

Special Issue

MOTIVATED

THE MAGAZINE THAT MOVES YOU!

Candlelight

What Would the Birthday Person Like?

A Christmas Carol



3	Candlelight
4	What Would the Birthday Person Like?
5	1,001 Gifts for Jesus
6	The Christmas Shoes
8	Sky Ballet
9	A Christmas Carol
10	Nine Seasonal Survival Tips
11	Repainting the Angel
12	Notable Quotes The magic of Christmas

Issue
Editor
Design

Special Issue
Christina Lane
Awexdesign

Contact Us:
Email
Website

motivated@motivatedmagazine.com
www.motivatedmagazine.com

Copyright © 2014 by Motivated,
all rights reserved

Quite a few years ago, when I was living and working in the Middle East, a teacher friend of mine spent untold hours during the holiday season putting together intricate nativity scenes. He would gather acorns, bark, and pinecones from under the trees in a nearby woodsy area where he loved to go for walks, and turn them into tiny stables, mangers, sheep, donkeys, and Christmas figurines, which were dressed in scraps of cloth.

I tried to copy his designs a few times, but I never managed to come up with anything as impressive as his productions. They were simply ingenious! The display in the hallway leading to his classroom inspired me with his new and intricate additions.

I was fascinated by how each unique little nativity scene portrayed what was happening in the stable, or what was going on in the fields surrounding it, and they filled me with wonder.

Much has changed since then, both in my personal life and the world at large—and especially in the troubled region of the Middle East. With conflict raging, economic hardship, or just the plain busyness of life, it is all too easy to pass by or completely miss the simple joys and the real meaning of Christmas—unless we stop and look around us.

It may not be something flashy or huge that fills us with wonder. It may be something simple, like the tiny manger scenes my friend made that year. Christmas is a magical time, and I look forward to finding something special this year, that will help me experience the miracle of Christmas once again.

I hope the articles in this special Christmas issue of *Motivated* will be an inspiration to you, and that, no matter what circumstances you may find yourself in, they will help you experience a little of the wonder of Christmas, too.

Merry Christmas!

Christina Lane
For *Motivated*

Candlelight

By Abi May, adapted

**Remembrance, like a candle,
burns brightest at Christmas time.**

—Charles Dickens (1812–1870)

I light this candle in ANTICIPATION...

The fact that we don't know the exact date of Jesus' birth doesn't matter; what counts is that He was born. Amidst all our busy activities, let us pause to think about the One who was born and lived to go everywhere doing good.

I light this candle in THANKS...

The joys and sorrows, successes and failures, achievements and disappointments of the past year are behind us now. Let us give thanks for them all, acknowledging that God meant it for good.

I light this candle in MEMORY...

It is customary to hold memorial services during the days leading up to Christmas. Whether alone or in company, let us remember those who have gone before us.

I light this candle in SOLIDARITY...

Not everyone has the blessing of a happy family, a roof overhead, or even enough to eat. Let us pray for those who are sick, lonely, grieving, or impoverished, and let us show our solidarity by reaching out to offer our assistance and companionship, as much as we are able.

I light this candle in PRAYER...

A new year is about to be born. Let us bring our hopes and expectations to God, and trust Him to walk with us on the path ahead. 🌿

**Walk with me, oh my Lord,
Through the darkest night and brightest day.
Be at my side, O Lord,
Hold my hand and guide me on my way.**

—Estelle White (1925–2011)



What Would the Birthday Person Like?

By Sukanya Kumar-Sinha, adapted

I LOVE MY BIRTHDAY and everything that comes with it—especially the many congratulatory phone calls, text messages, emails, Facebook wishes, and greeting cards from family and friends. For that one day, everything is about me—my favorite food, where I'd like to go, what I'd like to do—basically whatever I want. I love to bask in the “birthday girl” glory.

Sadly, I know of someone whose special day is becoming less and less about Him.

Today, Christmas has largely been reduced to a holiday from work, a time to shop, and a reason for relatives to get together. The decorations, exchange of gifts, and parties bring some excitement and merriment, but the Christmas spirit has been replaced to a great extent by the “holiday spirit.”

I once read about a small child who accompanied his grandmother to the shopping mall at Christmas and was awestruck by all the decorations, the toys, and the replica of Santa's shed. Slowly taking in the sight, the child looked up at his grandmother and innocently asked, “Where is Baby

Jesus?”

That child's question has a deep meaning. Amidst the glitz and glamour of modern Christmas, are we forgetting the true reason for the season? How many of us remember that Christmas is Someone's birthday and stop to think what He would like us to do for it?

