

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

*Reclaim the Season!*

# Peace & Justice Living and Giving...

*at Christmas and Throughout the Year*

It's often not "simple" to live and work for simplicity and sustainability in our lives. This is especially true during the holiday season when consumerism is working overtime. Making suggestions for change, while respecting holiday traditions, is one of the balancing acts we face when as Christians we strive to celebrate outside distorted, materialistic views of Christmas. Here are ideas and resources on how we might do this through the gifts we give, the time we share, and our preparation for the birth of the Prince of Peace.

"Peace Points" is a resource series from Lutheran Peace Fellowship that offers practical ideas and tips to encourage youth groups and families 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 members and the larger church a wide range of expertise and resources, insight and encouragement.

**For more information:**

lpf@ecunet.org  
206-349-2501

1710 11th Avenue,  
Seattle, WA 98122

www.lutheranpeace.org  
lutheranpeace.blogspot.com

### Purchase gifts from a Fair Trade catalog or website:

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

### Be creative with your gifts:

- Make your own calendar using cut-out pictures, photos, drawings, and/or family birthdays...
- Assemble a collection of favorite recipes.
- Make a flash drive or CD of songs that make you think of the recipient. Under each title, explain why you chose the song.
- 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.
- Make an audio or video interview with an elderly relative about childhood memories, how they met their spouse, etc.; give to siblings, 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 relative, friend, someone who could use your company...
- Write a poem or story for someone; or memorize one (or Bible verses) 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 a peace and justice group to support as a gift.
- 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**

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

If you realize you have enough, you are truly rich. **Lao Tzu**

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**

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**

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

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**

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

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**

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:

**Simple Living Works!** SimpleLivingWorks@yahoo.com www.simpleliving.startlogic.com

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

**ELCA** holiday ideas and options, type 'Christmas resources' in the search box at www.elca.org e.g. for 'Good Gifts'... www.elca.org/goodgifts

### Books and Manuals:

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

**Simplify and Celebrate**, Michael Crosby, Joan Chittister, many other writers (Northstone)

**Living More With Less**, Doris Janzen Longacre  
On faith-based voluntary simplicity (Herald)

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

**Unplug the Christmas Machine**, Jo Robinson and Jean Staeheli (Quill) Many practical ideas (free **leaders guide** from Simple Living Works!)

### 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)

## 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.)  
Have *Peace Points* and other resources available for sharing.

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

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