



Highlands Highlights

Presbyterian Women in the Presbytery of the Highlands of New Jersey

August 2026

RECIPIENT - PLEASE POST THE FLYERS AT THE END OF THIS NEWSLETTER ON BULLETIN BOARDS AND/OR WEB SITES, and INCLUDE IN YOUR OWN NEWSLETTER.

Please also forward to women in your church.

MODERATOR'S MUSINGS

I grew up in the heart of Newark, New Jersey, attending a Presbyterian Church as a youngster. The photos in my mind are of me and my sisters, lined up at Easter time with white dresses, hats, and white gloves. That is one of the most prominent memories I have for that time.

In later years, attending youth groups, I learned that God was the potter and we are the clay. When you think about a piece of clay being molded, there are different methods that one might use. But first, if molding by hand, one must wedge the clay to remove air bubbles, then use basic hand-building methods like the pinch, coil, or slab technique. Press, pull, and shape the moist clay on a clean surface until it forms your desired pot, bowl, or sculpture.

So, thinking about scripture, I had to do some research, since I couldn't recall any about God being the potter. I found that in Jeremiah 18: 1-6 God sent the prophet Jeremiah to watch a potter at a workshop. When a pot gets ruined on the wheel, the potter squashes it and reshapes it into a new vessel. God uses this to say He can do the exact same thing with the nation of Israel.

And in Isaiah 64:8, it is written that "The prophet cries out to God, saying, "Yet you, Lord, are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand."

Recently, I heard a song sung by a contemporary Christian artist, Brandon Lake, who collaborated with four other artists for the lyrics, and sang the duet with former boy band singer, Nick Jonas. It is a variant on who God is, an author. Some of the lyrics are as follows:

"Picked up the book for the first time in ages
Still washed me clean with the dust on the pages
My life is a story I struggle to write
But is it one worth telling, is it one You like"

[CHORUS 1]

"So who am I, who am I
Am I just a poor preacher's prodigal son
A troubled child, running wild
Chasing the glory instead of the One
Who says that I, even I have something still left to offer
So who am I, who am I
To question the pen in the hands of The Author"

"Like every good story you learn from the loss
And I lost the plot every time I've played God
I live in a moment You already wrote
And it's proof that I'm someone, yea someone You love"

This led me to the follow up lesson in Isaiah 45:9 which is a warning against talking back to God: "Woe to the one who quarrels with his Maker—and the clay is only clay among the pots on the ground! Does the clay say to the potter, 'What are you making?'"

So, who am I to question how God uses me. I grew up in poverty. It taught me to appreciate what I have, and that what I have doesn't need to be the best. There were times when my stomach growled from not having enough of a meal to get me through to the next one. It taught me to be frugal, thrifty, to not waste, and to feed others. My clothes were 'hand me downs' from my older sisters and at times, they didn't fit. And yes, we put cardboard in the soles to cover the holes in our shoes. I donate what I no longer wear. I have been the recipient of others' anger – it taught me to pray for peace, not just for myself, but for that individual and to forgive.

There is one song that I used to play for my children, on a cassette player (remember those???), "He's Still Working on Me"...to make me what I ought to be....

We travel through this life, being worked on, being molded, squeezed so that we think our air escapes us, being pinched or coiled into the fetus position, our stories being written, and at times, it seems like a struggle. But friends, God continues to work on us. He molds us into what He wants us to be. We don't need to struggle to write the story – it is already being written by the author. Be at peace in whatever your days bring you, in the name of the One who saved us, I pray, Amen.

Donna Rahmann, Moderator donnarahmann@comcast.net

BE ON THE LOOKOUT FOR:

- ❖ Information on the Thursday Zoom Book Group
- ❖ The Fall Gathering – Flyer in this newsletter
- ❖ The Retreat – Flyer in this newsletter

Il events are an opportunity for us to gather, learn something, do something – come out and meet some new sisters.

JUSTICE AND PEACE

PW is very committed to Justice and Peace, and thus publishes many resources. While you may not be interested in all aspects of Justice and Peace, this link leads you to recommended resources for many Justice and Peace concerns – from Antiracism, to Criminal Justice, to Eco-Justice, to Native American Justice, to Poverty, to Gender Justice, to Immigration, to the United Nations, to Substance Abuse.

<https://www.presbyterianwomen.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/JP-resources-full-page-FA-07152024.pdf>

Presbyterian Women, Inc. info@presbyterianwomen.org – this link has the Justice and Peace Calendar for the year.

FROM THE PRESBYTERIAN PEACE FELLOWSHIP ACTION OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

With a near-unanimous vote GA named Israel's war in Gaza, enabled by US weapons as genocide. GA called for a United States embargo on Israel, as well as a boycott of products from Israeli companies whose actions contribute to violations of international laws concerning genocide. GA backed this up by

voting to divest PC(USA) stock from GE Aerospace and Palantir Technologies Inc. due to their business with governments, including Israel, that are involved in human rights abuses.

