



PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN OF PWNC - AUGUST 2023

FROM THE MODERATOR

Sacred Encounters

Browsing through our 2023-2024 *Horizons* Bible Study, *Sacred Encounters: The Power and Presence of Jesus Christ in Luke-Acts*, I was reminded of people in my own life with whom I have had “sacred encounters,” people who shaped and strengthened my faith.

Miss Marie Adams was my catechism teacher. In the late 1950s, most of the younger children at Seneca Presbyterian Church attended regular Sunday evening classes, learning the questions and responses from the “pink” catechism. When it came to the Shorter Catechism, a few years later, I was pretty much alone in that class, and I treasured her patience and affirmation. Even later, Miss Marie instructed high school seniors in the Covenant Life Curriculum’s vocational program. Miss Marie provided both an example of a strong faith and instruction in the foundations of that faith.



Jane is my own personal angel. Her mother was the pastor at our church, and when Jane was a sixth grader at the middle school where I taught, she suddenly decided I was her anchor. As I stood on duty, Jane would come hurtling down the crowded hall and throw herself at me for a hug. That was the year my mother and Jane’s father died. While I may have been an anchor for Jane, she was equally great comfort to me, and I treasure the fact that we are still friends.

The women with whom I meet each month for Circle Bible Study represent regular sacred encounters continuing in my life. Their knowledge, deep faith, and willingness to share renew and inspire my own faith.

My sacred encounters have provided instruction, comfort, and inspiration. What about yours?

A NOTE FROM DOT

Summer 2023

What is there to be said about “giving” in PW? Presbyterian Women have traditionally been very generous with both their time and their money. If you were able to attend one of the presentations about Women and their work in the mountains in the early to mid-20th Century given at Warren Wilson College a few years ago, you couldn’t have helped being greatly impressed with their huge impact on the lives of people living in far-flung mountain valleys and coves. The health and education of children and families were enormously improved by these groups of faithful women. Current congregational groups are diligently working to meet the needs of the less fortunate in their own communities; some follow more global cares and spend their time and money on projects in Guatemala or Malawi and beyond.

Earlier this year a large number of Women in WNC undertook to construct and send a few thousand reusable sanitary pads to school girls in Malawi, helping enable their staying in school even during their menstrual periods, thus fulfilling a very mundane need. There are so many needs both here and abroad, and we need to figure out where we fit in to help.

Last year I went through our Directory and noted how many of our groups of Women still had Mission Facilitators. There were very few. Covid hit all of us hard, and our churches suffered losses of members. Recovery has not been substantial. It had already been challenging to find women willing to accept positions of leadership and responsibility, and now it is even more difficult. A few years ago we looked at our structure to see what Coordinating Team positions we could combine or even eliminate; it is time to do it again if we are to function well.

PW and PCUSA websites are overflowing with pleas for work to be done, funds to be raised, people to be helped. How can we handle it all? And do we try to rebuild what was in the past or do we just leave all that and storm into the future? We are still grieving our losses. What now?

Recently we had some “Front porch chats” where we talked about what had been but is no longer, and how we rode out some of our own storms, about where we are now. What if we do some more talking and planning? Where do we want to be as a group in five years? In ten? And how much are we willing to commit to make that happen? It is still God’s church, and God hasn’t asked us to “fix” it. But what IS God asking us to do? Do we need to spend more time together reviewing past accomplishments, celebrate recent small victories, then agree to move on? Should we find out what is already being done (or at least studied or planned) on Synod and Churchwide levels? What are other Women doing? How can we help each other?

What if we have a focus group on Restructuring? I have been thinking about this and have some suggestions for consideration. As for the matter of what

things we need positions for in order to function, what if we have Leadership (including a Moderator, a Secretary, and Treasurer; Mission (local and global); Fellowship and Hospitality; and Spiritual Nurture and Education? Details of how these would work could be negotiated.

We could call on some “Elders” with PW leadership experience who could be Consultants in the process. We are going to need some help with the process. If you care whether or not PW and our purposes continue, ask God what God would like for you to do to help, and then volunteer your gifts and services. Talk with your group and write down some thoughts and suggestions. Contact your Cluster Leader or someone else on the Coordinating Team and make your voice heard. We are all in this together. Blessings to all.

