

ITEM C.202
FOR INFORMATION

WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE/YOUNG WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP
DEVELOPMENT EVENT

More than forty women from across the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) gathered to explore the relationship between vulnerability and power at the Women's Leadership Institute/Young Women's Leadership Development Event held on June 13-14, just prior to the 221st General Assembly (2014) in Detroit.

The Rev. Deborah Block shared remarks from the Rev. Laura Mendenhall, the former President of Columbia Theological Seminary. Mendenhall wrote about her daughter, who used the services of a midwife and God's practice of placing midwives in the midst of women so that they, in turn, bless others.

Women of diverse ages and backgrounds, including young women, college age women, new immigrant women, women teaching and ruling elders and other women leaders in congregations shared stories about leadership. Exodus 1:20, reads, "So God dealt well with the midwives; and the people multiplied and became very strong. And because the midwives feared God, he gave them families. Then Pharaoh commanded all his people, 'Every boy that is born to the Hebrews you shall throw into the Nile, but you shall let every girl live'." Speakers shared images of midwives as leaders and how midwives help give birth to ideas and dreams while developing and nurturing people to realize the gifts God has given them. Participants worshipped together, shared with one another, tapped into their inner strengths, and lifted up one another in prayer during the event's closing session.

The Rev. Laurie Ferguson, Senior Coach at Auburn Seminary, discussed some of the factors that prevent women from tapping into their inner strengths. She then led participants through exercises to help them tap into their inner strengths. She suggested that participants know their purpose, be willing to act, confront their inner critic and build a support team.

Elder Linda Valentine, Executive Director of the Presbyterian Mission Agency (PMA), welcomed the women to the event and the Rev. Dr. Rhashell Hunter, Director of the Racial Ethnic & Women's Ministries/Presbyterian Women, offered greetings and introduced the leadership and staff planning teams. The two PMA leaders lifted up the mission and ministry of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) in reforming and developing new leaders to serve Christ's mission.

Other leaders for the event included: the Rev. Desiree A. Lawson, preacher, Pastor of Trinity United Presbyterian Church in Flint, Michigan; the Rev. Laura Mariko Chieifetz, speaker, Executive Director of Church and Public Relations for the Presbyterian Publishing Corporation; and Carolina Trevino, speaker, Christian Educator for Children and Youth at Central Presbyterian Church in Austin, Texas.