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I used to use the word “faith” a lot and make all sorts of lofty claims about it. But it seems to me that FAITH doesn’t mean anything more complicated than TRUST.

TRUST that God is with us always and has created us just as we are for a beautiful purpose. TRUST that Jesus’ life shows us the way to cut through that which does not satisfy or matter and live radically connected to the earth-shaking power and glory of God. TRUST that the Holy Spirit will guide us even when we are unsure or anxious or **downright terrified!** TRUST that the stories of the Bible and the rituals of our tradition help us dive deep within ourselves to touch the holy spark within and draw it out to light up the world. TRUST that there is a community behind us, cheering us, comforting us, celebrating with us, and delighting in who we are and who we are becoming. And TRUST that as an important part of this community, we are the living, breathing Body of Christ in our own time.

And as far as forming this TRUST, well, it seems to me to be a lifelong process and one that really does take a village.

From our parents and families we INHERIT our faith. Ever wonder why there are so many boring genealogies in the Bible? One reason might be that even ancient people understood that you are who you are because of the family that raised you. The process of faith formation begins with what we receive from our parents and family. This could mean the religious tradition we grow up in, but it also means the way our parents make sense of and move through the world.

Now, the faith we receive isn’t always ideal. Sometimes our parents teach us to trust that we’re not worth much, that the world is out to get us, or that God is looking for any tiny excuse to punish us. I’m sure each of us can name some wonderful things we inherited from our parents AND a handful of ideas we’d rather forget.

Which is why it’s so important to support the soon-to-be parents, parents, and grandparents of our congregation. When these feel loved and supported and know that they are not alone, then they will be equipped to gift the children in our community with a life-giving faith.

Our teachers, mentors, pastors, and staff INSTRUCT us in the history and traditions and rituals that bind us together as a community. Jesus’ disciples called him “Rabbi,” which means *teacher*. And as the Sunday School season kicks off, we bless our teachers and mentors because they have the opportunity to help our children develop a kind of super power to see the world through the lenses of grace and compassion, hope and blessing.



Of course, this is only an opportunity, not a guarantee. Years ago, as I walked by a Sunday School classroom, I heard the teacher say, "... and Job got what was coming to him!" Now, the Book of Job is... complicated... but it's certainly not about God delighting in the agony of Job's suffering. I've also heard from so many church folk over the years who've shared with me stories of spiritual wounds they received in the course of their religious education. It really bums me out.

Which is why it's so important to support our teachers, mentors, pastors, and staff. When these feel loved and supported and know they are not alone, then they will be equipped to teach the children in our community the full length, height and breadth of this life-giving faith.

We also engage with our peers inside and outside the church to INTERPRET what we believe and understand it better. Jesus was always coming up with new and interesting ways to explain his ideas, like the parable of the lost coin or the prodigal son. And every time someone asked Jesus a question (which happened A LOT), he received another opportunity to interpret his relationship with God and deepen it in the process. Because faith formation isn't just about taking in; it's also about sharing your ideas and experiences with others – not to necessarily change them, but to understand yourself better.

Dynamic conversation is key and yet it takes time to create spaces where our children (and many of us adults!) can let go of giving the "right" answer and dive in to the deep, juicy questions that draw us closer to God's mystery.

Which is why it's so important to support the peer relationships of the children and youth inside our church and foster strong peer relationships with youth in other kinds of churches, mosques, synagogues, etc. When our children and youth feel loved and supported in many diverse peer groups and know they are not alone, then they will be equipped to voice to their questions, wonderings, and experiences in a way that will give color and texture to this life-giving faith.

And then there's an unpredictable, magic, sometimes difficult, sometimes joyful (and often both) moment when *God* IGNITES faith. Now, because we live and move and have our being inside our God, God is moving through and guiding this whole process. But at this point, we take a step back; because igniting faith is intimately involved with an experience of resurrection. And, this can be neither scheduled or programmed; but only witnessed, named, and blessed. This part of the process is in God's time alone.

And yet, what we absolutely can do all along the way is share with each other, in clear voice and humble spirit, our own moments of resurrection. When disappointment turned to hope, sadness to joy, despair to faithful action... When we were raised up ourselves or



participated in raising up something good and right out of brokenness. And as we remember our own stories, we'll create space in our hearts to love and sustain our children and youth as they live in to their own stories.

Which is why it's so important to support us all in coming together as one church of many generations all sharing our resurrection stories. When the work of God in our lives is praised and honored and shared by all of us, then we will be equipped to carry our life-giving faith as a light to the world that the darkness can never, ever overcome.