



CHRISTMAS JOY SPECIAL OFFERINGS

LEADERSHIP: PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

A gift opens doors.

—PROVERBS 18:16



THE PERFECT GIFT.

2021

LEADER'S GUIDE

NOVEMBER 28 - DECEMBER 19



Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
Presbyterian Mission

Thank you!

...for your energy, creativity and support in promoting the Christmas Joy Offering. For those of us gathered together in Advent expectation, we know that the only perfect gift ever given was the one we received in Jesus Christ — a perfect gift from a gracious God. In Matthew's Gospel, one of the names given to Jesus is Emmanuel, which means "God is with us." We know that in Jesus, we receive the perfect gift of God *being* with us. What a powerful gift, a perfect gift — a gift that opens so many doors for us. Although we cannot give the perfect gift, we can give generously to support and *be with* our past, present and future leaders in their time of promise and their time of need, opening doors that may not have been available to them.

QUESTIONS?

You're always welcome to contact us!

CHRISTMAS JOY OFFERING

800-728-7228, Ext. 5047
special.offerings@pcusa.org
pcusa.org/christmasjoy

BOARD OF PENSIONS

Rev. John G. McFayden
800-773-7752, Ext. 7224
jmcfayden@pensions.org
pensions.org

SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES EQUIPPING COMMUNITIES OF COLOR

Tim McCallister
800-728-7228, Ext. 5230
tim.mccallister@pcusa.org
pcusa.org/scecc

STANDING ORDERS

Customer Service
800-541-5113
customer_service@presbypub.com

WHERE DO I REMIT MY GIFTS?

MID COUNCILS

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
PO Box 643751
Pittsburgh, PA 15264-3751

CONGREGATIONS

(through your normal receiving agency,
usually the presbytery, or)
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
PO Box 643700
Pittsburgh, PA 15264-3700

**THREE EASY WAYS
TO STAY UP-TO-DATE
ON ALL THINGS
SPECIAL OFFERINGS.**



BLOG | pcusa.org/blogs/weekly_offerings



FACEBOOK | facebook.com/specialofferings



TWITTER | twitter.com/pcusa_so



Get the Most Out of Your Christmas Joy Offering Resources

When you're busy, figuring out the best ways to share and promote the Christmas Joy Offering can be difficult. So, we've highlighted important facts, histories, statistics, and programs to make it easier to inspire your congregation to get involved.

In this guide, you will find a variety of materials to help you promote the Christmas Joy Offering and teach your members about the work supported by their gifts. This guide will walk you through these materials, as well as some effective ways to celebrate the Offering and motivate your congregation to give.

But this guide is just a start. We encourage you to add your own ideas and enthusiasm to create a unique Offering experience for your church.

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Interested in an electronic version of the Leader's Guide?
Find it at pcusa.org/christmas-joy-offering-leaders-guide



Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
Presbyterian Mission



CHRISTMAS JOY

SPECIAL OFFERINGS

LEADERSHIP: PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE



ANDREAS KRETSCHMAYER

THE PERFECT GIFT

One of the most powerful things that Christians claim is that God saw the great needs of the world and offered a perfect gift in response, a gift that brought God and humanity closer together. God's perfect gift, Jesus Christ — a gift who opens a door. Jesus is the *perfect gift*, not only opening a door but coming through it. In Jesus, God joined with humanity, and in his life, death and resurrection, so our story of God goes, Jesus *is* the door, now standing open. The giving continues because God is with us, still — and always.

Even though many of us haven't been able to be together in person, we have been together in spirit and in faith. We missed seeing faces we love — up close and personal, but the physical distance also revealed, for us, the importance of those things which bring us together, even when we are physically far apart.

We offer our gifts during this Advent Season to the Christmas Joy Offering because God shows us the power and importance of being together, of "being with." We might not be able to meet face to face with those who need the support that our gifts provide, but we are very much still together. We see the potential of students of color who will become our leaders and we seek to come alongside them, to encourage them, to be together with them. And we see church workers who have critical financial needs and we come alongside them, to assist them — we are with them. And we see the witness of the whole Church, either gathered in buildings or connected home to home, member to member, sharing what we have, together. We thank God for being "with us" through the gift of Jesus, for opening doors that may not have been accessible to us, and for joining us together as the Church and, through our gifts, with those who have need.

