

FAMILY FAITH FORMATION

LIVING WITH THE HOLY





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“Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest? He said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”

Matthew 22:36-39, NET ⁱ



HOLY LIVING: GUIDED BY THE MEANS OF GRACE

We are created and called into relationship with God and neighbor. Christ’s commandment to love God and neighbor guides us as we seek to be faithful disciples of Jesus Christ.

John Wesley assures us that God provides us with the grace needed to faithfully live into this commandment. The means of grace are outward signs, words, or actions that empower people for the work of loving God (works of piety) and loving neighbor (works of mercy). Works of piety and works of mercy are individual and communal, private or public, ways of responding to God’s relational presence in our lives.



PRACTICING OUR FAITH: DEVELOPING OUR SPIRITUAL TOOLBOX

How we practice our faith is important.

There are many tools we can use as we participate in the means of grace, loving God and loving neighbor. Whether it is through worship, prayer, journaling, study, silence, fasting, or another act, we are saying to God:

“This is important, I want to be in relationship and communication with you.”

The tools we use provide us with different ways to engage in relationship with our Creator. Every person develops and sharpens these tools by observing and learning from others and by practicing these disciplines over and over again. With repetition and dedication, these tools provide reliable ways for us to recognize, reflect, claim, and respond to God's presence and love.

This resource, *Living with the Holy*, offers simple ways for your families to model, develop, and practice using different spiritual tools. Together, we grow stronger in our faith and in our relationships with God and one another. The following pages contain multiple options for you and your family as you pay attention and respond to God's grace and love. The goal is not to follow this guide page-by-page or step-by-step. Instead, pick one moment in the day and commit to one liturgical practice. In time, you will discover the joy and peace that comes when you mark your hours in prayer and intentional living.



TOOLS FOR THE JOURNEY

LITURGY & RITUAL

We mark our hours with prayer and intentional living through liturgy and ritual.

The words, symbols, and actions we use form our liturgy.

This is the language we use to express our faith and communicate with God and one another. These pieces matter. Our liturgy provides us ways to practice the means of grace, loving God (works of piety) and loving neighbor (works of mercy). We use our words, symbols, and actions to engage in relationship with one another, to build community, and to do God's holy work.

Ritual is a series of actions that are repeated regularly according to a prescribed order.

When we create a liturgy and use it over and over again, we are creating a holy ritual that allows us to practice being in communication and relationship with God and neighbor. As Christians, we participate in ritual in order to set aside space and time to be in relationship with God, opening ourselves up to God's transforming grace and love. Through repetition and practice, we become aware of God's presence and open to the Spirit, allowing God's love to move and dwell within us, stirring us to action.

No matter our age, we can participate in liturgy at any point of the day, creating a ritual for our lives and the lives of those we are in relationship with. I invite you to find time in your day to stop, pay attention, and respond to God's presence in your life. *Living with the Holy* offers practical ways to add liturgy and create ritual in the home, at work, at school, and at play.

FIND TIME

It is hard to find time in our busy lives. Yet, every moment provides us an opportunity to stop, recognize God's presence, reflect on God's love, claim God's grace, and respond to these amazing gifts. The goal is not to tackle all of these liturgical practices at once. Instead:

- Identify one moment when you and your household will pay attention to God.
- Participate in the liturgy together.
- Repeat daily/weekly/monthly so that it becomes a holy ritual for you and others.
- Return to this resource when you are ready and choose another moment and another activity to add to your spiritual practice.

Over time, the hope is that you and your family will develop a ritual for holy living together.

CREATE SPACE

In this busy world, it is often hard to find moments for peace and calm. Space that is holy, sacred, inviting, and peaceful provides a place for us to experience God's presence and peace. This might be a specific room, location outside near your home, or an area in your home where people can go to relax, breathe, pray, and be with God.

As you begin to create ritual with the ones you love, consider creating a sacred space in your home. This will be a place where people in your household can return to find peace and calm and to remember God's presence and love. What this looks like is up to you and your family. You might choose to make this a special table, or perhaps an area that includes a favorite chair, pillows, or other comfortable furniture. Use symbols, liturgical colors, and objects to identify this as a holy place.

Throughout this resource, you will find specific ideas for developing your space.

PROVIDE FAITH STAMPERS

The idea of and need for faith stampers comes from a group of elementary children who demonstrated that finding a way to stamp, mark, and remember where we have been and where we have experienced God is essential to our faith development. Faith stampers are structures—tangible objects—that help us remember God's presence in our lives in the past, present, and future. In this resource, you will find suggested faith stampers that are ways to display Scripture, special notes, the day's liturgy, reminders, and other tangible objects that help us remember to stop, pay attention, and live in response to God's grace and love by loving God and loving neighbor.

