



A special message from MARP, MMA and Mennonite Church USA

“For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” Isaiah 9:6

How can we welcome the Prince of Peace with gifts that promote war and sexual violence?

As we enter the harried holiday season, we are reminded that this is also Advent—a period of prayerful waiting and reflecting in preparation for the birth of Christ, the One who seeks “peace on earth.” How then might our gift-giving—modeled after the Magi’s gifts to the young Christ child—reflect God’s vision for peace, healing and hope? Answering this question is increasingly important in our extremely sexual and violent media-saturated culture

In its annual Holiday Letter, the **Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility**—a national coalition of 275 faith-based institutions, including MMA—reminds parents and grandparents of the increasing sexual and violent content of many video games. Studies in behavioral science have continually shown that playing violent video games increases the likelihood of aggressive behavior in children and adolescents. With the new technology of “first person shooter” and “virtual reality,” these games are more graphic and real than ever before. Some games encourage and reward players for performing acts of violence and brutality that include beating women, shooting police officers and committing racially motivated acts of violence. These games are labeled “M” for “mature audiences” (ages 17 and older) by the industry ratings board.

The Mennonite Association of Retired Persons, MMA and the Mennonite Church USA Peace Advocate are together calling all gift-givers to careful, prayerful video game selection. We encourage adults to pay attention to a game’s

rating and suitability for the intended recipient and to become personally familiar with the content of the game.

It is also possible—though not always easy—to find video games that are both popular and positive. One example is Electronic Arts’ best-selling **SimCity Societies** that helps players build global communities to the benefit of all. You’ll find more suggestions on the Mennonite Church USA Peace and Justice Support Network youth Web site, in an article written for adults.

The gifts we give matter. Our choices are not only an opportunity to demonstrate our love for children, but a chance to encourage them to follow Christ in the path of peace and justice, care and compassion.

For tips on how to become a more informed video game shopper, links to resources for more information and a chart highlighting the practices of various video game retailers, please view the ICCR Holiday Letter on the Web sites below.

Mennonite Church USA: www.MennoniteUSA.org/peace

MARP: www.marp.mennonite.net

MMA: www.mma-online.org

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