

THE WAY OF LOVE

for Families



Practices for a Jesus-Centered Life



www.churchpublishing.org/wayoflove

Compiled by Sharon Ely Pearson

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Content from *Water of Baptism, Water for Life: An Activity Book* (Morehouse Publishing, 2012), *Preparing for Baptism in The Episcopal Church* (Morehouse Publishing, 2016), and *The Anglican Family Prayer Book* (Morehouse Publishing, 2004) by Anne E. Kitch is used with permission and has been adapted and included in these pages.

Some of the content for “Rest” comes from *Living Well Children’s Workbook: Christian Practices for Children* by John Roberto (Lifelong Faith Associates, 2009) and is used with permission.

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I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

– Ephesians 3:17-19

An Invitation to Families,

At the 79th General Convention of The Episcopal Church in July 2018, Presiding Bishop Michael B. Curry invited us to practice the Way of Love. This is an invitation to all of us, young and old alike, to “grow more deeply with Jesus Christ at the center of our lives, so we can bear witness to his way of love in and for the world.”

With this call, Bishop Curry named seven practices that can help us grow deeper in our relationship with God, Jesus, and our neighbors as we also learn how to live into our baptismal promises more fully. In today's world of busy schedules and hurried meals and fleeting time together, it is now more imperative that we make and take the time to center ourselves and follow the way of Jesus. This might mean revisioning and reshaping the pattern and rhythm of our daily life—finding a slice of time to center our thoughts on Jesus. Within these pages you will find ideas to engage your family, leading the way as a parent, grandparent, godparent, sibling, or mentor with children walking on The Way of Love for Families: Practices for a Jesus-Centered Life.

Parents and godparents are asked to make significant promises on behalf of a child they are sponsoring for baptism. In Holy Baptism, two promises are made:

- Will you be responsible for seeing that the child you present is brought up in the Christian faith and life?
- Will you, by your prayers and witness, help this child to grow into the full stature of Christ?

The first promise is about responsibility. We live this out by introducing children to the stories of our faith, and the teachings of Jesus, and by following practices such as prayer, generosity, and service to others. The second promise commits parents and godparents to practicing their own faith, which gives witness to the love of Christ and helps our children grow in faith.

As a family you may already follow a spiritual discipline of praying at meals or before bedtime, regularly reading from the Bible together, or engaging in acts of kindness toward others. If so, build upon what we offer here; if not, we offer a way to begin. Select one of the practices that interest you or that is especially important for you and your family at this time. Watch for signs in your daily life pointing you toward a particular practice. Listen for a call from God telling you how to move closer. Anywhere is a good place to start. This is your invitation to commit to the practices of Turn – Learn – Pray – Worship – Bless – Go – Rest. There is no rush—each day is a new beginning. Follow Bishop Curry's call to grow in faith by “following the loving, liberating, life-giving way of Jesus. His way has the power to change each of our lives and to change this world.”



What Do You Seek?

We seek love:

To know God's love, to love, and to be loved by others, and yes, to love ourselves.

We seek freedom:

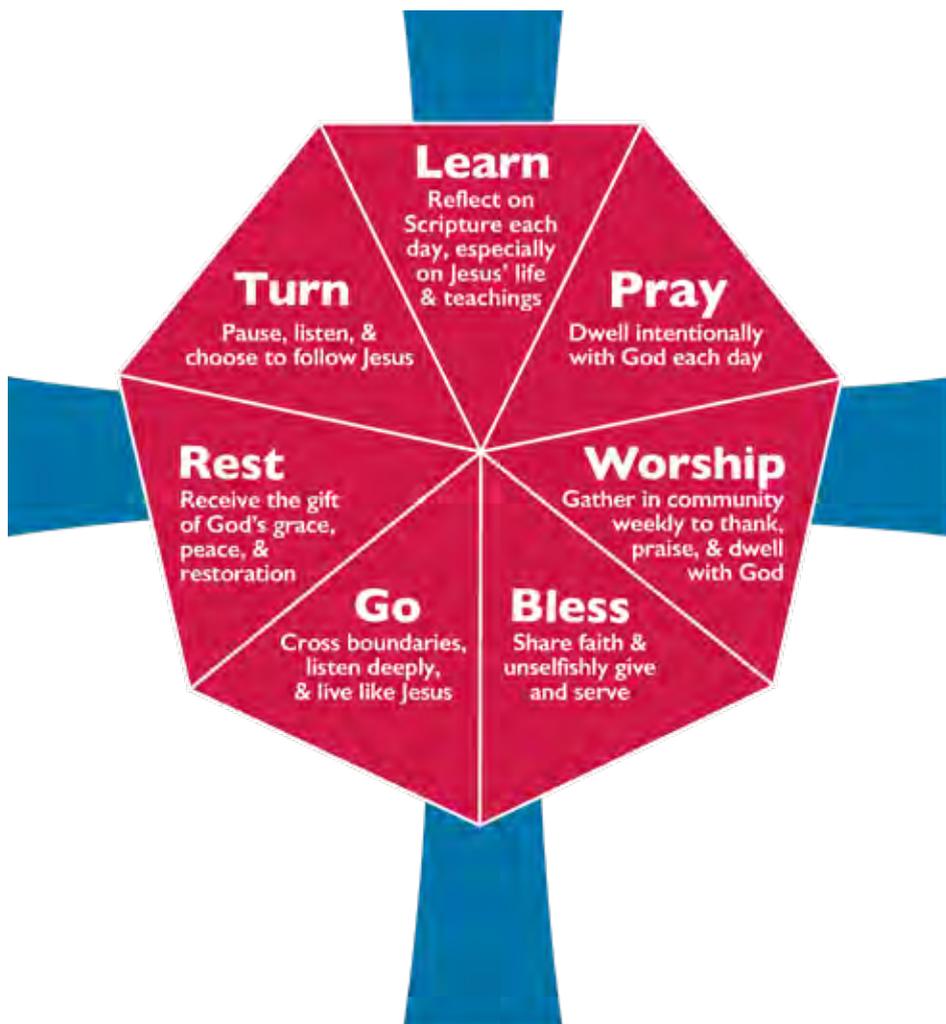
From the many forces—sin, fear, oppression, and division—that pull us from living as God created us to be: dignified, whole, and free.

