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**Living the “DREAAM”**

Tracy Dace, a passionate advocate for at-risk youth had just relocated to Champaign, Illinois, to start a doctoral program in special education at the University of Illinois when he found his heart calling him back into the community and, eventually, through the doors of a Presbyterian Church (U.S.A) congregation.

As Tracy was working in schools, after-school programs, a juvenile detention center and the county jail, he had an opportunity to build relationships with African American males.

“These boys and young men were brilliant, with so much promise and potential, and yet they also had experienced trauma,” he said. “I saw the opportunity to think about using a pipeline approach to prevent them from developing behavioral issues that can derail their lives, to strengthen their academic skills and disrupt generational poverty. That was the beginning of DREAAM.”

[DREAAM](http://dreaamhouse.squarespace.com/) — which stands for Driven to Reach Excellence and Academic Achievement for Males — was Tracy’s brainchild. It is a program designed to invest in African American males at risk and to walk alongside them and their families from the ages of five through 24.

Tracy’s vision and mission began to align after attending the PC(USA)’s 2013 Big Tent event in Louisville.

“It was at Big Tent that I found a greater calling on our faith and our denomination. I saw people who looked like me. I saw worship done in a contemporary and multicultural way, and I heard and witnessed leaders who promoted racial justice and transformation within Presbyterianism. This larger church that I felt I could be a part of helped me to better appreciate our local expression of church.”

Tracy took his idea for DREAAM to the mission committee at First Presbyterian Church. The church, upon hearing Dace’s presentation, also made the connection with the denomination’s larger goals — especially as they are now expressed in the PC(USA)’s [Matthew 25](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/matthew-25/) initiative — and supported him with seed money to get the project off the ground.

DREAAM is also supported in part with gifts to the [Pentecost Offering](https://specialofferings.pcusa.org/offering/pentecost/). Forty percent of the Pentecost Offering is retained by congregations for local ministries, while the remaining 60% is used to support children-at-risk, youth and young adults through ministries of the Presbyterian Mission Agency.

Gifts to the Pentecost Offering make a real difference. “Our young people are not only our future, but they are also our present,” said the Rev. Dr. Alonzo Johnson, coordinator of the Presbyterian Committee on the Self-Development of People. “It is incumbent upon us as people of faith to make sure we are nurturing our young people in the faith and also nurturing them with our love. The Church is going to have to find ways to be vital to young people because they really need that right now.”

Let’s build God’s house by laying down a strong foundation of faith. Please give generously.

*Let us pray~*

*Teach us, as your children, God, and by your children, too. Gather us all in your house, that we might share all that we have with one another.* ***Amen****.*