9th Grade STEP-UP Milestone

"Where do I fit in?"

Establishing Your Identity in Christ &
Stepping up into Young Adulthood with Faith

"When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known. So now ***faith, hope, and love*** *abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love."*

1 Corinthians 13:11-13

PARENTS of TEENS - You're Not Alone!

A Call to Parents - "to partner" & "to take on"!

Welcome to parenting a growing teenager! Whether this is your first go-around with a teenager in your house or not your first rodeo, we know that these years can prove to be challenging. But we also think that these years can also be, and are meant to be, deeply encouraging, joyful, and richly fulfilling as well!

This packet is an extension of hope, help, and **partnership from HFFBC to your family**. This is us, the church at-large and student ministry of the church, reaching out to you and letting you know that you are not alone in the raising up of your child to be more like Jesus, and that we desire nothing more than to come alongside you and invest in your son or daughter's spiritual journey, and in your spiritual journey as a parent of growing children. We hope you as the parent and your child will dive deep into the life of the church and take the chance that Jesus is all of who He says He is and that He has deep and meaningful plans for your life. We pray that you will take advantage of the opportunities and resources that God has gifted us with here at HFFBC to care for you and your family.

But this packet is also meant to challenge and encourage you **to take on the responsibility of the primary role that you play in the spiritual upbringing of your children**. The Bible teaches that parents are the primary spiritual caregivers of their families (see Deut. 6) and that the role of the father and mother in the spiritual growth and development of their child cannot be understated. While it is the temptation to outsource the spiritual growth of your child to the youth groups, the Sunday School classes, to the small groups, or the 1-on-1 mentoring that will be provided to your teenager in the coming years, please do not forget that *you* are the most important spiritual voice in your family and for your child. Pray with and for them, lead Scripture times with them, take them with you to serve, and pour into their lives deeply the truths of the Risen Savior.

This packet includes several items that we hope will encourage you in both ways (partnership with the church & taking up your parent responsibility). May God bless you richly in these years. We look forward to seeing you often!

In Christ,
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I. The Transition to the High School Years

The teenage years are full of transitions! As you embark on this journey into the teenage years, these are four big transitions you as parents and students will face:

1. Developmental Transitions - ME

As you can imagine, kids are developing a lot during these teenage years! Growing taller, learning knowledge of specific things, developing a heart and passion for specific things, etc. Physically, mentally, emotionally and psychologically **YOU** are developing into the individual person that you will become for the rest of your life. This is deeply important! Erikson's Stages of Development teaches us that from age 12-18 teens begin to develop a sense of self and personal identity. The big question becomes for a teenager - "Who am I?"

Questions a student will be asking about developmental things:

- **Who am I? What are my gifts? What are my strengths/weaknesses?**
- **Do I have unique worth? Do I have anything to contribute? What am I passionate about?**

2. Social Transitions - ME & OTHERS

But it is not just you individually who are changing and developing during these years, but it is you in relationship to everyone and everything around you as well! Kids are learning how they individually and uniquely relate to world around them. How we learn to live in relationship to other humans around us and to the world around us, will prove vital to how we live out the rest of our lives. The next big question then becomes for a teenager - "How do we live together in this world?"

Questions a student will be asking about social things:

- **What kind of person will I be? Kind or mean? Loving or hateful? Generous or greedy? Hard-working or lazy? Live by my own values or my parents' values?**
- **Will I fit in with those around me? What kind of friends do I value or want?**

3. Spiritual Transitions - ME & GOD

As has been widely noted, the teenage years are critical when it comes to whether or not a life of faith will be maintained or left behind. It is often during these years that we decide how much we we want God to play a role in our lives.

Questions a student will be asking about spiritual things:

- **Who is God? Is He real? Do I desire to know Him? Does He desire to know me?**
- **Why do bad things happen in the world? Is there hope? Is there eternal life?**
- **Do I believe? Do I desire to be part of His people? Do I want to follow Him?**

4. Worldview Transitions - ME & the World

While the other three transitions begin to take place in 7th grade, maybe the biggest transition for a new 9th grader that is different than something that has already begun to take place in the Jr. High years is this — the change that begins to take place in me as I begin to see the world in all its complexity and wonder. It is usually in the high school years that students begin to wrestle with the pressing issues of our world - politics, environment, race, economics, sexuality, etc… As the world begins to become large and complex in our eyes, how do we find our identity, equilibrium, and purpose in a world like that? Through what lens will students choose to view the world - one of suspicion, individualism, and cynicism? Or one of faith, hope, and love?

