

# MINUTE FOR MISSION

SOUTHEASTERN REGION (JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA)

## **THE PENTECOST OFFERING—HELPING FAMILIES FIND A HOME**

Where did you first learn about God? Who pointed out the glimpses of God in everyday life? For many, it happened during the early years of life. It was in Sunday School classes where stories were shared of Jesus' miracles and God's love. It was at summer camp and youth conferences where God's truth was revealed and life-changing friendships were forged. It was in spaces where safety and stability fostered learning, exploration, and growth. For families that are homeless, the instability and insecurity can greatly hinder a child's ability to thrive.

In response to the needs they saw around them in Jacksonville, Florida, Highlands United Presbyterian Church has reached out to support those families through Family Promise of Jacksonville. Family Promise is a non-profit, interfaith hospitality network providing temporary assistance, hospitality, and case management for families who have children but no home. The network brings together the local faith community to help families regain housing, independence, and dignity in a time of need. The program has helped 85 percent of participating families find long-term housing and at one-third the cost of traditional shelters. By participating in this ministry, Highlands United Presbyterian and its neighboring communities of faith are building a better community, one family at a time.

The Family Promise model of care relies heavily on the generosity and dedication of volunteers and local host congregations. The program provides meals, shelter, transportation, and support services for families in transition. Thanks to the generous support of individuals, corporations and foundations, families never pay for services.

Each evening, guest families are transported to the host congregations where volunteers welcome them as guests into their church or synagogue and provide them with meals, hospitality and overnight accommodations. These communities take turns hosting the families in the program for one week at a time on a rotating basis. Highlands United Presbyterian takes a turn three times a year. It's able to do so because of the congregation's generosity through the Pentecost Offering. In addressing the needs of the entire family, they provide the basics for children in need.

The Pentecost Offering is an opportunity to thank God for the gift of the Holy Spirit and to contribute to ministries that encourage the Spirit to move in the lives of those in the first third of life. Forty percent of the Offering will stay with our congregation to support [Local Program(s)], so we might support this cause locally as well as around the country. Please give generously!