

**ITEM D.106  
 FOR ACTION**

FOR PRESBYTERIAN MISSION AGENCY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S OFFICE USE ONLY				
	A. Resource Allocation & Stewardship	X	D. Coordinating Committee	G. Outreach to the World
	B. Personnel & Nominating		E. Mid Councils	H. Ministerial Teams
	C. Property/Legal		F. Nurture the Body	P. Plenary
<b>FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS – TO BE COMPLETED BY SUBMITTING OFFICE</b>				
<b>COST (explain in the Rationale section):</b>				
Within Per Capita Budget		Within Mission Budget		New Funds _____

**Subject: 2023–2024 Mission Work Plan (Part 1)**

**Recommendation**

That the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board approve the 2023–2024 Mission Work Plan and forward it to the 225th General Assembly (2022) for adoption as part of the unified General Assembly Mission and Per Capita Budget presentation.

**2023–2024 Mission Work Plan**

The words of the prophet Habakkuk 2:2 state:

**Write the vision;  
 make it plain on tablets,  
 so that a runner may read it.**

The 2023–2024 Mission Work Plan begins by giving thanks to God for the faithful discipleship of Presbyterians, lived out in a commitment to mission — the time and energy shared with congregations, mid councils, in the General Assembly and in communities across the street and around the world, which is making a difference in the lives of so many. In addition to your witness, your financial contributions in support of mission including Per Capita and Special Offerings — One Great Hour of Sharing, Pentecost, Peace & Global Witness and Christmas Joy — help empower Presbyterians to continue to bear witness to Jesus Christ in this most important time.

The Presbyterian Mission Agency Board has approved the following statements as guidance for the work of the Presbyterian Mission Agency:

**Identity**

**Created by the General Assembly and guided by the Holy Spirit, the Presbyterian Mission Agency is a band of disciples and co-laborers continuing a movement launched by Jesus Christ to welcome the realm of God on earth.**

**Vision**

**The Presbyterian Mission Agency envisions and embodies a just, radically inclusive, and relational world that is free of violence and domination, that celebrates and values all of Creation, where there are no more margins, and where the good news of God's love and grace are felt by all.**

**Mission**

**The Presbyterian Mission Agency is committed to bearing witness to Jesus Christ and sharing his love and justice in the world. As such, we seek to co-convene sacred spaces that nurture disciples of Jesus. Working with others, we inspire, equip and connect congregations, mid councils, other entities of the PC(USA) and our partners locally and globally to do justice and to repair historical harms.**

**The Presbyterian Mission Agency works with congregations and mid councils and centers our listening, learning and work with communities forced to the margins. We are building congregational vitality, eradicating systemic poverty, dismantling structural racism, sexism and heteropatriarchy, ending militarism and addressing our climate crisis.**

**Values**

- Justice
- Love
- Creativity/Imagination
- Humility
- Spirit-led
- Mutuality

**Mission Work Plan — Overview**

**The 2023–2024 Mission Work Plan builds upon the call of the 222nd General Assembly (2016) for the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) to become a Matthew 25 Church and continues to lift up the three priorities identified at the 223rd General Assembly (2018):**

**Building congregational vitality**

**Dismantling structural racism**

**Eradicating systemic poverty**

**Following the careful discernment of an extensive strategic visioning process, this work plan calls for the establishment of two new functions: a Center for the Repair of Historical Harms, and an Office of Innovation, Futuring and Discernment.**

**As the Presbyterian Mission Agency addresses the priority areas, the 2023–2024 Mission Work Plan calls for specific attention to be given to several critical intersections between its priority work and the topics of climate change, militarism and gender justice/heteropatriarchy.**

### Theological Framework

The Presbyterian Mission Agency 2023–2024 Mission Work Plan invites Presbyterians to unite in doing the work of Jesus' kingdom as described in Matthew 25, verses 31-46.<sup>1</sup> This kingdom is an alternative reality, based upon the principles and practices embodied by Jesus. In the kingdom, God's love, justice and healing power for God's people and Creation is exhibited. Jesus is passionate about the kingdom. His first recorded sermon announces the kingdom (Matthew 4:17). He teaches disciples to pray for this kingdom (Matthew 6:10). Afterward, his teaching and preaching is focused on the kingdom.