✳ WE'RE ON A MISSION WORTH JOINING

It's our goal to assist church workers and their families in their time of critical, financial need and students in of color in their time of promise — opening doors for healing and doors for opportunity. Check out the Minutes for Mission and bulletin inserts for powerful stories of lives changed — all because of your gifts to the Offering.

✳ YOUR ASSISTANCE GOES A LONG WAY

Research shows when church leaders like you encourage their congregants to support initiatives like the Christmas Joy Offering, their members give significantly more. Thanks to your commitment, we can continue to make, and keep, the vital promises of the Offering.

✳ IT'S NEVER TOO LATE TO LEARN MORE

Each year, we have more amazing reasons for you to continue your support of the Christmas Joy Offering. Visit our website to discover even more resources: pcusa.org/christmasjoy.

✳ SHARE YOUR STORIES WITH US!

We'd love to hear the unique ways you promoted the Christmas Joy Offering, as well as any suggestions for us to improve your experience. Contact us via social media or email special.offerings@pcusa.org.



STILLMAN COLLEGE CHOIR

1 OUR GIFTS AT WORK:

SUPPORTING OUR PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE LEADERS

By supporting the Assistance Program of the Board of Pensions (BOP), the Christmas Joy Offering honors the faithfulness of current and retired church workers and their families in need. Thanks in part to support from this Offering, church workers can receive critical financial assistance to support them through life's challenging circumstances. These generous actions bear witness to our faithful response to God's charge to love one another as Christ commanded.

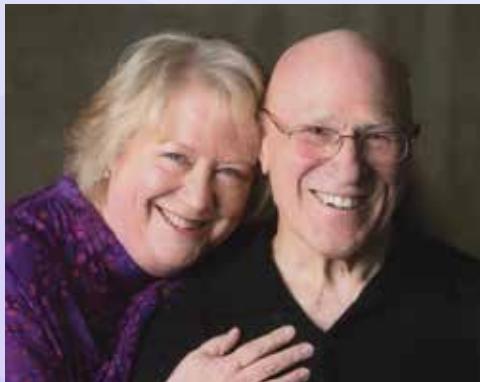
- ❖ \$1.1 million of gifts from 2020 are being used to provide critical financial support and grants for current and retired Presbyterian church workers in their times of need.
- ❖ Income supplements from the BOP helped nearly 299 households, assisting retired church workers and surviving spouses with the means to provide for themselves.
- ❖ Housing supplements from the BOP helped more than 244 households remain in their homes, afford assisted living, or long-term care.
- ❖ Emergency Assistance Grants from the BOP helped more than 109 households facing times of great financial need or uncertainty due to unforeseen circumstances.

ASSISTANCE PROGRAM OF THE BOARD OF PENSIONS

2000 Market Street, Philadelphia, PA 19103-3298

800-773-7752

pensions.org



"Knowing the impact of the programs that the Christmas Joy Offering supports, it has always been important for me to promote the Offering in the many churches I've served," said Jack. "I've gotten to highlight the wonderful things the Offering provides, and to encourage people to participate in this extraordinary generosity. And now, years later, I have firsthand knowledge of what a life-changing difference it can make."

**Rev. Jack Eisel
honorabley retired, Sacramento, CA**

Read Eisel's story on page 14 of this guide.

OUR GIFTS AT WORK:

PREPARING THE WAY FOR FUTURE LEADERS

The PC(USA), with its historic commitment to higher learning, has long promoted education and leadership development through the establishment and support of Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color. Our future church leaders of color can receive much-needed assistance while they discover and pursue their professional goals at these schools and colleges. Your gifts allow these ministries to continue — sustaining a tradition Presbyterians have carried out for nearly 140 years.

- ❖ \$1.1 million of gifts from 2020 are being used to provide education and leadership development skills at Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color.
- ❖ Many of the students attending Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color are the first in their families to enroll in higher education.

