

# God's Word

## Part four of a four-part discussion



BY JANICE CATRON

In previous articles exploring the theme for the 2006 Churchwide Gathering, we have considered God's Word as scripture, as the spoken voice of God and as Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh. In this article, which also highlights the fourth part of the PW Purpose, we will reflect on God's Word as *promise*.

Let's think about the word *promise* for a moment. A promise by its very nature points us to the future. A promise is always about something that we intend to do, never about something that is already done. Because of this, a promise calls for trust—the receiver of the promise is asked to believe that the future activity will indeed come to pass. What's more, the receiver of the promise is often asked to act in a certain way *now*, in the present, embodying this trust, even though the promise has not yet been fulfilled.

When we want to emphasize the trustworthiness of a promise, we say, "I give you my word." The idea that one's word is a guarantee is ancient, and so we see the Bible associate God's word with the surety of the divine promises. For example, *Psalms 18* speaks of divine deliverance that came when God "thundered in the heavens, and the Most High uttered his voice" (*v. 13*). The psalmist goes on to say, "This [God's] way is perfect; the promise of the LORD proves true" (*v. 30*). The God who can save with a word is a God whose word can be trusted.

The promise that perhaps carries the most meaning for Christians is that of the world to come. We believe that God will one day usher

in a new and better world, a world that fully reflects God's intentions for all creation that this one does not. *Revelation 21* describes the new heaven and new earth as a place where God dwells in the midst of the people, wiping every tear from their eyes (*vs. 3–4*). Death, mourning, crying and pain will end forever. In this vision, God speaks out and promises, "To the thirsty I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life. . . . I will be their God and they will be my children'" (*vs. 6–7*).

In the Lord's Supper, we look ahead to this event and celebrate it as both future and past. We know that the new heaven and new earth are not yet here, but we also believe they have begun in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Thus, when we celebrate the sacrament of Communion, we look back to what God has already accomplished, we acknowledge what God is doing now and we anticipate what God will do in the time to come.

In the same way, we live into the already-but-not-yet reality of God's realm when, through the PW Purpose, we commit "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." At the 2006 Gathering, we have a chance to act on this commitment and to help bring a little of God's promised realm into the here and now.

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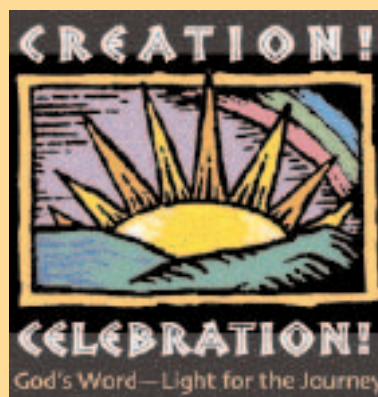
As Presbyterian Women prepares for the 2006 Churchwide Gathering of Presbyterian Women in Louisville, Kentucky, July 7–11, members of PW and other women planning to attend the Gathering are contemplating the theme, Creation! Celebration! God's Word—Light for the Journey.

The articles in this series unpack the theological implications of the theme. Dive into this fourth part of a four-part series to see how PW finds God's Word.

### The PW Purpose

*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
- 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.



**Genesis 9:8–17 tells of a covenant promise that God made with all creation, and it describes how God put a rainbow in the sky as a sign of that promise. Thus, the Gathering logo uses a rainbow to convey the themes of promise and trust.**