WONDER TOGETHER

Some of the suggested liturgy will include wondering questions.

Active wondering creates a space for people of all ages to engage in the learning process and to use their imaginations as they consider various topics, ideas, and experiences — including how they experience God and share God's love with their neighbors.

Active listening and wondering together creates a space where people of all ages can learn together. The gift of active wondering comes in the space created for honest reflection, respect from the listeners, and the absence of judgment. Faith development is a process, and every person is on this journey. Therefore, having all the answers is not important. Instead, strive to create a space where you and your family can wonder, imagine, discover, share, and learn together. Faith development is an ongoing activity that is fueled by wonder, imagination, intentionality, grace, and love. Wondering opens our eyes to new possibilities, to God's presence, and to God's call in our lives.



DAILY LITURGIES & PRACTICES

EVERY MOMENT OF EVERY DAY PROVIDES US AN OPPORTUNITY TO:

1. Pay attention (stop & recognize God's presence)
2. Create Space (take time to acknowledge, claim & reflect on God's love)
3. Do Holy Work (respond to God's gifts of love and grace)
4. Bless one another

3 STEPS FOR LIVING WITH THE HOLY

1. Identify one moment when you and your household will pay attention to God.
2. Participate in the liturgy together
3. Repeat daily/weekly/monthly so that it becomes a holy ritual for you and others.

MORNING HOURS

MORNING WAKE-UP ROUTINE, GREETING THE NEW DAY

Option one: Individuals greeting the new day:

As you wake up, take a deep breath in and reach above your head as you say, "Thank you, God, for this day."

As you blow out your breath, wiggle your toes and extend your feet toward the foot of the bed, say, "and for new possibilities."

Repeat several times until your body is ready to roll up. As you breathe out, touch your toes, sit up, and say: "I'm glad you are with me as I begin my work."

Option two: Waking your child or someone else in your household:

Sit at your family member's bedside, gently rub his/her back as you breathe in and say: "Good morning, *[insert name]*"; then as you breathe out, "A new day is here." Repeat several times until the person stirs. Then on your inhale, say: "God has given us a new day." As you exhale say, "I wonder what you will do today?" (Sit in silence, inviting the person to share something he/she is looking forward to doing that day.)

BRUSH TEETH; LISTEN TO GOD

Faith Stamper: Place a favorite Scripture or the Scripture your church is focusing on that week on your mirror. You may choose to write on your mirror with a wipe-off marker, or print your Scripture on colored paper and tape it to your mirror. Invite members of your household to do the same.

Scripture Suggestion: Lamentations 3:22-24

As you pick up your toothbrush and put toothpaste on it, say: "Lord, help me hear what you are saying to me today."

As you brush your teeth, read the Scripture silently and slowly. If time allows, read it more than once. Take a moment of silence after each reading, stilling your mind as you let the words sink in.

If you have younger children, you can read the Scripture or say a small part of the Scripture while you help them brush their teeth. Or you can sing a song as they brush.

Suggested song: "This Is the Day" (*United Methodist Hymnal*, 657)

As you rinse and put away your toothbrush, say: "The word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God. Amen."

BREAKFAST PRAYER

Faith Stamper: Display this prayer somewhere near where you eat breakfast so you can see it as you sit down to eat. Your family might choose to create a prayer booklet or mini-

flipchart on a 3 by 5 index card spiral notebook to keep at your table. You can place the different mealtime liturgies in this notebook to use when you gather for meals together.

New every morning is your love, Great God of light,
and all day long you are working for good in the world.
Stir up in us desire to serve you,
to live peacefully with our neighbors,
and to devote each day to your Son,
our Savior, Jesus Christ the Lord. Amen.

(from An Order for Morning Prayer in The United Methodist Book of Worship)

WALK THE DOG, FEED THE CAT, & WATER THE PLANTS: CARING FOR GOD'S CREATION

As you take care of a pet or tend to living plants in your home, use this time to give thanks to God for the wonders and beauty of creation.

Watering plants: As you pour the water say, “Thank you, God, for the gift of life. May your light and water bring life to all of your creation.”

Prayer of thanksgiving for pets: As you walk/feed your pet, say, “God, Thank you for [*insert pet's name/s*]. He/She/They is/are a gift to me. Help me to love and take care of them. Amen.”

