



Dear Faith Shapers,

As we prepare for the start of 2018, we get excited about fresh starts and new beginnings. We make resolutions and say that this year will be "our year." So many of our resolutions are based on our physical appearance, but I want to challenge to think beyond that and to our children think beyond that.

What about our faith lives? In January, we remember the Baptism of Jesus and with that, our own baptisms. Each day, we are washed anew through the waters of baptism, but this time of year also speaks to that newness that a new calendar year brings to us.

This month's newsletter will give you some food for thought about remembering our baptisms and ideas to help you start 2018 anew.

Blessings on the rest of our Christmas season and as we live into our newness in Christ Jesus.

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Remembering Your Baptism

When we baptize, we enter into a covenant with God that has five parts:

1. to LIVE among God's faithful people
2. to HEAR the word of God and share in the Lord's Supper
3. to PROCLAIM the good news of God in Christ through word and deed
4. to SERVE all people following the example of Jesus
5. to STRIVE for justice and peace in all the earth

On Sunday, January 7, we remember the Baptism of our Lord and this is a great time to talk with children about their baptisms. Take time to share with them about their baptism day. Who was there? Where was it held? What memories stand out? Light their baptismal candle, make the sign of the cross on their foreheads to remind them that they are marked with the cross of Christ and sealed with the Holy Spirit forever.

January is also the time to make resolutions, to start the new year fresh. What if our resolutions were about living out our baptismal covenant? What resolutions could you make together as a family to live more fully among God's faithful people, to hear the word of God and share in the Lord's Supper, to proclaim the good news of God through word and deed, to serve all people as Jesus served and to strive for justice and peace in this world?

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



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January 6th is the day of Epiphany. Epiphany is a day and a season of the Church year. On the day of Epiphany we celebrate the Magi visiting Jesus. Epiphany means manifestation and revelation. Epiphany symbols and images include: light, incense, and gift giving. The season of Epiphany begins on January 6th and will last until Ash Wednesday on February 14th. Epiphany is a time to bring gifts to Jesus, whose face we see in people who have needs. Consider serving others as a family. Volunteer at a nursing home, food pantry, or other community organization that serves. You may even want to give the gift of kindness and focus on Acts of Kindness you can do each day.

Here are some ideas to help you live out our baptismal covenants:

LIVE Among God's Faith People

1. Host a meal for some member of your neighborhood or congregation.
2. Arrange to go with your pastor to visit shut ins or a nursing home or just go as a family.
3. Take the prayer list from church home each week and set aside time to pray by name for those in your congregation. Send those you pray for a short note or card.

HEAR the word of God and share in the Lord's Supper

1. Join a Bible study or commit to reading Scripture each day. Augsburg Fortress publishes a great resource called Bread for the Day that gives you Scripture each day. Contact your pastor or children's ministry/youth ministry director for age appropriate devotions. Sparkhouse Publishing (part of Augsburg Fortress) has many great resources as well.
2. If your church has a home communion program, contact your pastor to volunteer to share communion with home bound members.

PROCLAIM the good news of God in Christ Jesus through word and deed

1. Share about your faith on your social media. Pastor Joelle Colville-Hanson has many great ideas on how you can do this. Check out the synod Facebook page or blog for more ideas.
2. Consider supporting a missionary. You can go online to elca.org/globalmission to find missionaries that you can support financially, through prayer and more.
3. Take a short walk around your neighborhood and pray for your neighbors as you walk.
4. Invite someone to attend worship with you.

SERVE all people, following the example of Jesus

1. Martin Luther King Jr. Day is a great day to get involved and serve your community. Find a way to serve together as a family.
2. Give to a local food bank or other non-profit to help the after Christmas slump in giving. Pray for their ministries.

STRIVE for justice and peace in all the earth

1. Talk about bullying with your children and how they can be part of the prevention of bullying and what they can do when they see bullying.
2. Visit elca.org/advocacy and find ways that your family can be plugged into advocacy issues in our country today.
3. Pray for peace.