



New Tools for the Times

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As I got ready for bed recently, I grabbed a toothbrush to get in some quick oral hygiene. I didn't bother with the toothpaste, figuring the brush and water would be good enough until the morning. To my surprise, the toothbrush quickly began to foam up as I ran it over my teeth. In that moment I came to the terrible realization this was not my regular toothbrush. Instead, I'd grabbed the brush used for cleaning small crevices with anti-bacterial soap. The residue from the cleaner was foaming in my mouth. I paused. In all honestly, I actually considered finishing the job with the tool at hand...until the soap taste hit me.

Sometimes we grab the familiar tool in a familiar context, but the results are not what we intend. The residue of how we've used the tool in the past leaves a bad taste in our mouths, and we've got no choice but to spit it out and start over. We pick new tools for new times.

Our Presbyterian Mission Agency (PMA) is picking new tools. In the Presbyterian Church (USA), the PMA houses programs such as Presbyterian Disaster Assistance, Presbyterian Hunger Program, World Mission, 1001 New Worshiping Communities, Youth Triennium, Vital Congregations Program, and Intercultural Ministries Support. Under the leadership of Rev. Dr. Diane Moffett, PMA President and Executive Director, the PMA has taken a long look at the context of our denominational ministries and whether we're using the right tools for the times. An outside consulting firm facilitated conversations with PMA staff, global partners, theologians, mid-council (Presbytery and Synod) leaders, and others to explore whether the PMA is faithfully living into its Matthew 25 commitment. At the end of September, it released [its consulting report](#), and the PMA Board adopted key aspects of its conclusions this month, including new identity, vision, and mission statements:

Identity Statement

The Presbyterian Mission Agency is a band of disciples, guided by the Holy Spirit to continue a movement launched by Jesus Christ to welcome the realm of God on earth.

Vision Statement

PMA is working towards 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 God's love and grace are felt by all.

Mission Statement

As a convener of sacred spaces, the PMA nurtures disciples of Jesus and inspires, equips, and connects 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 listens to, learns from, and co-labors with communities forced to the margins, and connects them to the relationships and resources needed to eradicate systemic poverty, dismantle structural racism, end militarism, and address our climate crisis.



To do this, the PMA provides:

- context specific accompaniment
- assistance with the identification and development of innovative approaches, and
- funds to support local and regional initiatives.

Among the tools that are being considered is the geographic deployment of PMA staff across the country, rather than a centralized location in Louisville, Kentucky. Mission co-workers might be recalled from service globally or might have the nature of their service adjusted. The ways in which grant and restricted funds are used and distributed might be changed to make them more readily available.

At the root of these changes is a recognition that that church has often held people at the margins of power, authority, and resources in the ways we were structured and operated. To be radically inclusive will require new tools because the old approach no longer suits our Matthew 25 calling. The residue of racism and unequal wealth and power still foams up, and it leaves a nasty taste in our mouths. Intentional correction of the problems raised in the consulting report acts like fresh, clean water to rinse away the residue.

Please hold the PMA and all its staff in your prayers. Change can bring a sense of loss and fear, even when accompanied by hopeful opportunities. May our siblings in Christ feel renewal and release as they discern God's intentions.