



# How to Use *Horizons* Magazine

## WHY THIS ISSUE IS IMPORTANT

With its focus on the 2005 Global Exchange to Brazil, this issue offers the opportunity to “see with new eyes.” In addition to literally seeing Brazil as the presenters did, this issue aims to open your ears to the voices of sisters in Christ who lead lives very different from the average Presbyterian woman in the United States, and help you search your heart for God’s call to you.

While only a limited number of Presbyterian Women personally participate in the Global Exchange, those who do commit to share their experiences and reflections with Presbyterian Women and the wider church for two years following the trip, in as many ways and places as they can. *Horizons* is just one such venue. The benefits and blessings to be gained from opening our minds and hearts to the lives of our Brazilian sisters come not only from the *awareness* arising from our reading of this issue, but even more so from the prayerful and considered *actions* we take.

So read, absorb, use the suggestions you find here, pray for the Holy Spirit’s guidance, and you will find yourself empowered to fulfill the PW Purpose—*nurturing faith, supporting the mission of the church worldwide, working for justice and peace, and building the inclusive, caring community . . . that witnesses to the promise of God’s kingdom.*

## FOCUSING ON THE ISSUES

### “Walking Arm-in-Arm into the Future” By Ann Ferguson

- Look at the U.S. Census Bureau’s basic statistics for the United States and consider the figures in light of the poverty and inequities in Brazil mentioned in this article. See [www.census.gov/statab/www/brief.html](http://www.census.gov/statab/www/brief.html), and choose among the categories listed. You may also want to compare the two countries through the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency)’s World Factbook, [www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook](http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook).
- Ferguson notes that “Presbyterians are a minority within the Protestant minority.” Call your presbytery office to see how statistically significant (or insignificant!) Presbyterians are in your area.
- In your circle, PW or other group, discuss the author’s words in the second paragraph of this article regarding European colonization of both Brazil and the United States, focusing particularly on the last sentence of the paragraph. Do you agree or disagree, and why or why not?
- In describing a very small congregation in Brasília that housed not only the church but also a school and a cooperative, the author says “...the churches are never empty, never still.” In what ways is your congregation’s facility used when not in worship or church-specific programming? Are there needs in the community that could be served by the church’s space?
- Ferguson comments on a neo-Pentecostal sect that “preaches a variation on the ‘theology of prosperity.’” Are you aware of similar groups in the United States? Discuss with others why you think people are so strongly drawn to such philosophies and what effects this may have on Christianity.

## “Called to a New Moment” By various participants

- Invite someone of Brazilian origin (preferably a woman, if available) to speak to your circle, PW or other group about life in Brazil. Check with a local university or community college to locate someone if necessary, or just ask around!
- Questions regarding health care (see “A Christ-Centered Hospital,” p. 8) for individual consideration and/or group discussion:
  - How does the North American emphasis on individuality and privacy in health care contrast with the situations described in Shannon Roe’s reflection?
  - How do you think health care in this country would be affected if family members were encouraged to assume some non-professional aspects of a patient’s care?
  - What views of the outdoors (if any) are offered patients in the hospitals with which you’re familiar? If you were hospitalized, what type of view would you find most conducive to inner peace and healing?
- In reading about Project Amparo (p. 8), are you aware of any similar comprehensive child-parent programs in Presbyterian churches in your area? (Check with your presbytery office to find if there are any, and what you could do to support it/them.) Do you know any “Veronicas” whose faith and determination have led to sharing the good news of Christ in concrete ways like those described here?
- Igracia Presbyteriana hosts a skin cancer clinic (p. 9).
  - Do you and members of your circle or other groups get regular screenings for skin cancer?
  - How can you encourage those whose livelihoods include lots of sun exposure to take protective measures, e.g., sunscreen, hats, proper clothing?
  - See the Web site of the Skin Cancer Foundation, [www.skincancer.org](http://www.skincancer.org).
  - In a February 2004 article on WebMD Medical News, Neil Osterweil says, “The most serious form of skin cancer (malignant melanoma) is moving up through the ranks of the most common forms of cancer in the U.S., moving from the No. 6 slot in 1997, to a projected No. 1 by the year 2022, researchers predict.” What can your PW do to encourage young women, and people of all ages, to be comfortable with their God-given skin color, and ignore the whole “healthy tan” cultural pressure?
- Flavia Alvarez writes about the AGAPE Program (p. 9) and one church’s efforts to reach out to the children of the community.
  - Find an after-school program run by a church in your community, if one exists (it may be only one day a week), and ask for permission to visit or tour the program.
  - Are there people, especially women, in your congregation who have volunteered or worked with a program similar to AGAPE? Ask that person to share their experiences and commitment to their program with you, your circle, or other group.
- Kathryn Baker talks about the challenges of ethical farming in “A Cup of Coffee and a Prayer” (p. 10)
  - If you are a farmer, share your struggles and challenges to be a good steward, or invite a farmer or farming family in your congregation to speak.
  - Purchase fairly-traded products and encourage others to do so, especially members of your congregation. Use only fairly traded coffee in your church coffeepots. See [www.pcusa.org/coffee/trade.htm](http://www.pcusa.org/coffee/trade.htm) for more information and ways to order.

