

## Wrap yourself around Christmas

by Luke and Jennifer Werre

Some time ago I was invited to a college graduation. Not having attended such an event for a while, I was surprised by the total lack of ceremony. It was chaotic, bordering on raucous. I was shocked at how far our society's sense of decorum had deteriorated in so few years. But the experience raised a question for me: As Christians living in a casual culture, how can we consciously practice our regard for things sacred—especially those things that are significant to our faith?

As an adult I've come to appreciate the value of ritual. Not for its own sake, but because it can help me remain focused on Christ. It gives me a sense of Christian identity and offers something tangible to remind me of my faith.

The Christian church year offers a great way to begin thinking about making maximum use of this potential. The seasons of Advent and Christmas provide wonderful opportunities for Christ-focused rituals for our children.

The church year is constructed around the life, words, and works of Christ's life on earth. You can help your child become more aware of the seasonal emphasis by drawing attention to the colors of the cloths that cover the altar, pulpit, and lectern. The traditional color for Advent is blue, the color of the sky. We wait hopefully for the coming of our Savior-King. Then for Christmas the color changes to white, reminding us of Christ's purity

**THE MESSAGE IS  
SIMPLE AND EASY  
TO UNDERSTAND;  
IT IS IMPORTANT TO  
KEEP THE RITUALS  
AND TRADITIONS  
SURROUNDING THAT  
MESSAGE SIMPLE,  
AS WELL.**



and the robe of his righteousness that covers our imperfect lives of sin. These colors are tied to real events. Review some of the Bible's accounts of events leading up to Jesus' birth in Bethlehem. Look for elements of hope, patient waiting, repentance, and joy in the seasonal Bible readings.

Just as we excitedly dress special areas of the church to reflect the season, children get excited when parents lay out special clothes for them to wear at the Christmas services. In terms they can grasp, it says "This event is special—a highlight of the whole year!"

You might consider using an Advent calendar to prepare for the season. (They can be purchased at most Christian bookstores.) Each day your child can open another window, revealing a picture or Bible passage leading up to Christmas. Done once, this practice often becomes an annual favorite.

Some families use Advent candles to serve a similar purpose. Each Sunday night during Advent, parents turn out the lights and light one more candle. They may then read portions of Scripture, pray together, or sing Christmas carols and Advent hymns. The children take turns blowing out the candle(s).

There are many useful rituals connected with traditional services for children at Christmastime. When the pageantry and music are combined with memorized readings from Scripture and

*(Continued on page 2.)*

(Wrap Yourself . . . cont.)

recitations from Luke chapter 2, such services can become memorable occasions for the whole family. What a rich, joyful experience this can be when children, parents, grandpas, and grandmas all join together in singing carols and hymns that span the generations. They may seem old and timeworn to some, but to children, learning them for the first time, they are beautiful and meaningful. When young and old alike sing them together, everyone is drawn closer into the circle of the congregation's fellowship. So these old favorites are usually sung with gusto. And someday these same children will teach these hymns and carols to their own children and grandchildren.

Unfortunately, some children's services try to proclaim everything from creation to the Last Day. The late Kurt Eggert (hymnal developer) advised congregations to simply focus on the story of Christ's birth: God the Father made good on his promise to send the world a Savior in the flesh. That's how Christmas fits into the church year; it unfolds the first step in Christ's work here on earth. The message itself is simple and easy to understand, so it is important to keep the rituals and traditions surrounding that message simple as well.

In recent years, there has been a renewed appreciation for the simple gospel as presented in God's Word and the sacraments. Along with that there seems to be renewed appreciation for things like ritual. Perhaps it is a hunger

stimulated by life in the postmodern vacuum of relativism and personal detachment. Whatever the reason, ritual is nothing new to the Christian faith. It can accentuate the importance of high points in life, like Christmas, helping us wrap ourselves around the real spiritual meaning of such events. Ritual can give us a sense of who we are and help us maintain our balance in life. Most important, it can help us keep our focus on Christ at a time of the year when so many things threaten to distract us.



