

# Something to Celebrate!

## God Does Great Things When Women Give Generously

BY CATHERINE STEWART VAUGHN

We call it “Celebration Giving,” and our giving is certainly something to celebrate!

When United Presbyterian Women (UPW) and Women of the Church (WOC) joined together for the first time at Purdue University in 1988, Presbyterian Women (PW) was born. From the beginning, both parties agreed that annual offerings for mission were important and must continue. Thus, the decision was made to receive a Thank Offering each fall and a Birthday Offering every spring. Through God’s grace, both offerings have long histories of achievement and far-reaching results.

The UPW Thank Offering began in 1888 when Eliza Clokey of Springfield, Ohio, urged each woman to give one dollar over and above her usual contribution to the Women’s General Missionary Society of the United Presbyterian Church of North America as a “thank offering to her Lord.” About 100 years later, in order to include WOC’s White Cross offering in the Thank Offering, it was agreed that at least 40 percent of money received should support health ministries throughout the world. Giving prior to 1988 is undocumented, but between 1988 and 2007, total grants amounted to \$19,493,318.

The WOC Birthday Offering originated in 1922 to celebrate the organization’s tenth anniversary. The first offering of \$28,169 (an amazing amount in 1922!) went to Miss Dowd’s School for Girls (now Seiwa University) in Kochi, Japan, and for a memorial gate at the entrance to Montreat, a North Carolina Presbyterian conference center and the birthplace of Women of the Church. By the 1980s, offerings reached more than half a million dollars annually. At the end of 2006, Birthday Offering grants amounted to \$30,767,873, of which \$15,162,777 was given between 1989 and 2005.

Both offerings are separate from and additional to PW’s annual Mission Pledge support, which is of vital importance to our organization and the Presbyterian

Church (U.S.A.). Individually, most women may not be able to give large amounts, but together our gifts bear powerful witness to our love and commitment to mission and ministry. Celebrate the following examples with me:

### Thank Offering



Photo courtesy of PVS

**Lonely and forgotten, prisoners welcome the attention of a visitor through Interfaith Prison Ministry. Here, Jonne Long visits a prisoner at the United States Penitentiary in Leavenworth, Kansas.**

### 1988: Interfaith Prison Ministry, Philadelphia, \$10,000

Founded in 1968 by Bob Horton, a retired Methodist minister and Fay Honey Knopp, a Quaker activist, Prisoner Visitation and Support (PVS) is a nationwide, interfaith visitation ministry to federal and military prisoners throughout the United States. Volunteers meet with prisoners who do not ordinarily receive visits from family or friends, who want or need supportive human contact, are in solitary confinement, or are serving long sentences. Around 300 volunteers see thousands of prisoners each year in more than 90 prisons across the nation.

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The Thank Offering grant enabled PVS to hire two half-time staff persons to recruit volunteers in a wide geographic area. PVS Executive Director Eric Corson said in a telephone conversation recently that the grant was not only helpful in providing new staff at a crucial time, but was also a great encouragement to the staff and board.

To remain independent, PVS does not seek or receive any government money. It relies on donations from individuals and congregations. To learn more about it, go to [www.prisonervisitation.org/visitors.htm](http://www.prisonervisitation.org/visitors.htm) or email [pvs@afsc.org](mailto:pvs@afsc.org).



Photo courtesy of Cuidando Los Niños

**The Family Health Clinic is a vibrant part of the Cuidando Los Niños Program.**

### **1999: Cuidando Los Niños (CLN) Programs, Albuquerque, New Mexico, \$20,000**

The goal of Cuidando Los Niños (CLN) is to provide child care and therapeutic services that meet the special needs of homeless children. It offers support services that assist homeless families in becoming rehoused and self-sufficient. Three primary programs work collaboratively: Children, Family Support and Family Health Clinic.

According to Executive Director Suzanne Farley, “The clinic was started around 1999–2000. A nurse

practitioner joined the staff in 2001. At first, the project was primarily funded by federal money with additional support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. But in 2005 we joined with Albuquerque Health Care for the Homeless to provide children with health checks and immunizations.”

