

Blessings without Boundaries

The Mission Pledge at Work 2010 Mission Pledge of Presbyterian Women

The dollars you give to mission through Presbyterian Women's Mission Pledge have a far-reaching impact. Your gifts touch, directly or indirectly, every aspect of Presbyterian Women and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). How were some of those dollars put to work in 2008?

Supporting the Mission of the Church Worldwide

Blessings Without Boundaries, Presbyterian Women's enhanced Mission Pledge campaign, is the foundation for PW's Celebration Giving program. Individual commitments from women in the pews support PW's work at the congregational, presbytery, synod and churchwide levels. These pledges also make it possible for PW to materially support the mission of the PC(USA) through a significant share of the funds raised. Presbyterian women have a long history of such "second-mile giving." PW and its predecessor organizations have built schools and hospitals, funded leadership development programs, established mission programs, and shared God's love with ministries throughout the church and worldwide. In 2008 your "second-mile giving" funded an emergency agricultural program in El Salvador to help alleviate hunger in that country, enabled young Presbyterian women of color to attend the United Nations' Commission on the Status of Women, and supported your PC(USA) mission coworkers.

Engaging in Hands-On Mission

In May 2008, Presbyterian Women took its third weeklong work trip to New Orleans, to help rebuild the Gulf Coast area in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. A group of 15 women partnered with RHINO (Restore Hope in New Orleans) and St. Charles Avenue Presbyterian Church to construct homes and develop relationships with people and ministries in southern Louisiana. RHINO, a ministry of St. Charles, works with Habitat for Humanity to rebuild neighborhoods in New Orleans, and works with other relief groups, including Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, in other towns along the coast. On this trip, the PW group and RHINO joined Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter's Work Week building blitz in the Lower Ninth Ward. In 2008, PW awarded a Birthday Offering Grant to Lakeview Presbyterian Church Weekday School in New Orleans as part of PW's commitment to rebuilding hope along the Gulf Coast. For more information on the RHINO trip, see Presbyterian Women's web pages, www.pcusa.org/pw/missionmatters; for information on the Birthday Offering, see the January/February 2009 issue of *Horizons* or visit www.pcusa.org/pw/birthday.

The Mission Pledge at Work

Strengthening the PC(USA)

In 2008, Presbyterian Women's Leadership Enhancement Committee launched a churchwide campaign to introduce PW to congregations that did not have PW groups. More than 5,000 invitations went out. More than 70 congregations responded, asking for more information. More than half of the nearly 11,000 congregations in the PC(USA) already had PW groups. Those groups participate actively in PW's Purpose—nurturing prayer and Bible study, supporting the mission of the church worldwide, working for justice and peace, and building an inclusive, caring community of women. In doing so, they raise money to support mission efforts all over the world; they partner with local, regional, national and international organizations; they hold Bible study meetings on a regular basis; they pray, worship and contribute funds to ecumenical prayer movements like World Day of Prayer and Fellowship of the Least Coin; and they strengthen the church through their work in their congregations.

Developing Leadership for Mission and Ministry

“So, what are you going to do now that you are retired?”

How many women have been asked that question as they near retirement? The Newly Retired Women's Task Group spent several months considering how to involve newly retired women in PW and PC(USA) mission and ministry. Its report, including recommendations, was presented to the February 2009 CCT through the Leadership Enhancement Committee. The task group concluded that retired women can offer a wealth of expertise and enthusiasm to PW, and that churches, presbyteries and synods would benefit from inviting them to participate as members and leaders for PW.

The Leadership Enhancement Committee has begun implementing the task group's recommendations. Following LEC's lead, the Churchwide Coordinating Team is recommending that PW adopt “Newly Retired Women” as its emphasis for 2009–2012 by identifying and welcoming newly retired women to PW, recognizing their gifts, and serving their needs. The committee further recommends that

leaders encourage learning opportunities at presbytery and synod gatherings specifically aimed at newly retired women—for example, programs on spirituality, grief, health, finance, and the particular challenges of the sandwich generation.

Expanding Global Mission

In September 2008, a group of 30 Presbyterian women PW staff participated in the triennial PW Global Exchange. This exchange traveled to the Czech Republic, Hungary and Carpath Ukraine. A smaller group of six spent an additional week with PC(USA) staff and church partners in Russia. The overarching goal of any PW Global Exchange is to renew and build relationships with women and church partners throughout the world as participants experience personal transformation. This particular trip focused on ending all forms of violence and advocating for the rights of women and children, particularly among the Roma people. The March/April 2009 issue of *Horizons* magazine is dedicated to the trip. Mission Pledge funds made the planning and implementation of the trip possible. They also make it possible for women from Central Europe to itinerate through the synods and join Presbyterian Women at the 2009 Churchwide Gathering. The CCT's mission committee is exploring joint mission projects with PW's Hungarian sisters. Watch for more on this in 2009 and 2010.

Working for Justice and Peace

In April 2008, a group of 19 Presbyterian Women traveled to the border cities of El Paso, Texas, and Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, on the first U.S.A. Mission Experience. Connecting concerns raised by past Global Exchanges and continuing the work of addressing issues of justice and mercy as a national communal body, immigration became a focus for Presbyterian Women through a mandate from the 2006 Business Meeting. As the PC(USA) continually affirms its commitment to welcoming immigrants, advocating for just immigration laws and calling for immigration reform, Presbyterian women are pioneering new ways to seek justice and to act faithfully in word and deed.

