

FAITH@HOME

TEACHINGS AND
PRACTICES THAT
BRING FAITH HOME
TO ALL MEMBERS
OF THE FAMILY



FAITH FORMATION IN THE FAMILY

As a pastor, one of the things that I believe in strongly is the power of the family to form the faith of the individuals who are a part of this first community of faith. From infancy to childhood, from adolescence to young adulthood, and throughout our maturing years, the nurturing influences of the spiritual life are more closely tied to the home than they are to the church. This is a huge admission from one who claims the church as her vocation! The vital role of the family - in whatever form that takes - in faith formation cannot be underestimated. At a conservative estimate, the number of hours we have each week as a family is approximately 57; the number of hours that the church has with your family is 1-3 hours each week. Given these numbers - who has the best chance to influence the spiritual core of your children or grandchildren?

In taking this role seriously, we at Saint Paul's UMC recently presented a six week sermon series called Faith@Home. This newsletter is an outgrowth of our time spend together in worship. Here you find resources, ideas, activities and articles that are designed to take our sermons and bring them to life in your own family...to take words and make them alive with action!

While our resources are presented with an unapologetic Christian perspective, and more specifically a United Methodist understanding; many of the principles found here can be easily adapted to your own faith setting. The major religious expressions all agree upon the primary role of the family in the formation of faith. So, receive this material as an invitation to adapt to your particular situation and background; your own faith tradition and understanding.

It is our joy to walk alongside you as you form the faith in your family.

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE CHURCH IS TO HELP EQUIP ADULTS TO BE POSITIVE INFLUENCERS ON THE FAITH OF THE CHILDREN, YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS IN YOUR SPHERE OF INFLUENCE.



