



Don Opdycke

Happy, Blessed and Blessing

Anna and Jerry Bedford's
Enduring Legacy to
Presbyterian Women (and an
Invitation to Join Them!)

BY CARISSA HEROLD

Anna and Jerry Bedford, at their home church, First Presbyterian Church, Sarasota, Florida.

The LORD will guide you continually,
and satisfy your needs in parched places,
and make your bones strong;
and you shall be like a watered garden,
like a spring of water,
whose waters never fail.

—Isaiah 58:11

Have you ever received a gift—a gift so amazing and generous and thoughtful and life-changing—that finding the right words to adequately express thanks and tell the story just aren't possible? Well, Presbyterian Women, we have received that gift. Make that two gifts. And now is the time for us to express gratitude, tell a bit of the backstory, and find a way to “pay it forward.”

The Gifts: Endowing PW's Future

Anna and Jerry Bedford have done an extraordinary thing. They have established two \$100,000 endowments for Presbyterian Women.

- Anna H. Bedford Endowment for Presbyterian Women, in support of the Bible study and related resources

- Susan Jackson Dowd Endowment for Presbyterian Women, in the PCUSA in support of nurturing connections among women of faith worldwide

Why? Because Anna and Jerry Bedford are confident in an enduring Presbyterian Women.

Jerry says, “The reason for giving an endowment is to provide perpetual support. Giving a large gift to meet a large current need is always welcome. But just as we have been gifted by those who went before us, it is fitting for us to pass on a gift for those who come after us, to meet the challenges they face.”

Anna, who learned early from her PW sisters that “Bible study is the heart of PW,” comments: “The organizational structure of Presbyterian Women will continue to evolve with the times, but the need to study the Bible—in whatever form—will stand firm. Jerry's and my small gift just puts a toe in the water before we are plunged into a floodtide of change. I invite others to jump in!”

Anna and Jerry are committed to honoring Susan Jackson Dowd, PW's Executive Director, by establishing an endowment in her name. Jerry says that Susan “is one of the most authentic





Endowments, Explained

One way of thinking about endowments is to consider our PW ministry as a garden. As PW gardeners, we can easily identify what's flowering and flourishing by carefully observing and tending our many programs, ministries and possibilities; we care for our garden by nourishing it through participation, outreach and leadership development, as well as caring for our "soil," PW's annual fund (the Mission Pledge, which sustains and supports the entire PW organization/garden). Not as visible are aquifers or deep streams of funding that contribute to the health of the garden for generations without being depleted.

These deep streams or endowments "provide for the best of ministry today and for future generations. They can provide needed funding when times are hard, and seed money for new efforts when times are good. Endowments preserve legacies of faithful Christians through the ages, and build up the body of Christ for years to come... When managed well, an endowment fund can grow over time while providing a steady and predictable stream of funding, which also grows to keep pace with inflation."*

* Presbyterian Foundation, "Endowment Service: A Service Designed Specifically for Long-term Investing of Funds," www.presbyterianfoundation.org/wpcontent/uploads/2018/02/10732.PFDEndowmentFundCollateral.F.pdf.

and capable leaders I know. The primary purpose for her endowment is to honor her leadership in ways that enhance that leadership." And Anna says, "Over the years, I have admired how Susan has moved with grace from shepherding one branch of Presbyterian Women to guiding the whole organization as executive director. She has assembled and maintained an excellent staff team. With careful stewardship she has restored PW's financial health. She has nudged leaders into making responsible financial decisions and moving in new structural directions. She has also found time to strengthen ties with ecumenical and international organizations that share PW's vision. Through all of this, she has not lost sight of the PW Purpose or failed to honor the PW Board's agenda. It seems to me that she must see holes she wishes to fill, needs she would like to meet, visions she longs to expand. My hope is that others will join me in making the endowment grow."

The Backstory

Over the decades, one could reliably find Anna and Jerry Bedford engaged in Presbyterian ministry and community in many places. These extraordinary servants of the church have devoted their lives to building up the body of Christ.

Bible study is fundamental for Anna. As a *Horizons* magazine reader and PW/*Horizons* Bible study enthusiast, you should know that Anna is highly regarded for her work as *Horizons* associate editor. Yes, *this Horizons!* For each of her eight amazing years of service, Anna produced three issues of the magazine and three versions of the Bible study. Anna reflects, "This was the heady period when the two former branches of the Presbyterian Church were learning to live together as one and, at the same time, women were becoming more vocal in their demands for change. Through the upheaval, Presbyterian Women held steady in its commitment to prayer, Bible study, service and support of the denomination. It was an honor to be a voice of this purpose through *Horizons*."