THE CHRISTMAS JOY OFFERING SUPPORTS THESE INSTITUTIONS

Menaul School
Albuquerque, NM
menaulschool.com

- Most diverse private high school in the Albuquerque area. Students from 15 - 20 countries are represented each year and the majority of students self-report identifying with minority ethnicities.
- Ranked best Christian High School and 5th best private school in New Mexico by Niche ([niche.com](https://www.niche.com))

Presbyterian Pan American School, Kingsville, TX
ppas.org

- 100% of graduates are accepted into colleges and universities in their home countries or in the United States
- Welcomes a diverse international student body, with 26 countries represented in the last 25 years

Stillman College
Tuscaloosa, AL
stillman.edu

- 93% of Stillman's full-time faculty hold terminal degrees
- Stillman has been selected a College of Distinction for 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 for Christian Education, Teacher Education, Support of the Military and Veteran Students, Preparing Business Leaders, and Equity and Inclusion (collegesofdistinction.com/school/stillman-college).



"I think a lot of people may not realize how many lives they can affect just by their support," Ray said. "It's a simple fact when they give students a scholarship, especially those students who are really in need, it's the best thing that could happen to them. It changes their lives."

**Rayondre (Ray) Roberts
Graduate, Stillman College, Tuscaloosa, Alabama**

The Christmas Joy Offering helps Stillman College and other Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color prepare future leaders like Ray to serve the church and society.

Read Ray's story on page 13 of this guide.

3 PROMOTING CHRISTMAS JOY: BEFORE THE OFFERING

SEPTEMBER – OCTOBER

Ask the session to set a date to receive the Christmas Joy Offering. This is traditionally received on the Sunday before Christmas, December 19, though any time during the Advent and Christmas season is appropriate. Encourage the session to set a giving goal higher than last year.

- ❖ Develop your interpretation plan by reviewing the resources, tips, and updates on the Christmas Joy website at pcusa.org/christmasjoy.
- ❖ Once you receive your shipment of materials, review them and continue planning your Offering promotion. Order any additional materials you may need by emailing customer_service@presbypub.com or calling 800-533-4371.
- ❖ Begin planning events around the theme: *A Gift Opens Doors (Proverbs 18:16)*. Choose the individuals who will present Minutes for Mission. Work with the worship committee to plan a special Christmas Joy Offering worship service as well as a suggested litany for a Christmas Eve candlelighting service (found on pg. 17 and online).



A Gift Opens Doors insert The Perfect Gift insert



Offering Envelope

Visit

PCUSA.ORG/CHRISTMASJOY
TO DOWNLOAD THESE OFFERING RESOURCES:

Bulletin Inserts

Poster

Minutes for Mission (in large print for easy reading and video form)

Sermon (written and video)

Children's Curriculum

Worship resource

Graphics and Social Media images

Christmas Joy Offering PowerPoint slides

Customizable bulletin slides



THREE WAYS YOUR MEMBERS CAN GIVE



Through your congregation



Text CHRISTMASJOY to 91999



www.pcusa.org/give/christmasjoy

If giving online,
members should provide the name
of their congregation so the church
will receive credit for their gifts.

4 PROMOTING CHRISTMAS JOY: DURING THE OFFERING

NOVEMBER

- ★ Display the Christmas Joy Offering poster in a prominent location, and feel free to order more if you need them!
- ★ Join us for *Between Two Pulpits* each week at 1:00 p.m. ET, where we discuss theology, mission and the Special Offerings. Each week features a special guest and includes ideas for promotion and engagement.
- ★ Use the pre-designed art and graphics found at www.pcusa.org/christmasjoy/resources in newsletters, bulletins or Facebook.
- ★ Make a promotional board or display! If you don't know where to begin, take a look at an idea from the Special Offerings team by visiting pcusa.org/cjo-display. You can also call 800-728-7228, ext. 5047, to speak with a staff member who can help you with ideas for your own promotional boards. Whether building on these ideas or coming up with your very own, remember to tag us on Facebook when you post pictures of your congregation's Christmas Joy display.
- ★ Use the children's curriculum in Sunday school. Available for download are a Children's Sermon, two lessons with activities, and ideas to connect worship and the congregation. Download these materials at pcusa.org/socurriculum.
- ★ Promote the Offering on your church's website, and share your promotional ideas with other congregations through your Facebook page. Please remember to tag us too to reach an even wider audience.
- ★ Remind your congregation about the Offering. Distribute coin boxes and promote the Offering through your church newsletter or other mailings. A ready-made newsletter article is available at pcusa.org/christmasjoy.
- ★ Enclose the Offering brochure/self-mailer envelope in your mailings as a giving opportunity for those who may be out of town when you receive the Offering.