The Mission Pledge at Work

Personal and Community Development

By Essie Buxton

Each year, a portion of PW's Mission Pledge is given as undesignated funds to PC(USA)'s General Assembly Council. Thus, every PC(USA) program that relies on undesignated funds is supported by PW. It's inspiring to learn about the exciting and life-changing programs—like the Young Adult Volunteer (YAV) program—that rely on undesignated gifts like PW's Mission Pledge to operate.

Steve Gillard recently completed a year of learning and service as a young adult volunteer in Tucson, Arizona. Steve joined the YAV program to live in intentional Christian community with other young adults who share similar passions for social justice, spiritual development and simple living.

Reflecting on his experience, Steve says, "I did not make a deep connection between my interests in social justice, service and nature during college, but had every opportunity to do so the year after graduation. . . . I lived in a house in Tucson with six other volunteers, who each had a full-time volunteer position. Mine was to work with a Mennonite organization that did emergency home repairs for low-income residents around the area. I saw a lot of depressing living situations and learned how to fix swamp coolers, furnaces, roofs, plumbing, water lines; build decks; tile bathrooms; and hang drywall. Each of

my housemates received a \$300 stipend every month and contributed a portion of that to a communal pot, which paid for food and utilities.

"We drew up a house covenant, promising to strive for an ecologically-low-impact lifestyle, to get involved in our community and to solve our inevitable conflicts with civility. Our lifestyle involved riding bikes as our primary mode of transportation (a 10-mile commute each way to and from work for me), buying local and organic food when possible, recycling, harvesting rainwater, composting food scraps, utilizing a gray water system, getting a portion of our hot water from a solar heater, hanging our clothes to dry and experimenting with a composting toilet system. These practices made us think deeply in a whole-systems manner and allowed us to consider ways to close loops of consumption, which would otherwise create an unnecessary waste of resources and energy."

In Tucson and around the world, the Young Adult Volunteer Program helps young adults to focus on their relationships with Christ and others, and to explore how their actions affect the ecology and spirit of their community. The Tucson YAV program continues to make a difference in its community, in part as a result of undesignated giving through Presbyterian Women.

Essie Buxton is PC(USA) associate for young adult and national volunteers

Your giving makes a difference in the lives of people in the United States and around the world.

The Mission Pledge at Work

Putting Down Roots, Growing the Church

By Emily Enders Odom

Presbyterian Women can certainly claim some deep roots! With the organization's own mission firmly grounded in the love of Jesus Christ, this visionary and inclusive community of women has consistently branched out with its own tendrils of support to ensure that worthwhile new initiatives are given their own roots to grow.

Nurturing a network of women that strengthens the PC(USA) and witnesses to the promise of God's kingdom is foundational to the PW Mission Pledge. Funds collected through the Mission Pledge comprise the basic source of funding for PW's program and mission at all levels—congregational through Churchwide—and are a source of funding for PC(USA) programs.

"The Mission Pledge funds enable PW participation in leadership training, denominational conferences and ecumenical events, thus enriching lives and PW immeasurably," said Hazel Fuhrmeister, a former PW churchwide moderator. "It has been a joy for me to not only be involved in such growth opportunities myself, but to watch women grow over the years, developing skills they may not have known they had, and becoming advocates for issues that they first encountered through these wider experiences."

It was precisely because of such intentional cultivation by Presbyterian Women that REYWT (Racial Ethnic Young Women Together) was able to take root. Defying conventional standards of pronunciation, the acronym REYWT is deliberately pronounced "root," evoking the deep connections shared by these young women across their Christian faith, gender, cultural and age identities.

According to its mission statement, "the purpose of REYWT is to be a nationally structured network of racial ethnic young women whose leadership will reflect the diversity of today's church and who will develop and provide resources that support our goal of becoming a vital and recognizable constituency of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)." Since 2003, PW has supported REYWT with funds from the

Mission Pledge and from grants funded by other PW projects. From 2003–2006, PW contributions assisted with staff support, programming and community building. In 2006–2009, PW funding supported REYWT retreats for young women of various racial ethnic backgrounds from across the country.

"PW has been assisting REYWT from the beginning," said Bridgett Green, former REYWT staff. "Six years ago, when the idea of REYWT was coming together, PW supported the group of young women and Women's Ministries staff as they developed and shaped the concept of the ministry to get it on its feet."

Tiffany B. Gonzales, former intern for the Office of Racial Justice and Advocacy and the Office of Women's Advocacy, found the 2008 REYWT retreat to be a unique environment in which to ask safely the challenging questions of life and faith. "What is my place in this denomination?" Tiffany wondered, asking whether the PC(USA) is "ready to have its culture, and therefore its very identity, transformed and made new so that it can be truly multiracial, multicultural, cross-cultural."

PW is answering Tiffany's question with a resounding yes, providing funding for the current young-adult intern for REYWT and for the National Network of Presbyterian College Women (NNPCW), thus allowing such important explorations to continue to take place. In recalling her experience at the 2008 retreat, Tiffany said, "Just as we spent time discovering our own identities, we of course spent time engaging one another's identities. I want to believe it is a process we will continue to engage in with one another; I believe it essential to our being and becoming church."

This is a statement to which PW—thanking God for the many blessings without boundaries made possible through the Mission Pledge—offers an enthusiastic amen!

Emily Enders Odom, a member of the PW Funds Development Committee, is associate for mission communications for the General Assembly Council of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).



Presbyterian Women
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