

A Shining Light



BY JANICE CATRON

In this series of articles about the theme for the 2006 Churchwide Gathering of Presbyterian Women, we have explored “creation,” “celebration” and “God’s Word” as we understand it through the four parts of the PW Purpose. Now we move to part of the last phrase of the theme—“light,” from “Light for the Journey.” Light emanates from the logo. We see the bright light of the sun, the subtle blend of light and shadow on the hillsides, and the multi-hued refracted light of the rainbow. As an art element, light adds beauty and color.

For all that light contributes to the logo, it adds far more richness to our created world. *Genesis 1:3* describes God’s initial creation of light; and *verse 31a* affirms what we know from our own experience—the light God created is good! Light, at its best, is splendid, glorious, magnificent. It’s no wonder the psalmist describes light as God’s garment (*Ps. 104:2*) and associates it with the very face of God (*Ps. 44:3*).

Throughout the Bible, the presence of the divine is connected to light. God leads the Hebrew people through the wilderness at night by a glowing pillar of fire (*Ex. 13*). After spending 40 days and 40 nights in the presence of God on Mount Sinai, Moses’ face shines so brightly he has to wear a veil (*Ex. 34:28–35*). At the transfiguration, Jesus’ own face shines in a similar way, and a “bright cloud” (indicating the presence of God) comes down



on him (*Matt. 17:1–5*). Paul’s encounter with the Risen Christ on the Damascus road began when “suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him” (*Acts 9:3*).

The Bible uses the word *light* in different ways, though, just as we do in modern English. The above examples all refer to physical light of some kind, but “light” can refer to an oil lamp. In this case, we know that the lamp is not really the same thing as the light; it’s just a bearer of it. It’s a medium by which the light can exist and provide its aid to the world. This is the meaning Jesus

intends when he tells the disciples, “You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven” (*Matt. 5:14–16*).

John 1:3–4 makes it clear that the true light is Jesus Christ, the Word of God who dwelt among us—“What has come into being . . . was life, and the life was the light of all people.” Jesus is “the light of the world” (*John 8:12*) in that he came to bring the revelation of God’s own Self. Adding the sense of Jesus’ teachings in *Matthew 5* to this, we can also say that now the resurrected Christ shines in the world through us.

The Gathering Planning Team had a great deal of fun thinking of ways to incorporate “light” into the 2006 Gathering. You will find this part of the theme reflected in items in your tote bag, in visual elements of the plenary presentation and in workshop experiences. It is the hope of the planning team that you will find the Gathering to be a place where you can let your own light shine—and where others can see the light of Christ shining in you.

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See the Light in Workshops

Workshops built around the theme of light are on page 7 of the registration brochure. Download the registration brochure at www.pcusa.org/pwgathering, order a copy through Presbyterian Distribution Service, 800/524-2612 or www.pcusa.org/marketplace, item CWG-06-057; or contact your PW presbytery or synod moderator.