

MINUTE FOR MISSION

GOD IS WITH US

What was the most perfect gift you ever received? A bike or doll when you were a kid? A video game, perhaps? Maybe it was the day you met your husband, your wife — or looked into the eyes of the newborn baby that someone laid in your arms.

For most of us, the most perfect gift is not necessarily a thing, but something else. Something bigger, deeper, more meaningful.

One of the most powerful things that Christians claim is that God saw the great needs of the world and offered a perfect gift, a gift that brought God and humanity closer together. God's perfect gift to us, Jesus Christ, offered the power of being **with** us. According to Matthew's Gospel, one of the names given to Jesus is Emmanuel, which means "God is with us."

In Jesus, we receive the perfect gift of God being with us, and of being with those who are often overlooked, left out, vulnerable, or in need. "God is with us," we proclaim. What a powerful gift, a perfect gift, the gift of ... *being with*. *Being with* ... think about it.

This is one of the reasons we share gifts during Christmas. We, too, want to share the power of being "with" those we love and those in need, by offering gifts like those we give to the Christmas Joy Offering.

When we give to the Christmas Joy Offering, we step forward to be with the young people attending Stillman College, Presbyterian Pan American School, and the Menaul School, recognizing their potential and rejoicing in their talents. We offer the gift of being with them in support of their education and leadership development, knowing that the students of color who attend these schools will soon lead the church and world, receiving our gifts and offering their gifts in return.

We also step forward to be with church workers and their families who have faithfully served the church but find themselves in critical financial need because of changing

health situations or an emergency. We offer the gift of being “with” them by giving a gift to the offering to help restore hope through the Assistance Program of the Board of Pensions.

We give these gifts because God shows us how powerful it is to “be with.” The power of “with” is the power God shows us in Jesus Christ. God’s perfect gift: Emmanuel, God is with us. Let us share our gifts and celebrate our church leaders — past, present and future.

Let Us Pray ~

*God, you are indeed **with** us.*

*Because of your son, Jesus,
we are inspired to be with those
who lead your Church
but find themselves in need.*

*And we are inspired to be with
students at Presbyterian-related schools and
colleges equipping communities of color,
who have the potential to lead your church
and world in the future.*

*In the name of the Christ,
Emmanuel, we pray.*

Amen.