The CLN clinic is now part of a broader community-based health care program. You can learn more about it at [www.cuidandolosninos.org](http://www.cuidandolosninos.org).

### **Birthday Offering**



Photo courtesy of Intermountain Children's Home

**Residents of Intermountain Children's Home and families in Helena, Montana, both benefit from the new multipurpose education center.**

### **1991: Intermountain Children's Home (ICH) Building Construction, Helena, Montana, \$256,000**

In 1991, PW became partners in mission to children at risk—those who are orphaned, rejected, abandoned, severely abused or emotionally disturbed. At the time, ICH had the capacity to serve only one of every 5–10 referrals for long-term residence and rehabilitation, and it had no space for a therapeutic day program. Our Birthday Offering grant underwrote the cost of constructing five classrooms in a new multipurpose education and therapy building. ICH is the only Presbyterian-related children's home in the Rocky Mountain area that provides this kind of residential care.

Speaking by telephone, ICH marketing manager Maggie Long said PW's grant was the largest single donation to the \$1.2 million capital building campaign. “It's difficult to put into words all the significant outcomes your gift made possible,” she said. “Intermountain's year-round on-campus school, physical education center and cafeteria offer countless opportunities to nurture children. Often the children have not been successful in school settings prior to living here; having an

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on-campus school allows full integration between education and treatment.”

She added, “The Wix Center houses a gymnasium where the kids have basketball games with other grade schools. Community groups use the conference rooms for meetings. These enhancements have significantly improved the quality of programs for children and families in the community.”

ICH is a nationally recognized nonprofit organization specializing in nurturing therapeutic environments for children under severe emotional distress. To learn more about it, visit [www.intermountain.org](http://www.intermountain.org).



Matthew Davies/Episcopal News Service

**Nanjing Seminary has trained hundreds of Protestant leaders in China. The variety of degrees offered and the seminary's tradition of excellence draw more applicants than it can accommodate.**

**1991: Solidarity with Chinese Theological Students: Nanjing Theological Seminary Expansion/Renovation, Nanjing, China, \$143,816\***

### **Mission and Funding in China**

The first Birthday Offering to China was \$36,172 to support Bible institutes or schools in 1933. It established a trust fund, with income from the fund to be used for teaching women in the North Kiangsu and Mid-China missions. These institutes trained women and girls to serve as volunteer workers in their churches and their communities. Part of the money was used to take Bible schools to women in remote rural areas.

With a full curriculum, these inexpensive institutes were held in seasons when farm work was light. Women often brought their own food, fuel and bedding. The income from this offering supported the school for many years. Sadly, the program was closed in the late 1940s, and in 1973 the invested fund was transferred to that year's Birthday Offering.

Although WOC continued to designate Birthday Offering grants for Presbyterian mission work in Chinese communities in the United States, the next offering designated for mainland China (\$76,463) was not until 1947. One-half was designated to build two Presbyterian missionary residences and rebuild the Woman's Bible School in Kiangyin. It also sought to establish one or more “mothercraft” schools and to create a fund for the translation, printing and promotion of phonetic work. War had ripped China apart, and the missionaries who returned in 1946 had to leave again by 1951. According to Board of World Missions records, \$42,988 of China's share of that year's Birthday Offering was disbursed. The remainder, \$34,475, awaited redesignation by the Board of Women's Work in consultation with the Board of World Missions. The fund was eventually transferred to the Presbyterian Hunger Program.

### **Nanjing Theological Seminary**

In the early part of the century, this Presbyterian facility was a women's Bible college, but over time it developed into a theological seminary. Founded in 1952, Nanjing Seminary was a union of 12 theological institutions in eastern China. By 1960 it had graduated more than 500 students, of whom most became key church leaders. In 1961 it was joined by Yanjing Union Theological Seminary, itself a blend of 13 theological schools in north China.

Nanjing was the only Protestant seminary in “New China,” until it was closed during the Cultural Revolution. During that time, the Seminary was devastated, the library was dismantled, classrooms were given to other purposes, and all facilities generally deteriorated.

