

MINUTE FOR MISSION

THE PERFECT GIFT

Every generous act of giving ... is from above. — JAMES 1:17

In the lead up to Christmas, many of us spend time in search of the perfect gift — the gift that communicates to friends and family how much we know and love them. We search our memories for indications of what gift might cause the faces of our loved ones to light up on Christmas morning. We scour the stores and shops, hoping to come across the thing that will communicate a depth that our words cannot.

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. At the Incarnation, we celebrate God who came to dwell among us, bringing light into darkness, and reconciliation to God and to one another. A perfect gift from a gracious God. Although we cannot give the perfect gift, we can give generously, knowing, as the New Testament letter of James says, “every generous act of giving ... is from above.” And, as important as gifts to loved ones are, the Church rejoices and gives in special ways, drawing us back, again and again, to a manger scene with bowed shepherds and joyous angels, and the truth of God’s perfect gift to us.

During the Advent and Christmas season, the Church’s response to God’s generosity takes on the very character of our Savior. Jesus came to lead God’s people, pointing to God through love and justice, peace and compassion, forgiveness and humility. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) reflects God’s gift to us, through the Christmas Joy Offering, with generous gifts supporting church leaders among us, retired, present and future, who have pointed us to God. For church workers in need of financial help, whether due to declining health or a catastrophic event, such as the Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico, Christmas Joy provides for those needs through the Assistance Program of the Board of Pensions. Even as we support our current and former church leaders, God is calling new leaders for our Church and world, through the ministry of Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color. For students receiving scholarships and support at Menaul and Presbyterian Pan American

secondary schools, and Stillman College, a Historically Black College, the generosity of Presbyterians means a brighter future and enhanced opportunities to use their talents and skills to serve God, the Church and the world for years to come.

We can never match God's perfect gift in Jesus, but through the Christmas Joy Offering, we can testify to who we have known God to be. Our perfect gift comes from above. Our gifts reflect our generous God. Our gifts support leaders in our Church and world — past, present and future.

Let us pray,

*Jesus Christ, you are the perfect gift,
given to lead us in the ways of
redemption and peace.*

You pointed us to God with your life.

*We celebrate with the gift of our lives
and support for our leaders, past,
present and future.*

*May those who lead your Church point
us always to you, and to your ways of
joy, hope, love and peace.*

Amen.