*Luke and Jennifer Werre live in Sun Prairie, Wisconsin, with their four children. Luke serves as pastor at Peace Lutheran Church and Jennifer as the congregation's music director.*

Visit [www.parentscrosslink.net](http://www.parentscrosslink.net) and share a unique ritual or tradition that your family has used to help stay focused on the spiritual meaning of Christmas.

## DID YOU KNOW?

- Christmas actually begins on December 25th and lasts for 12 days.
- Christmas Eve is only preparatory to Christmas morning, making Christmas morning the main event. Attending the consecutive services is another family ritual that builds the joy of the holiday to a climax.
- The word *Christmas* means "Mass of Christ," or a form of worship celebrating the Lord's Supper. Public worship has been a central part of our celebration of Jesus' birth since the earliest years of the New Testament church.



To add thoughts and continue the discussions about these questions and answers, go to

[www.parentscrosslink.net](http://www.parentscrosslink.net).

**I have always believed that parents need to be in control of their children. In our household, however, our strong-willed, seven-year-old daughter seems to be in charge. My husband and I agree we may need some counseling. Any thoughts?**

Licensed family psychotherapist Linda Reed responds: Family counseling could help you teach your daughter to make godly choices. An objective person can help identify patterns of interaction that reinforce negative behavior.

Here's an example of how you might address a child who disrupts the family when she doesn't want to go to church:

Give choices that recognize her feelings. "I know you're tired. I also know that you love God and want to show him how much you love him by visiting him in his house. You can either sit on the

end of the pew or sit between Daddy and me." In this example, not going to church is not an option. It is important to

- structure her decision by presenting appropriate choices.
- reinforce the gifts and abilities God gave her.
- be consistent.
- unite as parents.
- minimize the struggle for control. Make her responsible to God for her choices.

**I'm a working mom. Keeping my kids home from school when they say they don't feel well often leaves me with a difficult choice. I want to do the right thing. Do you have any suggestions on how to approach these decisions?**

Since situations vary by family, there is no perfect answer to this question. But a few practical guidelines might prove helpful.

- Sick children belong at home. Children do not learn well when they are ill. In addition, ill children are contagious to students and teachers.
- Most schools have guidelines for keeping students home. Follow the rules.

- Don't medicate them and send them to school. Symptoms return when the medication wears off.
- The age and maturity level of the child may determine whether he or she can be left at home alone.
- Staying home should not be a vacation. When home sick, quiet time in bed helps with healing. Limit the amount of TV and video games.
- Consider the severity of the illness. Fever and vomiting can lead to dehydration. A child with these symptoms needs to be under someone's constant observation. A cold or cough may allow for less supervision.
- Be creative in parental supervision. Are you able to split the day with your spouse? Can you shorten your workday? Can you run home during lunch?
- Look at the situation through your child's eyes. When not feeling well, a child usually wants mom (or dad) nearby. Extra amounts of TLC go a long way.
- If your child chronically complains about feeling ill, something may be wrong at school. Talk with your child and the teacher about concerns you might have.

# Resolutions are for quitters

by Emily Kratz

**W**hen my children make mistakes, I often use their errors to teach a lesson. Some mistakes lend themselves well to this approach. “Don’t jiggle your baby sister, or she’ll spit up on you” falls into this category. Sometimes I get the feeling that God is taking this tack with me, using the ample supply of mistakes in my life to draw me closer to him. Either that, or possibly he just wants a good laugh.

I was in a large group of people discussing New Year’s resolutions when I made my first mistake: I stated a resolution out loud. “I’m not going to eat chocolate.” At the word *chocolate*, the heads of everyone in the room swiveled toward me. As if this wasn’t already a big enough error in judgment, I kept going: “Not even anything that has chocolate in it. Not even cocoa. Nothing.”

By this time everyone was looking at me in what I thought was admiration but was probably just amused pity. Many of them probably knew about my nightly cup of hot chocolate. Looking back, I can see that this was mistake number 2. There were witnesses. Lots of witnesses.

It was easy to avoid chocolate at first. “No, Mommy’s not eating any chocolate,”

I told my daughter. This was my third mistake. A typical three-year-old cannot remember what she had for breakfast but will clearly recall the stupid things her parents say for weeks, or even months. She will then take to repeating these things, like a faulty car alarm, whenever things get a little dull. “No chocolate, no chocolate, no chocolate,” she’ll chant, running in circles around you. You soon begin wondering where you can buy chocolate by the pound.