We seek abundant life:

A life overflowing with joy, peace, generosity, and delight. A life where there is enough for all because we all share with abandon. A life of meaning, given back to God and lived for others.

We seek Jesus:

The way of Jesus is the Way of Love, and that way has the power to change lives and change the world.



THE WAY OF LOVE

Turn: *Pause, listen, and choose to follow Jesus*

Learn: *Reflect on scripture each day, especially on Jesus' life and teachings*

Pray: *Dwell intentionally with God each day*

Worship: *Gather in community weekly to thank, praise, and dwell with God*

Bless: *Share faith and unselfishly give and serve*

Go: *Cross boundaries, listen deeply, and live like Jesus*

Rest: *Receive the gift of God's grace, peace, and restoration*

Nurturing the Spiritual Life of Your Family

The Rev. John Westerhoff III believes that children will have faith if those around them share their faith. He offers the following tips which, though written many years ago, follow the pattern for the Way of Love that Bishop Curry has encouraged us to follow:

1. Tell and retell the biblical story together as a family.
(Learn)
2. Celebrate your faith and lives with family rituals.
(Worship and Rest)
3. Pray together. Attend church together.
(Pray and Worship)
4. Live out your faith--share your own faith stories and questions.
(Turn to Christ and Bless)
5. Perform faithful acts of service and witness together.
(Bless)

Jesus tells us that he has come in order that we “might have life, and have it abundantly” (John 10:10). May you be called to an abundant way of life in Jesus as you explore and live each of these Christian practices, and that you will experience a life full of the kind of freedom, love, and courage modeled by Jesus himself.

TURN



As Jesus was walking along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, “Follow me.” And he got up and followed him.

— Mark 2:14

Pause, Listen, and Choose to Follow Jesus.

“Do you turn to Jesus Christ ...?”

— The Book of Common Prayer, the Baptismal Covenant (p. 302)

Jesus was a real person. We know of his life, his death, and its impact from sources outside of the Bible and from archaeological evidence. However, a question we need to ask ourselves and talk about with our children is, “Who is he?” To understand the Christian faith, we have to get to know Jesus. Our faith is not just about ideas and things to do, it is a relationship. Jesus shows us God’s love, and we love him in return. Being a Christian is about having a deep relationship with Jesus, spending time with him, and listening to him.

Before Jesus began his ministry and called people to follow him, he was baptized in the Jordan River by John the baptizer. Soon after, he was driven into the wilderness where he was tested. Jesus turned away from the devil’s temptations by remembering and claiming who he is: God’s beloved son. Then he returned from the wilderness to begin his public ministry of teaching, healing, and loving.

When we are baptized, we commit to following Jesus; we renounce Satan and evil. We say “No!” to something and then we say “Yes!” to Jesus and God’s love. The sign of the cross is placed on our forehead with oil, and we are marked as Christ’s own forever, an invisible sign that remains with us always. The sign of the cross helps us remember that we belong to Jesus, he died for us, and that we promise to follow him. At a later date when we are confirmed, we affirm these promises made for us as infants. And every time we are present for a baptism in our churches, all of us reaffirm those baptismal promises to turn away from evil and turn toward Christ. We are invited, just like Jesus’ disciples, to turn and follow him.