A Gift Opens Doors poster

4 PROMOTING CHRISTMAS JOY: DURING THE OFFERING

DECEMBER

- ★ Place an insert in the Sunday bulletin every week. There are two inserts this year, so each insert can be used for two Sundays.



A Gift Opens Doors insert



The Perfect Gift insert

- ★ Ask individuals to present Minutes for Mission for three or four Sundays, including the Sunday when the Offering is received. The Minutes for Mission complement the stories in the bulletins, and can be found in this guide or downloaded from the website.
- ★ Put Offering envelopes in the pew racks or use the sample pastor letter on our website to mail along with an envelope to your members.
- ★ Visit the page 17 for a Christmas Eve Candle Lighting Service.
- ★ Use Offering materials during a worship service, potluck, zoom meeting, and/or other congregational gatherings.
- ★ On the Sunday your congregation receives the Offering, have the children share the art they created using the Christmas Joy curriculum. Visit pcusa.org/socurriculum for more information.
- ★ Receive the Christmas Joy Offering on December 19 or any time during the Advent or Christmas season.



"The generous people who give to Christmas Joy give us scholarships and the opportunity to continue our education in the United States," she said. "They have given us a lot of hope, and the realization that we can expect to be more."

Sarah Valentina Hernandez Solache
Graduate, Presbyterian Pan American School,
Kingsville, Texas
Student, Schreiner University, Kerrville, Texas

The Christmas Joy Offering helps Presbyterian Pan American School and other Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color prepare future leaders.

Read Sarah's story on page 15 of this guide.

5 PROMOTING CHRISTMAS JOY: AFTER THE OFFERING

Thank your congregation for participating in the Offering.

- ❖ Report to your congregation how much was received and which programs, schools, and colleges will receive gifts from the Offering.
- ❖ Throughout the year, remind your members they can contribute to the Offering at any time at pcusa.org/give/christmasjoy.
- ❖ Make your congregation's check payable to PC(U.S.A.). Send it through the normal receiving agency at your presbytery or synod. If your church does not have a receiving agency, the check can be sent to:

Mid Councils

Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
PO Box 643751
Pittsburgh, PA 15264-3751

Congregations

(through your normal receiving agency, usually the presbytery, or)
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
PO Box 643700
Pittsburgh, PA 15264-3700

- ❖ Share your stories with us! We'd love to hear the unique ways you promoted the Christmas Joy Offering, as well as any suggestions for us to improve your experience. Contact us via social media or email special.offerings@pcusa.org.

Stay Connected

Subscribe to the Special Offerings blog, "Like" the Special Offerings Facebook page, or follow Special Offerings on Twitter to stay up-to-date.

 BLOG | www.pcusa.org/blogs/weekly_offerings

 FACEBOOK | www.facebook.com/specialofferings

 TWITTER | www.twitter.com/pcusa_so

6 MINUTE FOR MISSION

A GIFT OPENS DOORS — PROVERBS 18:16 THE PERFECT GIFT

In the story of God, as we tell it, there is a barrier that exists between the Created world and its Creator. A wall. Sin, we say, separates us from God, and separation from God is unbearable.

And our story goes on to say that God, seeing that we had no hope in ourselves of getting over, or through or around what separates us, offered us a gift in Jesus Christ who opens a door — a door we could not open ourselves.

What a gift!

But the story goes on to say that Jesus is the *perfect* gift; not only opening a door but coming through it. Our story says God is with us.

In Jesus, God joined with humanity, pointing the way to the end of our separation. And in his life, death and resurrection, so our story of God goes, Jesus is the door, now standing open. The giving continues because God is with us, still — and always.

Because being with us is part of God's story, being with others is part of our call.

The Christmas Joy Offering opens doors of opportunity for the leaders who are shaped and supported through our gifts — doors that lead to hopeful futures for young people at Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color. Our gifts open doors that lead to relief for church workers and their families when emergency needs arise.

