

Mom's Moments

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Holiday Issue 2008-09

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A Note from Anna

I was out for a walk the other day... I am fortunate enough to live close to a lake, and I watched as the sun reflected off the ripples in the water. It was so peaceful and for the first time in a long time I was able to... just... breathe.

It's been a while - the home renovations are overwhelming at times, I recently wrote the first draft of a booklet for women who have experienced the loss of a pregnancy or newborn baby, and we've been refining MM's vision and shaping its future - all very exciting things! But it's kept me busy to say the least.

As we head into the busiest season of the year, remember to stop once in a while, reflect on the joy and love that Jesus brought to our world, enjoy your families and friends and... just... breathe.

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year Ladies!

MM Goes Bi-Monthly

Our readers have been sending in GREAT contributions, and in order to fit them in, we need more space!

So we decided to expand the newsletter to 4 pages, and publish them on a bi-monthly basis.

Tell us what you think about our new columns, pass this newsletter on to friends, family, coworkers, child-care providers, neighbours, etc, and consider sending in a contribution! WE LOVE THEM!



Tips for a Green Christmas

I'm the first to admit that I don't like a green Christmas. I want the snow! (At least from December 24th to 26th). However this is not the "green" Christmas I'm referring to. I'm talking about having an "environmentally friendly" Christmas. We all want to do our part for the environment but have you thought about making an impact at Christmas time?

Trees ~ Buying artificial trees allows for multiple use. If you

use a real tree, try to find a Recycler for it rather than just throwing it in the dump. Or what about no tree at all this year?

Lights ~ New LED lights are great for less energy consumption. Or don't put up quite as many lights to save electricity.

Presents ~ Let's cut down on the number of presents we buy this year. Try making gifts like knitted items, pottery, or wood crafts. Or buy gifts that don't need wrapping like trips, events,

fun outings and home cooked meals. The thing that will be remembered is the time spent together, not the present.

Wrapping ~ Recycle your gift wrap each year. Wrapping paper, gift bags, tissue paper, bows and ribbons can all be reused if they're in good shape. Or use nice baskets and boxes for filling up with gifts.

Let's reduce, reuse and recycle for a "green" Christmas!

-Lauren Raymond, Sudbury, ON

Heart and Home

Special stories, reflections or traditions from your family

Something I do after Christmas with the kids is to recycle Christmas cards by doing the following...

Cut the fronts off the cards and cut the reusable parts of the pictures into gift tags for the next Christmas. Have the older kids do the cutting. Younger kids can then punch holes into the top end and thread wool or gift ribbon through the hole.



Take the backs of the cards and place them in a basket on the meal table. Every evening at dinnertime, have each child take a card from the basket and talk about ways your family can help that person, kind deeds you can do, ways to stay in touch with them, or prayers for that person.

- Merrilyn Barber, Kingston, ON

Helping Hand - Ideas for Gift-Giving

Share your ideas for reaching out to those in need

If you want to give something a little different this Christmas, browse www.worldvisiongifts.org to see the World Vision Gift Catalogue for "Canada's most meaningful gifts." Find items such as food, animals, medical and classroom supplies, and soccer balls!

"With every item you order, you'll receive a beautiful free greeting card AND a fun paper ornament describing your gifts. Present the card and ornament to your honouree to let him or her know a life-changing gift has been given in their name."

Make a game out of it - decorate a special tree with those ornaments. When guests come to visit, let them find their own ornament!



Info Corner...

Want to Subscribe to this Newsletter?

Click [here](http://www.momsmoments.ca) or visit www.momsmoments.ca. Subscribe to receive our bi-monthly email which highlights our current newsletters and gives you the scoop about MM.

Deeper Newsletter

The Deeper newsletter is going bi-monthly too! Our newest edition is out - read two women's stories about discovering God's presence in tough times. Find it on our [homepage](http://www.momsmoments.ca).

Visit us online...

www.momsmoments.ca
Find out more about MM & our team, discover our online resources, polls & blogs, access all our newsletters, get ideas on how you can contribute & more!

