From missions to malls
Rich and poor alike line up for holiday cheer

- Minneapolis church gives free food to 5,000 in need

Michael Risomone’s heart was frostbitten white by the time he reached the front door of the Disciples Ministry Church Mission on Wednesday. He stood in line on the patio outside the mission, where a two-chair shelter was set up to pick up his family’s Christmas dinner.

“I need to make $180 on four hour work. It bears a week if I wanted it,” said Risomone, a former Honeywell machinist. A 25-year-old father of four, he said he’d been unemployed for about five years.

“I had a good job, and I worked hard,” he said, shivering in his tattered shoes on the ice skid over the mission’s sidewalk. His wife, Sherry, and the couple’s children — from a 16-year-old boy to an infant six — waited inside a van parked nearby.

“My family is now, standing in line waiting for a bag of groceries,” he said.

He was one of more than 1,000 shivering, shuffling slowly through a snow-flocked chute outside the North Minneapolis church. But he stayed up against the 8-degree cold, a few of those wrapped in blankets, trying to stay warm on Wednesday afternoon.

A 3-gallon plastic container filled with donated clothing was

- Business as usual at megamall — except for swamped Santa

At the Mall of America on the eve of Christmas Eve, the only long line in town consisted of fried parent and their family's children waiting to see that symbol of Christmas — Santa Claus.

The mall's Santa, a rather thin fellow in an oversized red suit, was seated in the center of the Minnapolis' frosted holiday season, surrounded by a huge crowd. Shoppers stuffed their bags with presents, and some even brought their own.

The line at one point reached all around the mall, containing a diverse mix of shoppers, including elderly couples, families and friends, all waiting to see the magic of Christmas.

It was a very busy Christmas Eve, with the mall's Santa swamped with browsers. People were seen standing in line to see the man, who seemed to be in high demand.

Yet anyone expecting to encounter a Santa, he indicated, would be disappointed. Although Santa wasn't much in evidence, the mall's Santa's interest in working was clear, and he was seen with throngs of shoppers, all eager to see the magic of Christmas.

In fact, he seemed pretty much business as usual at the