



The Sower

*Newsletter for the Presbyterian Women in the
Synod of Lakes & Prairies*



May, 2024

Kathleen Keefer, Editor

Moderator's Moment

Greetings to all my sisters in PW and Happy Spring. He is risen, He is risen indeed, I see him in your face!

The Coordinating Team had a great meeting in Sioux City, Iowa, this month. In cooperation with the Together in Service and Native American Concerns committees, we assembled 74 layettes for the "Welcoming the Child" organization, one of our Pine Ridge partners.

Each layette contained a blanket, two receiving blankets, a hooded towel, three wash cloths, two bibs, a hat, one outfit, two pairs of socks, two onesies, and two sleepers. A toy and a Native doll and hopefully a board book featuring a Native child and family will be added before being delivered.

There were bags upon bags of extra clothing and other items left over after we ran out of blankets and towels [one garbage bag held nothing but hats]. These will be distributed throughout our partner organizations in the Indigenous community. Wow. What a great outpouring of love to our sisters in the Dakota Presbytery.

I am so excited to go to Church Wide Gathering in August. I hope to see many of our SLAP Sisters there. Remember when registering to sign up for the Synod luncheon. You need to pay for it up front, but the Synod PW will reimburse you \$30. Just send a copy of your registration form to treasurer Terri Sherman. Your Coordinating Team is planning a wonderful program for the luncheon.

Plans are moving forward for the 2025 Synod Gathering in Watertown, S.D. There will be a pre gathering event touring the Lake Traverse Reservation including the Sisseton Wahpeton College and a memorial park where the Indian Boarding School stood. We are beginning to plan workshops, so let me know if there is something you'd like to hear about.

Keep doing what you are doing, because you truly do make a difference in your communities and beyond.

God bless you all,

Louise

Prayers & Devotions



Prayer Walk

Go for a walk and use this guide to pray as you find each item!

🐦 **Bird** - Thank God for promising to always be with us.

🐞 **Bug** - Ask God to heal those who are sick.

🌸 **Red Flower** - Ask God to protect those in the medical field.

🌲 **Evergreen** - Ask God to give leaders wisdom.

🥜 **Nut/Seed** - Ask God to take care of your family & friends

🌿 **Fallen Leaf** - Ask God to take care of your neighbors.

🦋 **Butterfly** - Ask God to use the church to share his love.

🌼 **Yellow Flower** - Ask God to bring revival through this time.

Submitted by Hope Dougherty

PW Synod News

Hello to our incoming PWP Moderators:

Judy Rops from Sioux Falls, SD is the new PW Moderator for the South Dakota Presbytery. Judy will serve on the Synod Gathering Planning Committee.

Donna Preston from Grandin, ND is the new PW Moderator for the Northern Plains Presbytery. Donna serves on the Native American Concerns Committee.

Rev. Teresa Bartlett from Wayne, NE is the new PW Moderator for the Homestead Presbytery. Teresa serves on the ICC and Search committees.

Goodbye with gratitude to our outgoing PWP Moderators: Mary Jenner, South Dakota Presbytery, Lana Schultz, Northern Plains Presbytery, and Joan Berglund, Homestead Presbytery. The Central Nebraska Presbytery continues its search for a PWP moderator.

A **bylaws/standing rules review committee** was appointed: Judy Bell, chair, Christy Abraham, Lana Schultz, and Louise Van Poll, ad hoc. This committee will report back before the next PWSCT meeting on October 19 in West Salem, WI. The next NACC Book Study will read "Wandering Stars," by Tommy Orange in June.

PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN OF THE SYNOD OFFERING

LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

The Synod of Lakes and Prairies PW Co-ordinating Team is looking for women who support PW's purpose and want to engage as Jesus' hands and feet to the world. If you have skills of organization, technology, love reaching out through mission and enjoy the company of others and working together, there is a place for you on the CT. Any woman who is active in her local congregation whether or not there is an active PW in the church can participate in the mission of Presbyterian Women. PW's connectional structure allows women to participate as deeply or broadly in the organization as desired.

Opportunities to serve include Synod Moderator, Synod Secretary, Synod Historian and a representative for Area One Search Committee (Northern Plains, South Dakota, Central Nebraska, Dakota and Minnesota Valley Presbyteries) all but the Search Committee positions will begin in June of 2025. The search position is open immediately. See the PW Essentials Guide at [PWR23120-PW-Essentials.pdf \(presbyterianwomen.org\)](https://pwr23120-pw-essentials.pdf (presbyterianwomen.org)) (See pages 14-17) for the job description for each position. The slate of officers will be presented at the April 2025 board meeting. The new officers will be installed at the Synod Gathering June 12-15th in Waterdown, S.D. for a three-term.

The Search Committee is currently comprised of Hope Dougherty, (Area Two, hdougherty2018@gmail.com) and Teresa Bartlett, (Area Three-teresabartlett98@gmail.com). The Search Committee welcomes self- referrals of interested women or if you know of women in your church or Presbytery who would be a great fit for one of these positions, please share their name with the Search Committee. The Search Committee asks each woman to pray about these opportunities and consider being a part of the Lakes and Prairies Co-ordinating Team and their work like this April's baby layette project for Pine Ridge Reservation which you can read about elsewhere in the Sower.

Presbyterian Women are busy, from local concerns to national engagement, Presbyterian Women, guided by the Holy Spirit, are at work, guided the PW purpose of strengthening the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and witnessing to the promise of God's kingdom, join with other women from around the Synod in this work.

