



Robin Souhrada
Director of Faith Formation

[Visit our website!](#)



Faith Story Spotlight September 2017

At Milestones Ministry
we believe that
"Home is Church too!"



Glossary of Milestones Ministry Resources

The resources at Milestones Ministry continue to grow.

Here is a brief description of each:

Taking Faith Home:

This is an annual resource that provides a different bulletin insert each week during the church year. This enables individuals and families to bring the Christian faith into the home and daily life by experiencing the Word of God through the Four Key Faith Practices that are also used in Milestones Ministry modules and Moments. Using Taking Faith Home with Milestones will help strengthen a congregation's lifelong faith formation ministry. [Click here.](#)

Meet Robin Souhrada Director of Faith Formation Bethlehem Lutheran Church Cedar Falls, Iowa



Home is church, too.

Caring Conversations

- Share a favorite personal story about school.
- What are you worried about for the coming school year?
- What are you excited about for the coming school year?

Devotions

Read Deuteronomy 7:11 (CEV)
So be sure to obey his laws and teaching I am giving you today.

- God made promises to our ancestors. God gave them and us a commandment to keep God's words in our heart. In school, we don't have commandments. We have rules. Talk about how having rules may relate to learning and a new school year.
- What rules do you have in school?
- What happens if you break the rules?
- How do we help others follow the rules?

Service

- Our lives are filled with learning. We learn at school, in the home, in the congregation, on the job, through media, and in the community.
- Take some time to name people who have taught you in the past. What did they teach you? Thank God for this person.
 - Make a commitment in the next month to be of service by helping someone else learn.
 - Be a "buddy" at school or help somebody learn something new.

Rituals and Traditions

Prayer:
Dear Lord, be with those beginning a new school year. Keep them safe. Help them learn, grow, and share your love. Amen.

~ Blessing ~

The love of Jesus be with you on your first day of school and throughout the year. Amen

A signed copy of this resource is available for \$10.00 for everything a person. 10 Blessings for Daily Use

Milestones Ministry Resources Used:

Child and Youth Milestones Manual, Adult Milestones Manual, Milestone Moments, Taking Faith Home, and Taking Faith Home Cards.

Taking Faith Home Cards:

The Taking Faith Home Cards are designed to allow individuals and families to nurture their faith at any time and place! Each card contains a variety of faith-building activities, allowing one to pick and choose what is most beneficial in your current setting.

[Click here for more info.](#)

Milestone Modules: Each module includes a Four Key Faith Practices outline for three different settings: Cross+Generational, Home, and a Follow-Up. Also included are tips for leaders, an appendix with additional suggestions, and a Worship Blessing, and an appendix that includes ideas for outreach.

- **Child and Youth:** There are 18 that can be purchased individually or together in a manual. [Click here to see the titles.](#)
- **Adult :** There are 12 that can be purchased individually or together in a manual. [Click here to see the titles.](#)

Milestone Moments for the Home: There are 17 at this time and we add new ones regularly. These guides are a two-page design that can be used in a small group setting or the home. [Click here to see the titles.](#)

Gifting Stones: If you choose to use a stone as a visual reminder of the Milestone, a stone for gifting has been designed by our potter and artist, Dawn Deines-Christensen for each Milestone module. Other gifting suggestions are also given in each module appendix. [Click here for more information about the Gifting Stones.](#)



Taking Faith Home Message During Worship

Many congregations include a Children's Message time during worship when young children come forward to hear a special message

Robin tells us that she and her pastor, the Rev. Gary Hedding, work together with Milestones, Blessings, and using the Taking Faith Home Bulletin inserts and cards. She says, "It really is such a blessing to be able to work together with Pastor Gary in our Milestones and Blessings Ministry! We really work together on everything. It's our teamwork that brings it all together for which I am grateful!"

A few stories from their congregation:

Blessing of the Backpacks Milestone: A Backpack Blessing page can be seen above. Robin created it from the Milestones Ministry Manual. She makes it into a postcard size card, front and back, so it is easier to send home and/or store in one's backpack. The graphic, "Home is church, too.", and blessing is on one side and the Four Keys [faith practices] are on the other side. The newsletter and announcements let people know when the Blessing of Backpacks will take place. This year it was Sunday, August 13 and included all teachers, students of all ages, professors, administrators, and education staff. They were invited to bring a backpack, satchel, briefcase, or bag to worship for a special beginning-of-the-school-year blessing. The congregation also blesses backpacks filled with supplies from the congregation that go to Lincoln Elementary School.

