



Baptism Milestone: The Beginning Point of Nurturing a Faith Life

Desired Outcomes

- Help families and others understand the importance of nurturing a faith life through the gift of baptism.
- Provide the opportunity for the congregation and the community to connect with the baptismal family.
- Affirm the importance of remembering baptism.
- Provide follow up in the home by introducing the Four Keys of practicing faith.



Introduction



Milestones Ministry





Milestones Ministry brings an awareness of the presence of God to individuals of all generations through a vital partnership between home and congregation. Milestones Ministry provides a clear and usable model for congregations, homes, and community to connect faith formation resources with daily life experiences. The rich variety of Milestones Ministry does the essential ministry of the church: promoting Christian faith formation and outreach into the larger community. The outreach element is accentuated when the celebration of milestones is offered for the entire community and not just congregational members.

Milestones Ministry provides a clear and usable model. Individuals and larger households can participate in a way of life that marks special moments and honors them as important to the journey of faith. This model provides the means to implement Vibrant Faith Ministries' vision for passing on faith—a vision that places children of all ages in the center of the church's concern and sees God's redeeming work at play through home, congregation, community, culture, and creation.

Milestones incorporate a simple structure that includes naming, equipping, blessing, gifting, and reinforcing so that the Milestones Ministry event has a greater chance to take deeper root in lifelong faith formation.

At the heart of equipping people for their lifelong faith formation are the Four Keys. These faith practices are central to every milestone and integrated into people's daily lives as well as the life of the local congregation.

The Four Keys:

-  Caring Conversations
-  Devotions
-  Service
-  Rituals and Traditions

These four daily faith practices are simple, doable, and practical. The Four Keys are used to open the imagination of individuals, families, small groups, and congregations with the gospel of Jesus Christ. They provide ways to nurture the Christian faith and reach out to others with the love of God in Christ. They serve as a catalyst for people to wonder about and play with a variety of ways to celebrate and practice the Christian faith in their daily lives.

To maximize its effectiveness, Milestones Ministry includes role modeling of the Four Keys in the congregational setting and incorporates opportunities for a follow-up gathering. The benefits of Milestones Ministry are more deeply rooted in the lives of people when they are able to gather again for a faith formation checkup. Therefore, each Milestones Ministry event offers a follow-up gathering that includes a Four Keys outline.

Milestones Ministry provides a faith milestone as a marker along life's journey that says, "This is something important and God is here, too." It is a faith formation practice for both home and congregation that helps all generations recognize God's presence in everyday life.



Baptism Milestone

Baptism is foundational to a life in Christ. It is through baptism that we are “first received into the Christian community” (Martin Luther). God’s love, forgiveness, and peace come to us through baptism, through water and the word. Baptism is the most natural beginning point in the lifelong process of nurturing faith lives. Baptism does not only bring blessings and provide support to the newly baptized, but to all who participate in this milestone.

This Baptism Milestone is intended to take place prior to the baptism of one or more individuals and is for family, friends, and the larger congregation. It provides that rare opportunity for public and thoughtful conversation about how we, as Christians, live out our baptism and support one another in that daily faith journey.

The Baptism Milestone incorporates a simple structure that includes:





Naming – It is important to recognize and celebrate baptism as an essential step in beginning one’s lifelong faith journey.

Equipping – This milestone provides an opportunity for family, friends, and larger faith communities to experience the foundational baptismal practices of the Four Keys and apply them to the various ages and stages of individuals and households.

Blessing – Prayers for those participating in this milestone provide a special blessing for the baptized as well as family, friends and the entire congregation.

Gifting – You may give a visible item as a physical reminder of this occasion, such as a candle, Baptism Stone or blessing bowl. (See Appendix 1.)

Reinforcing – Follow up after the Baptism Milestone by connecting one more time to tell stories about the baptism and talk about the use of a variety of faith practices in the home. The Baptism Milestone Follow Up is on page 7.

 Caring Conversations	 Devotions	Four Keys for Practicing Faith	 Service	 Rituals and Traditions
--	--	--------------------------------------	--	--





For the Leader

For this milestone event, leaders should plan for the participation of the entire congregation. The congregation and the community are invited and included in a Cross+Generational Event for those being baptized and their family and friends.

This gathering is best done before the actual baptism to provide an opportunity for all ages to be engaged in mutual faith formation together with family, friends, and the soon-to-be baptized.

