



# CHRISTMAS JOY SPECIAL OFFERINGS

LEADERSHIP: PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

# Prepare the Way

ISAIAH 40



THE PERFECT GIFT.



MATTHEW 25



2024

LEADER'S GUIDE  
DECEMBER 1-22

# Prepare the Way

ISAIAH 40

## THE PERFECT GIFT

The prophet Isaiah gives those listening to him a very particular task to prepare the way for the coming Messiah, the person we know as Jesus. Isaiah proclaims that to prepare the way is to make highways easily navigable, fill in valleys, flatten hills, level the ground, make the earth smooth. Then, and only then, will God's glory be revealed, and this will cause all humanity to see that God has spoken to us.

Your gifts to the Christmas Joy Offering combine with gifts from thousands of congregations throughout our denomination to do our part to repair the world and to ensure our siblings have the tools they need to flourish. Your gifts prepare the way for the God we know in Jesus Christ, the child whose birth we celebrate.

*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.

### QUESTIONS?

You're always welcome to contact us!

#### CHRISTMAS JOY OFFERING

800-728-7228, Ext. 5047  
[special.offerings@pcusa.org](mailto:special.offerings@pcusa.org)  
[pcusa.org/christmasjoy](http://pcusa.org/christmasjoy)

#### SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES EQUIPPING COMMUNITIES OF COLOR

[rewim@pcusa.org](mailto:rewim@pcusa.org)  
[pcusa.org/scecc](http://pcusa.org/scecc)

#### BOARD OF PENSIONS

Ruth Adams  
215-587-7295  
[radams@pensions.org](mailto:radams@pensions.org)  
[pensions.org](http://pensions.org)

#### STANDING ORDERS

Customer Service  
800-541-5113  
[customer\\_service@presbypub.com](mailto: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](http://pcusa.org/blogs/weekly_offerings)

 FACEBOOK | [facebook.com/specialofferings](https://facebook.com/specialofferings)

 INSTAGRAM | [instagram.com/special\\_offerings](https://instagram.com/special_offerings)

## 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.

### CONTENTS

- |  |  |         |
|--|--|---------|
| <b>1</b>                                     | Our Gifts at Work<br>Supporting Our Past and Present Leaders | page 6  |
| <b>2</b>                                     | Our Gifts at Work<br>Preparing the Way for Future Leaders    | page 7  |
| Using the Leader's Guide Makes Things Simple |  |         |
| <b>3</b>                                     | Promoting Christmas Joy: Before the Offering                 | page 8  |
| <b>4</b>                                     | Promoting Christmas Joy: During the Offering                 | page 9  |
| <b>5</b>                                     | Promoting Christmas Joy: After the Offering                  | page 11 |
| <b>6</b>                                     | Minutes for Mission  | page 12 |
| <b>7</b>                                     | Suggested Litany for a Christmas Eve Candlelighting Service  | page 17 |
| <b>8</b>                                     | Resources Order Form   | page 19 |

 Interested in an electronic version of the Leader's Guide?  
Find it at [pcusa.org/christmas-joy-leaders-guide](https://pcusa.org/christmas-joy-leaders-guide)





**CHRISTMAS JOY**  
SPECIAL OFFERINGS  
LEADERSHIP: PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

HELPING HEARTS

## THE PERFECT GIFT

When Jesus was born among us, he came as a helpless baby destined to bring joy, peace and salvation to his people. This child, God’s Word made flesh — fully human and fully God — became one of us. One with us. One among us. In all of our vulnerabilities, struggles and triumphs, Jesus became one of us —leading us, knowing us, connecting us to himself and to each other, and offering us his gift of eternal life.

*The perfect gift.*

Through the Christmas Joy Offering, we reflect God’s perfect gift to us, with generous support of church leaders among us — past, present and future — who have pointed us to God.

We honor and celebrate leaders like retired pastors, church workers and their families who have faithfully guided and led us but who now find themselves in critical financial need. We honor and celebrate emerging leaders like students in schools and colleges equipping communities of color, who develop leadership skills as they pursue their education and prepare to bring their gifts in service to the world God loves so much.

