

More Mission Questions



BY HAZEL FUHRMEISTER

Dear Alice,

Hello again! I'm glad my last letter helped with some of your mission questions—and apparently generated more questions from you and your PW sisters!

As I did before, I'll write out the answers to the questions you asked. Please share these new mission developments with anyone who might be interested.

Will PW still send items overseas?

Absolutely! Many Presbyterian women find that making or purchasing needed supplies is a terrific way to “support the mission of the Church worldwide.” However, PW wants to practice good stewardship of resources, so wants to send only what is needed.

However, sheets from the United States are prized for their high quality. Handmade baby caps and blankets carry a message of concern to women who give birth in the hospitals PW supports. Such items are also an incentive for women to go to the hospital for delivery, where they and their babies will get superior care.

Don't the shipping costs outweigh the benefits of sending some items?

In some cases, they do. For example, it makes little sense to send much-needed mattresses halfway around the world when they can be purchased close to where they will be used. The same applies to bicycles, which can also be found closer to Africa.



Did you say bicycles? Why bicycles?

Remember that the areas served by our mission workers are largely rural, with little or no means of transportation. This means

that medicine and supplies are often stockpiled in hospitals or clinics, waiting for distribution. Bicycles are perfect for distributing resources!

Are you saying PW should just send money?

Have you ever sent someone a gift certificate for Christmas or a birthday present? I certainly have. With family living on the other side of the country, I can't be sure of sizes, what they already have or what they really want. I find that sending gift certificates is a good way of ensuring that they get something that suits them rather than something I think they should have. Isn't that what giving should be?

When we “just send money” we are reaching out in a different, yet vitally important way. Personal involvement is still necessary, for example, sending personal notes with greetings and prayers to the mission partners and coworkers.

Creative PWs know how to interpret mission in their presbyteries and congregations. Your group may decide to:

- ✓ hold a mission fair to raise money for a specific need;
- ✓ organize a special bake sale or party to support mission;

- ✓ maintain email contact with mission coworkers;
- ✓ participate in on-site visits, putting faces to colleagues overseas;
- ✓ use International Health Ministries promotional materials.

What about Presby-kits—kits for school and medical supplies—and other national projects?

Many PW who have assembled the kits have found this process cumbersome, expensive and time-consuming. The new PW mission program will support PW in their ministries without asking them to provide specific items for specific sites. This will encourage more participation in local and denominational programs at the discretion of the individual PW groups. Groups who still want to create kits may submit them to the Church World Service program, Gifts of the Heart.

What if I have more questions?

Contact Sandy Weldy-Cook in the national offices of Presbyterian Women: 888/728-7228, ext. 8014, sweldyco@ctr.pcusa.org. If she doesn't have the answer, she will put you in touch with someone who does.

Looking forward to seeing you at the Gathering!

Hazel

Hazel Fuhrmeister was CCT/PW Moderator, 1994–1997, and currently chairs the Revision Task Group for Presbyterian Women.