

Dear Faith Shapers,

I may have found my motto for 2016: *good enough*. Good enough reminds me that perfection is impossible. Good enough encourages me to be mindful of how I'm spending my time and energy. Good enough invites me to wrap up whatever I'm obsessing about and move on to other things, trusting that God will keep on working when I no longer can. Good enough assures me that *I am good enough*, even when all the roles I try to fill make me feel as though I'm not doing very well at anything. Good enough is God's word of grace to me this year. Might it be a word of grace for you as well?

You are reading this newsletter page because you care, deeply, about passing on the faith to your children, grandchildren, students, and friends. It may, at times, become overwhelming, trying to make a difference in the lives of those you love. Please trust that God works through your desire to share God's love with others. Even if all your grand intentions remain only intentions, that's good enough for our God, who delights in creating something out of nothing. Whatever you are able to offer is good enough. God's beloved, *you are good enough*.

Peace,

Stacey Nalean-Carlson
Pastor, Glenwood & Canoe Ridge
Lutheran Churches, Decorah

Put On Your Own Oxygen Mask



Flying recently, I was reminded of how valuable the airplane admonition to first put on your own oxygen mask truly is, and how easily it translates to other situations.

When it comes to faith shaping, I can imagine no better word of wisdom than to put on your own oxygen mask first. If we want those we love and care for to grow in God's grace and breathe deeply of God's love and mercy, then perhaps the best place to start is by breathing deeply ourselves.

Here are just a few ideas for ways in which we might put on our own oxygen masks first:

- spend just a few minutes listening to your favorite, faith-shaping music while you get ready to leave the house in the morning (or at any other time of day that works well for you).
- as you go to sleep at night, name three things for which you are grateful. Thank God for them.
- write a favorite Bible verse on an index card and tape it to your mirror, or some other place where you will see it several times each day.
- ask the faith-shapers in your life for a book recommendation. Read it with friends. Enjoy the discussion that ensues.
- worship. Breathe deeply of God's love and mercy as you sing and pray, listen and learn.

This information is prepared for you by the
Northwestern Iowa Synod-Home Life Net-
work



for use by families and local congregations.

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Valentine's Day Devotion

While I am a big fan of anything chocolate, my kids love those little candy hearts with the messages printed on them. They've changed a bit since my childhood. Now you can give someone a heart that says "text me" or "tweet me" or "you rock."



These candy hearts with their variety of ways to communicate love got me thinking about how God communicates God's love for us. God speaks in ways that meet us where we are and offer the kind of love and assurance that we need at any given time.

Fearful? I love you. Do not be afraid.

Lonely? I love you. I am with you.

Sad? I love you. I will wipe every tear from your eyes.

Disappointed? I love you. I plan to give you a future with hope.

Joyful? I love you. I give you abundant life.

In all times and in all places, God says "I love you." That is the word to which we cling and the word we share with others through word and deed, text and tweet!

SOMETHING TO CONSIDER... KEEP IT SIMPLE

A friend recently shared a new discovery: not everything has to be a THING. So often, she said, she ends up turning a task or an event into a THING. But she's finding that the magic happens most often in the simple *moments*, not in the big THINGS. I hear this as GOOD NEWS, because simple *moments* are all I have most days!

I've spent considerable time and energy feeling guilty about not being more intentional when it comes to faith-shaping experiences with my kids. Most days, simple is all we've got. Around the dinner table, we share the best and worst parts of our day and we share where we saw God that day. At bedtime, we pray a simple prayer and then offer this blessing: (Name), child of God, God loves you and Mommy and Daddy and your brothers love you. On Sundays, they worship and go to Sunday School. That's it. Simple. I wonder if it's enough.

And then this happens:

—one child, age 5, picks up his sugar cookie (surprisingly, there are still some left from Christmas) which is in the shape of a heart. "I love God," he says.

—another child, age 8, plans a Christmas Eve concert for the whole family. The first song he sings is the song he describes as his "favorite Advent hymn," *All Earth is Hopeful*.

God is so good. Rest assured. Simple is enough. Thanks be to God!

If you're looking for some great ideas for Lent, check out past Living Faith @ Home pages.
<http://www.neiasynod.org/youth-ministry/home-life/>.