



## Giving and receiving all year-round

What do you remember about last Christmas? Did you open a present that you really liked, or spend time with relatives that you hadn't seen for a long time? Maybe you ate some really good food, like your grandma's roast turkey or your uncle's secret-recipe Christmas cookies.

However you spent your Christmas, it is important to remember the real reason for celebrating. You probably know the story of Jesus, God's only son, being born as a human so that he could save us from our sins.

You might be thinking, "Why are we talking about Christmas now? It's almost summertime." There's a good reason for that, and we'll get to it soon.

Have you ever wondered why we give presents at Christmas? It's Jesus' birthday, but you and your family are giving the gifts to each other!?

When we give presents to other people on Christmas, it symbolizes the gifts that the three wise men gave to Jesus in the Christmas story. Do you know what "symbolizes" means? It's when we do something to remind us of another thing that has happened before. We give presents to each other because Jesus gave all of us the greatest gift of all — the gift of living among us, dying to share with us abundant life. Remember that. That's what the Christmas spirit is about.

A church in Barcelona, Spain, celebrates Christmas by giving small presents to children at the Christmas Eve service. Even though the kids loved getting the gifts and the church loved giving them, sometimes there weren't enough gifts to go around. The church kept a list of all the children they thought would be at the Christmas Eve service — and they made sure they had enough presents for those kids. But sometimes, children showed up who weren't on the list, and there wasn't a present for them.

Have you ever seen someone else get a present when you didn't get one? It can be a bummer.

So, two years ago, the Barcelona congregation started a new tradition. Instead of getting gifts, the kids gave gifts to everyone. The day before the church's Christmas celebration, they decorated Christmas cookies to give to others at a party after the Christmas program.

Now, nobody gets left out, and the kids in the church know the real meaning of the Christmas season. They think about what they can *give* to others instead of what they can *get* from others. They can feel good about helping the church, and they probably get to help eat the cookies, too!

So, why are we talking about Christmas now?! Because giving is as important as receiving. Not just at Christmas, but through the whole year! We all have opportunities to give to others every single day of our lives. What are some ways that you can give and show the true spirit of Christmas to people all year-round? You don't have to give presents to someone every day, but you can give other things: your time and help, or even a simple smile. (*Give them a chance to answer or offer suggestions.*)

- Help your family with chores around the house.
- Without being asked, do your homework or chores before you play.
- Listen to your parents/guardians.
- Help your younger siblings with their homework.
- Play with someone in your class at school who doesn't have many friends.

### Prayer

*Dear Jesus,  
Thank you for coming to live on this earth and showing us how to love each other. Thank you for showing us how to forgive each other. We want to give in the spirit of Christmas all year-round. Help us to remember that, every day, we should give gifts such as our time and help and kindness. Amen.*



Photo by Josh Garber

Siblings Santiago and Leila Nummenpää-Craviotto were two of the children who helped make cookies to share with the entire congregation after the Christmas Eve service.

### Our gifts can help support mission in Spain.

Through the Garbers' ministry, Mennonite Mission Network partners with the Mennonite Evangelical Community of Barcelona, with a focus on youth outreach and congregational mission.

#### Did you know?

**\$25** pays for community building and outreach activities.

**\$50** helps pay for recording new songs to be used in Sunday schools and youth groups.

**\$100** helps pay for leadership training for church members to be equipped for further ministry.

**Gift designation.** All gifts to support ministries in Spain, should be sent to Mennonite Mission Network, PO Box 370, Elkhart, IN 46515-0370. Please indicate that the funds are for "**Mission Bank–Spain**" or "**Project #2018.**"

▶ For more activities and stories, visit [www.MennoniteMission.net/](http://www.MennoniteMission.net/) SpainMissionBank.



  
**BARCELONA**  
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