

The Royal Poinciana Chapel, Palm Beach

December, 2006

Volume 1, Issue 4

**December 24
Christmas Eve
Worship Services**
10:30 a.m.
5:00 p.m.
8:00 p.m.



WHO IS ON YOUR LIST THIS CHRISTMAS?

**The December "Bible
Pathway" Study and
Devotional Guides are
available for pick-up
in the North Gallery**

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DECEMBER

1-10 - Boutique Open
4 - Benevolence Commit-
tee
6 - St. George's Mission
Food Kitchen
10 - *The Many Moods of
Christmas*
6, 13, 20 - Bible Study
17 - Mission Mississippi
Information Lunch at
Tessa's Restaurant
17 - Handel's *MESSIAH*
21 - Board of Directors
21 - Madrigal Dinner
23 & 24 - The 4th Wise-
man Performances
24 - Christmas Eve Morn-
ing and Evening Worship

Have you given to charity this Christmas?

If you attend worship regularly, chances are excellent, if you haven't yet, that you will. A recent Wall Street Journal article reported that a third of all charitable giving in America occurs in December. But those who give and those who do not make a fascinating study. Eighty five million American households give each year to nonprofit organizations, while another 30 million do not. **Why?**

Religion is the most significant determiner, by far. Those who attend worship each week give four times more dollars per year than those who do not. They volunteer twice as frequently. On average, people of faith give 50 percent more money each year even to non-church benevolent organizations than secularists do. **Why?** One would expect those involved in a church to give to that church, but why the larger trend in volunteer hours and overall charity?

One answer is philosophical. Some in America believe that giving to charity only encourages dependence by the poor. Others argue that personal benevolence lets the government off the hook. But the larger issue appears to be driven by values -- religious people simply seem to be more inclined to give to those in need. This is a commitment which is encouraged by every major religion in the world.

The Koran instructs Muslims to give 2.5 percent of their goods to the poor. Buddha made compassion for the poor and suffering a significant part of his worldview. Hindu writings, while respecting caste differences, encourage kindness to those in need. Jews following Hebrew teachings gave 23 percent of their goods over a year in tithes and offerings. Jesus assumed the same for his followers: "*When you give to the needy.....*" (Matthew 6:2).

Why are the world's religions so emphatic about charity? **Why** does the Bible specifically call us to such compassion? **Why** does God call us to such sacrifice, especially in this season

when we celebrate Jesus' birth?

First, we give to those in need because their need is great. Hungry, homeless children and adults face all kinds of challenges. Many have chosen their lifestyle, but many have not. Multiplied thousands are on the streets because their homes are even more violent and horrific. Giving to organizations that help people in need is vital and valid on the merits of each. God calls us to give for the simple reason that many need what we can share.

Second, Scripture calls us to help those in need because we need to give. We have inherited a Western worldview which defines success in material terms. The larger the salary, the newer the car, the bigger the home, the more valuable one must be. Christmas ads reinforce a gospel of materialism. The more one gets, the happier one will be. To the contrary, the more one sacrifices, the more one is freed from the chains of materialism. Giving away what one has helps one understand what one needs.

How much should we give? C.S. Lewis was once asked that question. His answer: *more than we can spare. If our benevolent gifts do not cause us to sacrifice something, we have not given enough.* I'm afraid he's right.

Have you given to charity yet this Christmas? If you attend worship regularly, chances are excellent that you will.

I hope the Chapel is your number one benevolence not out of charity, but because the Chapel is your Church. You will find the Christmas offering envelope enclosed. When asked, and wherever you can, please give generously to all you know who have need this Christmas! God's generosity is our motivating influence to share richly out of our abundance.

A Most Blessed Christmas to All on Your List!

Bill Norris