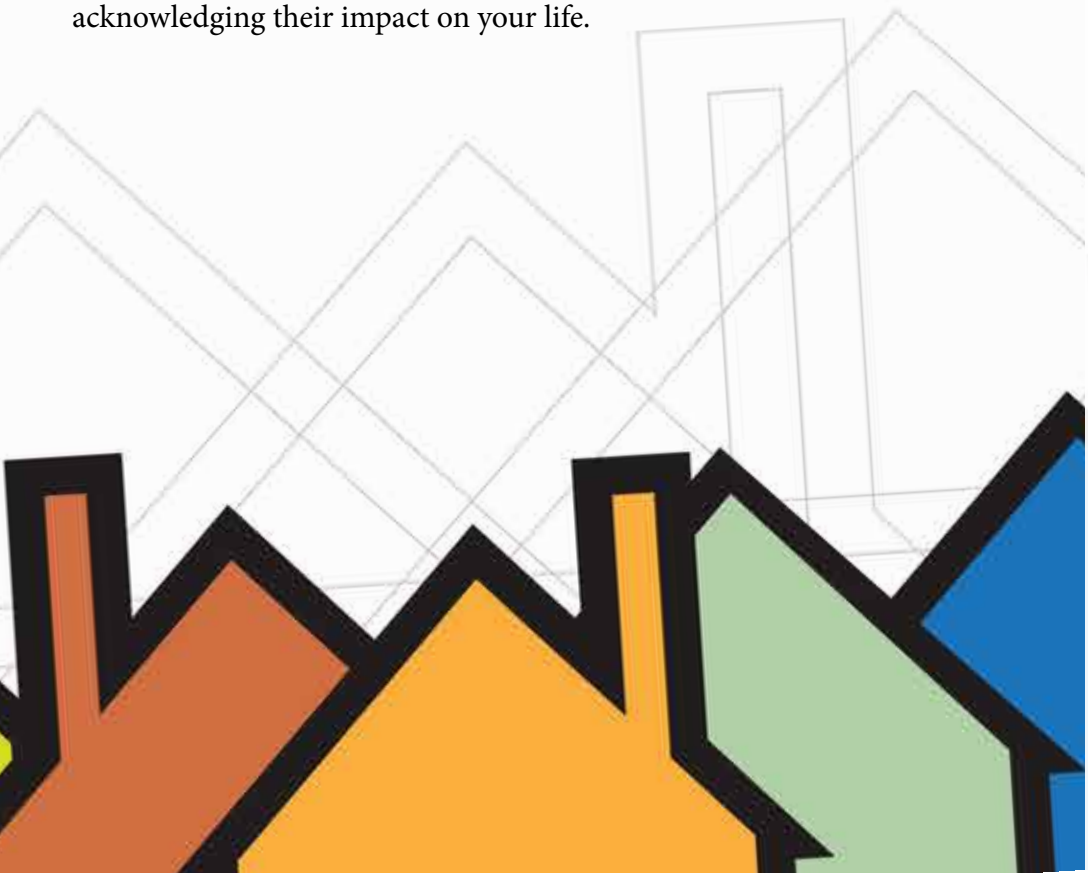


ENGAGE: YOUR FAITH FAMILY TREE

None of us came into this faith world alone; here is a simple exercise in faith memory. Consider those individuals who have formed your faith; the people who are part of your cloud of witnesses, who shared faith stories with you - who reminded you of your identity in Christ - who encouraged you to grow more and more in love with God?

Maybe it is a parent, grandparent, friend, neighbor, teacher, spouse, child, sibling, an author, pastor or artist.

Find a creative way to visualize this in your home. Make a tree, with individual leaves bearing the names of those you remember. Whatever you use - tell the stories of these meaningful encounters, and if these individuals are still living, perhaps a note of thanks would provide a special way of acknowledging their impact on your life.



CARING CONVERSATIONS: LEARN TO TELL YOUR FAITH STORY

We don't share our faith because we don't know how! How can you tell your faith story?

1 Peter 3:15-16 gives us several cues:

...in your hearts sanctify Christ as Lord. Always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you; ¹⁶ yet do it with gentleness and reverence.

1 Peter 3:15-16

1. SPEAK THE TRUTH - *in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord*

What is the message of our faith? It is about the love of God in Jesus Christ that is bigger and more powerful and more generous than anything that we can offer ourselves - and it is available to everyone through a relationship with Jesus Christ. That's the message.

2. LIVE AN INVITATION - *always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason*

How do we live a life that invites the questions of faith? We tell the truth - and we engage with other people in genuine, caring ways - we make ourselves available when they are hurting, or when they are confused. Sometimes that means being willing to say, 'I don't know, I wrestle with the same thing myself...'

3. SPEAK WHAT YOU KNOW - *for the hope that you have*

When have you felt the undeniable presence of God in your life? What difference has Jesus made for you? How does your faith impact your thinking about world events? About life? About death? About suffering? We can only share what we know.

4. SPEAK GENTLY - *but do this with gentleness and respect*

When we talk to other people about our faith, a basic goal, through an admittedly difficult one to achieve, is to offer what we say as a gift, with no strings attached. No expectation of a contribution, a conversion, or even agreement. I think this is what Scripture means when it says to share with gentleness and respect.

Write your faith story - then, see if you can tell it (or part of it) in six words. This requires us to distill what is important and central. Here are some examples:

- *My past doesn't define God's future.*
- *Desperately trying to believe in God.*

Six words - what would yours be? What six word sentence would capture invite people to say 'tell me more?'

Whether you use six words or six hundred words - may your life be a glorious testimony to God!



FAITH FORMATION THROUGH DAILY ACTIVITIES

The psalmist tells us not to hide our faith from our children..

*³ things that we have heard and known,
that our ancestors have told us.*

*⁴ We will not hide them from their children;
we will tell to the coming generation
the glorious deeds of the LORD, AND HIS MIGHT,
and the wonders that he has done.*