Then comes Valentine’s Day—the holiday custom-made for merchandisers of every chocolate product known to man. And right on schedule, Grandma sends a box full of treats for her three little granddaughters, including a bag of chocolate. Not that inexpensive semisweet stuff either. This was delicious, melt in your mouth, genuine milk chocolate. And as I looked closer, I realized it was caramel-filled chocolate.

Of course, I could have given it to the kids. But would little people, who equate the word *cheeseburger* with fine dining, appreciate chocolate like this? I think not. I put it in the cupboard. Another big mistake. Now the chocolate was lurking there in the darkness of my own kitchen cabinet, just waiting for my resolve to weaken. Waiting!

Then it happened. The three-year-old, the two-year-old, and the baby were all asleep at the same time. My husband was away at a meeting. I was alone. Surely this was justification for some sort of celebration. As I wandered into the kitchen, the vision of a steaming mug of hot chocolate flashed into my fertile imagination. I tried to ignore the thought, but soon I was fully convinced that, short of a trip to Florida, the only thing that could warm me up

was a cup of cocoa. “One cup of cocoa isn’t bad,” I remember thinking. “Besides, it barely has any real chocolate in it.”

The errors in judgment kind of snowballed from this point. As I reached into the cupboard for a mug, my hand casually brushed against the bag of milk chocolates. Now, suddenly, the only thing that sounded better than a cup of cocoa, was a cup of cocoa with some chocolate to go with it. I opened the bag, took out a handful, then carefully put the bag back into the cupboard, as though I were in complete control. Even the logic I used was obviously flawed. I reasoned that taking a one-day hiatus from my resolution would surely only strengthen my resolve in the long term.

**THE BAG OF  
CHOCOLATE WAS  
LURKING THERE  
... JUST WAITING  
FOR MY RESOLVE  
TO WEAKEN.**

The next morning the half-eaten bag of chocolates still prowled the cupboard, but now the temptation had grown exponentially. The bag was open. And I knew it. Faulty logic kicked in again. *One night off can hardly be considered a real break; a person needs at*

*least 24 hours for a proper chocolate respite*, I thought. At which point, I hid from the kids and ate the rest of the bag.

I can only assume that, through these many mistakes, God was trying to teach me a lesson. You can come to whatever conclusion you may wish, but I think I finally have it right: Chocolate is good. I should eat it.

Then again, perhaps the lesson God wanted me to learn was that herein was the very essence of *temptation*.



*Emily Kratz lives in Birmingham, Alabama, with her husband, Ben, and their three daughters, Hannah, Lydia, and Norah. The Kratzes are members of Our Savior Lutheran Church, where Ben serves as pastor.*

For great tips on how to make resolutions stick, go to [www.parentscrosslink.net](http://www.parentscrosslink.net).



# What research says about the impact the religious va

**C**hristian parents have the task of equipping their children with core values that will guide them throughout their lives. One of the ways we instill godly values is by teaching children about religious beliefs and matters of faith. There is plenty of evidence to suggest that many parents recognize that they have the responsibility of providing spiritual training for their children.

According to recent research, of the parents surveyed, nine out of ten parents of children under age 13 believe they have the primary responsibility for teaching their children about religious beliefs and spiritual matters (The Barna Group, 2003). Children learn values, including spiritual beliefs, when they are young, and they continue to carry them to adulthood. Research also tells us that individuals who attended church regularly as children are nearly three times more likely to attend church as adults when compared to individuals who were absent from church during their childhood. In addition, parents who attended church regularly as children are more likely to take their children to church and include prayer in their daily lives (The Barna Group, 2001).

Christian parents understand that the primary task God has given them is to help their children know Jesus as their Savior and Lord. Ultimately, they will want their children to be secure in God's promises to the end that they will spend eternity with Jesus in heaven.

By planting the seeds of Christian faith and faith-based values through God's Word and sacraments, parents foster a firm foundation that has an impact on the lifelong morals and beliefs of their children. These faith-based values help children lead lives in accordance with God's will. The author of Proverbs wrote: "Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it" (22:6).