Synod of Lakes and Prairies PW Search Committee

Hope Dougherty

Teresa Bartlett

hdougherty2018@gmail.com teresabartlett98@gmail.com

Churchwide News

"Do Everything in Love," based on I Corinthians 16:13-14, is the theme for the Churchwide Gathering, August 8-11, 2024, in St. Louis, MO. Registration is available at presbyterianwomen.org/gathering until July 7, 2024. Make your own hotel reservations at Marriott St. Louis Grand. Gift cards collected from Lowe's, Amazon, Target or Walmart will be given to Bethel Hills, a residential community for adults with developmental disabilities and Presbyterian Children's Homes, both in Missouri, serving vulnerable children.

"On This Memorial Day." by Emily Toma

Remember those who served before.

Remember those who are no more.

Remember those who serve today.

Remember them as we eat and play.

Remember our protectors

who are not home today.

Remember them all on Memorial Day,

[May 27, 2024]

NORTHERN PLAINS PRESBYTERY PW SPRING GATHERING

Pictures from Northern Plains Presbytery's Spring Gathering held April 27, 2024 in Arvilla, ND. Thirty women started their day with worship. A gift basket silent auction has become an annual event and this year raised over \$600 for Bdecan Presbyterian Church on the Spirit Lake reservation in North Dakota. Photos by Lana Schultz



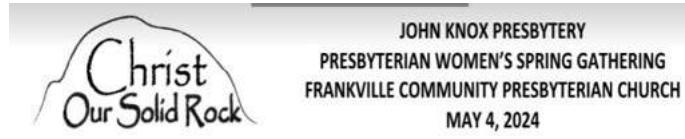
FALL GATHERINGS: If your PW Presbytery is making plans for a Fall Gathering and is looking for a speaker, contact a USAME participant to lead a presentation on the USA Mission Experience to the Arizona-Mexico border:

Julie Miller: jam1150@hotmail.com

Louella Voigt: louvoigt@hotmail.com

Kathleen Keefer: kathleenkeefer20@gmail.com

JOHN KNOX PRESBYTERY PW SPRING GATHERING



*"The Lord is my rock, my
fortress and my deliverer; my
God is my rock,
in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold."*
Psalm 18:2

Welcome, Announcements, and JKPW Business – Janine Brandt, JKPW Moderator
Special Music, "Sparrow" – Sarah Brandt
Light Christ Candle / Prayer
Presbyterian Women's Purpose (in unison)
Missions Update – JoAnn Uhlenhake
Dedication of Birthday Offering
Offering / Hymn "God, We Spend a Lifetime Growing"
Service of Holy Communion – Pastor Karla Johnson
Special Music, "A Living Prayer" – Sarah Brandt
"CHRIST, OUR SOLID ROCK" presentation and rock painting – Mary Quandahl
Closing Hymn: "My Hope is Built on Nothing Less (On Christ the Solid Rock, I Stand)"
Extinguish the Christ Candle
Table Grace and Lunch



MEMBERS OF THE TOGETHER IN SERVICE AND NATIVE AMERICAN CONCERNS COMMITTEE MET PRIOR TO THE COORDINATING TEAM MEETING TO CREATE LAYETTE KITS TO BE GIVEN TO A PROGRAM CALLED, "WELCOMING THE CHILD". THIS PROGRAM IS A MISSION PARTNER. 74 KITS WERE CREATED WITH MANY ITEMS LEFT OVER. THESE WILL BE SENT TO OTHER PARTNERS WORKING WITHIN THE DAKOTA PRESBYTERY.



**BE A VOICE FOR THE
PALESTINIANS IN GAZA. FROM
JUDY ROPS.**

MINNESOTA VALLEY PRESBYTERY PW – ANNUAL ECUMENICAL COFFEE

CHURCHES IN ROCK COUNTY AND BEYOND WERE INVITED TO THE ANNUAL GATHERING FOR THE ECUMENICAL COFFEE. LOUELLA VOIGT GAVE A WONDERFUL PRESENTATION ON HER TRIP TO THE BORDER WITH THE USAME, OUR NEW PASTOR WAS INTRODUCED TO ALL. OUR TABLE CENTERPIECES WERE DONE IN MEMORY OF OUR SISTER WHO CREATED WONDERFUL DECORATIONS FOR PW AND THE CHURCH FOR MANY YEARS. SHE PASSED AWAY LAST YEAR AND SHE IS MISSED!



With the Upcoming Churchwide Gathering in August in St. Louis, the CT voted to give each Presbytery \$300 to be used for members attending Churchwide, with the understanding that the \$300 should be returned if no one from the Presbytery attends Churchwide. Each Presbytery will decide how best to use these funds. The checks have been mailed to the Presbytery treasurers.

At the Churchwide Gathering we will be holding a Synod luncheon. The CT voted to defray part of the cost, so your members will only pay \$15 per person.

TOGETHER IN SERVICE-2024

By Pat McKisson, Committee Chair

'Answering the call to be the hands and feet of Christ in the World'

Together in Service, formerly known as Mission Opportunities, is one way that Presbyterian Women support mission. In addition to undertaking self-selected mission projects, we can also be "Together in Service" through financial gifts. The generous giving of Presbyterian Women to Together in Service funds mission initiatives such as health care, education, reconciliation and healing, poverty relief and more, as well as support for existing denominational and ecumenical programs.

For more than 200 years, Presbyterian women have demonstrated a commitment to serve the mission of the church in special, caring ways. From our early beginnings as missionary societies to our work with hospitals and schools, our caring has been tangible. What does it mean to support the mission of the church worldwide? For Presbyterian Women, it means that we respond to God's love for us by offering our many gifts to ensure wholeness for all. Standing alongside the [Presbyterian Church \(U.S.A.\)](#) and our [ecumenical partners](#), we bring Christ's love to the world.

