

**The 221st General Assembly (2014) approved the following Institutional Relationship Agreement between Presbyterian Women in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Inc. and the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).**

**Background**

Over the years it became apparent that a clear understanding about the relationship between Presbyterian Women and the national church structure needed to be articulated. The Churchwide Coordinating Team of Presbyterian Women (CCT) and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) General Assembly Council, now known as the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board, approved the original covenant in August 2001.

**Institutional Relationship Agreement between Presbyterian Women in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Inc. and the Presbyterian Mission Agency of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)**

**I. Preface**

This agreement expresses the partnership in mission among Presbyterian Women in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Inc. (PW) and the Presbyterian Mission Agency (PMA). PW and the PMA have had a longstanding partnership based upon shared beliefs, and complementary visions and commitments, common history and a relationship of mutual respect and cooperation. While this covenant is specifically for the relationship between PW and the PMA, it is commended as a model for Presbyterian Women in relation to other corresponding governing bodies and councils.

**II. The Covenant-based Relationship**

A covenant is essentially an agreement between two or more parties committing themselves to certain responsibilities. The idea of covenant is at the heart of the biblical story and is generally understood as different from a contract. A contract is about legal and economic transactions while a covenant depends on trust and fidelity and focuses more on the quality of the relationship. It is agreed that PW and the PMA will each assume responsibility for their actions, and the signing of the Institutional Relationship Agreement does not hold any party liable for the actions of another party. As reflected in this covenant, the PMA does provide various services to PW. PW supports the mission of the PMA, especially the directional goals to inspire, equip, and connect the church through transformational leadership, compassionate and prophetic discipleship, new worshipping communities, and young adult participation.

**A. Background**

PW is a tax-exempt national women's organization related to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), hereinafter PC(USA). Its members are, first and foremost, members of the PC(USA).

Presbyterian Women came into being in 1988, five years after the reunion of the Presbyterian Church in the United States and The United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America. PW incorporated in 2009 as a mission entity related to the PC(USA) as an integrated auxiliary. PW's bylaws link PW closely to the Constitution of the PC(USA). PW's members participate in leadership coordinating teams at all governing body levels from the congregation to the General Assembly.

From reunion in 1983 until the organizing Business Meeting of Presbyterian Women in 1988, a working team of Women of the Church (WOC) and United Presbyterian Women (UPW) proposed designs to their constituencies that culminated in the approval of the present structure. The 198th General Assembly (1986) received the Presbyterian Women Purpose and Principles of Organization as information only, pending approval by the uniting constituencies. The General Assembly action affirmed the independence and responsibility of Presbyterian Women to make its own decisions concerning leadership, program and budget. Membership in Presbyterian Women is open to all women who choose to participate in or be supportive of the PW organization in any way. The PW Purpose states: "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" (Purpose of Presbyterian Women). In 1986, UPW and WOC, as they looked ahead to becoming Presbyterian Women (PW), willingly became a part of the Women's Ministry Unit where they were in partnership with Justice for Women, Women Employed by the Church, and the Committee of Women of Color. In 1993, the Women's Ministry Unit was reorganized into the Women's Ministries Program Area of the National Ministries Division.

In 2007, the Women's Ministries Program Area was reorganized into Racial Ethnic and Women's Ministries (RE&WM). PW continues to be in programmatic partnership with RE&WM. PW supports the PC(USA) ministries that advance the role of women in the church and society. With each restructure or reorganization of the denominational staff, the PW organization has made the decision to be lodged with women's constituency groups and emphases. In April 2014, PW staff is no longer lodged with Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation, which removed the need for ministry area lodgment. PW continues to be in partnership with the Racial Ethnic & Women's Ministries ministry area.

## **B. The Covenant Responsibilities of Presbyterian Women**

Presbyterian Women will

1. conduct all mission and ministry according to the PW Purpose:
  - a. nurture [their] faith through prayer and Bible study,
  - b. support the mission of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) [which includes the Presbyterian Mission Agency],
  - c. work for justice and peace,
  - d. build an inclusive, caring community of women that strengthens the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.);

2. work cooperatively with Racial Ethnic and Women's Ministries as a whole and with other offices and areas within the PMA and other related entities;
3. be an active presence on the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board through the PW Moderator's membership, voice and vote, and vice moderators' attendance at PMAB meetings as observers;
4. be faithful stewards of the money given by Presbyterian women from throughout the church, whether that money is given for the general mission of the church, for ongoing work of PW, or for projects of Creative Ministries offerings;
5. ensure editorial autonomy for *Horizons* magazine, the annual Bible study, and all other publications of PW;
6. be guided by the general policies of the PAM (for example: contract procedures, minority vendor policies, and travel and meeting policies).

### **C. Covenant Responsibilities of the Presbyterian Mission Agency**

The PMA will

1. support the Purpose of Presbyterian Women;
2. recognize and respect PW's autonomy and status as a separate corporation, self-determining in its leadership, budget, and program;
3. provide support to PW;
  - a. honor the relationships as stated in the PMA Manual of Operations, recognizing the full membership, with voice and vote, on the PMAB, of the moderator of PW Churchwide;
  - b. appoint a member of the PMAB to serve with full voice and vote on the Corporate Board (CCT) of PW;
  - c. acknowledge and ensure editorial autonomy for all PW publications, including *Horizons* magazine and the annual Bible study;
4. seek ways to build tangible partnerships and share resources with PW for joint programming with various mission areas of the PMA in which the mission priorities of the church are served;
5. through the RE&WM ministry area director, maintain close connections with PW and the PW staff and be responsive to changes, new developments and program options.
6. ensure that collaborative women's ministries work remains a focus of PMA and ongoing work is supported.

### **III. Accountability**

In the following ways, PW and PMA will stay in communication, as each party attempts to be faithful to the covenant promise:

- A. PW will provide an annual report to the PMAB through RE & WM of its programs, services and policies, and PW's mission giving will appear in the General Mission Budget.
- B. A member of the PMAB will sit with full voice and vote on the CCT of PW and report on the policies and activities of the PMA at the triennial Churchwide Gathering Business Meeting of PW.

- C. A representative group from each body will meet on a two-year cycle to review the Institutional Relationship Agreement and propose any changes. The term of this agreement will be four years, commencing June 30, 2014, and expiring June 30, 2018.
- D. Any party may propose changes in the Institutional Relationship at any time upon prior written notice to the other party.