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**Supporting young women of color through the Pentecost Offering**

The world certainly looks different than it did this time last year. In addition to the coronavirus pandemic, we have been reminded of the harmful realities of the pandemic of racism, one that has plagued our country since its founding. In Matthew 25, we are called to address the inequities we see in the world, including confronting deeply ingrained racist systems and structures. In response to the denomination’s Matthew 25 invitation and with support from the Pentecost Offering, First Presbyterian Church in Tecumseh, Michigan, has begun taking action to dismantle structural racism in their community.

Due to the limitations of the online format, the 224th General Assembly (2020) did not hear the reports or recommendations of all the committees. This included the Task Force exploring the Disparities Experienced by Black Women and Girls. Considering the rate at which Black women and girls are experiencing institutional and interpersonal violence, as well as unaccountable police killings of unarmed people of color, like Breonna Taylor, many were upset at the Assembly’s decision to not hear their report. This inaction motivated First Presbyterian to create something that would support young BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and people of color), particularly young BIPOC women.

The congregation used their retained portion of the Pentecost Offering – their first time taking the Offering in over a decade! – to organize an outreach committee that included members of their predominantly white congregation as well as members of color throughout the community. Pastor Cathi King shared that their goal is to be advocates and allies and not to take over work that is already taking place – they want to identify barriers that *together* can be broken down. The committee began working closely with the Diversity and Inclusion Director at the local Sierra Heights University, and they began identifying needs in the county.

Since last year’s Pentecost Offering, they have worked with a Black-woman-owned business in Atlanta to provide blazers to 25 young women for job interviews, a need expressed by the university. They are currently working to provide mentorship communities for young BIPOC women who are preparing to graduate from the university, as well as young survivors of domestic violence who are moving to transitional housing. They are also working to provide a stipend for an internship, in conjunction with the university, for a student to study structural iniquities and cultural iniquities in their county for BIPOC. The intern will be working with a faculty adviser, reporting back to the committee, and interfacing with local agencies, concluding their internship by leading a courageous conversation for the community.

First Presbyterian’s commitment to supporting young women of color in their community is just one example of how congregations can live out the call to be a Matthew 25 church. The Pentecost Offering is helping them engage in their particular part of that vision locally, as well as joining with other Presbyterians to make an impact on children, youth and young adults in churches and communities around the country. This church-wide offering supports children at risk, ministries with youth, and Young Adult Volunteers, and 40% of the offering stays right here to support [name and briefly describe how your Session has decided to allocate the retained portion]. Please give generously, because when we all do a little, it adds up to a lot.

Prayer:

*God of all people,
stir in us a commitment to help shape the lives of our children, youth and young adults, especially those who are marginalized due to the color of their skin.*

*Help us to make sure all have opportunities to thrive and be exactly who you call them to be.*

*Amen.*