

Presbyterian Historical Society
Mission, Institutional Priorities, and Strategic Goals and Objectives
2023-2025

Collect → Preserve → Share → Transform

The Presbyterian Historical Society leverages its collections and archival work to galvanize the transformative power of history in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and wider community.

- We collaborate with entities and individuals to gather and share a full record of the past, allowing us *to hear the voices of peoples long silenced*.
- We provide broad and equitable access to our collections and resources.
- We foster reconciliation and repair in the PC(USA) and wider community through programs and resources that support the call *to work with others for justice, freedom, and peace*.

Words in italics are from the PC(USA) Brief Statement of Faith

PHS Strategic Goals and Objectives

PHS's strategic goals identify the four key areas in which PHS must excel in order to efficiently and effectively serve the PC(USA) and wider community.

Collect a full record of the past

Collecting a full record of the past affirms that addressing gaps in collections allows us to share a more complete history with our varied constituents. PHS staff will continue to employ records management and collection development expertise to build on current collection strengths while seeking to fill gaps and ensure that the full range of Presbyterian experience, including ecumenical and interfaith experience, is represented in the collection.

- 2023-2025: continue to bring in records as part of the Pam Byers Memorial Collection and the African American Leaders and Congregations Collecting Initiative.
- 2024-2025: build or strengthen collaborations that will bring in records to fill gaps documenting the diverse experiences of Native American and Hispanic/Latinx Presbyterians.
- 2024-2025: reassess how PC(USA) congregation and mid council records come into the archives and finetune outreach to ensure diverse collecting across geography, size, demographics, and financial resources.

Preserve records of historic value across the PC(USA)

Preserving records of historic value challenges us to invest in the resources needed for long term preservation. At PHS, that includes maintaining the environmental conditions necessary for preserving paper-based records, investing in the technological infrastructure required to preserve electronic records, and employing skilled staff with the expertise needed to successfully address the challenges of records in all formats. PC(USA) entities and individuals throughout the country and around the world continue to create and hold records, and PHS must disseminate information on how to manage and preserve these records—including electronic records—so that the vital threads of history are not lost before they are transferred to the Presbyterian Historical Society.

- 2023-2025: work with HVAC, roofing, pest management, and fire prevention/security vendors to assess the current state of PHS systems and procedures, make necessary repairs and changes, and develop maintenance and replacement plans through 2025 (stretching through 2030 as needed).
- 2023-2024: advocate for the infrastructure, staffing, and financial resources required for electronic records management and digital preservation during IT and website integration.
- 2024-2025: reassess how PHS resources the creation, management, and preservation of PC(USA) records across the denomination.

Share PHS collections and the history they hold broadly and deeply

Sharing PHS collections and the history they hold is at the heart of a vibrant organization that believes history is essential to doing God's work in the world. To share broadly and equitably, PHS strives to make collection material and historical resources both discoverable and usable by all types of researchers.

- 2023-2024: continue to rebuild opportunities for in-person research visits post pandemic, including classes and individual visits from Community College of Philadelphia students; use funds from the major fundraising campaign to improve accessibility and the onsite research experience in the reading room.
- 2023-2024: continue development and implementation of a reparative and inclusive approach to describing collections in order to increase discoverability.
- 2023-2025: develop, update, and share resources that bring attention to hidden, suppressed, and denied Presbyterian experiences.
- 2023-2025: solicit feedback from users (and select non-users) on ways to make PHS collection material more findable, more accessible, and thus more shareable remotely. Identify select audiences that are underusing or not using PHS materials and develop and implement strategies to increase sharing.
- 2024-2025: use funds raised through the major fundraising campaign to amplify PHS education and outreach within the PC(USA).

Nurture transformation

Nurturing transformation in ourselves and others often starts with asking questions about the past. In the quest to find answers, we often discover voices and images that resonate powerfully in the present while we also confront faulty narratives and gaps in the historical record. PHS nurtures transformation through engaging in and enabling the quest for historical understanding—and helping to create the grounding for reconciliation and repair.

- 2023-2025: continue to examine critically the history of PHS in order to rectify past practices that have excluded or downplayed some Presbyterian experiences; share publicly that process of atonement and repair.
- 2023-2025: continue to emphasize the transformative power of history for the PC(USA) and wider community through conversations, communications, and outreach; model how historical materials can both ground and transform hard discussions on issues before PC(USA) congregations, mid councils, national agencies, and the General Assembly.