

Ransomed at Christmas

by Kirk Craig

“O come, O come, Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appears.

O come, Thou Wisdom from on high,
Who orderest all things mightily;
To us the path of knowledge show,
And teach us in her ways to go.

O come, Thou Rod of Jesse, free
Thine own from Satan’s tyranny;
From depths of hell Thy people save,
And give them victory over the grave.

O come, Thou Day-spring, come and cheer
Our spirits by Thine advent here;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
And death’s dark shadows put to flight.

O come, Thou Key of David, come,
And open wide our heavenly home;
Make safe the way that leads on high,
And close the path to misery.

O come, Desire of nations, bind
In one the hearts of all mankind;
Bid Thou our sad divisions cease,
And be Thyself our King of Peace.

*Rejoice! Rejoice!
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!”*

Words by John M. Neale

BE A MENTOR!

Our next mentorship group will
start in January.

Contact Kirk Craig for details
about training!!

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Although I’m not very musical, I do have a favorite Christmas hymn, *O Come, O Come Emmanuel*, written from the prophecies of Isaiah concerning the coming Messiah. Each verse beckons the coming of the Savior to set the people of God free from the evil and sin of this world. The evils faced by the people of Israel in that day were both spiritual and material. Poverty and oppression were just as real as adultery and idolatry.

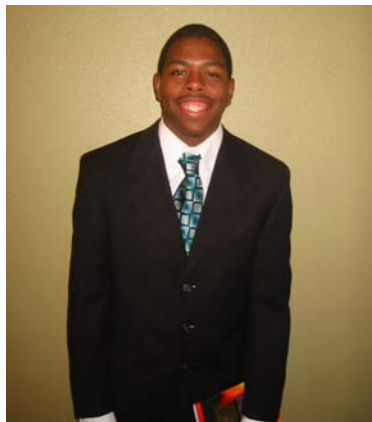
2000 years have passed since his first coming, but we still long for the continual coming of Christ into those dark areas of

our world, of our lives. I think this hymn is the cry of Christians in Houston’s Third Ward. Our community mourns, held captive by spiritual and material oppressors. Addictions, violence, poverty, absent fathers, and hopelessness hold the people captive. We wait with anticipation for Christ’s triumphal return to destroy sin and death. But in small bible studies, fellowship together, confession of sins, the resistance of violence or drugs, something miraculous happens. The Son of God appears, and we are ransomed. God’s promises come true.



So Come, Come, Emmanuel and ransom your captive children here in the city. We will rejoice. We will rejoice because God came to us, He is coming to us, and He will come to us on that great day!

Jobs! Jobs! Jobs!



We recently completed our third round of job readiness training seminars last month. Of those who have completed Agape Development Ministries’ full job readiness and mentorship program, the following statistics apply:

- 100%** have found employment and **93%** are still employed today: **62%** work full time.
- 71%** have received a raise in pay in the past year.
- 36%** are pursuing or have completed post high school education.
- 79%** are regularly attending a church.

All of these young people are defying the odds of their communities. They have overcome drug addictions, depression, suicide attempts, criminal records and behavior, teenage pregnancy, fatherless homes, sexual abuse, stabbings, evictions, aban-

donment, and isolation.

They are learning what it means to receive God’s love and be a family. They are studying God’s word, praying, confessing sins, discussing addictions, and learning to forgive. They are giving back to this world with both their time and their money. They are models of generosity. These are our Christian brothers and sisters.

This is what your prayers, your time, your money, and your love for God have helped accomplish. Thank you to all who have partnered with Agape Development Ministries.

“Christian brotherhood is not an ideal which we must realize; it is rather a reality created by God in Christ in which we may participate.”
Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Life Together

Family Time

by Amanda Craig

One of the things that became exceedingly clear when we started this ministry was that the people we were encountering wanted to be our friends, not our clients. They didn't want their names in a database on our computer— they wanted their pictures up on our fridge with the rest of our loved ones. What a blessing this turned out to be for us as we too were lonely for true friendship. The time we have spent on community and fellowship the past few months has breathed new life into the ministry. Imagine what it would be like to work hard at a job that you were uninterested in for minimum wage only to wake up the next morning, catch the bus and do it all over again. It is so easy to lose momentum and want to quit. What a difference it makes to finish work and have dinner with a group of people who love you, laugh about your day, and hang out for a few hours before the routine starts over again. This has become a big part of the ministry these days. It is not easy to face the hurdles in life, but the difference between facing them alone or with a family seems to be immense.



Agape Family Member Highlight



Daishea Mitchell is an incredibly strong young woman who is raising two children without the help of a husband. She works full time at an assisted living facility as a receptionist. Although she is living in her own apartment, she was recently nominated as one of 6 finalists who might receive a home from the Donald Driver Foundation. Daishea's love for Jesus and

commitment to her family's health are unmistakable, but her path has not always been a straight one.

When I first met Daishea, she confessed that her own bad decisions had led her to crime, prison, and homelessness. She and her children made a tough choice to get on a bus bound for the Star of Hope Mission in Houston. During the past 2

years she has been working on her spiritual life, her family's future, and her economic situation. Daishea belongs to a church and has enrolled her children in Yellowstone Academy and KIPP. She is seeking ways to continue her education and professional development. We are so proud of her and her children. Pray with us that God will continue to protect and grow this family.

Partner With Us

Jesus came to set the captives free, to release the oppressed, and proclaim the good news (Luke 4:18). Those involved with Agape Development Ministries are trying to follow him and obey his commands to love our neighbors and care for the least of these.

If God has stirred your heart for the inner city, then partner with Agape Development Ministries by giving financially. We need many committed monthly givers of \$25, \$50, \$100, and more. Every gift, regardless of size, is appreciated, and all donations are tax deductible.

Join us in this ministry, and invest in eternity. The dividends don't appear on quarterly statements. Transformed lives will mark your portfolio growth.



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