Kingdom sayings reveal the counterintuitive nature of Jesus teachings such as:

- *“Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it.” Matthew 10:39*
- *“If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven.” Matthew 19:21*
- *“So, the last shall be first, and the first last.” Matthew 20:16*
- *“If you want to be great, you must become a servant of all.” Matthew 20:26*

The Presbyterian Mission Agency 2023–2024 Mission Work Plan invites Presbyterians to unite in doing the work of the kingdom. This Mission Work Plan centers those who are on the margins as seen in Matthew 25:31-46 and other Scripture such as Luke 4. In the focus on building congregational vitality, the Mission Work Plan addresses the importance of making disciples. It is devoted and empowered disciples who are steeped in prayer, nourished in the sacraments, and transformed by the Word of God and the Holy Spirit who engage in kingdom work. It is committed disciples of Jesus Christ who bear witness to Christ and help make disciples of Jesus. It is committed disciples who will challenge unjust systems, eradicate systemic poverty, dismantle structural racism and intersectional structures of oppression, including militarism, gender discrimination and environmental injustice that leads to climate change. It is faithful disciples who will make this, and all Mission Work Plans, come alive.

We are happy to report that so many have joined us in embodying this “Matthew 25” vision. To date, 45% of presbyteries and 77% of synods are participating, along with the national and regional bodies of Presbyterian Women. Other entities of the Church, colleges, universities, national caucuses supporting communities of color and seminaries represent another 5,600 people.

It is no surprise that this effort has taken root in the midst of a global pandemic. In many ways, the pandemic laid bare the deep divide between the kingdoms of this world and the kingdom/kingdom of Jesus. The Presbyterian Mission Agency gives God praise for the work that took place in the context of a global pandemic made possible by Presbyterian generosity. Because of the financial support, prayers, and labor of Presbyterians, over 430 grants totaling over \$16.5 million were disbursed nationally and internationally, including over \$6 million in disaster response, almost \$1.7 million to global partners and almost \$1.2 million to New Worshiping Communities.

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<sup>1</sup> Many Presbyterians prefer the term “kindom” to kingdom because the idea of kingdom is a top-down monarchy. Scholars such as Dr. Raj Nadella, professor of New Testament at Columbia Theological Seminary, conclude that Jesus was inviting us to join a “more horizontal structure of power in which everyone is a beloved child of God.”

### Mission Work Plan — Priorities

We propose continuing our focus on Building Congregational Vitality.

In their ministry, congregations nurture and make disciples of Jesus Christ as they embody the principles and teachings of Jesus in daily living and community service. Congregational vitality refers to the intentional and continuous spiritual formation of teaching elders, ruling elders and members of a congregation that leads them to actively engage their community, bearing witness to Jesus Christ so that their faith comes alive and the world wakes up to new possibilities.

Congregations are empowered by the Holy Spirit. They have vitality when believers expand the welcome table to include whosoever will come and sup with the community of faith. Congregational vitality steers away from traditional measures of church health. It is not determined by the number of members in a church, the church's location, the number of people physically present in worship or in online platforms each week or the size of the church's budget. Rather, a church's faithfulness in demonstrating the love and justice of Jesus to a world hungry for healing and hope is what constitutes congregational vitality.

The Presbyterian Mission Agency's work in building congregational vitality is fundamental to this mission work plan. In Matthew 28:18, Jesus instructs us to make disciples, who, empowered by the Holy Spirit, are called to bear witness to him. Disciples constitute the laborers in God's harvest. Their faithfulness to ministry and mission helps create vital congregations.

The Presbyterian Mission Agency will continue to work with congregations, mid councils and partners to nurture and make disciples who are committed to bearing witness to Jesus Christ by providing resources, workshops, webinars and events to strengthen the work of churches, mid councils and international partners, by working with mid councils and churches to form new worshiping communities, by supporting churches and mission co-workers and international partners in their efforts to share the love and justice of Jesus in their communities, and by providing a means for churches to engage in critical review to determine the best options for future ministry and service.

We propose to continue the work of Dismantling Structural Racism in 2023–2024 Mission Work Plan.

In the United States, structural racism is the normalization and legitimization of an array of dynamics — historical, cultural, institutional and interpersonal — that routinely advantages white people while producing cumulative and chronic adverse outcomes for individuals who are Black, Indigenous and People of Color. Structural racism is a social construct. It is based upon domination and oppression and is designed to concentrate material and social capital within one group or race of people over others.

Structural racism is rooted in white supremacy or the belief that that people differ along biological and genetic lines and that white people are superior to other groups. It is perpetuated in part by “white privilege,” which is the advantage of white people having greater access to power and resources than individuals in similar circumstances who are Black, Indigenous or People of Color do. Structural racism is the gateway for colonization, domination and systems of oppression such as gender discrimination. Structural racism is also rooted in the historical legacy of the transatlantic

slave trade and westward expansion. Racism and white privilege are sin, violating the truth that all people are created in the image of God.

