

MIDDLE SCHOOL MINISTRY HANDBOOK

2025/2026



**A toolbox of knowledge and skills
for young disciples of Christ**



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MIDDLE SCHOOL MINISTRY: A FAMILY EXPERIENCE AT RLC

At baptism, parents, sponsors, and members of the congregation receive God's promises and make promises to be God's instruments in nurturing the faith of the one baptized. Confirmation is one part of that lifelong sharing of God's gifts. Young people at this stage prepare to make their profession of faith in their own expressions and be commissioned into full participation in congregational life.

"Confirmation is a custom of the Church and not a sacrament. It links the catechumens to their baptism, celebrates the reception of the Lord's Word among them and, in cases where the candidates have not yet communed, welcomes them to the Lord's Table."
(Lutheran Service Book Agenda)

At confirmation, a young Christian declares that he or she has been baptized, confesses the faith, and shares in communion with Christ and His Church.

MISSION AND VISION OF CONFIRMATION AT RLC

Confirmation provides a toolbox of equipping, modeling, and encouraging that promotes a lifestyle of following Jesus.

At Resurrection Lutheran Church (RLC), confirmation is not an education exercise that ends in a graduation. Rather, confirmation is a time for young people to immerse themselves in the Holy Scriptures, intentionally experience various aspects of congregational life, and seek the guiding of the Holy Spirit for confirming them in their faith as they say "yes" to the confession others made on their behalf at their baptism and are received as confirmed members of RLC.

What does "confirmed membership" look like for a young person? As with adults, it will vary according to spiritual gifts and areas of interest and opportunity as they participate in the following areas of congregational life:

Worship

God gathers us into this faith community both to receive His gifts and to share them with others. Congregational life flows in all aspects from this central calling to gather regularly and receive life in Christ to the fullest. Confirmation students will not only worship regularly but will be encouraged to consider service in worship as musicians, worship assistants, technicians, ushers, and greeters as their giftedness directs.

Biblical Equipping

Gathering around God's Word in regular activities affirms our identity as God's sons and daughters. His Word grounds our understanding of essential components of faith. We keep growing, learning, grappling, and knowing Christ more. Regular devotions--both individually and with others--allows God's Word to give our lives meaning and purpose wherever we might be.

Post-confirmation experiences include leadership roles in sharing their faith with our youngest members. Opportunities for such leadership await confirmed youth in Vacation Bible School, Sunday School and other various settings such as RLC's High School Ministry, retreats, and missional trip opportunities to name a few.

Fellowship

Developing Christ-centered relationships with family members, peers, church staff, and adult mentors connects families to each other and moves them into the next phase of congregational life together. Students have opportunities to regularly build community through Confirmation, retreats, middle school youth group, and service events. Post-confirmation experiences include high school youth group, yearly retreats, the tri-annual Youth Gathering, and leadership opportunities to work with the younger members of our RLC family.

Missional Service Ministry

Families are provided with opportunities to reach out in Christian service together in their homes, schools, church, community, and world. Jesus tells us in Acts 1:8, "...and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all of Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." This applies to us! As Christians, we live out our faith in service to others and share our faith with members of our family, neighbors, and friends.

HOME-CENTERED, CHURCH-SUPPORTED EXPERIENCE

Hmmm, sounds good, but what exactly does it mean?

Involving and Affirming:

Parents continue to have the greatest influence nurturing the faith of youth. RLC is here to equip parents, sponsors, members of the congregation and youth as they live out foundational promises made at baptism. **Equipping parents to be the primary faith nurturer in a child's life, especially as a child grows into young adulthood, builds a Scriptural framework for Christian education that accords with God's own plan for us (Deuteronomy 6:6-7).**

Parental and family involvement is necessary and part of God's plan for your student's faith life. The classroom portion of the student's learning is only one element. Worshiping as a family, talking about the sermon and Bible readings, Sunday School, volunteering, at-home projects, life situations, and so much more all help shape the discipleship of the student and are a vital part of your faith journey.

Learning, Celebrating, and Promoting:

Parents will enjoy networking with others in the church and community who know firsthand the joys and challenges of adolescent family life.

Intergenerational education and face-to-face missional service help us all to recognize youth as the church of today, gifted from birth for service in God's kingdom.