Jesus’ example as a child born to be among us and lead us to eternal life provides a pattern for us to follow as we celebrate those who have led us in the past and will lead us into the future. Through the Christmas Joy Offering, we come together to support past, present and future leaders, embodying God’s perfect gift to us, Jesus Christ.

## ✦ 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 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](https://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](mailto:special.offerings@pcusa.org).



# 1 OUR GIFTS AT WORK:

## SUPPORTING OUR PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE LEADERS

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 the 2023 Offering 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 275 individual recipients, assisting retired church workers and surviving spouses with the means to provide for themselves.
- ✦ Housing supplements from the BOP helped more than 218 individual recipients remain in their homes, afford assisted living, or long-term care.
- ✦ Emergency Assistance Grants from the BOP helped more than 215 individual recipients 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](http://pensions.org)

*"It's a great cloud of witnesses that I think about. People who I don't know or never will meet who gave generously to the Christmas Joy Offering to help support people like me."*

**Jenni Whitford**  
Director of Congregational Faith Formation,  
First Presbyterian, Granville, Ohio

*Read Jenni's story on page 14 of this guide.*



## 2 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.

- ✦ More than \$800,000 of gifts from 2023 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](http://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](http://niche.com))

Presbyterian Pan American School, Kingsville, TX  
[ppas.org](http://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](http://stillman.edu)

- Stillman has been selected a College of Distinction since 2019 for Christian Education, Teacher Education, Support of the Military and Veteran Students, Preparing Business Leaders, and Equity and Inclusion ([collegesofdistinction.com/school/stillman-college](http://collegesofdistinction.com/school/stillman-college)).
- Stillman's student population is 87% first generation in college.



*"I am completely thankful to everyone who has donated to the Christmas Joy Offering. I hope more people have the opportunity to grow as I have grown, not only in knowledge but also in faith."*

**Isabella Perez, student  
Presbyterian Pan American School  
Kingsville, Texas**

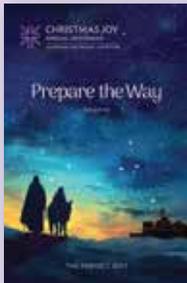
*Read Isabella's story on  
page 13 of this guide.*

### 3 PROMOTING CHRISTMAS JOY: BEFORE THE OFFERING

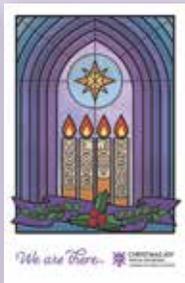
#### SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER

Ask the session to set a date to receive the Christmas Joy Offering. This is traditionally received on the Sunday before Christmas, December 22, 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](http://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](mailto:customer_service@presbypub.com) or calling 800-533-4371.
- ✦ Begin planning events around the theme: *Prepare the Way*. 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).



Prepare the Way insert



We are Here insert



Offering Envelope

Visit

[PCUSA.ORG/CHRISTMASJOY](http://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 inserts



**WAYS YOUR  
MEMBERS  
CAN GIVE**



Through your congregation



Text CHRISTMASJOY to 91999



[pcusa.org/give/christmasjoy](http://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!
- ✦ Use the pre-designed art and graphics found at [www.pcusa.org/christmasjoy](http://www.pcusa.org/christmasjoy) 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](http://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](http://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 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](http://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.



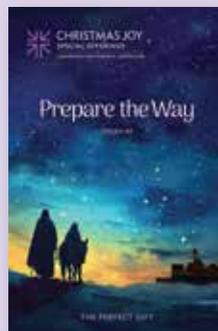
Prepare the Way poster

## 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.

✦ 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.



Prepare the Way insert



We are There insert

✦ 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.

✦ Receive the Christmas Joy Offering on December 22 or any time during the Advent or Christmas season.



