

“Come Away and Rest”

Installation Service for Presbyterian Women Leaders

BY REV. SUSAN CARTER WIGGINS

Call to Worship

(based on Gen. 2:1–3; Mk. 6:31)

One: God created the heavens, the earth, the sky and the sea,

All: God said that it was good, and God rested.

One: God created all creatures, great and small,

All: God said that it was good, and God rested.

One: We come to present to God our work of new leadership.

All: We come to present to God, to worship God, and to rest as God rested.

One: Jesus said, “Come away to a quiet place and rest.”

All: We come to present to God, to worship God, and to rest as Jesus rested.

One: May our work be acceptable to God. All praise, honor, and glory to God!

All: We come; we present; and we rest here in this place. Let us worship God together!

Song of Praise

“O Day of Rest and Gladness”¹ (GtG 393)² or “Here in This Place”/“Gather Us In” (GtG 401)

Prayer for Illumination

God of all creation and caring, of all restoration and rejuvenation, we come today from our busy lives to

worship you and to install our new officers. Calm and illumine our minds, so that we may keenly focus on all you want us to know, and so that we then may be equipped to take your gospel message into all the world. Through Christ our Lord we pray. Amen.

Scripture Reading

“The apostles gathered around Jesus, and told him all that they had done and taught. He said to them, ‘Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest for a while.’ For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. And they went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves” (Mk. 6:30–32).

Meditation

Women of God, We Need Our Rest in God

Does it ever feel like your work, your to-do list is always growing? Whether you work full-time or part-time, volunteer or are retired, you probably know the feeling of buzzing from one thing to the next, perhaps with even a third or fourth thing on your mind! Whether that feels like a comfortable level of activity or completely overwhelming, it's important to remember to take a breath, to pause. The creation story in Genesis 1:1–2:4a follows a steady rhythm that includes doing the day's work, then stopping. And even resting for a full day. Yes, even God paused in the work of creation.

Light and darkness, pause. Sea and sky, pause. Water and land, pause. Vegetation of every kind—trees with fruit and seed, pause. Sun and moon,

pause. Living creatures of sky and water, pause. Living creatures of earth—cattle and creeping things and wild animals, pause. And finally, human beings made in God's holy image, pause. Then, on the seventh day, God rested.

God provides for us the perfect model of sabbath-keeping to include in the rhythm of our days and weeks. This was so important that God included such a rhythm as a commandment to the ancient Israelites: "Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work. But the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; you shall not do any work . . ." (Ex. 20:8–10).

A wise woman (my mother) once said, "Your dust will still be there when you return. Go and worship God this morning with your family." She was right. Has there ever been a Sunday when you regretted pausing for a while and going to worship God?

Jesus and his disciples kept Sabbath, for they were Jews who observed God's commandments. Together they worshiped in the temple, celebrated the Passover meal and followed the teachings of the Torah. Jesus knew of the importance of stepping away from the busyness of his own life to be quiet and still, and he told the disciples to do the same. In Mark 6:30, Jesus saw the disciples' exhaustion and, knowing that it wouldn't get any easier in the days ahead, told them to go away and rest. And so they did.

Sisters in Christ, remember to follow the sacred tradition of sabbath and to find times of quiet rest. When you practice sabbath keeping, you are rewarded with a sense of calm and peace that you don't even realize you are missing.

To God be all glory, honor and praise. Amen.

Song of Response

"In God Alone"/"Mon âme se repose" (GtG 814)
(*Sing softly and reflectively three times.*)

Prayer of Thanksgiving and Intercession

Eternal God, source of all Creation, of every good and perfect gift, we praise you for the blessings of our lives and the opportunity in these moments to be still and hear what you desire for us to know. Christ Jesus, we thank you for teaching your disciples about self-care for body, mind and soul that is so much a part of sabbath keeping. Holy Spirit, we thank you for your presence with us always, whether we are working hard to accomplish every task on our list, or whether we are resting in your Spirit.

As Presbyterian women, we seek to serve you with all that we have and all that we are—body, mind and soul—in thought, word and deed—with energy, intelligence, imagination and love. We seek to share your love by loving our neighbor, caring for strangers that come into our midst, visiting prisoners, feeding the hungry, providing shelter and food to those need, educating children, and by helping girls and women claim and raise their voices.

Bless those in need this day of your healing mercies, your tender comfort, your compassion and care. And bless us with what we need to carry on your mission and ministry.

Hear us now as we join our many voices into one and offer to you the prayer our Lord and Savior taught his disciples to pray saying,

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth and it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

Service of Installation

Invitation to Support PW's Purpose

As faithful Presbyterian women, we share God's promise of peace, hope, reconciliation, justice and

love as we seek to respond to God's love and grace by serving one another. I ask you, then, to commit to God and to each other by affirming together our PW 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.

Prayer for Leaders

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 myriad 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. Amen.³

Recognition of Outgoing PW Officers

We offer our thanks and blessings for the faithful service of our outgoing PW Officers.
(Call the outgoing officers by name, and as your event space or technology allows, invite them to stand or show their pictures).

Litany of Installation

We will now install our new officers and commit to supporting them and our mission.
(As appropriate to your event, invite new officers to come to the front or stand at their place or show them on screen.)

Minister/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.

Minister/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.

Minister/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.

Minister/Leader: Will you seek to motivate others to follow you, demonstrating the joy and enthusiasm that you receive from the Holy Spirit?

Elected Leaders: We will.

Minister/Leader *(to the gathered Presbyterian Women)*: Will you, Presbyterian Women of *(name of circle/congregation/presbytery/synod)*, support and pray for these leaders, and will you, with God's help, partner with them in ministry?

All: We will.

Declaration of Installation

(Presentation of symbols of ministry as Presbyterian Women officers, if any)

(Insert the newly elected officers' first names) You are duly installed leaders of Presbyterian Women for

(insert name of circle/congregation/presbytery/synod).

Be reminded that God first claims and calls us to service, and then equips, empowers and emboldens us to go forth being the hands, the feet, the voice and the very presence of God in Christ Jesus in all the world. You've been called and you are ready. Let everything you do, in word and deed, be to the glory of God and as a witness to Christ's light within you. And, let God's women say, Amen.

Song of Sending

"We All Are One in Mission" (GtG 733)

Closing Prayer

All: Holy God, we are grateful for your redeeming love and your calling on our lives.

We are grateful to serve you as vessels of your grace, love, mercy, hospitality and forgiveness. We are grateful to be united as Presbyterian Women—one in mission, one in call, our varied gifts united by Christ. Send us forth, to find our rest in you so that we may be renewed to faithfully serve you with all that we have and all that we are. Through Christ we pray. Amen.

Benediction

God has called you all for joyful service to your congregation, your community, and to all the world.

Go forth now to love and serve God.

Go forth remembering to be gentle with yourselves, to keep sabbath and to rest.

Go forth with vision and grace.

And, as you go, may the love of God, the peace of Christ, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit bind you to one another and to Almighty God, now and forevermore.

And, let God's women say . . .

All: Amen.

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Notes

1. An alternate version of this hymn appears in *The Presbyterian Hymnal*, but the lyrics in the *Glory to God* version more directly speak to the theme of rest.
2. GtG: *Glory to God* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2013).
3. "Prayer for Leaders" and "Litany of Installation" are adapted from "We Persevere: Installation Service for Presbyterian Women Leaders" by Vilmarie Cintrón-Olivieri (March/April 2021 *Horizons*, 29).