Psalm 78:3-4

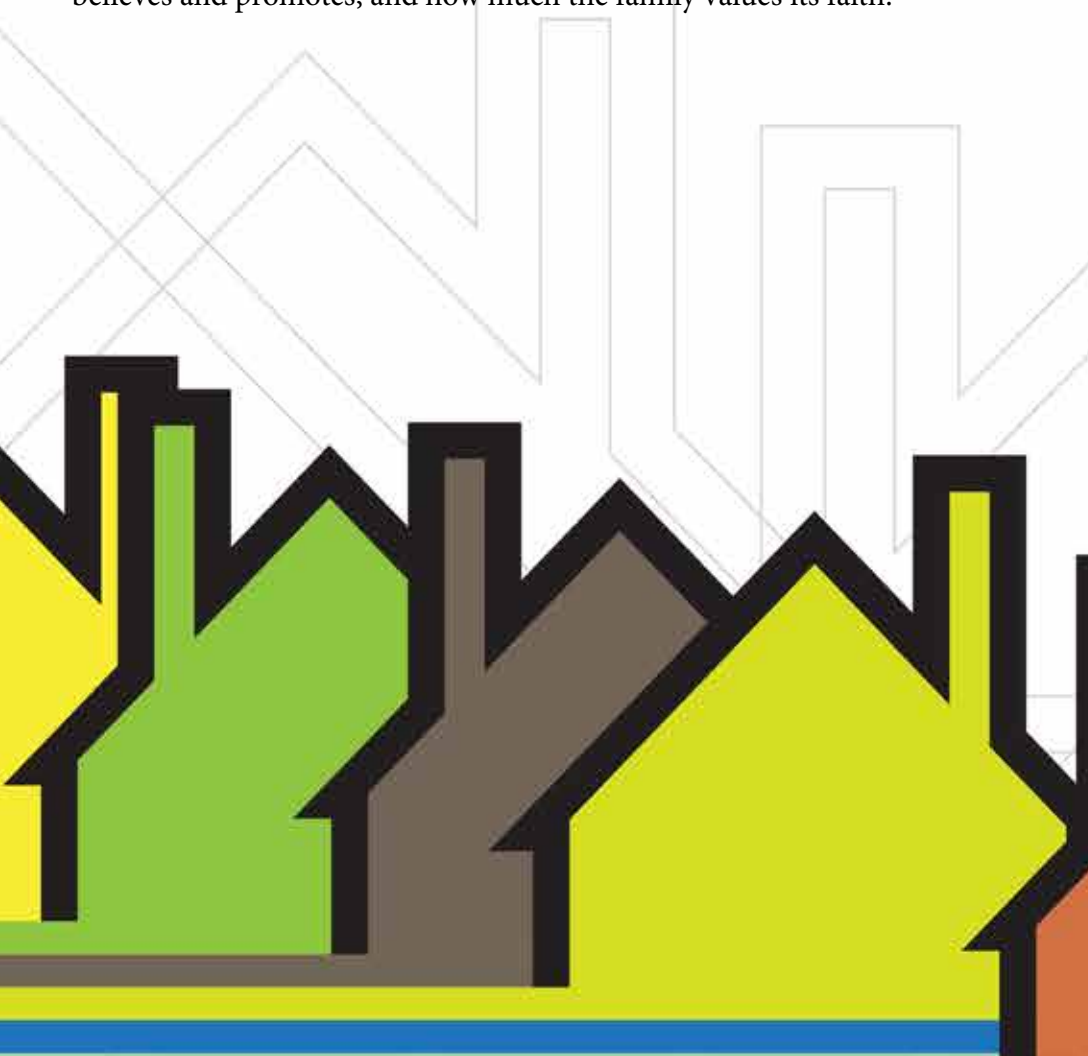
We tell coming generations in a thousand different ways every day, in the living out of our faith through five different daily activities:

CARING CONVERSATIONS

Caring conversations include more than simply telling our stories; this is the sharing of faith, values, and the care of others. The story of Jesus and our life stories are woven together as one fabric that brings forth endless variety of caring conversation.

RITUALS AND TRADITIONS

Family rituals and traditions speak volumes about what the family values, believes and promotes, and how much the family values its faith.





DEVOTIONS

A fruitful family devotional life includes, but is not limited to, public worship, the reading and study of scripture, and prayers. All of these occasions are opportunities for the word of God to be planted and grow within us.

SERVICE

When parent and child/teen together perform service activities, faith and values are put into action and the cross-generational bond takes place not only in the service event, but also in the retelling of the event through the years.

FAMILY MEALS

The research is clear: regular family meals have a very positive impact on the family as a unit, as well as its individual members. Just as meals were central to the work and teaching of Jesus, so too are they important in passing down the faith heritage.

The psalmist reminds us that these activities in which we engage have a larger purpose,

*so that they should set their hope in God,
and not forget the works of God,
but keep his commandments;*

Psalm 78:7



SAINT PAUL'S
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CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE

for more FAITH@HOME resources:
www.saintpaulsumc.org

1700 N. Meridian Road Tallahassee, FL 32303 | 850-385-5146