

For Immediate Release June 30, 2017

When children have left the church and faith in Jesus Christ, parents that are left behind often find themselves feeling isolated and alone. The feelings of guilt and shame can become overwhelming as they wonder what they did wrong, could have done better or what they failed to do. The end result makes parents feel as though they are living solo with the need to carry this burden on their own.

We invite you to begin the journey of discovery together with us in a half-day seminar and other like-minded parents, as we explore the notion that we might all share similar stories and that maybe we are really not alone on this road.

During this seminar, we hope to provide you a warm, comfortable, loving and non-threatening environment where you might feel the freedom to express yourself. We hope that this time together can maybe “little by little” break down the walls of shame and secrecy. As we join together with one another we hope to create a community within the church family, for you where you feel safe to open up a dialogue and begin the conversation with others.

We are not going to “tell you what to do” or “tell you what you could have done better” but rather offer you a time where you can hear from a prodigal that has returned to the faith and to be surrounded by other parents going through similar situations in life. Our goal is to have you leave with hope, realizing that you are not alone and maybe even forming new friendships.

Help families’ welcome home family members who have wandered away.

When:

- Saturday, September 16: 9:00 am – 3:00 pm (presentation with light continental breakfast and working lunch)
- Sunday, September 17, 2017: Beginning at 9:45 am – 10:45 am (presentation with light continental breakfast) *If you are not able to join us on Saturday we would love to see you Sunday!

- **After:** There will be an opportunity to sign up for an 8-week class for parents that are interested in meeting together after the weekend retreat on a regular basis. Information on this meeting will be announced on both Saturday and Sunday events.

Where: St. Augustine Lutheran Church 5475 Livernois Rd Troy, MI 48098

What: All of us have someone in our lives who has strayed away from faith in Jesus Christ. How can we reach out not only to the prodigal but to the parents, families and friends of prodigals who struggle to know what to do? The seminar will discuss these important issues and introduce a ministry opportunity that churches everywhere can easily implement.

For Whom: Parents, Church Leadership, Pastors, Family Members with prodigals

Cost: None. This retreat is made available to attendees because of a generous donation from the Oscar & Keturah Haab Foundation

About the Curriculum:

The class curriculum is an 8-week course for pastors and church leaders to use in their congregations. The course is designed to reach out to parents whose children have left the faith. The curriculum offers the opportunity for parents to meet together in a small group setting and begin to address the issues and emotions surrounding the subject matter. Pastors, church leaders or parents could lead the course.

The Faith Family Reunion class curriculum has been co-written with Dr. Jakob Heckert, Theological Editor (and founder's father, a retired LCMS pastor). Ben Freudenburg (and his wife Jennifer), director of the Family Life Program with Concordia University Ann Arbor, Michigan, were instrumental in initiating the class curriculum. Faith Family Reunion is also an affiliate of the Concordia Center for the Family of Concordia University Ann Arbor.

About the Ministry

The heart of this project all starts from my experience of growing up in a loving Christian home, falling away from faith in Jesus Christ and then returning again. During the time I fell away from my faith, my parents and siblings went through a tough time with me and I with them. My parents questioned how they brought me up, wondering if they did enough and feeling like they had failed. During the course of my life, living away from the Lord, my parents continued to love me, encourage me and let me be me. They never forced their faith on me but continued to be an example of strong and committed Christian parents through the way they lived their lives.

Over the years I have felt a drawing to families and adult children like me, who have gone or who are going through the same family experience I did. I have heard other parents express their sadness and guilt thinking that they did not do raise their children correctly and that their children had left the church and the faith. I have seen parents carrying around the burden and guilt.

This issue is not often discussed in church; people somehow don't appear comfortable to talk about it. Some parents may speak personally with their pastor or with friends, but most keep it to themselves because of guilt or shame. When guilt and shame are not addressed, parents can get so overcome by these feelings that it wears on them and drains their life of the Lord's joy. Some might even leave the church because of it. When parents are not living their life free from guilt, adult children lose out on the opportunity to experience the Christian witness of their parents, because they keep everything inside, afraid to make a mistake again. This situation can be especially hard on pastors and their families or church leaders, since they often feel the expectation to have a perfect family.

Because I wanted to do more than just give encouragement to parents individually, I wanted to address the situation more fully and connect parents with other parents/families. There is something to be said about knowing you are not alone in a situation, that there 'are others' just like you, who are going through the same thing. With the inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit, Faith Family Reunion was born. My hope with Faith Family Reunion is to address the issue of

children leaving the faith and the church, giving parents a network to reach out to other parents/families, who are going through the same thing, sharing testimonies of families that have been reunited in faith, and offering encouragement, inspiration and hope to parents/families.

More Information:

- Visit our website: www.faithfamilyreunion.com.
- Contact us: info@faithfamilyreunion.com.