



PEAKS PW NEWS

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December 2019

PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN PURPOSE

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.

FROM THE MODERATOR (Helen B. Dean)

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PLEASE READ AND SHARE THIS NEWSLETTER WITH THE WOMEN IN YOUR CHURCH.

MODERATOR'S MESSAGE

Presbyterian Women of the Peaks held their Annual Gathering at Raleigh Court Presbyterian Church on September 28. This note is a special thank you to the ladies and gentlemen for their support of this program.

Senator John Edwards welcomed the group and applauded their involvement with the community and their support of programs that benefit our women and children. The offering recipient for this event was House of Bread, and we raised over \$850 in support of this worthy organization.

The speakers were extremely engaging, and we want to give thanks to Rev. Clayton Rascoe, Executive Director of Massanetta Springs Camp and Conference Center; Ms. Jennifer Brothers, Co-Founder and President of House of Bread; and Elaine Alderman, Synod Moderator for Presbyterian Women.

The mission project for us this year was "Handbags for Hope," and we are very proud to announce that we gathered over 600 handbags this year filled with toiletries. The handbags have been distributed to many organizations around the Peaks that support women in need. Some of the organizations are: Rescue Mission, Catholic Charities, Floyd County Social Services, Giles County Social Services, Hope House, Homeless Shelter in Narrows, Lexington Project Horizon, Lisa House, Lois Johnson Bettis Women's/Children's Center, Mrs. Dorsey's Clothes Closet, New River Family Shelter, William Fleming High School, and Homeless Assistance Team.

We wish to give special thanks to the members of the Coordinating Team and to Diane Patty, Vice Moderator and Gathering Coordinator, for all their hard work to make this event a success. We are very thankful to be able to support Presbyterian Women causes.

We wish for you a wonderful Christmas holiday!

Helen B. Dean

Helen B. Dean, Moderator

FROM THE VICE MODERATOR (Diane Patty)

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PW PARTICIPATE IN THIRTY-FIRST ANNUAL GATHERING

Raleigh Court Presbyterian Church (RCPC) in Roanoke hosted the Thirty-first Annual Gathering of Presbyterian Women in the Presbytery of the Peaks Saturday, September 28. The theme was “Reflect, Refresh, Renew.”

The Gathering was called to order by Helen Dean, Moderator of the Presbytery of the Peaks PW Coordinating Team. Susan Kessler, RCPC PW Treasurer, lit the Christ Candle and led the group in reciting the Presbyterian Women Purpose.

Cathy Slone, RCPC PW Moderator, introduced The Honorable John Edwards, Virginia State Senator, who welcomed the attendees to the city and expressed his appreciation for being invited to the Gathering. Senator and Mrs. Edwards were married at RCPC.

During the business portion of the Gathering, the 84 attendees approved a budget of \$2,300 for 2020, elected new PW leaders for 2019-2020; and received the Moderator’s Annual Report. Several minor changes to the Peaks PW Bylaws were approved.

A moment of silence was observed for Presbyterian Women who passed away during 2018.

The Rev. Clayton Rascoe, the Executive Director of Massanetta Springs Camp and Conference Center, presented the morning devotions for the Annual Gathering. In keeping with the theme of the Gathering, his devotional was based on Mark 8:22 when Jesus healed a blind man at Bethsaida. When Jesus put his hands on the man’s eyes, the man’s eyes were opened, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly.

The program for the Annual Gathering consisted of a keynote address by Jennifer Brothers, a Licensed Professional Counselor in Roanoke, Co-Founder and President of House of Bread, and a final-year Master of Divinity student at Union Presbyterian Seminary. She added a fourth “R” to the Gathering theme of “Reflect, Refresh, Renew” – Resurrection. She spoke of the Resurrection being the ultimate renewal and pointed out incidences in the Bible where women played key roles, such as being the last at the Crucifixion and the first to spread the good news of the Resurrection. She reminded everyone that God has new life for us all, and God walks ahead of us and prepares the way.

