

# **Covenant between Presbyterian Women in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Inc. and the General Assembly Mission Council of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)**

## **I. PREFACE**

This covenant expresses the partnership in mission among Presbyterian Women in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Inc. (PW) and the GAMC. PW and the GAMC, have had a long-standing partnership based upon shared beliefs, 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 GAMC, it is commended as a model for Presbyterian Women in relation to other corresponding governing bodies and 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, GAMC, and the GAMC's Racial Ethnic and Women's Ministry/Presbyterian Women Ministries Area (RE&WM) will each assume responsibility for their actions, and the signing of the covenant does not hold any party liable for the actions of another party. As reflected in this covenant, the GAMC provides various services to PW. PW supports the mission of the GAMC.

**A. Background:** PW is a not-for-profit, national women's organization related to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), hereinafter PC(USA). Its members are first and foremost members of the PC(USA). Prior to incorporation, 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. PW incorporated in 2009 as a mission entity related to the PC(USA). Its members participate in leadership coordinating teams at all governing body 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 the Women of the Church (WOC) and United Presbyterian Women (UPW) proposed designs to their constituencies which 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 PW organization in any way.

The PW 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, willingly became a part of the 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 National Ministries Division. In 2007, Women's Ministries Program Area was reorganized into RE&WM. PW continues to be in partnership with RE&WM with staff as part of the ministry area and as further evidenced by an administrative services agreement. 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 made the decision to be lodged with women's constituency groups and emphases.

Because of PW's status as a corporate entity, assets currently held or managed by the GAMC's corporate entity, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), A Corporation, will be transferred to PW together with liabilities and contracts pursuant to a written agreement.

## **B. The Covenant Responsibilities of the PW**

PW will:

- 1.a. nurture (their) faith through prayer and Bible study,
- b. support the mission of the PC(USA),
- c. work for justice and peace,
- d. build a community of women that strengthens the PC(USA);

2. work cooperatively with the RE&WM as a whole and with other offices within the GAMC organization and other related entities;
3. be an active presence on the GAMC through the PW Moderator's membership, voice and vote and vice moderators' attendance at GAMC meetings as observers;
4. 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;
5. ensure editorial autonomy for *Horizons* magazine, the annual Bible study, and all other publications of PW;
6. respect the limits of staff time;
7. understand that staff operate under the rules of the GAMC Employee Handbook and report via the regular process of supervisors within the GAMC;
8. be guided by general policies of the GAMC (for example: contract procedures, minority vendor policies, and travel and meeting policies).

### **C. Covenant Responsibilities of the General Assembly Mission Council**

The GAMC will:

1. recognize and respect PW's autonomy and status as a separate corporation, self-determining in its leadership, budget, program and lodgment;
2. provide support to PW :
  - a. honoring the relationships as stated in the GAMC Manual of Operations, recognizing the full membership with voice and vote on the GAMC of the Moderator of PW Churchwide;
  - b. appointing a member of the GAMC to serve with full voice and vote on the Corporate Board (CCT) of the PW.
  - c. acknowledging and ensuring editorial autonomy for all PW publications, including *Horizons* magazine and the annual Bible study;

3. through specifically assigned staff persons, seek ways to build tangible partnerships with PW for joint programming with various program areas of the PC(USA) in which the mission priorities of the church are served;

4. through the GAMC staff assigned and the RE&WM Ministry Area Director, maintain close connections with PW and be responsive to changes, new developments, and program options.

### **III. ACCOUNTABILITY:**

In the following ways, PW, GAMC, and RE&WM stay in communication as each party attempts to be faithful to the covenant promise:

A. PW will provide an annual report to the GAMC through RE&WM of its programs, services, and policies, and PW's mission giving will appear in the General Mission Budget.

B. A member of the GAMC will sit with full voice and vote on the CCT of PW and report on the policies and activities of the GAMC at the triennial Churchwide Gathering Business Meeting of PW.

C. A representative group from each body will meet on a three-year cycle to review the covenant and propose any changes, the terms of this covenant being three years, commencing January 1, 2010 and expiring June 30, 2013.

D. Any party may propose changes in the covenantal relationship at any time upon prior written notice to the other parties.