

We Persevere

Installation Service for Presbyterian Women Leaders

BY VILMARIE CINTRÓN-OLIVIERI

Lighting of the Candle

One: We light this Christ candle. Jesus said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life” (Jn. 8:12). This, we affirm. In this certainty, we rest.

Gathering (based on Psalm 133)

One: How very good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity!

All: How very good and pleasant it is when kindred come together for worship and prayer!

One: How very good and pleasant it is when kindred join together in service, in acts of love and justice!

All: How very good and pleasant it is to gather today and commit our lives to service. For here God has pronounced divine blessing, even life everlasting. Thanks be to God!

Hymn

“Look and Wonder!”/“¡Miren qué bueno!” (GtG¹ 397)

Scripture

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a huge crowd of witnesses to the life of faith, let us strip off every weight that slows us down, especially the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honor beside God’s throne. Think of all the hostility he endured from sinful people; then you won’t become weary and give up” (Heb. 12:1–3, NLT²).

One: Holy wisdom, holy word.

All: Thanks be to God.

Interactive Reflection

One: For the community reading the letter we now call “Hebrews,” its inspiring words served in some instances to confront them, but more often, to encourage them. These faith siblings lived in uncertain times, struggling with internal tensions and the threat of external persecution. The letter emphasizes the importance of keeping the faith and persevering in the face of deep disappointments. The metaphor of the race highlights the champions of the faith that “ran the race” before them, enduring precariousness, mockery, persecution,

imprisonment, torture and even death. The lives of those referred to as the “great cloud of witnesses” were an example to the faith community in Hebrews of endurance as they ran their own race.

Today we celebrate and commission our elected Presbyterian Women leaders, whom God has called and equipped. Gathered for this installation service, we are also running our own race. Though we live in different times than those of the 1st century church, the words from the letter to the Hebrews encourage us as we face the challenges of the 21st century church.

Presbyterian Women, we have been called to service for such a time as this and we honor those who ran the race before us—mentors, innovators, reformers, conveners, teachers, preachers, activists, coaches, prayer partners, listeners, motivators and so many others. Whether they are now part of the church triumphant or are among us today, we present them to God in gratitude.

(Consider setting aside time to share names of mentors and leaders and/or memories of these individuals. If mini posters were created—see “Suggested Visuals and Tokens of Appreciation”—this is a good moment to display them.)

Trusting in the guidance of the Holy Spirit, let us run the race before us and not grow weary, but persevere in faith.

All: Amen.

Prayer of Thanksgiving and Intercession

Eternal God, source and giver of every perfect gift, we praise you for the lives and ministries of women of faith—way-makers and trailblazers, leaders and mentors among us today and in your divine presence, named and unnamed throughout history.

We honor their life stories and praise you for their wisdom and witness, for their courage and strength, for their endurance and resilience.

As we seek to serve through the ministry of Presbyterian Women, as we seek to love you by loving our neighbor, help us to overcome exhaustion and feelings of defeat, give us courage and strength to do what is right, empower us with endurance and resilience to run

the race before us,
grant us wisdom in all decisions
that we may witness to your love and grace.

Help us to keep our eyes on Jesus, perfecter of our faith,
example of life, redeemer of us all.
In Jesus we pray, Amen.

Installation

PW Leader: We affirm our call by reciting the Presbyterian Women 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 community of women that strengthens the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and witnesses to the promise of God’s kingdom.”

PW Leader: Gracious God, we are grateful for the gifts you bestow upon us for service. We thank you for the women you call to the ministry of Presbyterian Women, which we carry out in manifold ways. Thank you for time given, resources shared and lives touched. Knowing that all gifts come from you, we especially thank you for the women who commit to serving in positions of leadership. Grant them wisdom and vision as they carry out their ministry.

All: Amen.

PW Leader (to elected leaders): Having affirmed the Purpose of Presbyterian Women, will you commit to bringing its words into practice, leading Presbyterian Women in nurturing faith, supporting mission, working for justice and peace, and building an inclusive, caring community?

Elected Leaders: We will.

PW Leader: Will you be a prayerful leader, seeking the wisdom of the Holy Spirit to lead with joy and love, and, in your role, will you commit to model self-care, healthy time management and spiritual nourishment?

Elected Leaders: We will.

Leader: Will you listen to your individual Presbyterian women with an open heart, honoring their life stories and experiences, and will you be receptive to both words of encouragement and words of concern, seeking to demonstrate compassion and grace in times of disagreement?

