

Just Neighbors Award November 2014

Presented by:

Compassion, Peace & Justice Task Force of the Presbytery of Des Moines

Presented to:

**Westminster Presbyterian Church, Des Moines
for engaging in compassion, peace and justice ministry in their community as a
Family Promise Center of Great Des Moines**

Family Promise of Greater Des Moines (FPGD) is a unique homeless shelter that serves the Des Moines metropolitan area. Its mission is "To mobilize our community to help homeless families achieve stable housing and income through compassionate care, hospitality and professional support." FPGD is one of only two family shelters in Des Moines with the capacity to serve families with a single-male head of household, two-parent families as well as multi-generational families. FPGD has the capacity to serve a maximum of three families at a time. Initial length of stay is 30 days, but a family may stay for up to 90 days. Families wishing to stay longer than 30 days must agree to a plan to save 80% of their income and actively be working toward goals related to securing income and housing. Guests receive a variety of case management services while staying with Family Promise.

Since 2005, Westminster has provided space and utilities for the Family Promise Day Center, which is a safe, secure and

comfortable place for families to go during the day, seven days a week. Also located at Westminster are the FPGD offices for staff and volunteers, space for FPGD guests to meet with caseworkers and use the internet, and shower and laundry facilities. Upon leaving shelter and moving into permanent housing, each family receives a house-warming basket full of useful household items and a grocery gift card, provided by Westminster.

Another unique feature about FPGD is that there is no permanent shelter space aside from the Day Center. Overnight hospitality and accommodations are provided by local congregations on a rotating basis. Several times a year, Westminster serves as one of 13 area host congregations, providing week-long overnight room and board for FPGD families. Basic accommodations include private sleeping quarters for each family, in which they may leave personal items throughout the week. During these host weeks, Westminster volunteers provide meals and hospitality throughout the evening and overnight. The goal is to provide an experience that is as close to "home-like" as possible for these displaced families.

FPGD is always looking for increased congregational support. New host congregations are added into the overnight rotation schedule. The more churches participating, the fewer times a year any one church will be called on to host. Support congregations are not able to accommodate overnights, but help in other ways, including recruiting hospitality volunteers, providing drivers, cooking meals, and offering financial support.

According to its 2013 Annual Report, FPGD served 27 families (64 children, 39 adults), 48% of the



Rev. Scott Paczkowski & Jim Cain are shown accepting the award on behalf of the church from Rev. Michelle Parsons.

children were under the age of five, 72% of families exiting shelter moved to permanent or transitional housing, 100% of former guest families participating in the Aftercare Program remained in housing one year after exiting shelter. Network congregations clocked 9,868 volunteer hours, 3,127 nights of lodging, and 9,381 meals.

Westminster members of all ages serve as FPGD volunteers, and report that it is a fun and rewarding experience. Folks look forward to this great opportunity to connect with and support the moms, dads, and kids who are the FPGD guests.

Learn how your congregation can become part of this vital ministry at <http://www.familypromisedm.org/>.