THE PEACE CHURCH WORKING GROUP will host a series of Peace conversations on Zoom this fall for Presbyterian peacemakers on how to effectively respond to conflict and violence. Join them for the first event on the International Day of peace September 21st at 7:00 pm Eastern Time (4:00 pm PT). Topic: "Speaking Against War with your Congregation, Community and Nation," led by Ben Daniel author of the new book on nonviolence *GRACE OVER GUNS: PURSUING PEACE IN A MILITARIZED WORLD* and by Harry Eberts, Interim Director, Presbyterian Peace Fellowship. Sign up now at bit.ly/peaceconvo1

WORLD FOOD DAY IS OCTOBER 16TH

What can you do?

Innovation starts with awareness, but real change happens through everyday action. Each of us has a role to play in transforming agrifood systems and building a better food future, by respecting food and those who produce it, making informed choices, and working together for better, more sustainable solutions. The way we eat, waste less and stay aware of science and innovation helps shape demand for healthier, more sustainable and diverse foods. Together, let's support farmers, protect natural resources and contribute to a future where everyone has access to enough nutritious, diverse and safe food.

- Choose diverse, nutritious foods
- Reduce food loss and waste
- Support local producers
- Use science to guide action
- Learn and share knowledge
- Care for natural resources
- Engage in your community



FAIR TRADE MONTH – OCTOBER

As you make your Christmas list this year, think about increasing your gifts from Fair Trade Organizations. Here's a few to get you started.

<https://www.serrv.org/>

<https://fairtradefederation.org/>

<https://tenthousandvillages.com/>

BOOK

If you're looking for ideas for social justice **activities** in these trying times (besides getting out and protesting!) the book **Hope is Here! Spiritual Practices for Pursing Justice and Beloved Community** by Luther E Smith Jr. and Westminster John Knox Press (where I got mine) has a wonderful downloadable "congregational guide for leadership teams & groups", by Rev CeCe Armstrong. Each chapter has the sections 'hear the words', 'offer the wisdom of scripture', 'pray with each other', and 'ENACT SPIRITUAL PRACTICES'.

Lisa Gray - PWP Peace & Justice Coordinator Lisa_A_Gray@outlook.com

STAYING CONNECTED

If you know of any women who are not getting this email, and would like to, send their name and e-mail to Jane MacDonald jkmac3536@gmail.com to be added to the distribution.

TREASURER

Do you know that all of these are supported by our Mission and other pledges?

- ❖ Award-winning PW/*Horizons* Bible studies and accompanying helps that nurture our faith and build community.
- ❖ Funds raised to support mission through our Thank and Birthday Offerings.
- ❖ Peace and justice issues that PW supports through prayer and advocacy.
- ❖ Building community, especially through PW Gatherings (whether synod or churchwide, in person or online) and our commitment to include all.

Of course everyone can go to the presbyterianwomen.org/give website to make a gift. If you do, there are choices for which ministry is supported, i.e. the Mission Pledge, the Birthday or Thank Offering or one of the Endowments. PW in the Presbytery prefers that gifts be made through us, so that the Presbytery is credited, and bank fees minimized. The remittance form is below, and write-ins are acceptable.

Also, new forms for scholarship applications, Honorary Life Memberships, etc. are available – just drop me an e-mail to treaspwhigh@gmail.com Jane MacDonald, Treasurer

PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN, PRESBYTERY OF THE HIGHLANDS OF NJ REMITTANCE FORM

Local Association Treasurers: Please use this form for making remittances. Your canceled check is your receipt. Please make checks payable to: PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN, HIGHLANDS PRESBYTERY. Thank you.

Name of Sender: _____ Telephone _____

Sender's E-Mail Address: _____

Church / Association: _____ Date _____

Payment of:	Amount
Mission Pledge - Churchwide	
Mission Pledge - Synod	
PW Presbytery Operating Support	
Birthday Offering	
Thank Offering	
Least Coin	
Other - Specify	
Total of Check	

All money is to be sent to
the Treasurer:

Jane MacDonald
35 Hillside Ave
Newton, NJ 07860

Reminder: Quarterly payments for mission pledges are due by the 10th of March, June, September and December.

HORIZONS MAGAZINE/BIBLE STUDY

We are very excited about the 2026-2027 PW bible Study! It's **United Through Christ, Bound to Each Other**, Paul's first letter to the Corinthians.

Why is this helpful & what can you learn? This was written to a church in conflict: our nation is in a time of conflict. There are controversial passages that we can get a better understanding of and share our own views. Did you realize the words of institution of communion come from this book of the Bible? We'll see how Paul calls for Unity in the church, which may be helpful in today's political climate. And best, in my opinion, there are beautiful pieces of artwork in each chapter we can look at and evaluate.