A Prayer to Follow Christ

*Lord, lead me in the way of faith,
Help me to follow Christ.
Open my heart to receive your love,
Open my mind to understand your word. Amen.*

Through our baptism we promise to resist evil, and when we do fall into sin, we promise to turn back to God. None of us is perfect. We spend our entire lives learning to be the people God created us to be. When we hurt others along the way, we need to say we are sorry and ask for their forgiveness and God's.

A Prayer for Forgiveness

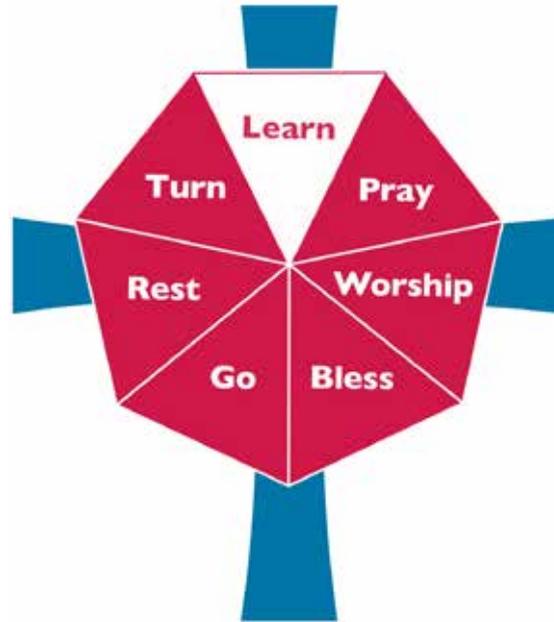
*For the times I have forgotten and put myself instead of others first,
Forgive me God.
For the times I have broken promises I have made,
Forgive me God.
For the times I have been unkind in my words and actions,
Forgive me God.
For the times I have not acted like Jesus would have me act,
Forgive me God.
For the times my choices have led me away from God,
Forgive me God. Amen.*

With your loving help, O God, may I continue to resist the bad things that come my way and always turn to the way of Jesus' love. May I seek you in all that I do and return to you when I stray. Amen.

Things to Do as a Family to Turn to Christ:

- Share family photos of baptism. Recall what the day was like, who was there, and what happened. What are the memories you share of witnessing the baptism of your child, your sibling, a friend?
- Read Bible stories about Jesus together. Don't have a Bible? The bibliography at the end of this booklet offers some suggestions.
- Wonder together about how Jesus looked, what he ate, what he liked to do, what he didn't like to do, and what he did for fun.
- Go to church together and discuss the rituals and symbols you find there. Ask someone to show you the sacred objects used in worship that help us get to know Jesus better.
- Take a walk, go to a park, visit a nature center. Where do you see Jesus?
- Share stories and talk about God's kingdom and the principles of love, justice, forgiveness, peace, and acceptance.
- Make Jesus a part of your life every day: pray, talk, listen, answer questions.

LEARN



“Those who love me will keep my word, and my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them.”

— John 14:23

By reading and reflecting on Holy Scripture (the Bible), especially the life and teachings of Jesus, we draw near to God, and God’s word dwells in us. When we open our minds and hearts to scripture, we learn to see God’s story and God’s activity in everyday life.

“Grant us so to hear [the Holy Scriptures], read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them.”

— The Book of Common Prayer, Proper 28 (p. 236)

The Bible is a prayerful collection of words about Jesus, who is called the Word of God. We believe that we will hear God speaking when we read the Bible—to the people of long ago as well as to us today. By reading scripture we learn more about who God is and what God has done for us. It is an essential part of our Christian life and faith no matter our age.

The Bible was an important part of Jesus’ life. As a young Jewish boy, Jesus would have attended classes to learn about the Bible; it was part of his family’s life. Stories about Jesus are a great place to start when reading the Bible. Start with the following stories. Find a Bible that is age appropriate for your children with pictures especially if they are young. Read together before bed or after dinner or before going off to school. If a reader, also encourage your child to read stories on their own for personal pleasure.

Bible stories to get you started:

- Jesus is born (Luke 2)
- Jesus is baptized (Mark 1:9-11)
- The good neighbor (Luke 10:30-37)
- The good shepherd (John 10:1-18)
- The disciples learn to pray (Luke 11)
- Jesus calms the storm (Luke 8 and Matthew 8)
- Jesus is alive (Luke 24 and John 20)
- The Good News (Acts 1)

Things to talk about after reading a Bible story together:

- What part of this story do you like best?
- What surprised you in this story?
- Where are you in this story?
- Where do you see this story happening today?

