



For God so loved... He gave... Those few words give us the real secret of Christmas, the reason the time is supposed to be special. And it is special, for it's the time to get our eyes off ourselves and onto both the Lord and then to others, as seen through the Lord's eyes.

In many ways that's what the renewal is all about, to wash us and renew us so that we're able to pour out good things to those around us. The well flows to all who will partake, regardless of whether they're worthy or likely to return some favor.

The well flows because that's what God made it to do, and God is the one who keeps pouring the water in. The well's responsibility is only to release the water freely, to stay in contact with the source, and not taint or pollute the water in any way. God loves such a well—and so does everyone else.

When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child. I hung up my stocking on Christmas Eve and waited for Santa Claus. But when I became a man I put away childish things—well, I hope I did. Some years Christmas has been a disappointment for me. For each of those times I find that somewhere in my heart I'd hung up a 'stocking' but Santa didn't come.

It's really not Santa's fault. You know, for a mythological, media creation he does all right, covers a lot of territory. But he doesn't own the universe like my God does. When Jesus makes bold and sweeping statements like, *Give and it shall be given unto you, good measure, pressed down and running over shall men press into your bosom...* it pays me to listen.

That verse wasn't put into the Bible just to give preachers a 'line' for the offering. In fact, when it refers to the bosom, well, that's where the heart is, which is what can really hurt when we find ourselves disappointed during the Christmas season. How much better if we follow Christ's example of giving and serving- even unto death or at least, death to 'self.'

Christ was joyful. *Joy to The World* was just the spin-off of the love that carried Him to the cross. Hebrews 12 tells us the decision was not even a close one, Christ viewed his ordeal, terrible as it was with the attitude of *is that all?* I'd have to say He's been the best Christmas gift I ever received.

And so, having received Christ as Lord and Savior, let us be careful to follow His example and pour out our lives to others this season. If we do, we will know the full joy God has for us.

So, what's TORCH doing this month? Well, there are a few good Christmassy things on the burner, and possibly a few more depending on what we just happen to think of

at the last minute. I think we do some of our best planning in the foyer after church but anyway, here's what's been scheduled:

Chemekata Community College in Salem has a presentation called Christmas Alive. We're planning to attend the 3PM performance on Sunday the 7th. Those wishing to go should pre-register with M- and it looks like that is an ASAP situation as the tickets go rather quickly and we aren't able to give you much notice here.

The plan is to attend the 8AM service at BT, then meet at the PBC Cafeteria at 10:30, carpool over to Salem, find a good spot for lunch, hear the concert, then return for the evening service in Portland. For those going, be sure to get your car to the upper area as parking is always tight for the 10:45 service in the main lot.

On the 13th we're doing the progressive dinner we originally planned for November. Cost is \$7, payable to E- by the 8th. We'll also have a white elephant gift exchange, so by all means gift wrap something we can all laugh over.

The entire dinner will be staged in Washington State. The salad will be served 6PM at R's in Hazel Dell.

From Hazel Dell we will go to N's. Dinner is at 7:00.

Dessert will be at M's.

Wow, sounds like a treasure hunt.

Reminds me of days gone by when I used to run service calls, *Turn left at the corner where Jones's used to live...* Let's make sure the rest of the month will be easier to find

Prayer this month will be at D's. Since this is an apartment complex, D says be sure to park in a spot marked 'V' for visitors. Unit 1 is behind the pool. Looks like there is a lot of things to pray about this month, so let's get in on it.

Promise Keepers is still holding steady at T's. Men are encouraged just to come out and spend a little time that evening.

We will be going caroling at Crestview Convalescent Center again this year, Bertha Blvd @ SW 30th. Be there at 3:30, and when we're done we'll figure out a good place to catch a meal together. For directions call E.

Only one SNAC is planned on the 28th, for Stanford's at Lloyd Center. Should be a good chance to unwind a bit from Christmas.

Prayer needs:

-Not only are the holidays busy, stressful times, but in the aftermath of 'Eternity' there's both demonic counterattack and just good old fatigue. Pray for continued grace for everyone in the group, and especially those who were involved with the play.

-The 'stats' for Eternity list 19 singles of the TORCH age bracket. Holding these new believer's up in prayer before we ever even meet them would be a real act of love. Whether they ever became active in this group or not, we can minister to them in this vital season through prayer.

-That believers within TORCH can be released in a big way through the 'Faith Harvest' principle. We have many who either labor under great financial bondage or are functionally deceased because of their workload. It's time to stop talking about how *God blessed* so and so with a wonderful high paying job, when that person is history so far as the house of God is concerned. There may be seasons when one does have to pursue career for a season but the ongoing choice should not have to be between absence and poverty.

-That TORCH people will all find some special ways to minister and give of themselves to others this Christmas season, and that we can all be the exciting, dynamic people we know that God intended us to be. Turn that well loose...