

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

Merry Christmas!

How do you categorize the Christmas gifts that you have received throughout the years? I can come up with at least three categories in my situation: gifts that I am still using; gifts that I have thrown away and gifts that I have passed on to other peoples who have better use of them.

No matter how well-thought-of are the gifts that you have received, they will end up in either one of these categories. This is just the reality of gifts giving and receiving. It has little to do with the superiority of one category over another.

Therefore, for this Christmas, I have pre-categorized my gift to you. It belongs to the third category: gift that you can pass it on to other peoples who have better use of them. It is called a “value-added” gift. It means that the value of my gift to you will increase when you pass it on. My gift to you for this Christmas is a donation of \$\_\_\_\_\_, on your behalf, to an organization called Living Water International ([www.livingwatercanada.org](http://www.livingwatercanada.org)). This donation is for the use of providing clean water to those who are in need. You can read on the back of this letter about the water facts and figures in the world.

On another note, I think this gift does also reflect the true meaning of Christmas. Think about this: if the root of Christmas is for the celebration of the birth of Christ Jesus, who should then be receiving a gift? Jesus or me?

And the gift Jesus wants is perhaps for us to give to the needy of this world.

“I came so they can have real and eternal life, more and better life than they ever dreamed of.” Jesus

Love,

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Christmas 2007

## Water Facts and Figures

- 1.1 billion people in the world – roughly one-sixth of the world’s population – do not have access to clean, safe water.
- 2.6 billion people in the world – about two-fifths of the world’s population – do not have access to adequate sanitation.
- Some 6,000 children die every day from diseases associated with lack of access to safe drinking water, inadequate sanitation and poor hygiene.
- At any one time it is estimated that half of the world’s hospital beds are occupied by patients suffering from water-borne diseases.
- The World Health Organization has estimated that 80 percent of all sickness and disease in the world is attributable to inadequate water or sanitation.
- The average distance that women in Africa and Asia walk to collect water is nearly four miles.
- The weight of water that women in Africa and Asia carry on their heads is the equivalent of your airport luggage allowance (approximately 44 pounds).
- The most a woman can carry in comfort is about four gallons. If she carries only enough water for her family (husband, mother, five children) to survive each day, she would need to fetch about 10.4 gallons. But to keep them all clean and healthy, she would need to fetch 52 gallons of water every day.
- The average person in the developing world uses 2.6 gallons of water a day.
- The average person in the United Kingdom uses 35 gallons of water every day.
- Americans consume more water per capita than any other country in the world, including India and China combined.
- One flush of your toilet uses as much water as the average person in the developing world uses for a whole day’s washing, cleaning, cooking and drinking.
- Two-thirds of our body weight and nine-tenths of its volume is water. That is why water is essential for life. People can survive for up to two months without food, but die within three days without water.
- Agriculture accounts for 70 percent of total global fresh water use.
- 90 percent of wastewater in developing countries is discharged into rivers and streams without any treatment.
- In the past 10 years diarrhea has killed more children than all the people lost to armed conflict since World War II.
- In China, India and Indonesia twice as many people are dying from diarrhea diseases as from HIV/AIDS.
- The simple act of washing hands with soap and water can reduce diarrhea disease by one-third.
- The population of the Kibera slum in Nairobi, Kenya, pays up to five times the price for a liter of water than the average American citizen.
- In Zambia, one in five children die before their fifth birthday. In contrast, in the UK, fewer than 1 percent of children die before they reach the age of five.
- Water-borne diseases (the consequence of a combination of lack of clean water supply and inadequate sanitation) cost the Indian economy 73 million working days a year. A cholera outbreak in Peru in the early 1990s cost the economy US\$1 billion in lost tourism and agricultural exports in just 10 weeks.
- At any time, 1.5 billion people suffer from parasitic worm infections stemming from human excreta and solid wastes in the environment. Intestinal worms can be controlled through better sanitation, hygiene and water. These parasites can lead to malnutrition, anemia and retarded growth, depending upon the severity of the infection.
- Projections for 2025 indicate that the number of people living in water-stressed countries will increase to 3 billion. Today, 470 million people live in regions where severe shortages exist.
- Comparative costs: In Europe \$11 billion is spent each year on ice cream; in the USA and Europe, \$17 billion is spent on pet food; **in the USA \$61 billion is spent on soft drinks**; in Europe \$105 billion is spent annually on alcoholic drinks – 10 times the amount required to ensure water, sanitation and hygiene for all.