Picture books for young readers:

- *The Glorious Impossible* by Madeline L'Engle
- [*The Good Shepherd*](#) by Jerome Berryman
- *On the Day You Were Born* by Debra Fraser
- *Images of God for Young Children* and *Psalms for Young Children* by Marie-Helene Delval
- *In God's Name* by Sandy Eisenberg Sasso (or any of her books)
- *Psalm 23* by Tim Ladwig
- *The Easter Story*, and *Jesus*, and *St. Francis* by Brian Wildsmith (or any of his books)
- *Miracle Man: The Story of Jesus* by John Hendrix
- *God's Dream* by Desmond Tutu

Chapter books for older readers:

- *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* (and the Chronicles of Narnia series) by C. S. Lewis
- *A Wrinkle in Time* (and the titles in the Time Quintet) by Madeline L'Engle
- [*Marked*](#) by Steven Ross (a graphic novel)

A Prayer about Learning

God of love, the Bible recounts the story of your great love poured out on us.

Help us learn more about you.

Help us to live out that story of love every day of our lives.

In everything that we say and do. Amen.

Learning is more than just reading the Bible. It is about reflecting upon it—even for small children. When we read scripture or stories about Jesus, listen to what God might be saying to you in it, allowing it to change you. Be open to wondering with your children about what this might be, knowing that there is no right or wrong answer. The Bible is a book to live as well as read. The Bible tells the story of the expression of God's love in the world, a love that caused God to send God's Son to die for us. As we live our lives, we continue that story of God's love in the world.

A way to support you and your family in learning God’s Word is to attend worship on a regular basis. This is difficult for some due to work or school obligations. However, we model the importance of being part of a faith community to our children when we worship weekly, listening to God’s Word with others and participating in God’s holy meal, the Eucharist. And children learn about God by participating in that too!

Things to Do as a Family to Learn:

- Read Bible stories about Jesus together. Don’t have a Bible? The bibliography at the end of this booklet offers some suggestions.
- Reflect on a Bible story each day, especially on Jesus’ life and teachings. Try doing this before bedtime, right after dinner, or while waiting for the school bus. Reflection questions might be: What was your favorite part of the story? Where are you in the story? Where did you discover God or Jesus in the story? And for older kids: How is Jesus speaking to you in this story? What is it calling you to do differently?
- Attend church regularly. Participate in educational offerings such as Sunday School, adult Bible study, and intergenerational events. Remember that worship is just as formational as being in a classroom, no matter what your age is. On the way home from worship, talk about what everyone heard or experienced. What were the stories for that day? How do they relate to our lives today?

PRAY



He was praying in a certain place, and after he had finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.”

— Luke 11:1

Dwell intentionally with God daily.

“Lord, hear our prayer.”

— The Book of Common Prayer

To dwell with God means to dwell in relationship with God. Jesus teaches us to come before God with humble hearts, boldly offering our thanksgivings and concerns to God or simply listening for God’s voice in our lives and in the world. Whether in thought, word, or deed, individually or corporately, when we pray we invite and dwell in God’s loving presence.

The quantity of our prayers doesn’t matter; we don’t have to say a lot. We just have to say what we feel strongly about. Prayer is about life, all of it, but we don’t need to talk about it all at once—just that piece that is weighing on our heart at any particular moment. The quality of prayer also doesn’t matter; it is about our conversation with God, not a test. We also don’t need to have a theology degree to speak to God any more than we need a medical degree to speak to a doctor. When you pray, be honest and be natural. Remember, God loves you for who you are and just wants to be in relationship with you. God is always waiting to hear from you.

When the apostles asked Jesus how to pray, he responded with the Lord’s Prayer. Christians have been praying this since the Church began over two- thousand years ago. It is a very brief prayer and one that anyone can memorize from an early age. Each line of the prayer is rich and powerful, and it teaches us how to pray.

Teach and Pray the Lord's Prayer as a Family

*Our Father in heaven,
hallowed by your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial,
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and forever.
Amen.*

(contemporary language version)

*Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever.
Amen.*

(traditional language version)

Praying with Children

With children, use simple devices to help them understand how prayer can be used at all times and places of the day and for all circumstances that may arise. The five-finger prayer is an easy way to start:

1. **Thumb** (people who are close to you). These are your close friends and family, often the first you think about when you pray. Give thanks to God and ask his protection on your parents, siblings, friends, and classmates.
2. **Pointer** (people who point the way). These are leaders in your life, such as teachers and pastors. Offer God your thanksgiving for them and ask him to help them in their important work.
3. **Tall Finger** (people in authority). The big people in the world need prayer too. Ask God to give wisdom to our government, military, and police.
4. **Ring Finger** (people who are weak). This is your weakest finger. We should remember others who are sick, live in poverty, or are treated badly. Pray that Jesus would give them new strength.
5. **Little Finger** (your own needs). God wants to hear your needs too, especially when you put others first. Pray for your own growth in mind, body, and spirit.

Another way is to use the word ACTS to learn the different types of prayer: Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication, and Intercession.

- Adoration – “Wow!”
- Confession – “Oops!”
- Thanksgiving – “Thanks!”
- Supplication (petition) – “Gimme!”
- Intercession – Please, remember! Don’t forget!

