

A New Day

Together

A New Way

Second Annual Witness Season and Offering

✚Our Presbytery took a step of faith last year when it committed to reinstate a Season of Emphasis on Christian Witness and a Witness Offering. Many of you remember when this was a significant event on our denomination's yearly calendar. Concerned that this essential aspect of the Church's ministry has not been receiving the attention it should, the Presbytery of Coastal Carolina overturned the General Assembly in 2003 requesting that it be reinstated. The overture was approved in principle by the Assembly and referred to a special task force reviewing the special offerings already on our calendar. We were disappointed that the Witness Offering was rejected by the task force, and subsequently by the General Assembly in 2004.

✚**Convinced of the importance of giving this emphasis to the mission of the Church**, our Presbytery voted unanimously to authorize an annual Presbytery-wide Season of Emphasis on Christian Witness, and a Witness Offering, beginning in 2005. We do this as important in itself, but also with the hope that we will have such a positive response that we can convince the General Assembly to follow our lead at some time in the future. So a good response from our congregations will be a double blessing.

✚**We have made a beginning, and want now to move forward in 2006.** We commend all those congregations that participated in 2005. If your congregation was one of them, we thank you, and hope that you will have an even better response this year. It is as all of us do our part that great things are accomplished. As the great pioneer missionary William Carey said, "Attempt great things for God; expect great things from God."

✚**Why do we need such a season?** As we pointed out last year, Christian Witness is in season all year long. That's why we call this a **season of emphasis** on Christian witness. It is a time to give special focus and emphasis in our **prayers** for the witness of the Church at home and around the world. It is a time to remember that we are part of a fellowship and ministry far larger than our congregation and our denomination. It is a time to give thanks for the Church around the world, much of which is a result of faithful missionary work of which the Presbyterian Church (USA) and our predecessor denominations have been a vital part. It is a time to pray for fellow Christians and their witness around the world, many in very difficult and dangerous circumstances. It is a time for focused prayer for our own missionaries, international and in this country. It is a time to pray for a renewed

concern for and interest in the mission of the Church in carrying out the first great end of the Church, the proclamation of the Gospel for the salvation of humankind. It is a time to **study** what is being done in Christian Witness internationally and at home today. It is also a time to **reflect** on our personal responsibility for Christian witness to those around us, as well as on our part in the witness of the presbytery and of the General Assembly. May it be also a time for us to deny ourselves some of the things we could do without in order to give a special **offering** to strengthen this work. **This offering will go in its entirety to the work for which it is designated.**

✚**When will this offering be taken?** We encourage you to observe this emphasis and give the offering at the time you find best. It might even be late in the year. One pastor has suggested taking the offering on World Communion Sunday. Find the time that suits you best.

✚**How will the funds be used?** Just as last year, Presbytery calls for the local church to retain 25 percent of the offering you receive for local use. A larger portion, 35 percent, will go to PC(USA) Worldwide Ministries, the arm of PC(USA) that promotes the Gospel throughout the world in many different ways. The largest portion, 40 percent, will be designated to our Hispanic ministry within the bounds of our presbytery. This is an increasingly needed ministry, and we are blessed with competent leadership.

✚**May we encourage you to give generously, demonstrating again that spirit of liberality, which has been a Presbyterian hallmark since the days of John Calvin and John Knox.**

✚To help you and your congregation in this reflection, we recommend the following two books for reading and study.

Beals, Art. *"When the Saints Go Marching Out!"* Geneva Press: Louisville, 2001.

Brown, G. Thompson. *"Presbyterians in World Mission: A Handbook for Congregations,"* revised edition. Decatur, GA: CTS Press, 1988.

✚For additional information about the Witness Offering and our Hispanic Ministry, go to the Presbytery web site: www.presbycc.org (this also contains the genesis of the current Witness Season offering), or call the Presbytery Office (800-277-7479). Additional resources : from World Wide Ministries Division at www.pcusa.org/wmd, from Medical Benevolence Foundation at www.MBFoundation, from Presbyterian Frontier Fellowship at www.pff.net, and from The Outreach Foundation at www.theoutreachfoundation.org.