*"I was so very thankful for the work of Christmas Joy and for the generosity of our denomination. I think it's important to give to the Christmas Joy Offering because it continues to affirm pastoral leadership and leadership of those serving the Church."*

**Rev. Dr. Judi McMillan**  
Presbyterian Church  
of Bella Vista, Arkansas

*Read Judi's story on page 16 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](https://pcusa.org/give/christmasjoy).
- ✦ Make your congregation's check payable to PC(USA). 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](mailto:special.offerings@pcusa.org).

### *Stay Connected*

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

 BLOG | [pcusa.org/blogs/weekly\\_offerings](https://pcusa.org/blogs/weekly_offerings)

 FACEBOOK | [facebook.com/specialofferings](https://facebook.com/specialofferings)

 INSTAGRAM | [instagram.com/special\\_offerings](https://instagram.com/special_offerings)

## 6 MINUTE FOR MISSION

### PREPARE THE WAY: THE PERFECT GIFT — ISAIAH 40

Where have you seen hope recently?

We see hope in the faces of each of us gathered here in worship. We feel hope through signs of mercy and grace shown to those in our communities during this busy season. We show hope through acts of loving kindness. We know of hope in the face of a child or an elder whom we love and trust. We trust in the hope of the Christ Child, for whom we prepare a way so he can prepare a way for us to know the fullness of God's love.

There is hope all around us while we wait during this season of Advent.

Every year, the Christmas Joy Offering, one of the four churchwide Special Offerings of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), combines thousands of congregations' gifts to bring hope through education and emergency assistance.

Three Presbyterian-related schools that equip communities of color — Menaul School in Albuquerque, New Mexico; Presbyterian Pan American School in Kingsville, Texas; and Stillman College in Tuscaloosa, Alabama — provide a transformative education for students all around the globe. These jewels in the Presbyterian crown prepare the way for students from every walk of life to be active, compassionate and informed citizens of the world. Beyond their schoolwork, these students live together in a supportive intentional community where they prepare the way for one another through acts of generosity, mission and service. In their lives together, students experience the love of Christ that we all meet anew at Christmas.

Like the schools and colleges that equip communities of color, the Assistance Program of the Board of Pensions prepares a way of peace and flourishing for church workers in times of financial crisis. This program provides life-giving and critical assistance in the most tender moments of church

workers' lives, like health or housing instability. The prophet Isaiah tells us that God is a bringer of comfort as we make the paths straight by offering food to the hungry and satisfying the needs of the afflicted. Jesus, the Light of the World, brings hope, so we can do just that through our receipt of the Christmas Joy Offering to support this vital assistance program.

Our gifts to the Christmas Joy Offering make all of this preparation possible. These gifts will combine with others from congregations throughout our denomination to do our part to repair the world and ensure that every person — whether they be a high schooler, college student or church worker — has the tools they need to flourish. Your gifts prepare the way for the God we know in Jesus Christ, the child whose birth we will celebrate soon. Thank you for all the ways that you give.

*Let us pray,*

*O God,  
may that little child  
born in the manger  
show us your ways of peace  
this day and every day  
as we prepare the way  
for his reign  
in our world once more.  
In his name, we pray,  
**Amen.***

## 6 MINUTE FOR MISSION

### CALLED TO BE 'GOD'S HANDS IN THE WORLD'

Isabella Pérez Sanchez has always believed in miracles.

The 18-year-old high school senior, who was raised primarily by her mother and stepfather in a Christian household in Bogotá, Colombia, had always found that everything came so easily to her, she knew it must be a “God thing.”

Yet the one thing that, at first, didn't seem so easy was Isabella's lifelong dream of attending high school and college in the United States. But when the Presbyterian-related Colegio Americano de Bogotá, or the American School of Bogota, where Pérez was a student at the time, told her about their partnership with the Presbyterian Pan American School in Kingsville, Texas, the way seemed clear.

Everything lined up easily, and even though it was hard for her and her mom to let each other go, they both kept saying that this was God telling them, “This is my plan for you.”

The Presbyterian Pan American School is an international, college-preparatory, boarding school related to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Established in 1911, the school motivates and equips young people for lives of Christian leadership in the global community and is supported by gifts to the Christmas Joy Offering.

