

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

NASHVILLE - Priest Lake Presbyterian Church's (PLPC) "Project JOY" (Joyous Offerings of Youth) is truly a project of joy! Started in 1999 by PLPC's high school youth group, "Project JOY" began as a way to reach out and offer help to needy families during Christmas in Harlan, Kentucky, an economically depressed mining community in the Appalachia Mountains. That first year, 20 people delivered food, clothing and gift boxes for approximately 40 people. This year, well over 430 families were served by 60 volunteers with food boxes, toiletries, clothing, bedding, pillows and linens, as well as 1,232 learning bags for preschool through high school students. Children and families were served specifically through Cawood High School and surrounding school district, as well as the Harlan County Head-Start program.

During "Project JOY" 2007, PLPC could see God's hand at work through the exponential growth of joy (as well as donations) during their October 12th & 13th mission to Harlan. There was an undeniable connection between the children/youth being served and the children/youth serving them. Hearts were open with awareness of what Christ calls us to do - take care of the needy, the least of us. This care of others nurtures the joy this project is built upon and around: unreserved joy on the face of young Cody, a 4 year old boy with cancer, who received "new" clothes, linens and a stuffed toy monkey; joy on the faces of Cawood High School teens upon finding that there really were good quality clothes to be found in the mountains of donated items; joy upon the face of a hard-working, financially-strapped grandmother who is raising six of her teenage grandkids, when she found much needed toiletries and food for her family; joy and gratitude expressed by person after person, family after family, that these "strangers" would travel so far from their own homes to joyfully serve them.

In a true outpouring of Christ's love, donations came from many churches, organizations and individuals, not only in the local Nashville area, but even as far as Pennsylvania. Working heart-to-heart with PLPC were: Trinity Presbyterian Church, First Presbyterian Church - Older Adult Ministry Group, Hillwood Presbyterian Church, and Smith Springs Church of Christ (all Nashville area churches), Pond Presbyterian Church (Dickson, TN), First Presbyterian Church (Tullahoma, TN), First Cookeville Presbyterian Church - Women's Group (Cookeville, TN), LaVergne Presbyterian Church (LaVergne, TN), First Presbyterian and Milldale Presbyterian Churches (Springfield, TN), First Presbyterian (Lebanon, TN), First Presbyterian (Gallatin, TN), First Presbyterian (Franklin, TN), First Presbyterian (Columbia, TN), First Presbyterian (Lewisburg, TN), Smyrna Church (Byrdstown, TN), Calvary Presbyterian Church of Big Lick (Crossville, TN), Liberty Hill Presbyterian Church (Alexandria, TN), Buffalo Valley Presbyterian Church (Buffalo Valley, TN), Normandy Presbyterian Church (Normandy, TN), Brick Church Presbyterian Church (Pulaski, TN), Clinton United Presbyterian Church (Clinton, PA), Good Samaritan and The Learning Place Preschool (Tullahoma, TN), Associated Wholesale Grocers (Nashville, TN), and even local dentists. In addition, countless individuals of all ages shared donations of time, resources, and supplies to ensure the success of this year's "Project JOY." PLPC thanks ALL and recognizes that this project has been able to grow only through God joining together a tremendous network of faithful volunteers.

Finally, PLPC and "Project JOY" dedicated this year's joyful mission in Memory of Bill Higgins, whose passing this past April, took from us his leadership and tireless servant's heart. He will forever be missed.