



Rev. Walter Koch: A Donor's Story

The seeds of Chaplain Wally Koch's call to ministry were nurtured growing up as a pastor's son. Wally's father was a missionary in Australia and Brazil before serving as a local church pastor in Wisconsin and then in Minnesota, where Wally was born. After enlisting in 1952 for service with the Navy in Korea, Wally returned home, went to college, was a member of the first graduating class of Minnesota's United Theological Seminary in 1963, and was ordained shortly thereafter.

Soon afterwards, while serving a parish in Nebraska, Wally felt a call to chaplaincy in Vietnam, rejoined the Navy, and provided pastoral care aboard ships for two years. Back home, that Vietnam experience led to 20 years with the Reserve Chaplaincy Corps in Minnesota, as well as 19 years as a chaplain at Fairview Southdale Hospital in Edina, Minnesota, where he became the hospice program manager. "It often felt like I was still at war, having to provide constant ministry to those in pain. But there was joy in that work, too – working with patients especially, helping them to a place of peaceful acceptance of who they were, and where they were."

As a pastor's child, Wally also witnessed the severe limitations of making ends meet on a pastor's salary. There was simply never enough to provide for the family of six. As a young boy, he supplemented the family food supply by hunting; at the age of 12, he went to work from Monday to Saturday at a local farm to earn extra dollars. While the Navy provided much-needed assistance to Wally's family at home after he enlisted at age 18, even that had to be supplemented by most of his Navy pay.

Years later in retirement, Wally and his wife, Shirley, received their first appeal for the Christmas Fund for Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund. Seeing that it often provided for pastors living in scarcity, "We looked at each other and knew this is what we had to do." Since then, the Kochs have contributed generously each year for more than two decades. For Wally, early experiences of life on a pastor's salary remain vivid to this day. "We feel so blessed to be able to make a difference now knowing what it can be like."

★ THE CHRISTMAS FUND

for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund



In 2016, gifts to the Christmas Fund enabled

- Small pension supplementation for 448 retired clergy and lay employees (\$1,507,787)
- Health benefits supplementation for 216 retired clergy and lay employees (\$487,338)
- Emergency grants for 50 individuals and families (\$90,927)
- Christmas "Thank You" gift checks to 503 retired clergy and lay employees (\$233,800)