

Words of Thanks



BY CLIFTON KIRKPATRICK

The afterglow of the Churchwide Gathering of Presbyterian Women continues to linger for me. When I look back on this past summer, the Gathering stands out as a major highlight. More than 3,000 women—and a few of us men—singing, studying, praying and seeking ways to more faithfully serve Jesus Christ. It truly was one of those times when the theme of an event and the event itself were a perfect match!

I wish I could take the energy and enthusiasm from this Gathering, bottle it and then pull it off the shelf from time to time between now and the next Gathering in three years. There are some days when it would be a big boost!

Even more so, I wish we could somehow take the energy and enthusiasm that Presbyterian Women has for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and spread it across this entire church. We would all be the better for it.

PW's Place in the Church

Presbyterian Women is on what seems to be a growing list of interest groups in this present chapter of the church's ongoing life. You could say that, out of the entire list, Presbyterian Women is the interest group that focuses on the whole church.

It would be very hard for any of the other groups on the list to match PW's record of ministry in this country and worldwide.



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Specifically, the work and commitment of this organization in the area of social justice is unparalleled. Presbyterian Women has been most generous with their financial resources and, perhaps even more important, with their hands-on presence in forgotten and neglected parts of this society and the world.

Presbyterian Women has made the story Jesus told in *Matthew 25:31–46* come alive! Where there are those who are hungry (a number that is growing at an alarming rate), PW helps to feed them. Where there are those who need safe water to drink (again, a rising number), PW responds beginning such programs as Living Waters for the World.

Strangers remain strangers for only a little while when PW puts into action its worldwide reputation for hospitality. It would be interesting to see how deep the

goodwill continues to run and how many friendships have been made and sustained through the Global Exchange every three years.

PW and its Ministries

PW's generosity in the area of health ministries may be the organization's best-known work. From the past days of rolling bandages to the present time of confronting the HIV/AIDS crisis, Presbyterian Women has been consistently and actively involved. And, where there are those in prison, PW will be found on the visitor's list.

What is deeply uplifting is how all of these ministries in the name of Jesus Christ go on, day after day, with little to no fanfare. It's just what PW does. In so many ways, Presbyterian Women is a model of how we are all called to minister for the sake of the gospel—with faithfulness, determination, generosity and gratitude, seeking the best in each other and working to bring dignity and justice to all of God's children.

A final word of thanks. Never did I expect to be the recipient of an Honorary Life Membership from Presbyterian Women. But the unexpected happened at the Gathering. I am deeply grateful for the honor of joining an incredible list of those who wear the pin and I will wear it proudly!

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