

Children learn what they live

This *Parents Page* is provided by the larger family of our congregation to assist parents in nurturing faith in their personal family.

'Faith is formed by the power of the Holy Spirit through trusted human relationships most often in the home.'

In these words, Dr David Anderson (*The Child in Our Hands*) reminds us that

- ♦ parents are vitally important in the growth of their children's faith
- ♦ our faith depends on God from beginning to end. We trust in God because God gives us that trust (or 'faith' or 'belief').

Faith-nurturing Christmas Symbols

The sights and sounds of Christmas are all around us.

You can use them to reinforce for your child the real significance of Christmas. Use these starting points as you talk with your child.

Encourage them to find meaning in other sights and sounds of Christmas.

CHRISTMAS TREES:

Traditionally they are pines and can be seen as arrows pointing to God in heaven, who made the world and everything in it — including trees — and who sent his Son Jesus to us at Christmas.

WREATHS: Their round shape reminds us of the eternal (no beginning, no ending) nature of God and God's love for us.

CANDLES: Candles and other lights remind us that Jesus is the light that shines in the darkness, to show us the way and give us hope.

MUSIC: In all its forms, music can remind us that the angels sang when Jesus was born.

GIFTS: Jesus — the greatest gift ever — was born as a baby as Christmas, and later as a man gave his life for us.

CARDS: Messages on cards and Christmas letters remind us of the angels' joyful message that Jesus birth was good news for all people.

FOOD: Candy and cookies and special meals show us God's generosity, providing much more than we need or deserve.

SANTA: Originated in the story of St Nicholas, who is remembered for following Jesus' example and helping people who were in need.



Prepared by the Resource Centre for Children's and Family Ministry, Parafield Gardens Uniting Church, as part of the Mission Resourcing Network of the Uniting Church in South Australia

KUCAnews

PARENTING PAGE

Jesus & Father Christmas

Do you still believe in Father Christmas?

Some children raise the question at age 4 or 5. Others, not until much later. The question signals that a child is mature enough to start dealing with issues of truth and falsehood, trust and doubt — and the possibility that their parents have lied to them.

More than a century ago FP Church wrote a newspaper editorial which has become a classic response to the question: 'Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus. He exists as certainly as love and generosity and devotion exist, and you know that they abound and give to your life its highest beauty and joy. . . Nobody can conceive or imagine all the wonders there are unseen and un-seeable in the world.'

That was fine for Mr Church, but what about Christian parents today? Do we actively participate in the whole 'Santa Claus is coming to town' ethos of Christmas, with its focus on gifts (earned by good behavior)? Or do we try to insulate our children from it? Most of us allow Jesus and Father Christmas co-exist somehow.

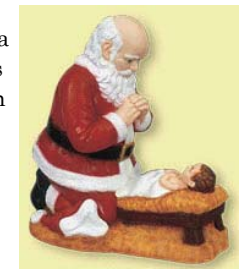
Recently I've noticed attempts to bring an acceptable balance — stories of St Nicholas and how he evolved into Santa Claus and figurines of Santa kneeling to worship Jesus.

This approach can be helpful. A wise mentor once said, 'If someone has to share Jesus' birthday celebrations, I'm glad it is a Saint who was known for his love and generosity.'

The important thing is that our children know *what* we celebrate at Christmas — the birth of our Lord and Saviour. *How* we celebrate is a secondary consideration. Keep Jesus the focus of your Christmas and your life all year long. Accept Santa as a character in a nice seasonal story. Santa is a loveable, fictional character. Jesus is really God.

One day your child will ask:

"Do you still believe in Jesus?" That's the most important question you'll ever answer.



From the Bible

Always be ready to give an answer when someone asks you about your hope. Give a kind and respectful answer and keep your conscience clear.

1 Peter 3:15,16 (CEV)