

25 Ways of Passing the Peace

*For Sheri Hostetler, in celebration of her 25 years of ministry at First Mennonite Church of San Francisco.
—Bekah Puddington, December 7, 2025*

Laugh, though you know many heart-breaking facts¹.

Embrace someone who needs it.

Plant a blackberry bush in your backyard. Tend to it, and learn all the ways it is an emissary of God.

Receive these instructions: pare down your life.

Pare down your theology. Sift through inherited teachings. Dismantle the unholy doctrines you uncover.

Rediscover a kernel of truth in an old concept become compost.

Get arrested singing love for the planet and all her inhabitants.

When they warn you not to marry the gay couple, do it anyway. Affirm their love is good. Celebrate this love.

Grieve a beloved's death; speak at the memorial service, though it breaks your heart.

Language the prayers of the people, and so give expression & balm to the human heart.

Love your cat, your dog.

Mother your child; care for your family.

Go on a walk with your neighbor, and pause when something lovely catches your eye.

Bring a dish to the potluck, and the memory of who gave you the recipe.

Welcome the newcomer with warmth, and learn their name.

Serve on the committee. And on that one. And on *that* one. Go to yet another meeting.

Baptize those who ask in the ocean, in water pooling beneath redwoods, in a stained-glassed & light-kissed sanctuary.

With your voice, join others to weave a web of song to guard your neighbors from harm, no other arms necessary.

Write. Read, reflect, and then write again. Co-author a book *So That We & Our Children May Live*.

Tell the children a true story.

Rest. Resting is sacred.

Light a candle. Make a place for the Spirit to breathe.

Bless the people.

Know that it is a blessing to be alive, and even, in the fullness of time,

to die. Wonder at all there is we do not know, and how—from hand to hand—we touch both agony & glory.

Finally, pass the ordinary loaf, the cup, the peace. We are each other's bread & wine.

Be together, on that Ground of All Being, and feast.

¹ This line, and this poem, owe thanks to *Manifesto: The Mad Farmer Liberation Front* by Wendell Berry, 1973.