



ADVENTURES IN MOTHERING

"... how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ..." EPH 3:18

MERRY CHRISTMAS!

By: Michelle Longey

This time of year is filled with so many different emotions, some of them good and some of them not so good. Traditionally, we set up our Christmas tree the day after Thanksgiving. This year was no different. My 7 year old daughter Emilia woke up on Friday asking every five minutes when it was time to set the tree up and decorate the house. Sadly, I have to admit, I wasn't in the mood to set the tree up and decorate the house. I felt like it was another chore added to the mega list I already had going.

I am happy to say though, that with my husband's help, we fetched the boxes from the basement and placed all the decorations in their correct places all while the Christmas music played in the background. Emilia was so excited and smiled the entire time. I was really thankful for her that day. I'm thankful for her every day, please don't misunderstand, but on that Friday, I was especially thankful, because I was reminded of the excitement that goes along with Christmas. Why is it that we lose that excitement when we're older? Is it really about Santa and the gifts? Probably so for the children, but as adults we should be even more excited than they, because we understand the true meaning of the Christmas celebration - the birth of Jesus Christ. Is there a greater gift?

The challenge is now to keep the excitement up and the proper focus in the coming weeks.

It is difficult to not be stressed out. I find myself going over list after list trying to remember everything that needs to be purchased, making sure no one is left out, keeping within out budget, and preparing for the many family gatherings. Christ said to cast all our burdens on Him. Was he thinking that the celebration of His birth would be one of these burdens? I am confident that was not His intention when He said it, though He is willing to take them anyway.

One way we are keeping this Christmas season focused on Jesus is through Advent calendars – you know the ones that have chocolate hidden behind a door with the date written on it. My children love these. Before they can open the door we read a verse or two about Jesus and I ask them a few questions. We then pray to God and thank Him for the blessings He has poured out on us and anything else the children feel led to ask or share. Then they can have their chocolate. I have come to love this time together. We usually do our devotions in the morning and chocolate before school is always a big hit.

This time of year is a challenge for everyone, no matter how much we try to not be stressed, it's impossible not to be with all that goes on. I do pray that our Prince of Peace, Mighty Counselor, and Comforter grant you His Peace, His Counsel and His Comfort this Christmas season and that you would be able to "see" through the eyes of your child(ren) the joy and excitement it brings.



"...how long, how wide,
how high and how
deep is the love
of Christ"
Ephesians 3:18



WEFC CHRISTMAS SERVICES

Sunday, December 21, 2008:

Come and enjoy our Christmas concert performed by children & adults! The concert starts at 6pm and childcare will be provided for 4 and under.

Christmas Eve Service:

Join us at 5:30pm for our traditional Christmas Eve Service. No childcare provided.

Christmas Day Celebration:

Join us at 10am to celebrate the birth of our Savior. No childcare provided.



MOPS is a ministry of Westfield Evangelical Free Church
568 Southwick Road, Westfield, MA 01085
(413) 562-1504

www.westfieldefc.com

Service time is Sundays 10AM
(Childcare/Sunday School is provided)



Joy To the World

By: Katherine R. Cottle

www.proverbs31devotions.com

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” John 3:16 (NIV)

Uh-oh, my son had begun the dreaded potty dance. He had gotten so engrossed in the beautiful, giant, Christmas ornaments suspended from the shopping mall ceiling that he totally ignored his almost 4 year-old bladder. It was warning him to get to the potty. We were only seconds away from an accident, without a change of clothes.

Doctors had recently given my little son a great big label: Pervasive Developmentally Delayed. Simple translation: he learns differently than most and things that “typically developing” children are able to do easily, he finds challenging. For example, being able to recognize that his body needs to go to the potty and communicating his need to me. I had 20 other things to accomplish in the mall and I was not prepared for this.

Thanks to a mother’s ability to quickly maneuver through crowds and leap tall mounds of Christmas presents in a single bound, we made it to the restroom just in time.

Frustration began to overwhelm my heart.

I wasn’t just overwhelmed by the pressure of the things I had on my to-do list, but also by my son’s struggle with being able to recognize and verbally acknowledge his needs. *Lord, will he ever be able to tell me what is going on in his head? How are we going to reach him?*

As we were washing our hands, he suddenly began to sing with all his heart, “Joy to the world, the Lord has come, let earth receive her King.” *Where was this coming from?* I wondered. Quieting my frustrated mind, I slowed down to listen. The song was playing over the intercom. I had totally tuned it out.

My beautiful little boy with his great big label had heard what I had not. Women coming out of their stalls smiled and sang with him. I think the angels would have included us in their choir that day.