Whenever one wants to give thanks or thinks (children and adults, too!) of something they want to talk to God about, that is a time to pray—any time. Sometimes there are special circumstances for “Important-Moment Prayers” for when something important happens on the spot. There is always “Time-with-God Prayers” offered at a regular time every day. Just like friendships need development and regular contact, building a relationship with God must be intentional.

Mealtime is an important time to give thanks. Even if it is fast food and in the car!

*We want it fast, we want it now.
Thank you God, for the cow!
For burgers, fries, and all we chew,
For all who work at this drive-thru!*

Peanut Butter and Jelly Prayers by Julie B. Sevig

Things to Do as a Family to Pray

- Set aside time each day to pray together at least once. Routine is important, so set a regular time each day for prayer as a family.
- Say “grace” (thanking God) before every meal. Hold hands around the table if able.
- Bless your children as they go off to school, work, or play. Simply lay your hands on their head and say the words “God be with you and protect you until we see each other again” before they go out the door.
- Create a prayer space at home reminding everyone of God’s presence. Use a portion of an accessible table, a mantel, or a shelf. Place a candle, cross, Bible, or other object on a piece of cloth to designate this special place. For special days and seasons, add other objects such as a book, pottery, flowers, fruit, pictures, prayer cards, an icon, salt, water, oil, a branch of a tree or bush.
- Post notes, prayers, sayings, petitions, and pictures on the refrigerator, bulletin board, or even the bathroom mirror for everyone to see on a daily basis.
- A special bowl or basket on a table along with slips of paper and a pencil will serve to remind others to pray about a special intention. They can place their petitions or requests on a piece of paper and put it in the bowl or basket.
- A candle placed in a special spot can also call the family to prayer during time of need.
- Make a prayer box out of a gift box or a plastic storage tote and fill it with sand, stones, shells, or a cloth.
- Arrange a quiet place to sit and reflect in your home: a comfortable chair, books, quiet music.
- Your children may like to create their own prayer space in their bedroom or a favorite spot in the house.

WORSHIP



When he was at the table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him.

— Luke 24:30-31

Gather in community weekly to thank, praise, and dwell in God.

Celebrant: Lift up your hearts.

People: We lift them to the Lord.

— The Book of Common Prayer (p. 361)

When we worship, we gather with others before God. We hear the Good News of Jesus Christ, give thanks, confess, and offer the brokenness of the world to God. As we break bread, our eyes are opened to the presence of Christ. By the power of the Holy Spirit, we are made one body, the body of Christ sent forth to live the Way of Love.

Children come to worship already known and loved by God. They already know and love God in return, even if they might not have the words to express it. As parents, it's important to acknowledge children as spiritual beings that are filled with joy and wonder about God's creation. The more they understand and participate in worship, the more they will be engaged in their words and actions.

As adults, we model why it is important to go to church weekly to hear God's Word and receive God's holy meal. Children need parents and caregivers to lead the way and not wait until they can choose for themselves. In order for them to make a choice when they are older, they need experiences from which to choose. In addition to the joy of worshipping with others, churches, at their best, provide a kind of extended family where there is always room for others. It is one place in our communities that is truly intergenerational on a regular basis. Church is not a social club—it is a place to ground ourselves in all things spiritual so that we can be sent forth to do God's work in the world, whether it be home, work, school, or play.

Worship provides a sensory experience. We listen, we sing, we pray, we eat, we stand. It can be an aerobic exercise of body, mind, and soul. We are formed by our prayers and those of others when we gather corporately; candles, stained glass, music, icons, and incense often remind us that we are in a different, holy place set aside just for us.

Tips for Worshipping with Children

- Relax! God put the wiggle in children; don't feel you have to suppress it in God's house. All are welcome!
- Encourage whispering by modeling the lowering of your voice when speaking to them.
- Sit toward the front where it is easier for your little ones to see and hear what's going on at the altar. Seeing the backs of others' heads doesn't allow their full engagement.
- Quietly explain the parts of the liturgy and actions of the priest, acolytes, choir, readers, ushers, etc.
- Have them look up the hymns in the hymnal or follow along in the worship bulletin.
- Ask if your church offers bulletins or coloring sheets for children.
- Sing the hymns, pray, and voice the responses.
- Children learn liturgical behavior by copying you.
- If you have to leave the service with your child, feel free to do so, but please come back. Parents are often more distressed by an anxious child than those around you. As Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me."
- Remember that the way we welcome children in church directly affects the way they respond to the Church, to God, and to one another. Let them know that they are at home in God's house of worship, wherever that might be.

A Prayer for Worship

Merciful God,

You have called us to your table.

Generous God, You have fed us with the bread of life.

Abundant God, Draw us and all people to the service of your Son;

And send us out to bring your peace and goodness to the world.

Amen.