Presbyterian Women in the Congregations, Presbyteries and Synods often also identify their own mission partners, answering needs in their communities or regions. If your group would like to pursue that route, the Together in Service Guide offers guidelines for identifying and selecting a mission emphasis and forging mission partnerships. To see the Together in Service Guide, go to P.W. website at:

[www.presbyterianwomen.org](#) and click on:

What we do, then Support Mission, then Together in Service.

People of all ages seek opportunities to express their faith through service to others. Presbyterian Women groups are a great place to share concerns, discern ways to help, and act together to show God's love to the world. By partnering with organizations and responding to their needs, Presbyterian women use their creativity, enthusiasm, skills, and generosity to give to others in a hands-on way.

Presbyterian Women answer the call to be the hands and feet of Christ in the world. Whether it's by picking up knitting needles to create a blanket for a child in need or picking up a crowbar to participate in disaster recovery work, Presbyterian Women get to work when there's a need.

Presbyterian Women offer ongoing support to local church or community projects, committing to answering short-term needs in their communities, or providing goods, labor, or financial support for Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) mission work.

What is God calling your PW group to do?

- Look around your community and prayerfully consider its needs.
- Ask mission partners how you can work together and choose projects that best match your group's interests and strengths.
- Determine if your PW group is ready to commit to ongoing support or if they prefer responding to short-term needs.
- Spread the word so that others may join you, Together in Service!

Ideas for Doers

- Provide a cleaning day for kitchens or bathrooms at a women's crisis center.
- Plan a gardening day to spruce up the entry area and grounds of a local ministry.
- Send cards or bring treats for those celebrating a birthday in a shelter.
- Form a group that reads and tutors at a local school.
- Lead a monthly Bible study or sing-along at a senior residence.

- Tie fleece blankets for new chemo patients.
- Sew walker bags or lap blankets for assisted living residents.
- Knit prayer shawls for people who are seriously ill.
- Crochet mats from plastic bags for people sleeping outdoors.
- Create fidget aprons, lap mats or twiddle muffs for people with dementia.
- Sew finger puppets and small pillows for children in hospitals and shelters.
- Make dolls or stuffed animals given through foster homes, police, or fire departments.

Ideas for Gatherers

- Paper or cleaning products for shelter residents starting their own homes.
- Menstrual hygiene products for people who need period supplies.
- Health kits for ministries to homeless individuals and families.
- Books, games, stuffed animals for children in crisis centers.
- Christmas stockings for shelters, prisons and children's hospitals.
- Basket of hand-made and purchased baby items for new parents.
- Presbyterian Disaster Assistance Gift of the Heart Kits.

Other Opportunities

PW programs:

- [PW's Annual Mission Fund \(Mission Pledge\)](#)
- [Birthday Offering and Thank Offering](#)
- [Global Exchange](#)
- [U.S.A. Mission Experience](#)

PC(USA) programs:

- [Presbyterian Hunger Program](#)
- [Presbyterian Disaster Assistance](#)
- [Ministries of Presbyterian mission co-workers](#)
- [Presbyterian Peacemaking Program](#)

Ecumenical programs:

- [Fellowship of the Least Coin](#)
- [Heifer Project International](#)
- [Habitat for Humanity](#)
- [Bread for the World](#)
- [IMA World Health](#)
- [Church World Service](#)

Please contact any of the P.W. Synod Together in Service Team, Janine Brandt, Audrey Fenton, or Pat McKisson if you have questions, you are interested in, or need help with any mission project. You can get their contact information from your P.W. Moderator.

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TOGETHER IN SERVICE-BABY LAYETTE KITS

By Pat McKisson, Committee Chair

Thank you for being the hands and feet of Christ in the World.

Did you go out and buy an infant baby blanket, a onesie, socks, bib, or outfit, or did you knit/crochet a baby blanket or hat, or did you contribute money to help the cause? If you did, a huge 'Thank You' is being sent your way for the tremendous response to this project.

At the P.W. of the Synod of Lakes and Prairies meeting in April, the coordinating team sorted by size and assembled approximately 67 baby layette kits for our Native American / Indigenous Persons Concerns Committee. 60 kits will be given to our sisters on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. The others, plus many extra items that were received, will be given out as needs arise.

It was such an overwhelming feeling of gratitude I had, as well as the entire coordinating team, when we saw the number of items received from you. Your love and generosity for this project exceeded all of our expectations! It is true when we say, 'together in service we can do anything.'

TOGETHER IN SERVICE-MISSION HIGHLIGHT

By Pat McKisson, Committee Chair

'Answering the call to be the hands and feet of Christ in the World.'

"Each one should use whatever gift one has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms." (I Peter 4:10)

The Together in Service Committee will highlight a mission which is embraced by the women of one of our churches in the Synod of Lakes and Prairies in each edition of the Sower. In this issue, we have chosen **Rural Healthcare Initiative**, a mission supported by the P.W. in the Presbytery of the Twin Cities Area and specifically, First Presbyterian Church in White Bear, MN.

Alice's Story of Vision and Dedication to a Cause:

Alice Karpeh was born in Tikonko and trained as a midwife in Liberia. In 1993, at the outbreak of Sierra Leone's civil war, Alice's husband was ambushed and killed, and she was granted US asylum. Arriving with nine children, Alice made her way to Minnesota where she worked for many years as a nurse at University of Minnesota's Boynton Health Service.

As the war raged on, Tikonko was not spared. In 1998, rebels burned villages including Tikonko, destroyed farms, and murdered residents. By the time the war ended in 2002, the county's infrastructure was destroyed and over half of its people displaced.

