

FAITH @ HOME

Week of March 8, 2020

Second Sunday in Lent

ADULT AND SMALL CHILD

READ: Genesis 12:1-4a

REFLECT: Trying new things can be really fun, but sometimes it can be a little scary. When you ride your bike without training wheels for the first time, it requires bravery. You know that there is a chance you might fall over and maybe even scrape your knee. But when you are ready and brave, you try it. You have faith in yourself that your legs are strong to pedal fast and faith that God is with you. At different times in our lives God asks us to be brave and have faith. Sometimes you move to a new house, like Abram, or a new school. These are hard things but God is there with you, even when you are afraid or sad.

RESPOND: Brainstorm a list of things that you would like to learn or activities you would like to try. Adults should add theirs as well. Making a huge list without separating it by person shows that there are new things to learn and do no matter your age. Expand on each item about why you want to do that activity and perhaps what has held you back from doing it already. Make a commitment to conquer one thing each on your list.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: HANNAH GRAHAM



For nearly 15 years, Hannah has served in a variety of Christian Formation roles. Hannah utilizes her knowledge of child and adolescent faith development in the classroom and in executing big picture planning to enhance the shaping of Christian community. She has led the Education for Ministry Program as a trained mentor and regularly contributes to Diocesan events, camps, retreats, and committee work. In addition to her ministry at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in Glenwood, Maryland, Hannah devotes herself to growing in faith as a beloved child of God, wife and mother of three boys, ages 10 months-5 years old.

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ADULT AND ELEMENTARY

READ: John 3:1-17

REFLECT: “Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit.” (John 3:5, NRSV)

Have you been born of water and Spirit? You might have no idea what that means when it’s said that way. But here is another way to say it: have you been baptized? Has anyone in your family been baptized? Have you seen a baptism at church?

Baptisms can look different. But if you have seen one in an Episcopal Church, then it most likely looked something like this: a family passing a baby to a priest and the priest takes water from a font or bowl-like thing and pours it onto the forehead of the baby while saying, “I baptize you in the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.”

In baptism, families and their churches say words that are promises. They promise to care for, to love, and to grow up with that baby. They promise to do it all in a community that believes in a God whose love for us never stops no matter what. And, because of that love, we should never stop trying to love God and others as well.

RESPOND: Ask your family if you were baptized and, if so, have them tell you about it. Ask them to share photos if there are any. Ask if any of them were baptized and have them tell you about it and show you any photos they have. Pay closer attention to what happens and what is said the next time a baptism is happening at your church. See what sticks out to you. If you are not baptized, consider and pray about if you want to be.

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: PATRICK KANGRGA



Patrick Christopher Kangrga is the Associate for Youth Ministries at Trinity Episcopal Church in Menlo Park, California. Originally from Arkansas, he left home to participate in two years of the Episcopal Service Corps in Maryland and in Massachusetts. After this came the beginning of his lay-professional journey with positions at parish and diocesan levels in New York and New Jersey. He has primarily served youth, with a foray into children's ministry.

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ADULT AND YOUTH

READ: John 3:1-17

REFLECT: One of the most famous verses in the Bible is John 3:16, “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.” (NRSV) You see it on t-shirts, tattoos, and television ads. The conversation between Nicodemus and Jesus in the Gospel of John leads up to this pinnacle point. However, John 3:16 isn’t just a mic drop by Jesus, instead it’s born out of questioning how we experience the kingdom of God.

Nicodemus was a Pharisee, a Jewish sect that was often seen at odds with the teachings of Jesus. However, in this reading we see Nicodemus coming at night to ask Jesus (whom he calls Rabbi and teacher) about his beliefs. What follows is a profound conversation about being ‘born again’ in the spirit. Jesus tells Nicodemus that we are born of both water and Spirit. It is the Spirit that directs our lives, even when we are not aware of the spirit’s presence.

In our increasingly connected lives we rely heavily on what we can experience through sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell. Experiencing the Spirit in our lives however often doesn’t involve such a direct contact (like Paul) but instead trusting in those things we cannot experience or understand. Being born in the Spirit requires nothing more than faith and a desire to open ourselves up to those things we cannot understand.

RESPOND: Grab your journal and reflect on these questions: Have you ever experienced a time when you encountered something you didn’t understand but you were asked to believe in it anyway? How did this make you feel? What questions do you have about faith that you do not have the answers to? Are you comfortable waiting and exploring for answers or do you want the answers right now? Is it okay to not have all the answers either right now or even, ever?

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: KATE HUSTON



Kate Huston serves as the Director of Young and Young Adults and the Program Director for the IONA School of Formation in the Diocese of Oklahoma. Kate has worked in formation ministry for over 15 years and currently serves on the Forma Council. Before moving into full-time formation ministry, Kate had a faculty position in Political Science and continues to teach courses as an adjunct professor. Kate has a daughter, Brigid (6), and they love to read, watch the Great British Baking Show, and walk their 90-pound furball, Sully the Great Pyrenees.

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ADULT AND ADULT

READ: Romans 4:3

REFLECT: I once went camping with the girl scouts in a park far from the city. Our camp was at the top of the mountain. We were exhausted from the climb back up the hill after a long day of hiking, but we stayed up for a while watching the night sky because none of us from the city had ever seen so many stars.

God promised Abraham that his offspring would number more than the stars in the sky. Abraham may have been able to count them if he were near a modern city, but the sky he saw was more like the sky on the top of that mountain, with so many stars that it would have been impossible for him to count. It was an amazing promise, especially since Abraham and Sarah were well beyond child-bearing years. Abraham believed the LORD, turned from his old ways and followed God into the unknown. It was credited to him as righteousness, not of good works or right living but of a right relationship with God. His faith was not in the promise but in the Lord who made the promise.

RESPOND: Go outside on a clear night and see if you can count the stars. Think about how God is calling you to turn from your old ways, to trust, and to recommit to following God, trusting God in all things, good and bad, in your life. As you count the stars, name them for all the blessings of that day. Can you count them, or are they too numerous?

ABOUT OUR CONTRIBUTOR: PEGGY HOPPES



Peggy Hoppes is a writer, artist, photographer and crafter; her creativity reflects her faith. She is married with two grown children. She began writing "A WORD FOR TODAY," a devotional, in August 1999 which can be found at www.awordfortoday.org. Peggy teaches a Bible class at her church and has led workshops. She has published several books. Peggy shares her gifts to build up the church, to help Christians grow as disciples with living faith, and to be a witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the world.

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