

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, 2023-2025

PHS's strategic goals identify the four key areas in which PHS must excel to 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 leads to a more complete documentary history. PHS staff members with records management and collection development expertise will 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 African American Leaders and Congregations Collecting Initiative and the Pam Byers Memorial Collection.
- 2024-2025: build or strengthen collaborations that bring in records documenting Native American, Hispanic/Latinx, and Korean Presbyterians in the PC(USA).
- 2024-2025: evaluate recent trends in how PC(USA) congregation and mid councils transfer records to PHS and fine-tune 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 vital historical materials 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: secure the staffing and resources needed for electronic records management and digital preservation, especially during the planned integration into Information Technology services provided by the Administrative Services Group of PC(USA) A Corporation and during the integration into pcusa.org.
- 2023-2025: using National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) grant funds, preserve the entire Religious News Service (RNS) photograph collection through rehousing, segregation of deteriorating negatives, and digitization.
- 2024-2025: assess the effectiveness of PHS's resources on preserving church records at all levels of 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.

- 2023-2024: continue collaboration with Community College of Philadelphia to bring students, teachers, and interns to PHS. Use funds from the major fundraising campaign to improve accessibility and the onsite research experience in the reading room.
- 2023-2025: draw on PHS staff expertise, creative communications, and existing and new collaborations to develop, update, and share histories that bring attention to hidden, suppressed, and denied Presbyterian experiences.
- 2023-2025: using NEH grant funds, add 22,500 RNS images to Pearl and share widely about the images and the history they document.
- 2023-2025: solicit feedback on ways to make PHS collection material and historical resources more discoverable and accessible. 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 hire a fulltime outreach archivist who will create and amplify PHS educational resources for the PC(USA) and connected communities.

Transform ourselves and our communities through the power of history

Transforming ourselves and our communities through the power of history starts with the imperative to ask critical questions about our received past. We may find biased narratives and gaps that do not adequately represent lived experiences, but we will also discover voices and images that resonate powerfully in the present. Transformative history is regenerative for the PC(USA) and our wider communities.

- 2023-2025: continue to examine critically the history of PHS—its leaders, practices, and buildings—to address and rectify past practices that have excluded and downplayed some Presbyterian experiences and caused historical harm; share publicly that process of atonement and repair.
- 2023-2025: continue development and implementation of a reparative and inclusive approach to describing collections in order to increase discoverability and relevancy for a broad audience.
- 2023-2025: continue to emphasize the transformative power of history for the PC(USA) through conversations, communications, and outreach; model how historical materials can both ground and transform hard discussions on issues before congregations, mid councils, national agencies, and the General Assembly.