A monetary offering of \$854.56 was received to benefit House of Bread in Roanoke. Lisa Goad, Co-Founder of House of Bread, explained that House of Bread is a non-profit group that seeks to connect formerly incarcerated women with the chance to turn their lives around. The program consists of an eight-week session when women are exposed to new skills through hands-on training, as well as making and selling bread, while working alongside volunteers from the Roanoke community.

Approximately 200 handbags were donated for the “Handbags for Hope” project. Handbags were also donated at the two spring Neighborhood Gatherings. This brings the total collected well over 600 purses! The goal was to deliver handbags to charities and/or organizations that serve women in each of the six neighborhoods in the Presbytery of the Peaks. Several recipients of the handbags are: Catholic Charities, Roanoke; Giles County Social Services; Lexington Project Horizon, Lisa

House; Lois Johnson Bettis Women/Children's Center; New River Community Action; Social Services, Charlotte County; and Good Samaritan, South Boston.

During the break, attendees enjoyed snacks and visiting the displays of several supporters of PW: Fair Trade Products sale, hosted by Denise Pillow; House of Bread, hosted by Lisa Goad; Massanetta Springs Camp and Conference Center, hosted by The Rev. Clayton Rascoe; the Presbyterian Children's Home of the Highlands, hosted by Zac Carter; Sunnyside Communities, hosted by Lynda McMillen; the Peaks Coordinating Team display of "Together in Service"; and PW history albums.

Janet Rakes, Past Historian of the Synod of the Mid-Atlantic, installed the newly elected PW leaders for 2019-2020 and re-affirmed those PW leaders who are continuing in service on the Coordinating Team. She based the installation service on 1 Peter 3:8 (NIV): "Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble."

The new Peaks Presbyterian Women Coordinating Team is composed of the following leaders:

Moderator – Helen Dean (Second Church)

Vice Moderator – Diane Patty (Fairlawn Church)

Secretary – Shelda Wills (Christiansburg Church)

Treasurer – Theresa Underwood (Peace Church)

Historian – Carol Cole (Second Church)

Racial Equity/Justice and Peace Representative – Elease Wilson (Holbrook Street Church)

Missions Coordinator – Betty Oliver (Westminster Church)

Moderator of the Search Committee – Cynthia Washburn (Second Church)

Search Committee Members – Sylvia Kent-Goodman (Mizpah Church), Sandra Gisiner (Campbell Memorial Church), Ashley Stanley (Holbrook Street Church)

Leadership Coordinator, Piedmont & Southside Neighborhoods – vacant

Leadership Coordinator, Hill Cities & Roanoke Valley Neighborhoods – Sarah Eller (Salem Church)

Leadership Coordinator, Highlands & New River Valley Neighborhoods – Ginny Poff (Christiansburg Church)

(Note: Ginny Poff was appointed in October by the Peaks PW Coordinating Team to fill this position for the coming year.)

Following the installation service, the Gathering concluded with the observance of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, with The Reverend Clayton Rascoe serving as the celebrant.

Appreciation is expressed to Raleigh Court Presbyterian Church for hosting the Annual Gathering of Presbyterian Women in the Presbytery of the Peaks.

The Thirty-second Annual Gathering of Presbyterian Women in the Presbytery of the Peaks will take place on Saturday, September 26, 2020, at the Presbytery Office in Lynchburg. You are encouraged to mark your calendars now! We look forward to seeing you there! Watch for additional details.

