



Moderator Musings

From Trudi Nelson

SIMPLY CHRISTMAS

By Roxanne J. Ferguson

If I lived in a place away from the throng
With Christmas not celebrated, not even in song...
With no stores to shop in, no gifts to wrap,
No cards to send, with no friends to chat...
If I had no tree to decorate
Or Christmas cookies I had to bake...
If I had no choir in which to sing,
If I had no last minute anything...
What would I do to celebrate the day
When our Savior was born and laid in the hay?
The quiet around me, I'd think about Him,
The Babe born long ago in Bethlehem.
In the still of the night, the only sound I'd hear
Would be the angel choir of yesteryear.
My surroundings so plain, no gift would I bring,
But only my heart to the newborn King.
My fellowship would be with the Lord alone.
I'd worship Him in this humble home.
I think I would find in this simple way,
The most joyous, wonderful Christmas Day.

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Dates to Remember

- Saturday, April 27: PW Spring Gathering at Brookings.
- June 20-23: PW Synod Gathering at Gateway Hotel & Conference Center in Ames, Iowa.
- Fall 2019: USA Mission Experience in the Synod of the Northeast.

Looking Ahead

WHAT:	PW PRESBYTERY SPRING GATHERING
THEME:	<i>FROM THE BELIEVER'S HEART</i>
WHERE:	FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, BROOKINGS
WHEN:	SATURDAY, APRIL 27, 2019
LEADER:	REV. NINA WESTFALL WILL LEAD THE WORSHIP SERVICE WITH COMMUNION
MISSION SPEAKERS:	LINDA BARNETT/PRESBYTERIAN DISASTER ASSISTANCE NINA WESTFALL/MISSION IN NEPAL
REGISTRATION:	\$15.00 – INCLUDES LUNCH / PROGRAMS / SNACKS

Searching.....Searching.....Searching

Presbyterian Women in the Presbytery are searching for new leaders. The positions open are:

- Moderator
- Mission-Justice-Peace
- Spiritual Growth
- Search

If you would like to volunteer or want to know more about each position, please contact current Moderator Trudi Nelson or a member of Search: Diane Helin, Vicky Wahl or Paula Zavits.

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It is an opportunity for **Presbyterian Women** to answer our call to our church and society; to commit ourselves to God and to one another; and to celebrate the bonds that unite us.

This year we celebrate 30 years of Presbyterian Women, and 30 years of being faithful to our **PW Purpose**:

*Forgiven and freed by God in Jesus Christ,
And empowered by the Holy Spirit,
we commit ourselves:*

**to nurture our faith through prayer
and Bible study,*

**to support the mission of the church
worldwide,*

**to work for justice and peace, and*

**to build an inclusive, caring community of
women that strengthens the Presbyterian
Church, (U.S.A.) and witnesses to the promise
of God's kingdom.*

Music and Memory



No one wants to end up alone and isolated in a nursing home. It is hard enough to have someone you lose to Alzheimer's or other forms of dementia. It is terrifying to think you could end up there yourself, someday.

But there is reason to hope for a better life as we age. People in nursing homes and other care organizations, who suffer from a wide range of cognitive and physical challenges, find renewed meaning and connection in their lives through the gift of personalized music.

The approach is simple, elegant, and effective: Professionals are trained how to set up personalized music playlists, delivered on iPods and other digital devices, for those in their care. These musical favorites tap deep memories not lost to dementia and can bring participants back to life, enabling them to feel like themselves again, to converse, socialize, and stay present.

Research and evaluation of the Music & Memory's work in care organizations show consistent results:

- ◆ Participants are happier and more social
- ◆ Relationships among staff, participants, and family deepen
- ◆ Everyone benefits from a calmer, more supportive social environment
- ◆ Staff regain valuable time previous lost to behavior management issues

There is growing evidence that a personalized music program gives professionals one more tool in their efforts to reduce reliance on anti-psychotic medications.

To see the results of this type of therapy, watch the movie "*Alive Inside*." Please keep this form of ministry in your thoughts and prayers. You may also donate iPod shuffle or any other electronic device to any care organization to aid in this type of therapy for our South Dakota citizens. Send to:

Trudi Nelson, PWP Moderator
6498 Evergreen Acres Dr.
Wentworth, SD 57075

Music and Memory is the mission project for Presbyterian Women in South Dakota. If you wish to give, as a Presbyterian Woman or group, send your donation to:

Lois Stanfield, PWP Treasurer
5732 W. Bream Drive
Sioux Falls, SD 57107

Thank you!



