

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

Note: The 225th General Assembly (2022) approved the PW/PC(USA) Institutional Relationship Agreement. Originally called a covenant, the agreement was first established in 2001 and renews every four years.

## **I. Preface**

This agreement expresses the partnership in mission among Presbyterian Women in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Inc. (PW) and the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) PC(USA). PW and the PC(USA) 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 General Assembly, it is commended as a model for Presbyterian Women in relation to other corresponding 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 PC(USA) 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 PC(USA), via its principal corporation, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation, does provide various services to PW pursuant to a Service Agreement. PW supports the mission of the PC(USA), especially the directional goals to inspire, equip, and connect the church through justice and reconciliation, leader formation, and evangelism and discipleship.

### **A. Background**

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

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. Presbyterian Women incorporated at the national or churchwide level in 2009 as a mission entity related to the Church as an integrated auxiliary. PW's bylaws link PW closely to the Constitution of the Church. Presbyterian Women's members participate in leadership coordinating teams at all council 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 Presbyterian Women organization in any way. The Presbyterian Women 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.” In 1986, UPW and WOC, as they looked ahead to becoming Presbyterian Women (PW), willingly became a part of the General Assembly Council’s (GAC) 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 GAC’s National Ministries Division.

In 2007, the Women’s Ministries Program Area was reorganized into Racial Ethnic and Women’s Ministries (RE&WM). The ministry area was subsequently renamed Racial Equity and Women’s Intercultural Ministries (RE&WIM) in 2018. PW continues to be in programmatic partnership with RE&WIM. 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. The employees moved from Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation as the employer of record to PW on August 1, 2014. Following a name change from the General Assembly Mission Council (GAMC) to the Presbyterian Mission Agency (PMA), PW continues to be in partnership with PMA’s RE&WIM.

## **B. The Covenant Responsibilities of Presbyterian Women in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Inc.**

PW 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 General Assembly and the Presbyterian Mission Agency],
  - c. Work for justice and peace,
  - d. Build an inclusive, caring community of women that strengthens the PC(USA);
  - e. Work cooperatively with RE&WIM as a whole and with other offices and areas within the PMA and other related entities;
  - f. Be an active presence on the PMA Board through the PW Moderator’s membership, with voice and vote;
  - g. 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;

- h. Ensure editorial autonomy for *Horizons* magazine, the annual Bible study, and all other publications of PW;
- i. Be guided by the general policies of the General Assembly and the PMA (for example: contract procedures, minority vendor policies, and travel and meeting policies).

### **C. The Covenant Responsibilities of the General Assembly as performed by 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. 3. Provide support to PW;
  - a. Honor the relationships as stated in the PMA Manual of Operations, recognizing the membership, with voice and vote, on the PMA Board, of the moderator of PW;
  - b. Appoint a member of the PMA Board to serve with voice and vote on the PW Board of Directors;
  - c. Recognize the role of PW as a corporation related to the General Assembly, as stated in the Organization for Mission of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.);
  - d. Acknowledge and ensure, to the extent PMA is able, editorial autonomy for all PW publications, including *Horizons* magazine and the annual Bible study;
  - e. 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;
  - f. Through the RE&WIM ministry area director, maintain close connections with PW and the PW staff and be responsive to changes, new developments, and program options;
  - g. Ensure that collaborative women's ministries work remains a focus of PMA and ongoing work is supported.

### **D. The Covenant Responsibilities of the General Assembly**

The General Assembly 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. Invite PW to support and participate in GA programs that align with the Purpose of Presbyterian Women;
4. Provide support to PW;
  - a. Recognize the membership, with voice and vote, of a PW representative to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation Board of Directors;

- b. Recognize PW as a corresponding member to the General Assembly, as stated in the Standing Rules of the General Assembly as amended by the 223rd General Assembly (2018).

### **III. Accountability**

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

- A. PW will provide a report to the PMA Board through RE&WIM of its programs, services, and policies.
- B. The PW Board member representing the PMA Board will report on the policies and activities of the PMA at the triennial Business Meeting of PW.
- C. The term of this agreement will be four years, commencing July 10, 2022, and expiring July 15, 2026.
- D. Any party may propose changes in the Institutional Relationship at any time upon prior written notice to PW or PMA (on behalf of the General Assembly).