

MINUTE FOR MISSION

THE CHRISTMAS JOY OFFERING HELPS A STUDENT MOVE FROM HOMELESSNESS TO HOPE

As a high school senior, Devon Kelly had no place to call home and little hope.

Beginning at age 14, he slept wherever he could find a place to lay his head. He stayed with cousins, friends, his grandmother, and his aunt. Sometimes he spent the night outdoors on a park bench. His mother's struggles with mental illness and other medical issues had diminished her ability to care for Devon and his brother.

"Growing up on Chicago's South Side was really tough," he said. "By the time I was 18, I had lost several family members to gun violence. I had lost other family members to the judicial system. Honestly, I thought I was going to be another statistic."

However, his entire outlook, and his life, began to change when he encountered an admissions representative from Stillman College, a historically black college in Tuscaloosa, AL, affiliated with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), at his high school.

Devon assumed he "didn't have any hope of going to college." However, his mind changed after a "heart-touching conversation" that started with ... POP TARTS®. Devon bumped into a Stillman admissions representative at a POP TARTS® vending machine in his school.

"At this time, I didn't like POP TARTS®, but now I believe this was the Lord's way of leading me to a bigger plan for my life," Devon said.

And as we all know, the Lord moves in mysterious ways ...

That said, Devon began to imagine Stillman as a place where he could succeed. And he did.

He found hope. He found his future.

Today, Devon is pursuing a master's in social work at the University of Alabama, and he has his sights set on helping children and youth, who like him, have faced severe adversity.

“Stillman has made me the person I am today, the desire I have for other people to do well, the professionalism I carry, and the desire to show the love of God, the love of Christ.”

Devon's life-changing journey to Stillman was possible because of its relatively low tuition and generous financial aid packages. Gifts to the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)'s Christmas Joy Offering help Stillman reach out to students like Devon.

The Christmas Joy Offering helps others like Devon find hope, and perhaps a better future. The Christmas Joy Offering is a reflection of the perfect gift — the love of God, the love of Christ.

Let Us Pray ~

Lord, you moved toward us

when you gave your son, Jesus.

Through Christ, you drew near to us

and lifted us up to you in him.

May the gifts we share in this offering

honor your perfect gift to us,

and may the students who are supported

have their potential lifted up while they know

the church's presence and yours.

Amen.