Rep's Corner

Take a peek inside your *Horizons*

By Diane Helin

When the **November/December 2018 *Horizons*** magazine arrived in my mail, I opened it immediately because it featured the 2018 Churchwide Gathering, which I attended in Louisville, Ky.

*"If you have not read your recent **Horizons** already, get to it! If you have not subscribed yet, I strongly urge you to do so! Either way, you'll be glad you did."*

What I found is that this issue, as with all issues, is fully packed with tons of interesting PW stuff. One can get a real feel for the Churchwide Gathering by reading articles written by speakers and presenters from the Gathering, including "our own" South Dakotan Danelle McKinney, Dakota Presbytery teaching elder and Presbyterian Woman. Danelle is currently the Native American member at large on the Churchwide PW board of directors.

Not surprisingly, what I did not find was a photo of me at the Gathering! Skimming through it, though, definitely took me back to August and the Galt House Hotel where the events inspired attendees with the theme "Arise, shine; for your light has come....."

Other entries in this **Global Faces of Christianity** issue include **Celebrate the Gifts of Women Liturgy for 2019, Fellowship of the Least Coin** program grants, **Bible Study Resource** for Lessons Five and Six, and so much more.

If you have not read your recent **Horizons** already, get to it! If you have not subscribed yet, I strongly urge you to do so! Either way, you'll be glad you did. If you subscribe before April 1, you will receive the 2019-20 Bible study (a \$10 value) along with the six issues of the magazine, at this special subscription price of \$19.95. One of your PW subscriber friends has the special order form in the front of her **Horizons** magazine and can give it to you. OR you can contact me - Diane Helin at djhelin@sio.midco.net or 605-334-4562 and I will mail the form to you.

There's a brand New Year coming and you can make it a great New Year by subscribing to **Horizons** magazine.

Diane Helin is the PWPSD Horizons Representative.

Please send all address changes to:

Louise Van Poll, Editor, at 605-354-2397

or by email to PWPSD@outlook.com.

Deadline for the next edition is March 1.



Mary Visits Elizabeth

Then miraculously, God answered her prayers and Elizabeth conceived a child in her old age. When her kinswoman Mary arrived for an unexpected visit, Elizabeth knew why she had come. She exclaimed to Mary, “blessed is she who has believed that what the Lord has said to her will be accomplished.” (Luke 1:45)

The three wise women

By Christin Ditchfield

The Three Wise Men: Caspar, Melchior, Balthasar. They’re beloved characters in the traditional Christmas story. Through the centuries, these mysterious figures have captured our imaginations and inspired us to “follow the star” on our own spiritual journey to Bethlehem. Of course, we don’t really know what their names were, or even that there were, in fact, three of them.

We do know, however, that there were three wise women Mary, Elizabeth and Anna -- three very different women in different ages and stages of life. Yet they were all women who “feared the Lord.” And each one played a crucial role in the events of the true Christmas story. Each one, in her own way, set a powerful example for us to follow today.

Mary

She was a young woman, a teenager, about to be married. She stood at the threshold, full of hopes and dreams for her future. Most of her time was spent preparing for her wedding. Then the angel appeared, he brought a message that would change her life forever. He told Mary that she was “highly favored.” God had chosen her to bear His Son. From now on, all generations would call her blessed.

What an awesome privilege! What an incredible responsibility. At the moment, Mary could not have imagined all that it would entail. She asked a natural question. “How can this

Wise Women continued on Page 6.

A Christmas Prayer

By Robert Louis
Stevenson (1850-1894)

Loving Father, help us
remember the birth of
Jesus, that we may
share in the song of the
angels, the gladness of
the shepherd, and the
worship of the wise
men.

Close the door of hate
and open the door of
love all over the world.
Let kindness come with
every gift and good de-
sires with every
greeting.

Deliver us from evil by
the blessing which
Christ brings, and teach
us to be merry with
clear hearts.