The Presbyterian Mission Agency's work in dismantling structural racism is especially important given the current climate of race in America. The insurrection on our nation's capital in January 2021, combined with the uprisings sparked by the killings of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery and Breonna Taylor reveal that the wound of racism is open and raw. Scripture as well as the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s creeds and confession obligates the Church to work toward the exhibition of the kingdom of God and promotion of social righteousness, which includes the issues of race relations.

This Mission Work Plan's focus on dismantling structural racism will include supporting Black, Indigenous and People of Color and their communities through grants; education and training; supporting leadership development in communities of color within the country and around the world; acknowledging the intersectionality of racism in other areas via resources, webinars and training events; providing anti-racism education and training for white Presbyterians through conferences, workshops and webinars; and strengthening our partnership with other denominations and organizations within and beyond the Church who are committed to dismantling racism.

Eradicating Systemic Poverty is the third part of the trifold mission work plan that the PMA proposes to continue.

Systemic poverty is a human construct that leaves vulnerable populations without the material and social capital to ensure basic well-being. Systemic poverty is perpetuated by laws, policies, practices and an array of dynamics that lead some people to benefit and profit from the exploitation of others. Systemic poverty intersects with structural racism and other forms of oppression.

In 2019, the United States Census indicated that a disproportionate number of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color communities, as well as women and children, suffer from poverty. The data indicates that 18.8% of Black people and 15.7% of Hispanic people, compared to 7.3% of White people, live below the poverty line. Women suffer from poverty at a higher rate than men — 11.5% compared to 9.4%. Children suffer the most, with 18% approximately 13 million children living in poverty compared with 9% of adults from 18–64. According to the global rates of poverty (the 2017 latest complete figures), 10% of the population — 689 million people — live on less than \$1.90 a day (the international poverty line). Most of these people are women and children — approximately 55% and 50% respectively. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is projected that an additional 88 million to 115 million people will be pushed into poverty.

Systemic poverty continues to negatively impact the lives of God's people in our nation and around the world. Women and children, as well as Black, Indigenous and People of Color, suffer disproportionately from systemic poverty. Given the General Assembly Matthew 25 mandate and Scripture, the Church must continue to serve human siblings who are impoverished and marginalized by systems that are indifferent to their suffering.

The Presbyterian Mission Agency's work in poverty will include promoting resources, workshops and events that help Presbyterians obtain a biblical and theological framework for eradicating systemic poverty, creating space for Presbyterians to examine relationships with people who are poor to determine if those relationships are equitable and non-paternalistic, assisting Presbyterians

in learning from people who are dealing with poverty, teaching and acknowledging the root causes of poverty as well as the intersectionality of poverty with racism and other systems of oppression, and encouraging Presbyterians to advocate for the eradication of poverty, along with other denominations and organizations.

### New Functions

In addition to a focus on the trifold priorities of building congregational vitality, dismantling structural racism and eradicating systemic poverty, the proposed 2023–2024 Mission Work Plan expands our work to major emphases on the work of repair in the midst of cultures of oppression, and innovation, futuring and discernment in this time of uncertainty. These new areas came forward as a result of an 18-month strategic visioning process engaged by members of the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board and leaders from across the denomination.

**The Center for Repair:** Through the Center for Repair, the Presbyterian Mission Agency hopes to initiate a denomination-wide effort to inspire repair both within and beyond the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.).

General Assembly statements regarding racism, including calls to repentance and reconciliation, are well established in the Confession of 1967, the Belhar Confession and the 222nd General Assembly (2016)'s Special Committee on Racism Truth and Reconciliation, as well as other overtures and constitutional documents. A central part of reconciliation is repair. The foundation for repair is presented in Old Testament Scripture such as Exodus 22:1 and in the New Testament story of Zacchaeus in Luke 19. In most biblical accounts of repair, payment for those wronged exceeds the actual damages.

Already many churches, mid councils and agencies are discovering new ways to repair the damage done by structural racism and white supremacy in this nation and throughout the world. The Center for Repair will construct teams tasked with partnering with churches, mid councils or other entities who are doing the work or interested in doing the work of repair. The teams will listen and work with our partners to determine innovative and meaningful approaches to deal with repair that are already in place and other approaches that may need to be developed.

**The Office of Innovation, Futuring and Discernment:** John Calvin, known to many as the “father of Presbyterianism,” created the phrase “The church is reformed and always reforming, according to the word of God.” This means we are always changing, adding to, and modifying our faith as the Holy Spirit helps us see and understand God in familiar and unfamiliar ways. Recent Assemblies and review committees have consistently urged a focus on innovation, futuring and discernment as an ongoing function in the life of the denomination.