### Factors that undermine spiritual teamwork

The ideal is for children to hear a consistent approach to faith life from both parents. The unfortunate reality

is that many households are divided when it comes to spiritual matters.

Many parents come into their marriage from different backgrounds, with differing family structures and life experiences. They may also have different goals, expectations, and priorities. Some parental teams have been raised in different faiths. The question of which parent

will have influence in the faith life of their children may be especially difficult to deal with. How it's handled can have a huge impact on how each parent carries out his or her role as a spiritual leader within the home. In many cases children may receive confusing, or even contradictory, messages.

The data also recognizes other factors that can impact the spiritual lives of families. One parent may refrain altogether from having any involvement in the spiritual development of the children, leaving that responsibility up to the spiritual spouse. Some parents consider spiritual matters a burden on family time. Faith-building activities such

as prayer, daily devotions, and attending church are squeezed out of the family's daily life by a wide range of distractions and activities.

### Dealing with spiritual division

The challenges of nurturing children spiritually are compounded when a parent must assume this responsibility alone. On the other hand, any parent who has been in this position knows how difficult it can be to mend spiritual differences. It requires time, dedicated effort, persistence, and loving patience. This is not an easy matter to address. But, considering the ultimate goals a Christian parent has for all the members of the family—for now and for eternity—the concern is profoundly worthy of plenty of prayer and personal commitment. Here are some practical encouragements to provide general direction in that effort.

**CHRISTIAN  
PARENTS UNDER-  
STAND THAT THE  
PRIMARY TASK GOD  
HAS GIVEN THEM  
IS TO HELP THEIR  
CHILDREN KNOW  
JESUS AS THEIR  
SAVIOR AND LORD.**



# Spiritually

# Values of parents have on the faith life of their children

† *Keep the communication regarding faith and religion open between yourself, your spouse, and your children.*

Acknowledge the differences, and discuss the spiritual goals you have for your family. Discuss these differences with both your spouse and children so everyone understands the realities of faith life in your home.

† *Look for ways to incorporate God's Word into daily family life.* God's Word is very powerful. Make it the center of your life. Let God's truth speak for itself. This means that you will need to look for opportunities to study his Word together with your children. Begin meals with prayer, and end the day with devotion and prayer. Or reverse the order. Just make sure that you and your children aren't ignoring your need to be spiritually fed. Over time these habits will become part of your daily routine.

† *Know which things you can change and which things you cannot change.* You can change routines. You can find ways to "plant seeds." You can change strategies and the way you practice your faith. But you cannot change a human heart. Only God's Holy Spirit can do that. Some parents realize they cannot be responsible for the faith of their spouses. They cannot force their partners to become more actively involved in church and faith-building activities. We plant; God grants.

† *Invite, but don't try to force change.* Spiritually reluctant parents tend to respond more effectively when invited to participate in the family's faith life. Forcing partners to change by making them feel guilty about their lack of involvement may cause further frustration and distance from the Word. Instead, try to understand where your spouse is in his or her relationship with God. Keep your spouse in your

prayers. And offer regular opportunities for your partner to hear God's Word.

† *Seize the critical moments in life.* Use the struggles and celebrations of life as opportunities to draw your spouse closer to God and his loving promises. Times of tension and stress—a job loss, the death of a loved one, financial loss—these are opportunities to talk about how God will support your family through these challenges. Offer prayers of thanks to God, acknowledging his blessings during moments of celebration such as birthdays, a job promotion, success in school, or safe travel. These are also great times to plant seeds.

† *Lovingly encourage children to reach out to your spouse with the simple gospel message.* Never use a child to leverage your faith. But do encourage your children to live (and share) their faith in ways that will obviously reflect Jesus' influence in their lives. Luther once said that we are to be like "little Christs." This is an encouragement to demonstrate the gospel in action in our lives. We are to love and forgive others as Christ loves and forgives us. We make sacrifices for others, even as Christ gave the ultimate sacrifice by dying on the cross for us.

