A brief guide to some of the major ACP award categories...
Certain words are often used by our judges when describing excellence...
When choosing your potential entries consider whether these kinds of adjectives would apply to the work you are submitting...

Compare the entry against the category’s criteria to ensure you are submitting it correctly.
look at the criteria

Read the category criteria carefully before submitting...
Which to pick... how to choose...???
Categories involving the written word...
features

Solid reporting.
Human interest.
Detailed. Narrative style.
Active and precise.
Dramatic.
Personalization.
Humor and/or pathos.
Direct quotes and attribution.
Writer expertly creates clear visual pictures and uses solid reporting to deftly meld facts with narrative into a cohesive and fascinating, whole. The piece uses a wide variety of sources and voices and explores the broad topic of “Who’s Filling America’s Church Pews” with detailed examples. Tackling the conflict in religious expansionism adds to the authority of the piece. There is analysis, without editorializing (very refreshing).
**Editorials**

**Persuasiveness** is most important. Logical, clear, forceful, eloquent. Strong reporting. Definite point of view. Fair. Identifies issues of importance. Spurs readers to respond and debate.
This was a forceful essay that stayed relentlessly on point. The moral reasoning and the moral outrage were an effective combination. The author relies on good sources and uses them well. When you finish reading, it's hard to think of a counter-argument.

A well-written and appropriately outraged critique of a controversial government policy.
Solid reporting. Accurate.
Sound news judgment.
Demonstrates initiative.
Issues are in context and in perspective.
Tight writing. Active wording.
All news questions answered.
Objective. Fair.
The writing is vivid, the story compelling. From the descriptive visual lede to the hopeful, inspiring kicker, this story carries the reader to a foreign land and shares the challenges of a Christian community inside a largely Muslim city.
Excellent deeply reported and well written story. This piece contains all the elements of good writing: clear, concise and compelling.
personal experience

Allows the reader to feel the emotions of the author and reveals a significant aspect of the writer's personality.
Reflects an experience that the reader would benefit from sharing with the author.

* A long feature should leave the reader feeling that it deserved the space allotted to it and the time it took to read it.
Though many people who perform charitable acts say doing so is more rewarding for the giver than for the recipient, this is the first time I've run across such a clear explanation of why that is the case. The detail in this story--the slippers, the cement dust and dirty bandage, the two coconut shells--paint a vivid picture of day-to-day life. At first, I was put off that the story doesn't identify the specific locale, and only passingly mentions "India" well into the story. However, I realized that this is a portrait of a slum, and that they are everywhere.
Saying "I get more than I give" when doing God's work has become a cliche, but not in the hands of this talented writer. She clearly explains what she gets out of the experience of caring for a mother and daughter who live in the most horrific conditions. I am grateful for the work she does and that she shared her story.

The mother had been born to parents who were poor and illiterate, and who considered their daughter a burden to be married off as soon as possible. She was given away to a man who only had a job, but was committing drink. He even soaked the little bit of money she earned. She was in such sheer helplessness. One day he abandoned her, disappearing without a word, leaving her pregnant.

The barely 20-year-old woman wearing a single sleeve and selling bamboo baskets, moving through various neighborhoods in and around town. Hunger, pain, and neglect had turned Sharmila and her 1-year-old daughter into thin, pale, emaciated figures. Their bones were clearly visible through their torn, dirty clothes. They had no place to wash, no soap, no fresh change of clothes. India is hot and dusty, and summer temperatures can rise to 130°F in arid states that are far from the coast.

The people like them simply take the streets from statistics, dehydration, or heat stroke. They cannot afford to buy water or find shelter to protect them from the devastating heat. Many of them simply huddle under whatever trees they can find, waiting for the sun to head toward the western horizon. They fall prey to jaundice, cholera, typhoid, and gastroenteritis from the contaminated food and water they ingest. They have no money for medicine.

Many heads swam from witnessing these ugly realities. Their open hut held an earthen water pot and a piece of cloth. I saw a pot blackened by fire standing on three bricks, a bucket of water, an old broken mug, and two empty coconut shells that served as dishes.

We lumped the grain sacks to a corner of the hut; wheat and rice, some lentils and dried beans they could use anytime. I emptied the fruit baskets, laying out the chickpeas, mangoes, and grapes. When I brought out a bag full of vegetables, they were the picture of delight. I sat on the scene while the attached bamboo roof swayed with the wind. The ones that stood in wonder at the clean rocks for her, the skirts and sari for her mother.

Rewards

I thought I was doing the giving, feeling happy from the warmth of sharing and giving something good. But I realize that my minor gifts were nothing compared to what they had given to me. Their smiles said they were thankful. How are anyone could in such places? I wondered.

I glimpsed their resilient spirits and wondered, how do they go on day after day? Their eyes danced with hope and I wondered, How are anyone have hope in such conditions?

And yet they had life, hope, resilience, gratitude, and much more.

I bicycled back to my home, humbled and truly grateful, I had to be. I realized I hadn't been properly thankful to God for all he had given me. Not just for my basic necessities, but for all that I look for: trained education, home, health, work that I enjoy, and many more blessings I can't even begin to list.