I am sure He is touched by the time and effort we put into decorations and buying gifts for our earthly loved ones, but how happy He would be if we also gave Him a birthday present!

If you're looking for a birthday present idea for Him, consider these:

- Tell Him how much you love Him. You can never do this enough.
- Express your love to family and friends. You never know who might need to hear just that.
- Give to the poor. Reach out to them in His name and invite them to share in the Christmas spirit.
- Make amends with those you're holding a grudge against.

This year, let's do something for the Birthday Person! 



1,001 Gifts for Jesus

By Chalsey Dooley

LAST CHRISTMAS, the magical spark never came. I was bothered by all the commercialism that plagues our city months in advance. Somewhere between the flashy ads in magazines and feeling I didn't have much to offer to others due to the limitations of our circumstances, I lost my enthusiasm. I wasn't looking forward to decorating the tree, neither did I want the guilt and stress that would come from cramming and rushing to "make things meaningful."

This year has been the opposite, though. In fact, we started preparing in July!

So what was different?

Back then, the children and I came up with a plan to give Jesus 1,001 presents* by His birthday, and we've been sending a few more His way every day since. The back of our kitchen door is covered with lists and charts, and now there are several hundred checkmarks and stickers indicating the gifts we've already given Him! There's a chart for good deeds done to help others. There's a chart for making simple story audios to post for other children. There's a chart for writing letters to cheer the hearts of

friends. These are just a few of the gifts we're giving Jesus for Christmas.

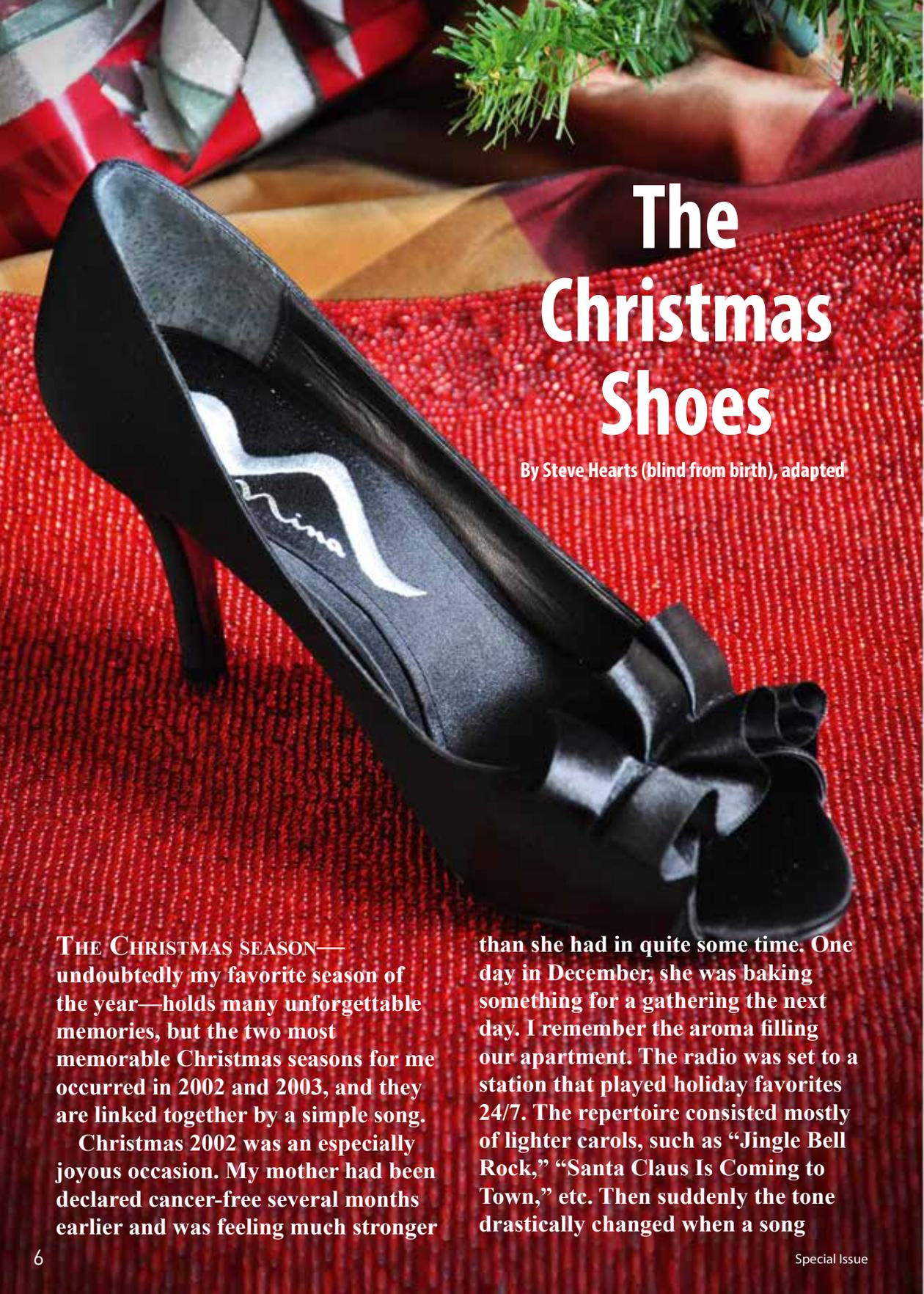
This year, our Christmas season started months ago and it feels great. There's no rush, no pressure, no guilt, and no lack of focus. We're reaching our goals and using our time to make Him and others happy. The charts are nearly filled up, and when they are, we'll place each list in a gift-wrapped box and place it under the tree. They are gifts from the heart—each one represents time, love, and effort we know He will be happy to receive.