## Walking the talk

In Deuteronomy 6:7, Moses laid out a directive for all of God's families: "Talk about [God's will for your lives] when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up." Faith grows moment by moment through the Word of God as it is woven into daily life. Lead by example. Stay connected with God through his Word and daily prayer. Keep your own faith life growing. Don't neglect your relationship with the other members of God's family, the church. And weave your personal convictions and values into your everyday conversations. By doing these things, you will be planting the kind of seed that has real power to overcome family divisions.



Kristen Smith lives in Owatonna, Minnesota, with her husband, Thomas, and their two children. She is a licensed parent educator and a member of Emmanuel Lutheran Church.

Look on the *Parents Crosslink* Web site at [www.parents-crosslink.net](http://www.parents-crosslink.net), for information on an open forum discussing the issues related to the spiritually divided household.



# Divided

by Kristen K. Smith

# Viewpoint

## A Minimal-Homework Policy

Jeanne Lehninger

“Never say never,” they say. True enough, I’ve found. If someone would have told me just five years ago that soon I would be championing a minimal-homework policy, I would have declared an emphatic “Never!” I was not alone in thinking that good teachers give a lot of homework. When I started teaching, I took pride in being a demanding teacher, who assigned tons of homework. So I’ve gone from one extreme to the other in 30 years. What’s happened besides my aging? Two things, I think. I became a parent. And times have changed.

Being Annie’s mother plunged me into a new reality. As my perspective changed, so did my teaching. As homework

became a battleground between my daughter and me, I fought an internal battle between my teacher self and my mother self. I knew what Annie needed to have a balanced life; she needed to play after school and be cocooned at night so she could face a new school day without resentment and stomachaches. As I saw the effects of Annie’s 40-hour-plus homework weeks, sanctioned by her teachers and enforced by me, I began to ease up my out-of-class expectations for my students. I saw my students and their parents as people who needed balanced lives.

In addition, I came to the conclusion that pushing kids excessively in school sends the wrong message. It says that the most important thing is climbing the ladder of success, that making something of ourselves is more important than being good stewards of our health, our relationships, and our homes. It buys into the ungodly more-is-better philosophy and its hideous offspring, the devilish American rat race.

After having put my toe in the minimal-homework water, three years ago I finally jumped right in. I expected to accomplish less in terms of quantity and hoped to make up for that lack in quality. I devised a teaching system designed to get and keep my students’ attention for

the whole of each class period. I got rid of all busywork and concentrated on the essentials in class. I struck a deal with my students: give me your attention for the whole period, and you will be spared the onus of homework.

My students worked hard in class, accomplishing as much, or more, than before. In the process, my job description changed. I had less paperwork and more time than I previously had for preparation and individual instruction for those students who needed my attention.

Is this system perfect? No. But it more closely resembles what I consider to be a better way. And it enables me to actually teach

according to the premises that I believe. Specifically, some of the benefits include:

- Less cheating (if any)
- More accurate feedback on student capability
- All students on task throughout the class period
- More time for individual instruction
- Better class discussion and participation
- Better discipline
- Less reteaching
- A more balanced life for teacher and students
- Higher grades
- Greater opportunity for differentiated education
- Happier parents

Having a system that focuses on what kids do *in* class instead of what they may or may not do *outside* of class has revolutionized my teaching. I never would have thought that eliminating homework could lead to more learning. But it does.

Jeanne Lehninger teaches English at Wisconsin Lutheran High School. She and her husband, Paul, live in Wauwatosa, Wisconsin.

Join us online at [www.parentscrosslink.net](http://www.parentscrosslink.net) for a lively discussion regarding the value of homework.