As soon as it was politically possible, in February 1981 Nanjing Seminary reopened. The physical plant urgently needed repair, and there was space for only 40 students. More than 700 applied!

By 1990 the Seminary was offering a four-year course for senior middle-school graduates, a program for theological and university graduates, one-year training for lay church workers from rural areas, and a three-year correspondence course for 1,000 students. Today, the Extension department publishes and distributes a quarterly syllabus for 30,000 rural and lay workers. Since 1981, China has opened 12 new Bible schools and seminaries, and Nanjing serves as their basic training center. Also, by 1990 the demand for admission was greater

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Matthew Davies/Episcopal News Service

### Plans for 2007 expansion generate interest and excitement at Nanjing Theological Seminary.

than ever, facilities were terribly overcrowded, and there was no space for all who applied. So the China Christian Council and Nanjing Seminary made a joint request to the 1991 Birthday Offering to underwrite renovation and expansion.

### Coming Full Circle

Presbyterian Women chose to designate \$143,816 to show solidarity with today's young Chinese Christians and, at the same time, to honor the memory of the Presbyterian women who began the institution, recognizing that Bible schools operated by women were forerunners of the Seminary.

Today, Nanjing Theological Seminary is China's premier theological institution and integrates biblical teaching with theological research and spiritual nurture.

I have been privileged to visit Nanjing Seminary four times since the early 1980s. On my last visit, I observed positive changes and growth on the campus, made possible partly by our gift. One frequent comment I heard in China is, "Before, we had shepherds looking for sheep; now, we have sheep looking for shepherds!" Through our Birthday Offering, Presbyterian Women has become a partner in training young "shepherds," so needed in China today. Faithful elderly pastors have sacrificed much in the past; these dedicated young leaders who follow them will lead Christ's church in China into the future.

And that is something to celebrate! 🍷

Catherine Stewart Vaughn has served as moderator in Women of the Church and Presbyterian Women at all levels of the organization. She chaired the Birthday Offering selection committee for Women of the Church.

\*The material on Nanjing Seminary is taken from *Messages of Reconciliation and Hope: 75 Years of Birthday Offerings* by Catherine Stewart Vaughn. To order, contact Presbyterian Distribution Service, 800/524-2612; item PWR-00-507; \$12.00 plus shipping.

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### Make Something Great Happen in Your Community!

Is there a project in your community that is doing great work, but needs financial support to do it?

Help Presbyterian Women help that project—encourage them to apply for a Thank Offering or Birthday Offering grant! Nanjing Seminary, Intermountain Children's Home, Interfaith Prison Ministry, Cuidando Los Niños and hundreds of other projects around the world have expanded their ministries with prayers and funds from Presbyterian Women's two main offerings.

To apply for a grant, a project must:

- Have a clearly defined purpose that meets basic human needs. The purpose must be in accordance with mission goals and policies of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
- Provide a form of aid that relates directly to the people being served
- Be a creative project less than three years old or an existing project moving in a new direction

Each year, the Birthday Offering funds up to five projects, with grants ranging from \$200,000 to \$750,000. The offering supports projects that are not included in ongoing General

Assembly mission programs; in the past, organizations have received funding for agricultural development, child care, community organization, criminal justice, drug counseling, economic justice, elder care, employment training, aid for people who are homeless, literacy programs, violence awareness education and women's concerns. Applications for the Birthday Offering are due by May 15.

At least 40 percent of the Thank Offering supports health ministries throughout the world. The remaining 60 percent funds new creative ideas for mission. The grants range from \$5,000 to \$50,000 and have funded projects in agricultural development, child care, community organization, criminal justice, drug counseling, economic justice, elderly care, employment training, aid for people who are homeless, literacy programs, violence awareness education and women's concerns. Applications for the Thank Offering are due by September 15.

For more information on the offerings, criteria or deadlines, or to receive an application, email Cindy Goodman, PW Associate for Special Offerings, 888/728-7228, ext. 5387 or [cindy.goodman@pcusa.org](mailto:cindy.goodman@pcusa.org). Applications also may be downloaded from [www.pcusa.org/pw/missionmatters](http://www.pcusa.org/pw/missionmatters).