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A Household Word: The Simple Life This Summer

By Carol Band

Michaela

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We just got another whopping electric bill. Turns out, even with Daylight Savings Time, we're not saving enough. Maybe it's because long after the darkness of December, my family continues to celebrate the Festival of Lights. I'm not talking about eight tiny candles. I'm talking about a 24-hour, 365-days-a-year, megawatt extravaganza. My kids never turn off anything. Walk into the den and Paula Deen is whipping up pralines for nobody. Nocturnal fish swim on our computer screens all through the night and the overhead lights in the kitchen are on even when the sunshine streams through the windows.



"It looks cozy," my son Lewis says.

"It looks like a \$200 electric bill," my husband Harris complains, as he goes through the house, turning off computers, unplugging iPods from their chargers and flipping off lights. The kids call him "The Dark Lord."

"We've got to find a way to use less electricity," he says, unscrewing the light bulb in the fridge.

We huddle around a candle in the dark kitchen.

"Geez, Dad," Lewis says. "Do you want us to become Amish or something?"

"Yes," Harris replies. "Amish would be good. Then, maybe, the electric bill would be manageable."

"There wouldn't even be an electric bill," our oldest son Nathan points out. "We'd be off the grid."

While I know it's not all quilting bees and buggy rides, I also know that the Amish are hard-working, law-abiding, God-fearing people who are able to eat enormous meals of scrapple, funnel cakes and fritters, without joining the 35 percent of Americans who are officially obese. That alone is enough to convert me.

My daughter Perry, who is away at college, is going to take a bit more convincing. Since this was my husband's idea, I made him write the letter informing her of the changes she would encounter when she came home at the end of the semester.

Dear Daughter:

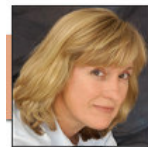
Before you arriveth home for the summer, I taketh pen in hand to informith you of thy family's recent decision to follow the tenets of the Amish.

Thee brothers sayeth that they rejoiceth in our decision and doth proclaim great excitement at the prospect of buggy racing and hath commenced to convert the minivan into a chicken coop.

Thy room wast stripped of many worldly goods including thy Conair blow-dryer, thy assortment of lip glosses, thy mid-drift-baring Abercrombie & Fitch T-shirts, which proclaimth "Naked, Co-ed Volleyball, and thy thong underwear. Beist not alarmed. Think not that thee will be afforded no cute outfits. Thy mother hath sewn thee several modest frocks (no more pesky buttons!) which await in thy closet.

Indeed, thy mother seems content with our new ways and sayeth that my new beard rendereth me "hot."

A HOUSEHOLD WORD



By Carol Band

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Worry not that thou hath no quilt-making ability, for thy mother hath purchased multitudes of "Bed in a Bag" at Target and selleth them on the front lawn for great profit to the many tourists who doth find us charming. I will pick you up next week - look for the buggy!

Love,
Dad

Of course, he was kidding ... I think. But scaling back, unplugging and trying to modify our consumption does have its appeal. Maybe it's just a way to get the kids to turn off the TV, walk away from the computer and play outside, but this summer, being just a little bit Amish seems simply brilliant. Pass the scrapple.

To read more of Carol Band's award-winning column and check out her blog, visit Household Word Archive. You can also find out more about her book, A Household Word, and listen to a our new podcasts with Carol.

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