Questions a student will be asking about worldview things:

- **What is the world really like? Why is it that way? What caused it to be that way?**
- **What can I do to change the world? Can/Should I change the world or just give in to what others do?**
- **Is Jesus really the hope of the world? How can I see the world as God sees it?**
- **Am I willing to look and act different in order to live more authentically? What am I willing to sacrifice for the sake of the Gospel?**

What the Bible Says About These Transitions:

At HFFBC and within our Student Ministries here at HFFBC, we believe the Bible has much to teach us about the developmental, social, and spiritual challenges of these formative and transitional years. The Bible teaches us that before each of us were born, God knew us (see Jeremiah 1:5) and that He knows us deeply! (see Psalm 139). Our truest identity comes from knowing the God of the Universe, who created all things and who created you individually, uniquely, and particularly. Ephesians 1 teaches us that our truest identity is found "in Christ", who "chose us before the foundation of the world" (v. 4) to the "praise of His glorious grace" (v.6). Additionally, each of us are uniquely created and have all been given gifts that suit us particularly and to be used for others (Rom. 12; 1 Cor. 12). We have deep, intrinsic worth; we have God-given passions; and we each have things to contribute to the world that nobody else can, because we are each uniquely and individually made for deep purposes that God intends to show us and work out in us over the course of our lives. Our understanding of ourself and our deep intrinsic worth comes from seeing how much God sacrificed (His own Son Jesus!) to be in relationship with each of us personally.

Therefore, the Bible also teaches us that we were given these gifts and passions to use not for our personal gain, but for *others,* because we were made to live in relationship to one another and to be in fellowship with others (see Genesis 2 and Acts 2). As Christians, we are the body of Christ and each have individual gifts and functions that contribute to a larger whole (see 1 Cor. 12). Therefore, we *need* one another and must seek out friends and people to live in relationship with, to spur one another on to love and good deeds (Heb. 10:24). We each get to choose *how* we live in relationship to one another, but the Bible implores us to "love your neighbor as yourself" (Lev. 19:18; Matt. 19:19). While we live in a sinful world where much of our interactions with others will be difficult and broken and often painful, God shows us in the Scriptures that a taste of the future heavenly fellowship is made available to those who trust in Him in the Church. And that even though there are persecutions and troubles that will come to those who trust in Him, Jesus calls us to "love your enemies" (Luke 6:27) and to "bless those who curse you" (Luke 6:28). Our relationships with others is to be defined by deep love, out of the love Christ has shown us.

And so then the Bible teaches us that God is seeking out friendship and relationship with each of us. He desires to be in our lives and for us to spend eternity with Him (John 3), and He desires that all people be saved (1 Tim. 2:4). He works all things together for good in His loving, sovereign plan. Jesus Christ is God in flesh who came to take away the sins of the world, which He did on the cross. God is real, and He has made a way for us to know Him - in Jesus and through the power of the Holy Spirit.

HFFBC Student Ministries

Our Purpose Statement:

"To partner with families and students in
***knowing** Jesus,*
***growing** to be more like Jesus, and*
***going** to serve and tell the world about Jesus."*

*A visual way to view this **know, grow, go** purpose and progression in student ministry is through the **head, heart, hands** visual. It is our goal and purpose here at HFFBC to develop full-person disciples of Jesus Christ, who are healthily balanced and prepared to leave home with a lifetime of genuine and bold faith in Christ ahead of them.*

Our Vision - what we want things to look like if God blesses our efforts:

"Our vision is for this generation's students to come together at HFFBC and then become the next generation's Church and culture leaders, who are characterized by their **deep love** of Jesus, their **joyful obedience** to His Word, and their **missional living** in His world."