Contact us...

info@momsmoments.ca

A Deeper Moment - Inspirational thoughts from the Bible

*"Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."
Matthew 5:10 (NIV)*

I've been reading through the book of Mark in the Bible. I want to read all the accounts of Jesus' life before Christmas, to help me focus on the "reason for the season".

Today I read about Jesus' death. One thing that is clear to me is that Jesus absolutely knew what He was getting into when he started teaching about a God who was more concerned that people love Him and others rather than follow a list of rules, or when He healed the sick (and even raised a few from the dead!) or performed His MANY miracles (like feeding more than 5000 people with a boy's lunch or calming a storm with just a word).

Many times throughout His life Jesus talked about His death.

He knew exactly how and when it would happen. He could have backed out at anytime. He could have called thousands of angels to rescue Him. But He didn't. He chose the way of righteousness and endured the persecution that followed.

I believe with all my heart that Jesus now lives in heaven with His Father. I believe that the tiny baby who was born to this world more than 2000 years ago is filled with joy about His life, that He's happy He did what He did. Most of all I believe His love for each of us is just as strong now as it was then. And that's the greatest gift I have ever received.

If you want to know more about the love of Jesus this Christmas season, read through our '[Looking for Peace With God](#)' webpage and don't miss our new *Deeper* newsletter. Find both on our homepage: www.momsmoments.ca.

-Anna Sklar

Break of Dawn

We have a gift
Each and every morning
That we awaken to.
At the break of dawn,
We are given a new day
A new beginning,
A fresh new start.
There is no need to carry
Old baggage from the previous day.
Let us resolve to get closer to
Our goals, our dreams,
Our hopes and aspirations.
Let us leave no room for anger
Doubt or negativity.
Indeed,
We have a precious gift,
At the break of dawn
God has blessed us
With a brand new day.
O glorious blessings!
Let us live it to our fullest.

- Written by Paulyne Cascanette, Sudbury, ON

Send in your poetry for the newsletter

Health Nut- Postpartum Exercises for Mom & Baby

Health-related topics, exercises or nutrition facts that promote wellness in a nutshell - send us your ideas for future topics!

You finally have the go-ahead from your primary health care giver to start exercising after giving birth. You want to work-out but don't quite know how to do it with this little one needing all of your attention. Here are some simple ways to have your baby be part of your training. The best part is that as your baby gains weight, you get stronger! Here are a few exercises you might want to try with your baby. Trust me, it will be just as much fun for them as it will for you.



The Crunch (abdominals)

Lie on your back, knees bent and feet flat on the ground a little wider than hip distance apart. Place your baby between your legs with their chest and arms resting on your lower abdomen so they can see you. Slowly lift your shoulders off the ground, using your abdominals as you exhale. Slowly return to the ground as you inhale. Repeat 10-20 times.

The Lunge (Legs, glutes and core)

Stand straight, feet together and walk forward with one foot. Hold your baby on your chest facing out or in, depending on your baby's preference.

Drop the back leg's knee towards the ground, keeping your back straight and your forward knee above your forward ankle. Return to standing as in first picture as you exhale. Repeat 8-12 times.

For the **cardiovascular** part of your workout, take your baby out for a walk in the stroller. You should be able to talk but not recite a nursery rhyme... if you can, walk faster!

For more about *Postpartum Fitness Guidelines* access the September 2007 issue of *MM* on our website (www.momsmoments.ca/pdfs)!



-Caroline Deschamps (PHC-NP, PTS, PFS) is a nurse practitioner & personal trainer specializing in pre/post-natal fitness in Ottawa, Ontario.

The Craft Nook - Cinnamon Applesauce Dough Ornaments

Send us your fun and creative ideas for the family

Looking for a fun craft/gift for the kids to make and give this Christmas? Here it is! They are beautiful, easy, & smell great when warmed by the Christmas lights!

Ingredients:

- 1½ cups ground cinnamon
- 1 cup applesauce (store bought works best)
- 1/3 cup white school glue (Elmer's or other brand)

Mix the ingredients together until a dough forms. Knead for a few minutes. Roll out to ⅛ or ¼ inch thick. (If sticky, dust your hands and rolling pin with cinnamon, work on waxed paper.) Use cookie cutters or other implements to cut out the shapes you desire. Cut out a hole at the top of each with a drinking straw so you'll be able to thread a ribbon or string (for hanging) when dry. It takes 4 or 5 days for the ornaments to air dry. You should turn them over frequently so they will dry evenly and won't curl. You can outline each shape with puffy paint to make them more special.