We already know what the 1,001st gift will be—a simple birthday candle. We'll light it for a moment each day while we pray for others around the world. These prayers are also gifts we can offer the One who offered us His all. 🌿

**What can I give Him, poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd, I would bring a lamb;
If I were a wise man, I would do my part;
Yet what can I give Him: give my heart.**

—Christina Rossetti (1830–1894)

*Don't worry if you can't make your goal that high. It could be 101 or 51 things. Make it reachable and meaningful for your situation.



The Christmas Shoes

By Steve Hearts (blind from birth), adapted

THE CHRISTMAS SEASON— undoubtedly my favorite season of the year—holds many unforgettable memories, but the two most memorable Christmas seasons for me occurred in 2002 and 2003, and they are linked together by a simple song.

Christmas 2002 was an especially joyous occasion. My mother had been declared cancer-free several months earlier and was feeling much stronger

than she had in quite some time. One day in December, she was baking something for a gathering the next day. I remember the aroma filling our apartment. The radio was set to a station that played holiday favorites 24/7. The repertoire consisted mostly of lighter carols, such as “Jingle Bell Rock,” “Santa Claus Is Coming to Town,” etc. Then suddenly the tone drastically changed when a song

began to play that captured my attention. I put aside what I was doing in order to tune in to it. (I later found out that it was titled “The Christmas Shoes,” performed by Newsong.)

The song tells the story of a man who found himself in line at a fancy department store on Christmas Eve, trying to finish his last-minute holiday shopping. In front of him was a little boy, with an appearance that made it obvious he had no business being in that store at all, holding a pair of shoes. When his turn came to pay, he said he wanted to buy the shoes for his mother who was sick and didn’t have much time left—he wanted her to look beautiful if she were to pass away that night. The boy put all the change he had on the counter, but the cashier shook his head and told him it wasn’t enough. He turned and looked at the man imploringly. The man in line behind him paid the difference and couldn’t forget the look on the boy’s face as he thanked him and left.

As I listened, tears rolled down my cheeks. I realized how fortunate I was to still have my mother by my side. I imagined how sad I would have felt if I were in the place of that little boy who was about to lose his mother. The song stayed with me through the remainder of the Christmas season, eventually fading as the New Year was ushered in.

In the course of 2003, Mother’s cancer recurred and she again took a turn for the worse. By Christmas, she was in a nursing home, and the staff had informed us that the only thing they could do was try to keep her comfortable until the end. One day, I was running

errands with my brother, listening to the radio as we drove around. Suddenly, on came the same song, “The Christmas Shoes.” How true to life it rang this time around!

Moved by the song, my brother and I immediately bought Mother a pretty pair of shoes, which fit her beautifully and gave her great joy. She left us (in the physical, at least) only weeks later.

Today, this beautiful song helps me look beyond the hectic side of the Christmas season with all its activities, plans, and preparations for festivities, family get-togethers, and what have you. When the ceaseless activity threatens to drive me nuts and I find myself succumbing to frustration, I hear my mother’s voice whispering to me, “Remember the ‘Christmas Shoes’ song.”

With this reminder, the stress and frustration dissipates, and I remember to count my many blessings. I think of my family and loved ones who are still alive and well and give thanks for my own life and health too. I say a prayer for the many who find themselves in painful circumstances during the Christmas season—as the little boy in the song did, or as my family and I did in 2003. I ask God to lead me to such people and give me an opportunity to be of comfort to them. He often does.