Elected Leaders: We will.

Leader (to the congregation): Will you, Presbyterian Women and members of the faith community, support and pray for these leaders, and will you, with God’s help, partner with them in ministry?

Congregation: We will.

Declaration of Installation

Leader: (Name of each officer), I now declare that you are installed as (name of each position) of Presbyterian Women for this (circle/congregation/presbytery/synod). Everything you do, in word and in deed, let it be for the glory of God and as a witness to Christ’s light in you.

(Presentation of tokens.)

Hymn

“God, Be the Love to Search and Keep Me”/“Oh Christ, Surround Me” (GtG 543) or “The Lord Now Sends Us Forth”/“Enviado/a soy de Dios” (GtG 747)

Body Prayer and Benediction

One: We will conclude our time together with an embodied prayer. This prayer involves motions and/or focusing on areas of the body as we pray. Please participate as you are comfortable and perform the motions as you understand them for you. Direct your attention to the part of the body being mentioned. Please do not rush. Begin by finding a comfortable position and cupping your hands in front of you, if desired. Let us pray.

Loving God,
As we breathe in deeply, we recognize the work of your Spirit
in us and through us.
We acknowledge your presence and receive your love and forgiveness.

As we breathe in deeply and then exhale, we share your grace with those around us and with the world.

As we prepare to leave this place,
may our thoughts be of you and our mind like
that of Christ,
may our shoulders be refuge for the deep hurt
of the world,
may our mouths speak words that are pleasing to you,
may our hands do good deeds of mercy and stretch out
in friendship,
may our hearts beat with your love for all,
may our entire bodies and our spirits be moved into action,
propelled by a desire for justice and peace.

We stretch our hands towards one another and we thank you for the lives gathered here today. We pray for your blessing as we are imitators of Christ; that we may feel your warm embrace and extend it to all we encounter.

(Pause)

“And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:7).

All: Amen.

(Extinguish Christ candle.)

Suggested Visuals and Tokens of Appreciation

- **Light a Christ candle**, using any candle available. For extra safety, consider a battery-operated candle.
- Create **mini posters** honoring women mentors and leaders. Consider the ideal size of the poster: Sizes 8½" x 11" and 11" x 14" are more manageable in a video conference as well as a live setting.
- Create a **homemade encouragement card** for the newly installed officers. Include prayers, well-wishes, favorite quotes or poems, stickers, a bookmark, a pressed flower, origami figure, little drawings or confetti. Items in the envelope should be flat and lightweight. Imagine the smiles as they open the envelopes!
- Consider gifting the **"Love Grows by Giving Bookmark"** to commemorate the occasion. This free item is available at www.presbyterianwomen.org/product/love-grows-by-giving-bookmark.
- Consider gifting the **Presbyterian Women logo lapel pin** to the newly installed officers. The pin is available

for purchase at www.presbyterianwomen.org/product/pw-lapel-pin.

Vilmarie Cintrón-Olivieri is an educator and a Presbyterian elder. She served as co-moderator of the 223rd General Assembly (2018) and has been active in Presbyterian Women and Hispanic/Latina Presbyterian Women for many years."

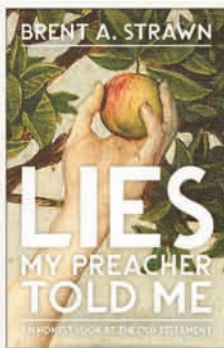
Notes

1. GtG indicates *Glory to God! The Presbyterian Hymnal* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2013).
2. NLT indicates scripture quotations from the *Holy Bible, New Living Translation*, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

Spanish Installation

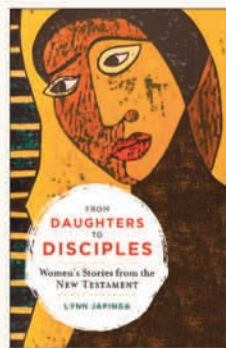
Vilmarie has also translated this installation service into Spanish. Visit www.presbyterianwomen.org to download.

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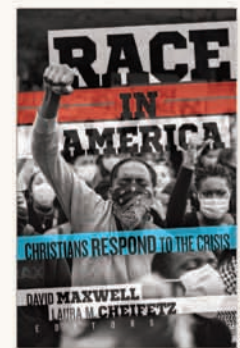
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