

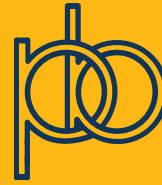
## Christmas Fund Gifts Provided...

The generous gifts of UCC congregations and individuals to the Christmas Fund enabled the Pension Boards' Ministerial Assistance program to provide some form of financial assistance to approximately 1,500 persons during 2008:

- Monthly pension supplementation is provided to 458 persons. These gifts total \$96,265 per month (\$1,155,180 per year). A significant part of annual total of \$1,155,180 comes from the Christmas Fund.
- Quarterly health premium supplementation is provided to 280 families, totaling \$151,601 per quarter. All of the funding for health premium supplementation is derived from the Christmas Fund.
- Emergency Grants have been provided to 32 individuals and families, which totaled \$37,900 in the first seven months of 2008. It is estimated that 70-80 persons will receive an Emergency Grant by year-end.
- Christmas Gift checks will be sent to approximately 900 persons in 2008. Of those who will receive checks, 20 are over 100 years of age. The oldest person is 106. One person has received Christmas checks continuously since 1976. The 900 gifts will total \$247,500.

(These statistics reflect activity through July 31, 2008. Please log on to the Christmas Fund web site at [www.christmasfund.org](http://www.christmasfund.org) for updated information.)

The First Sunday of Advent  
November 30, 2008



"I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace that has been given you in Christ Jesus, for in every way you have been enriched by him, in speech and knowledge of every kind..."

(1 Corinthians 1:4-5, NRSV)

At age 91, the Reverend H. Gardner ("H.G.") Andersen is enthusiastic about sharing the knowledge he has gained throughout his lifetime.

A teacher at heart, H.G. currently leads a class on Christian beliefs at his local church in Washington, New Hampshire. "It's a small group, but they ask excellent questions. I try to select from among the best theologians of the 20th and 21st centuries, including [my] favorites, Hans Kung and Thomas Merton," he says.

The self-sufficient H.G. lives on a small farm in rural New Hampshire, in a small house he shares with his German Shepherd, Leo. A daughter and son-in-law live near by and assist with any "heavy lifting" but he is quick to note that he operates the snow blower on his own.

H.G. started his career in small churches, but quickly moved on to larger congregations, in Lawrence, Massachusetts; Benton Harbor, Michigan; and Walpole, Massachusetts. He arrived at First Church in Walpole, located 30 miles south of Boston, just as the post-World War II boom was beginning. Within 10 years, average attendance at worship went from 350 to 600; two services were held each Sunday; and 600 children attended Sunday school.

In 1976, H.G. learned that he needed heart surgery and decided to take an early retirement at age 60. Even after a long and successful career, early retirement impacted the base amount of his annuity, causing economic hardship. The increasing costs of oil and fuel meant that he faced a shortfall each month.

Thanks to the Christmas Fund, H.G. now receives pension and health supplementation that helps him meet basic expenses. The extra money helps cover the cost of fuel so that he can drive the 30 miles from his remote rural community to doctors' appointments and the nearest grocery store.

A long-time advocate of the Veterans of the Cross, the predecessor to the Christmas Fund Offering, H.G. knows that, "You can't give a better gift [to] ministers or their spouses who have meager income and can't make ends meet without it. It's our Christian responsibility."