FROM THE TREASURER (Theresa Underwood)

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2019 FINANCIAL DUE DATES

This is a reminder that our Peaks Presbytery PW Financial Pledges for this year (2019) are due. If you haven't sent in your pledges for either the fourth quarter or the full year, please do so before December 10, if possible. Also, if you still have Thank Offerings that have not been mailed, please send these to PO Box 744, Blue Ridge, VA 24064 no later than December 10, if possible. Any monies for 2019 should be sent in by the year's end. Please contact me with any questions you have. Wishing each of you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

“MILE OF PENNIES” CHALLENGE

The Synod PW Coordinating Team is challenging each Presbytery in the Synod of the Mid-Atlantic to raise a “Mile of Pennies” to benefit the Massanetta Springs Camp and Conference Center in Harrisonburg. A “Mile of Pennies” is 84,480 pennies or \$844.80.

I am asking all PW circles, individuals, Sunday School classes, etc. in the Presbytery of the Peaks to step up and help with this challenge. Presbyterian Women in the Presbytery of the Peaks would like to raise the \$844.80.

Massanetta Springs Camp and Conference Center has always supported and continues to support Presbyterian Women, and it would be nice to help them out with some little repairs that are needed. Our Synod PW Coordinating Team has its meetings there, and the past several years, the Synod Summer Gathering has been held there. Massanetta holds a special place in the hearts of Presbyterian Women.

Please send your checks, made payable to PW, Presbytery of the Peaks, to Theresa Underwood, PO Box 744, Blue Ridge, VA 24064. Please mark the memo line of your check as Mile of Pennies. The deadline has been extended to March 1, 2020. Thank you very much for your support of Massanetta Springs!

FROM THE HISTORIAN (Carol Cole)

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IT'S TIME FOR SOME PW HISTORY!

For this newsletter, as we prepare for Advent and Christmas, I wanted to bring your attention to a few points of PW history.

Presbyterian Women's predecessor organizations began more than 200 years ago when women had no role outside the home. In spite of numerous societal restrictions, the women's organizations in Presbyterian churches gained respect, especially that of missionaries in the field who requested women's donations and prayers.

In 1872, the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church in North America (UPCNA) asked women members to devise some way to systematically raise money to support women missionaries

in the field. In 1875, Sarah Foster Hanna spoke to the General Assembly and received permission to establish the first national organization for women in a Presbyterian denomination, the Women's General Missionary Society.

Presbyterian Women's financial support of missions was phenomenal and included the Thank Offering (begun in 1888) and the Birthday Offering (begun in 1922), both of which continue today. Finally, in 1988, Presbyterian Women was born, incorporating the best in United Presbyterian Women (UPW) and Women of the Church (WOC).

Presbyterian Women continue their life-changing work in the world, now with more recognition. PW incorporated in 2009, establishing itself as a publicly supported integrated auxiliary of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). Then in 2016, the General Assembly added Presbyterian Women to the PC(USA) Organization for Mission as a related corporation. This action formally acknowledges PW's unique role within the church.

The same assembly ruled that the national moderator of Presbyterian Women, Inc., is a corresponding member to the General Assembly. This gives the moderator a seat on the floor with voice, but no vote. When speaking to committee about this recommendation, Rhashell Hunter, Presbyterian Mission Agency Director of Racial Ethnic and Women's Ministries, said, "PW has supported the church for over 200 years – it's beyond time for this voice to be at the table."

So, as we prepare for the holidays, maybe we should think about our voice in the world and the strong and determined women who have made PW's voice heard!

FROM THE RACIAL EQUITY/JUSTICE & PEACE REPRESENTATIVE (Elease Wilson)

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DIVERSITY IN OUR CHURCHES

Diversity in our Churches – What in the world are we talking about?

Well, we're talking about just providing equal communication, opportunities, and connectivity among Presbyterian Women across the Presbytery of the Peaks and all over the world. It's still Presbyterian Women working to build an inclusive and caring community.

In my role as your Racial Equity/Justice and Peace Representative, I want to ensure that we plan meetings in our neighborhoods that will include everyone and that will allow us to have productive conversations about what we are doing and how we might be able to help and support each other.