Things to Do as a Family for Worship

- Attend church on a regular basis. The more children are in worship, the more they will learn the rhythm of service and actively participate.
- Arrive early for worship (or stay after). Ask someone to give you a tour of the sanctuary (worship space) and other areas where the holy vessels are kept (the Sacristy).
- As noted above—sit up front! And remember, all who are baptized are welcome to receive Holy Communion, even the smallest child.
- Come as you are. There is no need to dress up; some churches even have pajama-prayer services!
- Invite a friend (or your child's friend) to come to worship with you. Have a sleepover the night before!
- Talk about what you experience in worship on your way home: What was your favorite part?

BLESS



“Freely you have received; freely give.”

— Matthew 10:8

Share faith and unselfishly give and serve.

“Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?”

— The Book of Common Prayer (p. 305)

Episcopalians are not the best at sharing their faith (or their money). Stephanie Spellers, Canon to the Presiding Bishop (who helped create and launch the Way of Love) says, “I am an Episcopalian because I connect with a local and global network of people who follow Christ, emphasize mutual respect among people, share the Word and sacraments, and share resources to create communities of transformative love and hope everywhere.” Wow—does that include children and families? Yes, it does.

The best place to begin to practice talking about Jesus with others is with our family and friends. And sometimes we don’t have to use words—those can come later. There is a hymn titled “They’ll Know We Are Christians By Our Love” that has its origins in a phrase from John 13:25 that non-believers used to describe Christian believers of the early Church “Behold, how they love one another.” How we live our lives and the actions we can take can show others what being a Christian is all about; the lyrics speak to unity and dignity, to walking hand in hand and working side by side, the result of which is that “all will know that God is in our land.”

Knowing people of all ages, colors, religions, and walks of life are gifts we can give our children. When we join in community events to speak out against injustice, donate canned goods to a food pantry, visit an elderly person who cannot leave their residence, or simply acknowledge a stranger we pass on the street, we are showing the love of Christ. Children participate in service projects at school all the time. How do we as a family reach out in assistance to others? When we do so, we just need to name it: we do this because Jesus calls us to do such things in his name.

To talk about:

- How do we take Christlike actions in our relationships?
- What needs to change in order for our behaviors to reflect the love of Jesus?
- How might we love one another better at home as well as in the places we learn, play, and work?
- Who can we talk to about Jesus?

A Prayer for Blessing

*Loving God, shine the light of your gospel
in and through our lives each;
help us to live as a disciple of Jesus, an ambassador of peace,
and a sign of your loving presence in the world.*

Amen.

Abundant Generosity

Jesus called his disciples to give, forgive, teach, and heal in his name. We are empowered by the Spirit to bless everyone we meet, practicing generosity and compassion, and proclaiming the Good News of God in Christ with hopeful words and selfless actions. We can share our stories of blessing and invite others to the Way of Love.

The single best thing parents can do is to practice Christian generosity in the sight of their children. Children learn by example, and parents are their foremost teachers. If you have a tradition of family giving, you should take care to make the Good News of Jesus the main thing, rather than the family legacy. Family legacy, while a good thing, cannot motivate true Christian generosity. Parents can teach their children to be committed first and foremost to Christ and God's kingdom. Anything else, family included, must take second place. What's a parent to do?

1. Teach them to associate money with labor.
2. Teach them to save.
3. Give them opportunities to practice giving.
4. Take them with you to serve the poor.
5. Teach them some basic financial planning tools.
6. Teach them by example how to live simply.
7. Show them how family finances work.
8. Teach them that many things are more important than money.

As we learn to give—of ourselves, our time, our hospitality, and even our money—we find our place in God's amazing plan of generosity, and we can begin to understand God's character as one of abundance, not scarcity. Giving of ourselves includes praying for others and showing compassion. One of Jesus' well-known parables, The Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37), is a story worth sharing with children and discussing. When do we stop and give of ourselves to someone in need? Teaching children to give is important because it allows us to find our own place in God's amazing plan of generosity. We are called to give the very best that we have to God, not just the scraps that are left over when we have finished doing something else.

Things to Do as a Family to Bless:

1. Children of all ages can be involved in the family giving process. Do your children know to whom you give? If you involve them in the decision-making process, you can teach them both about giving and about the abundance of God.
2. Children of all ages can give their time and energy in acts of service. Consider taking your kids with you to deliver a meal to a needy family, to visit a nursing home, or to rake leaves for an invalid. In this way, they can learn to give even before they have money of their own.
3. When children are old enough to have money of their own (whether from allowance or employment), parents can train them to give regularly and generously to the church.
4. Above and beyond church giving, it is good to give children chances to give voluntarily to projects that excite them. Look for opportunities to expose them to missionaries serving abroad, local ministries, and people in need, explaining that they are free to give where Jesus leads them.

GO



Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.”

— John 20:21

Cross boundaries, listen deeply and live like Jesus.

“Send them into the world in witness to your love.”