Dot Descieux
Mission Facilitator
828/779-1164
dotdes39@gmail.com

PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN PERSEVERE

At our last CT meeting the Cluster Leaders reported on the diminishing number of active Presbyterian Women’s Circles in the Presbytery. But they also reported that a number of these small churches had women’s groups who may be small in number and elderly, but still maintained the purposes of the Presbyterian Women.

I’ve had the privilege of visiting two of these small churches. Last May, Sue Hyde (Second Vice Moderator) and I joined the women of **Forest City Presbyterian Church** for the Birthday Offering event. Though we were few in number the women had collected an offering and provided a lovely time of fellowship. These women still do a Bible Study, provide donations to the church and community, and participate in the Birthday and Thank Offering events. With a new Pastor on board and with lots of prayer, this congregation is looking to grow. I believe the women I met will do all they can to assist in this revitalization.



Last Sunday, I attended **Brittain Presbyterian Church's 225th anniversary Homecoming** worship service followed by "dinner on the grounds". I was greeted by several of the women who provide help in the kitchen, meet for Bible Study when able, provide financial support to the church and community, and support the pastor and leadership for this historic church. Even though they are few in number and age has rendered them unable to do as much as they would like, they soldier on. A new Pastor and his wife will give them much needed encouragement.



I pray that these churches with history and beautiful facilities will be examples of perseverance and renewed energy. They are too valuable to their community and to the world to do otherwise.

Ellie Mercer
Cluster C Facilitator

HAVE YOU THOUGHT ABOUT WAYS TO GAIN FINANCIAL SUPPORT for those projects you hold near and dear? Every worthwhile cause must have champions who are willing to take on a fundraiser! Here are a couple of ideas that have succeeded for the Microloan Project.



A major fundraiser is the sale of greeting cards that come in two formats:

1. "In your honor" donation cards inform the recipient that a gift to the microloan project has been made in their honor. There is a card specifically for Christmas giving and another that can be used for any occasion: birthday, thinking of you, Mother's Day, etc. Each card contains a brief description of the Microloan Project and is invaluable in informing others about the project. The inside of the card has ample room for a personal message. A minimum donation of \$10 per card is suggested.

2. All-occasion notecards are available in packs of 3/\$10. These notecards feature photos of microloan participants on the front, are blank inside, and have a description of the Microloan Project on the back.

To order cards to make available to your PW group and church, contact Sandra Teubner at steubner@charter.net. Also look for them at Presbyterian Women Gatherings or Presbytery Meetings.

NEWS FLASH: A new Christmas card is being designed by graphic artist, Jade Baker, and will be available at the PW Fall Gathering on October 7th at Brevard Davidson River Church.

A second fundraiser recently begun in Belmont is the sale of products ordered through Equal Exchange, a fair-trade

company that sources only ethically produced foods. They work outside of the conventional system to build transparent and strong relationships with farmer cooperatives, enabling farmers to stay on their land and plan for their future. Products are organic and produced without child labor that is rampant in some other agricultural communities. Although Equal Exchange offers a variety of foods, they are best known for coffee and chocolate. Their support staff is very helpful with first time orders and provides printed “how to” information on their website under the Resource Center tab. Learn more and enjoy browsing at <https://shop.equalexchange.coop>.



The May 2023 Issue of Joyful Noise included an article about another type of fundraiser – a Holy Land Dinner and Biblical Women Fashion Show that was held by the Presbyterian Women of Greenway Presbyterian in Lenoir. Please refer to that issue for details.

OTHER WAYS YOU CAN HELP EXPAND OUR REACH!

Arrange a program for your PW group or church; contact Mary Louise Forsythe at mlbforsythe@gmail.com.

Do you use Facebook? Like our “Guatemala Microloan Project” page and please share our posts so others can learn about the work. Current posts include information about the groups and participants we visited on our recent 2023 delegation trip.

UPDATE ON MICROLOAN GROUPS:

ADEHGUA has been working hard to wrap up work with the 4 original microloan groups in Santo Domingo, San Felipe, Coatepeque, and Las Animas. Please pray that as these women finish their time in the project they will be strengthened and empowered to continue their businesses and learning, and that they will thrive! ADEHGUA is also evaluating 3 communities that have expressed an interest in having a microloan project. Please pray for God’s guidance as we hope to begin two new groups in the coming year.

