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*Good news of great joy
that will be for all the people . . .*

Luke 2:10

Christmas 2004

Dear Friends:

The message of Christmas is a message of great joy. Jesus came to earth to bring life, hope, peace – and especially joy. As we receive him as our Savior, he fills us with great joy.

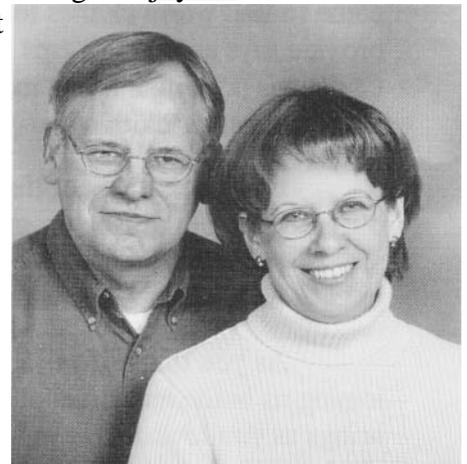
As I reflect on this Christmas message of great joy, it seems significant that the message came first to a group of shepherds. Although we romanticize shepherds in our Christmas pageants, shepherds were actually among the lowest strata of society in first century Judea. They were viewed with suspicion and considered outcasts, shunned by more respectable, religious people. But the angels appeared to the shepherds to announce the birth of Jesus and his message of joy.

It also seems significant that the angels added that the good news will be available to all the people. No one will be left out.

As we celebrate Christmas at Washington Street Mission, we want to make sure that the good news is extended to everyone. We want the great joy of the birth of Jesus to be experienced by people in all conditions, not just the privileged few who enjoy material possessions and respectable social status. We want to open our arms a little wider at this time of the year to include the marginalized, those pushed to the edge, those who are viewed as the least in our society, the lost, those who are left out.

We celebrate the Christmas message in all of our activities at Washington Street Mission during this time of the year. We host a neighborhood Christmas party on a Sunday afternoon to share some of the joy of singing Christmas carols and eating holiday cookies.

Our morning coffee hour is brightened during this season by serving coffee in holiday mugs and playing Christmas music. The usual coffee and doughnuts take on a Christmas glow as they are



Ken and Mary Lynn Mitchell have served as the Executive Director and Associate Director of the Mission since March 1999. They continue to enjoy the challenge of the ministry.



Trees and festive decorations throughout the Mission remind people of the great joy that the birth of Jesus makes possible.

served with smiles and words of encouragement. More than fifty people are being served in the coffee hall each weekday morning. The numbers increase during this colder season of the year.

Several Christmas trees are placed throughout the building and brightly decorated. The decorations provide a holiday feeling that reminds many of the people we serve of homes and families. They also provide another opportunity to present the Christmas message of great joy.

At the transition house, we celebrate Christmas with the men who are current and former residents. A holiday dinner will help remind them that the good news of Christmas includes them.

We provide Christmas food baskets for a number of the families we serve. These are usually the families of the children who participate in our afterschool tutoring program.

The Bible time during our afterschool tutoring program also focuses on the Christmas message. The children enjoy being able to sing Christmas carols and hear the Christmas story. We also provide a time for them to select and wrap presents for their mothers. Through the generosity of Mission supporters, we will also be taking the children out to purchase new coats and boots for the winter weather.

In our free clothing shop, we also give away more clothing during this holiday season. As mothers come to find warm clothes for their families, we also provide toys and other items that can be used as Christmas presents. Many men will also be coming for warm winter clothing.

For the mothers of the children we serve in our afterschool tutoring program, we set aside a special gift selection day. Volunteers come to help them select gifts and to wrap and label the gifts. The mothers leave with enough gifts to make the holiday very special for their families.



Children select and wrap gifts for their mothers at the Mission. These girls participate in the Mission's afterschool tutoring program.

As you think of ways to extend the great joy of this holiday season, please consider joining us in the ministries of Washington Street Mission. You will find the great joy that Jesus brings as you look for ways to give and ways to serve others who are in need. Your gift to the work of Washington Street Mission will be appreciated.

Sincerely,

Executive Director