

# Blessings without Boundaries

BY EMILY ENDERS ODOM

When the new theme for Presbyterian Women's Mission Pledge—"Blessings without Boundaries"—was first adopted in 2007, the talk was all about walking. "Walking in the footsteps of our foremothers," "walking in our integrity" and "walking the path of 'second-mile giving'"—those were a few of the ways in which Presbyterian Women characterized their ongoing commitment to the challenge of unrestricted mission giving.

And in 2007 a group of sisters in the Northeast have now found that—thanks to the PW Mission Pledge—they have been newly empowered to *stand and walk together*. With support that flowed in large part from the PW Mission Pledge, PW in the Synod of the Northeast created a unique and groundbreaking leadership development training program called "Sisters Stand and Walk Together." The program worked to acclimate recent immigrant women to PW, preparing them for leadership roles at presbytery and/or synod levels as well as within their respective groups and congregations. Women from Brazil, Ghana, Korea, Nigeria, Taiwan and the United States gathered several times during a three-year period for a series of one-day training events on topics such as the PW Purpose, the *Book of Order*, the history of racial ethnic dialogue in PW, and how to plan and lead worship, workshops and Bible studies.

## Building an Inclusive Community

"Sisters Stand and Walk Together" is the most exciting program that I have ever been involved in with Presbyterian Women," said Anne Reynolds, immediate past moderator of PW in the Synod of the Northeast. "The PW Mission Pledge has the power and the promise to expand this invaluable program churchwide."

In fact, the PW Churchwide Coordinating Team (CCT) is already exploring how this training opportunity might be made available to women across the country. Consistent support of the PW Mission Pledge will ease the way. Because the funds collected through the mission pledge comprise the basic source of funding for PW's program and mission at all levels—congregation, presbytery, synod and Churchwide—giving becomes a sacred obligation.

Former representative of the Middle Eastern Presbyterian Women on the CCT and originator of the concept for "Sisters Stand and Walk Together," Salam Lebbos commented, "I think if a mini-program in each synod PW could be created to empower racial ethnic women with the same skills I learned while on the CCT, this will widen the circle of leadership and make it more diverse."

## Strengthening Women, Strengthening the Church

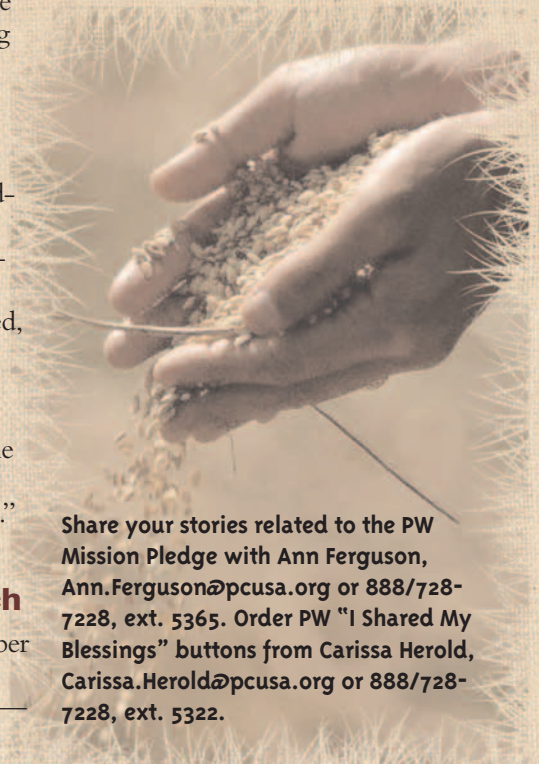
As a result of the program, a number of women have already discovered their voices as leaders, enriching PW—and the whole church—with their

gifts. Jyung In "Jenny" Lee, a native of Korea, answered the call to become moderator of the Eastern Korean Presbyterian Women and, subsequently, of National Korean Presbyterian Women. Precious Ekhaton, a Nigerian immigrant, assumed leadership of a large Sunday school class and volunteered to lead prayer in her congregation.

Lisione da Silva, a "Sisters Stand and Walk Together" participant who emigrated from Brazil, said, "I think this was the best thing that ever happened to us immigrants as a way to make us feel more comfortable and confident within the denomination." While involved in the training, da Silva was elected vice moderator for the Synod of the Northeast in 2007. "The enthusiasm of our participants was contagious," she said. "I would like to see that enthusiasm of learning from each other go on and on."

Thanks to the PW Mission Pledge—and God's abundant blessings without boundaries—it surely will. 🍀

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