LEAVING THE HOUSE, JOURNEYING WITH GOD

Faith Stamper: In the Jewish tradition, households place a *mezuzah* by their door. The *mezuzah* often holds a piece of parchment or displays the words from the Shema (verses from the Torah that can be found in Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and 11:13-21). This is the Jewish response to God's command in Deuteronomy 6:9 to write God's commandments on the doorposts of their house. The *mezuzah* is a visual reminder of faith for all the people who come and go from their house. Your household may choose to do something similar: Place a

visual reminder by your door that you can see whenever you come or go that reminds you of God's call to love God and neighbor as you share your light with the world. The object you choose for your faith stamper can take many different shapes and forms. Pick a symbol or a text that helps you and your family remember that God is with you wherever your family goes and that, as Christians, our work is to share God's love with others.

Leaving the home: Look at, touch, or read your faith stamper. Then say: "God be with me as I leave this house. Bless my work. Help me share your love with others. Amen."

Returning home: Look at, touch, or read your faith stamper. Then say: "God, thank you for returning me home safely. May the lives I touched know your love. May I find rest and peace in this place. Amen."

CAR TIME, TRAVELING WITH GOD

Fastening your seatbelt: "Lord, keep us safe as we make this journey. Amen."

Wondering together: Traveling in the car to school, work, or play is a great time to stop and reflect on God's presence in our lives. Here are a few wondering questions to ponder together as you travel:

1. I wonder what you are excited about doing today.
2. I wonder how you can show God's love to others today.
3. I wonder if there is anything you are worried/scared/
anxious about today.
4. I wonder what will help you as you move through this day.

Prayer: "Lord, help us remember that no matter what happens today, we are not alone. You are with us."

Unfastening your seatbelt: "Lord, thank you for safe travel."

AFTERNOON HOURS

MEALS

Packed lunch: If you are in charge of packing lunches for your household, put a small note in the lunches that reminds family members that they are loved. You can use stickers for those who are not old enough to read. For older children, youth, spouse, or a roommate, you can print a short note: “I love you. God loves you. Enjoy your lunch.” If you want, you can include a short meal blessing on the back. If you are not packing lunches, you can always place a note in a backpack, bookbag, purse, or briefcase.

Wesley Blessing Before Meals (*You can add this to your mealtime spiral notebook—see breakfast prayer liturgy. Take time during the meal to talk about what the words mean.*)

Be present at our table, Lord,
Be here and everywhere adored.
Thy creatures bless and grant that we
May feast in paradise with Thee.
Amen.

Wesley Blessing After Meals

We thank you, God, for this our food,
for life and health and everything good. Amen.

END OF WORK/SCHOOL DAY

As you leave school or work, take time to say: “Thank you, God, for this day. For all I did [*insert specific accomplishments*] and for all I learned [*insert specific learnings*]. Thank you for being with me during the hard times [*insert specific moments*] and the fun times [*insert specific moments*]. Help me relax, play, and rest. Amen.”

CAR TIME, TRAVELING WITH GOD

Fastening your seatbelt: “Lord, keep us safe as we make this journey. Amen.”

Wondering together: Traveling in the car to school, work, or play is a great time to stop and reflect on God's presence in our lives. Here are a few wondering questions to ponder together as you travel:

1. I wonder what you did today.
2. I wonder what you learned today.
3. I wonder what happened that was hard.
4. I wonder what happened that was fun.
5. I wonder how you felt God's love.
6. I wonder how you shared God's love with others.

Prayer: "Lord, thank you for this day. Keep us safe as we travel home. Help us to relax, play, and rest. Amen."

Unfastening your seatbelt: "Lord, thank you for safe travel."

Siren Prayer Liturgy: Whenever we hear sirens, we are reminded that someone's life has changed. The sirens and lights can be our reminder to stop and pray for the people involved. Whenever you hear sirens, use this liturgy:

"God: When we hear sirens, it is a reminder that someone's life has changed. Please be with the people in need of your care, their families, the drivers of the emergency vehicles, the medical team, and people who might be in their paths. Amen."

RETURNING HOME: SHARING THOUGHTS AND PRAYERS WITH GOD

Faith Stamper: Invite everyone in your household to create/ decorate a journal. You might choose to use a special app on your phone/tablet/computer. You can decide to have one journal for prayer requests for your household, or if people want a private space to write, encourage them to create their own. An alternative option to a prayer journal is a prayer box. You can decorate this and place it in your home's designated sacred space (*see creating space*). Make sure it's tightly closed and that there is a small slot for inserting messages. Provide pens and small pieces of paper.

