

PARENT RESOURCE PAGE

AlterNativity

**"If we are going to bring about peace in the world, we have to begin with the children."
--- Mahatma Gandhi**

At Christmas we celebrate the birth of the Prince of Peace – but often the lead-up to Christmas can be anything but peaceful! The challenge for us as parents every year is: "How do we make Christmas more Christ-centred?" In the world today, where violence – of war, terrorism, domestic violence, the violence of poverty, violence in the schools and violence in all forms of the media – is very up-front and visible, our children need people who will model peace-making in their private lives and in public life to counter-act the images they see every day.

During the season of Advent as we get ready to celebrate Jesus' birth, think about how Jesus the Prince of Peace can make a difference in the life of your family, and in the world. How can Jesus help you and your family to be more peaceful people? How can Jesus teach the world to be a more peaceful place? What is your role in this?

One of the clues to living peacefully is in the circumstance into which Jesus was born. God's gift of Love at Christmas was extravagant in the extreme. Proclamation by a sky full of angels was over the top too. But in material terms there was

nothing extravagant about Jesus' birth. The barest essentials: a roof over their heads, clean straw to lie on, a baby born with no fuss or hullabaloo – just Mum, Dad and maybe a midwife. Jesus' birth set the pattern for the rest of his life. Prune life down to its essentials – but love extravagantly.

Living peacefully means living with less, living less selfishly. What are the essentials in your family's life?

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Take time out from the materialism of the Christmas season to promote an alternate approach to Christmas this year: Even if you just choose one thing to change and achieve it, you will be surprised how different your Christmas can be.

- Examine your end-of-year functions and decide which ones are REALLY essential? What can you do to take the stress out of the ones you do have to attend?
- What can you do to take the commercialism out of Christmas celebrations?
- What will your Christmas hospitality look like? Who will you invite or visit?
- How will you deal with conflict in the family?

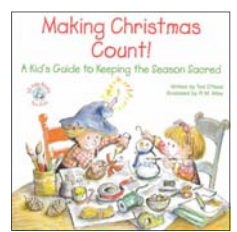
- Approach Christmas with a Christ-centred Advent calendar; make a Nativity scene together.
- Find alternatives to expensive presents – an outing, a surprise visit, personalised gifts like a photo collage; enjoy God's created world outdoors together.
- Cut back on extravagances. Decide as a family what to do with the money saved.
- Shop with an environmental conscience, poverty awareness and a fair trade conscience.
- Instead of visiting Santa, visit a community Christmas Tree where your family can donate a gift for someone else.
- Help your children to critique Christmas advertising, on TV and in printed catalogues.
- Spend time talking together, learning how to really listen to what others are saying.
- Ask some people you know well (friends, grandparents) to share their faith stories or their Christmas traditions with your family.
- Consider an exchange system: for every new item bought a similar item can be given away to someone in need – apply to clothes, books, games, toys, appliances, furniture; it applies to the parents as well as to the kids.

And his name shall be called... Prince of Peace...

Christmas BOOKS

Making Christmas Count

A Kid's Guide to Keeping the Season Sacred
Elf-Help Books for Kids
by Ted O'Neal
Illustrated by Robert W Alley
One Caring Place/ Abbey Press
© 2006
ISBN: 9780870294013 or
0870294016 Paperback



Children don't need to be told that Christmas counts, but sometimes the "reason for the season" can get lost in the excitement and

anticipation of the secular hype surrounding the season of Advent. This little book enables families to celebrate the birth of Jesus with excitement and enthusiasm on a genuinely deeper level, finding caring and sharing moments that are truly sacred and spiritual experiences in the midst of the gifts, carols, feasting and gatherings of family and friends.

Also available at Pauline Books

From **Unichurch Books: \$14.95**
Much of what kids do at Christmas has to do with our secular culture and what we, as parents, teach, practice and allow our kids to experience.

CHRISTMAS FUN a MY FIRST BIBLE ACTIVITY BOOK


By Leena Lane & Roma Bishop
Barnabas/BRF
ISBN: 1 84101 321 8
© 2003 **\$14.95** paperback



Available from **Unichurch Books** and **Pauline Books**
Visit Mary and Elizabeth in their homes, travel with Mary and Joseph, watch with the shepherds, journey with the wise men, find Jesus in the

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