Proverbs, a book of wisdom sayings, states that it's a person's gift that opens doors. As we give generously to the Christmas Joy Offering, we seek to not only meet needs, but to meet people, to come through the door that generosity opens. We open the door to celebrate "God with us!" We open the door with each and every student who will soon inspire and lead the

world. We open the door with each and every church worker who helps us share God's story with the world.

The story of God, as we tell it, is not about a barrier, but about a gift. It's not about the separation, but about the gift of "being with." Please give generously to the Christmas Joy Offering, in celebration of God's perfect gift to us. Give because it brings us together, to open doors of relief and opportunity and to relationships that are part of God's story, a part of God's perfect gift to us.

Let us pray,

*God, with us,
we are grateful for
your perfect gift,
Jesus Christ.*

*May we learn,
through your open door to us,
to be open to others
and offer ourselves
to those in need.*

Amen.

6 MINUTE FOR MISSION

WHEN HOME IS A WORLD AWAY

At first, nothing about Stillman College reminded Johnykqua [Jon-e-kwa] Bevans and Rayondre [Ray-on-dray] (Ray) Roberts of their home on the tropical island of Grand Bahama: not Alabama, not the food, not their classmates and not the as-yet unfamiliar Presbyterian tradition in which the college is steeped.

But then there was the choir.

Stillman's nationally-renowned concert choir — and the college's president, Dr. Cynthia Warrick — were powerful draws, inviting Johnykqua and Ray to transcend the many differences between their contrasting cultures to claim the joy and promise of the music of their shared Christian heritage.

Stillman College, situated in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, was founded in 1876 by Presbyterians led by the Rev. Dr. Charles Allen Stillman, pastor of First Presbyterian Church of Tuscaloosa, to become a training school for African American ministers. Today, with its expanded mandate and mission, the college is "committed to fostering academic excellence, to providing opportunities for diverse populations, and to maintaining a strong tradition of preparing students for leadership and service by fostering experiential learning and community engagement designed to equip and empower Stillman's students and its constituents."

Our gifts to the Christmas Joy Offering help Stillman provide scholarships to its gifted and promising students.

Johnykqua said that she became even more grateful to the PC(USA) after Hurricane Dorian hit Grand Bahama late in the summer of 2019, devastating their island home. Both students lost family members in the disaster while they were away at school. They were embraced and supported by their classmates, faculty, staff and administration until they could return home to be with family, which the college made possible for them to do over Christmas.

When the college president became aware of the devastation affecting these students' families, she

contacted the Presbyterian Mission Agency. The agency responded with additional financial assistance to help cover costs not included in the students' scholarships. This assistance from PC(USA) has enabled Johnykqua and Ray to mature as young adults in the safety of the college as their families in Grand Bahama work to recover their stability after a first hit by the hurricane, then hit again by the pandemic.

"Thank you to the Presbyterian Church for coming to our aid," said Johnykqua.

Now both students are looking forward to the future. Their dreams are now more than possible thanks to the gifts of generous Presbyterians.

"I think a lot of people may not realize how many lives they can affect just by their support," Ray said. "It's a simple fact when they give students a scholarship, especially those students who are really in need, it's the best thing that could happen to them. It changes their lives."

Yes, indeed — our gifts can help change lives. And when we all do a little, it adds up to a lot.

Let us pray,

*God of expanding grace,
open the doors to relationships
that grow and
ministries that connect
in new places and in new ways.
May we expand,
not ourselves,
but our sense of community.*

Amen.

6 MINUTE FOR MISSION

A LITTLE EXTRA HELP TO KEEP THE HOME FIRES BURNING

Seems like in one way or another, Jack and Kate Eisel have always been busy putting out fires — unless they were building them.

The couple met fireside in 2009 at Zephyr Point Presbyterian Conference Center, where Kate was the conference manager, and Jack, a recently retired pastor, was volunteering in the maintenance department.

“Since our courtship developed through long talks in front of the fire during snowy winter nights,” recalled Kate, “sitting by a fire is very special to us.”

As for Jack, following a long, second career spent almost entirely in interim ministry, he was no stranger to fighting the frequent fires inherent in transitional situations. Throughout his career, Jack served 15 interim pastorates over 25 years, in 12 different presbyteries throughout the western U.S. There God used his gifts to help congregations navigate through challenging and often difficult times.