When people arrive home at the end of the day, invite them to take five minutes to talk to God in a quiet space, write/draw in their prayer journal, or put their thoughts in a prayer box. Suggested formats:

1. Thank you, God, for...
2. I felt sad today when...
3. I felt happy today when...
4. God help me...
5. God help *[insert another person's name]*

EVENING HOURS

DINNER

Mealtime Blessing: Choose a prayer from your mealtime spiral notebook. During the meal, take time to share your highs and lows with one another.

Go around the table inviting persons to share:

1. Their highs for the day: When they felt happy...
2. Their lows for the day: When they felt sad...
3. Prayer requests that they might have.

Invite someone to pray for each person after everyone has shared:

Lord, thank you for this family (*insert names*). Thank you for the times when we are happy. Thank you for being with us when we are sad. Thank you for listening to our prayers. Amen.

BEDTIME STORY

Choose a story to read together from the Bible, a chapter book, or some favorite book. There are many possibilities for this time together. The gift in this time comes from being together as you read and wonder together. As you close, take time to wonder:

1. I wonder...what is your favorite part of the story?
2. I wonder...how did you experience God in the story?
3. I wonder...is there a character like you in the story?
4. I wonder...what do you wonder about?

Conclude this moment, saying the Lord's Prayer together:

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
Your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth, as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins,
as we 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.

NIGHTIME BLESSING

As you say goodnight, make the sign of a cross on the person's forehead or in the palm of his/her hand. As you make the vertical line, say: "God loves you." As you make the horizontal line, say: "God is with you." Then offer a hug as you say, "Sleep well, knowing you are loved."

My child, keep my words and store up my commandments with you; keep my commandments and live, keep my teachings as the apple of your eye; bind them on your fingers, write them on the tablet of your heart.

Proverbs 7:1-3, NRSV ⁱⁱ



IN CLOSING...

*“The easiest way to learn to write a blessing is to do it.”
Begin by blessing any old stick you find lying around. “Bless
you stick, for being you.”*

Barbara Brown Taylor in *An Altar in the World*

Sometimes it is hard to know where or how to begin. Start by picking a practice and giving it a try. It might feel awkward at first. Know that with all practices it takes time and repetition for a new activity to become a habit, a daily practice, a ritual that marks your day. By practicing the new tool with your family, you are modeling ways to connect with God every moment of every day. Practice together as you recognize, claim, and respond to God’s presence in your lives. For more daily activities and faith practices, visit <http://www.umcdiscipleship.org/leadership-resources/intergenerational-family-ministries>. Together you will grow closer to God and to one another. May you and your families experience God’s blessings, grace, and love, as you grow in holiness of heart and life.

¹ FOUND IN THE UNITED METHODIST HYMNAL, SERVICE OF WORLD AND TABLE, 10-11

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FOR FURTHER STUDY

A Homemade Year: The Blessings of Cooking, Crafting, and Coming Together by Jerusalem Greer (Paraclete Press, 2013).

Passing it On by Kara Lassen Oliver (Upper Room, 2015).

Praying in Color by Sybil MacBeth. Paraclete Press, 2007.

Praying in Color (Kids' Edition) by Sybil MacBeth (Paraclete Press, 2009).

Real Kids, Real Faith: Practices for Nurturing Children's Spiritual Lives by Karen Marie Yust (Jossey-Bass, 2009).

Scrambled Starts: Family Prayers for Morning, Bedtime, and Everything In-Between by Jenny Youngman (Upper Room, 2015).

Sleeping with Bread: Holding What Gives You Life by Dennis and Sheila Fabricant Linn (Paulist Press, 1995).

For more information and resources related to family faith formation, visit:

<https://umc-intergenerational-ministry.com/family>

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Tanya holds a master's of divinity degree from Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary and a doctorate of philosophy in Christian education and congregational studies from Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary. The title of her dissertation is *Experiencing God Together: A Practical Theology for Ministry with Children*.

Tanya's research focus is children's spirituality. She has 19 years experience as a Christian educator and minister to children and families in the local church.

Tanya uses the wisdom received from the children she has worked with to gain insight and discover faithful pedagogical methods for the entire church. Children have taught her how persons grow in their faith when they are connected to God and neighbor through relational and experiential ministry. This forms the foundation for Tanya's work in family and intergenerational ministry.