During our Spring Neighborhood Gatherings, I want to offer opportunities to spend some time discussing how we can have more involvement with Presbyterian Women in our programs and create programs that will engage other people in our communities. In the coming weeks, I will be calling and inviting you to share ideas and to examine programs that work best for our PW.

I am looking forward to working with each of you and to have your ideas working to make our Presbytery more visible and effective.

Thank you, and please call me with ideas and program suggestions!

A NOTE FROM YOUR MODERATOR

During our Annual Gathering, a question was asked relative to the name change for the position of Racial Equity/Justice and Peace Representative that sits on our Coordinating Team of the Peaks.

It has always been my goal to ensure that we offer programs that benefit everyone and that we work to have an inclusive, caring community of women supporting programs that will benefit everyone, especially with an emphasis on women and children.

In order to be able to give you a clear picture of the study that went into making these changes and decisions, I am submitting information from the website which should help you in understanding the process and thought that went into the decision to upgrade the name to better reflect what this position is supposed to do to support the churches. As you read and digest this information, if you have additional concerns or questions, please feel free to write to me personally. You are also invited to come to one of the Coordinating Team meetings, and we will provide time on the agenda to discuss any of your concerns.

I want to thank Eleese Wilson who is your newly elected Racial Equity/Justice and Peace Representative, and we look forward to her involvement in your Presbyterian Women circles.

AS INFORMATION FOR YOU:

Antiracism Initiative

As part of Presbyterian Women's commitment to [racial equity](#), a structural review task group evaluated its structure, programs, and resources from an anti-racist perspective. The [structural review task group's report](#) and recommendations continue to guide the life and work of Presbyterian Women.

PW Racial Equity Dialogue

The PW Racial Equity Dialogue seeks to:

- honor the gifts, perspectives, and heritage of all God's people and celebrate our oneness in the living Christ;
- work together toward developing a sanctuary where women of different racial ethnic backgrounds can speak the truth to each other and be heard;
- intentionally find ways to increase mutual understanding and work together as partners in ministry through dialogue;
- develop racial ethnic women's leadership so that they may pursue their concerns and mission with confidence;
- serve as a vehicle for bringing about justice for women of all racial ethnic backgrounds and ages in Presbyterian Women and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) – *Approved by the PW Racial Ethnic Dialog, January 24, 2009*
- A dialogue group met for several years at the national level. The national dialogue is currently on hiatus, but regional dialogues continue to meet. For example, PW in the Synod of the Mid-Atlantic provides the following model:

- The PW Racial Equity Dialogue of the Synod of the Mid-Atlantic is a racially diverse team of women from throughout the synod that focuses on building relationships across racial and cultural backgrounds. The purpose of the PW Racial Equity Dialogue (RED) is to fulfill the PW Purpose by “building an inclusive, caring community” through the use of dialogue as a tool for building relationships among and between women from different racial ethnic groups.
- For the past three years, the RED has studied books and articles on timely justice issues, focusing on how to adapt ideas from current literature into action within the synod’s presbyteries and churches to promote racial equity for all God’s children. RED is now collaborating with OAR (Offender Aid Restoration) to support those returning to their communities after incarceration.
- The Synod of the Mid-Atlantic Racial Equity Dialogue was established in 2005, with a grant from the PW Churchwide Coordinating Team. Each year since 2007, RED has sponsored workshops at the PW Synod Summer Gathering, as well as at various presbytery PW gatherings, to raise awareness of racial equity.
- The current team includes African American, Cameroonian American, European American, Ghanaian American, Hispanic/Latina American, Malawi/Central African, Middle Eastern American, and Native American women from the following presbyteries: Charlotte, Coastal Carolina, Eastern Virginia, The James, National Capital, New Castle, New Hope, The Peaks, Salem, Shenandoah, and Western North Carolina. The group meets each summer during the PW Synod Summer Gathering and, otherwise, conducts its work through conference calls.

