



'Tis the season for  
*Generous  
Celebration*

By Yolanda F. Johnson

**C**hristmas is my favorite thing to celebrate, and the holiday season is my favorite time of the year. So, as we enter this festive time of 2021 and the year comes to a close, I want to focus upon a personal tradition of mine and encourage you to also start your own traditions of generosity.

There are many ways to be generous during this time of year, from donating to food banks, making year-end donations to nonprofits, volunteering for holiday events and projects, etc. Staying true to the philanthropic lifestyle during the holidays, I personally always look forward to my annual Christmas Tea Party. It's a beautiful, festive event, one in which I invite my nearest and dearest by for an afternoon of fun and merriment. I bake and create scones (chocolate peanut butter is the fave!), cookies (including a Dutch Almond variety that folks think are store-bought—I'll take that as a compliment), and other deliciousness from scratch. There are teas from around the world, and it's the one time each year that my prized teapot collection sees the light of day.

During the pandemic last Christmas, I held it virtually, so this year, I'm looking forward to hopefully joining everyone in person if it's truly safe to do so. Either way, it will be fun and festive, and this year I'm giving a special nod to generosity both monetary and through the items used for the gathering.

Here are my 3 top tips for bringing the people you love together in the spirit of holiday generosity:

### BUY LOCAL

How can you support local artisans and craftspeople through your own plans for the holidays? Scout your local farmers' markets to find new options. I recently discovered an incredible apiary in New Jersey, which woman-owned business and a bakery that makes the most incredible

orange marmalade (a tea-time must!). Local artisans are among those severely impacted by the pandemic, so pushing a bit of business their way at this time of year can be a major—and generous—boost.

### ASSEMBLE A "GIVING CIRCLE"

This year, I'll ask all invited guests to add a donation to a giving circle "pot" of money. To get everyone started ahead of the event, I'll send out a few suggestions from those organizations and causes I support and will ask others to do the same. During the event, we'll have a brief discussion on some of the areas of good work that matter to us most and decide on one or two charities that will receive the funds. The per-person amount is not set; it's whatever is meaningful and/or realistic for any given person. To top it all off, my own giving vehicle, YFJ Philanthropics, will match the amount given by the group. This will make an even greater impact, and it's a fun experience making the decision as a group.

### DRIVE IT HOME

Perhaps in lieu of a giving circle, you can work with a local organization like a food bank or nursing home to see what items they might need and then ask your guests to bring one or more of those items with them to your event in lieu of a hostess gift. There's no better feeling that dropping off these much-needed items to help those in need.

Whether you are back together with loved ones this year, or you'll continue to celebrate virtually, there is always an opportunity to enjoy the season while giving back and helping others. As many of us celebrate Jesus' birth this year, may we also listen to His advice, which transcends backgrounds or differences: "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

*May each of us find the true joy of giving this year and may we each be blessed in return.*