

June 4th 2020

Dear families,

as Jodi mentions in her pastoral letter, we are by necessity and opportunity exploring what it means for us to be the body of Christ not gathered together in one place on a Sunday but dispersed across the city throughout the days of the week.

We invite you and your children to enter into the imagery of *Joining Jesus on the Road*. What would it be like for our kids to get a sense that Jesus is in our neighbourhoods, on the move on sidewalks, in parks, in the homes of our friends as well as the homes of people we don't know and strangers we pass by? How is God active in our community with love and justice and healing and creativity? Where is Jesus weeping where there is hurt and unfairness and celebrating when there is kindness and truth? How can we be curious and attentive to this? Where is the Spirit calling us to join in with the work and play and friendship of God in the places that we're in?

Included in this package are three prayers that are the starting point for our collective church practices for loving God and loving our neighbour in this season. We encourage you not to create new or potentially overwhelming rituals for these but to incorporate them into the ordinary rhythms of your day. *Morning Prayer* could happen at or just before breakfast; *Evening Prayer* is designed to fit with the nightly celebration of 'pots and pans!' at 7pm; *Welcoming the Sabbath* is a simple liturgy for reorienting us to the spacious and generous gift of God's time in creation.

We would also like to offer the perspective that the practicing and playing and risk-taking of following Jesus is not something that happens primarily for an hour and a half during Sunday worship or in children's worship classes (even when we *could* meet in our building), but is most significantly shaped through all the other moments of the week and especially as your children engage with you engaging with God. This includes the casual conversations you have with your kids that show them that your faith is not isolated or compartmentalized but is integrated with all of your life.

Many of you already have creative practices for drawing your children into the everydayness of faith. On the following page are two ideas that you may want to experiment with and incorporate into your family rhythms. If you have other recommendations for ways to nurture children to make choices to follow the way of Jesus in the good ordinariness of their days, we'd love to hear from you at melanie@gcbchurch.ca.

Bedtime Examen

- One-on-one with your child, as they are tucked into bed
- This is a mutual exchange as you both think back over the day and share:
 - Desolations, moments or experiences
 - that you wish you could erase
 - where you felt sad or far away from God
 - when you felt alone
 - that you are least grateful for
 - Consolations, moments or experiences
 - that you wish you experience again just because they were good
 - when you felt fully alive or close to God
 - that you are most grateful for
- Enjoy the moment as an opportunity for a window into each other's souls as well as time for attentive care and bonding.
- Keep it simple. Five minutes max. The power is in the cumulative effect over time.
- Close with prayer, a thank you to God for being present in all the good and bad moments of the day.

Sermon Wondering

- After you've listened to the weekly sermon, spend some time noticing what really stuck out to you about the message or what questions you still have. Then tell your child about this.
- This could happen on the walk to school, at the dinner table, while you're weeding together or playing in the sandbox, and is an opportunity for your child to witness the goodness of you processing, wrestling with, and integrating faith and life. As they see you valuing honesty, sharing, and the real questions you have, they can learn to value this for themselves.

Towards the end of the month there will be opportunities to share stories together as a church of how and where we have noticed the presence of Jesus in the places where we live. (Stories about the baffling, frustrating, or disappointing parts of our experience are okay, too. We're going for honesty here.)

We look forward to hearing what you and your children have discovered as we experiment with being curious about and getting to know some more of our neighbours, as we open ourselves to being filled up with God's love and overflowing to care about others around us, and as we receive the gift of stopping and rest each Sabbath, trusting that God has this world and our lives in God's good hands.

With gratitude to Matt, Catherine, Greg, and Rosemary for framing the faith nurturing practices for families and to Rosemary and Teak who shaped the prayers for this season.

In hope,
Melanie Colenutt
Faith Formation for Children and Families