A cherished Presbyterian tradition since the 1930s, the annual offering distributes gifts equally to Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color and the Assistance Program of the Board of Pensions.

Once Pérez arrived on campus, she thrived. Yet in 2019, Isabella, an aspiring doctor, encountered the greatest challenge of her young life.

It was a Sunday morning, and she was coming out of church when she had the strongest pain she'd ever felt and was taken to a hospital immediately.

Diagnosed with an abnormal tangle of blood vessels that irregularly connects arteries and veins, disrupting blood flow and oxygen circulation, she underwent brain surgery and spent nearly two months in the intensive care unit.

“That was when I realized I had a personal relationship with God,” said Isabella. “That was when I received my calling for life, which is to help others and to be God's hands in the world.”

Today, more than five years later, she is completely and miraculously healed.

Isabella shares, “After my brain surgery, God gave me a second life opportunity and said I should use my hands to help other people. I am completely thankful to everyone who has donated to the Christmas Joy Offering. I hope more people have the opportunity to grow as I have grown, not only in knowledge but also in faith.”

Please give what you can to the Christmas Joy Offering to help more students like Isabella achieve their dreams — for when we all do a little, it adds up to a lot.

*Let us pray,*

*God, thank you*

*for students like Isabella  
as they grow into the fullness  
of who you created them to be.*

*May our gifts be used to ensure  
that all people are given the gift  
of education as we all strive to  
be your hands in the world.*

*In the name of Jesus, we pray,*

**Amen.**

## 6 MINUTE FOR MISSION

### THE GIFT OF PEACE IN A SEASON OF UPHEAVAL

A single phone call nearly 20 years ago turned Jenni Whitford's whole world upside down.

Jenni, who was then serving as a Christian educator at First Presbyterian Church in Jackson, Michigan, came home from a session meeting and got a call that her husband, Ken, had collapsed. She was asked to come to the hospital right away. When they arrived at the hospital, Jenni and her two children, ages 9 and 12, learned that their dear husband and father had died of an aortic aneurysm.

When someone dies, so much starts happening all at once. Jenni learned that their medical insurance, which was carried by her husband, was only paid through the end of the month. Her children would need immunizations and healthy child check-ups, and COBRA was incredibly expensive.

Her pastor was immediately by her side to offer both comfort and counsel. The Rev. Jim Hegedus (HEY-geh-duz), an honorably retired member of Lake Michigan Presbytery and the former pastor at First Presbyterian, recommended to Jenni that the Christmas Joy Offering was there to help church workers in times of need.

Facing such a huge financial challenge at a time of "chaos, upheaval and huge emotions," Jenni found the support she needed through the Assistance Program of the Board of Pensions. In partnership with Lake Michigan Presbytery, they granted her immediate, emergency assistance by covering the family's medical premiums for two years.

The generous support that she received was made possible, in part, by the annual Christmas Joy Offering, which distributes gifts equally to the Assistance Program and to Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color.

Since November 2022, Jenni has served as the director for Congregational Faith Formation at First

Presbyterian Church in Granville, Ohio. And although she said that "life is pretty much normal" for her now, having the peace of mind that the Offering provided her then was lifesaving.

"It's that great cloud of witnesses that I think about," she says today. "People who I don't know or never will meet who gave generously to the Christmas Joy Offering to help support people like me."

Jenni has shared her story several times at both congregations where she has worked and at a meeting at Scioto Valley Presbytery. She wants people to know the help is there for them like it was for her.

By sharing her story, Jenni is helping prepare for way for other church workers who may need help in their own time of crisis. And we can help, too. Please give what you can to our Christmas Joy Offering — for as Jenni knows, and we all know, when we all do a little, it adds up to a lot.

*Let us pray,*

*God, we know you  
are present with us  
in life's most tender moments.*

*We pray today for all  
church workers facing  
immense challenge and struggle.*

*May our gifts, combined with  
so many others,  
help many know the peace  
only you provide.*

*In Jesus' name,*

**Amen.**

## 6 MINUTE FOR MISSION

### CHANGEMAKERS PREPARE THE WAY

Sitting next to a picture on the wall at her office, LaTrell Clifford Wood accidentally discovered a significant piece of her family's history.