- When you read about new church planting (Shirley Patton’s reflection on p. 10), do you know what happens to get a new church started in your presbytery? Call the presbytery office for more information, or take a look at [www.pcusa.org/newchurch/](http://www.pcusa.org/newchurch/).
  - If there is a new church development reasonably close in your presbytery, invite the pastor or an elder to share the story of the new church’s start, and talk about joys as well as challenges.
  - You or your circle, PW or congregation might commit to regular prayer for one or more new church developments, including the one in Aguas Lindas.
- Stella Webster points out the “presence and absence” of indigenous people in Brazil (p. 11). She comments on her status as a Native American in the United States; what similarities do you see between what you know of Native American history in this country and her description of the current situation in Brazil? See the Web site of the National Museum of the American Indian (part of the Smithsonian Institution), [www.nmai.si.edu](http://www.nmai.si.edu).
- Susan McMichael shares the story of the Institute for Theological Education of Bahia and its connection to the Presbyterian Women’s Birthday Offering (p. 11).
  - What do you know about Presbyterian seminaries—how many are there? Where are they located? Has anyone in your group or congregation been to seminary?
  - Does your congregation support the Theological Education Fund? Learn about it and ways you can support it at [www.pcusa.org/seminaries/funds](http://www.pcusa.org/seminaries/funds).
  - **Download** or **order** the 2006 PW Birthday Offering free promotional materials.
- “Something from Nothing” (p. 12) depicts a different process for recycling than most of us are familiar with. Ask yourself these questions:
  - How could your own recycling efforts improve or get started?
  - Does your congregation recycle? Does it encourage members to do so at home? Who benefits from recycling programs in your community?
- Kathy Wareham tells about her visit to CISM (p. 12), which offers services and hope to women working as prostitutes. Compare her account with the story of the Mary Magdalene Project (started with a PW Thank Offering grant) found in the **March 2006 issue of *Presbyterians Today*** (“Freed from Prostitution,” pp. 21–23).
- In “One Man’s Perspective,” (p. 13) John Davison says, “The suggested preparation was well worth the time it took.” Participants read various resources about Brazil (recommended by the Global Exchange committee) before leaving the United States; each participant was assigned to a study group for a topic relevant to Brazil; many studied Portuguese as well. Consider studying the topics, reading a recommended resource or learning Portuguese. Members of your group, circle or PW could commit to reading one of the recommended resources and discussing it, or each read a different resource to present to the group.

#### “Changing Destiny” By Susan Jackson Dowd

- What connection do you see between the life’s work of Benedita da Silva and the PW Purpose?
- Do you know any women who have overcome obstacles similar to those that Benedita da Silva recounted in this interview?
- Benedita says, “When we educate and train, we don’t invite just the children, but the whole family . . . the whole family gets involved in the courses, and then they exchange information.” Are you aware of any programs in your community or presbytery that use the “whole family” approach to education and vocational training?
- Benedita da Silva presents networks as a tool for multiplying voice and power for action and change. In what ways is PW a network?

- After reading this interview, what specific ways do you see that your circle and/or PW (or another group) can support Benedita da Silva and the work of her foundation?

**“Another World Is Possible”** By Joanne Blaney and Heidi Cerneka

- Try to put yourself in Leah’s or Maria’s place. To what lengths would you go to provide for your children or grandchildren if you were completely destitute?
- Check with a local law enforcement agency or domestic violence shelter to learn about the domestic violence laws in your state.
- Identify the domestic violence shelters or other related programs in your area, and invite a staff member from one to speak to your circle, PW or other group.
- If you know a woman who has been a domestic violence victim and is willing to share her story, her testimony could personalize a crime that often seems nameless and faceless.
- Identify and support organizations that help girls and young women value their own worth and build self-confidence, e.g., Girl Scouts, Girl Power, Girls, Inc.
- Ask a police officer or other law enforcement personnel to share how they are trained to deal with victims of domestic violence (both female and male).
- Check out the following resources (available through Presbyterian Distribution service, 800/524-2612) for more information and education:
  - Presbyterians Against Domestic Violence Network: visit their Web pages, [www.pcusa.org/phewa/padvn.htm](http://www.pcusa.org/phewa/padvn.htm), for PADV resources and theological statement
  - *Confronting Violence Against Women: The Church’s Calling* (comprehensive packet with statistics, worship suggestions, information and denominational stances); \$6.00 plus shipping.
  - *Striking Terror No More: The Church Responds to Domestic Violence* (handbook; revised 10/05); \$18.95 plus shipping
  - *Turn Mourning Into Dancing: A Policy Statement on Healing* (policy statement approved by the 213th General Assembly 2001 accompanied by study guide); \$4.00 plus shipping
  - *Anguished Hearts* (seven-session study on domestic violence; covers spouse/partner, child, elder, sibling, dating violence and abuse of people who are vulnerable); \$8.00 plus shipping
  - *Presbyterian Panel Report: Interpersonal Violence* (1999 survey results of members, elders and clergy on the issue of interpersonal violence); \$5.00 plus shipping
  - *When We Are All Strong Together: Building Gender Justice* (seven-session study and advocacy guide); free item but shipping charges apply

