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**Minute for Mission**

**Building a Life of Faith — Creating Welcoming Spaces for Youth with Disabilities**

Like most kids, Josh Davenport-Herbst has a hard time saying no to his parents, especially when it comes to showing up for stuff at church. But unlike most kids, both of Josh’s parents are PC(USA) pastors and unlike many of his peers, he doesn’t like to be around too many people, loud noises or too much excitement.

Josh is among nearly 5.5 million people in the U.S. with [autism spectrum disorder](https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/features/adults-living-with-autism-spectrum-disorder.html). That means Josh has difficulty communicating and interacting socially with others, and the prospect of attending the [Presbyterian Youth Triennium](https://presbyterianyouthtriennium.org/) in 2016 was a formidable challenge for him.

Held every three years, Triennium is a gathering that draws over 3,000 high-school-age youth, youth leaders and young adults. The Triennium’s plenary sessions are known for are their energizers, which may include flashing lights, loud music and loud voices. This made the event that much more daunting for the then 18-year-old, who is especially sensitive to his environment.

Josh’s father, the Rev. Dr. Timothy Davenport-Herbst, pastor of [St. Paul Presbyterian Church](https://www.stpaulsanangelo.org/) in San Angelo, Texas, points out, “If you’re not the kind of person who thrives on that, there’s no place for you.” Yet he adds, “These folks need a youth group, too. These, too, are children of God.”

But then a door — actually, a balcony — opened. Tim saw a way for people to enjoy the experience away from the noise. Later, on Instagram, he posted, “Triennium opened the entire top balcony just so people with sensory issues could join in!”

Creating a safe and welcoming space for all of God’s children in the life of the Church is what the [Pentecost Offering](https://specialofferings.pcusa.org/offering/pentecost/) is all about. Gifts to the offering support the [Office of Presbyterian Youth and Triennium](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/youthministry/presbyterian-youth-and-triennium/), the [Young Adult Volunteer Program](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/yav/) and children at risk through the [“Educate a Child, Transform the World”](https://www.presbyterianmission.org/ministries/compassion-peace-justice/child/) national initiative.

Forty percent of the Pentecost Offering is retained by our congregation for youth ministries in our community. (HERE IN OUR CHURCH, WE USE OUR PORTION OF THE OFFERING TO…)

“I support all of the [Special Offerings](https://specialofferings.pcusa.org/),” said Tim. “When Presbyterians made the decision to be fully inclusive, they made the decision to do some very difficult work that brings us into greater levels of grace and celebration of God’s image in diverse people. We are seeking and making every effort to welcome people that are not welcome in traditional places, and as we do that, we live into the love of Jesus Christ more and more.”

Please give generously; when we all do a little, it adds up to a lot.

***Let us pray***

*Come to us, Holy Spirit, as you did at Pentecost. Empower us to share the story of your grace through the diversity of languages, spaces and experiences needed by your children.* **Amen**.