This has everything to do with "Peace & Justice", my passion. Jane, Donna and I went to the Bible Study learning/retreat this past June. If you need some help leading this in your congregation, please invite any of us to help. The "Workshop for Leaders" is very well done this year (and free to download from PW), the introduction by the author is on Youtube (don't have to purchase the DVD; PW Youtube channel).

Lisa Gray - PWP Peace & Justice Coordinator Lisa_A_Gray@outlook.com

P.S. We'll present an overview of the Study at the Fall Gathering – see flyer.

MONTHLY PW BOOK STUDY

We are hoping to have a little fun with the DEVIL! Presbyterian Outlook has a great resource you can download. (I'm not sure if you need a subscription but I could forward it to you) When I typed in Devil on their website "The Devil You Say" comes right up. We're also looking at "What Presbyterians believe about Hell" (and Progressive Christianity) "When was the concept of the devil introduced?"

We have been meeting at Panera's in Ledgewood, 5-5:30 pm for dinner, 6:30 for discussion on the last Friday of the month.

We are open to changing the day, time and place. Perhaps a more central spot? If you have suggestions let Donna Rahmann or me know before September. Since it's not a whole book to read we thought more of you might have the time for this. We'd love new faces!

THURSDAY BOOK GROUP

We look forward to the return of the weekly Zoom get together. This fall, we are staring with Jill Duffield's book – *Appreciate These Things – Eight Ways of Cultivating Compassion*.

From the PCUSA Store Description:

"In a world tense with anger and division, how can we preserve our sense of well-being and inject a little more kindness into our daily interactions?"

Pastor Jill J. Duffield finds an answer in the apostle Paul's guidance in Philippians 4:8: "Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things."

Thinking about, looking for, *appreciating* these eight things can reorient our hearts and minds in ways that nurture compassion for ourselves, those in need, and those with whom we are inclined to disagree. Duffield leads the way with stories and insights that will transform your outlook on the world—and maybe even the world itself.

The book is available from the PCUSA Store for \$11.70.

Unless you hear otherwise, we plan to start September 10th at 10am. To be added to the weekly reminder & get the Zoom log-in, e-mail Lisa at Lisa_A_Gray@outlook.com

MORE JUSTICE AND PEACE NOTES

Thoughts and prayers are not enough.

James Atwood Institute 2026
September 15–18, 2026 • Heartland Retreat Center
Parkville, MO (near Kansas City)

*Learn gun violence prevention strategies that are working across the nation, and
find out how your congregation can join the movement to save lives.*

*Join Presbyterian Peace Fellowship from September 15-18 at the Heartland Retreat
Center in Kansas City, Missouri.*

Register by August 25 by going to the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship website

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From our visit to Well Sweep Herb Farm this past Spring. Even in the rain, we learned a lot. Well worth another visit.



**Looking ahead to next Spring, we are planning to visit
Sanctuary + Seed, in Martinsville, New Jersey.**

Save the date: April 17, 2027

Join us as we discuss nature, our world and how to grow (gardens, ourselves, etc.) at the beautiful Sanctuary + Seed located at 1600 Washington Valley Rd, Martinsville, NJ 08836.

You are invited to meet new women from other Presbyteries. A program, outside worship service, walking a Labyrinth, and perhaps planting some seeds with the wonderful women of the Presbytery of the Highlands of New Jersey are on tap.



Sanctuary + Seed is a unique ministry here in the Highlands. Plan to join us. More info in the Spring.

PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN
FALL RETREAT
NOVEMBER 8, 2026 9am-4pm
SHRINE OF ST JOSEPH
1050 Long Hill Road
Stirling, NJ

Some things Coming!

Led by Colleen Duffy

Colleen led our retreat in 2018 when she was Associate for Family Nurture at the First Presbyterian Church of Newton. She has since retired, and is tending to her garden and potting wheel.

What's coming? Maybe Thanksgiving, maybe Advent, maybe a surprise. Come, spend a day in a tranquil place, with tranquil sisters, before the "crazy" season is upon us.



Coffee, lunch provided

Please RSVP to Jane MacDonald @ jkmac3536@gmail.com or 973-383-4166 by **October 15**
Cost: \$50 – Send a (non-refundable) check–payable PW in the Presbytery of the Highlands to:
Jane MacDonald

35 Hillside Ave, Newton NJ 07860

Scholarships are available upon request – send to jkmac3536@gmail.com for form



PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN
FALL GATHERING
SEPTEMBER 26, 2026 9am-2pm
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF MORRIS PLAINS
400 Speedwell Avenue
Morris Plains, NJ

Dimensions of Wellness

THE DAY

Registration - 9:30am

Wellness Strategies for Women

Chair Yoga

Financial Update

Bible Study – *United Through Christ, Bound to Each Other* – Based on
Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians

Closing Prayer Service

Coffee & lunch provided

Cost is \$10.00 payable at the door.

Please RSVP to Jane MacDonald @ jkmac3536@gmail.com or 973-383-4166 by September
15th