The picture had a name on it: Chief Justice McClellan, who presided over the Supreme Court of Alabama when the 1901 Constitution was written. LaTrell shares, "That was the constitution that made a lot of broad statements about the forced illiteracy and alleged moral depravity of many Black people as 'justification' for them not being permitted to vote. It was McClellan's family who owned my great-great-grandfather's mother. These weren't stories that I knew growing up."

But now she does.

LaTrell was an honors history major and the valedictorian of the Class of 2020 at Stillman College in Tuscaloosa. Stillman is one of three Presbyterian-related Schools and Colleges Equipping Communities of Color of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and a Historically Black College and University (HBCU).

She started out as a business and fine arts major but was drawn to history and its practical application as an aspiring scholar, leader and social justice advocate. Her many achievements at Stillman include co-founding the college's Sustainable Healthy Food Initiative Task Force and serving as task force chair as well as project lead for the Community Garden Project.

Not long after graduating, she found her way to Washington, D.C., with the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation, where she served Alabama's 7th Congressional District as a congressional intern. Then, in 2023, LaTrell accepted a position as a hunger policy advocate for Alabama Arise, a statewide, member-led organization advancing public policies to improve the lives of Alabamians who are marginalized by poverty, truly carrying

"The Stillman Way" of the pursuit of intellectual excellence, the development of personal honor and a commitment to the common good into the world.

She was taught that education is how you are able to take care of yourself. But her ideologies have matured with the understanding that caring for yourself and others — by promoting workers' rights, equity and workplace wellness — can help change the world.

Providing such promising students as LaTrell with the support and resources they need to thrive is what the PC(USA)'s Christmas Joy Offering is all about. The annual offering distributes gifts equally to Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color and to the Assistance Program of the Board of Pensions.

"I see the Christmas Joy Offering as a way to support restorative justice," said LaTrell.

Gifts to the Offering prepare the way for the future leaders like LaTrell. Please give what you can, for when we all do a little, it adds up to a lot!

*Let us pray,*

*O God, we give you thanks  
for all those who teach and lead.  
May your Holy Spirit move all of us  
closer to the justice and peace  
only you provide  
as we humbly work with you  
to enliven a world in the way  
of your Son, Jesus the Christ.*

**Amen.**

## 6 MINUTE FOR MISSION

### A PRESBYTERIAN SAFETY NET IN TIMES OF HARDSHIP

If tears are a gift of the Spirit, then the Rev. Dr. Judi McMillan has been blessed. Even if some of those tears have been other than joyful.

What began 20 years ago with tears of happiness when she relocated from Nebraska to Michigan to accept a call as an associate minister didn't end as auspiciously as it had started. A few years into her ministry, it became clear that her position wasn't working out, and she left the congregation.

Judi shares that that season was a really hard time. She had been between calls before and now found herself in the situation where she was the sole person providing for her kids with a mortgage.

She reinvented herself by working in a flower shop while being enrolled in interim ministry training. In the meantime, she budgeted out how long her funds would last to pay her mortgage. It was the four most stressful months she'd ever had financially.

Judi called a pastor friend from her clergywomen's group, and when she told her she was struggling, they met for lunch. "It was one of those times when you feel safe enough with someone that you just cry," Judi said. "I remember crying and saying to her, 'I'm doing everything I can.'"

After they had prayed together, her friend and clergy colleague told her that the Christmas Joy Offering could help. Judi recalled, "As a pastor, I knew about the Offering, but I didn't know it was really for my situation." It was inspiring to discover how the community of faith is there when people need a bit of help.

The "bit of help" that Judi needed came through the Assistance Program of the Board of Pensions, which is supported by gifts to the Christmas Joy Offering. She received a grant that helped in her last month without a call. The Offering also supports Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color.

After Judi emerged from the worst of her financial stress, she received a call to become the interim pastor of First Presbyterian Church of Royal Oak, Michigan.