Pastor Gary tells a Bicycle Blessing story: When Rev. Dr. David Anderson was coaching our congregation in Milestones Ministries, he encouraged the congregation to see our Blessing and Milestone events as an opportunity to reach out into the community. We are blessed to be a blessing to others, so opening our times of celebrating Milestones or Blessings should be moments where we proclaim that God is present for all people, not just for Bethlehem people.

We lived this out when we brought our Bicycle Blessing to the 2nd Annual Cedar Valley Pedal Fest. Pedal Fest draws attention to the amazing bicycle trails we have in Cedar Falls and Waterloo. People from around the state came to enjoy a variety of guided rides. Prior to the very first ride on Saturday, July 1, we hosted our Bicycle Blessing. Around 50 people took part in the service. We had many people who kept a copy of the blessing to be used in cycle team or club gatherings around the state. "I've Been Blessed" stickers were applied to bicycles and many people took some to offer a blessing to children or grandchildren who were not present.

On Sunday, July 2, we again offered the Bicycle Blessing to those who participated in the Faith to Faith Ride, visiting six different faith communities on a 20-mile round trip ride. Again, people from many backgrounds enthusiastically joined in.

We know that God seeks to bless all people in as many ways as possible. Going out into the community for Blessings and Milestones is a way of proclaiming the goodness of God to the whole world.

Pastor Gary tells a story about using Taking Faith Home Cards and Taking Faith Home: A few weeks ago, we tried a different kind of "sermon". We practiced with a Taking Faith Home Card to see what it was like to use as a devotional tool. Frankly, we were nervous. We were asking people to try something very different - have a faith conversation instead of listening to the pastor. What if no one said anything? What if they all looked at the pastor and refused to participate? The silence would be very awkward. Thanks be to God that after a couple of seconds at the first service, everyone turned to someone next to whom they were sitting and started talking about what word jumped out at them from the Bible verse. Then, they talked about why they thought that word might be

about the scripture lesson for the day. Milestones Ministry suggests this time be renamed as Taking Faith Home Time.

Use this as an opportunity to nurture the faith of all present by highlighting some part of Taking Faith Home. Worshipers-children and adults alike--can be encouraged to use faith practices that connect with the Sunday Bible texts. Taking Faith Home Time becomes a way to bring the Sunday morning experience into our daily lives and be blessed by the worship service all week long.

Why not be intentional about taking a few minutes during worship to ask children to come forward and invite all ages to take out the bulletin insert?

One section of Taking Faith Home could be highlighted each week during this time and then the children or everyone together can read the Prayer of the Week or turn to one another and say the blessing.

This is a wonderful way to equip and encourage parents, grandparents and other mentors to live out their role in faith formation with children and youth. This can be supported by having "faith talk" in the congregation so that we can be encouraged to have it in our daily lives. Because we believe that the home is church, too, let's find ways to help people practice faith at home.

important that morning. They then talked about what the Bible text told them about God. After that, they talked about when they had been very weary, and when they were relieved of weariness. They dove in to think about who they knew that might be weary or burdened, and how this Bible verse, "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest", might help them. We then blessed each other with the expectation of resting in God.

The 10:30 service went just as well. Lots of conversation. In addition to that, our Taking Faith Home Card packs went like hotcakes. We ordered more. You can also use the Taking Faith Home bulletin insert. It is formatted just like the Cards, only with a few more suggestions for conversations you might have and services in which you might take part. You don't have to do them all, just what fits for you. Caring conversations, devotions, service, and traditions and rituals are the Four Keys to forming faith. These tools provide guidance for us to practice them just as we did that Sunday morning.



**Bethlehem Lutheran Church's website
can be found here:**

<http://www.bethlehemcf.org/>

"Grow the church by growing people in faith."



Visit our website: www.milestonesministry.org and like us on [Facebook](#) page and join us for conversations on our [Facebook group page](#).

Milestones Ministry, LLC Website - www.milestonesministry.org

David Anderson - danderson@milestonesministry.org

Debbie Streicher - dstreicher@milestonesministry.org

The Milestones Ministry Mission is to provide congregations and households with resources and coaching services to nurture the Christian faith and reach out to others with the love of God in Christ.

STAY CONNECTED