A follow-up gathering brings this same group together after the baptism to show pictures and tell stories about the baptismal day, plus talk about steps that have been taken to nurture the baptized in their faith life.

Infants through adults glean the benefits of practicing the Four Keys in these two events as a tool for lifelong faith formation.

Invitations can be delivered through newsletters, personal notes, website, and a variety of social media tools. It is often the enthusiastic personal invitation that will result in participation.

It is important to plan ahead for budget, space, and volunteers.

Plan to record your events so that Milestones Ministry traditions can be developed and replicated in the future. Building these traditions is important.

Use the Four Key faith practices in a variety of Baptism Milestone settings to help participants understand every milestone is an important opportunity for their own faith formation.



Planning for this Milestone

- Schedule the events with your pastor to correlate and support the baptism(s).
- Publicize the Baptism Milestone in the congregation several weeks prior to the event via flyers, newsletters, websites, email, etc.
- Schedule time and space for the Baptism Milestone event. If the event is scheduled to take place in the worship space or as an in-home visit, the family will need to participate in the scheduling.
- Order or make the chosen gift to be used as a reminder of this important milestone. (See Appendix 1 for ideas.)
- Send personal invitations to family members and others. (See Appendix 2 for a sample invitation.)
- Find others from the congregation who can help plan this event. The best helpers may be grandparents and/or empty nesters who could offer wonderful encouragement and support for the baptismal families.
- Use this tool as a faith formation resource to reach outside your congregation into the general community. (See Appendix 3 for ideas for outreach.)

+ A Cross+Generational Event

If possible, schedule this event to happen at a special time during the week before the baptism. Include the Blessing of Gifts as a closing. Begin the session by welcoming everyone and thanking them for understanding the importance of this milestone. Take some time to outline this event and verbally remind them of the date and time of the follow-up gathering that will take place to “check-in,” show pictures and tell stories about the baptism. They will also talk about the impact faith practices have had in their lives.

Preparation:

- Prepare meal/snack and assign servers for set up and clean up
- Provide paper and pens/pencils for writing prayers
- Provide childcare, if needed

Four Keys for Practicing Faith Outline:



Caring Conversations

Prior to the meal/snack, invite conversation with these starters:

- Baptism is important to me because...
- One way to support and encourage the faith life of someone who is being baptized is to...
- Tell a story about a baptism you witnessed.



Devotions

Read Scripture prior to meal/snack: Matthew 28:18-19 (CEV)

I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth! Go to the people of all nations and make them my disciples. Baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit...

Take time for conversation about the reading:

- After hearing this verse, the first word that jumps out at me is...
- One hope I have for the one being baptized is...
- When I hear this verse read, it reminds me of...

Say grace and serve meal/snack



Service (following meal/snack)

At tables, ask families to write a baptism prayer. Ask them to write a prayer that they will pray on the morning of the baptism. (Note that the term “family” is intended to include all in attendance, whether they came alone or with others.) The prayer may be very simple. For example:

Dear God, be with our family today as we bring _____ to your house for baptism. Help us all to grow in our faith and faithfulness. Amen.

Blessing of Gifts

(See right column)



Rituals and Traditions

Closing prayer together at the tables:

Dear God, be with us and the baptismal family as _____ will soon be brought to your house for baptism. Help us all to grow together in our faith in the congregation and our homes. Amen.

Bless one another at the tables: “*May you remember your baptism every day.*”

Blessing of Gifts

This blessing takes place during the Cross+Generational Event. It can take place in the same room as the event.

Leader: Friends and family of those soon-to-be baptized, each of you will play an important role in the nurture and support of their faith formation. As we celebrate this step in their faith journey, we encourage you to pray for them, share with them your stories of faith, and bring them with you to worship and to serve, for God has no other hands than yours. We celebrate this next step in your lives and urge you and all of us to continue the faith practices of caring conversation, devotions and service to build rituals and traditions in all our homes as a way of life.

We gather as God’s family with this (these) family/ies to celebrate _____’s baptism and God’s presence with us. We confess that we were born with the desire to serve ourselves, not God. Alone we cannot say no to evil, the devil, and all his empty promises. Let us pray.

We rejoice as we are united to the cross of Christ. Sin cannot destroy us. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, we can say no to evil, the devil, and his empty promises. Embrace God’s grace and forgiveness and worship God. We ask for your guidance in the lives of _____ for a special blessing on these individuals as we celebrate this milestone in their lives.