Gone is the nervousness I feel over the approaching singing engagement I don’t feel sufficiently prepared for, the irritation I feel when important details are overlooked, and all other such cares, as I strive to simply appreciate the fact that I am alive and able to enjoy another Christmas. 

Sky Ballet

By Curtis Peter van Gorder, adapted



IT WAS CHRISTMAS MORNING, and my wife and I were enjoying a break at the end of what had been a hectic December. The view from our hotel balcony—a pristine lake surrounded by snowcapped mountains—was idyllic, but as an avid bird watcher, it’s what was happening above that caught my interest.

Several large flocks of thousands of starlings were wheeling and turning in perfect synchronization. They would break off in small groups and then reunite. They ascended, descended, turned, and whirled as one body. The swarms constantly changed shape, with one edge of the flock meeting another and then breaking off into a new formation to fly in opposite directions. The display lasted for over thirty minutes.

According to some ornithologists, this amazing sky ballet is due to birds seeking out thermals of warm air during the winter. The birds can ride these updrafts for hours. Louise Crandal, a former paragliding world champion, actually glides with her trained steppe eagle to get the best results. She advises other gliders:

“Follow the birds. They’re the masters of the sky, so do what they do. It’s as simple as that! ...

I realized that birds don’t fly in circles. They turn, but never in neat 360s. Every single lap is different and they constantly adjust and move to where the thermal is stronger, or even a couple of hundred meters to the side to find better lift. Whenever you get the chance to fly with a bird, try to follow it as closely as possible. Soaring birds automatically stay in lift for as long as possible, even with an annoying paragliding pilot on their tails, so there’s always something to learn.”

Back to Christmas Day and our view of the magnificent midair acrobatic show...

It seemed almost like the birds were dancing in praise to their Creator, and I thought back on the first angelic choir proclaiming Christ’s birth: “Suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: ‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!’” (The Gospel of Luke.)

Let us join the angels in praises this Christmas, take wings, and soar heavenwards. 🦋

A Christmas Carol

By Natalie Anne Volpe (1991–2011), adapted

WHAT COMES TO MIND WHEN YOU THINK OF CHRISTMAS? Perhaps gifts, evergreen trees, lights, holly, good food, the birth of the Christ Child, the coming New Year, the end of the old, and probably for many, “A Christmas Carol.”

The well-known tale of the bad-tempered, miserly Scrooge has been often retold through the many years since its first publication by Charles Dickens in 1843. For many, the story has become a symbol of Christmas; yet while most of us are familiar with the hardheartedness, stinginess, and greed of the main character, Ebenezer Scrooge, how often do we apply the story’s lessons to our own lives?

The plot takes a wretched miser and brings him through a dramatic change for the better. Before his transformation, he was the opposite of all the good qualities that Christmas stands for—love, charity, goodwill, unselfishness, and caring for those around us. While Scrooge may be a rather extreme representation of miserly features, he’s perhaps also a metaphor for the miserliness that resides in each of us.

There’s a little selfishness in all of

us, isn’t there? Goals gone a little awry, high ideals long forgotten? Do we pass by others without a word or kind glance when they cross our path, too caught up with ourselves to notice?

We don’t have to wait until we become as extreme in our selfishness as Scrooge before we decide to make a change. Wouldn’t it be wonderful if at every Christmas we could take an honest look at our lives, at the things of the past, at what we’re doing in the present, and our goals for the future, and see what really has become most important to us?

By taking Jesus as our role model, we can hope to reflect some of those qualities that will keep us happy and make us a blessing to those around us and a better person in general.

Let’s make it a goal—and not only at Christmas—to step back a bit, reassess our life and values, and discern what has been the driving force in all our actions. Let us savor every moment while we have it, and make the most of every opportunity to help another human being, because along with other special occasions, this is something that will give us and others eternal satisfaction. 🌱

Nine Seasonal Survival Tips

By Abi May, adapted



THERE ARE MANY FORTUNATE PEOPLE who enjoy the celebrations, relishing the break from work, savoring the culinary treats, treasuring happy memories or making new ones, and relaxing in the company of family and friends. But it's not like that for everyone. Christmas can be one of the most difficult times of the year for those who are suffering in some way.

Of course, Christmas isn't the culprit, but the season's expectations can take a toll. Those who live alone or have recently lost a loved one may feel their isolation more acutely. Others may buckle under the financial stress and extra expense. Many well-meaning parents find themselves worn out from gift-buying, baking, and cleaning.

