

Better Together

Installation Service for Presbyterian Women

BY MAMIE BROADHURST

This liturgy may be used during a service or meeting to install leaders of Presbyterian Women. The inspiration comes from the witness and experience of two very different women: Hagar and Lydia. If you are able, read these stories together prior to your installation service. You can also invite members to read them on their own or do so together afterwards if time does not permit a gathering beforehand. Genesis 21:8–21 offers Hagar’s story, while Acts 16:11–15 gives us Lydia’s. Though they came from different backgrounds, held drastically different levels of power, and had very dissimilar life experiences, both Hagar and Lydia relied on God and served God well, and we are strengthened by the witness of them both.

To prepare for the service, gather together a large purple cloth and a bowl of water. You will need copies of the *Glory to God* hymnal (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2013). You can drape a small table in purple cloth and place the bowl on top, or use a smaller amount of fabric and nestle the bowl into the fabric. Feel free to make changes as your setting and resources require. Also, as you plan for this service, be mindful of elected leaders or members of your congregation who may need accommodations (for vision, hearing, or mobility) to allow them to join in the service. Make adjustments wherever necessary in the setup or liturgy to ensure their participation.

Call to Worship (Based on Psalm 139)

Leader: Oh God, you have searched us and known us.

All: You search out our path and are acquainted with all our ways.

Leader: We are perpetually in your presence God.

All: You know what is in our thoughts and in our hearts.

Leader: You knit us together in our mothers’ wombs.

All: We are fearfully and wonderfully made!

Hymn

“Come All You People” (GtG 388)

Prayer of Celebration for our Common Bond

(This is an opportunity to distribute each portion of the prayer to the outgoing members of PW leadership. It can also be made responsive with the gathered community. Feel free to adapt to your needs.)

Leader 1: Gracious and loving God, you call us all to praise and worship, to service and devotion. You see us in all our particularities: the color of our skin, the

balance in our checkbooks, the weight of our burdens, the power of our gifts. You celebrate who we are uniquely—fearfully and wonderfully made.

Leader 2: And just as you knit us together in our mothers’ wombs, your Spirit continues to knit us together as one people. We bring all of who we are to this place, knowing that when we unite our gifts and share our vulnerabilities, we build a stronger community of women.

Leader 3: God, you told Hagar not to be afraid, and then you provided water so that her son might drink it and survive. So we, too, turn to you and ask your courage to face our fears, knowing that you will provide what we need.

Leader 4: It was through Lydia that her entire household came to know the love and grace you offer to your people through baptism. May we, too, serve as entryways for others to experience your wide embrace.

Leader 5: We ask that you would provide both comfort and challenge to us in needed measure so that we can resist hardship and injustice, make provision for strangers, and do it all relying on

your promise to be our God in all times. We do all of this knowing that you are God with us, Immanuel. Amen.

Hymn

“O for a World” (GtG 372)

Installation

Outgoing PW Leader: Women have been faithful leaders of the people of God since the time of creation. Striving to live in ways that reflect God’s love for all of that creation, Presbyterian Women have been faithful leaders and stewards for generations. No matter our shape or our station, we are committed to working together for the good of all the people of God. As we look toward the organization’s 30th anniversary, let us recommit ourselves today, uniting in our Purpose:

All: 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



She Worketh Willingly With Her Hands, Elspeth Young



God Liveth And Seeth Me, Elspeth Young

community of women that strengthens the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and witnesses to the promise of God's kingdom.

Litany of Installation

Leader: We all have gifts to share. Some of us are called to lead others so that we might work and serve better together. *(Invite those being installed to gather near the bowl of water for this portion of the installation.)*

God has called you at this time to use your gifts and talents for leadership in Presbyterian Women for the glory of God and in the service of God's people. You are invited to acknowledge that call publicly and to accept its responsibilities by answering the following questions:

Congregation: Will you use your leadership as a platform to lift the voices and gifts of others? Will you reach out to both people who are like you and different from you in order to expand your circle, both literally and figuratively?

Elected Leaders: With God's help, we will.

Congregation: Like Hagar, will you turn to God in times of difficulty, recognizing that you cannot make your way alone? Will you listen carefully and eagerly, like Lydia, seeking to hear the word of God—even if it comes from an unexpected source?

Elected Leaders: With God's help, we will.

Congregation: Will you mourn injustice, prevail upon people with your generosity, and commit to using the privileges you have to offer grace and welcome? Will you serve with enthusiasm, humility and wonder?

Elected Leaders: With God's help, we will.

Prayer

All: Holy and Gracious God, bless each of these women and use their gifts for your purposes. May you always guide their steps, providing vision, strength and energy in response to their devotion. Amen.

Declaration of Installation

(Presentation of tokens, if any)

Leader: *[reciting the names of the new officers]* You are duly installed leaders of Presbyterian Women in and for this [circle/congregation/presbytery/synod].

All: We welcome your leadership, and we look forward to serving God and God's people alongside you.

(If this service is part of a PW meeting, you might choose to sing the final song in a circle, perhaps around the table with the cloth and bowl, to emphasize that part of the role of leaders is to recognize the

importance of the gifts of all the women gathered.)

Hymn

"Come! Live in the Light!" (GtG 749)

Closing Prayer

All: Gracious and loving God, we thank you that you have brought us together to magnify our gifts and to serve you in different ways, but together. May the curiosity of Lydia and the tenacity of Hagar guide our steps in this year to come. Amen.

Sending

Newly Installed PW Leader: Go out into the world in peace. Have courage! Hold fast to what is good. Return no one evil for evil. Strengthen the faint-hearted, support the weak, help the suffering. Honor all people. Love and serve the Lord your God, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Mamie Broadhurst is currently serving as pastor at Covenant Community Church in Louisville. She previously served as a mission co-worker in Colombia and as a Young Adult Volunteer in both Guatemala and Nashville.