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Presbyterian Women and The Advocacy Committee for Women's Concerns issue joint statement on sexual injustice

Women's Ministries January 26, 2018

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Group calls for healing and repentance, offers resources for study and action

by Gregg Brekke | Presbyterian News Service

LOUISVILLE —
The Advocacy Committee for Women's Concerns and Presbyterian Women of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) have issued a joint statement on sexual injustice in response to national attention being focused on the topic.



Referencing the

#MeToo movement against sexual violence, the statement highlights #ChurchToo and the stories of women who

have experienced sexual harassment, discrimination and assault in the context of church service.

Asking the denomination to “take the next step toward healing” and “correct the culture that allows sexual abuse,” the statement ends with a prayer that seeks healing and compassion for victims of sexual violence “as we right the sins that have been committed.”

The complete statement is below:

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**Presbyterian Women & The Advocacy Committee for Women's Concerns
Joint Statement on Sexual Injustice**

As courageous women, children, and youth from across the United States share their #MeToo and #ChurchToo stories, we reflect on the PW mission which says, in part, that Presbyterian Women will build an inclusive caring community of women that strengthens the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), works for justice and peace, and witnesses to the promise of God's realm. As a committee called by the church to be a prophetic voice to and for the church on issues of gender justice, ACWC is a partner to PW in this mission.

Together, we respond with empathy for the experiences of injustice due to sexual violence, sexual harassment, sexual assault, and other violence and discrimination against women. Together, we issue a call for repentance and justice-seeking. We offer this statement in hope of continuing conversations and healing actions within the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) at both the local and national levels.

God has created all people equally and directed us to love others as we love ourselves. Our Creator's teachings must be demonstrated in our actions as well as in our conversations. Jesus models for us how to live out the gospel of justice and peace.

The energy surrounding sexual assault issues has created an opportunity for our denomination to take the next step toward healing. How do we correct the culture that allows sexual abuse? How do we empower women to help themselves? How do we neutralize the harmful ripple effects of sexual violence and other forms of abuse? Presbyterian Women, in covenant with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the Advocacy Committee for Women's Concerns, encourage women to speak up and speak out when they experience abuse, whether it occurs at home, in the work place, or in our churches.

At the same time, the faith community must confess and hold itself accountable for fostering environments that allow for abuses and encourage silence, repent and create systems where justice for victims is accessible, and offer resources to support healing for victims and secondary victims of abuse. We must individually and collectively begin to deconstruct ideologies that perpetuate maleness as superior to femaleness, whether in our imagery for God or in our references to one another, and think of one another in a way that lets us see our gender differences as blessings to be respected and celebrated.

PW partners with Presbyterians Against Domestic Violence, encourages Courageous Conversations in October (Domestic Violence Awareness Month), participates in the UN's UNITE to End Violence Against Women campaign, encourages ratification of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Violence Against Women (CEDAW), observes International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women on November 25 each year and 16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence beginning each November 25, and urges all to observe Orange Day on the

25th of every month by wearing orange to raise awareness of the global movement to end violence against women (see endviolence.un.org).

PW and ACWC also encourage participation in “Thursdays in Black,” an initiative of the World Council of Churches seeking a world without rape and violence, by wearing black on Thursdays in solidarity, in protest, in mourning, and for awareness and hope.

PW supports local shelters and recovery programs for survivors of violence and trafficking, and advocates at the UN Commission on the Status of Women. PW at the national level and ACWC are committed to breaking the code of silence with stories and education at the congregational level, and enlisting the help of good men in ending the culture of violence. See www.presbyterianwomen.org for additional resources.

The Advocacy Committee for Women’s Concerns will be at the 223rd General Assembly in St. Louis handing out #MeToo and #ChurchToo/#Time’sUp buttons in the exhibit hall. There will be awareness-raising efforts calling for the church’s action in several GA resolutions. PW will hold a march for justice and peace at the 2018 Churchwide Gathering in August 2018.

A Prayer for Healing

Gracious God. In these troubled times we come asking you to give us discernment as we search for ways to respect one another and to heal our hearts and, our thoughts, and our actions. We seek to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls. We seek to respect one another, to show Christian love, to live in harmony, and to be compassionate as we right the sins that have been committed.

ACWC Co-chairs

Jeanne Choy Tate, Joyce Rarumangkay, Flo Watkins

Moderatorial Team, Presbyterian Women, Inc.

Carol Lloyd Winkler (Moderator), Judy Persons (Vice Moderator, Mission Relations), Wanda L. Beauman (Vice Moderator, Justice and Peace Issues)

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“This is my covenant with you.” —Gen. 17:4

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