For the sake of all those who struggle, here are nine seasonal survival tips.

1. Schedule your time: Make a plan for December before it speeds up out of control. Schedule days for shopping, decorating, baking, and celebrating—and leave some time for the unexpected.

2. Budget your finances: Decide how much you can afford to spend and stick within your limits. Be creative with gifts.

3. Celebrate within limits: Watch your diet. You don't have to accept every invitation or eat all of the chocolates in the box.

4. Press pause: A little argument can spoil an otherwise happy gathering. Take a deep breath. This too will pass.

5. Reach out: If you might be alone at Christmas, look for company by volunteering, inviting a neighbor, or organizing a potluck at a community center.

6. Allow yourself to "be": It might not be your "season to be jolly." That's okay; there's a time for everything.

7. Try something new: Avoid some of the stress of previous Christmases by doing things differently this year. For instance, eat out instead of cooking a big dinner; play board games instead of watching television; visit a friend instead of sitting at home alone.

8. Be kind to yourself: Christmas is a time for giving, but that doesn't mean you shouldn't give a little time ... to yourself.

9. Look up: If there's any time of year to be reflecting on the goodness of God, it's at Christmas. The wise men found the Christ Child by following the star. We too can find Him if we still ourselves and look up. 

Repainting the Angel

Adapted from a story by Wilfred Peterson

THE STATUETTE OF AN ANGEL

holding the hand of a little boy had been placed on a neglected back shelf in an antique shop. It was covered with soot and dust, lost amidst the clutter of jars, dishes, and ornaments. A man browsing through the shop discovered the figurine and had an inspiration: He would rescue it from oblivion, restore it, and give it a place of honour among his Christmas decorations.

At home in his basement workshop, the man covered the angel and the child with glistening white paint. Then he painted the wings of the angel and the hair of the little boy with sparkling gold. Each brush stroke worked magic. The old, grime-covered statuette vanished, and a shining, new one appeared. The statuette was transformed before his eyes into a thing of radiant beauty.

As the man painted, he thought, *Isn't this what happens to people at Christmas? They come to the end of the year dust-covered from the struggle. And then Christmas inspires them to repaint their nature with love and joy and peace.*

The art of repainting the angel! This is our lifelong task: to never stay down in the dust and the dirt, but, heroically, to rise again after each fall.

Repainting the angel! We need never lose our ideals, dreams, and purposes. We can always make them gleam again with the glory of renewed hope.

This story reminds me how life takes on a special glow at Christmas. It starts

with the wonder of a little baby who came carrying a message of love and hope. For those in families, it continues with the happiness and camaraderie of celebrating together with loved ones.

Christmas is special because we enjoy not only what God has done for the whole world, but also for us personally. He has "repainted" us with new qualities that we couldn't have given ourselves. He has blessed us with much. He has given us peace, as the angels promised.

We are transformed by Christmas. 🌿



The Magic of Christmas

NOTABLE
QUOTES



Christmas—that magic blanket that wraps itself about us, that something so intangible that it is like a fragrance. It may weave a spell of nostalgia. Christmas may be a day of feasting, or of prayer, but always it will be a day of remembrance—a day in which we think of everything we have ever loved.—Augusta E. Rundel

Let us remember that the Christmas heart is a giving heart, a wide-open heart that thinks of others first. The birth of the baby Jesus stands as the most significant event in all history, because it has meant the pouring into a sick world of the healing medicine of love which has transformed all manner of hearts for almost two thousand years.

—George Matthew Adams (1878–1962)

The world is filled with the sights of Christmas. If you look with your outer eyes, you will see brightly decorated trees, tinsel stars, flaming candles, and a crèche. If you look with the inner eye, you will see the star of Bethlehem in your own heart.—Adapted from Anna May Nielson

Let us have music for Christmas...
Sound the trumpet of joy and rebirth;
Let each of us try, with a song in our hearts,
To bring peace to men on earth.

—Mildred L. Jarrell

The Christmas spirit—love—changes hearts and lives.

—Pat Boone (b. 1934)

It is Christmas every time you let God love others through you ... yes, it is Christmas every time you smile at your brother and offer him your hand.—Mother Teresa (1910–1997)

Be an angel to someone else whenever you can, as a way of thanking God for the help that another angel has given you.—Eileen Elias Freeman

Christmas is most truly Christmas when you celebrate it by giving the light of love to those who need it most.—Ruth Carter Stapleton (1929–1983)