



Growing Faith in the Home

Web Newsletter for St. Mark's Families and Beyond

Vol: 1

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Spring 2009

Dear Families,

Welcome to our first "Growing Faith at Home" online newsletter! We are looking forward to this new venture, sharing resources with you as you seek to raise your kids in the Christian faith. We are hoping that you will make this resource your own—take the ideas and suggestions and shape them according to what would work best in your family. You know your children and your routines better than anyone. We want to serve as your partners to care for our beloved children, nurture them in faith and receive the gifts they bring to this community.

We have both appreciated and been shaped by the work of Dr. David Anderson and Rev. Paul Hill. In their book, "Frogs Without Legs Can't Hear", they point to four key practices for raising faithful children: Caring

Conversations, Devotions, Service and Rituals and Traditions. In each edition of this newsletter, you will find ideas organized into these four key areas. We will include ideas for pre-schoolers through high-schoolers. We hope they are helpful.

Give us feedback!

Thank you for sharing your children with us. God bless you as you carry out this holy calling,

Ingelaurie Lisher
Director, Youth and Family Ministry

Rebecca Shjerven
Pastor



Family Service Projects

Spring is the time the earth comes alive again! As a family, plant seeds in a flower box that will grow throughout the Easter season. Older kids can help younger kids. Share in the responsibility for watering and tending. When the flowers have grown, cut them and arrange them into bouquets to give to people in your life—neighbors, teachers, friends.

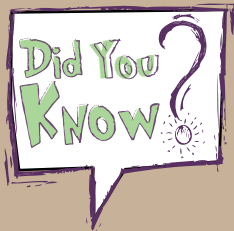
Check out the Community Garden program at the Metro Parks website, www.metroparkstacoma.org, to find out ways to get involved in a local community garden.

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Caring Conversations

Around the dinner table, or another time that your family is gathered together, share your "highs" and "lows" of the day. . . "high" being the best part of the day, and "low" being the worst part of the day. Take Turns. Ask Questions. Encourage both kids and adults to listen deeply. Lift up the joys and concerns in prayer.



During a typical week Americans spend 26 hours watching television, 2 hours nurturing faith, and 8 minutes in conversation with their children.

//Our Easter celebrations cannot end too abruptly. We've prepared too long for these mysteries to drop everything and go back to business-as-usual. In the spirit of enthusiasm for the resurrection of Christ, we nourish ourselves on the Gospels of the Easter week. They are some of the best and happiest stories to tell children, the "new Christians" among us. They tell of the different appearances of the Lord amongst his friends but they also breathe of a new spirit and condition; they tell of a Christ who is risen and transformed".
—Gertrud Mueller Nelson, *To Dance with God*, New York: Paulist Press, p183

Rituals and Traditions

Easter is not one day, it is 50! The season begins on Easter Sunday (this year April 12) and continues until Pentecost Sunday (this year May 31).

At the beginning of the Easter season, gather 50 plastic Easter eggs. . . perhaps the ones left over after your Easter Egg Hunt. Divide them

among the members of your family, along with slips of paper and colored pencils. Ask each member to write an encouraging word or prayer, something they are thankful for, or draw a happy picture. Stuff these into the eggs. Each day of the Easter season, either in the morning or at bedtime, open an egg and share the gift that lies within it.



Family Devotions

During the week, read and/or tell the gospel stories from each Sunday in Easter. Use whatever translation or paraphrase of the bible is best suited for the members of your family. For younger kids we suggest "The Adventure Bible", available at Zonderkidz.com. For teens we suggest an NRSV Study Bible. Both of these editions of the Bible have age-appropriate questions and comments in the margins that help open up the stories for younger people (and adult, as well!)

Week beginning April 12—John 20: 1-18—The Resurrection of Jesus

Week beginning April 19—John 20: 19-31—Jesus with Thomas and his friends

Week beginning April 26—Luke 24: 36b-48—Jesus appears again to his friends

Week beginning May 3—John 10: 11-18—Jesus, the Good Shepherd

Week beginning May 10—John 15: 1-8—Jesus is the Vine, we are the branches

Week beginning May 17—John 15: 9-17—Jesus as our Friend

Week beginning May 24—John 17: 6-19—Jesus Prays for his People

Music is a wonderful way to create ritual and tradition in your home. Start a collection of CDs or download Easter music for your MP3player to play throughout the season.

Suggestions:

- Handel's "Messiah" (Classical)
- "A Very Veggie Easter", from the VeggieTales folks
- Audio CDs and Downloads for MP3 players available from amazon.com
- Easter Sing-Along songs—download for .99 each from www.grouppublishing.com