

Installation Service for *Presbyterian Women*

BY REBECCA F. HARRISON

The ideal time for this installation service is during Sunday worship. Ask your pastor to suggest a Sunday when you may include it. Liturgical leadership may be provided by the pastor, or by PW leadership from the presbytery or the synod.

The stones that are suggested may be obtained anywhere rocks are found. To mark them, use a pen with metallic ink in gold or silver; these may be found at local crafts stores. Use words such as “Strength” for the moderator, “Service” for the vice moderator, “Fidelity” for the treasurer, “Honesty” for the secretary, and “Encouragement” for circle leaders. You might wish to print the date of installation on the opposite side of the rock.



Statement of Purpose

One: From the very beginning of God’s relationship with humankind, God has called people into positions of leadership, asking those people to serve God with their gifts and abilities. Through Joshua, God said to the ancient Israelites, “I hereby command you: Be strong and courageous; do not be frightened or dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go” (*Joshua 1:9*). Today, we hear again the significance of those words in our time: “Be strong and courageous; do not be frightened or dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.”

Prayer of Invocation

All: O Lord, our God, you are with us, even now, thousands of years after you called Joshua and the Israelite people into

leadership and service. May we feel that same Spirit with us this day, as we install into positions of leadership these women who have been called to serve you through Presbyterian Women. This we pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Those women who have been called into positions of leadership with Presbyterian Women are invited to come forward at this time.

Litany of Installation

One: Through the ages, women and men have heard God call to them, and they have responded. Most have answered, as did the ancient Israelites, “All that you have commanded us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go” (*Joshua 1:16*). Today, each of you has been called to serve. Today, each of you will be asked to respond in the same fashion as those long-ago leaders.

One: Will you, as newly-elected leaders of Presbyterian Women, hear and respond faithfully to God’s call?

Leaders: All that God has commanded us we will do; all with which Presbyterian Women has charged us we will do; and wherever we are sent we will go.

One: One of those ancient leaders was a woman of Jericho—Rahab, known as a prostitute. With great courage and strength, at great risk to herself and her family, she sheltered the Israelite men sent to spy in Jericho. For her risk, service and faithfulness to a new God, she and her family were kept safe from harm (*Joshua 2:1–21, 6:15–25*). Today, each of you is called to risk what is familiar and safe, in order to grow in faithfulness.

Will you, as newly-elected leaders of Presbyterian Women, like

Rahab, be strong and courageous, not frightened or dismayed, knowing that the Lord your God is with you wherever you go, whatever you do?

Leaders: All that God has commanded us we will do; all with which Presbyterian Women has charged us we will do; and wherever we are sent we will go.

One: When the Israelite nation began to cross the Jordan into the Promised Land, 12 leaders, one from each tribe, carried a stone from the middle of the Jordan into the new land, where the stones were placed as a memorial to God's saving grace. Today, we give each of you a stone. (*The stones should now be given to each newly installed leader.*) As you hold these stones in your hand, feel them. Notice their heft, representing the weight of responsibility each of you has taken on. Feel how smooth they are, signifying the grace God has given each of us to remove our rough edges. Read the words, different on each one, which serve as encouragement and inspiration for the tasks that lie ahead. Place your stone where you can look at it each day, and remember how God has been with the people of God from the beginning of time, and will continue to be with you and with us always, for God has promised.

The Israelites followed their leaders into Jericho, knowing that God, through Joshua, had called these leaders, and had given them the abilities and strength of character they would need to serve. We have called

leaders to serve God through the work of Presbyterian Women. These leaders depend on all of us to follow them, to serve, pray, study and give as they call upon us to do.

Do all of you here this day promise to follow and support these leaders of Presbyterian Women, trusting them to lead as God has called them to do?

All: All that God has commanded us we will do, and wherever we are sent we will go.

One: [Names/Offices], you are now duly installed as officers of Presbyterian Women, in and for this [congregation/presbytery/synod]. You have affirmed your calling, and your willingness to serve as God calls you, and we have affirmed our support for you in this work to which you have been called.

Let us pray.

All: God of Grace, from the very beginning, you have called people into positions of leadership in the communities where they live, work and worship. Today, we acknowledge that you have called these sisters into particular forms of service with Presbyterian Women. We thank you for the gifts you have given them, as well as the strength and courage they will need in their work. Bless each of them, that they may feel your eternal presence guiding them, and that they will have the strength and the courage to continue even in the face of difficulty. Bless each of us as we stand around, behind, with them, so

that together, we represent not only the power of Presbyterian Women, but your power, your Spirit, your love. In this and in all things, we pray in Jesus' holy name. Amen.

Hymn

"Today We Are Called to Be Disciples" (PH #434)



Presbyterian Women Purpose

One: I invite all who are present here to stand and say with me the Purpose for which Presbyterian Women exists.

All: 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, and
- 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.



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PH—*The Presbyterian Hymnal* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1990)