In 2011, with the help of Minnesotans and Sierra Leonean Americans, Alice founded Rural Health Care Initiative (RHCI) as a nonprofit in Minnesota and a Nongovernmental Organization (NGO) in Sierra Leone. RHCI collaborates with the local community to advance community health and combat one of the world's highest maternal and child death rates.

Alice has retired from RHCI's Board but continues to promote awareness and fundraise. In early 2023, Alice moved back to her home in Tikonko permanently, where she will monitor RHCI's life-saving work and progress on the ground.

The Mission of Rural Health Care Initiative is to partner with rural communities in Sierra Leone to redevelop health care systems and to overcome one of the highest maternal and child mortality rates in the world.

They have accomplished so much over the past 13 years and continue to be a leader in Sierra Leone for healthcare especially in remote regions of the country. Before RHCI, pregnant women in labor walked hours-day and night, in rain and heat- to access labor and delivery facilities at the local Community Health Centers. Babies born along the way and mothers with complications didn't survive. With RHCI's Mbao-mi Mother's Home and Gondama Birth Waiting Home, mothers make the trip in advance of labor and receive medical supervision, education services, nutritious food, and transportation to delivery facilities. They also provide social activities and instruction in farming and tailoring.

The statistics from their 2023 annual report are eye opening.

Since 2018, 1,218 pregnant and postpartum women have received care at the two Birth Waiting Homes.

In just the past year:

--290 pregnant and postpartum women have been at the two Birth Waiting Homes.

--128 pregnant and postpartum women were treated at two other remote health units we support.

--291 ultrasound scans were performed.

Other services they provide:

--Training for over 70 Community Health Workers.

--Training for Community Health Workers for annual Helping Babies Breathe course.

--Weekly motorbike clinics that go to remote rural villages and diagnosis, treat, and dispense medication that do not have access to health care.

--Monthly donations of medical supplies and medications to health centers.

--Daily medical monitoring of pregnancy followed by postpartum and newborn care.

--Education classes on newborn care, breastfeeding, family planning and sanitation/hygiene

--Access to learning activities such as tailoring and tie-dyeing

--Transportation to return home to their rural villages with their newborn.

The motorbike clinics have been a great success. Statistics show:

--6,555 Child medical visits.

--820 Prenatal care visits.

--2,858 Family planning consultations and care

--1,611 patient visits at two peripheral health units.

In a commitment to reduce disparities and reinforce local healthcare systems, in the past year, we offered:

--661 transports of women and child patients to hospital or home village

--Donated \$36,961 medical supplies and equipment.

Their Children's Health Program works to protect each child against malnutrition, malaria, and other common infections.

One out of every nine children in Sierra Leone does not survive to reach the age of 5, a staggering 17 times higher than the corresponding rate in the U.S. The prevalence of malnutrition, malaria, respiratory infections, and diarrhea significantly contributes to this distressing mortality pattern. A notable 30% of children suffer from growth stunting.

Throughout the preceding year, RHCI initiatives covered:

--1,227 malnutrition visits for children.

--166 critically ill children with transportation and coverage of hospital expenses.

--57 Community Health Workers trained to support newborns and lactating mothers.

--576 infants enrolled in newborn care program.

--1,504 newborn home visits performed.

--1,191 children updated on vaccines and preventative treatments.

May the work of RHCI continue to bring positive changes in the lives of women and children in the remote regions of Sierra Leone.

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Prevalence of violence against women and girls

Globally, an estimated 736 million women—almost one in three—have been subjected to physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence, non-partner sexual violence, or both at

least once in their life (30 per cent of women aged 15 and older). This figure does not include sexual harassment. The rates of depression, anxiety disorders, unplanned pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections, and HIV are higher in women who have experienced violence compared to women who have not, as well as many other health problems that can last after the violence has ended.

Most violence against women is perpetrated by current or former husbands or intimate partners. More than 640 million or 26 per cent of women aged 15 and older have been subjected to intimate partner violence.

Of those who have been in a relationship, almost one in four adolescent girls aged 15–19 (24 per cent) has experienced physical and/or sexual violence from an intimate partner or husband. Sixteen per cent of young women aged 15 to 24 experienced this violence in the past 12 months [9].

Reporting of violence against women

Less than 40 per cent of the women who experience violence seek help of any sort. In the majority of countries with available data on this issue, among women who do seek help, most look to family and friends and very few look to formal institutions, such as police and health services. Fewer than 10 per cent of those seeking help reported to the police.

Climate change and violence against women and girls

Climate change and slow environmental degradation exacerbate the risks of violence against women and girls due to displacement, resource scarcity and food insecurity and disruption to service provision for survivors.

Following Hurricane Katrina in 2005, the rate of rape among women displaced to trailer parks rose 53.6 times the baseline rate in Mississippi, USA, for that year [5].

In Ethiopia there was an increase in girls sold into early marriage in exchange for livestock to help families cope with the impacts of prolonged droughts [6].

From UN Women - <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/facts-and-figures#83918>

Israel/Palestine Mission Network pens letter to university leaders calling for divestment in the Holy Land

Advocacy & Social Justice May 3, 2024

Network cites General Assembly precedents on divestment

by Israel/Palestine Mission Network | Special to Presbyterian News Service

Photo by Ehimentalor Akhere Unuabona via Unsplash

Editor's note: This letter has been lightly edited.

Dear university presidents and chancellors,

We write to you as members of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), a 300-year-old institution [that divested from companies profiting from the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory in 2014](#). We encourage you to take similar measures at your university.