Judi wants the Church to see how the gifts of generous Presbyterians have helped prepare the way for her. After several positions in interim ministry, Judi is now pastor of the Presbyterian Church of Bella Vista in Arkansas and has shared her testimony openly with her current congregation.

She says, "I think it's important to give to the Christmas Joy Offering because it continues to affirm pastoral leadership and leadership of those serving the Church. And since we can't always predict when we might need financial assistance, knowing that there's a safety net there is both lived grace and love."

Share the love! Please give what you can to the Christmas Joy Offering. For as we always say, when we all do a little, it adds up to a lot.

*Let us pray,*

*Gracious God,  
may we, by your Holy Spirit,  
share love through our gifts.*

*Take the gifts we will receive  
and help others flourish  
through our giving.*

*In Jesus' name,*

**Amen.**



## 7 SUGGESTED LITANY FOR A CHRISTMAS EVE CANDLELIGHTING SERVICE

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!



**CHRISTMAS JOY**  
SPECIAL OFFERINGS

LEADERSHIP: PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

Text **CHRISTMASJOY** to 91999  
to give to the Christmas Joy Offering  
or visit [pcusa.org/christmasjoy](http://pcusa.org/christmasjoy) for more information.

## 2024 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

✦ Email [customer\\_service@presbypub.com](mailto:customer_service@presbypub.com)

✦ Fax this order form to 800-541-5113

✦ Mail this form to  
Presbyterian Customer Service,  
100 Witherspoon Street, Louisville, KY 40202.

✦ Download at [pcusa.org/christmasjoy](http://pcusa.org/christmasjoy)

**ALL CHRISTMAS JOY MATERIALS ARE FREE**  
unless otherwise noted.

QTY.	PDS#	UOM	ITEM	PRICE
<b>ENGLISH RESOURCES</b>				
	12136-24-301	Each	Poster	
	12136-24-302	Each	Leader's Guide	
	12136-24-304	Pack 25	Brochure/Mailer	
	12136-24-305	Pack 25	Bulletin Inserts – <i>Prepare the Way</i>	
	12136-24-306	Pack 25	Bulletin Inserts – <i>We are there</i>	
	12136-24-310	Pack 50	8.5"x11" Bulletin Covers	\$4.00
	12136-24-311	Pack 50	8.5"x14" Bulletin Covers	\$4.00
	12136-23-375	Pack 25	Offering Envelopes	
	12136-11-365	Pack 25	Children's Coin Box	
<b>SPANISH RESOURCES</b>				
	12136-24-331	Each	Poster	
	12136-24-335	Pack 25	Bulletin Inserts – <i>Preparen el camino</i>	
	12136-24-336	Pack 25	Bulletin Inserts – <i>Estamos ahí</i>	
	12136-24-352	Pack 25	Offering Envelopes	
<b>KOREAN RESOURCES</b>				
	12136-24-341	Each	Poster	
	12136-24-345	Pack 25	Bulletin Inserts – 여호와의 길을 예비하라	
	12136-24-346	Pack 25	Bulletin Inserts – 우리가 함께합니다	
	12136-24-351	Pack 25	Offering Envelopes	

If you are only ordering Christmas Joy Offering materials, then no sales tax or billing details are required.

However, if you are adding Bulletin Covers or other cost items, sales tax and billing info are needed. Please add appropriate sales tax for orders being shipped to CA, DC, KY, NY and PA.

**Note:** All orders will be shipped by the most efficient method as determined by our distribution center. Any special handling charges will be billed to the recipient.

