

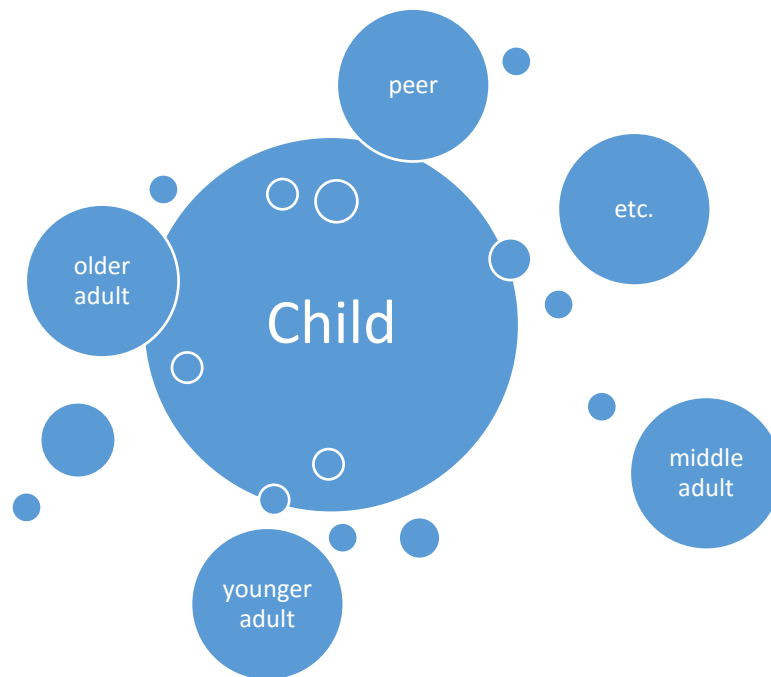


Faith Clouds

What are faith clouds?

Faith clouds are relationship networks for each pre-confirmation youth and child at St. John. They are also a new way of bringing people of different generations into caring relationships at St. John. Most importantly, faith clouds are baptismal sponsorship networks in which the “cloud” supports the child in her relationship with God, and she in turn is a blessing to them. The concept is inspired by Hebrews 12:1 – “We are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses.”

A faith cloud looks something like this:



Children have been asked to begin identifying 6 to 8 people in the congregation of various ages whom they know, like, respect or feel comfortable around. They are asked to think about two “grandparent-aged” people, two parent-aged people, two young adults or high-schoolers, and if possible, two kids their age or younger. Usually children can only identify two or three such people, so we will need to help them “fill in the blanks” by suggesting further people in the congregation to complete their faith cloud.

What Do Faith Clouds “Do”?

The broad answer is that they are a “cloud of witnesses” who love a child along his way of growing in faith. Just as a child has baptismal sponsors, think of faith clouds as extended networks of baptismal sponsors. Each child knows that, while the whole congregation are called to love her, there are a few special people who take a special interest in her, and they are of different generations.

Faith clouds are also building blocks for strengthening intergenerational relationships at St. John, so as children grow in faith, they are more inclined to remain active when after they are confirmed and become adults. They are less inclined to see church either as something they are on the margins of, or as something they “graduate from” after confirmation or high school.

But beyond that, what does a faith cloud actually “do”?

There are any number of possibilities, and it’s our hope that a child’s faith cloud members will take their own initiative to bond and forge relationships, whether as a group or one-on-one between the child and different faith cloud members.

Some examples might include:

- “Cloudy Days” – semi-annual retreats, or summits, of all the faith clouds together, where we have some intergenerational fun and games, Bible study, meals in common, at a Christian camp or retreat site.
- Some may be encouraged to participate or represent their child in activities such as Second Sundays, Confirmation instruction, etc. For example, we might ask “Johnny’s” faith cloud members to help lead Second Sunday activities one month, or to ask “Sally’s” faith cloud members to serve a snack, or help mentor, at Confirmation class.
- Faith clouds will encourage their child in their growth in Christian faith. They will pray for their child, and might be involved in mentoring the child or the class during his confirmation instruction period.
- Faith clouds will take an interest in other aspects of the child’s growth as well, such as attending sports events, plays, concerts, sending cards or gifts on her birthday and baptismal anniversary, arranging visits with the child and his parents, etc.
- Faith Cloud members would make a point of seeking out a child when gathered at St. John to greet her and ask after her well-being, to model Christian caring and hospitality.
- The child, for his part, is encouraged to relate to the members in his faith cloud. This will require help from parents, of course. Perhaps the child can be encouraged to pray for her faith cloud members, especially if they have particular needs or concerns. He can be encouraged to call his faith cloud members and say hello, or send a card, etc. In this way, the child also learns to be a responsible, loving member of the body of Christ.

Can I Be Part of a Faith Cloud? What is required!

Yes, we would like that very much! Most children cannot articulate the 6-8 people they would like as part of their faith cloud, and it helps if you are willing to offer yourself as part of a faith cloud for any child who may need it! Before confirming you as part of a child’s faith cloud, we will make sure to confer with you, the child, and parents, to be sure all are comfortable with the arrangement. **Please remember, being part of a child’s faith cloud means being a formative person in his or her faith formation. Please be willing to be serious about your commitment if you volunteer.**

FAQs

What are the qualification to be part of a child's faith cloud?

You should be active in the life of St. John, have a fondness for children and youth, a willingness to commit to a childhood-long friendship with a child, and reliability such that you can be counted on to take your responsibility as part of a child's faith cloud seriously. It can be source of disappointment for children if adults do not follow through on their commitments to them.

Are there events I'm required to attend?

Faith clouds are not a "legalistic" thing. We won't say, you "must" come to this or that event. But you will want to participate with your child as much as you can when the opportunity presents itself. The more you participate, the more your child, you, and the other faith cloud members get out of it!

It may be just as important to establish your relationship with your child outside of structured or scheduled St. John activities. Attending school events, a birthday party, etc., would be examples.

Can homebound members of St. John be part of a faith cloud?

Absolutely! In fact, it's encouraged. It provides a ministry in which homebound persons can be involved, and is a growth opportunity for a child to relate to someone who has that life circumstance and to learn sensitivity and caring for homebound persons.

I like the idea of being part of a child's faith cloud, but I don't really know any children at St. John well. What do I do?

Make your interest known to Pr. Bill, and we will help match you to a child who needs to develop his or her faith cloud. There is a place for you!