As the first mainline denomination to divest from companies involved in human rights abuses against Palestinians at a time when such a move was still controversial, [Presbyterians were hesitant to take such a bold action](#). Today, with more than 34,000 dead in Gaza, it is not difficult to stand on the right side of history.

Upon selling more than \$20 million of shares in Caterpillar, Motorola Solutions, and HP, the sky did not fall, and the denomination's \$9 billion investment portfolio has remained strong. Divestment is a significant step toward liberation and equality in the Holy Land. It is a nonviolent and moral tool for institutions like ours and yours.

Our divestment action in 2014 followed a long history of the church selling off its investments in companies whose business practices ran counter to our values. Our denomination was active in the South African anti-apartheid movement, divesting from several companies that propped up the white supremacist government. [We divested from all military-related companies in 1982, from tobacco companies in 1990, from for-profit prisons in 2014, and from five fossil fuel companies in 2022.](#)

Divestment in each of these cases was possible because denominational leaders allowed constituents to vote on the matter. It was ordinary pastors and laypeople who, through a democratic process, called upon the church to divest, and the church responded. Now your students are calling on you for transparency and morally sound investing policies.

Instead of inviting the police to assault and arrest them, we urge you to do the right thing and heed their call.

Like most churches, your universities exist not simply for the sake of making a profit but rather to, each in our own way, make the world a better place. As institutions of higher education, you cannot justify investing in companies that are complicit in the Israeli military's destruction of all twelve of Gaza's universities. As universities with some of the best medical schools in the world, you are collecting dividends from companies that profit from [Israel's takeover and destruction of more than two thirds of the hospitals in Gaza](#). How can you educate the next generation of global citizens while [the companies in your endowment aid and abet the murder of more than 34,000 people, including 15,000 children?](#)

How can you offer classes on the Armenian genocide, the Nazi Holocaust, or the Rwandan genocide while your money is tied to [a situation in Gaza](#) that a growing number of genocide scholars considers a case of genocide?

As people of faith, we believe in a better way. It is not too late for you to change course and rid yourself of these deadly investments. Many times throughout our history, we have needed to confess our collective sins, repent for the harm that we have helped create, and choose a better path.

We invite you to join us in this ongoing process, a course that will help lead to a world where, in the words of the prophet Amos, "[justice rolls down like water and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.](#)"

Join your courageous students and please divest now.

Sincerely,

Israel/Palestine Mission Network of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

Additional Israel-Palestine resources collected by the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) are [here](#).

Dispatch from Forbearance Presbyterian Church

Outside the Box

BY CHARLOTTE JOHNSTONE

Forbearance's Presbyterian Women organization had become stuck—tires spinning, engine sputtering, a few people pushing, some pulling back—an enterprise with crossed purposes, going nowhere fast. On the one hand, PW had always been an integral part of the church, overseeing many aspects of congregational life that otherwise would have been neglected. And yet, on the other hand, certain aspects of Forbearance's PW had somehow become preserved in amber—fossilized remnants of an earlier era that remained unexamined and unchallenged. Good intentions abounded, but tradition and organizational inertia usually triumphed. Radical surgery was needed, but no one seemed willing to make the first cut.

To be blunt, PW was in danger of becoming the sole province of the church's older women—monthly luncheon meetings recycling old business, the occasional craft project, committee reports and dutiful prayers. The one topic never on the



Catherine Latson

official agenda, however, was the question habitually and somewhat resentfully asked during the luncheon conversation—“Where are all the younger women?”

“Oh, they don’t care about church like we do” was often heard. “They’re too busy” . . . “They can’t be bothered” . . . “What we do doesn’t seem to interest them” were murmurs heard around the tables with varying degrees of annoyance and resignation. There was a

problem, all acknowledged, but the pursuit of a solution seemed so fraught with challenges to the existing PW hierarchy and the entrenched organizational egos that most of the women chose to preserve the status quo.

One woman, however, growing tired of the same old whine, decided to do something about it. Marge Paley, an elder and a PW fixture, “interviewed” many of the younger women of Forbearance, but she did it with a twist. Instead of asking the usual unproductive and defensive question—“Why don’t you come to PW meetings?”—she asked a question designed to lead to progress: “If you could create a women’s organization within Forbearance, one that would

engage your interest, what would it look like?” And this is some of what she heard . . .

“I’m a teacher and I have three kids of my own, so my time is limited for long-term commitments. I’d like to see an organization that allowed me to dip in and out without feeling guilty about not attending every meeting—some sort of structure where I could get involved to accomplish a defined task in a specific time frame.”

"The one time I went to a PW meeting, no one talked to me. I introduced myself to the women around me, but they didn't seem much interested. I was relatively new to Forbearance and thought this might be a place where I could connect, but it just seemed to be a group that had a few women who ran things, with a lot of women who just listened. I asked about opportunities for involvement, but no one got back to me, so I figured this was an organization that didn't need me. I guess if I were running things there, I would make sure that new people got not only an enthusiastic welcome, but also a chance to get immediately involved."

"Well, the first thing I'd do is make sure we understood the differences between Forbearance's generations.

My mother's generation, I think, is more loyal to institutions and traditions, perhaps more conservative about wholesale change, while my generation and my children's generation tend to be skeptical, entrepreneurial, comfortable with rapid change, less likely to be loyal to an institution and more likely to be loyal to a cause.

None of these generations are wholly right or wrong, but if we're going to work together, we need to embrace the differences and learn from each other.

We all work hard and we're all productive, but if a church group wants to attract younger women, connect them to a pragmatic goal, show them where and why they're needed, welcome challenges to the existing order and jettison any hint of turf protection."