- Recipe from www.teachers.net/gazette submitted by K. Carpenter



My Story - Presence vs. Presents



I am willing to bet all my 2008 stocking stuffers on the notion that many families with young children have a grandparent or two, who just cannot help themselves when it comes to spoiling their grandchildren at Christmas.

My husband and I both come from families where the presents around the Christmas tree each year resembled more of a colourful Berlin Wall than anything else. The boxes and bags and bows went deep and high.

When grandchildren came, the said wall of purchased gifts grew – until one year my husband and I actually had to wade through the loot in order to get to the couch. Thoughtful and generous? No doubt. But the bar was raised, and I feared my children growing into greedy, materialistic, demanding little things like the kids in the movie *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* – Augustus Gloop (the one who keeps getting fatter as his parent indulges him to shut him up), or the whiny and spoiled Veruca Salt: "But I want an Oompa Loompa now!"

A year ago we sold our first home – 1 kilometre from our kids' school, 8 minutes from Hubby's work, 2 minutes from Grandma's. It had an unfinished, yet respectable basement for toys and play, the infrequent overnight guest, and great

storage. We had a garage and computer room. It was a small, yet spacious home.

We purchased a gutted century home north of Kingston, Ontario. There is a severe lack of storage space. There is hardly room to store seasonal items let alone finding a nook for our daily belongings.

Prior to moving we sold a lot. From shelves to beds to dressers, and oh those dreaded accumulated toys! I loved every minute of getting rid of things. Not only did I feel enlightened in spirit, but I think I heard my old house breathe a sigh of relief. Embracing Katie's Theory of Getting Over the Tangible is easy – for Katie. Everyone else? Not so much! The idea of minimizing was exciting for me – less to dust, wash, find, argue over, etc. My children and husband had opinions of their own.

So approached the First Christmas in Our Country Home that is Lacking in Storage Space. We had just found homes for all our belongings (a place for everything, and everything in its place), but where the heck do future Christmas gifts go?!

I put out an email blast to our family members, pleading with them, to radically reduce the amount they have traditionally purchased for our children at Christmas time. I made my case as clear and as loving as I could: If you buy either child another stuffy I will burn it.

Well, I wasn't that blunt, but I did appeal to their common sense and pocketed some guilt along the way: "You have seen our home, you know we are lacking in storage space. Instead of purchasing them a *thing*, invest in *memories*. The girls would love a dinner out, a movie night, an

overnight, ice skating behind city hall, a trip to a local museum, bowling. Your presence, (not presents) is enough."

The amount of *stuff* purchased was reduced (not drastically, but it was a start), and the imagination of our family members shone through. Our girls received homemade gift certificates that contributed funds to their favourite summer camp, their horseback riding lessons, and some were made out in the value of tobogganing afternoons complete with hot chocolate.

I myself, have had to get over the fact that this *is* the 21st century: my kids won't cry tears of joy and disbelief at finding a lone peppermint stick and an orange in their stocking; and I cannot relive Little House on the Prairie ideals as hard as I try. But I will not succumb to purchasing for them, or allowing family members to purchase, their own Nano just yet either.

I think that minimizing Christmas purchases involves striking a harmonious balance between my own expectations and our extended families' expectations of what Christmas means: I need to respect that grandparents love to spend and spoil, but they must also support the values of their own adult children.

I acknowledge that even the baby Jesus received lavish gifts from the wise men, but it was His *presence*, and not the offered *presents*, that originated this wondrous Christian holiday.

And so I will challenge family members again this year: Just your presence. Not your presents.

- Katie Ouellette, Kingston, ON

Tasty Treats - Texas Millionaires

I make these every Christmas and wrap them up for gifts - my family LOVES them!

- 14 oz package caramels, unwrapped
- 2 tbsp butter
- 2 tbsp water
- 3 cups pecan halves
- 1 cup (8 oz) semi-sweet chocolate chips
- 8 (2 oz) vanilla candy coating squares

Cook first 3 ingredients in a heavy saucepan over low heat, stirring constantly until smooth. Stir in pecan halves. Cool in pan 5 minutes. Drop by tablespoons onto lightly greased wax paper. Chill 1 hour, or freeze 20 minutes until firm.

