

2019 Sr. Youth Gathering Sectionals Preview

Topic: Development/Intentional Development

Building on our foundation to further grow in our relationship with God

What does it mean to not just “live life” but to live “life intentionally”? At the core of our decisions, habits, motives, goals, and desires are our values; yet, for so many people their values go undefined, unchecked or unrealized. In our time together we will look at not just what our values are but more importantly what are the values of Jesus and how can we live through those values to discover greatest potential for this life?



Pastor Ben Johnson

My role at Gloria Dei is to help lead people in becoming more like Jesus. Through our worship services, CORE classes, life groups, and service opportunities my desire is that as people get connected and engaged they will see that following Jesus is an awesome adventure and is best done with others.

I am constantly amazed at the depth of God's love for each and every person on the face of this earth. To think that I was in the mind and heart of Jesus when He laid His life down on my behalf truly makes my heart and head spin. In many ways I feel churches have made following Jesus way too complicated. At the end of the day it comes down to loving God and loving other people in the same way that Jesus loves you. The grace and love of Jesus is truly the greatest and craziest thing of all time!

Topic: Empowerment

We are not alone when our life weathers the storms



Pastor Matt Krause

Empowering disciples is an important part of Jesus' ministry. In our 45 minutes together, we will ask the question “What is Jesus empowering you to do as His Disciple?” We will focus on how Jesus built a discipling culture and how we can imitate the foundation He laid. As we lean on this foundation, we will see the practical ways the Holy Spirit empowers us to impact others where we live, work, and play.

I'm Pastor Matt Krause, Family Life Pastor at Faith Lutheran Church in Adel, Iowa. I have been at Faith Lutheran for 6 years. Christ has blessed me with a wonderful family. My wife Courtney and I have 3 wonderful children: Ella 8, Evan 6, Eli 3. My passion is connecting people to Jesus by helping them see that through God's Word He empowers all of us to influence people where we work, live, and play. When we take a step back, it is truly amazing to see how God is working through us. Outside of church, I enjoy watching the St. Louis Cardinals, Minnesota Vikings, and going to Iowa State football and basketball games.

Topic: Confidence

We are confident in our relationship with God. Specifically being confident in saying “I believe...” and sharing the Gospel. But some times we go through seasons of doubt.

What is the difference between being confident and arrogant? I want all attendees to walk away knowing that God created them for a purpose and He promises to be with us in the tough times. Our culture is doing a great job of telling us we are not good enough, we are not pretty/handsome enough, we need to do “this” to fit in, BUT together we will use the word of the Lord to build our confidence. The world tells us to doubt that there is forgiveness, to doubt that He loves us in hard times, and even doubt that there is a God.

Together we will grow confident!



Kari Smith

Kari Smith was born and raised in southern Minnesota but left her roots to attend Concordia University in Seward, Nebraska. Kari graduated with a degree in elementary education and took her first call to teach at Trinity Lutheran School in Davenport, Iowa. Kari met her husband while attending Concordia and they have four children. When they started their family, she took a leave from teaching and took over the high school youth group and went back to school to get her master's degree. In 2015, Kari began working for Lutheran Family Service in a dual role. She serves as a pregnancy counselor, adoption caseworker and congregational services leader/speaker but also continues to serve the youth in her church. In her free time, she enjoys anything and everything outside.

Topic: Grace

We are a new person in Jesus Christ - forgiven and free: a unique person loved by God and a masterpiece made by Him.

What does it mean to be God's masterpiece (Ephesians 2:10)? The foundation of our life is God's grace given to us in Jesus Christ. And. This. Changes. EVERYTHING for us. In our baptism, God's grace opens up eternity to us and gives us freedom to “do the good things he planned for us long ago.” In this session, we will encourage each other in Christ's forgiveness, in our giftedness, and to do these good works.



Pastor Mark Kiessling

Rev. Mark R. Kiessling serves as the director of LCMS Youth Ministry. In that role, he supports the leadership, service, resourcing, and networking functions of LCMS Youth Ministry. Kiessling graduated from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis (2006) and holds a bachelor's degree in business administration from Concordia University, Portland (1998). Kiessling is married to Beth (Timm), who teaches Preschool at Christ Community Lutheran School in Kirkwood, Missouri.