"I'd have a PW executive committee made up of only a moderator to oversee the whole thing, a treasurer to manage

the money, a project manager and two project advisory members. Instead of monthly meetings, the women of Forbearance would be offered a variety of six-week project opportunities in which to participate and each project would determine its own leadership. Forbearance's women—and men—could participate in as few or as many of the projects as their schedules permitted. What would the projects be? Well, they could include projects directed to the needs of the larger community, an evening book group, a breakfast Bible study, PW fund-raising initiatives, a series of theologically relevant movie nights with discussion, a babysitting co-op, planning for a working trip to a foreign mission, a biography project to gather the life stories of Forbearance members, a PW investment group, a project to arrange for four yearly evening seminars with provocative speakers, a resale shop, partnership with a homeless shelter . . . there are numerous possibilities. Then, once a year, I would have the project participants meet for dinner at the church to assess their projects and to recommend new initiatives—or continuation of successful ones—to the executive committee. The advantages would include diverse leadership within each project, manageable time commitments of definite duration, irrelevance of age or gender, friendships formed through mutual pursuits, easy access to the life of the church for new members. My PW organization would be less interested in preserving its traditional self and more interested in being a catalyst, a seedbed."

As Marge eventually told the PW board, **"If we want the younger women of Forbearance to take more of an interest in what PW has to offer, we need to think like the younger women of Forbearance.** They are

multitaskers, have limited free time, value innovation, don't shy away from conflict, are involved with issues that go far beyond this community. They value leadership that is bold and imaginative, able to reinvent itself. They do not say, 'But we've always done it that way.' They say, 'Think outside the box or be left behind.' They have ideas that need to be heard. They are pragmatic and task-oriented, they are connected to dynamic and cutting-edge ideas, and they enjoy friendships with all sorts of people. Monthly luncheons with polite conversation and static agendas feel like spinning wheels to them, but a project-based PW program with definable goals—projects that would involve all ages, more equality of leadership and a changing cast of participants—would be, from what I heard, more likely to attract their attention. I like their ideas and I like their energy, and I think we ought to follow their lead and reinvent ourselves."

Marge got, as one might expect, a mixed reception. A few women, entrenched in Forbearance's leadership, were vaguely offended and discomfited, perhaps hostile to the idea that younger women, who had previously spurned PW involvement, should have any influence at all on their organization. But others, perhaps just enough, recognized the possibilities and began to advocate for change.

It's a start, Marge thought. And who knows what might result from the debate? A leaner, more dynamic, bolder and more diverse organization that values the past but embraces the future? A group of Presbyterian women reinventing themselves to meet the challenges of a new age? Yes indeed, thought Marge, it's a definite start.

Charlotte Johnstone is a member of Immanuel Presbyterian Church in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. She (and the cast of Forbearance Presbyterian Church) welcomes comments. Write to her at *Horizons*, 100 Witherspoon St., Louisville, KY 40202-1396, or email wjohns4949@aol.com.



SYNOD of Lakes & Prairies PW Gathering

June 12-15, 2025 Watertown Event Center
Watertown, South Dakota

Pre-Gathering opportunities: Visit Lake Traverse Reservation or
Redlin Art Gallery or Coddington County Museum

Watch for details in the next *Sower* newsletter as speakers,
workshops and details are available!

If you would like to volunteer to help plan this event,
provide a workshop, or help with on-site
details—we'd love to have you come on-board the
planning team!

Thanks, Maggie Horak (PWSLAP Vice Moderator).



Recently, the Presbyterian Women of the Synod of Lakes and Prairies created a new Facebook page to keep you informed on all the exciting things happening with PWSLAP! The page can be found by clicking on this link: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61552522904776> or by searching for Synod of Lakes and Prairies Presbyterian Women on Facebook. Once you find the page, please "Like" it and updates will appear in your Facebook feed.



If you have any items you would like to add to the PWSLAP Facebook page, please send them to Christy Abraham, PWSLAP Facebook Coordinator at christylou71@gmail.com

PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN ARE BOLD – AROUND THE WORLD

CELEBRATING A BOLD PW

“PW are uniquely BOLD” is a short yet powerful two-minute video that highlights the unique and important witness that PW brings to the church and world. Available at youtube.com/presbyterianwomen/videos (PW’s YouTube channel), the video debuted at the 225th General Assembly (2022) and is an excellent tool for showing why Presbyterian Women matters. Share a link for the video in your next personal email, church newsletter or minute for mission. Use it as a tool to raise awareness about and invite others to participate in our life-changing organization.

READY FOR DOWNLOADING

“PW Essentials” (formerly PW Manual) is available at <https://www.presbyterianwomen.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/PWR23120-PW-Essentials.pdf> for downloading. In the future, any changes or new editions will be available in a downloadable format only.

A TRIENNIUM THEME WORTHY OF COMMITTING TO: Living in a world without violence against women and children. Pause for a moment of silence on Thursdays at noon your local time to remember and honor those who have died at the hand of sexualized or gender-based violence. Go online at <https://www.ecumenicalwomenun.org/thursdays-in-black> and commit to the pledge below:

I commit to: **Thursdays in Black.**

In solidarity. In protest. In mourning. For awareness and In hope.