In that moment I felt the Lord assure me that He had created my son and knew his needs and exactly how to reach him. After all, this is what Christmas is all about. Our loving Father, knowing our need of the gift of salvation, reached the world through Jesus Christ. Joy to the world, the Lord has come. Let us receive our King!

Dear Lord, Thank you for knowing my needs, sending Your Son and creating a way to reach me. This Christmas, please help me quiet my frustrations and busy to-do list and listen to Your song.

In Jesus’ Name, Amen.

What is MOPS?

MOPS (Mothers of Preschoolers) is a non-denominational Christian ministry program designed to nurture mothers with children from infancy through kindergarten. MOPS helps moms...and MOPS makes a difference in the lives of families. Visit MOPS.org for more information and resources on mothering preschoolers.

The MOPS International theme for 2008-2009 is **Adventures in Mothering**. The content for our year is focused on learning more about ourselves as we go through this crazy adventure called motherhood.

www.orgsites.com/malmopso@westfield



SCRIPTURE OF THE MONTH

“Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.”

Isaiah 7:14 (NIV)



A Cup of Christmas COCOA

by: *Tracie Miles*
www.proverbs31devotions.com

On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh.
Matthew 2:11 (NIV)

One of the things I adore about the holiday season is hot cocoa. Who doesn't feel warm and snuggly while sipping on a steaming cup of cocoa with marshmallows or whip cream piled on top? The word 'COCOA' can be used to help us remember the important aspects of Christmas, reminding us of the happiness and warmth we can enjoy being a part of God's family.

C – CHRIST

Matthew 1:18 This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ is the reason for the season. Remember to spend as much time searching for God's truth, as you do searching for that perfect gift. Christ IS Christmas – there is no Christmas without Christ. During this season, share the gift that Christ has given you with someone else.

O – ORNAMENTS

1 Peter 3:3 Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. Instead it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. Do you spend more time fretting over whether or not your house could be featured in the holiday edition of Southern Living, than whether or not your inner spirit is adorned with God's love and compassion for those in need? Put a stronger focus on blessing others this holiday season.

C – CHEERFULLY CELEBRATE THE SEASON

Proverbs 15:13 A happy heart makes a face look cheerful. But a sad heart produces a broken spirit. As the gift list grows, the budget drains, and the calendar fills, it is easy to get discouraged. And although Christmas is meant to be a joyous season, many people also struggle during the holidays with depression and discouragement. Despite the reasons that you might feel discouraged during this time of year, focus on how much you are loved as a dear and precious child of God.

The holidays are merely a season, but God's love and compassion for His children is permanent. Now that is something to celebrate!

O – OVERJOYED not OVERWHELMED

Matthew 2:10 –12 The shepherds saw the star, and they were overjoyed – they were overcome with delight, awe, motivation, encouragement, love for God – they were overwhelmed with the gift of life. Think of a time when you were overjoyed- the birth of a child, a graduation, a wedding, a beautiful sunrise, sparkling white beaches, a baptism. Your feeling of happiness was likely so overwhelming, that tears filled your eyes, you had a lump in your throat, or your heart was beating rapidly. For many Christmas-a-holics, we are overjoyed when we kick off the holiday season, but overwhelmed by the middle of the month! Try to find ways to remind yourself each day of December to be thankful for the birth of our Savior and overwhelmed by the blessings that have been bestowed upon you, rather than being overwhelmed with your holiday to-do lists or personal issues.

A – ABUNDANCE

Jude :2 ..mercy, peace and love be yours in abundance. Whenever I think of Christmas morning, from my childhood to the present, the word ABUNDANCE comes to mind. As soon as the sun rises on December 25th, until it sets in the evening, we are bombarded with an abundance of presents, candy, baked goods, fruit, and other delectable foods. But these things are temporary. What we really yearn for is the abundant life promised to us in God's word. Our true heart's desire is for mercy, peace and love, not just on Christmas day, but every day throughout each year.

The next time you are in the mood for a hot cup of steaming cocoa, I pray that you will be reminded of this devotion. As the warmth of the cocoa trickles down your throat, allow the warmth of God's love to pour into your heart, and then pour that love out abundantly onto others.

Dear Lord, thank You for giving us the gift of Your son, so that we could have eternal life with You. Please help us not to get so caught up in the earthly celebrations of Christmas that we forget to celebrate Christ. Grant us joy and peace this season and into the future. In Jesus' Name, Amen.



**May the Spirit of Christmas bring you PEACE,
The Gladness of Christmas bring you HOPE,
The Warmth of Christmas grant you LOVE**

Author Unkown



The Fight for Baby Jesus
A Fisher-Price nativity set creates sibling rivalry between preschoolers.