May the Christmas
morning make us hap-
py to be Thy children,
and the Christmas
evening bring us to our
beds with grateful
thoughts, forgiving and
forgiven, for Jesus'
sake. Amen.

Why I give to PW missions

By Bonnie Wirt

In our PW purpose, we pledge “to support the mission of the church worldwide.” Jesus commissioned us, “Go to the people of all nations and make them my disciples” (Matt. 28:19).

Each one of us cannot actually go on mission trips to all the places where God’s people need help, but we can do it indirectly through mission-giving.

Because of the story behind the Fellowship of the Least Coin, I always find it to be inspirational to put my pennies in the collection. To know that I am joining women all over the world who have been giving their least coins since 1956 to seek peace and reconciliation in a divided world, to create an awareness of belonging to a worldwide fellowship of faith, and providing funding for many needs of people around the world.

When I give to the Birthday Offering I remember the Presbyterian woman who in 1922 challenged the women in her group to give a penny for each year of their lives. The Birthday Offering has supported mission projects, such as programs for at-risk boys and girls, and partnering with Habitat for Humanity to repair homes for needy families. Communities could not achieve this on their own without PW grants.

I know I am supporting the Presbyterian World Hunger Program when I donate to Cents-Ability. It also helps me remember that Jesus instructed his disciples, “You give them something to eat” (Mark 6:37).

The Thank Offering came into existence when a Presbyterian woman in 1888 urged each woman to give one dollar in addition to other mission gifts as a “thank offering to the Lord.” Thank Offering has funded thousands of educational programs and ministries to improve the lives of women and children throughout the world.

Whatever mission we support, we must remember for whom we do it. Jesus said, “When I was hungry you gave me something to eat, and when I was thirsty you gave me something to drink. When I was a stranger you welcomed me, and when I was naked you gave me clothes to wear. When I was sick you took care of me, and when I was in prison you visited me...Whenever you did it for any of my people, no matter how unimportant they seemed, you did it for me” (Matt. 25:35).

Bonnie Wirt, Spiritual Growth.

God's Voice

Think of this when you are wondering if it is God leading you.

GOD'S VOICE

Stills you.....
Leads you.....
Reassures you.....
Enlightens you.....
Encourages you.....
Comforts you.....
Calms you.....
Convicts you.....

SATAN'S VOICE

Rushes you
Pushes you
Frightens you
Confuses you
Discourages you
Worries you
Agitates you
Condemns you



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*Submitted by Mary
Jenner, PWPSD Vice
Moderator.*

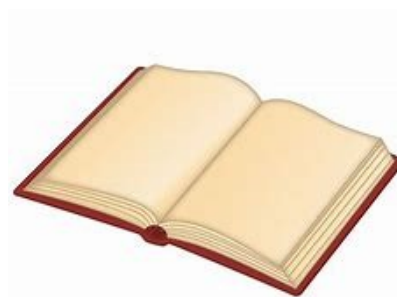
Call for Bible study proposals

The 2019 Presbyterian Women Churchwide Coordinating Team/Board of Directors Bible Study Committee will meet in late winter 2019 to choose the author and theme of the 2022–23 PW/Horizons Bible study.

Potential authors are invited to propose a theme and submit an outline and sample lesson (one of the nine lessons that will make up the study) to the committee for their consideration.

Authors must demonstrate knowledge of the Bible and related writings, knowledge of and commitment to Reformed theology, experience teaching Bible study, clear understanding of women's issues in the wider church and in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), commitment to and use of inclusive and expansive lan-

guage, active membership in the church, and working knowledge of Presbyterian Women.



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Deadline for proposals is Jan. 31. Contact Betsy Ensign-George, PW associate editor, for more information: betsy.ensign-george@pcusa.org; 844.797.2872, ext. 5366; 100 Witherspoon St., Louisville, KY 40202-1396.

be?” We can tell from the angel’s gentle reply that it was not asked in doubt or skepticism.

Mary didn’t demand a sign, some sort of proof or additional confirmation. She voiced no complaint at the total disruption of her life. She knew now that things would not turn out the way she had planned it all. But in her heart, there was no resistance, no rebellion. Just a sweet, simple submission – surrender to the will of God.

“I am the Lord’s servant” she replied.

