

LOVE SHOWS ITSELF IN ACTION!

- Check out Big Brother and Big Sister programs in your community, along with shelters and hotlines for critical care. Consider how you can support these and other programs as a way to encourage others.
- Be available. Just as the little boy offered his fish and loaves to help feed the 5000 (John 6:9), our willingness to let God use what we have is almost more important than what we actually have to give.
- Be a friend to a new family in your church or community. Invite them into your home or meet them at a park or a fast food restaurant.
- Encourage your children to call a friend who has stayed home sick from school or who has missed an athletic game or a Sunday school class.
- Express thanks to those who share their time and talents with you — day care providers, public servants, coaches, dance and music teachers, home nurses. Celebrate the many gifts God has given them.

RESOURCES

- *Soul Gardening: Cultivating the Good Life.* Terry Hershey.
 - *That Reminds Me: Family Story-Starters for passing On the Faith.* Jean Brown Eittrheim.
- Both are available from Augsburg Fortress Publishers. 800/380-4648.

Your pastor or church leader has access to number of catalogs that provide information on additional resources. You might also browse local Christian bookstores for other resources.



encourage

This bulletin insert is part of a series on the seven faith practices, developed in conjunction with the ELCA-wide Call to Discipleship. Copyright© 2000

faith practices:



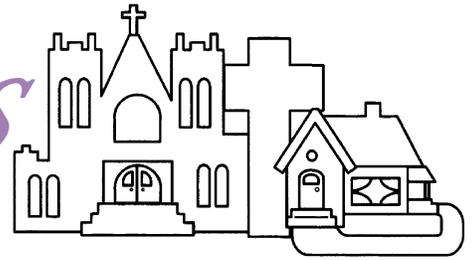
ENCOURAGE

“For God has destined us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live with him. Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.” — 1 Thessalonians 5:9-11

- L** As disciples, we are called to do those things that enrich our journey with Jesus. Encouraging others in faith nurtures the community and shows God’s love in word and deed. Shall we respond to the invitation to encourage one another and build each other up?
- C** Yes! Lord, help us to share and care in Jesus’ name.
- L** Shall we look for ways to reach out and support generations beyond our own?
- C** Yes! Lord, help us to share and care in Jesus’ name.
- L** Shall we attend to those who face difficult transitions, such as separation and divorce? Shall we seek to sustain those who suffer bereavement; incarceration or physical or mental illness?
- C** Yes! Lord, help us to share and care in Jesus’ name.
- L** Shall we speak for those who often cannot be heard, those who are hungry and thirsty or burdened with other issues of injustice around the world?
- C** Yes! Lord, help us to share and care in Jesus’ name.
- L** Leaders in homes and families, will you encourage one another in faith, model healthy lifestyles, communicate in love and seek to live at peace with one another?
- L** Children, will you look for ways to show God’s love in your words and actions?
- C** Yes! Lord, help us to share and care in Jesus’ name.
- L** Then, join me, in prayer, as we honor our call to discipleship.
- C** Lord, increase our sensitivity and desire to love our neighbors as ourselves. Amen

nurturing lifestyles

t h a t a r e C h r i s t ' s s t y l e



ENCOURAGE

These pages will help people in whatever family relationships they live to honor their call to discipleship with a growing sensitivity to those who need to see signs of God's presence and activity in their own lives.

"I am longing to see you so that I may share with you some spiritual gift to strengthen you or rather so that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine." — Romans 1:12

BRINGING IT HOME

How many shoes in a shoe store? Hundreds? Thousands? There seems to be something for everyone!

Think of a time you tried on someone else's shoes. How did they fit? Could you wear them for a day?

Imagine what it might be like to have for a parent to switch with a preschooler, or a teen with an older adult, a happily-married homemaker with a single parent working two jobs, an executive with a blue-collar worker, an American with an Ethiopian spouse. When little children shuffle around in adult shoes, we laugh because they look so out of character. And yet, we might tend to feel the same way if we actually walked in someone else's shoes through their average day.

"If then, there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, make my joy complete: be of the same love, being in full accord and of one mind." — Philippians 2:1

Talk about ways you can be more sensitive to people in need and encourage them in their faith.

Look through the following ideas you can use to help increase your sensitivity to others and your willingness to nurture them in faith. Choose one, two or more.

- Leave a pair of shoes near your door to remind you to be sensitive to people in need.
- Purchase a pair of "heart-shaped" sun glasses from a party supply store. Try them on and think about how the color and shape of lens affects the way you see something. What difference would make if we looked at the following people through God's eyes?
 - Kids on the playground
 - Teammates in athletics
 - Co-workers
 - People who seem to be different from us
 - Clerks, waitresses and service attendants
 - Refugee families throughout the world
- Write words of encouragement and affirmation on self adhesive notes. Stick them on mirrors, doors and other places where others in the family can see them.
- Invite grandparents to send frequent postcards to support the challenges and accomplishments of their grandchildren.
- Be kind to the people you meet. Offer a smile, a greeting or gesture as you pass by. Explain to your children that, "We love, because God first loved us" (1 John 4:7-8).
- Nurture unconditional love. Teach your family members to handle inappropriate behavior with a response, "I might not like what you do, but I'll always love you."
- Find ways to address some of the greater world challenges. Go to the Lutheran Office of Governmental Affairs Web page (www.loga.org) to learn ways you can be advocate for change.

"For surely, I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, for your welfare and not harm, to give you a future and a hope." — Jeremiah 29:11
