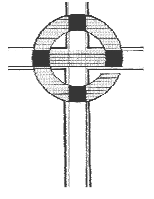




The Presbyterian of The Presbytery of Elizabeth



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Notes from Outreach and Social Concerns (OSCU)

Many of us remember the famous "Uncle Sam" poster that dates back to the First World War. For those of you that who may not recall the print, picture a tall gentleman with a white beard, dressed in a red white and blue suit and top hat, pointing his finger saying "We Want You". Now, press the fast forward button on your remote to 2010 and instead of "Uncle Sam," you have Linwood Bagby, Michael Rountree and Skip Winter stating "We Want You" to join the Outreach and Social Concerns Unit of the Presbytery of Elizabeth. We are looking for interested clergy and lay leaders to work with us in expanding the mission work of the Presbytery of Elizabeth.



One of the many comments that were heard from the representatives of Council that visited Sessions on behalf of the Mission Study was the need for our churches to "connect". Joining OSCU gives people an opportunity to interact with other mission minded individuals and churches.

What do we do you ask? OSCU administers the regular Presbytery of Elizabeth Grants and the growing New Hope Development Grant program. We also provide input to the PCUSA Mission Yearbook, support and host visiting missionaries and work on individual Presbytery Mission projects.

Interested? We hope so! Questions? We hope so!

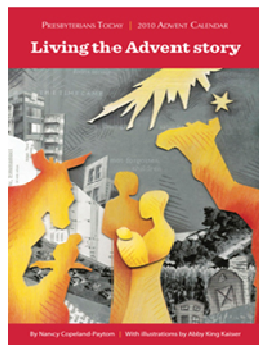
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Advent 2010 Living the Advent Story



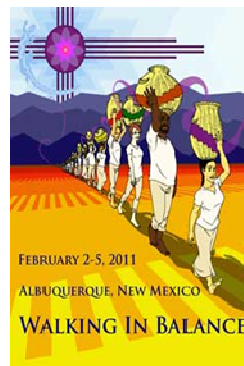
This popular devotional resource, produced by *Presbyterians Today* magazine, contains Scripture readings, meditations and prayers for each day of the Advent season.

This year's guide measures a handy 5¼ 8³⁄₈" so it easily goes along with you in a purse or coat pocket, making it easy to grab a moment for prayerful reflection sometime during your day. \$4.00 each — \$1.25 for 150+

[Resources for Advent \(Year A\)](#)

WALKING IN BALANCE

ASSOCIATION OF
PRESBYTERIAN
EDUCATORS (APCE)
February 2 - 5, 2011
Albuquerque, NM



Calling all educators, Christian Education committees, teachers and ministers. The Southwest awaits you. Come immerse yourself in the rich cultural heritage, rooted in centuries of history. Soak in the blue skies and bright sunshine. Breathe in the high desert air scented with sage and pinion and you will understand why Albuquerque is a destination like no other. Contact the Presbytery office 908-755-3776.

www.apcenet.org

Christmastime Provides Countless Ways to Witness --easily, enjoyably and effectually--

“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you; and you will bear witness for me in Jerusalem, and all over Judea and Samaria, and away to the ends of the earth.” Acts 1:8, RSV

Jesus asked Christians to witness about Him here, there and everywhere. The Christmas season presents us with unique opportunities to do this. However, it is obvious that for many years, and increasingly as time goes on, the observation of Christmas has been taken over by secular commercial interests. It is imperative that Christians and churches make a conscious decision to educate about and maintain the central importance of Christ in Christmas.

Christmas Day reminds Christians that God was totally involved in the world through Jesus' birth. Early Christians chose December 25th to celebrate because across the Roman Empire non-Christians were celebrating a pagan holiday, which made the day free from work, and their observances non-threatening to others.

Christmas is celebrated in other countries according to their local cultures, but with the essential elements of the Gospel stories.

WITNESSING is often done verbally, as in---

“Christ's spiritual presence:

- enabled me to carry on after my mate's death
- led me to answers to questions and solutions to problems
- gave me confidence before surgery
- challenged my choice of my life's work
- gave me meaning and purpose
- taught me how to love and be loved
- showed me how to overcome my ego
- encouraged me to help others help themselves
- gave me faith for the future when I thought I was dying.”



Christmas Joy Offering

WITNESSING is also done through action. The following are suggestions for witnessing through action during ADVENT.

- In planning the giving of family gifts, keep them modest even if “special”, and at the same time include ways to give to others less fortunate. This may be done by contributing money, gift items or services through the church or other charities, in the name of a family member or friend, who is then notified with a card of the gift. Encourage children to participate with their own money or efforts to share with others in this way.
- Sharing at the Christmas season can be extended to causes and people worldwide by purchasing through organizations, such as SERRV (handmade gift items at fair prices), and other “fair trade” product distributors, or by giving directly, as to World Vision (a goat or dairy cow for a poor village family, medical supplies or aid for an orphan etc.). The latter has a catalog and is based at P.O. Box 70359, Tacoma, WA 98481. Website: www.worldvisiongifts.org
- Hold an Alternative Christmas Fair at your church in the fall, offering a variety of opportunities to “shop” for ways to give to or advocate for others in need and the environment. Set up booths with displays and literature representing a wide variety of charitable organizations, including the above and Church World Service, a local food bank or shelter, for example, to “sell” their products or “shares” in their work. (Get some hints from a church which has done this.)
- Attend a Christmas concert with your family. Participate in your church's music programs.
- For fun, see Dickens' parable “A Christmas Carol” performed, visit a live nativity scene, or enjoy the Radio City Music Hall Christmas Show which always has a live manger scene on stage. (Where else outside a zoo will you see a camel?)

WITNESSING on CHRISTMAS EVE and CHRISTMAS DAY

- The family can worship together at services on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day.
- Before gathering around the Christmas tree and opening presents, set up and pause in front of a small manger scene to read the Christmas story from the Gospel, pray for Christ's spiritual presence, give thanks and join in singing a Christmas hymn.
- Some families celebrate Christmas dinner as a birthday party, with a place set for Jesus, some gifts (to be given away to people in need), even a cake and singing “Happy Birthday, dear Jesus”.
- Family gifts may include illustrated Bible story books for children, and spiritually thought-provoking books for adults. Exploring the meanings of Christian symbols and traditions, or learning about the stories behind favorite hymns can be an enriching and inspiring adventure. Do you know the hidden meanings in “The Twelve Days of Christmas”?
- If there is a piano in the house and a volunteer to play, it can be great fun to bring Christmas Day to a close with friends and family singing hymns and carols, ending with “The Twelve Days of Christmas, each person taking one of the “days”, and singing it through. A conductor and a bit of rehearsing may be needed!

ENJOY! And MERRY CHRIST-MAS!

*Rev. Russell Block (HR), with Nancy Block MD
Members of the Global Mission/Peacemaking Committee (OSC Unit)*