“May it be to me as
your have said”

Luke 1:38

In essence, she
told the angel that
God could use her
in any way He chose,

God is still looking for people
who, like Mary, will make
themselves fully available to Him.

because she was a willing vessel, fully available to Him. How that must have blessed the heart of God! No wonder He chose this precious young woman to be the mother of His Son.

God is still looking for people who, like Mary, will make themselves fully available to Him. If we are willing to surrender our hearts, our hopes, our dreams. He says He will use us to accomplish great and mighty things.

Elizabeth

She was barren in a culture in which a woman’s worth was measured by the number of children she produced. She was infertile at a time when an inability to bear children was seen as a sign of God’s judgment – a curse. She and her husband had prayed fervently for a child. But now her childbearing years had passed.

Elizabeth had every reason to be bitter, but instead she followed God’s commandments blamelessly (Luke 1:6) She continued to

walk in faithful obedience, even when she didn’t understand His will. She continued to pour out her heart to Him, even when it seemed He wasn’t listening.

Then miraculously, God answered her prayers and Elizabeth conceived a child in her old age. She knew it was the hand of God supernaturally intervening in her life. When her kinswoman Mary arrived for an unexpected visit, Elizabeth knew why she had come. Elizabeth had heard God’s voice speaking to her.

She was attuned to His
Spirit.

With the authority of a woman
who has experienced God’s faith-
fulness, she exclaimed

to Mary, “blessed is she who has believed that what the Lord has said to her will be accomplished: (Luke 1:45)

In that instant, Elizabeth took on the role of a spiritual mother or godly mentor. She gave a work of encouragement to a young woman who felt very much alone.

Elizabeth affirmed Mary and confirmed the word of the Lord to her. If Mary had any doubts or fears, Elizabeth dispelled them with a joyous reminder of God’s love and faithfulness. Like Elizabeth, we need to let our heartbreaks draw us closer to God instead of allowing them to drive us away. We need to listen for His voice and be sensitive to His leading.

And we need to take advantage of every opportunity to encourage and affirm those who are younger in the faith. We can share from our own personal experience that God is faithful.

Anna

At 84, she was coming to the end of her life. No doubt Anna had already outlived most of her friends and relatives. Her own husband had died more than 60 years earlier, seven years after they were married. There were no young children to care for. For whatever reason, she never remarried. The culture didn't allow a woman to pursue a career. So Anna had a lot of time on her hands.

She could have spent that time living in the past and longing for the good old days. She could have become the proverbial busybody – the woman who goes from house to house spreading gossip and sticking her nose into other people's business. She could have sat on the porch complaining to her neighbors about all her aches and pains and the problems that come with growing older. But she didn't.

Instead, Anna devoted herself to loving God. Just loving God. Spending time in His presence. As the years went by, she devoted more and more of herself to Him. "she never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying" (Luke 2:37)

Scripture tells us that God honors those who honor Him. He gave His servant Anna the privilege of living to see what men of old had died waiting for...the coming of the Messiah. She was there in the temple, where she always was, when His baby dedication took place. She responded to the blessed event in the same way she always did. "She gave thanks" (Luke 2:38). Then she told everybody who would listen about the goodness and greatness of our God.

Anne was a woman who made the best out of a bad situation. She counted her blessings. As a result, her heart overflowed with gratitude to God. Talk about growing old gracefully! Anna shows us that no matter how old we get, we don't ever have to retire from our walk with God. We don't have to grow bitter; we can grow better. We can choose to count our blessings, not our heartaches. We can always give thanks.

The Three Wise Women: Mary, Elizabeth and Anna. Just as the Wise Men followed the star, we can follow the shining examples of these women who lived lives "holy and pleasing to God" (Romans 12:1) A popular Christmas card proclaims "Wise Men still seek Him" The truth is, wise women still seek Him, too!



God gave His servant Anna the privilege of living to see what men of old had died waiting for...the coming of the Messiah.

Article submitted by Dianne Boatright, Spiritual Growth.

***Our perfect gift comes from above—Jesus Christ.
Our gifts to the Christmas Joy Offering reflect our generous God.***

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. We scour the stores and shops, hoping to come across the thing that will communicate a depth of love that our words cannot. Jesus came to live among us, bringing light into darkness, and reconciliation to God and to one another. A perfect gift from a gracious God. As important as gifts to loved ones are, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) gives through the Christmas Joy Offering, drawing us back to the manger and God's perfect gift to us.



