

**[FIN-11]**     **2023-2024 Mission Work Plan of the Presbyterian Mission Agency**  
**Source:**     Agencies  
**Committee:** [FIN] Financial Resources  
**Profile #:**   [REC-079]  
**Event:**       225th General Assembly (2022)  
**Sponsor:**    Presbyterian Mission Agency Board  
**Type:**        General Assembly Full Consideration

Action Summary	
Recommendation	Action
On this Item, the Financial Resources Committee acted as follows:	Approve (CA)
On this Item, the General Assembly acted as follows:	Approve (AA)

## Assembly Action

*On this Item, the General Assembly acted as follows:*

### Approve

Consensus

### Final text:

**The Presbyterian Mission Agency Board recommends that the 225th General Assembly (2022) approve the 2023–2024 Mission Work Plan for adoption as part of the unified General Assembly Mission and Per Capita Budget presentation.**

## Committee Recommendation

*On this Item, the Financial Resources Committee acted as follows:*

### Approve

Electronic Vote - Committee

Affirmative:23

Negative:0

Abstaining:

## Recommendation

**The Presbyterian Mission Agency Board recommends that the 225th General Assembly (2022) approve the 2023–2024 Mission Work Plan 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 through per capita and the four special offerings—One Great Hour of Sharing, Pentecost, Peace and 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 (PMA):

### ***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 PMA 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;<sup>[1]</sup> 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 PC(USA) 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 development of two new functions: a Center for the Repair of Historical Harms and an Office of Innovation, Futuring, and Discernment.

As the PMA 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 2023–2024 Mission Work Plan invites Presbyterians to unite in doing the work of Jesus' kingdom as described in Matthew 25:31–46.<sup>[2]</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” (Mt. 10:39).
- “If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven (Mt. 19:21).
- “So, the last shall be first, and the first last” (Mt. 20:16).
- “If you want to be great, you must become a servant of all” (Mt. 20:26).

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 amid 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 PMA gives God praise for the work that took place in the context of a global pandemic. The generosity of Presbyterians made this work possible. Because of the financial support, prayers, and labor of Presbyterians, more than 430 grants, totaling over \$16.5 million, were disbursed nationally and internationally, including more than \$6 million in disaster response, nearly \$1.7 million to global partners, and almost \$1.2 million to new worshipping communities.

### **Mission Work Plan—Priorities**

We propose continuing our focus on Building Congregational Vitality, a priority of the Matthew 25 Initiative.

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 PMA’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 PMA 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 worshipping 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, a priority of the Matthew 25 Initiative, in the 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 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. 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 PMA’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 PC(USA) creeds and confessions, 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; support for leadership development in communities of color within the country and around the world; acknowledgment of the intersectionality of racism in other areas via resources, webinars, and training events; providing antiracism education and training for white Presbyterians with 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, a priority of the Matthew 25 Initiative, 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 U.S. 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 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 PMA’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 amid 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 PMA Board and leaders from across the denomination.

### ***The Center for the Repair of Historical Harms***

Through the Center for the Repair of Historical Harms, 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) 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 the Repair of Historical Harms 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 PC(USA) to prepare for such shifts, rather than simply react to them after the fact. With the creation of this office, the PMA will seek to understand this scripture: “I am about to do a new thing ... do you not perceive it?” (Isaiah 43:19).

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, the Mission 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 PMA’s priorities (Building Congregational Vitality, Dismantling Structural Racism, and Eradicating Systemic Poverty).

These intersections were identified in the PMA’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 PC(USA) has long recognized our obligation to take actions as faithful stewards of God’s Creation to respond to climate change. 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—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 PMA'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 preindustrial 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(USA). Other General Assemblies in 1980, 1982, 1998, 2004, 2008, 2010, 2012 and 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(USA) 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 is often correlated with inordinate expenditures on weapons, undue influence by the defense establishment on setting national priorities, the suppression of human needs, and legitimate protests of evils committed against underserved communities. The domestic impacts of militarism are often overlooked but can be seen in militarized police forces and the demonization of the "other" to justify denial of human rights to repressed peoples and inequality of treatment for marginalized populations.

The PMA'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. Recognizing the unique resource of specialized ministers serving and having served as chaplains in the uniformed services, the PMA will invite their expertise alongside longtime international and domestic partners to engage in education, advocacy, and partnership within and beyond the PC(USA) to address the dangers and impacts of a militaristic mindset from a Christological perspective.

### ***Gender Discrimination/Heteropatriarchy***

Though the United States is becoming an increasingly 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 PC(USA) 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" (F-1.0403).

As we invite the church to deepen its engagement with the three current priorities of Matthew 25, the PMA 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**

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.

1. Heteropatriarchy: “The social construct that privileges and normalizes the experiences of heterosexual and cisgender\* males to the exclusion of LGBTQIA+ persons and women, resulting in unequal access to power and reinforcing systems of domination.

\*(from *Merriam-Webster*) *cisgender*: of, relating to, or being a person whose gender identity corresponds with the sex the person had or was identified as having at birth

2. 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.”

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## 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, staffing rationale, funding plan, and working budget. This document is Part I 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 II.

The 2021–2022 Mission Work Plan has been a useful framework for PMA 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**

- Antiracism 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 PMA 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
- Nurturing PC(USA) relationships with national antipoverty 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 worshipping communities planted in communities experiencing poverty
- Almost \$5 million in grants to eradicate poverty and create sustainable communities in over 62 countries

In many ways, the development of the 2023–2024 Mission Work Plan began in fall 2020, with the launch of a strategic visioning plan designed to focus on how the PMA might best implement the mandate to become a Matthew 25 church. Led by CounterStories Consulting, approximately 30 leaders from across the PC(USA), the PMA Board, and the PMA 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 PMA Board. These statements and the comprehensive report of the consultants have been critical in the development of this Mission Work Plan.

[www.presbyterianmission.org/pmabudgetnarrative](http://www.presbyterianmission.org/pmabudgetnarrative)

## Other Comments

### **Advice and Counsel—From the Racial Equity Advocacy Committee (REAC)**

The Advocacy Committee for Racial Equity Advocacy Committee advises that the 224th General Assembly (2020) **approve** FIN-11.

The Racial Equity Advocacy Committee (REAC) enthusiastically supports this resolution.

### **Advice and Counsel—From the Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP)**

The Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy (ACSWP) advises that the 225th General Assembly (2022) **approve** Item FIN-11.

The Advisory Committee on Social Witness Policy commends the work of the Presbyterian Mission Agency in shaping this Mission Work Plan. We encourage the Presbyterian Mission Agency to **rely on the wisdom of our Reformed theological heritage**, including that displayed in the denomination's confessions.

We also note the **absence of explicit attention to the PC(USA)'s established social witness policy throughout this plan** and encourages the Presbyterian Mission Agency to ground its work, wherever possible, in the denomination's social witness policies as approved by the present and previous General Assemblies.