RLC's confirmation experience is one of many tools God provides parents as they live out their God-given primary role in nurturing the faith of their family. **Staff and lay leaders serve as facilitators and partners for parents to participate with their child in the total confirmation experience.**

TO THE STUDENT

What is confirmation, anyway?

It is the time when you – not your parents or friends – **are confirmed in God's gift of faith** given to you at your baptism.

Why confirmation now?

You are growing in your faith through a special time of **discovery** of beliefs, **priorities**, and **values** for yourself. Peer pressures, educational priorities, sports, clubs, and seemingly endless other activities and events are going to compete for your time and attention. Therefore, now is a time for you and your family to consider carefully:

- God's promises and gifts you received at your baptism.
- How your gift of faith provides for **all areas** of your life.
- How God is blessing you to serve in His kingdom now and in the future.

What is expected of me?

As a maturing young person, you are expected to be responsible for your learning with lots of help from your parents and class leaders. Important components of your responsibilities include:

- Active, regular participation in worship and Bible study at RLC.
- Not more than 7 excused absences (25%) from in-person Confirmation classes
- Complete sermon notes (10 per year). Discuss sermon and worship experience with your family on a regular basis.
- Participate in missional service projects (10 hours per year).
- Attend Middle School Youth retreat
- Give your personal 100% and make it a lifestyle.
- Respect yourself, other people, and property.
- Encourage others. We laugh "with" not "at" others.

How to make the most of confirmation?

- Be on time for classes. Communicate to your leader days you might be late or miss.
- Be ready with your Bible, Catechism, folder, highlighter, pen/pencil.
- Bring your best attitude, assignments, and questions.

TO THE PARENTS/GUARDIANS

Holy Scripture gives parents the primary responsibility of nurturing their student's faith. As partners with you in this "home centered, church supported" confirmation ministry, we thank you for putting this God-given responsibility into action. While pastors and youth leaders will actively engage with a congregation's children and youth to assist in the process of their faith formation, continued research indicates that parents know their family members best and have the most influence in the development of their student's faith. Ministry staff are here to equip you.

Many parents are surprised to find that Martin Luther wrote his primary teaching tool for biblical doctrine, Luther's Small Catechism, for parents, not pastors or church professionals. As you grow in your role as faith nurturers of your family, we are pleased to invite you to join in confirmation ministry in an active, committed role. We ask that all parents attend class with their students on the last Wednesday of every month. This provides an opportunity for you to grow with your student and lead by example in your faith walk.

Confirmation is simply too important to do without you! When you take your children home, **ask about the lessons they learned** and talk about it on the way home.

Informal discussions of classroom topics that follow class remind them that you are on this faith journey together as you encourage your youth to bring questions and insights to the next class session.

If you ever have questions about what your student is learning in class or anything else about our Christian faith, please do not hesitate to reach out to one of the pastors!

In order for your family to get lasting impact for faith nurture, please:

- **Participate** in worship and Bible classes outside of Confirmation instruction regularly – actions speak louder than words.
- **Attend** Confirmation class with your student the last Wednesday of every month.
- **Pray** for all youth, parents, and class leaders regularly.
- Ensure that your youth **arrives on time**.
- Make sure **students have materials needed** – check with class leaders.
- **Trust** God to keep His baptismal promises given to your family members.
- **Learn** with your student as you review class notes and study God's Word together.
- **Reach out** to pastor Zach class content if your student must miss a class.
- **Contact** your student's teacher when your child will miss class.

WHO ARE YOUR FIVE?

God has created us to be in a community. All throughout the Bible, we see different illustrations used to describe the people of God...

- Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12-31)
- Household of God (Ephesians 2:19-22)
- Flock of the Good Shepherd (John 10:1-18)
- Nation of God (1 Peter 2:9)
- Bride of Christ (Revelation 21:2)
- Family of God (Mark 3:33-35)
- Vine of the Father (John 15:1-17)

These are just a few of the multitude of creative ways that God uses to describe the incredible way He brings His people into community. And that is what makes this so amazing! God doesn't just bring us into relationship with Him (though that alone is something to celebrate). When we are baptized into God's name and into relationship with Him, He brings us into relationship with His entire Church! You can't have God without His Church, they are intimately and eternally connected.

So, who are your five? Who are your student's five? Studies show (*Sticky Faith* by Kara Powell) that if we truly want our students, youth, and children to stay in the church they need five people to walk with them in their faith journey. These are five people outside the assumed circles. Not pastors, not youth workers, not family members, but five different people that know your student, are invested in their life, and love them on their faith journey.