These days both Jack and Kate candidly admit that moving forward in their own post-retirement lives has required some careful planning — and maybe a little firefighting. Kate lost her job unexpectedly when she was not yet of retirement age, and the couple found themselves relying heavily on Jack’s modest assets.

“When we first retired, life was extremely restrictive,” Kate said. “I often had to ask myself, ‘Can I really go get that carton of milk right now?’ Jack’s Social Security and pension were very modest, so we still wondered how we were going to pay the bills and put food on the table.”

As a minister himself, as well as the son of a Presbyterian minister, Jack had always known that help was available through the Assistance Program of the Board of Pensions, a resource he occasionally commended to his colleagues. He just didn’t know that one day he might need that help.

Through the Assistance Program, supported by your gifts to the Christmas Joy Offering, the Eisels were able to receive an Income Supplement to help alleviate their financial burden.

“The PC(USA) long ago recognized the need to support those who served faithfully, ordained or otherwise, beyond their active service and into retirement,” said Lucas McCool, Assistance Program operations manager. “Stability in retirement can be a weight lifted and one that allows for retirees like Jack and Kate to live with emotional and financial flexibility.”

“Knowing the impact of the programs that the Christmas Joy Offering supports, it has always been important for me to promote the offering in the many churches I’ve served,” said Jack. “I’ve gotten to highlight the wonderful things the offering provides and to encourage people to participate in this extraordinary generosity. And now, years later, I have firsthand knowledge of what a life-changing difference it can make.”

For Jack and Kate, it helps to keep those cherished home fires burning.

Let us pray,

*Draw us near to the light of the manger,
generous God,
to see your perfect gift to us.*

*By your grace, stoke the fires
of our compassion
that all might know
the gift of your love.
Amen.*

6 MINUTE FOR MISSION

REACHING FOR THE STARS

For Sarah Valentina Hernandez Solache (SO-LA-CHAY), the colorful city of Zitácuaro (ZEE-TA-QUARO) in the highlands of Mexico — where millions of Monarch butterflies bathe the fields and forests in a sea of orange during their annual migration — was, and always will be, home. But, despite its beauty, Sarah readily admits that it simply wasn't a safe environment for her.

"I had an amazing childhood there," said Sarah, who was raised Presbyterian in her local church. "Mexico is beautiful, with the best climate and the best food ever. But it is also a really dangerous country."

The ongoing violence against young girls that terrorized her community while she was growing up was one of the primary reasons her parents decided to send her, like her older sister before her, to pursue her education in the U.S. at the Presbyterian Pan American School in Kingsville, Texas. Established in 1911, the school is an international, college-preparatory, boarding school related to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) that motivates and equips young people for lives of Christian leadership in the global community.

"We met the school thanks to our church, which has a relationship with Pan Am," Sarah said, referring to her alma mater by its common nickname. "They send scholarship award letters to people all over Mexico."

The experience was life-changing and transformative. Both sisters are now distinguished graduates of Pan Am. Sarah is a pre-med student on a full scholarship at Schreiner University in Kerrville, Texas, and her sister is a Houston-based architect.

"Coming to Pan Am and to this Christian community is where I actually found myself and my faith, and where I knew that I loved God," she said. "I found my blessing here."

Gifts to the Christmas Joy Offering help Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color, like Pan Am, prepare young people to become leaders in the Church and the world.

"The generous people who give to Christmas Joy give us scholarships and the opportunity to continue our education in the United States," she said. "I will always be grateful for that. But beyond that, they have also given us a lot of hope. All of the things I always dreamed about, thanks to them, they are making me feel like it can actually happen."

The president of Pan Am, Dr. Gordon A. Govens, states, "Through the sharing of the Christmas Joy Offering — and prayers — every student receives the gift of reaching his or her full potential." In other words, with our gifts to this offering, hope turns into dreams. Dreams turn into reality. And all of a sudden, those stars are within reach.

Please give generously. When we all do a little, it can add up to a lot.

Let us pray,

*Through your Son,
you open to us a door.
As we cross the threshold
into relationship with God
and with one another,
we rejoice and give thanks
for opportunities to live
as your people.
Amen.*

6 MINUTE FOR MISSION

FINDING THE RIGHT ROAD

Like many people, the Rev. Meg Shoeman needed time to find the right road, the right path for her life.

