MINUTE FOR MISSION

Little Rock, Arkansas

BUILDING GOD’S HOUSE: RAISING UP A GENERATION OF PEACEMAKERS

A big part of being peacemakers in the world is teaching others about the power of Christ’s peace. Second Presbyterian Church in Little Rock, Arkansas, understands this to be especially true when it comes to young people. When they chose to designate their retained 25% of last year’s Peace & Global Witness Offering, they decided to build up the youngest peacemakers of their community by supporting the Interfaith Friendship Camp.

The Interfaith Friendship Camp has been held annually in Little Rock since 2016, bringing together young people of varying faith traditions, including Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Baha’i and Universalist Unitarian. Second Presbyterian has been committed to the success of the program since the very beginning, even hosting the event on their campus several years ago.

In her opening remarks to the 2020 Interfaith Friendship Camp, Sophia Said, executive director of the Interfaith Center in Little Rock, shared their inspirational goal for the program: “We aim to develop strong understanding and appreciation of different religious beliefs and traditions while building community with fun, faith and friendship.”

During the weeklong day camp, children in third through sixth grades come together to hear lessons and stories led by a team of leaders from several faith traditions, as well as participate in arts and crafts, recreation and a mission activity. Participants are intermixed throughout the camp except for times of prayer when they gather in groups by their faith tradition. In the spirit of peacemaking and building community, if a child is interested in learning how another religion prays, that child can sit in during their prayer time.

This year, of course, looked different given the pandemic, but families of different faiths were still able to participate in the camp. Instead of gathering in a building, they did so virtually, participating in songs, listening to stories, learning how to make face masks as a COVID-19 mission project and even participating in a scavenger hunt.

As they are building friendships with one another through this camp, the children might not understand that they are actively engaging in peacemaking. However, as they come to realize that we are all more alike than we are different, they grow to be bearers of peace who respect one another and appreciate the value of their differences.

Through their commitment to the Peace & Global Witness Offering, the peacemakers of Second Presbyterian join with their partners throughout Little Rock, reducing misunderstanding and fear among people of different faiths and contributing to a world that is more peaceful. In our community, we are being peacemakers by using our retained portion of this Offering to [DESCRIBE HOW YOUR CONGREGATION USES YOUR SHARE OF THE OFFERING].

Together, through our gifts, we are building God’s household through the youngest of peacemakers in our midst, to generations of peacemakers in places where compassion, peace and justice are not just heartfelt words, but lifesaving needs. Through our gifts, we are active peacemakers. We are builders. And when we all do a little, it adds up to a lot.

 Let us pray ~

 Reconciling God,

 continue to build us as your Church.

 May we engage in ministries

 that share your joy and promise with all people

 and deepen our call

 to be reconciled to one another.

 **Amen.**