CONGRATULATIONS, REYNA!

We have received news that Reyna Solval, a former microloan participant who now works full-time for ADEHGUA, the Guatemalan human rights organization that we employ for the Microloan Project, has received permission to write her thesis as the last requirement toward her university degree. Part of the message sent by her coworker, Flor de Maria, is quoted below: “Reyna has chosen the theme, ‘Dignified Reparation for Women Survivors of



Violence.' It is a great achievement for her, ... and especially for ADEHGUA. ...she is an example of perseverance, effort and empowerment for her family (Reyna is the mother of four sons), community, and for women."

2024 DELEGATION TRIP TO GUATEMALA: Please begin now to consider the possibility of joining us on the next Microloan Delegation Trip to Guatemala in late January or early February 2024. We will meet with ADEHGUA staff, visit the microloan groups, meet microloan participants, and see their businesses. These visits have been very meaningful and inspiring to all. More details will be coming. Meanwhile, if you have questions or want to be on the email list to receive information, contact Susan Maveety at susan.maveety@gmail.com.

TO CONTRIBUTE to the Guatemala Microloan Project, make checks payable to PW PWNC and send to Heather Hudson, 4 Northvalley Dr., Weaverville, NC 28787. Your financial contributions are much appreciated!

THANK YOU! This year marks 10 years since the idea of a Microloan Project was first conceived at a women's retreat in Guatemala. We have seen God work in and through countless people in Guatemala and in the United States. Presbyterian Women has been key in making this idea a reality. Thank you for all the ways you have supported this project through your prayers, interest, advocacy, and financial support. We welcome additional help in the following areas: serving on the Microloan Task Force (meets bimonthly by Zoom), serving as the Prayer Partner Coordinator, and being in charge of posting updates (that others have written) on Facebook. For more info on any of these, contact Mary Louise Forsythe at mlbforsythe@gmail.com.

FALL GATHERING



COME CELEBRATE AND LEARN -

The Fall Gathering of Presbyterian Women of the Presbytery of Western North Carolina will celebrate in person as we gather at Brevard-Davidson River Presbyterian Church on Saturday, October 7, 2023. A Love Offering will be given to Transylvania

Habitat for Humanity's Home Repair Program. Fellowship and Workshops are the focus. All women of the presbytery and friends are invited to participate in a common gathering, in workshops and then LUNCH together. The Registration Form is included in this issue of the *JOYFUL NOISE*; fill it out, send it in and bring a friend!

PRINTABLE REGISTRATION FORM FOR 2023 PW FALL GATHERING

SAVE THE DATE

Save the date for our 2024 PW Spring Gathering. The event will be held at the Montreat Conference Center on April 20, 2024, and Asheville area churches will host. Please mark your calendars for this important event.

IMPORTANT EVENTS TO REMEMBER

October 7, 2023 - Fall Gathering at Brevard-Davidson River

April 20, 2024 - Spring Gathering at Montreat Conference Center

August 8-11, 2024 - Churchwide Gathering Of Presbyterian Women in St. Louis, Missouri

IMPORTANT DUE DATES TO REMEMBER

November 15, 2023 - Mission Pledge Form due to Presbytery PW Treasurer

December 10, 2023 - Thank Offering due to the Presbytery PW Treasurer

December 31, 2023 - Faith Fund Application due to Presbytery PW Treasurer

January 31, 2024 - PW History due to Presbytery PW Historian & Moderator

January 31, 2024 - PW Moderator's Report of PW Activities due to Presbytery PW Moderator

February 15, 2024 - Scholarship Applications due to PW Scholarship Committee Chair

June 1, 2024 - Birthday Offering due to Presbytery PW Treasurer

July 1, 2024 - List of new PW Officers due to the Presbytery PW Secretary & Moderator

Click on the PW icon to visit the Presbytery of Western North Carolina's Presbyterian Women's page



PRESBYTERIAN
WOMEN

EMAIL BETH TAYLOR

First Presbyterian Church | 237 2nd Street NW, Hickory, NC 28601

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