Meg, who earned her M.Div. from Pittsburgh Theological Seminary in 2007, candidly confessed that hers has been a “very long journey.” She left the ordination process after graduation and chose another career path because of the constitutional prohibition of gay and lesbian ordination.

“After graduation, I started working at an animal shelter,” she said. “I remember walking down the steps of the shelter one day and having this fleeting thought that church is a thing of my past. It was crushing.”

Not long after, Meg reentered the ordination process under care of Market Square Presbyterian Church in her hometown of Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, and interned at Penn State Health’s Hershey Medical Center. She later accepted a full-time call at Children’s Hospital of Alabama in Birmingham, to which she was ordained in 2018.

Although the position was a great fit, the culture wasn’t. A little more than a year later, Meg decided to return to Harrisburg.

“I came back with the idea of seeking a call,” she said, “but it didn’t happen. COVID happened. Just to make some money, I was working part-time at a coffee shop, and also in a temporary pastoral position at the Market Square Church. When COVID shut the coffee shop down and I didn’t have my normal source of income, that’s when I knew I really needed some financial help.”

The Rev. Cheryl Galan, interim executive presbyter for the Presbytery of Carlisle, was standing by. “When I learned that Meg was struggling financially, I could not imagine the stress she was under. I thought immediately of the Assistance Program of the Board of Pensions. Her circumstances made her an ideal candidate for an Emergency Assistance Grant.”

Now that the pressure on Meg to meet her basic living expenses has been alleviated, she intends to focus on discerning her next call.

Throughout her journey, Meg said that in addition to her presbytery’s active support and encouragement, the “Merton Prayer” by Thomas Merton has also helped to keep her centered. In the prayer, Merton confessed to having no idea where he was going but knowing that God would lead him by the right road.

Thanks, in large part, to the Christmas Joy Offering, Meg believes she is now on that road — the right road.

“I am grateful for the generosity of Presbyterians, whose Christmas Joy offerings make it possible to provide support and sustenance to those like Meg, whom God has called,” said presbytery’s interim executive. “Such gifts bring essential peace of mind and demonstrate our gratitude for God’s gift, in the Christ child.”

Please give generously to the Christmas Joy Offering, for when we all do a little — it adds up to a lot.

Let us pray,

*Make the way plain
that leads to your help,
O God.
Open the doors of hope
in our lives.
Amen.*

7 SUGGESTED LITANY FOR A CHRISTMAS EVE CANDLELIGHTING SERVICE

ZAC CAIN



Some congregations receive the Christmas Joy Offering in the context of a candlelighting service. Whether or not that is your congregation's practice, you may find the following litany a helpful resource as you celebrate this season in your faith community.

Leader: In the beginning and in the midst of darkness, God spoke.

All: **Let there be light.**

Leader: In the beginning was the Word. And the Word came and dwelt among us.
And the Word was the light of all peoples.

All: **Let there be light.**

Leader: We light our candles, knowing that the One who is the source and
promise of all light is the One whose birth we celebrate.

All: **Let there be light.**

Leader: We are here to seek a little light by which we can see, by which we can live, by which we can
love.

All: **Let there be light.**

Leader: We need to know that we are part of something greater than the flicker of our own little candles.
We long to be assured that the light of Christ is with us even in the moment.

All: **Let there be light.**

Leader: So we light our candles in gratitude for the love and light that shine through the babe born in
Bethlehem who became the Redeemer of us all.

All: **Let there be light.**

Leader: May we be so emboldened as to share the love of God with a world longing for light and hope,
purpose, and love. May our actions and generosity shine in a world under the shadow of despair.

All: **Let there be light.**

Leader: We join the chorus of those whose carols have echoed through the years—
“O come to us, abide in us, our Lord, Emmanuel.”

All: **Let there be light.**

JOYFUL SHARING

Did you Know?

- ❖ The Christmas Joy Offering has been a cherished Presbyterian tradition since the 1930s.
- ❖ The Offering distributes gifts equally to the Assistance Program of the Board of Pensions and to Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color.
- ❖ The Assistance Program provides critical financial support to church workers and their families.
- ❖ Presbyterian-related schools and colleges provide education and leadership development while nurturing racial and ethnic heritage. This has been a Presbyterian commitment for nearly 140 years.