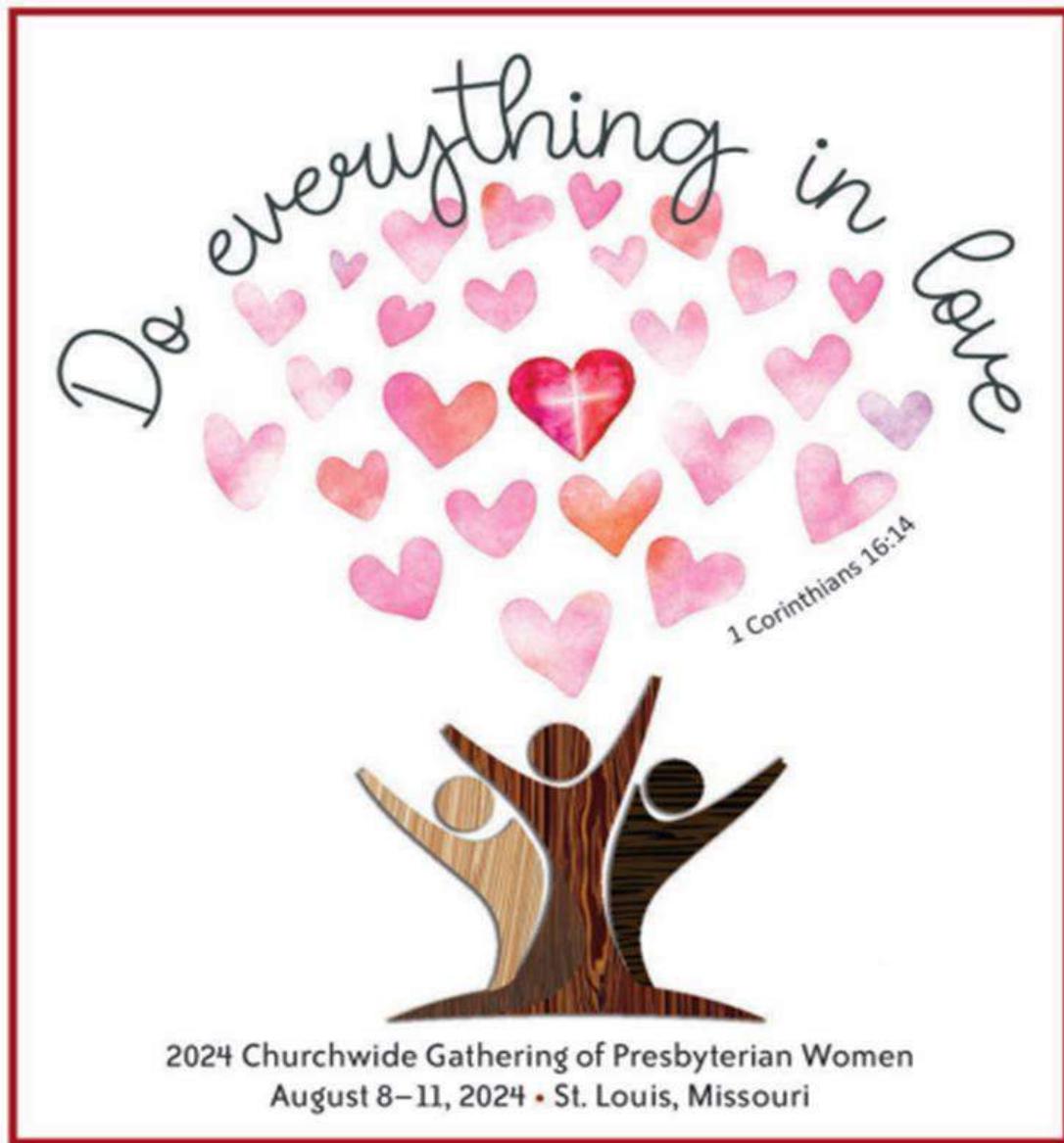
By supporting to wear black on Thursdays, I stand

- In solidarity with 1 in 3 women worldwide who face violence in their lives
- In protest against systems and societies that encourage violence in any form
- In mourning for men, women and children who are harmed and killed in sexual violence
- For awareness and knowledge about the challenges of sexual and gender-based violence.
- In the hope that a different reality is possible.

MAKE THE PLEDGE. #THURSDAYS IN BLACK. STAND AGAINST VIOLENCE.



DON'T FORGET TO WEAR BLACK ON THURSDAY, AUGUST 8TH FOR THE BEGINNING OF THE CHURCHWIDE GATHERING!!!



Save the date to gather in person and in faithful community
at the 2024 Churchwide Gathering of Presbyterian Women,

August 8-11, 2024

Details to come!

presbyterianwomen.org/gathering

You're invited to

Sit & Sip



Join other Presbyterian Women from the Synod of Lakes and Prairies (and beyond) for a monthly round table discussion on issues prominent in today's world.

NO Sit & Sip on May 2 as it falls on Memorial Day weekend.

Sit & Sip events are held via Zoom – the next one is on June 29 at 11 AM Central Time.

Our topic for discussion is: LGBTQIA+ community

So grab your favorite beverage, relax in your favorite chair and join the discussion.

Register by contacting Kathleen Keefer at kathleenkeefer.pw@gmail.com. A zoom link and resource materials will be sent to you several days before the event.



Ferncliff Camp & Conference Center in Little Rock is ready to host church mission trips to help replenish the stock of disaster kits

To watch the video, copy and paste the link below into your browser.

