

Good Morning, I'm Tammy Jones West your youth and family ministry coordinator. It is a pleasure to be able to stand before you each year and I'd like to begin our time together in prayer. The Lord be with you.

Good morning Lord, you gave us a wonderful example of what we should do to pass on the faith – you did whatever it took to get our attention, even sending your Son for us. Help us to have that “whatever it takes” attitude when it comes to sharing the love story of the universe – your story. In your Son's name we pray. Amen.

Whatever it takes – those are your words to remember this year. This important task of passing on the faith can't mean new wine into old wineskins. We know that there are children and youth who are baptized and confirmed that never grace the doors of our congregations. Whatever it takes may mean equipping those grandparents in how to bring faith home and letting loose that love they have with simple acts of blessing their kids and grandkids.

Whatever it takes – parents have been told for years that the experts in faith formation teach, work and are called to a congregation. Luther told us otherwise – “Most certainly father and mother are apostles, bishops and priests to their children, for it is they who make them acquainted with the Gospel. In short, there is no greater or nobler authority on earth than that of parents over their children, for this authority is both spiritual and temporal. Whoever teaches the Gospel to another is truly his apostle and bishop.”

Whatever it takes may mean finding a way for every family to have a faith chest and helping them practice being that apostle in your congregation so they feel able to do that at home with their new home altar.

Whatever it takes – we often hear that we need think outside the box. A box isn't big enough, we have to think outside ourselves. It's not about us, it's about God. It's about loving the children of God even if it never adds a single person to our congregational roll books. Whatever it takes may mean being that congregation in the community that is known for how they equip all the people they come into contact with, not just their members. That is known for inviting the entire surrounding community to have their kids backpacks blessed in the fall, not just our own.

Last year I shared with you that my youngest sister (17 years younger to be exact) graduated from Lenoir-Rhyne and got engaged. She got married in April and after convincing her she really didn't need an old bridesmaid, I told her I'd direct her wedding. She came up the stairs of Ascension, Shelby as I sent my next youngest sister down the aisle as maid of honor. The photographer looked at her and said “where's your bouquet?” In typical Bobbi style, she hiked up that dress and started to turn to go tearing down the stairs. I said, stop. They'll wait on you and turned to my husband, Eric who had been given the keys to the locked choir room downstairs. Luckily he was in the back with me and not sitting in the pew where he was originally suppose to be. He took off. I waited to send the ring bearer down the aisle until Kimberly was at the front. Still no Eric. I

then sent my nieces who were flower girls down the aisle and told them to walk slowly. Still no Eric. Finally, I hear him bound up the stairs as I close the door to signal the organist that Bobbi was ready. As she and my dad walk down the aisle, Eric looks at me and said – these keys don't unlock the choir room. He tried the first door with both keys, moved to the second door and finally found a locked door that was not completely closed that he got into. He looked at me and said – we were about to have to buy a new door. I'm not sure just what Pastor Jeff Erbskorn would have done with the crashing noise of my 6'5" 250 pound husband going through a downstairs door but Eric knew that Bobbi's bouquet was important, her something old was attached to that bouquet – her future husband's baby bonnet - and she was going to have that bouquet. Eric was going to make sure of it. Whatever it takes.

We have to be willing to crash through doors, tear down walls that separate our kids from the authentic, available, and affirming adults that they so desperately need in their lives – YOU! We have to equip our parents but also each other – to be able to call them by name and for each child to know they are loved, not just by their own family but by their faith family. We have to be those adults that say in regards to passing on the faith, we've never done it this way but whatever it takes.

Thank you.