

PW: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord Jesus Christ.

PW: Let me tell you a story. There was this mad scientist who wanted to learn about how well frogs jump. So he took this frog and stood behind it and yelled, “Jump, froggie, jump!” The frog jumped four feet so the mad scientist wrote down, “four legs, frog jumps four feet.” Then the mad scientist surgically removed one of the frog’s legs, stood behind it and yelled, “Jump, froggie, jump!” And the frog jumped three feet and the mad scientist wrote down, “three legs, frog jumps three feet.” The mad scientist surgically removed another leg and stood behind the frog and said, “Jump, froggie, jump.” The frog jumped two feet so the mad scientist wrote down, “two legs, frog jumps two feet.” Then the mad scientist surgically remove another leg and stood behind the frog and yelled, “Jump, froggie, jump.” The frog jumped only one foot, so the mad scientist wrote down, “One leg, frog jumps one foot.” Finally, the mad scientist removed the frog’s last leg and stood behind the frog and said “Jump, froggie, jump.” Well, the frog couldn’t jump at all, so the mad scientist scratched his head and wrote down, “Frogs without Legs Can’t Hear.”

PG: Pastor Wendy, that’s a terrible story! That poor frog ...

PW: It’s an illustration ...

PG: You have *illustrations*?

PW: No, look. Imagine that the congregation is the body of the frog and the families in the congregation are the legs. The point is that if the legs and the body don't work together, the frog won't move.

PG: So?

PW: Well, if families and congregations don't work together, faith formation doesn't happen and the church can't move forward. Have you read the book, "Frogs Without Legs Can't Hear?"

PG: Thank you for bringing up that horribly painful subject ...

PW: Okay, Okay...I know that you don't like the title... but, The point of the book is that the church has been working off of the wrong model. It's a model that says that people come to church to be taught the faith, and that just doesn't work.

PG: What do you mean?

PW: Think of it this way. When you are sick you go to the doctor.

PG: Right.

PW: We trust the doctor to give us the right medicine to fix us. Well, sometimes it's easy for us to think that the church will do the same thing for passing on the faith. People come here on a Sunday morning and are fed by the word of God and the sacraments and may think it's enough to pass on the faith to their children.

PG: Okay. I got it. So what can we do to change this model?

PW: Actually there is a lot that we can do to help the church frog's legs.

PG: Pastor Wendy, please don't talk about our families as frog legs.

PW: Okay...sorry, I get caught up in the analogy. Anyway, we can do a lot to help our families. But before we talk about that I think we need to define what we mean when we say family.

PG: Say more.

PW: It's easy to think of a family as those who have children, and yes that's true, but we are part of God's family. I'd like to believe that when we use the term family at Saint Nicholas that we are describing family in a more inclusive sense as a way to convey the immediate, personal, and trusted relationships that sustain people in life.

PG: So any relationship, whether you have children or not,

PW: Right, family includes not only two parents with children, but other configurations including single adults, single-parent families, multi-generational families, adoptive families, groups of friends, as well as others.

PG: Now that we have a definition of family, what can we do to help our families?

PW: We can help the church frog legs...

PG: Pastor Wendy!

PW: Sorry... we can help our families by encouraging them to take part in different activities here at the church.

PG: Aren't we doing that now?

PW: Yes, but other things that we can do is equip our families to see that their home is church too by recognizing the five principles and the four keys of nurturing faith.

PG: The five what?

PW: The five principles that Youth and Family Institute raise up when talking about passing on the faith.

PG: What are they?

PW: The first one is faith is formed by the power of the Holy Spirit through personal trusted relationships, often in our homes.

PG: A relationship with our parents, grandparents, or a friend passes on the faith.

PW: That's right...The second principle is The church is a living partnership between the ministry of the congregation and the ministry of the home.

PG: We can't do ministry without our families and our families need encouragement and support from each other.

PW: The third principle: Where Christ is present in faith; the home is church, too.

PG: Where two or three are gathered, there I am also.

PW: That's right. And now to principle number four which is my favorite: Faith is caught more than it is taught.

PG: Why is it your favorite?

PW: I went to Sunday School and church growing up, but for me the moments that I remember most are the experiences I remember such as praying with my parents at mealtime and bedtime and helping others with them. I learned a lot in Sunday school, but my family helped me realize that what I learned at Sunday school was part of how I lived my life.

PG: Good to know...What's the fifth principle?

PW: The fifth principle is: If we want Christian children and youth, we need Christian adults and parents.

PG: So, we need everyone to work together and teach our children the faith.

PW: That's right. It takes a village to raise a child.

PG: Now that we've briefly talked about the five principles, what about the four keys?

PW: That's easy. I've written about each of the four keys in the newsletter. They are caring conversations, family devotions, family service, and rituals and traditions.

PG: Are the four keys for the home or church or both?

PW: For both. Worship, fellowship opportunities that happen here at the church can be models for things that happen in the home. We can also learn from our families things that they do in their homes and see how it will work here.

PG: Now that we have these five principles and four keys, where do we go from here?

PW: Well, how about a teaching and preaching series?

PG: A teaching and preaching series?

PW: Yeah, we'll cover the five principles during the Sundays in Lent and the four keys during Wednesday night soup and study.

PG: Sounds good to me.

PW: It's good to have a plan. The Vision of glory on the Mount of Transfiguration prepares Christians for the forty days of Lent. How about this Lent at Saint Nicholas we commit ourselves to follow Jesus, that is, to Christian discipleship, through a vision of church that partners home and congregation ministry?

PG: This means I have to read the rest of Frogs without Legs Can't Hear, doesn't it?

PW: Yeah...

PG: Alright...

PW: As we anticipate our journey through Lent, let us pray and explore our partnership between home and congregation.

PG: Amen.

PW: Now the peace of God which surpasses all human understanding be in your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus the Lord. Amen.

PG: Amen.