

**Moderator's Report of the Presbyterian Women
of the Presbytery of St. Augustine
2022 Spring Stated Meeting
Daryl Mullee, Moderator**

After a very successful Annual Gathering of the Presbyterian Women of the Presbytery of St. Augustine, January 29, 2022, the tasks of the Moderator are reduced significantly for the next few months. It is with this in mind that I wish to give the Presbytery of St. Augustine a description of what our organization is and what we do. We are not merely the "Ladies in the Kitchen"!

Presbyterian Women, Inc., is the women's organization in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). We are a community of more than 200,000 women who participate in Presbyterian Women (PW) and align our ministry and hearts around a shared purpose, the PW Purpose.

Forgiven and freed by God in Jesus Christ, and empowered by the Holy Spirit, we commit ourselves:

- to nurture our faith through prayer and Bible study,
- to support the mission of the church worldwide,
- to work for justice and peace, and
- to build an inclusive, caring community of women that strengthens the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and witnesses to the promise of God's kingdom.

These commitments are lovingly carried out in Presbyterian Women groups in congregations, presbyteries, and synods. At the national level, Presbyterian Women provides the resources, directions, and opportunities to fulfill the organization's mission and ministry. Presbyterian Women's connectional structure allows you to participate as deeply and/or broadly in the organization and its commitments as you wish.

All women are welcome in Presbyterian Women. As an antiracist organization, Presbyterian Women actively works toward building God's beloved community and ensuring the full participation of all women who feel called to the organization.

In addition to an intentionally diverse Presbyterian Women at all levels of the church, a number of PW sister groups function at the churchwide level. These groups support the PW Purpose while simultaneously making space for women of the same race or ethnicity to share common experiences.

- Hispanic/Latina Presbyterian Women
- National Asian Presbyterian Women
- National Black Presbyterian Women
- National Korean Presbyterian Women
- National Middle Eastern Presbyterian Women
- Native American Presbyterian Women

- A HISTORY OF PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN -

Presbyterian Women's predecessor organizations began more than 200 years ago when women had no role outside the home. In spite of numerous societal restrictions, the women's organizations gained respect, especially that of missionaries in the field who requested women's donations and prayers.

In the mid-1800s, with civil strife in the nation, the church split; it would be many years before the wounds were healed and the northern and southern branches of the church were reunited. The work of Presbyterian women varied with the cultural backgrounds of North and South. Despite regional differences, Presbyterian women have always been in the forefront of national movements. Presbyterian women have long advocated for women and children, and crusaded for the right to fair, paid work for African Americans, Native Americans, people of Appalachia and immigrants. They went into the field to actively do something about a host of other societal problems.

In the late 1800s the mission work of Presbyterian women broadened to include areas in Alaska and San Francisco, with a particular focus on Asian women. By answering God's call, women's work in the church and in society was validated, and the role of women in both foreign and home missions expanded throughout the 19th century.

In 1872 the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in North America (UPCNA) asked women members to devise some way to systematically raise money to support women missionaries in the field. In 1875 Sarah Foster Hanna spoke to the General Assembly and received permission to establish the first national organization for women in a Presbyterian denomination, the Women's General Missionary Society. Southern women were more hesitant about organizing a churchwide missionary society; it took the women of the Presbyterian Church in the United States (PCUS) more than 26 years to get permission to set up a national women's organization, Women of the Church. Presbyterian women's financial support of missions was phenomenal and included the Thank Offering (began in 1888) and the Birthday Offering (began in 1922), both of which continue today.

The early 1900s were a time of upheaval and discontent; women gained power, women lost power, but through it all, women remained dedicated to the church. Then, in 1930, the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. (PCUSA) opened the office of elder to women, thereby expanding the power of women to serve on any board of the General Assembly. The offices of elder and minister were opened to women in the UPCUSA in 1958, when the PCUSA and the UPCNA merged to become the United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., and to women in the PCUS in 1964 when presbyteries approved the ordination of women.

In the 1930s the definition of the word *missions* was expanded in the church. It began to mean much more than sending out missionaries, preachers and teachers to distant lands. It meant sending workers to work in inner cities. It meant working to bring people together. It meant working with former enemies after the two world wars. Peace became a continuing emphasis of Presbyterian women as they continued their faith journey through the 20th century and into the 21st century. They also worked to stamp out

hunger, exploitation of women and children, and war. Presbyterian women were strong women who took tough positions on racism, reproductive choice and equal rights for women in society and in the church.

After many years of talk about reunification, it became a reality in 1983 when the UPCUSA and the PCUS joined, becoming the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). There were many difficulties in blending two organizations of strong women. Finally in 1988, Presbyterian Women was born, incorporating the best in United Presbyterian Women (UPW) and Women of the Church (WOC).

Two centuries after Presbyterian women first gathered to pray and give their money to the church, women have voice in the church and in the world. A legacy of devotion to the church and dedication to God are a strong foundation for continuing mission and taking Christ into every area of life in Presbyterian women's third century of organization. Presbyterian Women exists today because women are adaptable, determined, proactive, charitable, generous and dedicated to God.

Presbyterian Women continue their life-changing work in the world, now with more recognition. PW incorporated in 2009, establishing itself as a publicly supported integrated auxiliary of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Then in 2016, the General Assembly added Presbyterian Women to the PC(USA) Organization for Mission as a related corporation. This action formally acknowledges PW's unique role within the church: "The Organization for Mission is incomplete without referencing this important point of mission coordination for Presbyterians."

The same assembly ruled that the national moderator of Presbyterian Women, Inc., is a corresponding member to the General Assembly. This gives the moderator a seat on the floor with voice, but no vote. When speaking to committee about this recommendation, Rhashell Hunter, Presbyterian Mission Agency director of Racial Equity & Women's Intercultural Ministries, said, "PW has supported the church for over 200 years—it's beyond time for this voice to be at the table."

In addition to PW's national history, PW celebrates the histories of PW in the congregation, PW in the presbytery and PW in the synod.

Source: Edited content from www.presbyterianwomen.org