The Office of Innovation, Futuring and Discernment will be responsible for learning about future trends and values shifts that will impact churches, mid councils and international partners with the hope of helping the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A) to prepare for such shifts, rather than simply react to them after the fact. With the creation of this office, the Presbyterian Mission Agency will seek to understand this Scripture: “Behold, I am doing a new thing, can you perceive it?”

The Office of Innovation, Futuring and Discernment will be responsible for discerning, searching out and being continuously aware of God's activity in new and exciting ideas that originate from the Church at large and PMA employees. Discovering models of community engagement and

structural transformation that can help prepare the Church to deal with shifting realities will also be part of the scope of work in this office. Listening will be central to this work of innovation, futuring and discernment. Initial implementation will include locally situated action teams and advisory groups comprised of leaders adept at listening to voices from the margins of the Church's work.

### Intersections

In addition to the three consistent priorities and two new functions, this work plan identifies three intersectional priorities that will fully connect our current Matthew 25 priorities.

“Intersectionality” is a term coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989 to describe “the complex, cumulative way in which the effects of multiple forms of discrimination combine, overlap, or intersect, especially in the experiences of marginalized individuals or groups.” In the same way, these “intersections” provide critical overlays for the Presbyterian Mission Agency's priorities (building congregational vitality, dismantling structural racism and eradicating systemic poverty).

These intersections were identified in the Presbyterian Mission Agency's strategic visioning process as persistent and serious threats to the well-being of communities thrust to the margins. However, simply identifying them is not enough. Working with our ecumenical partners, we are committed to preserving and enhancing the future of humanity and indeed all Creation.

**Climate Change:** The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has long recognized our obligation to take actions as faithful stewards of God's Creation to respond to climate change. The General Assembly actions in 1981, 1998, 1999, 2003, 2006, 2008, 2010, 2012, 2014, 2016 and 2018 acknowledge the realities of global warming, its effect on the “least of these” and the need to reduce energy consumption and reliance on fossil fuels.

Climate change intersects with systemic poverty and structural racism. Climate change is a particularly acute threat for countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia — the regions where most of the global poor are concentrated. It is estimated that 821 million people (1 in 9 of the world's population) do not get enough to eat.

The Presbyterian Mission Agency's work addressing the climate crisis in 2023–2024 will align with the goals of the Paris Agreement to limit global average temperature to an increase of no more than 1.5 degrees Celsius from pre-industrial levels through education, advocacy, training and partnerships, primarily through critical intersections with building congregational vitality, dismantling structural racism and eliminating systemic poverty.

### **Militarism:**

**The General Assembly has offered much language related to militarism over the years. In 2010 it initiated the Peace Discernment Process which produced a number of papers, studies, and resources for congregations throughout the PC(U.S.A.). Other General Assemblies in 1980, 1982, 1998, 2004, 2008, 2010, 2012 & 2014 weighed in on issues around militarism in the areas of peacemaking, human rights, drone warfare, divestment related to war and militarism, and ways to support our international partners in the disproportionate ill-effects of militarism on their local**

communities. In 2010 the major PC(U.S.A.) policy paper on Gun Violence was passed which forms the foundation for our concerns around policing and militarism in the United States.

Militarism is a term that is misunderstood by many, but refers to a “system of beliefs, political priorities, and economic investments. Militarism includes the activities of corporations that produce and sell weapons, and the role of state militaries — including state-sanctioned violence, martial law, repression, extra-judicial killings, military coups, and military dominance within governments — as well as non-state militias.”<sup>[2]</sup> The domestic impacts of militarism are often overlooked, but can be seen in militarized police forces in underserved communities and outsized defense budgets that mostly benefit contractors and weapons manufacturers. Meanwhile, wages for enlisted personnel, many of whom come from low-income communities, are stagnant and veterans remain underserved by the system charged with their care.

Given the broad scope of this area, the Presbyterian Mission Agency's work in 2023–2024 will examine and confront militarism through the lens of the Christian faith from a variety of intersectional perspectives, including racism, poverty, climate change and gender oppression. The Presbyterian Mission Agency will engage in education, advocacy, and partnership within and beyond the PC(USA) to address such issues as police brutality, mass incarceration, migration, moral injury, drone warfare, violence against women and children, and healing historical harms.

