

Guiding Principles for Faith Formation in  
**Discipleship Academy**  
St. Luke Lutheran

For many of us, this process of teaching 6th-8th graders have often been called “Confirmation,” but in 2015 we decided to make a change to that process and title. We wanted our students to have ownership over their group. And we believe that “Discipleship Academy”

makes our goal even more clear:

We (the church and families together) are in the process of forming the next generation of disciples. Just like any of us, our students need time set aside to learn about the Bible, time for Fellowship, time for Worship, and time for Prayer.

Our program strives to include all four of these elements.

### **Mission Statement**

St. Luke’s Mission Statement is as profound as it is simple.

Three words:

*Gather. Empower. Serve.*

We believe everything we do is about **Gathering** people regardless of tradition, history, or any other factor used to separate. The Bible bears witness to a God who continually gathers “other sheep” into the fold (Jesus’ words in John 10:16) . Likewise, once there, those people need to be **Empowered** to be the active, living, loving presence of God that the early Christians called “the Body of Christ” (Ephesians 4:11-12) \*. Finally, this Body of Christ, like any body, is most alive when it is moving. We then **Serve** others as a part of this movement of love in the world.

### **Core Values**

CHRIST. WELCOME. SUPPORT. JOY. SERVICE.

These core values are at the heart of St. Luke’s ministry, and as such, at the heart of our Discipleship Academy program as well. Learn more about them by visiting the church website ([www.stluke-slinger.org](http://www.stluke-slinger.org)) and looking under the “Who We Are” tab.

### **“Not (just) Religion, but Relationship”**

Jesus didn’t come to start a religion; he came to repair the relationship between humanity and God. In fact, his greatest conflicts were with the profoundly religious who kept every letter of the law – see Matthew 23:23. For this reason, the Discipleship Academy Program is intentionally focused on helping students build relationships with each other, with their Small Group Leaders and other Adult Mentors, and most importantly with God. Bible content will still be taught, but will be done so within the

context of strong relationships. We take to heart the wisdom that “you have to open the kid before you open the book,” and so we seek to create an environment that fosters strong mentoring and peer relationships as fertile ground for faith to grow.

### **Wonder. Discovery. Passion.**

These three words will shape our entire year of Discipleship Academy.

Wonder – developing the students’ relationship with God.

Discovery – assisting the students in learning about themselves and their gifts.

Passion – developing the students’ relationships with each other and the world that needs their gifts.

### **“Not (just) Information, but Inspiration”**

If you think back to when you were a child in school, you likely remember very few individual classroom lessons. What you are more likely to remember is how you *felt*, your relationship with your teacher, and the classroom environment.

Likewise, it is important for us to recognize that Jesus’ own teaching style was decidedly *not* scholastic. Followers were not trained in classroom lessons, but taught in parables (creative stories told using images from everyday life – see Mark 4:34). They also did not learn by studying; they learned by *doing*. We believe modern churches would do well to recognize this ancient dynamic.

For these reasons, Bible stories will be taught in ways that make use of images from modern culture, and will be interactive. The main goal is to create an environment in which the student will be not just informed but in-spired (which literally means “breathed into”) by God’s Spirit.

### **The Involvement of Parents**

If you think about it, none of you could teach your child to drive without having a driver’s license yourself. For this reason, we believe the spiritual health of the whole family is incredibly important to the spiritual health of the student. Countless studies have shown that the most effective Faith Formation programs are those that understand that “spirituality” is a marriage of church and home. Likewise, throughout history, Jewish and Christian values have been most effectively taught at home, by the parents (see Deuteronomy 11:18-19).

We know that many aren’t sure where to begin with this. Don’t worry! You are not alone! We want to partner with you in this work. We encourage you to get to know your child’s Small Group Leader. Inform them about important events in your child’s life. Invite them to significant milestones or even just the piano recital. As often as possible, worship together as a family. Lastly; make use of the resources sent to you before or after each class. We intend to give you simple tools to discuss faith with your child in a way that isn’t overwhelming for already-busy families.