Families and congregation, I ask that you respond to this prayer by saying, “Rejoice! May the Lord bless you and shower you with the love of Christ.”

Families and congregation:

Rejoice! May the Lord bless you and shower you with the love of Christ.

(The chosen gift is given to those who will be baptized.)

Leader: Lord, we ask that this gift be received as a blessing. May the gift be a remembrance of this occasion to celebrate new beginnings and as a reminder of your never failing love. And may we honor your name through faith, hope, and love. In Jesus’ name we pray, Amen.

(Closing prayer and sending blessing is now done at tables. See left column to continue.)

+ Milestone Event for Small Groups or Home

There are times when celebrating a milestone can be done in a small group setting, or more intimately, in homes. Take time to enjoy a meal or dessert together and to invite conversation using the following outline. You may also wish to use portions of the Cross+Generational Event found in this Baptism Milestone.



Caring Conversations

Begin with conversation:

- What is your favorite activity to do with family and friends?
- Baptism and the Lord's Supper have been referred to as "the mysteries." We will never know everything there is to know about them. What is a question you have about baptism?
- What is something you know about baptism?



Devotions

Read Scripture: Galatians 3:27 (CEV)

And when you were baptized, it was as though you had put on Christ in the same way you put on new clothes.

Take some time to answer these questions:

- Will new clothing be worn for the baptism?
- What is customary dress for baptism in your congregation?
- What word captures your attention in this verse? Why?



Service

Encourage families and those gathered to pray for others. Take time to select a name of someone in the congregation or community to pray for each week. This is a meaningful way to begin a service project that emphasizes the practice of praying as a family. Commit to praying for others nightly. Keep a journal of names and revisit it over time to track prayers.



Rituals and Traditions

Pray together:

Dear Jesus, Thank you for your presence as we gather. Bless each one here and help us in a meaningful way to prepare for a very special event, the baptism of _____, you have given to our care.

(If a gift is being given, present the gift and lay hands on the soon-to-be baptized.)

We ask for a special blessing on this gift. May it be a reminder of your baptism and this time we have spent together on this day the Lord has made.

Close with blessing one another: "Child of God, may you know you are loved."

Commit to choosing a blessing to give to one another every morning or every evening to establish as a tradition in your home.

Resources and tools to encourage faith talk and faith practices in the home are helpful and remind us that home is church, too!

A suggestion for building rituals and traditions in the home:

4 Key Faith Practices Mat



Place a candle in the center

Place a blessing bowl in the center



Add a milestone to the bowl to encourage caring conversations





Baptism Milestone Follow-Up

Encouraging a time to check-in



Leadership Tip

An important step after role modeling the Four Keys in a cross-generational or small group setting is to bless and equip families to continue practicing faith by using the Four Keys in their homes.

The follow-up for the Baptism Milestone is an important one as it brings families together to support one another and build relationships. Bring families and others back together for a follow-up time of talking about the baptismal day and tell about ways they are using the Four Keys at home. Use this as a time to be accountable to one another.

Continue building relationships and facilitating the Four Keys as an intentional step to encourage faith traditions in the congregation and at home.



Serve a meal and/or dessert. Set up necessary equipment or tables for showing pictures of the baptism that took place. Use the following outline to engage the group in conversation and to support relationships.



Caring Conversations

In small groups, answer these questions:

- Is there a special time set apart during the day when you talk to one another about your day at home?
- Is there something you do—or can do—every day to remind you of your baptism?

As a large group, take time to show pictures of the baptism and tell a story related to the baptism.



Devotions

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-13 (CEV)

The body of Christ has many different parts, just as any other body does. Some of us are Jews, and others are Gentiles. Some of us are slaves, and others are free. But God's Spirit baptized each of us and made us part of the body of Christ. Now we each drink from that same Spirit.

Take a minute to reflect on the verse:

In what ways do we each drink from the same Spirit?

Is there something about the baptism you witnessed that relates to this verse?



Service

Ask families and others to tell about the faith traditions they are developing. What morning and evening prayers are they praying? How has their effort affected their personal faith journeys? Is there a special resource being used? Is there a story you could tell others about the traditions you are establishing that could help other families?



Rituals and Traditions

Closing prayer (can be done at tables):

Lord, we thank you for the forgiveness of sins and the power of new life in Christ that you have given each of us in baptism.

Thank you for _____ and bless _____ today and forevermore. Amen.