Submitted by Helen Dean, Moderator – Presbytery of the Peaks Presbyterian Women

NEWS BRIEFS

- **Fall Packet and Financial Support Form for 2020 (PW Mission Pledge):** You received the Fall Packet of information through the mail in October. Thanks for all the Financial Support Forms received so far. Even though the November 20 deadline has passed, please continue to send those forms to Helen B. Dean, PO Box 744, Blue Ridge, VA 24064. If you have misplaced your form, or if you have questions, please contact Helen at 540.362.5169 or hbarb55@cox.net.
- **Local PW Leaders Form:** You also received a “Local PW Leaders for 2020” form in the Fall Packet of information. Please complete this form and send it to Shelda Wills by January 31, 2020. You can mail it to her at 107 West Main Street, Christiansburg, VA 24073. If you have questions or need another copy of the form, please contact her at swills@usit.net or 540.382.2802.
- **Peaks PW Group/Circle Report Form:** You also received a “Presbytery of the Peaks PW Group/Circle Report” form in the Fall Packet of information. Please complete this form and send it to Carol Cole by January 31, 2020. You can mail it to her at PO Box 744, Blue Ridge, VA 24064 or email it to her at slick314.carol@gmail.com.

- **Pocket Prayer Squares:** Every current Clerk of Session in the Presbytery of the Peaks has received a “pocket prayer square” for his/her church from the Peaks PW Coordinating Team. The prayer squares were handcrafted by PW and friends of the Presbytery of the Peaks in five churches: Christiansburg, Fairlawn, New Dublin, Peace in Roanoke, and Second in Roanoke. If you have not seen your church’s prayer square, check with your Clerk of Session.
- **Celebrate the Gifts of Women, Sunday, March 8, 2020:** On “Celebrate the Gifts of Women Sunday,” we honor women of faith, those who may have felt their faith falter at times, and those who held fast to faith. The theme for the celebration is “Honoring Women’s Spirituality, Struggle, and Survival.” Though March 8 has been set aside as “Celebrate the Gifts of Women Sunday,” your congregation may use the resource on any day that you choose. The “Celebrate the Gifts of Women” resource is available in the November/December 2019 issue of *Horizons* magazine. It can be downloaded free from www.pcusa.org/women. It is also free from the PC(USA) store, 800.533.4371, or from www.pcusastore.com; item 27501-20-001.
- **Spring Neighborhood Gatherings:** The Spring Neighborhood Gathering for the Roanoke Valley, Highlands, and New River Valley Neighborhoods will take place on Sunday afternoon, April 19, 2020. The Spring Neighborhood Gathering for the Piedmont, Southside, and Hill Cities Neighborhoods will take place on Sunday afternoon, April 26, 2020. Watch for more details from the Leadership Coordinators and in the next edition of *Peaks PW News!*
- **Synod of the Mid-Atlantic PW Summer Gathering:** The Synod Summer Gathering will take place June 11-14, 2020, at the Massanetta Springs Camp and Conference Center. The theme will be “Rise Up, You Women . . . Hear My Voice!” based on Isaiah 32:9. Registration forms will be available soon!
- **Churchwide Gathering of PW:** The next Churchwide Gathering of PW will take place August 5-8, 2021, in St. Louis, Missouri. The theme will be “Rejoice in Hope.” More information will be available soon!
- **Celebrating 100 Years of Ministry:** The Presbyterian Children’s Home of the Highlands in Wytheville celebrated its 100th Anniversary September 21, with the official dedication ceremony for the Sarah Ellen Harless Garden of Hope, campus tours, exhibits, games, and lots of delicious food! Check out the photos at www.pchh.org!
- **Honorary Life Memberships (HLM):** Honorary Life Memberships are a wonderful way to honor the special women in your PW circles. The sterling silver level is \$95, and the gold level is \$250. Funds from the HLM support PW leadership development and training.

*The Presbytery of the Peaks Presbyterian
Women Coordinating Team wishes you
a very Merry Christmas and
a Happy New Year!*