



## MINUTE FOR MISSION

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### Come to the Table of Reconciliation

#### MENDING A RACIAL BREACH IN DENVER

A shared faith and joint worship are building a bridge that is helping two Denver congregations cross a racial divide.

Central Presbyterian, a predominantly white congregation, and Peoples Presbyterian, a predominantly African American one, began the effort on Martin Luther King Jr. Day this year. Central members traveled to worship with Peoples. The following Sunday, Peoples visited Central.

Relationships formed quickly between members of each congregation and soon, planning began on a joint women's retreat, and Peoples hosted a vacation bible school with children from both churches attending. Two additional joint worship services were held last spring, with more anticipated. "In past times, we had pulpit exchanges, but this is something much more than a pulpit exchange," says Louise Westfall, Central's pastor. "It's a desire to be together."

"There was this mutual feeling that this is amazing," Rev. Westfall continues. "I can only attribute it to the Spirit."

Theresa Varnado, a ruling elder at Peoples, is enthusiastic about the increasing level of understanding. "Sometimes the ideas we share just among ourselves can become redundant," she says. "When we spend time in community, conversing, and participating in joint activities, the opportunity to learn new and fresh ideas is greater. We are building bridges as well."

Rev. Westfall adds, "Until we break down social barriers, until we count among our friends people of color, we are going to remain separate."

The joint worship services that set this relationship in motion were part of a Colorado Council of Churches

initiative called "Soulful Sunday." "It began as an acknowledgment that the Body of Christ is broken in many ways," says Adrian Miller, executive director of the council, noting one of the most enduring sources of this brokenness is race.

Denver Presbytery uses a portion of its Peace & Global Witness Offering receipts to support the "Soulful Sunday" initiative across Colorado. Tom Sheffield, presbytery pastor, admits that simply holding joint worship services can be superficial. "But," he says, "The experience of Central and Peoples shows that they can lead to deeper relationships and honest conversations about each other's lives."

Any setting where diversity is honored, where strangers become friends, and where brokenness is mended is part of the table of reconciliation set by God. It's the table where diverse congregations and people can celebrate their unity in Christ.

Your support of the Peace & Global Witness Offering is one way you can help grow the table of reconciliation in places near and far. Twenty-five percent of the offering is retained by our congregation for local ministries of peacemaking and reconciliation, another 25% will support these ministries at the mid council level, and the remaining 50% supports peacemaking and reconciliation ministries of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A). Your gift to the Peace & Global Witness Offering will help more people gather at God's table of reconciliation.

**Please give generously.**