We encourage you to think about who your student's five are and we want to work with you to identify these five or to find folks at RLC who could be a part of your five. As part of your eternal family, we want to walk with you in this part of your faith journey, support you with the loving arms of the Church, through five fellow disciples that God has for you.

MISSIONAL SERVICE COMPONENT

"Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death – even death on a cross!" Philippians 2:4-8

Considering the gifts poured out to us at baptism, we are reminded that **God blesses us to be a blessing to others**. Families are encouraged to seek opportunities to serve together in neighborhood, school, community, national, and international service projects. Missional service is one way to show God's love to others. Face-to-face service is strongly encouraged. It is nice to mow someone's lawn, but also remember that if you honor the person you serve in the way you talk to them, are sure to give your best, and are proud of what you are able to do, you are personally bringing God's love to them in a special way.

After completing each act of service, please fill out the "Service Project" card found near the entrance of each worship location. For worship in the main sanctuary, check the last mailbox on the left near the door entering the Narthex. For worship in the Family Life Center, look on the Children's Table in the lobby of the FLC. Completed cards should be returned to the "Completed Card" location near the spot where you pick up the blank cards.

Parents are encouraged to help youth seek a variety of service project options. Please see the list of suggested missional service activities below for ideas. You may also ask Pastor Zach or Ms. Jenny if you are wondering about the suitability of any service idea.

SUGGESTED MISSIONAL SERVICE ACTIVITIES

The Middle School Ministry of RLC provides a multitude of service opportunities throughout the year. In addition, look for ways you can serve others at home, school, in your neighborhood, with clubs or teams, or any areas of involvement.

Here are some suggestions:

Community/Neighborhood

- Scout Projects
- Neighborhood Clean-Up
- Volunteering at School
- Doing a favor/small task for a neighbor, without pay
- Food and Clothing Drives (drop-off for donations gathered is in the church hallway near the member mailboxes)

Family/Home/School

- Helping Relatives (grandparents, etc.)
- Leading/Reading Family Devotions
- Assisting with a task at home normally assigned to someone else

RLC/Church

- To serve as a greeter, usher, lay reader, slide tech, or live stream tech contact the following servant leaders
 - 6:00 pm - Lori Jannings (ljannings@att.net)
 - 8:00 am - Brenda Peterson (tarheelbsp@gmail.com)
 - 9:30 am - Dara Linn (daralinn02@gmail.com)
 - 11:00 am - Suzi Heffner (suziheffner@gmail.com)
- Delivery of devotional materials or other items to shut-ins – Jamee Thieme (jameethi39@gmail.com)
- Yardwork/Gardening – Garrett Nigg (garett.douglas@rlcary.org)
- Vocalist or Musician – Bob Unger (robert.unger@rlcary.org) or Chris Reed (bluejeansstudios@gmail.com)
- Children's Ministry Events – Erika Hulse (erika.hulse@rlcary.org)
- Coffee House (2nd Friday of the Month) – Brenda Peterson (tarheelbsp@gmail.com)
- Blind Ministry (Last Friday of the Month) – Annette Langefeld-Kennedy (annett_langefeld@hotmail.com)

SERMON NOTES

...Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. How then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?"

(Romans 10:13-14)

As we grow in our hearing of God's preached Word, sermon notes help develop a discerning attitude and a deeper sense of active participation (active listening) in our worship.

Sermon notes challenge learners to listen to sermons with a proper distinction between God's Law and God's Gospel as they receive God's preached Word and apply it to daily life.

For your convenience in completing sermon notes, blank forms will be available in the mailboxes next to the door leading into the Narthex and on the children's table in the Family Life Center.

Be sure to include all information written clearly. Return completed forms to the appropriate mailbox next to where the blank forms are found. They will be returned to the family mailbox with notes to the student by Anne Altieri. If you are unable to return completed sermon notes in person, you may also email them to Anne at anne.n.altieri@gmail.com.

It is desired for families to make intentional efforts to discuss their worship experience together. Discuss the sermon, the readings, and the hymns or songs. Each family member should share their questions and input.