Melt chocolate chips and candy coating in a heavy saucepan over low heat, stirring until smooth.

Dip candies into chocolate mixture, allowing excess to drip. Place on lightly greased wax paper. Let stand until firm. Makes 4 dozen.

**From Southern Living Top-Rated Recipes 2000
Submitted by Carolyn Sklar, St. Louis, Missouri, USA**



"Let us remember that the Christmas heart is a giving heart, a wide open heart that thinks of others first. The birth of the baby Jesus stands as the most significant event in all history, because it has meant the pouring into a sick world of the healing medicine of love which has transformed all manner of hearts for almost two thousand years... Underneath all the bulging bundles is this beating Christmas heart."

- George Matthew Adams



Elisabeth Corcoran's Column

Elisabeth writes this column called "Moments for Moms" for various publications

Elisabeth is the author of *In Search of Calm: Renewal for a Mother's Heart* (2005)

and *Calm in My Chaos: Encouragement for a Mom's Weary Soul* (2001)

Read more from Elisabeth on her blog: www.elisabethcorcoran.blogspot.com

Peace, as defined loosely in my mind, has something to do with not feeling all chaotic inside. Something to do with thoughts coming at you one at a time as God intended. Your heart beating at a regular pace. No headaches. No butterflies. Breathing in and out slowly. All being well with my soul and in my little world.

Webster's third definition, the one that has to do with individuals, is a state of mutual harmony between people or groups, esp. in personal relations.

Oh my. I'm already tripped up. Mutual and harmony seem out of place to me in that sentence. I mean, don't get me wrong, that would be ideal. But if I can only partake of peace when I've got myself some mutual harmony going on, I may never...none of us may ever... really get peace.

Because when I have needed peace the most, over say, the past fifteen years, it has been in a relationship where there isn't a lot of mutuality going on and none too few pleasing chords are being struck.

Peace comes, for me, in bits and pieces. That I have come to realize I actually have to fight for. Wrestling it to the ground like Jacob wrestled with the angel...until his hip was dis-

placed...until he got his blessing. That's how I've been fighting for peace lately, with a limp and a new name.

I don't say the serenity prayer ("God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can; and wisdom to know the difference...") and feel heaven part its doors and shower down peace upon me like manna, though that would be swell.

I say the serenity prayer, or any kind of prayer, and then I wait. I read Scripture, any kind of Scripture, and then I wait. I take some deep breaths and I wait. I do yoga and I wait. I drink chamomile tea and I wait. I close my eyes and count to ten and I wait. I read a book or a magazine or the back of a cereal box and I wait.

I claim Philippians 4:6-7 as my truth, because it is Truth: *Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, WILL guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*

And sometimes it comes. Sometimes. Just sometimes. Sometimes I physically feel a quietness wash over me from

head to toe and settle into my soul.

But sometimes, most times, I have to tell myself that peace is really there even when I don't feel it. Which, to me, seems pointless.

Because what's peace if you can't feel it? Well, maybe, after all, it's not really a feeling. Maybe those grand times when we actually feel peace, that is just an added and occasional gift that we need to be genuinely thankful for.

Because I think what peace really is is a Truth. It's a knowing. It's a steadiness whether or not there's mutual anything or harmonious such-and-such. (Sorry, Webster...)

But it does exist...I'm convinced of it. No matter what the winds of change and circumstance and our fickle feelings allude to otherwise. Peace is mine to keep company with, if and when I so choose.

And as we walk into the holidays, with their frantic pace that can sway us to and fro, we can cling to Peace. The Peace that came to rescue us from ourselves and from the harshness of our world. Peace came down and now dwells among us. Merry Christmas, ladies.

**Elisabeth Corcoran,
Elburn, Illinois**
www.elisabethcorcoran.com

Draw Winners

We held two draws for our contributors of 2008.

The winners are...

Nicolle Huggins,
Ottawa, ON

&

Danielle McGrath,
Whitby, ON

Congratulations!