

JOHN F RAWSON & JEANNINE LEWIS

The most endearing Christmas memory I have is one which Margaret and I recalled on numerous occasions.

It was the Christmas of 1963. At that time our family was Kim, aged 3 and a bit, Mark aged 2 and a bit, Jeannine aged 8 months, Margaret and me.

That year was not a Tiona Reunion year for us, but one we were spending with Margaret's family, the Smith's. It was Christmas Eve. The kids were in bed early, pillow slips in place in the lounge room waiting to be filled. Margaret and I patiently waited until the kids were well asleep before we did our Santa act, putting presents in each of their sacks.

Then it was our time for bed!

Sleep came easily, only to be later disturbed by sound coming from the lounge room about 2.00 am. With sleepiness still holding us tightly in its grip, we made our way carefully into the lounge room, wondering if we had a burglar invading our home.

Turning on the light, we found Kim, sitting on the floor, surrounded by a pile of torn wrapping paper, a look of absolute delight on her face, and a matching smile, calling to us with, "Look Mummy and Daddy, Santa's been!!!" And Mummy and Daddy, trying to be stern, but holding back our laughter, replied, "Get back to bed!!! It's still far too early to be up and about!!!"

Christmas has always been about our children, then our grandchildren and now the utter joy with great grandchildren.

But it is much more than this. The Christmases that I spend in Tamworth with Jeannine and her family, are exciting times for us all, not only the kids.

Early Christmas morning we head off to the Uniting Church for Christmas Worship, greet our friends there, then home for a sumptuous late breakfast. After which it's present opening time. One of the kids is chosen to be "Santa" to deliver the gifts, but usually all join in. There's torn paper everywhere and the normally tidy room looks like a cyclone has hit.

The table is prepared for Christmas Dinner. It's not unusual for us to have a visitor. Sometimes a friend who is lonely. Or a Nurse from Tamworth Hospital who may be separated from their family. There's always room for another.

Jeannine's generosity doesn't end there. Because her son Samuel and his wife Asha are both nurses in the busy Surgical Ward of Tamworth Hospital, Jeannine is conscious of other staff whose shift takes them from their homes and loved ones on Christmas Day. To show they are not forgotten, and, in appreciation for the wonderful people all essential healthcare workers are, Jeannine prepares platters of Christmas goodies, and delivers them to the hospital, much to the delight of the staff who are giving so generously of their day to care for those who are unwell.

Christmas, for us, is always about God's love and giftedness to us in the birth of the Christ child.

Be blessed this Christmas my friends. May love always be your greatest gift of discipleship.



