



## Dear Faith Shapers,

Take a deep breath. In. Out.  
Take another. In. Out.  
As you inhale, breathe in God's peace.  
As you exhale, breathe out fear.

Soon the angel will say to the shepherds, and to us, "Do not be afraid, for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day...a Savior" (Luke 2:10-11).

It's easy to fear. Our world is a messy place, beautiful and terrifying all at once. It is into this messy world that the Christ child comes, Immanuel, God with us. Somehow, his presence stills our fears.

In the midst of busy holiday preparations, breathe. In the midst of long-held grief, breathe. In the midst of worry and restlessness, breathe.

**Christmas coming does not depend on you.**

The Christ has already been born for us. A Savior is walking this journey with us. So breathe out fear; there's no need for it. Breathe in God's peace; all is well.

*Stacey Nalean-Carlson  
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## TRADITIONS: TIME OUT!

Traditions are so valuable. They can also get the best of us, especially this time of year.

Instead of struggling to do EVERYTHING, take a moment to ask each of your family members what one tradition they most enjoy or find most meaningful. You may be surprised by what matters the most. Record their responses in the space below, and refer to this list when making decisions about this year's Christmas traditions.

### ***Our Favorite Traditions***

Check out past Living Faith @ Home pages at  
<http://www.neiasynod.org/youth-ministry/home-life/>

You'll find all of this and more:

- 1) Blessing of the Nativity Scene
- 2) Ideas for celebrating the 12 days of Christmas
- 3) How to host a baptism reunion in your congregation
- 4) Epiphany resources
- 5) Tips for extinguishing holiday stress!

## ONE STOP SHOPPING

Get all your shopping done at  
[ELCA.org/goodgifts](http://ELCA.org/goodgifts)

ELCA Good Gifts are a fantastic way to honor friends and loved ones with a unique, meaningful Christmas gift that will make a difference in the world.

Fruit-tree seedling \$10

Chicks \$10

Add a rooster \$15

Feed a refugee family for 1 week  
\$25

We all know a few people who are impossible to shop for. Or you might know a few people who already have everything they need. Why not choose ELCA Good Gifts?

## CHILDREN'S BOOKS FOR CHRISTMAS

Children's books are perfect for children of all ages! Here are a few favorites!

\* ***We Were There: A Nativity Story*** by Eve Bunting

This book imagines some of the unmentioned animals who were at the birth of the baby Jesus, including snake, toad, and rat.

\* ***The Nativity*** illustrated by Julie Vivas

The illustrations in this book are amazing! You'll never picture the birth of Jesus the same way again!

\* ***Refuge*** by Anne Booth & Sam Usher

This book is described as a timely retelling of the cherished Nativity as a powerful story of refugees. It is stunning!

This information is prepared for you by the **Northeastern Iowa Synod-Home Life Network** for use by families and local congregations.

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