Our Mission - what we'll do everyday to advance the vision God has given us:

"Our daily mission is to **invite** students to know and experience God in Jesus, to walk alongside those students in **love**, and to **instill** in them a lifelong love for His Word and His world that would then **compel** them to participate in God's mission of redeeming all of life back to God through Jesus."

The Emphases in HFFBC Sr. High Youth Ministry

The emphasis specifically then in our Sr. High Youth Ministry here at HFFBC focuses on all three — know, grow, and go (the head, the heart, and the hands):

1. To nurture the **heart love** for Christ that has been developed through the years. The emphasis of our children's ministries (from birth through grade 6) to this point has been primarily focused on sensing security, experiencing faith, and developing relational faith.* But if this has been missed or not well-developed in a kid's life, then this is still our first priority in Sr. High - to help kids see Jesus clearly and fall in love with Him! If kids already do love Jesus and have a heart for Him, it is still our primary role to further nurture and develop that love during these important teenage years. A major and primary part of this is offering a safe, loving, and intentional space for Sr. High students to meet openly to discuss faith, have fun together, learn to pray, and to ask questions.

2. The second continued emphasis is for the intentional and pointed effort to develop the **head knowledge and understanding** of a student with regards to the Biblical storyline (Genesis to Revelation), theology and doctrine, and how that intersects with the modern world. We want all students to be able to give a "reason for the hope that is in you" (1 Peter 3:15). This means that we'll ask challenging questions and will expect God to be growing students in the area of understanding and knowledge of Him.

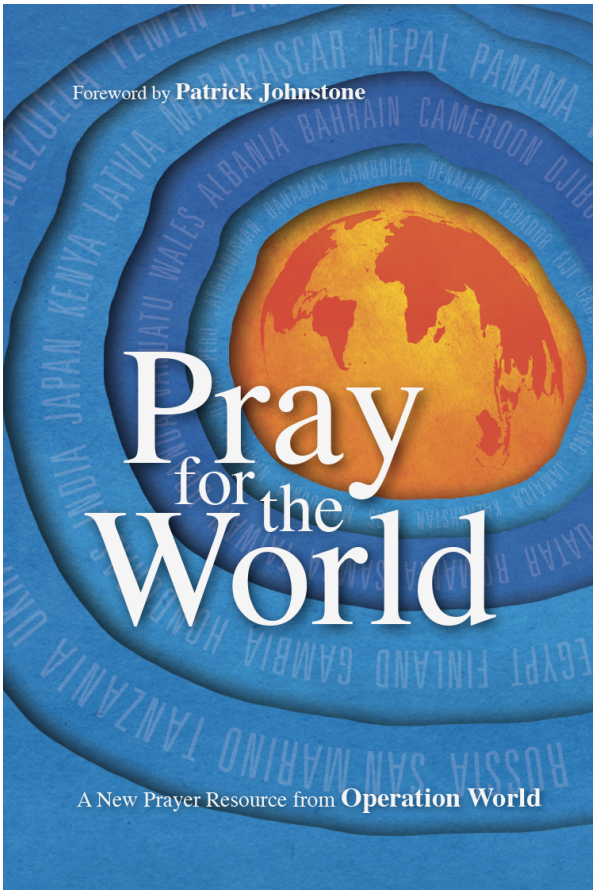
3. Lastly, the big emphasis in Sr. High becomes the **hands** - learning to care, serve, love, and to **go** and reach the world around them for Christ. This involves tangible justice and service projects to help build up communities and also proclaiming the truth of the Gospel in love and gentleness.

So out of our purpose statement then, the **primary emphases of Sr. High Youth Ministry are **"Know"** (developing head knowledge & understanding), **"Grow"** (continuing to foster and nurture a heart love for God)., and **"Go"** (serving & telling others about Jesus).

**See article "The Stages of Spiritual Growth" by Judy Bryson in Christianity Today (2009) and Lifeway's "Levels of Biblical Learning"*

A Sr. High Gift for the HEAD, HEART & HANDS!

In order to begin helping students and families develop a healthy "head, heart, and hands life" and to especially begin to help students move towards applying their heart love for God and their mind understanding of God to practical and tangible outlets of love in the world, we give each rising 9th grader a resource to help with this. We desire that HFFBC, Sr. High Youth Group, and all of our Sr. High ministry opportunities be places where students are encouraged to love the world around them with the same love that Jesus has shown them.