## OUR family MATTERS

### Rethink Party Gifts

by Pam Holz

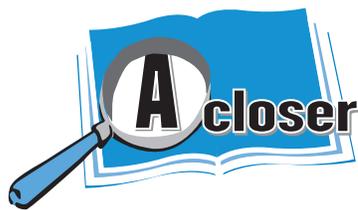
With birthday party invitations for the kids coming monthly, I’ve found myself at Stuff-Is-Us too often lately. There the invitee and I ponder options and my budget. Do you also struggle with the never-ending battle against the overabundance of stuff—that 15th Barbie or 53rd Matchbox car? Here are a few alternative ideas to consider:

- Give a gift certificate to a specialty shop. Ice Queam Palace offers memorable treats beyond the party.
- Stock up at the back-to-school sales. Look for fun pencils, notebooks, crayons, erasers, and such.
- Fill a pot with a bag of dirt and some seed packets. Encourage a green thumb!
- Give a gift from a Christian bookstore.
- Give passes to a movie, bowling alley, skating rink, or zoo.
- Give a Saint Bernard puppy (my husband’s suggestion). Your child may never be invited to another birthday party, but then you won’t have the gift-giving dilemma either!



Pam Holz is a research associate in the field of child development and human relations (a.k.a. mom to Nathan, Joel, Adam, and Lydia, and wife to Kent). Her husband is a home missionary at Word of Life Lutheran Church in Appleton, Wisconsin.





Katie Martin

# THE MIRACLE IN BETHLEHEM

The emperor had issued a decree. And people were already pouring into Bethlehem to register for his census. My father is a shrewd businessman; he can smell a profit. So we scurried around all day, preparing our inn for the many strangers. Our hostel holds only a handful of travelers, but it would soon be filled to overflowing. I was in charge of bringing water for the guests' feet, feeding the animals, and keeping my little brother out of trouble. I worked hard to earn every denarius I could.

Long after our house was filled, people continued to filter in, looking for a place to stay. Sadly, my father had to keep turning them away, until one particular man entered.

I could read the worry and anxiety in this man's eyes. He and his young wife had just traveled south from Nazareth in Galilee for the census. He explained that they needed shelter and a little privacy so his young wife could deliver her baby. She was already in labor.

Proud that I had taken the time to stock the manger with fresh hay and light the torches in the cave, I tugged at my father's cloak. I quickly discovered he had the same idea that I had, offering them the cave nearby that housed our animals. It wasn't much, but it would offer some warmth and privacy so that the mother could give birth without a host of strangers watching. My father sent me up to our quarters to gather clean cloths and water for the expectant couple.

Anxious to witness the excitement, my brother and I waited until our father was asleep. Then, wrapped in our warm outer robes, we slipped outside. The gravel path crunched beneath our feet, exposing our presence as we tried to hide in the shadows. In spite of the increased traffic, the streets had an eerie

silence in the chilly darkness. In the distance we could hear a commotion being raised by a raucous group of shepherds, leading their sheep. Their excited chatter was audible, but we couldn't make out what they were saying. We edged closer. The passion in their voices was coupled with a determination to see something, or someone. I wondered why they made such a fuss. In front of our inn they paused; then ventured out to our stable.

IT WASN'T MUCH,  
BUT THE PLACE  
WOULD OFFER  
WARMTH AND  
PRIVACY SO THAT  
A YOUNG MOTHER  
COULD GIVE BIRTH  
WITHOUT A HOST  
OF STRANGERS  
WATCHING.

When my curiosity could stand it no longer, I came out of hiding to get the details from a shepherd boy. He explained that they had just seen the sky filled with angels, proclaiming the birth of God's Son in Bethlehem. A messenger from God had announced that these shepherds would find the special infant wrapped in strips of cloth and lying in a manger.

My heart raced as my brother and I followed them into our stable. There we

saw the same man who had pleaded for a place to stay and the young woman who was with him. They kneeled adoringly over the feed trough. The looks of worry and anxiety in their faces had been replaced with joy and peace.

The shepherds bowed low in the presence of this ordinary family that had become extraordinary through the miracle birth of this child—the Son of God. The man gestured for us to come closer. We stepped to the side of the manger and looked with wonder at the child that lay there. For fear that we would awaken from a dream, we refused to blink, or even to breathe.

The rabbis at our little Bethlehem synagogue had taught us about a day when God would come to live on earth. Yet how could I have imagined that the very strips of cloth I had torn would be his first clothes, and the hay I had gathered, his first bed? My heart swelled with pride . . . and then humility, for I knew that this baby was not here because of my greatness. Rather, my weakness had caused the King of heaven to leave his throne and endure this humble birth. For this I bowed my head in humble thanksgiving.

