

## MINUTE FOR MISSION

### **MENDING LIVES NEAR AND FAR THROUGH THE PEACE & GLOBAL WITNESS OFFERING**

We all have known challenges — some greater than others, and not all the same. Far from it. This morning I want to introduce you to someone who faced a tremendous challenge: the task of re-entering the workforce carrying the stigma of a criminal conviction. His name is Craig Rockenbach.

Employers tend to be skeptical of ex-offenders, but for those without a job, another criminal conviction and more jail time is statistically likely. That was Craig's challenge and one he desperately wanted to face down, so he sought the help of the Inside Out Re-entry Community, an Iowa City, Iowa, program that offers job assistance, mentoring, and other resources for those returning from incarceration.

His experience with Inside Out helped him land a job as a housekeeper at a downtown Iowa City hotel. He was thrilled by the opportunity. "It might be a small thing, but it's programs like this that give people a second chance," Rockenbach said.

First Presbyterian Church of Iowa City helps people like Craig by devoting a portion of their Peace & Global Witness Offering to Inside Out. But as we all know, challenges take many shapes, many forms, and show themselves in many places. With this in mind, the Iowa City congregation also chose to use some of the Peace & Global Witness Offering it retains to help individuals in challenging circumstances abroad; they also gave a portion to Healing Hearts, a ministry in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

While Congo may be geographically distant from Iowa City, it is close to the hearts of people at First Presbyterian. Several of the congregation's members have fled violence in Congo. They are among more than 20 African members, predominantly Congolese, who have started worshiping at First Presbyterian in recent years. Healing Hearts helps children and teens in Congo recover from the trauma inflicted through brutal internal conflicts. Thousands of Congolese children have seen their villages attacked by militiamen who were wielding guns and machetes.

First Presbyterian's support of Healing Hearts and the Inside Out Community illustrates the congregation's concern for people near and far — a concern shared by Presbyterians around the country. Congregations just like ours. As you may know, here at [CHURCH NAME] we have used our share of the Peace and Global Witness offering to [TO DO THIS...]

Across the U.S. and around the world, the Peace & Global Witness Offering supports empowering ministries that work for reconciliation and facilitate healing for those scarred by conflict. Half of the Peace & Global Witness Offering goes to the national church to address these issues around the world. Twenty five percent is retained by congregations for local peace and reconciliation work and 25 percent goes to mid councils for similar ministries on the regional level.

By taking this offering, we stand with our brothers and sisters in Christ. We stand with those like Craig, like the people of Congo, like those who live among us. We stand together. We stand for peace.

### *Let Us Pray ~*

*Christ, you invite us to your table  
and offer us your peace.*

*Open our eyes to the needs of our neighbors  
who suffer violence and war.*

*In your healing presence we pray.*

**Amen.**