

PW Mission Pledge

Blessings Without Boundaries

BY EMILY ENDERS ODOM

Presbyterian Women can certainly claim some deep roots! With the organization's own mission firmly grounded in the love of Jesus Christ, this visionary and inclusive community of women has consistently branched out with its own tendrils of support to ensure that worthwhile new initiatives are given their own roots to grow.

Nurturing a network of women that strengthens the PC(USA) and witnesses to the promise of God's kingdom is foundational to the PW Mission Pledge. Funds collected through the Mission Pledge comprise the basic source of funding for PW's program and mission at all levels—congregational through Churchwide—and are a source of funding for PC(USA) programs.

"The Mission Pledge funds enable PW participation in leadership training, denominational conferences and ecumenical events, thus enriching lives and PW immeasurably," said Hazel Fuhrmeister, a former PW churchwide moderator. "It has been a joy for me to not only be involved in such growth opportunities myself, but to watch women grow over the years, developing skills they may not have known they had, and becoming advocates for issues that they first encountered through these wider experiences."

Roots and Growth

It was precisely because of such intentional cultivation by Presbyterian Women that REYWT (Racial Ethnic Young Women Together) was able to take root. Defying conventional standards of pronunciation, the acronym REYWT is deliberately pronounced "root," evoking the deep connections shared by these young women across their Christian faith, gender, cultural and age identities.

According to its mission statement, "the purpose of REYWT is to be a nationally structured network of racial ethnic young women whose leadership will reflect the diversity of today's church and who will develop and provide resources that support our goal of becoming a vital and recognizable constituency of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)." Since 2003, PW has supported


REYWT with funds from the Mission Pledge and from grants funded by other PW projects. From 2003–2006, PW contributions assisted with staff support, programming and community building. In 2006–2009, PW funding supported REYWT retreats for young women of various racial ethnic backgrounds from across the country.

"PW has been assisting REYWT from the beginning," said Bridgett Green, former REYWT staff. "Six years ago, when the idea of REYWT was coming together, PW supported the group of young women and Women's Ministries staff as they developed and shaped the concept of the ministry to get it on its feet."

Tiffany B. Gonzales, former intern for the Office of Racial Justice and Advocacy and the Office of Women's Advocacy, found the 2008 REYWT retreat to be a unique environment in which to ask safely the challenging questions of life and faith. "What is my place in this denomination?" Tiffany wondered, asking whether the PC(USA) is "ready to have its culture, and therefore its very identity, transformed and made new so that it can be truly multiracial, multicultural, cross-cultural."

PW is answering Tiffany's question with a resounding yes, providing funding for the current young-adult intern for REYWT and for the National Network of Presbyterian College Women (NNPCW), thus allowing such important explorations to continue to take place.

In recalling her experience at the 2008 retreat, Tiffany said, "Just as we spent time discovering our own identities, we of course spent time engaging one another's identities. I want to believe it is a process we will continue to engage in with one another; I believe it essential to our being and becoming church."

This is a statement to which PW—thanking God for the many blessings without boundaries made possible through the Mission Pledge—offers an enthusiastic amen! 

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