We encourage parents and teens to talk and pray through this book together, and to develop creative ways to expand your Christian worldview so that you can be a global Christian.

This is how the book is described:

For decades, *Operation World* has been the world's leading resource for people who want to impact the nations for Christ through prayer. Its twofold purpose has been to **inform** for prayer and to **mobilize** for mission. Now the research team of *Operation World* offers this abridged version of the 7th edition called *Pray for the World* as an accessible resource to facilitate prayer for the nations. The *Operation World* researchers asked Christian leaders in every country, "How should the body of Christ throughout the world be praying for your country?" Their responses provide the prayer points in this book, with specific ways your prayers can aid the global church. When you hear a country mentioned in the news, you can use *Pray for the World* to pray for it in light of what God is doing there. Each entry includes:

- Timely challenges for prayer and specific on-the-ground reports of answers to prayer
- Population and people group statistics
- Charts and maps of demographic trends
- Updates on church growth, with a focus on evangelicals
- Explanations of major currents in economics, politics and society

Join millions of praying people around the world. Hear God's call to global mission. And watch the world change.

A Sr. High Gift for the HEART!

BUT… we aren't forgetting about fun or the heart either! As a way to continue fostering, nurturing and developing students' hearts for Jesus and encountering Him in the fellowship of believers together, we are also including a gift to foster that as well See below!

We've included a voucher below for new 9th graders to use during one of our summer Jr. High gatherings this year! We hope this will encourage you to join us this summer for a wonderful time together and growing together as a community!

Cut out the voucher below and bring it to the announced Sr. High event to redeem your gift!

$5 Voucher to…

**This is not an official Lago's gift card, so you can't redeem it by yourself!*

Lago's HOMEMADE ICE CREAM

**only redeemable by HFFBC Sr. High Youth Group on the date TBA!*

**and only to be used by YOU!*

in Rye, NH

II. The Opportunities for Sr. High Students

Sr. High Wednesday Night Youth Group *(grades 9-12)*

What is it? The Sr. High Youth Group is a place for seekers, skeptics & believers alike to come to investigate the truth claims of Jesus Christ found in the Bible. We use a mixture of teaching styles including video presentations, small group breakout discussions, large group discussions, and semi-frequent open Q&A times. Our night is intentionally non-threatening, comfortable, and meant to simply be a place where students can gather together in a safe environment where no question is dismissed and or deemed too large. Students are encouraged to come early to hang out over a piece of pizza or to play ultimate frisbee on the Common outside, and we always end the night with a good game of foosball or pingpong!

When & Where is it? 6:30-8:00pm each Wednesday (September to June) in the Sr. High Room.

What's the curriculum? Each year we strategically pick out teaching topics based on the head, heart, hands balance we seek to develop in our students. We usually rotate between going through a book of the Bible (chapter by chapter) and a strategic topic that is confronting teenagers today. Below is a sample of what we've done in the past few years.

- Spring 2018 - *"Prayer" - 12 lessons on prayer, focusing on desiring, understanding, deepening and doing prayer.*
- Fall 2017 - "*Just Do Something" - an 8-week series on vocation, God's will, and practically deciphering what you have been made for.*
- Spring 2017 - *"Counter-Culture" - a 10-week series on living distinctively as Christians in the modern world.*
- Fall 2016 - *"1-2 Peter & Jude" - a 13-week study on Christian identity*

How do you teach? We use a mix of formal teaching, small group breakouts, semi-frequent Q&A times, and monthly prayer times at the monthly Haystack Missions Nights.

Who leads it? We have a group of team teachers from our Sr. High Youth Mentors who minister to the students faithfully each week and share in the teaching load. See the welcome letter for more info on who these people are for this year! Pastor Steven is usually there for 2-3 Wednesdays/month as well.

Youth Sunday School
(grades 7-9)

What is it? This class is for Jr. High students and High School freshmen and is designed to give them a core understanding of the Story of redemption in the Scriptures, comprehensively from Genesis to Revelation. It is also the hope that the older students (9th graders) will take up the leadership mantle during their last year and help facilitate the conversations each week. We stick our noses deep into the Bible each week, have group discussions, and have fun learning about the Bible together! Donuts are provided!

