World Mission leader addresses questions regarding shift in global ministry approach

Reconfiguring the church’s international presence among top priorities

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Last month, leaders in the Interim Unified Agency of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) announced a reimagining of how it approaches global ministry. The plan includes transitioning World Mission with a new vision that leaders believe will continue to build connections with PC(USA) partners domestically and around the world.

The Presbyterian News Service recently talked with the Rev. Mienda Uriarte, interim deputy executive director in the IUA, to address some of the questions around the decisions to change this approach to global ministry.

**The PC(USA)’s approach to World Mission goes back decades. Why make this change now?**

The deep relationships formed through World Mission have been a source of joy, transformation and faithful service. This change in approach is not a reflection of a diminished commitment but an intentional effort to create a sustainable and authentic model for global ministry today and for tomorrow. This means creating a new form of ministry that will strengthen both the ecclesial and programmatic mission functions of the church.

The goal is to:

* Create a more missionally equitable and sustainable approach that honors the agency of global partners.
* Elevate the leadership of global partners in shaping ministry.
* Strengthen long-term partnerships through shared ministry models that reflect the evolving needs of the global church.

This is also taking place as part of the unification of the Office of the General Assembly and the Presbyterian Mission Agency, agencies that have previously held different roles in global and ecumenical work.

Another is financial. The reality is, the current model was not financially sustainable. A significant portion of funding for mission co-workers has come from gifts restricted for sending and supporting individuals called to this work. Gifts for those accounts are on average $1 million less than has been budgeted for several years now. Making this change now will allow us to be engaged globally for years to come.

**There are some who argue that this goes against General Assembly actions. Is that accurate?**

[The General Assembly’s CR-10 resolution (2024)](https://www.pc-biz.org/search/3001384) has been carefully considered during this entire process. The new model retains funding for critical placement of PC(USA) leaders on the ground through the appointment and placement of global ecumenical liaisons, domestically and internationally. The shift also builds upon theological and missiological foundations outlined in [Presbyterians Do Mission in Partnership (2003)](https://pcusa.org/sites/default/files/presbyterians_do_mission_in_partnership.pdf) and the [Ecumenical Stance of the PC(USA) (2008).](https://www.pcusa.org/sites/default/files/ecumenical-stance-of-the-pcusa.pdf)

**How does this change impact World Mission staff?**

These changes will have an impact on all 79 world mission staff members, including some mission co-workers and those who have faithfully supported them. Staff have been informed that their service in its current form will conclude toward the end of March. Some have been offered salary and benefits packages appropriate for their years of service, consistent with our policies. Others have been invited to serve in new roles under this new model of global engagement.

IUA leadership acknowledges and honors the deep commitment of our mission co-workers as well as the strong relationships that have been forged over the years. We recognize the grief, frustration, and uncertainty that many experience. We are learning from the past while making space for the work of the Holy Spirit to shape our future.

**Who are the individuals who will be impacted by this decision?**

World Mission staff are in a discernment period that will last through the end of March. Out of respect for that process and in compliance with employment laws, we are not disclosing specific names at this time. We recognize that this uncertainty is difficult. Once the discernment period is complete, we will share more information but only with the consent of the individuals involved. In the coming months, we will be holding an event to recognize, celebrate and give thanks for the ministry of colleagues who are ending service.

**Will the PC(USA) continue to have an international presence?**

YES!! The PC(USA) remains committed to a global presence in a new way for a new day, which is why the current approach, roles and responsibilities are being reshaped to align with present realities. The goal is to empower global and ecumenical partners while also continuing to equip Presbyterians for meaningful engagement in global ministry. We encourage you to read [this](https://pcusa.org/news-storytelling/news/shifting-patterns-ecumenical-global-engagement) [“Shifting Patterns of Global Engagement”](https://pcusa.org/news-storytelling/news/shifting-patterns-ecumenical-global-engagement) article for more on how global mission and ecclesial partnership are changing.

**Define what it means to be a Global Ecumenical Liaison.**

Global Ecumenical Liaisons will assist global partners, diaspora communities in the United States, mid councils, congregations, mission networks, national or regional PC(USA) programs, and local organizations. They will facilitate and encourage connections, relationships, and shared work in ministry and mission.

**For those who have financially supported the work of World Mission, where should that support be directed now?**

The PC(USA) remains committed to a global presence, so financial support remains critical moving forward. For years, the current funding model for mission co-workers has been unsustainable due to declining PC(USA) membership and its impact on mission giving, coupled with rising costs. Contributions to **Account E132192** will sustain the work of the new global ecumenical liaisons. Mid councils and congregations are encouraged to reach out to their [Ministry Engagement Advisor (MEA)](https://pcusa.org/giving/ministry-engagement-support/meet-our-team) for guidance in discerning their continued support for global mission.

We also encourage supporters to stay engaged in mission partnerships and explore new ways to connect with global ministries.

**What happens to previous gifts given to Extra Commitment Opportunities (ECOs) designated in support of specific global partners, which have not yet been disbursed?**

The Interim Unified Agency’s commitment to global ecumenical partnerships, as well as the sharing of financial resources, remains the same. Within the new global engagement model, an ECO gift designated in support of a global partner or project will continue to be used in accordance with the ECOs’ designated purpose, our gift acceptance policy, our grant policy and operating procedures.

**How will the PC(USA) remain grounded in its Reformed and Presbyterian values while engaging globally?**

Our mission remains rooted in our witness to Jesus Christ’s unconditional love and call to justice and our commitment to global partnerships. We continue to uphold our values of peace, racial and gender equity, theological diversity, and care for marginalized communities. The IUA is guided by the statements and policies of the PC(USA) General Assembly and in particular, the theological and missiological foundations outlined in [Presbyterians Do Mission in Partnership (2003)](https://pcusa.org/sites/default/files/presbyterians_do_mission_in_partnership.pdf) and the [Ecumenical Stance of the PC(USA) (2008).](https://www.pcusa.org/sites/default/files/ecumenical-stance-of-the-pcusa.pdf)

This is a big change. We invite you to join us as we begin to live into this new opportunity this spring and summer.