

PRESS RELEASE

Start a New Christmas Tradition Centered on Giving

The Giving Manger teaches children to look for opportunities to love and serve others



Nashville, TN — The true spirit of Christmas often gets lost in busyness of the season. As the events of 2020 have made us slow down and shift some of our priorities, this year is the perfect time to refocus on the joy of giving and honor the real reason for Christmas: Jesus' birth. With *The Giving Manger* (WorthyKids/October 13, 2020/ISBN: 9781546034223/\$39.99), creators and sisters **Allison Hottinger** and **Lisa Kalberer** offer a faith-based interactive family tradition that encourages acts of kindness.

Each Giving Manger box set contains a hardcover picture book, a wooden manger, a bundle of straw, and a sturdy Baby Jesus figure—everything a family needs to start the tradition in their own home. The included book, *The Giving Manger*, uses a story to introduce families to how the tradition works and gets children excited about participating.

The Giving Manger tells the story of a family who shifts the focus of their Christmas. Young Anne and Ben always look forward to Christmas. Each year their dad makes a special wooden toy for them, but he tells them this year will be different. They are starting a new tradition, and there will be more gifts this year, starting December 1. The kids misunderstand, thinking they will be getting more gifts, but instead, the gifts are given by them to others. Initially disappointed, the children quickly change their attitudes when they see the joy that doing kind things and giving to others brings.

"This is a special story to us because it represents the same shift we've seen in our own families," Kalberer shares. "The focus used to be lists and what the kids were going to *receive* for Christmas, but in adopting *The Giving Manger* the focus shifted to what we can *give*. Christmas is different in our homes than it used to be, and we couldn't be happier about it!"

Once the family reads the story together, it's time to place the empty manger in a prominent spot in the house. In the days leading up to Christmas, family members place a piece of straw in the manger each time they perform a kind deed or act of service. Filling the manger will become a fun, interactive project for the entire family, prompting even young children to look for ways to love and serve others.

As the family works together to fill the manger with straw, both hearts and home will be filled with the joy and contentment that comes not from wish lists and getting, but from giving and loving others. On Christmas Day, the family will place the baby Jesus in the manger—now full of the straw that represents the acts of love and service done in honor of Jesus' birth.

"As we began to raise our own families, we often felt like the true meaning of Christmas and the spirit of giving was getting lost in the hustle and bustle of the season. We wanted to start making the season more about giving and showing kindness to others," says Hottinger. "We originally made the tradition just for our own family, but when we told friends about what we were doing, we had so many friends who wanted one too!"

In the back of *The Giving Manger*, readers will also find a list of activities as inspiration. Each act of kindness does not need to be a grand gesture, but can be simple gestures such as putting away a brother's shoes, drawing a picture for a grandparent, helping to empty the dishwasher without being asked, or leaving a candy cane and a note for the mail carrier. The goal is to become more kind and giving-minded in daily life so that the actions come naturally all year round.

Each item in the box is built to last so families can keep the tradition going year after year.

Visit www.thegivingmanger.com for a downloadable activity list and to take part in a letter writing service project.



About the Creators

Allison Hottinger and **Lisa Kalberer** are sisters who are passionate about giving back. As they began to raise their own families, they realized that the true meaning of Christmas and the spirit of giving was getting lost in the hustle and bustle of the season. They put pen to paper, wood to the saw, and clay in their hands to create the book, manger, and Baby Jesus that make up *The Giving Manger*—a complete tradition to help families focus on the real meaning of Christmas. They hope that *The Giving Manger* can spread kindness and promote service as families come together and shift the focus of Christmas from getting to giving. Allison lives in Ladera Ranch, California, and Lisa lives in Austin, Texas.

Learn more at www.thegivingmanger.com and on [Facebook \(@thegivingmanger\)](https://www.facebook.com/thegivingmanger), [Twitter \(@thegivingmanger\)](https://twitter.com/thegivingmanger), and [Instagram \(@thegivingmanger\)](https://www.instagram.com/thegivingmanger).

Suggested Interview Questions

- Where did the original idea for *The Giving Manger* come from?
- Can you share a little bit about the story from *The Giving Manger*?
- What is included in *The Giving Manger* box set? How does the manger itself work?
- The illustrations in the book are both beautiful and unique. Can you describe a little bit what makes the illustrations special?
- When you started this tradition with your own family, were the kids hesitant at first like Anne and Ben in the book? Do you see that kids catch on quickly to the concept?
- One reason moms dread a certain holiday tradition involving a certain elf is that it requires doing something daily. Do families have to do this every day or is it meant to be a reminder to try and do something as often as possible?
- Does every act of service have to be big? Can some of the activities be little things around the house?
- For the sake of inspiration, what are some of your favorite acts of kindness that you've done as a family?
- The Christmas season, like everything in 2020, is going to be different for a lot of people this year. Can you share a few ideas of ways to serve the elderly especially given restrictions for social distancing?

To request a review copy of *The Giving Manger*, to schedule an interview with Allison Hottinger and Lisa Kalberer, or for more information, please contact Audra Jennings, ajenningspr@gmail.com.