Through the Offering, we celebrate leadership; past, present and future. We do so because church leaders greatly impact our lives of faith, walking with us down the path to be more like Jesus. We want future leaders for the church and world, like those educated at our Presbyterian-related schools and colleges equipping communities of color to reflect the wideness of God's intended diversity, and we want those church leaders and their families who find themselves grappling with a critical financial need to have the resources they need. For those supported through the Christmas Joy Offering, this help is truly a gift from above. May our gifts, and the leaders who receive them, point us always to the truth of the one whose birth we celebrate, Jesus Christ—the truly perfect gift.

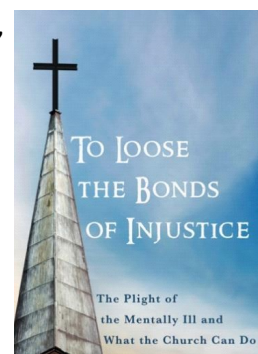
Synod supports emerging, innovative ministry in many ways

Readers may be aware of the Synod of Lakes and Prairies programs and grants that support ministry and mission in a variety of ways across a variety of systems. For example, the synod offers grant support for collegiate ministries and for other institutions that have ecclesiastical and ecumenical ties to the synod. The synod also supports emerging mission within the synod is through a separate grant program. And that's just the grant aspect. There are also racial-ethnic scholarship opportunities and Self Development of People awards. And then there's The Academy, a program designed to develop well-equipped, thoughtful people to serve councils in a variety of capacities. Curious readers can learn more at "Synod Resources." There are even links to sermon and worship aids.



Murphy's new book addresses mental illness, social injustice

According to Wipf and Stock, publishers of Marcia A. Murphy's new book, "To Loose the Bonds of Injustice," the "work is the first to address the living conditions of the mentally ill from the standpoint of social justice. It is the first for religion to partner with the psychiatric field from a spiritual vantage point to improve the lives of those afflicted with medical, social, and spiritual maladies." Murphy, of Iowa City, Iowa, has published articles, essays, and works of creative nonfiction in professional psychiatric journals and four anthologies. Details about the book can be found at "Bonds of Injustice." Murphy's website is "Hope for Recovery."



The Manger of My Heart

By Renee Swope

This Advent, Lord, come to the manger of my heart,
Fill me with Your presence, from the very start.
As I prepare for the holidays and gifts to be given,
Remind me of the gift You gave when You sent Your Son from Heaven.

The first Christmas gift, it was the greatest gift ever,
You came as a baby, born in a manger.
Wrapped like the gifts I find under my tree,
Waiting to be opened to reveal Your love to me.

Restore to me the wonder that came with Jesus' birth,
When He left the riches of Heaven and wrapped Himself in rags of earth.
Immanuel, God with us, Your presence came that night.
And angels announced "Into your darkness, God brings His Light."

"Do not be afraid," they said, to shepherds in the field.
Speak to my heart today, Lord, and help me to yield.
Make me like those shepherd boys, obedient to Your call.
Setting distractions and worries aside, to You I surrender them all.

Surround me with Your presence, Lord, I long to hear Your voice.
Clear my mind of countless concerns and all the holiday noise.
Slow me down this Christmas, let me not be in a rush.
In the midst of parties and planning, I want to feel Your hush.

This Christmas Jesus, come to the manger of my heart,
Invade my soul like Bethlehem, bringing peace to every part.
Dwell within and around me, as I unwrap Your presence each day.
Keep me close to You, Lord. It's in Your wonderful Name I pray.

Submitted by Judy Rops, Spiritual Growth

Presbyterians for Just Immigration offer opportunities for involvement



The website for Presbyterians for Just Immigration is calling for Presbyterians to join its movement. It notes, "People of faith are joining together and calling for immigration reform and the full recognition of immigrants' rights. They are doing this, in big and small ways, because of a shared faith in Jesus Christ who spent his ministry at the margins of society and because of the call to remember that they were once strangers/immigrants in Egypt." The website, which also includes links to a variety of resources, can be found at "Just Immigration."

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