— The Book of Common Prayer (p. 306)

As the Episcopal branch of the Jesus Movement and followers of Jesus’ Way, we seek to live like him. We’re serious about moving out to grow loving, liberating, life-giving relationships with God (evangelism); to grow those relationships with each other (reconciliation); and to grow those relationships with all of creation (creation care). To go means to be sent forth, to leave a particular place to go to another place. At the end of every worship service, the final words are usually something like this: “Go to love and serve the Lord,” to which our response is: “Thanks be to God.” For we have gathered together for word (Holy Scripture) and food (Holy Eucharist) so that we are fed and strengthened to leave our place of worship to do God’s work beyond the doors. It is about following Jesus into our neighborhoods.

We are sent with purpose. As Jesus went to the highways and byways, he sends us beyond our circles and comfort, to witness to the love, justice, and truth of God with our lips and with our lives. We go to listen with humility and to join God in healing a hurting world. We go to become Beloved Community, a people reconciled in love with God and one another. Children have great capacity for being empathetic and compassionate. As parents, we can help focus their energy and creativity on why we seek to follow Jesus’ example.

Now more than ever, we live in a broken world. Our children are not blind to the events that happen in our neighborhoods or the world. In “going,” we have an opportunity to explore, remember, and understand that we are all made in the image of God and loved equally by God. This involves living as Jesus would have us live, respecting all people, and caring for God’s creation.

Things to Do as a Family to Go:

Being Evangelists as a Family

This is about the love of God. How does your family express and give love to each other and those outside your household? Reflect back on the activities suggested in Learn and Bless. What concrete things can you do to act like Jesus in your local community?

- Invite a friend or other family member to come to church with you.
- Pray for others and the world.
- Be Jesus' feet and hands at school, work, home, and play.
- Take a walk around your neighborhood together. Where do you see goodness in your neighborhood? Where do you see signs of brokenness? What is Jesus calling you to do?
- Pay attention to your neighbors and help them out when you can.
- Visit the elderly at a nursing home or do chores for seniors in your neighborhood.
- Give food to the food bank
- Volunteer with organizations that serve others—find out what family opportunities your church offers.

Being Forgivers as a Family

Reconciliation is a big word for children. However, they understand what it means to forgive (“I’m sorry”) and make amends (“What can I do to make it better?”) toward others that they have harmed or hurt. The following picture books for children may help your conversation and determine action steps in regard to race:

- *The Sandwich Shop* by Queen Rania (ages 3-7)
- *One Green Apple* by Eve Bunting (ages 4-7)
- *Let’s Talk About Race* by Julius Lester (ages 4-8)
- *The Story of Ruby Bridges* by Robert Coles (ages 4-8)
- *The Other Side* by Jacqueline Woodson (ages 5-8)

In times of conversation about people in our world who are hurting or suffering, ask the questions (without knowing what an answer or action might be): Where is God in this situation? Does the Bible have a story that is like this? What would Jesus do here?

Caring for God’s Creation as a Family

This one may be the easiest of all to practice as a family. Together determine what steps you can take together to care for the earth. Children can come up with a list of things to do all on their own. Let them take the lead.

- Practice recycling bottles, glass, plastics, and paper.
- Learn how to save water and electricity in your home.
- Plant a garden: on your windowsill, in your yard, in a community garden, or at school or church.
- Pray for the earth.
- Walk, ride a bike, or use public transportation whenever possible.
- Use cloth shopping bags.
- Work with others to care for the environment, like cleaning up the neighborhood and planting trees.

God calls on each of us to walk softly on the earth, caring for it. We cannot change the world on our own, but we are called to do many small things that work together to accomplish something great.

REST



Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

— John 14:27

Receive the gift of God’s grace, peace, and restoration.

Blessed are you, O Lord ... giving rest to the weary, renewing the strength of those who are spent.

— The Book of Common Prayer, p. 113

From the beginning of creation, God has established the sacred pattern of going and returning, labor and rest. Especially today, God invites us to dedicate time for restoration and wholeness—within our bodies, minds, and souls, and within our communities and institutions. By resting we place our trust in God, the primary actor who brings all things to their fullness.

The word “Sabbath” comes from the Hebrew verb *shavat*, which literally means “to cease” or “to stop.” For the Hebrew people, the Sabbath was a day of ceasing from work. Taking Sabbath time on a weekly basis is a time for rest or activities that keep our minds, hearts, and bodies happy and healthy. Taking time to rest is also a time for us to remember all of God’s blessings: all that we have and all that we do has been created and given to us by God.

How does rest fit into your weekly schedule in your family? Outside of work and school, often our time is spent going from one activity to the other. Many children hunger for times of quiet and “just being” (as do many parents!). How do we make time for God and renewing our body and spirit in the midst of our busy lives?

