers at church. You can learn from the bible about what it means to live as a child of God.

Pastor: (to the parents):
Parents and grandparents, you are holding your child’s bible. We hope your child will explore the pages of this special book. We ask you to present this bible to your child. But before you do, we have a question for you: Will you share in the excitement and accept the challenge to use the bible, so that as a family, you may find the joy of Christian growth? If so, answer, “We will.”

Director of Children’s Ministry:
In a moment you will receive your new bible. We have a question for you: Will you promise to ask the special person who is giving you your bible to take time to read the Bible with you as you grow in faith together? If so, answer “We will.”

Pastor:
Parent or grandparent, please give the bible to your child.
Congregation, we ask you to share in the sentences printed in the bulletin:

Leader: We celebrate this Bible Milestone.
People: This is the Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

Elder who taught Bible Milestone: Question of the congregation:
When these children were baptized you or another congregation made promises. Today we ask you to reaffirm those promises on behalf of each of these children: Do you, as members of the church of Jesus Christ, promise to guide and nurture each child standing before you today, by word and deed, with love and prayer, encouraging them to know and follow Christ and to be a faithful member of Christ's Church? If so, answer, "We do."

Pastor: Let us pray: God, your word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. We pray for the children and their families who have received bibles today. Help them to know, through the pages of this book and through our life together as a church, that you claim them as your own and that you will never, ever let them go. We pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.
January 13, 2013 The Baptismal Anniversary Milestone
Baptismal Anniversary Milestone Gathering: 9:45 a.m. in the Courtyard—Includes all who were baptized in 2012, along with their parents, grandparents and families. This milestone reminds us that our baptisms are not singular events, but rather the beginning of lifelong journeys of faith.
From the church bulletin:

**Congregational Response: With a splash of water and a promise we have been called children of God.**

2012 baptisms included four boys and twelve girls.
APPENDIX B

HUMAN SUBJECTS RESEARCH REVIEW COMMITTEE
Meeting – November 6, 2012

Present: Shari Ayres, Emlyn Ott, Leo Jones, Diane Hymans

The committee conducted an email review of a proposal for an STM project submitted by Ann Palmerton. The committee approved the project outlined in the proposal with the condition that Ms. Palmerton obtain written consent from participants at time of their interview for the data collected in the interview to be used in the final thesis.

Respectfully submitted,

Diane J. Hymans, Chair
A Written Consent Form

Agreeing to Participate in Ann Palmerton’s Thesis about Milestones Ministry

Purpose:
I am writing a thesis on “The Future of Milestones Ministry at Broad Street Presbyterian Church” for my Master of Sacred Theology degree in Christian Education at Trinity Lutheran Seminary.

I am conducting interviews of family groups and individuals, to gather information about peoples’ experience of Milestones Ministry, which at BSPC includes the Baptismal Milestone, the Baptismal Anniversary Milestone, the Bible Milestone, the Confirmation Milestone, the Graduation Milestone and the 90+ Milestone.

If you are reading this consent form your name has been randomly selected as a participant.

Please read and sign, below, to acknowledge receiving the guidelines I am following to ensure the protection of your identity:

1. I will conduct an interview and take notes. I will not use your name in anything that follows.
   For instance:
2. I may use quotations from the interview in my thesis, but will not identify you.
3. I may use quotations from the interview in other related presentations, but will not identify you.

Signed by person(s) interviewed:
_____________________________________________________________
Date ____________________________

Signed by person interviewing:
________________________________
Date ____________________________


Rake-Marona, Jennifer L., *On The Way: Reflections, Resources and Rites for the Young Teen, including: A Teen’s Guidebook for the Trek, A Parent’s Guidebook and Journal, and A Mentor’s Journal and Guidebook.* ©This work and its title are protected by copyright as the property of the author, and all rights under federal, state and international law are thereby reserved to the author's sole control. ©Jennifer Rake-Marona, 2003.


