

Metro Lutheran  
Positive Parenting  
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## THE GIFT OF CHURCH FAMILY

Paul was six years old when his Sunday school teacher asked all of the children in the class to draw pictures of their families. When he finished his picture, he carefully rolled it up and placed it in his bag to take home and show to his parents.

Imagine his mother's surprise when Paul carefully unrolled his picture and smoothed it out on the table to display it to her. His picture of a family of five had six figures in it! Mom identified the two parents and three children. Quizzically, she turned to Paul. Pointing to the sixth figure, she inquired, "Who is that, Honey?"

"Mom, you know," replied Paul. "That's the guy who's always happy to see me at church. He knows my name and stops to talk to me every week."

Twenty years later, Paul's mom still remembers and shares this story with me in her congregation in Peoria, IL. I had spent the weekend with church professionals and parents and grandparents, talking about passing on the faith. I had let them know that every Christian adult is called to be a faith parent, and not just to their own children. God's call to all of us is our baptismal vocation of passing on faith to all the generations. No one is exempt because they've already done that or they don't have children or they don't feel comfortable around children.

No children have too many adults who love them with the love of Christ and help them follow Jesus. Search Institute research asserts that all kids need at least five non-family adults to love and know and nurture and care about the children, to help them successfully navigate childhood and adolescence, to grow into the people they have been created to be.

Yes, that means that we as parents need to give our children time and opportunities to get to know and be known by other adults. Cross-generational experiences in worship, fellowship, learning, and serving together are perfect opportunities.

And, yes, that means that all of us adults need to become those caring, attentive non-family adults to children to whom we are not related.

This is how church families are formed. May you show up in Paul or Paula's family picture! They need you.

## FAMILY ACTIVITIES

1. Ask your child, "Who are the adults outside our family who care about you?"

2. Encourage your child's relationships and time together with non-family adults who love and care about them. You get to know them, too, to keep them safe.
3. Encourage your kids to stay in touch with these adults. Your kids might want to draw them a picture, send a card, or invite them to join your family for lunch.
4. Welcome your child's friends in your home and get to know them, to be that non-family adult for them.
5. At church, befriend five kids who aren't yours. Call them by name. Ask questions, then listen. Get to know what they're good at, concerned about, and proud of ... and let them know you care.