

Joined and Knit Together in Love

September 2008

Presbyterian Women Global Exchange to Eastern Europe



Every three years, a group of Presbyterian Women travels to another part of the world to listen to the pain and the joy that their sisters experience and to share their faith stories and ministries with each other. It is a global exchange because, the following year, a group of women from the same part of the world are invited to attend the Churchwide Gathering of Presbyterian Women to tell their stories to their North American sisters.



But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knitted together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love.
(Ephesians 4:15-16, NRSV)

Presbyterian Women will focus on how the changing political climate of Eastern Europe has affected women, the Church and the Roma* people by

- hearing the voices of our sisters and responding with compassion,
- working for the end of all forms of violence,
- advocating for the rights of women and children,
- supporting our global partners and
- allowing ourselves to be transformed by partnership experiences.

To learn more about the Presbyterian Women Global Exchange, visit www.pcusa.org/pw.



Eastern Europe



Local issues

Czech Republic—Emerging from a long period in which religion has been a source of controversy and enmity, our Czech partners feel a need to move toward grace and healing.

Hungary—The problems of migrants, refugees and the trafficking of women and children are major concerns in Hungary. Our partners there are working to support the spiritual and community life of people who have lost their homeland.

Ukraine—In Ukraine, a nation of the former Soviet Union, multiple churches are reemerging after almost 75 years of state-sponsored atheism. Our mission partners are working to encourage cooperation between denominations and to build healthy connections with sister churches abroad.

Background

Recovering from the effects of more than 70 years of communism, the people of the Czech Republic, Hungary and Ukraine are struggling to adjust to new economic, political and societal realities. The people of these countries must deal with rapid changes in education, health care, environmental issues and social equality.

The churches of Eastern Europe are working to renew a sense of cooperation, mission, servant-leadership and lay involvement. Ministry to the Roma* is a central mission in the region. Churches are developing faith communities for the Roma, while addressing the issues of discrimination, poverty and social separation.

“In light of the divisions that often shatter our world and sometimes threaten our church, hope is a fragile commodity. However, our shared faith in Christ offers us the possibility that peace can prevail over strife and that long nights of yearning can be illumined by unity.” —Joyce and John Michael, PC(USA) mission workers serving in the Czech Republic

*The Roma people are itinerant ethnic groups in Europe, previously referred to in North America as *Gypsies*.