<https://youtu.be/tBQV9PdoaKY>



2023 PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN JUSTICE & PEACE CALENDAR

We are called to share god's love with the world, by being god's hands in the world. we answer god's call to "do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with our God" (Micah 6:8). Remember, every Thursday is an opportunity to participate in Thursdays in Black. See oikoumene.org/what-we-do/thursdays-in-black

J&P Calendar for May 2024

Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month; asianpacificheritage.gov

2 National Day of Prayer; nationaldayofprayer.org

2-8 Children's Book Week; everychildareader.net/cbw

6 May Holocaust Remembrance Day; ushmm.org/remember/days-of-remembrance/resources/calendar

7 National Teacher Day; nea.org

11 World Fair Trade Day; wfto.com

11 Stamp Out Hunger Day; about.usps.com/corporate-social-responsibility/nalc-food-drive.htm

12 Mother's Day; presbyterianmission.org/story/a-prayer-for-mothers-day

13 J&P Book Discussion Group online, 6:30-8:30 PM (Eastern) on *Transforming: The Bible & the Lives of Transgender Christians* by Austen Hartke. Register at presbyterianwomen.org/justice

15 Palestinian Nakba Remembrance Day; presbyterianmission.org/story/may-15-2022/

19 Pentecost; presbyterianmission.org/ministries/worship/christianyear/pentecost

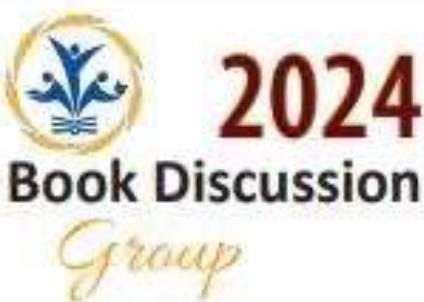
19 Intercultural Church Sunday; pcusa.org/resource/intercultural-ministries-19226

22 International Day for Biological Diversity; cbd.int/idb

27 Memorial Day; presbyterianmission.org/story/may-30-2022

Want the J&P calendar for the entire year?

Click here to download the PDF or visit the Justice and Peace webpage at presbyterianwomen.org/justice, where you can also find additional details.



JUSTICE and PEACE



DISCUSS THE BOOKS WITH OTHERS VIA ZOOM

- The J&P Book Discussion Group is open to all!



DISCUSSION GROUP MEETS EVERY OTHER MONTH

- Read and discuss any or all books that appeal to you. Registration will be needed to join the discussion on Zoom.



RECEIVE STUDY GUIDES TO INFORM YOUR READING

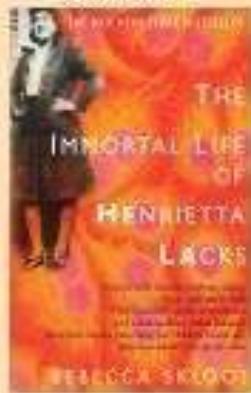
- Questions for discussion or reflection will be sent with your registration confirmation.



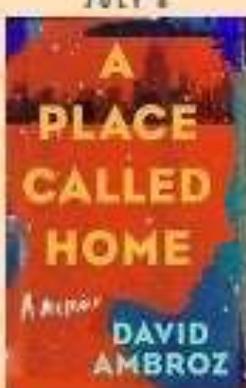
To register, scan the QR code with your smart phone or go to presbyterianwomans.org/Justice.

Reading Selections (6:30 pm – 8:30 pm Eastern Time)

JANUARY 8



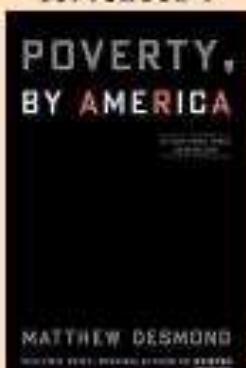
JULY 8



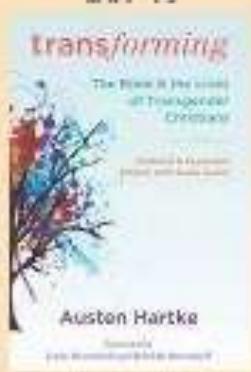
MARCH 11



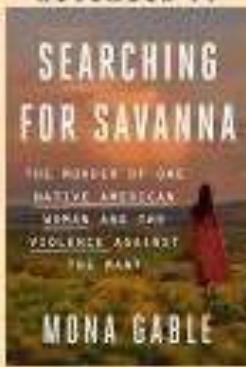
SEPTEMBER 8



MAY 11



NOVEMBER 11



Selections are recommended by the Justice & Peace Committee of PW's Board of Directors.



Introducing Presbyterian Women's *Build a Bouquet* FUNdraiser

PW's *Build a Bouquet* campaign invites us to celebrate all the individuals and programs that help Presbyterian Women bloom in so many spectacular ways and places. Funds received through this campaign will build PW's Annual Fund, which supports all PW ministries and programs, at all levels of the organization.

Bouquets

Beginning in May 2023 through the Churchwide Gathering in August 2024, gifts to Presbyterian Women's *Build a Bouquet* campaign will be recognized with a virtual bouquet. Bouquets will be digitally displayed at the Churchwide Gathering and via other PW communications.

Seven bouquet options + one community garden are available!

	Flower	Amount
	Carnations	\$10.00
	Lillies (memorial)	\$10.00
	Tulips	\$25.00
	Daisies	\$35.00
	Sunflowers	\$45.00
	Mixed bouquet	\$55.00
	Roses	\$100.00
	Community garden	\$500.00

For each gift to the PW *Build a Bouquet* campaign, a card (in honor or in memory of) will be available to print and mail, download and email, or email directly with a personalized message.

Build your bouquet (or learn more) at presbyterianwomen.org/bouquet.

Or, send a check with additional information (the bouquet option you choose, your name and address, email address and telephone number) to: Presbyterian Women, Inc., Remittance Processing—Giving, PO Box 643652, Pittsburgh PA 15264-3652.

Presbyterian Women's Annual Fund (the Mission Pledge) makes possible every mission, program and resource of PW, including the Churchwide Gathering. Give now to support Presbyterian Women's witness in the world.

[**GIVE TO PW's ANNUAL FUND**](#)

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Presbyterian Women in Synod

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