Create a Sabbath Basket

Get a basket or box and place it in a well-traveled area of your home. Pick a night of the week (Friday or Saturday may be best), and before bed invite everyone to put all the things you don't need in order to observe a day (or time) of rest in the basket. This might be everyone's cell phones, credit cards, iPads, and work projects such as homework. Take them out again on the next evening or at an agreed-upon time.

A Prayer for Rest

*God of all creation,
you breathed us into this world and called us by name to be yours. Guide our days.
Let our work reflect your glory
and promote the good of all humankind.
Show us the goodness of keeping a time of rest,
that we may be whole in body, mind, and spirit.
Help us to know the patterns and rhythms of our lives,
and bring peace to the places of chaos in our lives.
Let us live in your love forever. Amen.*

Things to Do as a Family to Rest:

- Attend church as a family
- Spend some time reading a book, everyone on their own or together.
- Cook a nice meal to share with others.
- Go for a walk or bike ride.
- Watch a funny movie.
- Play board games.
- Take a nap.
- Read the Bible or pray.
- Write a letter to someone who lives far away.
- Call someone on the phone just to chat.
- Visit a museum, park, or nature center.

Times of rest are a blessing. These are times to rest your mind, refresh your spirit, and renew your relationships with those important to you. Taking time for rest is an important gift we can give our children. If we are always busy and don't take time to "smell the roses," our children will not see its importance for themselves as they grow.

RESOURCES

Bibles for Family Use:

- Tomie dePaola's Book of Bible Stories (GP Putnam's, 1990), ages 2-10.
- Spark Story Bible: Sunday School Edition (Augsburg Fortress, 2009), ages 3-7.
- *Children of God Storybook Bible* by Desmond Tutu (Zonderkidz, 2010), ages 4-8.
- *Shine On: A Story Bible* (MennoMedia, 2014), ages 8-11
- *The Complete Illustrated Children's Bible* by Janice Emmerson (Harvest House, 2014), ages 7-11.
- *The Children's Illustrated Story Bible* by Selena Hastings (Dorling Kindersley, 2004), ages 8-12.
- *The Lion Bible for Children* by Murray Watts, Helen Cann (Lion Hudson, 2014), ages 9-12.

Resources for Children

- *Candle Walk: A Bedtime Prayer to God* by Karin Holsinger Sherman (Church Publishing, 2019).
- *Jesus: God Among Us* by Roger Hutchison (Church Publishing, 2018).
- *Let Us Pray: A Little Kid's Guide to the Eucharist* by Jennie Turrell (Morehouse Publishing, 2014).
- *Living Well Children's Workbook: Christian Practices for Children* by John Roberto (Lifelong Faith Associates, 2009), free download: www.lifelongfaith.com/faith-formation-in-christian-practices.html
- *Praying in Color: Kid's Edition* by Sybil MacBeth (Paraclete Press, 2009).
- *Today Is a Baptism Day* by Anna Ostenso Moore (Church Publishing, 2018).
- *What We Do in Church: An Anglican Child's Activity Book* by Anne E. Kitch (Morehouse Publishing, 2004).
- *Water of Baptism, Water for Life: An Activity Book* by Anne E. Kitch (Morehouse Publishing, 2012).

Resources for Parents and Caregivers

- *Faith at Home: A Handbook for Cautiously Christian Parents* by Wendy Claire Barrie (Morehouse Publishing, 2016).
- *Stories of God at Home: A Godly Play Approach* by Jerome Berryman (Church Publishing, 2018).
- *The Anglican Family Prayer Book* by Anne E. Kitch (Morehouse Publishing, 2004).
- *Preparing for Baptism in the Episcopal Church* by Anne E. Kitch (Morehouse Publishing, 2015).
- *Godparenting: Nurturing the Next Generation* by Nancy Ann McLaughlin and Tracey E. Herzer (Morehouse Publishing, 2007).
- *Faithful Celebrations: Making Time for God* series edited by Sharon Ely Pearson (Church Publishing, 2017-2019).
- *Peanut Butter and Jelly Prayers* by Julie B. Sevig (Morehouse Publishing, 2007).

Websites:

- Building Faith: Home Practices www.buildfaith.org/home-practices/
- FISH: Families Integrating Sunday with Home <https://standrewsfish.weebly.com>
- Forward Day By Day <http://prayer.forwardmovement.org/>
- Grow Christians www.growchristians.org
- Moon Jar: resource materials for teaching children about money www.moonjar.com
- Parenting for Peace and Justice www.ipj-ppj.org
- Teaching Tolerance produces numerous videos and materials as well as a free quarterly magazine with ideas and resources on justice issues. www.teachingtolerance.org
- The World Peace Village is an online resource where families can walk together on the path toward peace, tolerance, and understanding about the world's religions. www.worldpeacevillage.org
- The Way of Love from Church Publishing www.churchpublishing.org/wayoflove
- The Way of Love from The Episcopal Church www.episcopalchurch.org/way-of-love