By: Alicia Bruxvoort

It was the first cold day of November. Sleet slapped at our windows and the Iowa wind chill held steady at a bitter ten degrees. While the initial sight of snowflakes had created pre-dawn excitement, winter's luster faded fast. By 9 a.m., my preschoolers wandered listlessly through the house, and I wondered if we'd survive the day with goodwill intact. That's when I got the idea.

Disappearing into the depths of the storage closet, I excavated the Fisher-Price nativity scene and triumphantly lifted my sanity-saver from its box. When my 5-year-old recognized the shiny brown stable, she squealed with delight. "I have the perfect place for the stable. Let's set it up by the window!" Immediately, Lizzy began arranging the pudgy little shepherds, the royally robed angels and the irresistibly cute animals. Peace restored, I congratulated myself on salvaging the day and began my mental inventory of holiday to-dos.

Then Lizzy noticed her younger sister lingering near. "See our Jesus story?" my eldest daughter asked. Wide-eyed, 2-year-old Hannah edged closer. "Cow!" she declared as she grabbed the plastic bovine and moo-ed. "Donkey!" she exclaimed while caressing the inflexible silver mane. With loud delight, Hannah inspected each animal until her eyes landed on the tiny figure propped atop the synthetic manger. "It's a baby!" she murmured, then reached for the miniature version of our infant Savior. Cupping the two-inch Jesus in her hands, Hannah began to rock and sway. "Rock-abye-baby," she sang.

Horrified by her sister's lack of reverence for the Christ child, Lizzy stooped to face Hannah eye-to-eye and set the record straight. "That's not ANY baby," Lizzy harrumphed. "That's Baby JESUS!" On cue, Hannah stopped rocking and her blue eyes began to sparkle. "Oh ... yeah," she said with a contented sigh, "It's MY Jesus!" Then, before her indignant sister could stop her, Hannah raced from the room and tucked Jesus in her crib. "Shh," she whispered as she returned with a finger covering her pursed lips, "Baby Jesus is peeping." Realizing that the star of her story had been snatched, Lizzy objected. "You can't have Jesus! I was playing with him." "No!" Hannah replied in typical toddler fashion. "My Jesus!" In a flurry, she snatched the Christ child from his midday snooze and protectively hugged him to her heart. "He's not YOURS!" Lizzy responded with unusual fury. "He's MINE!" And with that, my normally kindhearted girls fell to the floor in a heap of flailing arms and legs.

Once baby Jesus had been rescued from my toddler's clinched fists, he was put into a "timeout" on top of the refrigerator until a truce could be reached. Tears were wiped away. Apologies and kisses were exchanged, and a second baby Jesus was created out of a tiny doll swaddled in a Kleenex.

Later as I moved the stable to a nearby tabletop, I chuckled at the drama that had unfolded over a two-inch baby with synthetic swaddles and a painted red smile. And I thanked God that when it comes to the REAL Christ child, there need be no dispute. My daughters may have been unable to share their plastic Jesus without leaving someone at a loss, but we can share the real Jesus without coming up empty-handed. Because of God's amazing grace on that first Christmas, Jesus belongs to all of us.



Cookie Dough Truffles

Ingredients

- 1/2 cup butter, softened
- 3/4 cup firmly packed brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 2 cup all-purpose flour
- 1 (14-ounce) can sweetened condensed milk
- 1/2 cup semisweet mini chocolate morsels
- 1 cup finely chopped pecans
- 1 1/2 lb chocolate bark candy coating, melted

Directions

In a large bowl cream butter and brown sugar with an electric mixer at medium speed until creamy. Add vanilla. Gradually beat in flour and add milk. Add chocolate morsels and pecans, mixing well. Shape into 1-inch balls. Place on waxed paper; chill 2 hours.
*Cook's Note: Since the dough is sticky, roll your fingers into flour. This will make it easier to roll.

Melt chocolate bark candy coating in a double boiler. Using 2 forks, dip cookie balls into candy coating to cover. Place on waxed paper and chill to set. Store in the refrigerator for at least 1 hour.

STEERING COMMITTEE

- Mentor: Diane Hodges, 357-8726
- Coordinator: Michelle Longey, 737-3377
- Asst. Coordinator & Discussion Groups: Karin Coutsouridis, 568-6080
- Creative Activities: Mary Beth Reed, 789-4216
- Publicity: Jenna Banaitis, 785-1832
- Hospitality: Maria Seddon, 569-5416 & Sarah Lakota, 351-5936

- MOPPETS:**
- Tina Desroches, 357-8592
- Megan Patterson, 568-0233

