

MINUTE FOR MISSION

WAR VETERAN FINDS OPPORTUNITIES FOR HEALING AND PARTNERSHIP IN IRAQ — SUPPORTED BY PITTSBURGH PRESBYTERY AND THE PEACE & GLOBAL WITNESS OFFERING

Fifteen years after serving as a soldier in the Iraq War, the Rev. Matthew Fricker felt compelled to return to Iraq.

In his own words: “I could feel God calling me back.”

Fricker, associate pastor at John McMillan Presbyterian Church in Pittsburgh, was among eight members of the Iraq Partnership Network who travelled to Iraq. The network is a Presbyterian group whose members share an interest in building relationships with Iraqi Christians and sharing in mutual ministry with them.

“I could feel God calling me back.”

The group visited the three small Presbyterian congregations that remain in Iraq. Since 2003, hundreds of thousands of Christians have fled the country to escape the war, the devastation left in its wake, and intense persecution at the hands of ISIS.

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Fricker was deeply moved by what he experienced in Iraq. “I sat with people and we talked about our families, war, rebuilding, and hope for a brighter future,” he said. “We talked about reconciliation in partnership. We talked with passion about unity in peace. What I received from the people I met was healing...it was true love.”

Pittsburgh Presbytery helped fund Fricker’s trip through the presbytery’s share of the Peace & Global Witness Offering. The Rev. Henk Bossers, chair of the presbytery’s Peacemaking Committee, emphasized the committee’s support of Frickers’ dream of getting more Iraqi War veterans involved. He is reaching out to veterans and wants to connect them with Iraqi

Presbyterians through texts, emails, and possibly through visits. “True healing and peace can come out of these kinds of conversations, these kinds of partnerships, and these kinds of visits,” he said.

Across the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), congregations and mid councils use their shares of the Peace & Global Witness Offering to work for Christ’s peace on the local and regional levels as well as extend their witness to more distant places. PC(USA) mission co-workers are sometimes called upon to assist in connecting Presbyterians with these opportunities, as Elmarie Parker, who facilitates relationships with partner churches in Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon did for the Iraq Partnership Network. Twenty-five percent of the offering is retained by congregations, and 25 percent goes to mid councils. The remaining 50 percent is used by the national church to support its peace and reconciliation ministries.

Right here in our congregation, we have used our share [\[TO DO THIS...\]](#)

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I think Rev. Fricker is just one of many of us who feel God’s call to join together as active peacemakers, and to stand in support of our global sisters and brothers, because the peace of Christ belongs to people everywhere. Please give generously to the Peace and Global Witness Offering, for when we all do a little, it adds up to a lot.

Let Us Pray ~

O God, call us back

to who you created us to be.

Make us part of

your ministry of reconciliation

and inspire us to make peace

in every part of our lives.

Amen.