Thank you for your support of the Christmas Joy Offering!

Text CHRISTMASJOY to 91999
to give to the Christmas Joy Offering
or visit pcusa.org/christmasjoy
for more information.



2021 CHRISTMAS JOY OFFERING ORDER FORM

If you find you need additional copies of resources...

- ✳ Contact PC(USA) Store at **800-533-4371** between 9:00 am – 5:00 pm EST
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- ✳ Mail this form to
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- ✳ Download at pcusa.org/christmasjoy

ALL CHRISTMAS JOY MATERIALS ARE FREE
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QTY.	PDS#	UOM	ITEM	PRICE
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	12136-21-301	Each	Poster	
	12136-21-302	Each	Leader's Guide	
	12136-21-304	P25	Brochure/Mailer	
	12136-21-305	P25	Bulletin Inserts – <i>A Gift Opens Doors</i>	
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	12136-21-310	P50	8.5"x11" Bulletin Covers	\$4.00
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	12136-21-336	P25	Bulletin Inserts – <i>El Regalo Perfecto</i>	
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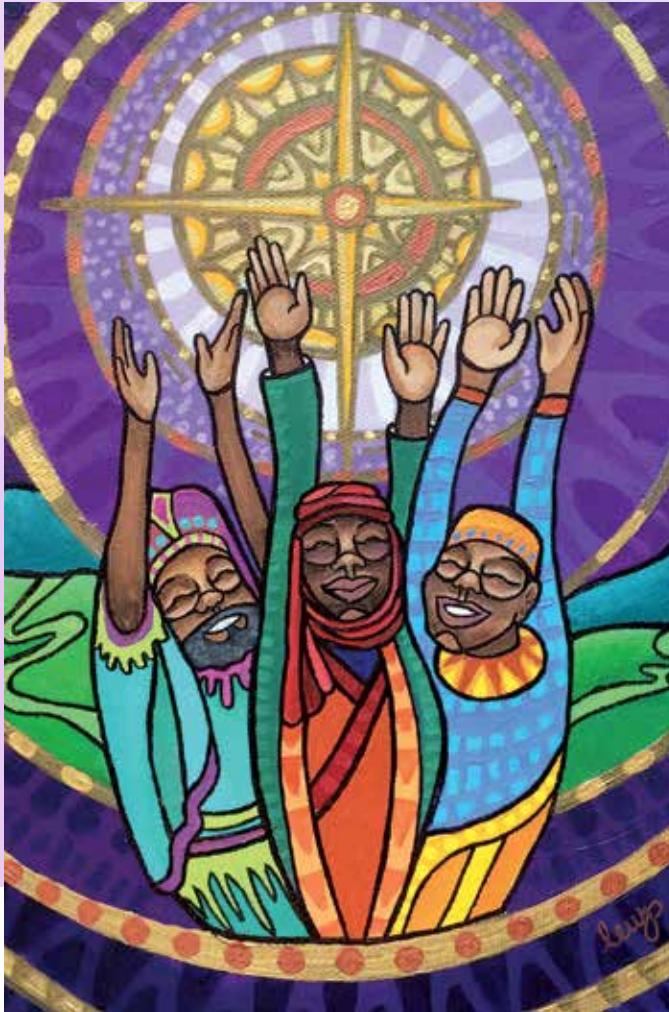
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Thank you
for your support
of the
Christmas Joy
Offering.

**IF WE ALL DO A LITTLE,
IT ADDS UP TO A LOT!**

QUESTIONS?

Feel free to contact us at **800-728-7228, ext. 5047**
or email **special.offerings@pcusa.org**.
PC(USA) Office of Special Offerings
100 Witherspoon Street
Louisville, KY 40202



Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
Presbyterian Mission

The Christmas Joy Offering is one of four annual special offerings. The four church-wide Special Offerings of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) — One Great Hour of Sharing, Pentecost Offering, Peace & Global Witness Offering, and Christmas Joy Offering — play an important role in defining what it means to be a connectional church. Over the years these offerings have provided ways for individuals and congregations to join together with each other and in partnership with other Christians in responding to a variety of concerns; and offer opportunities for partnership, learning, and witness that profoundly affect the life of the church as a collective witness to Jesus Christ's love for the whole church.