Bless one another: *"May you know you are part of the body of Christ."*



+

Appendix & Gift Ideas



+

5

FIVE PRINCIPLES

for living and passing on faith

1. Faith is formed by the power of the Holy Spirit through personal trusted relationships – often in our own homes.
2. The church is a living partnership between the ministry of the congregation and ministry of the home.
3. Where Christ is present in faith, the home is church, too.
4. Faith is caught more than it is taught.
5. If we want Christian children and youth, we need Christian adults.

4

FOUR KEYS

for practicing faith

1. Caring Conversations
2. Devotions
3. Service
4. Rituals and Traditions

3

THREE CHARACTERISTICS

for Christians

1. Authentic
2. Available
3. Affirming

+ Appendix 1 – Baptism Milestone

Underlined
resources
are active
links

Ideas for “Gifting:”



Baptism Stone – Individual stone for a blessing bowl.

Candle – If candles were not given during baptism, gift a candle as a reminder of this occasion that can be used in the home for prayer times and/or lit each year at this same time as a reminder of baptism.

Water Come Down – by Walter Wangerin, Jr. with Gerardo Suzán, Illustrator

What a meaningful keepsake for your child to receive on his or her baptism day or baptism anniversary! If given as a gift on the child’s baptism day, make sure to have your family, sponsors, pastors and even special congregation members sign the book as a remembrance.

Come Right in, You’re Home – by Marie Sundet

Whether given as a meaningful gift, or used in a Sunday school setting, this book answers all of your child’s questions about baptism. In addition, the blank spaces on the laminated pages make it easy for your child to add his or her own artwork or special photos.

Blessing Bowl – Use this bowl to establish a ritual of filling the bowl with water and dipping a finger in to bless another with the sign of the cross.

Four Key Mat – Gift the mat to use as a centerpiece in the home for a candle or blessing bowl as a reminder of baptism and as an encouragement for daily faith practices at home.

Additional Resources from Milestones Ministry:

FaithTalk® Cards – Are designed as a tool to provide meaningful conversations. There are 192 cards divided in to 4 categories of 48 cards each. The categories are: Memories, Etchings, Values, and Actions.

For Everything a Season – Rituals are an important part of a vibrant family life. Make both the ordinary and extraordinary events in your family more intentionally sacred by honoring them with the simple blessing rituals featured in this book. This wonderful resource provides you with a blessing for life’s most meaningful moments!

Blessing Bowl and Mat for Meaningful Moments – This beautiful, handcrafted bowl not only adds a lovely decorative touch to any home, but also holds special meaning to the family that owns it. Milestones Blessing Bowls are designed to remind us of those meaningful moments that make up our lives.

Blessing Bowl for Congregational Milestones – The Congregational Milestones Blessing Bowl is a great way to celebrate each important milestone in the congregation. The hand-painted stones help visually remind congregations of the significance of a child’s faith milestones, such as baptism, entering Sunday school, first communion, confirmation, and graduation.

Individual Milestones – A faith milestone is a marker along life’s journey that says, “This is something important and God is here, too.” Marking a milestone is a biblically-based spiritual practice in both home and congregation that helps all generations recognize God’s presence in all of life.

Additional Stones – The bowls and stones for Milestones Ministry, LLC are designed, handcrafted, and painted by artist Dawn Deines-Christensen of Prairie Patterns. These stones make wonderful gifts as reminders of special, meaningful moments in our lives.

Taking Faith Home Bulletin Inserts – Spark interesting conversations using this lectionary-based Four Keys tool for the home.

Go to **Milestones Ministry, LLC** website and look under the Toolbox tab for more ideas. www.milestonesministry.org



+ Appendix 2 – Baptism Milestone

(Sample Invitation):

Dear _____,

The baptism of _____ will take place on _____.

Prior to this day, we will host a gathering for all being baptized, their family and friends.

You are invited to come and help prepare for the baptism of _____ on [date and time]. We are excited about celebrating this special time of preparation and would like to invite you to the Baptism Milestone event. It is a way for the larger faith community to support the newly baptized and their families in this lifelong journey of faith. We hope you can join us for this event that will take place on _____.

Come enjoy meaningful time together, have caring conversations with family and friends, learn about and/or review the importance of baptism, and take time to pray for those being baptized. We will include a special blessing to further encourage _____ in his/her walk of faith.

We look forward to this special time together.
Please RSVP to [name/phone/email] before [date].