Finding solutions for a hurting world is fundamental for Jerry. Have you (or your church) ever donated an ark or a hive of bees to Heifer International? If so, then you know Jerry. Jerry, raised on a Michigan farm, received his M.Div. from Union Theological Seminary in New York. After the couple's two-year internship in Kenya (stay with the story to learn more!), Jerry felt called to work with an organization that addresses issues of alleviating poverty and hunger. That's when he found Heifer.

Heifer International was a good fit for Jerry's farm, business, church and international experience. The only skill that he felt he lacked was for the one that he was hired to do: fundraising. A 35-year career with Heifer International and later, Heifer Foundation, proved that connecting donors with issues of critical importance (like poverty and hunger) was one in which he also excelled. And like the good servant in the parable (Matt. 25:14–29), under Jerry's direction, Heifer International invested in the future, establishing Heifer Foundation. The foundation's goal—to sustain Heifer International and its mission for generations by offering a variety of planned giving options—is important for the organization and its donors. This vision of what is possible through planned giving moved Jerry and Anna Bedford to commit their own resources to establishing two endowments for PW's future.

A Love Story

Anna and Jerry's gifts of love to PW started as a love story. Theirs! In 1963, after their time at Union, the Bedfords accepted an invitation from Margaret Flory of the United Presbyterian Church in the USA to spend two years in Kenya in the Frontier Interns in Mission program (FIM), developing church school and youth ministry programs for the Presbyterian Church in East Africa.

This time abroad in ministry gave the young couple two truths that have guided them through their years: Living on a subsistence allowance as interns, Anna and Jerry discovered that living on less is not only doable but doesn't necessarily diminish happiness. "No matter how frugally we lived, we noticed others who were scraping by on half as much and still happy with what they had." And Christians are called to make this world a better world.

That's when they arrived at a formula to guide their financial lives (inspired also in part by the generosity of Jerry's father, who faithfully tithed on his *gross* income): live on half an income, donate one-quarter, and invest in the rest. The careful tending of their finances has given them the opportunity to support ministries they love, including PW. (Jerry and Anna will tell you that their thriftiness did not diminish their lives, nor the lives of their two daughters. Blessings in abundance for those who choose to bless!)

An Invitation

This article began as a "thank you" to two extraordinary people who gave of their treasure because they value Presbyterian Women and are confident in it. This article ends with an opportunity: we are invited to add to the Bedford endowments, sowing seeds for tomorrow's harvest. And the harvest that follows. And the one after. Whether we serve at the national level, lead Bible study, or are most contented in our circle, Presbyterian Women (the organization) allows each of us (Presbyterian women) to live a life of Purpose. Let us respond in confidence and prayer—and in thanksgiving for Anna and Jerry Bedford, who are leading the way by example. 🍓

Carissa Herold is marketing associate for Presbyterian Women.

Give to Anna and Jerry Bedford's Endowments

Presbyterian women can build up the endowments that have been generously seeded by Anna and Jerry Bedford. Doing so will increase the corpus, providing richer opportunities for Presbyterian Women year after year after year. (Donors and would-be donors are encouraged to consult with their financial advisors and prayerfully consider their personal financial situation.)

Susan Jackson Dowd Endowment

Fund 10312000010

Give on line, <https://endowments.presbyterianfoundation.org/fund/10312000010/>

Anna H. Bedford Endowment

Fund 10312000011

Give on line, <https://endowments.presbyterianfoundation.org/fund/10312000011/>

For other giving options, please contact Kym Vaughn of the Presbyterian Foundation, 502/569-5909; Kymberly.vaughn@presbyterianfoundation.org.

Flowering in the Near Future

And "you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters never fail." Isa. 58:11b

Endowments may, at first glance, seem like an investment whose good use is available years into the future. But Anna and Jerry Bedford's endowments will, "like a spring of water," help provide for two upcoming PW opportunities:

A Racial Ethnic Dialogue (RED) event will be held August 4, 2021, a pre-event to PW's 2021 Churchwide Gathering in St. Louis, Missouri. Thirty-two participants (minimum)—two from each synod—will be invited to learn about (and commit to) starting a RED team in their respective synods. This "train the trainers" or facilitator-training event speaks to our call as PW "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." Funds from the Susan Jackson Dowd Endowment for Presbyterian Women will provide, in part, for making this training possible.

PW/*Horizons* Bible study connects Presbyterian Women through shared scripture study. Funds from the Anna H. Bedford Endowment for Presbyterian Women will make available support materials to deepen understanding and engagement of the 2020–2021 PW/*Horizons* Bible study, *Into the Light: Finding Hope through Prayers of Lament*.