When & Where is it? 9:15-10:15am each Sunday (September to June) in the Sr. High Room!

What's the curriculum? We use *The Gospel Project for Students* which walks through the entire Bible, Genesis to Revelation, in 3-years. In the Fall of 2018 we will beginning our second cycle of the class, beginning again with the book of Genesis!

Most weeks we also watch videos that have been made available by *The Bible Project*, which are 5-8 minute videos that give short, yet deep and rich, summaries of every Bible book. They also have thematic videos and videos that help in understanding how to read the Bible. This is great for visual learners. I encourage you to check them out for your family at www.thebibleproject.com.

Who teaches it? Pastor Steven has been the primary teacher, though several other youth mentors and adult leaders in the church step in and out to help teach throughout the year.

Retreats

Retreats are offered for Sr. High students twice a year as a chance to "get away" and to connect with Christ and one another in a new rhythm. It is a chance for students to change their pace, to individually encounter Jesus in a deeper way, and also to serve and have rich fellowship with one another. Below are the retreats and dates for the upcoming year (2018-2019)

Sr. High Fall Retreat

Fall - Oct. 19-21, 2018 at Camp Shiloh

Purpose: A service retreat designed for fun, fellowship-building & an emphasis on spiritual disciplines.

Jr./Sr. High Winter Retreat

Winter - January 18-20, 2019 at Camp Brookwoods

Purpose: A fellowship retreat designed to build unity between our youth groups, have fun together, and to grow deeper in love with Jesus.

Mission & Service

Mission & service opportunities are offered for Sr. High students at various points through the year for all students, and then as things for students to work up to as well. See below for information!

Local Missions Service Projects

These are designed specifically to bless the local area in which we live (the Seacoast region extended). These mostly consist of one day or half day service times that make a tangible, visible difference in our communities and that build relational bridges with those outside the church. **These are open & encouraged for all Jr. High students to take part in.** These could consist of a number things, depending on the year but each year though we will definitely, at the least, gather a group to serve alongside Operation Blessing in their annual "One Day to Serve" day in Portsmouth, NH.

Regional Ministry "Go" Trips

These are designed to go one step further in intentionality and geographic reach from the local projects. These are overnight trips that are service-oriented but have clear evangelism and Gospel-sharing times built into them. These stay within the Northeast region of the U.S. and are for students entering grade 9 and older. Therefore, when students are in 8th grade they can begin looking into, applying for, and preparing for any spring or summer regional mission trips that HFFBC offers. In the past we have taken teams to Boston, Portland, ME, and New York City. These trips usually take place in the summertime or over NH Winter Break (in late Feb.) or Spring Break (in April).

Global Mission Trips

These are intergenerational trips that cross country borders that are designed to take the Gospel and tangible service to places of strategic need and that have relational ties to our church. These trips are for older high school students who have experience in missions and service and who are looking to be intentional in being obedient to the Great Commission's call on their lives (Matt. 28).

La Casa de La Esperanza

Our church has a partnership with the La Casa de La Esperanza orphanage in Tijuana, Mexico that we have taken teams to for many years. This trip usually takes place over the Thanksgiving holiday break in late November and is open to high school students as well who have prior missions experience. This is a wonderful opportunity for upcoming 9th graders to be praying towards and working up to!

Haystack Missions Nights (monthly)

Lastly, we take our Sr. High youth groups to our monthly Haystack Fellowship Missions Nights (on the first Wednesday of most months from Sept.-May) in the church so that they can participate in ***worship, missions, & prayer.*** Our hope is that students would be exposed to what God is doing around the world through His people, and would capture the same heart that God has for the world! In the past we've had groups come and share on *church planting in the Middle East, underground churches in China, local ministry in Massachusetts helping liberate women from sex trafficking, and many others.*

Mentoring & Small Groups

1-on-1 Mentoring/Discipleship

1-on-1 mentoring is the heartbeat of student ministry. We believe this is where true discipleship and life transformation happens. It is the hope, goal, and prayer that each student, upon entering 10th grade will be given the opportunity to enter into a meaningful, consistent, and biblical mentoring relationship (this invitation to a 1-on-1 mentoring relationship takes place at the 10th Grade "Milestone" in the fall each year). Our older students and Adult Youth Ministry Mentors make it a goal to build encouraging relationships especially with incoming 9th graders. These relationship-building times begin with our Wednesday night small-group breakout times after the large group lesson, and are further developed (we pray) during our retreats, service days, and informal fun times throughout the year.