SERMON NOTES

Name: _____

Date of Sermon: _____

Sermon Title: _____

Sunday of the Church Year: _____

Bible Passage Used for the Sermon: _____

Preaching Pastor's Name: _____

A. Give a brief summary of how the **Law** was proclaimed in the sermon in two or three sentences (How did the message challenge you or show you your need for God's love and forgiveness in Christ?):

B. Briefly summarize how the **Gospel** was proclaimed in the sermon in two or three sentences. (How did the message bring you God's comfort?):

C. How is the message of this sermon applied to your life today (two or three sentences):

THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN LAW AND GOSPEL

The **Law** teaches what we are to do and not to do;
The **Gospel** teaches what God has done for our Salvation.
~ Psalm 32:1-5

The **Law** shows us our sin and the wrath of God;
The **Gospel** shows us our Savior and the grace of God.
~ Romans 3:21-24

The **Law** exposes the works of our sinful flesh;
The **Gospel** reveals the works of Jesus, and the gift of His holy flesh and blood.
~ Ephesians 2:1-9, 5:25-27

The **Law** must be proclaimed to all people, but especially to impenitent sinners;
The **Gospel** must be proclaimed to sinners who are troubled in their minds because of their sins.
~ Romans 10:4; Galatians 3:13

The **Law** delivers condemnation and death;
The **Gospel** bestows the gift of forgiveness and life.
~ Colossians 1:13-14

The **Law** declares us to be guilty according to our sinful nature;
The **Gospel** declares us to be innocent and holy according to the innocence of Jesus.
~ 1 Peter 1:18-19

The **Law** produces accusations, excuses, and works-righteousness;
The **Gospel** produces faith, thankfulness, and freedom.
~ Romans 10:14-17; Matthew 11:28

YEAR 2 EXPRESSION OF FAITH

Now that you are in your last year of confirmation, it's time to affirm what you believe. Your parents made promises at your baptism, but now is your opportunity to stand up, stand firm, and declare how God has shaped your life. Using the knowledge that you have gained, the experiences you've shared, and the maturity as you get older, reflect on these questions:

How is God the center of your life?

How do you share your faith?

How is God leading you?

The 2nd Year Confirmation Faith Affirmation is a project you will complete to personally reflect on those questions and share your reflections with the congregation. You will start by researching several Bible verses and eventually choose a verse which will be your confirmation verse. There are three assignments that will help formulate thoughts for writing final draft. Each part of the assignment is IMPORTANT, as we break every step down for you. Finally, you will have the option to speak in front of the congregation at the service of your choosing, affirming your faith, and making a public effort to share what you believe. Or you can share a talent/gift that God has given you and tell or demonstrate how you can use this gift to serve God and others. Don't worry, we'll be right there along with your parents to guide and support you along the way!

CONFIRMATION CLASS SCHEDULE (2025-2026, FALL)

<u>Date</u>	<u>Lesson Content</u>	<u>Main Topic</u>
September 3	Introduction	What Are We Doing Here?
September 10	The Reformation	Why Does It Matter?
September 12-14	Confirmation Retreat	Who Is God And What Is He Doing?
September 17	10 Commandments	Why Do They Matter?
September 24	10 Commandments	1 st Table, Commandments 1-3
October 1	10 Commandments	2 nd Table, Introduction
October 8	10 Commandments	2 nd Table, Commandments 4-5
October 15	10 Commandments	2 nd Table, Commandments 6-7
October 22	10 Commandments	2 nd Table, 8-10
October 29	Apostles' Creed	Why Does It Matter?
November 5	Apostles' Creed	1 st Article, God the Father
November 12	Apostles' Creed	2 nd Article, God the Son
November 19	Apostles' Creed	2 nd Article, God the Son
November 26	Happy Thanksgiving!	No Class
December 3	Apostles' Creed	3 rd Article, God the Holy Spirit
December 10	Lord's Prayer	Why Does It Matter?
December 17	Break Out	Bible Verses That Tell My Story
December 24-December 31	God's gift of a Savior is ours! / A New Year of God's Grace (No Class)	

CONFIRMATION CLASS SCHEDULE

(2025–2026, SPRING)