The images of that night have been etched in my mind forever. The excitement of the shepherds. The look of peace in the eyes of the young couple. The details of the infant's face. Most of all, I remember knowing that from that moment on the life of this tiny child would bring peace, forgiveness, and eternal life to all who gaze into his manger.



*Katie Martin lives in Killeen, Texas, with her husband and two children. She is a member of Abiding Savior Lutheran Church.*

# Activities for the family

adapted from [www.enchantedlearning.com](http://www.enchantedlearning.com)

## HANDPRINT WREATH

Your preschooler or grade schooler will enjoy working with you to make this universal symbol of Christmas.

### Supplies needed

- 9" paper plate
- Front of used Christmas card
- Green construction paper
- Red construction paper or a red ribbon
- Pencil
- Scissors
- Glue
- Paperclip or yarn
- **Optional:** Glitter glue

Trace your child's hand on green construction paper, making between 10 and 15 tracings for each wreath.

Cut out the handprints.

Glue the front of a used Christmas card with an appropriate scene at the center of the paper plate.

Glue the handprints together in a wreath shape, with the wrists overlapping a little bit, around the edge of the plate.

Glue on a red ribbon bow (or make one from red construction paper).

Glue a paperclip or piece of yarn to the back for hanging.

## 2006 CALENDAR

Prepare for the New Year by making a customized calendar with your child. Be sure to include important dates of family, community, and church events.

Use calendar-making software or search the Internet for calendar-making Web sites. Some provide the option of importing family photos for your calendar.

**OTHER SUGGESTIONS:** Use child-generated Bible story art, newspaper or magazine cutouts, or prized schoolwork to decorate each month.

Check out [www.mycalendarmaker.com](http://www.mycalendarmaker.com) and similar Web sites.



## WINTER WONDERLAND FAMILY

During the long indoor season, brighten the day by making fun winter characters participating in snow-time activities. What makes the time even more fun is eating your creations when you're done.

### Supplies needed

- Large and small marshmallows
- Tubes of decorating frosting
- Fruit rolls or sheets
- Pretzel sticks
- Graham crackers
- Raisins, peanuts, decorating candies, etc.
- Toothpicks
- Tissue paper

Use the toothpicks, frosting, marshmallows, pretzels, and fruit sheets to make snow people doing snow-time activities. Use your imagination and other edible items to make them "come alive." Crackers make neat toboggans, circles cut from fruit sheets can be snow coasters, marshmallows make igloos as well as snow people.

Drape tissue paper to create a snowy hillside. These can make a great centerpiece for a winter birthday party.



"We call it the Slope of Faith."

## Parents Crosslink

DEAR READER,

Today's parents learn from each other, sharing ideas and encouraging one another to meet the daily challenges of living in an increasingly godless society. In the context of the gospel, this is a very powerful dynamic. *Parents Crosslink* (PCL) is a response to the demand for an interactive approach to assisting parents with a biblical view of family. Please join our ongoing conversation about Christian parenting at the PCL Web site located at [www.parentscrosslink.net](http://www.parentscrosslink.net).

Kenneth Kremer, PCL Editor

*Parents Crosslink* is published by North-western Publishing House four times annually in partnership with the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod's **C o m m i s s i o n s** on Youth Discipleship, Adult Discipleship, and Parish Schools. Please also visit the **Parents Crosslink** interactive Web site at [www.parentscrosslink.net](http://www.parentscrosslink.net). All comments should be directed in writing to **Kenneth Kremer**, Editor, 2949 Mayfair Road, Milwaukee, WI 53222 or [kremerk@nph.wels.net](mailto:kremerk@nph.wels.net).

For subscription rates or other questions regarding subscriptions, call NPH Subscription Services at 1-800-662-6093, ext. 8, or visit [www.parentscrosslink.net](http://www.parentscrosslink.net).

Copy Editor – **Jeanne Fehlauer**  
Art Director – **Karen Knutson**  
Senior Designer – **Carianne Ciriacks**

All Scripture quotations are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®. Copyright ©1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Publishing House. All rights reserved. All materials contained in **Parents Crosslink** are protected under U.S. copyright law.