"…we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us." (1 Thessalonians 2:8)

Small Groups/Bible Studies

Small group breakouts on Wednesday nights and then gender-specific Bible studies/ small groups at other times during the week are core activities for students to draw into deeper relationship with Christ, adult leaders, and other students. Depending on the goal of the particular group, these groups serve as chances to "go deeper", to pray together, to do fun things together, and to invite non-Christian friends to. It varies from year-to year as to what kinds of groups and how many groups will be offered, but it is our goal to always have some gender-specific small group option for both Sr. High guys and Sr. High girls. 9th graders are encouraged to jump into these!

Summers

Summer "Sup n' Stuff" gatherings

Summers are times for rest and a change of pace. Student Ministry takes a hiatus in the summer from our Wednesday evening programming, but we do intentionally have several points of "connection" we wish to maintain throughout the summer. The Sr. High group gets together 6-8 times on Wednesday nights for informal times of hangout/games, dinner, and a simple devotional at families' homes. For Sr. Higher's these are called **"Sup n' Stuff"** gatherings.

The dates for this year's "Sup n' Stuffs" are included on the **Summer Connection Card** you received at the "Step-Up Celebration" or are also available online. Contact Pastor Steven or one of adult leaders for more information or for addresses to the gatherings.

Summer Sunday School for Teens/Families

Keep an eye out for special, short, Sunday School classes offered particularly for teens and families during the summer months. In the past we have done classes on pertinent topics like Social Media and Technology, Parenting Teens, Sexuality and the like. **For the summer of 2018,** we will be doing a special 4-week class in July on *"Talking with 'Others' About Faith" (focusing on Atheists, Catholics, Indifferents, and Muslims).*

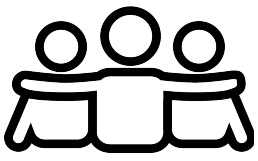
Sundays July 1, 8, 15, 29 @ 9-10am

III. The Invitation from the Church to You

Therefore, the church here at HFFBC encourages you (both students and parents) to jump into all that God has in store for you in these exciting teenage and then young adult years. Take advantage of what our church here at HFFBC can offer your kids during these important and formative teen years, both on Wednesday nights, Sunday mornings, and in other things throughout the years.

Students, it is our sincere hope and desire that as you enter into High School and then progress into early adulthood, as your life gets busier and freer, and as the temptations and allures of the world will become more present and easily accessible in your lives, that you will choose to stick to Jesus, to follow Him, and to jump into our community here at HFFBC and trust that the Lord will grow and shape you into His image more and more. Love the Lord, serve Him, and tell others about Him!

Parents, it is also our sincere hope and desire that *you* encourage your kids to jump into our fellowship and community here for young people, that you will lean on the church for guidance, community, encouragement, challenge and correction, and spiritual resourcing. May you trust and allow the church to shepherd your children to be more like Jesus, allowing them the freedom to grow as they gain independence and seek to find their own identity for the first time. But also, parents, it is our *prayer* that you also do not rely on us too much - but that you take up the mantle of spiritual oversight of your family and that you gently, yet boldly, guide your children towards Jesus in your home life. We invite you to all our church has to offer to adults to help you learn how to best do this and not feel like you're doing this all on your own.

So our challenge and invitation to you is this - take a chance on Jesus (that He is who He says He is) and on His instituted vessel, the church, to do and be for you what it is meant to be and do - to shepherd and lead you towards the Risen Christ.

During these 9-12th grade years, we you invite you to a life of *faith, hope, and love* (1 Cor. 13:11-13) that you may find Jesus to be worthy and your all-in-all.