**“A Call to a New Ecumenism”** By June Ramage Rogers

- In your circle or other group, discuss the content of the paragraphs under the header “Widening the Dialogue.” Have you considered the variety of ways Christianity has appropriated, and continues to blend, indigenous or cultural beliefs and practices?
- Do you see any similarities between orixás and our concept of the communion of the saints? What about the “cloud of witnesses” mentioned in Hebrews 12:1? Have you ever felt accompanied in intercessory prayer by the remembrance or emotional presence of a deceased loved one?
- In “Who Needs Permission?” (p. 25) Janet Riley shares the struggles of women ordained to ministry of Word and Sacrament in some Brazilian Presbyterian denominations. How would you compare the struggles for acceptance experienced by female pastors in the PC(USA) with

the stories of the women profiled in this article? Consider especially those women pioneers who were first ordained to ministry of Word and Sacrament in the late 1950s and 1960s.

- Write a prayer for the women whose stories are told here, personalizing it as much as possible. Compose this prayer as an individual, or invite your circle or other group to read this article and write a group prayer to be prayed aloud.
- If you haven't yet taken a look at it, see the report *Clergywomen's Experiences in Ministry: Realities and Challenges, 2003*. This report, from the Advocacy Committee for Women's Concerns, is available from your presbytery resource center; or order through the Office of Women's Advocacy (888/728-7228, ext. 5385 or [email Leigh Harper](mailto:Leigh.Harper@pcusa.org))
- See the new book



*Celebrating Our Call: Ordination Stories of Presbyterian Women*

Edited by Patricia Lloyd-Sidle

Louisville, Ky.: Geneva, 2006

ISBN: 0664502873.

Borrow it from your presbytery resource center or order from

*Presbyterian Publishing Corporation* (ph: 800/227-2872).

**“Steadfast and Determined”** By Meghan McKinney

- In what other countries of the world are women in the forefront of the struggle for rights to safe homelands and an existence free of intimidation and violence?
- What groups in the U.S.A. seek to protect territories and people endangered by organizations whose goals are primarily related to maximizing profits or economic return?

**“Promised Land”** By Miguel Carter

- This article offers part of the history of Brazilians' efforts for land reform, noting that “land reform affects the redistribution of wealth and power.”
  - What is a *hectare*?
  - Carter says, “In a matter of days, the peasants established an elaborate internal organization—a network of family groups, a variety of task teams, a coordination council and a leadership committee.” Have you ever been part of such a venture that had to establish its own internal functions in such an all-encompassing fashion? Can you see any biblical connections, e.g., the Israelites in their exodus wanderings?

**“The MST”** By Celia Alldridge

- As you read about the Escola Nacional Florestan Fernandes in “Teaching Transformation,” (p. 33) are you aware of educational programs in this country or abroad that use a format similar to going to school for 30 days and being at home for 60 days? What about having a student-built and -operated school with no staff and visiting professors? Contrast this with traditional public education in the United States.
- In “Three Voices, One Vision” (p. 34), three members of MMC share their view of their work with this grassroots women's rights movement.
  - Do you see any similarities between the MMC and the history of the women's movement in the United States?
  - At the end of the interview with Rosangela, Luci and Luciana, the women point out some of commonly received stereotypes about Brazil. What stereotypical images would you assign to the United States?

### Another Brazilian Connection

From February 14–23, 2006, Porto Alegre, Brazil hosted the ninth Assembly of the World Council of Churches. The World Council of Churches is a fellowship of more than 340 churches in 100 countries that is dedicated to Christian Unity. The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is a member denomination. Read the Presbyterian News Service [articles about WCC](#), in particular “Brazilian president urges churches to help build ‘[just and equitable society](#)’”.

Learn more about the [WCC](#) on their Web site; learn about the assembly and see pictures of it on the [Assembly’s Web pages](#).

Brazilian writer and educator Paulo Freire is an important figure for Christian education.

Learn more about him at [www.paulofreire.org](http://www.paulofreire.org), the Web site for the Paulo Freire Institute.