

CELEBRATING A NEW LIFE, WELCOMING THE BABY

[W]e will tell to the coming generation
the glorious deeds of the Lord, and his might
and the wonders that he has done ...
that the next generation might know them ...

Psalm 78:4,7

This is the same scripture with which I began the column, "Celebrating a Life, Leaving a Legacy," honoring my beloved father-in-law. Carl Martin, who died at 96, indeed, told "to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord." We grieved his death and celebrated his legacy to all of us. Two months later, it has a new application ... "that the next generation might know them."

Our family is absolutely breathless - we have a new baby in our midst! So, it is time to celebrate a new life. Our newest grandchild was born March 31st and is already utterly beloved! As grandparents, we want her to know and follow Jesus. We want her parents to feel supported and loved at this tender time in their lives. We want her extended family to have opportunity after opportunity to gather, to build memories and identity with our newest family member.

So, as grandparents, we had a decision to make - should we retire the national debt or fly the new aunt, uncle, and cousins home from Montana to meet this baby? Guess which we chose to do? It was Easter weekend. Could there have been a more perfect time to welcome this precious baby into our family? While our congregation gathered around the Last Supper, we gathered at our table for the First Supper as a family of 11.

Little cousins held her, kissed her, wondered at how tiny she was, and simply couldn't get enough of her. Hearts and cameras captured it all. Easter Sunday, after worship, we all went to the cemetery where my parents are buried. It is our Easter tradition to go there as a family and celebrate our very personal stake in the resurrection. We tell Grampa and Gramma stories. These beloved saints died before most of those who gathered were born. So we have the privilege of helping them live in story for their grandchildren and great-grandchildren. We tell how they shaped us ... and each one of them ... by the ways they lived their faith. This year, we also told stories of Papa Carl and Papa Smith, our daughter-in-law's father who died much too young. We connected God's story with our family's story.

So, how does your family welcome new life, whether it comes into your family by birth, adoption, foster care, or marriage? How will you tell God's story, so "that the next generation might know them?" Here are some ideas you might want to add to the things you already do. Be prepared to savor every minute of this high, holy work of passing on a life-transforming faith in Jesus Christ.

FAMILY ACTIVITIES

1. As a family, pick out some "faith resources" for a new baby. Consider a board book Bible, a child-friendly manger scene, a CD of faith songs or lullabies, and a stuffed toy that helps you tell a Bible story. Let this be your baby gift.
2. When you go to a baptism, take pictures after the service. Have the adults who are present write a letter to the baby, retelling the story of the baptism. Have children draw pictures. Compile photos, pictures, and letters in a memory book, a gift to the baby and parents. (A lovely addition would be to put the baptism date on your calendar and send a Baptism Birthday card next year.)
3. Choose a family story Bible that the entire family can use together as the child grows, establishing the ritual of family devotions. Ask all of the adults and children to mark their favorite Bible stories, signing their name and writing (or dictating) a blessing.
4. Keep a journal for the baby, recounting treasured experiences and memories. Plan to give it to the child at their confirmation or high school graduation or another important event in the life of this child.
5. For a family with a new child, offer childcare once, twice, or more. Send the parent(s) out to relax, go for a walk, eat a hot dinner, or to have adult conversation. Then, snuggle the baby, fall in love, and make memories, telling "the glorious deeds of the Lord, and his might and the wonders that he has done."