

Peace in our world • Peace in our nation • Peace in our neighborhoods • Peace in our homes • Peace in our hearts

Reclaim the Season!

Creative Ways to Celebrate Christmas and Flourish in Faithfulness

It is not always “simple” to live and work for simplicity and sustainability in our world. This is especially true during the holiday season when consumerism is working overtime. Making sensible changes while respecting holiday traditions, is one of many balancing acts we face when as Christians we strive to celebrate outside our culture’s warped, materialistic view of Christmas. Here are ideas on how we might do this in the way we live, the gifts we give, the time we share, and the ways we prepare to receive the Prince of Peace.

“Peace Points” is a resource series of Lutheran Peace Fellowship that offers practical ideas and leadership tips to help encourage youth and adults in their peacemaking and justice seeking.

Lutheran Peace Fellowship (LPF) is a community of Lutherans across the U.S. and around the globe responding to the gospel call to be peacemakers and justice seekers. LPF offers a wide range of resources, expertise, encouragement, and support for congregations and individuals.

For more information:
lpfyouth@gmail.com
lpf@ecunet.org
206-720-0313
1710 11th Avenue,
Seattle, WA 98122
www.lutheranpeace.org

Purchase gifts from a Fair Trade catalog or website:

- **Lutheran World Relief Fair Trade** site www.equalexchange@equalexchange.com
- **Fellowship of Reconciliation, Gifts for Peace**, offering wonderful cards, calendars, books, CDs and videos: www.forusa.org/catalog/gifts.html
- **Ten Thousand Villages**, indigenous crafts: www.tenthousandvillages.com
- **SERRV International**: www.serrv.org
- **PEOPLink**, handmade gifts from international grassroots artisans, many items under \$15: www.peoplink.org/EN/O.html
- **Fair Trade Federation**, association of fair trade wholesalers, producers and retailers: www.fairtradefederation.org

Give a gift membership

to Lutheran Peace Fellowship or give a donation in honor of someone you love. (LPF will send you a gift card.)

Begin a family-time activity

or devotion series. Advent candles are a helpful focus. Plan to continue into the new year (see resources box, over).

Be creative with your gifts:

- Make your own calendar using cut-out pictures, photos, and/or drawings.
- Assemble a collection of favorite recipes.
- Make a mixed tape or CD and choose songs that make you think of that person. You might explain why you chose the songs.
- Compile a list of memories and arrange them in a creative fashion, add illustrations if you want.
- Buy a used book and in the inside cover explain why you chose the book for that person.
- Videotape an interview with an elderly relative about childhood memories, how they met their spouse, etc., and give to siblings or children.
- Bake your favorite holiday treat or homemade goodie and pack in a recycled tin.
- Collect quotes that remind you of the recipient.

Offer the gift of your time:

- Give a monthly lunch date for an elderly friend relative or friend.
- Write a poem or story for someone, or memorize one the recipient likes.
- Think of your skills and gifts, offer a lesson or get together with the recipient to help garden, cook a favorite recipe, learn a computer skill...
- As a household set spending limits and choose an organization to support as part of your gifts.
- Volunteer together at a soup kitchen or shelter.

For discussion and reflection

We are called to celebrate all life, including our own, not to repress it. But to celebrate life does not involve participation in the luxury and waste of a throwaway society that exists in the midst of world poverty. **John Cobb**

Use it up, wear it out, make it do or do without. **New England proverb**

The human community and the natural world will go into the future together as a single, sacred community or we will both perish in the desert. **Thomas Berry**

In the twilight of life, God will not judge us on our earthly possessions and human success, but on how much we have loved. **St. John of the Cross**

We read the Gospel as if we had no money, and we spend our money as if we know nothing of the Gospel. **John Haughey**

From scripture

Do Not Worry, Matthew 6:25-34

The Rich Young Man, Matthew 19:16-26

The Parable of the Rich Fool, Luke 12:13-21

Deut. 24:14-15, Matthew, 6:20, John 6:12

Acts 4: 32-35, 1 Timothy 6:6-10...

The more we have, the less we own. **Meister Eckhart**

This we know: the earth does not belong to the people; the people belong to the earth. All things are connected. We are brothers and sisters after all. **Native American Wisdom**

Simplicity can be difficult, but the alternative is immensely more difficult. **Richard Foster**

Justice is sorting out what belongs to whom and returning it to them. **Walter Brueggemann**

We have met the enemy and the enemy is us. **Pogo**

Here [in the West] you have a different kind of poverty, a poverty of the spirit, of loneliness, of being unwanted. And that is the worst disease in the world today, not tuberculosis or leprosy. **Mother Teresa**

i thank You God for most this amazing
day: for the leaping greenly spirits of trees
and a blue true dream of sky; and for
everything
which is natural which is infinite which is
Yes **e.e. cummings**

In everything, love simplicity. **St. Francis de Sales**

Resources

Groups, Web Sites:

Alternatives for Simple Living, 800-821-6153,
www.simpleliving.org

The Center for the New American Dream,
www.newdream.org/holiday/giftidea.html

Books and Manuals:

Simpler Living, Compassionate Life, Michael Schut, editor (Living the Good News)

Unfettered Hope: A Call to Faithful Living in an Affluent Society, Marva Dawn. (WJK)

Unplug the Christmas Machine, Jo Robinson and Jean Staeheli. Many practical ideas (Quill)

Simplify and Celebrate, Michael Crosby, Joan Chittister, and two dozen other writers.

Families Living the Pledge of Nonviolence, 20 activities, Advent to Lent (WELCA, 800-528-3522)

Worship resources:

A Call to Peace, Jim McGinnis. 52 meditations with helpful resource lists: www.ipj-ppj.org

Guide My Feet, ed. by Marian Wright Edelman, prayers and reflections (Beacon)

Many Lutheran agencies feature holiday resources on their sites (DHES, DCM...): www.elca.org

Tips for group use

Opening prayer, song, and/or text, e.g. The Magnificat, Luke 1 or WOV (5 min.)

What is Christmas in our family? (10 min.)

Divide up the quotes and bible texts and discuss in small groups. (15 min.)

Return and share ideas. Then brainstorm alternatives, leaders occasionally adding an idea from page one. (20 min.)

Close with an Advent song, prayer. (5 min.)

LPF's **Peace Points** resources include *What Is Christian Peacemaking? Hosting a Hunger Awareness Meal, Peace Worship, Just War, and Peace Points Starters*; free, by mail, or at: www.LutheranPeace.org

This resource was prepared by Grace Hanson, LPF youth trainer, and Glen Gersmehl, national coordinator. We gratefully acknowledge the support of Wheat Ridge Ministries in developing and publishing this resource.