**SHIP TO:**

THIS IS A:  CHURCH ADDRESS  PERSONAL ADDRESS

CHURCH: \_\_\_\_\_

ATTENTION: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY: \_\_\_\_\_ STATE: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP CODE: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_ PIN/CUSTOMER I.D.#\*: \_\_\_\_\_

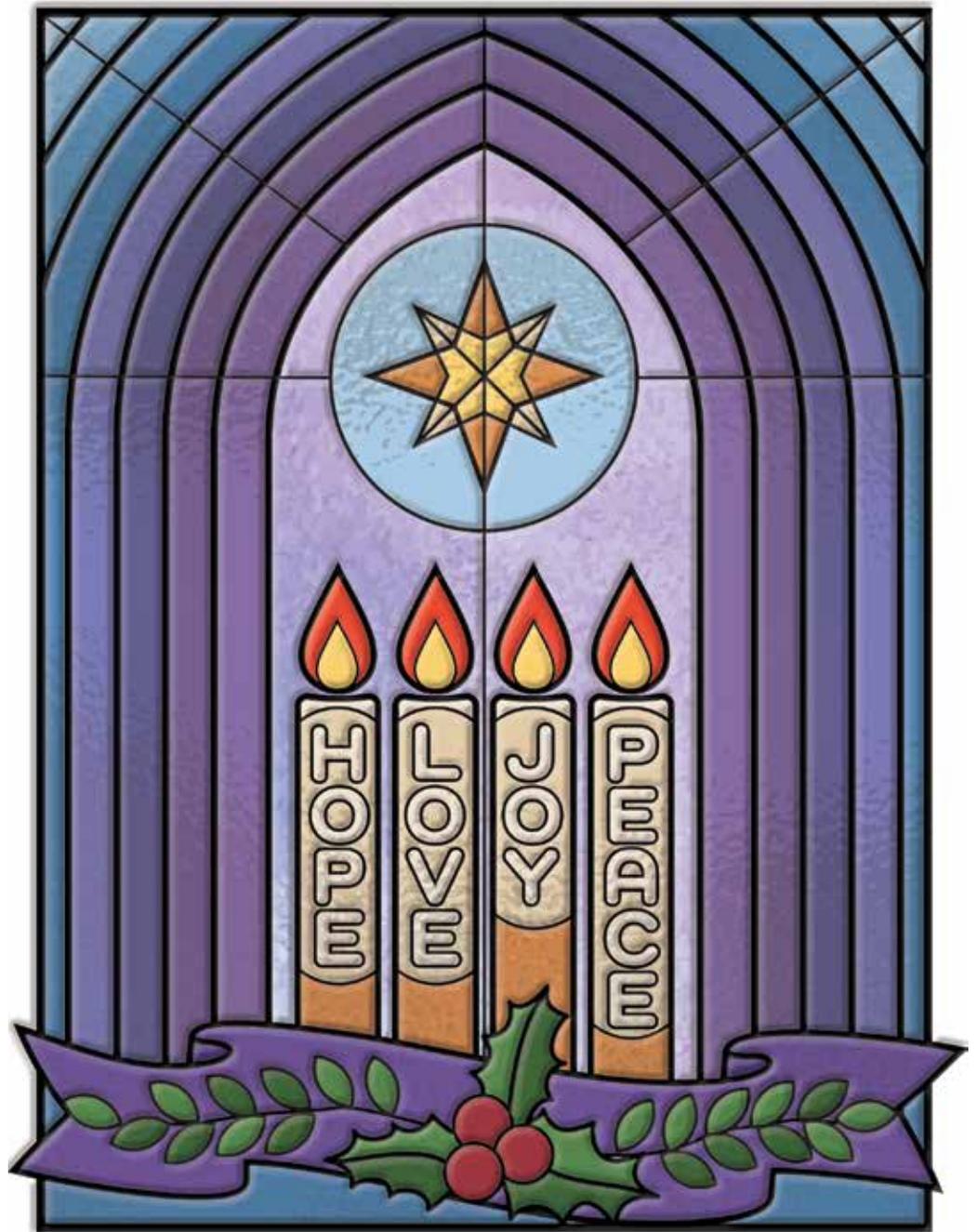
\*Permanent Identification Number. See General Assembly Statistics Book.

Bill me (shipping and handling will be included). We will bill to listed shipping address unless told differently.

Check or money order enclosed (include 10 percent of the order total for priced items: \$7.50 minimum, \$65 maximum).

*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](mailto:special.offerings@pcusa.org).

PC(USA) Office of Special Offerings  
100 Witherspoon Street  
Louisville, KY 40202



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.