+ Appendix 3 – Baptism Milestone

A Tool for Outreach:

Milestones Ministry provides a clear and usable model for congregations, homes, and communities to connect faith formation resources with daily life experience. Outreach into the community is a major gift of Milestones Ministry. This Milestone is written with the larger community in mind and is part of a lifelong faith formation ministry that can serve and bless other people besides the immediate congregational members. As your congregational leaders make plans to implement this milestone celebration, please consider the outreach ideas presented below as ways to reach out to those in the surrounding neighborhood and bless them with the life and faith of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Ways to Support Faith Formation:

- **Start early in life**
(cross+generational and including all ages is the goal)
- **Involve faith practices**
(the Four Keys model for practicing faith is embedded in all the resources)
- **Be relational**
(faith is formed through personal interactions)
- **Promote Christian hospitality**
(welcome all with food, warm greetings, and smiles)
- **Have fun, fun, fun!**
(people thirst to return to joyful settings)
- **Involve everyone**
(all ages doing ministry grows faith lives)

Using this Module as Outreach...

- **Leads** the church to include those not immediately considered as the ones who benefit from the ministry of a local congregation
- **Adds** creative and compassionate imagination about how to reach a larger audience
- **Includes** surrounding neighborhoods and larger communities
- **Uses** social media to reach more people including family and friends living in another state or country
- **Uses** the Milestone event to reach out to those who are not present at a larger group event by providing an outline for the home

Suggestions for Using within the Congregation and Beyond:

- Announce the baptism in the life of the congregation before and after the baptism to remind members to pray for the newly baptized individual or group of individuals.
- Give the newly baptized a FaithChest and invite family and friends to bring an item to place in the chest as a tool for practicing faith in the home. (For Everything a Season, FaithTalk cards, storybook Bible, or a prayer cube)
- If the Cross+Generational event does not take place on the same day as the Blessing during worship found on page 5, host a reception after the worship service and invite family and friends to get to know the one being baptized.
- Consider doing the baptismal service outside the sanctuary and in a more public setting like a park, lake, or river.
- Support the soon-to-be baptized by equipping family, friends, and sponsors with resources that help them teach and practice the Christian faith. Place a copy of the Milestone Event for the Home in their hands found on page 6 and encourage them to use it with family and friends in their home before the baptism.
- Give baptismal sponsors/godparents resources to understand their role as a faith mentor over the years.
- Appoint a congregational sponsor for each baptized person. Many times sponsors who are not members of the congregation will find it difficult to help the baptized participate as an active member in the congregation.
- Give the baptized and family an outline using the Four Keys for practicing faith to use in the home with family and friends following the baptism. See Appendix 4.

+ Appendix 4 – Baptism Milestone

Taken from the appendix (page 184) of the book [Vibrant Faith in the Congregation](#) by David W. Anderson

For Those Who Attended a Baptism or Dedication

In the days following the baptism or dedication of a friend or family member, consider the following Four Key faith practices:

Caring Conversation

Discuss how you can support the recently baptized or dedicated person(s). How can you support them and their family and friends on their journey of faith?

Tell the story of your baptism or dedication. What do you remember? What have you been told about it? Who was present with you?

Baptisms and dedications call upon the work and will of God to raise people of Christian faith. What does it mean to you that faith itself is a gift of God?

Devotions

- Read the story of the baptisms of the Philippian jailor and his household (Acts 16:25-34).
- Read the story of Jesus' naming and being presented in the temple by his parents (Luke 2:21-35).
- Read Isaiah 43:1-7.

Pray this prayer

Dear God, you call us by name and claim us as your sons and daughters. Come Holy Spirit, renew us in faith and in good courage as your disciples that we may bring your message of grace, mercy, healing, and salvation to all. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Service

- Jesus says that to follow him is to be a servant (see Mark 10:41-45). How do you think God has gifted you to serve others?
- Encourage the newly baptized and the families of children recently dedicated or baptized in living out the faith through Christian worship and fellowship.
- As a follower of Jesus, do a simple act of service for someone you do not know well.

Rituals and Traditions

Dip your hand into a bowl of water and consider how this vital element in creation is used as a sign of baptism. You may want to make the sign of the cross on your forehead or over your chest.

Prior to attending a worship service, pray for those who have been entrusted with the leadership of the worship service. Pray that the Spirit of Christ will be their source of wisdom, faithfulness, and witness.