

To Hear the Word of God

From elca.org/faithpractices...

The Faith Practices Initiative of the ELCA urges members of this church to “put their faith into practice” by living out the promises contained in the liturgy for the Affirmation of Baptism. In that promise, we pledge as members of the body of Christ through baptism to:

- **live** among God’s faithful people
- **hear** the word of God and **share** in the Lord’s supper
- **proclaim** the good news of God in Christ through word and deed
- **serve** all people following the example of Jesus
- **strive** for justice and peace in all the earth

(Evangelical Lutheran Worship, p. 236)

It is always interesting to hear Call Committee interview questions. Most include some form of: Pastor, what will you do to grow the youth in our congregation?

I remember vividly as a small child sitting on the floor coloring quietly at my mother’s Circle meetings. I remember listening to their prayers, Bible readings and singing. I remember being in the kitchen as the ladies served funeral lunches. I was able to witness their faith in action even before I understood.

When my daughter was not quite 3, she followed me into the sacristy while I was cleaning up. She asked for the bread. I responded with a question, “What is this?” She answered, “The body of God.” I held up the chalice and asked the same question. She answered, “The blood of God.” Being a good Lutheran, I asked the next logical question, “Why do we eat and drink?” She answered, “Because Jesus died on the cross to take away my sins.”

I have a friend whose pastor began communing her daughter at her infant baptism. She has only known full participation at the altar. One night, while leading dinner church, her mom called her from the children’s coloring table saying it was time for Communion. The toddler daughter began jumping up and down in excitement and glee at the thought of partaking.

This year, during my First Communion class, a little girl attended because her brother and parents were attending. I gave her the *Fed and Forgiven* book to follow along. She completed all of the exercises, participating in the conversation. When I passed out banner-making supplies, she eagerly picked out her colors. When it was time to make the bread, she was my partner. Then I

realized, her parents had not intended on her receiving Communion this year. So, I sent mom a message. This was her reply...

"We were not planning on it, but yes, she did participate and wasn't made to. She wanted to be there. And when we got home Sunday, she asked if she was able to receive communion and we told her no. She was upset. I just talked to [her dad] and we are good with it. So, yes, she can receive her first communion. Thank you for checking. She will be happy. She had to come home and set up her altar and showed [her dad] and I how it all works. Words and all."

One of the ways we put our faith into practice is to...**hear** the word of God and **share** in the Lord's supper.

Our children learn to live in the faith by hearing the word of God spoken, studied, proclaimed, sang and experienced. They have ownership as a baptized member of the body of Christ even when they do not sit still in the pew or make some noise or spend that time coloring the latest children's bulletin. They learn through repetition. They learn by watching the adults around them. They learn what is important to the church as they listen to what is discussed in the hallways, Fellowship Hall or on the car ride home. They learn when worship as a family is the priority each week.

And that is my answer when people tell me all the reasons they are not in worship to hear God's word and to share in the Lord's Supper. If we want our children to remain active throughout their teen years, we have to be active as adults. If we want our children to feel ownership and a part of the body of Christ, we cannot relegate them to the roles no one else wants to do or a one time a year "Youth Worship".

This month, we focus on Living Our Baptism: to hear the word of God and share in the Lord's supper. Check out the resources at faithfulteaching.org, elca.org/faithpractices, and LifeofFaith.info. I invite you to visit the Facebook group and share your stories of how your people are hearing God's word and sharing in the Lord's Supper.

Blessings on your journey,

Pastor Juli Lejman-Guy