Gender Discrimination/Heteropatriarchy: Though the United States is becoming an increasing diverse country, we still live in a society dominated by white cisgender heterosexual males whose characteristic bias is unfavorable toward women, people of differing genders and the LGBTQIA+ community. The context of work for gender equity and freedom from heteropatriarchy is a human situation that extends beyond our nation. In all corners of the world, women experience injustice because they are women. LGBTQIA+ people experience injustice because of their gender and sexual identities. And gender nonbinary people experience injustice because they do not fit into the categories of male or female.

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is committed to work against gender-based discrimination and heteropatriarchy. The Book of Order states: “In Christ, by the power of the Spirit, God unites persons through baptism regardless of race, ethnicity, age, sex, disability, geography, or theological conviction. There is therefore no place in the life of the Church for discrimination against any person” (Book of Order, F-1.0403).

As we invite the Church to deepen its engagement with the three current priorities of Matthew 25, the Presbyterian Mission Agency 2023–2024 Mission Work Plan will include a focus on the intersection of gender discrimination/heteropatriarchy with congregational vitality, structural racism and systemic poverty.

### Conclusion

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<sup>[2]</sup>From “A Feminist Vision of Genuine Security and Creating a Culture of Life,” International Women's Network against Militarism, April 1, 2021. Shared with the PC(USA) by founding member the Rev. Deborah Lee during the “Connecting the Dots” webinar on Dec. 7, 2021, organized by the Presbyterian Mission Agency's Militarism Working Group.



**The 222nd General Assembly (2016) called the denomination to become a Church committed to the gospel of Matthew 25. This call involved a recommitment, at all levels of the church, “to locate ourselves with the poor, to advocate with all our voice for the poor, and to seek opportunities to take risks for and with the poor.” The Presbyterian Mission Agency was directed to implement a coordinated strategy that would “assure that concerns around confronting racism, environment concerns, standing against violence and militarism, and advocating for the dispossessed come before the Assembly on a regular basis.” The Presbyterian Mission Agency is committed to this work and believes that congregational vitality is an essential component of this work. Therefore, the 2023–2024 Mission Work Plan is rooted in these responses to the Gospel ... to God be the glory.**

#### Rationale

The General Assembly has directed that the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board prepare a Mission Work Plan as a framework for its two-year budget, and then present the Mission Work Plan and budget to the General Assembly for approval. The Mission Work Plan consists of priorities for the two-year period, a theological framework, a staffing rationale, funding plan and a working budget. This document is part one of the Mission Work Plan, consisting of the identified priorities and the theological framework. Financial elements will be included in the Mission Work Plan's part two.

The 2021–2022 Mission Work Plan has been a useful framework for Presbyterian Mission Agency activity over the past two years. Some highlighted accomplishments for 2021 include:

#### Building Congregational Vitality

- 45 new worshipping communities.
- Educational materials:
  - Vital Congregations curriculum – completed by 139 congregations
  - 8 Habits of Evangelism
  - Matthew 25 Bible studies
  - Matthew 25 hymn.
- Coaching, grants and continuing education support.
- Support for 35 presbyteries leading revitalization efforts with their congregations.
- COVID-19 grants for vulnerable congregations and technology assistance.

#### Dismantling Structural Racism

- Anti-racism training.
- Videos and discussion guides.
- Working with global partners to explore and address the legacies of colonial mission and the transatlantic slave trade.
- Monthly diversity, equity and inclusion training events for Presbyterian Mission Agency employees and interested others.
- Grants and scholarships to strengthen Presbyterian witness among Black, Indigenous and People of Color communities.

#### Eradicating Systemic Poverty

- Over 100 domestic and international presentations, conversations and workshops on the root causes of poverty.

**PRESBYTERIAN MISSION AGENCY BOARD**

**February 9-11, 2022**

**Executive Director's Office**

- Nurturing PC(USA) relationships with national anti-poverty groups such as the Coalition of Immokalee Workers, the Poor People's Campaign and Jubilee (USA).
- Equipping 71 young adults for work in advocating and community organizing through the Young Adult Volunteer program.
- 41% of PC(USA) new worshiping communities have been planted in communities experiencing poverty.
- Almost \$5 million in grants to eradicate poverty and create sustainable communities have been made in over 62 countries.

In many ways, the development of the 2023–2024 Mission Work Plan began in the fall of 2020, with the launch of a strategic visioning plan designed to focus on how the Presbyterian Mission Agency might best implement the mandate to become a Matthew 25 Church. Led by CounterStories Consulting, approximately 30 leaders from across the Church, the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board and the Presbyterian Mission Agency met on a biweekly basis to build a vision implementation plan. This work culminated in October 2021 with the approval of identity, vision, mission and values statements by the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board. These statements and the comprehensive report of the consultants have been critical in the development of this Mission Work Plan.