The best way I can show my gratitude is to keep serving so help carry their burdens. It's my religious duty. The apostle wrote, "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ." (Gal. 6:2).
Focused. Passionate.
Distinctive style. Authentic voice.
Original. Creative. Engages the reader.
Personalizes issues.
Offers solutions and suggestions
Well-reported and grounded in fact.
Arguments are well-reasoned and are mindful of opposing arguments.
These columns are superb. Each began with a story, with real people -- and the author used their names, which is even better! Names authenticate the stories for me. These columns caught my eye (love the large type for opening story), engaged me and kept me engaged. They inspired me. I was drawn in by the presenting short story related to the topic, and the commentary that followed was good and thoughtful. Great writing, too. Bravo!
In-depth study based on original research. Written by and for those with experience in a religious field. Peer review is not required. Scholarly articles generally cite sources using footnotes or a bibliography rather than quotations or anecdotes.
An excellent review of the rootedness of the new black theology in the thought of the early church.

Racism is a mistake about Christ, a failure to grasp the Trinity.

Black theology’s return to pro-Enlightenment sources is also surprising in that the Enlightenment has often been cerebralized with overcoming oppression. In a fascinating reversal, Carter and Bantu turn the Enlightenment’s claim of liberation on its head, locating in that movement a basis of oppression and looking instead to ancient and medieval Christian theology to free us from contemporary racism.

In a claim characteristic of this new theology, Carter takes Christian theology’s emphasis on difference and races it theologically. “Difference theologically understood arises from the positivity of the hypostatic distinctions in the Trinity, within which the possibility and, according to the will of God, the

Jonathan Tran is assistant professor of theological ethics at Baylor University, author of The Vietnam War and Theological Memory and Race and Theology.
... gives new life to what many consider irrelevant controversies.
A good clear summary that covers most of the bases.
Scholarship for the masses (or at least for seminary educated pastors). A good thing.
Personal reflection on Scripture, doctrine, or religious tradition. NOTE: If the article uses footnotes or a bibliography it may be more appropriately placed in the scholarly article category.
This is a well-constructed piece that flows easily from one good point to the next. The opening of the piece is excellent, getting right to the topic from the first sentence and carrying that theme all the way to the last word of the article. There is no doubt what this piece is about, and it brings it home with clarity and power. The points about margins not being "empty" brought hope and understanding to this reader, and, I'm sure, to many others. And like many others, I, too, often find God in the margins of life...in the unexpected places. Greenidge does an excellent job of reminding us in the "gotcha" closing paragraph.
Reflection of the experience of the holy in contemporary life.
Powerful point of view, along with clear and compelling writing. Excellent use of personal experience as basis for larger reflection.
Each part of the piece -- from opening to conclusion -- works well, and there is effective flow throughout.
Article, series, department, or creative use of sidebars that takes a practical, accessible approach in helping readers learn more about Scripture. It also can be a Bible study or any other printed or online resource.
Excellent resource. The writing is lively and engaging. The material is accessible—in content, organization, and layout. The questions/suggestions for readers to think about/engage with the study are interesting and well placed. The suggestions for leaders are creative and helpful. The art adds an important dimension.
SUGGESTIONS FOR LEADERS

LESSON TWO

Preparing
- Prepare and review in Lesson One, page 16. In addition, provide a Bible verse on marriage free of charge from the KJV for the book of Corinthians.

Opening
- Welcome participants using the Christ-centered Bible verse of the day. Ask each person to tell what it means to you and why.
- Sing the song or song related to the chapter on Lesson Two, such as “Great Is Thy Faithfulness” (Ps. 103) or “Worship in This Land” (Sing the Word Step).

Introducing
- Whose in Charge? As the group gathers, discuss the following questions:

  - "Whose in charge in your household?"

  - "Who makes decisions in your home?"

  - "How do concepts like power and authority change over time, and from culture to culture?"

  - "Understanding Life and Death: Introduce the concepts of the nuclear family in the Roman Empire, using "Mother to Mother" on page 15. Emphasize that for us, God is the ultimate Peter-Familian who transforms, upholding parents and qualities.

Listening
- Reading selection: Ask the group to read the chapter on Lesson Two aloud. Ask the group to listen for the words, phrases, and concepts that would be good to discuss in the group.

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Categories involving art, graphics and photography
Imaginative presentation.
Clearly conveys intended message.
Headlines impart drama and impact.
Text positioning, fonts, typography and weight create eye appeal and balance.
Color, line and artistry used creatively.
Photos, illustrations and graphs work with text to draw reader into the page.
An elegant visual solution. The headline typography is well-weighted and organized, yet understated at the same time. Its placement also helps the reader to zero in on the symbolism within the imagery. This cover has a nice marriage between the imagery and the typography.
Outstanding use of color and play of photos throughout the page that helps lead the reader's eye. There is an energetic flow, top to bottom. A clean page with just the right amount of design flair, enough to emphasize the readability of the stories instead of taking away.
Nice! The pop art approach works well here with the multi-colored photos at left. The timeline on the following spread is well done and easy to follow across the bottom of the pages.
Simple, balanced and inviting to look at.
Compositions reflect skill, imagination, creativity and planning. Visually delightful, with drama, strong human interest or a fresh viewpoint. Image quality enhances the impact and aesthetics of the image. Good use of color.
Great color, depth and composition. Well-thought-out. The broad smile of the president juxtaposed against the sad state of the poster and the raggedy brick wall speaks volumes.

Powerful photo that dramatically adds to the content. The choice of angle by the photographer makes it even more effective.
Unique photos that combine disparate images to create an intriguing mixture of old and new. There is no way a reader won’t turn the pages to see more.
You can view these (and other) examples of excellence by our members on this website.