<u>Date</u>	<u>Lesson Content</u>	<u>Main Topic</u>
January 7	Lord's Prayer	Petitions 1-2
January 14	Lord's Prayer	Petitions 3-4
January 21	Lord's Prayer	Petition 5
January 28	Lord's Prayer	Petitions 6-7
February 4	Lord's Prayer	Petition 8
February 11	Break Out	Themes To Know
February 18	Ash Wednesday	No Class
February 25	Means of Grace	Why Do They Matter?
March 4	Means of Grace: Baptism	Where Does It Come From?
March 11	Means of Grace: Baptism	What Does It Do?
March 18	Means of Grace: Communion	Where Does It Come From?
March 25	Means of Grace: Communion	What Does It Do?
April 1	Holy Week	No Class
April 8	Break Out	How Do I Live My Faith?
April 15	Break Out	How Do I Share My Faith?
April 22	Faith Statements	Practice Presentations
April 29	Confirmation Banquet	
May 3	Confirmation Sunday	

HOW WILL WE STAY INFORMED?

The most current confirmation information is available on the Resurrection Lutheran Church website, www.rlcary.org, under Ministries. (rlcary.org/ministries/confirmation). Instructors may also use Dropbox or One Drive to share class notes, videos, info etc. Contact Pastor Zach or Ms. Jenny if you have any questions. We know people have busy schedules and so we will strive to “over” communicate the message for clarity.

Occasionally, information is included in the Weekly Announcements, which are emailed every Friday, and the Monthly Newsletter, emailed at the beginning of each month. Hard copies for both are available at the Information Centers in the Narthex and Family Life Center lobby.

Class specific emails are sent through Resurrection Church Builder (RCB). If you are not receiving emails or need assistance with RCB, please contact the church office at office@rlcary.org or 919-851-7248.

INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY

We will have class unless otherwise noted!

If classes are canceled, emails from teachers will be sent through RCB. Resurrection follows Wake County schools closure information. Class will not meet at RLC on the evenings that Wake County schools close. **HOWEVER**, your class Instructor may request that classes meet at the regular time on Zoom. Look for the emails from your instructors on class meeting times regardless of Wake County school decisions to ensure complete information.

Church-wide closing notices are available via recording at 919-851-7248, ext. 42, on the homepage of the website at www.rlcary.org, through RCB email, and on social media (Facebook and Instagram).

RLC CONTACTS

Pastor Jonathan Blanke, Senior Pastor: jonathan.blanke@rlcary.org

Pastor Zach Sarrault, Associate Pastor: zach.sarrault@rlcary.org

Pastor Alan Shaw, Assistant Pastor for Coaching/Family Health:
alan.shaw@rlcary.org

Jenny Piontek, Youth Director: jenny.piontek@rlcary.org

Erika Hulse, Children's Ministry Director: erika.hulse@rlcary.org

Bob Unger, Director of Music Ministries: robert.unger@rlcary.org

Christopher Reed, Praise Worship Leader: bluejeansstudios@gmail.com

Margaret Hyatt, Director of Operations: margaret.hyatt@rlcary.org

Susan Moore, Communications Specialist: susan.moore@rlcary.org

Linda Merrill, Office Assistant: linda.merrill@rlcary.org

Garett Nigg, Facilities Manager: garett.douglas@rlcary.org

Diane Hooper, Preschool Director: director@rlpcary.org

Robin Hester, RLS Principal: robinhester@rlscary.org

ABOUT US

Resurrection Lutheran Church has been joyfully serving and ministering to the western Wake County area since 1978. We are part of the larger Christian witness of the Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod, Southeastern District, with over 400 in worship each weekend in four services.

Since 1984, our **Resurrection Lutheran Preschool** has provided Christian education to nurture hundreds of our young children.

Since 2002, our **Resurrection Lutheran School**, an academically focused, dually accredited Jr. K-8 school, has provided a Christian education as a Christ-centered alternative to public school.

Resurrection has a growing program of children, teen, and adult education. We offer trained lay caregivers known as Stephen Ministers to support us in our Christian journey. Among the local care ministries we support are Families Together, Dorcas, Meals on Wheels, Safe Families for Children, Sleep in Heavenly Peace, and our own monthly Coffeehouse ministry for those with special needs, and Outreach to the Blind for those with visual impairments.

There are many opportunities to connect, serve, learn, and grow at RLC. We encourage you to find areas of interest that best suit your natural gifts and join us as *we reach out with the love of Christ, **by grace, through faith, for service.***

WORSHIP

Saturday | 6:00 pm

Sunday | 8:00, 9:30, 11:00 am

