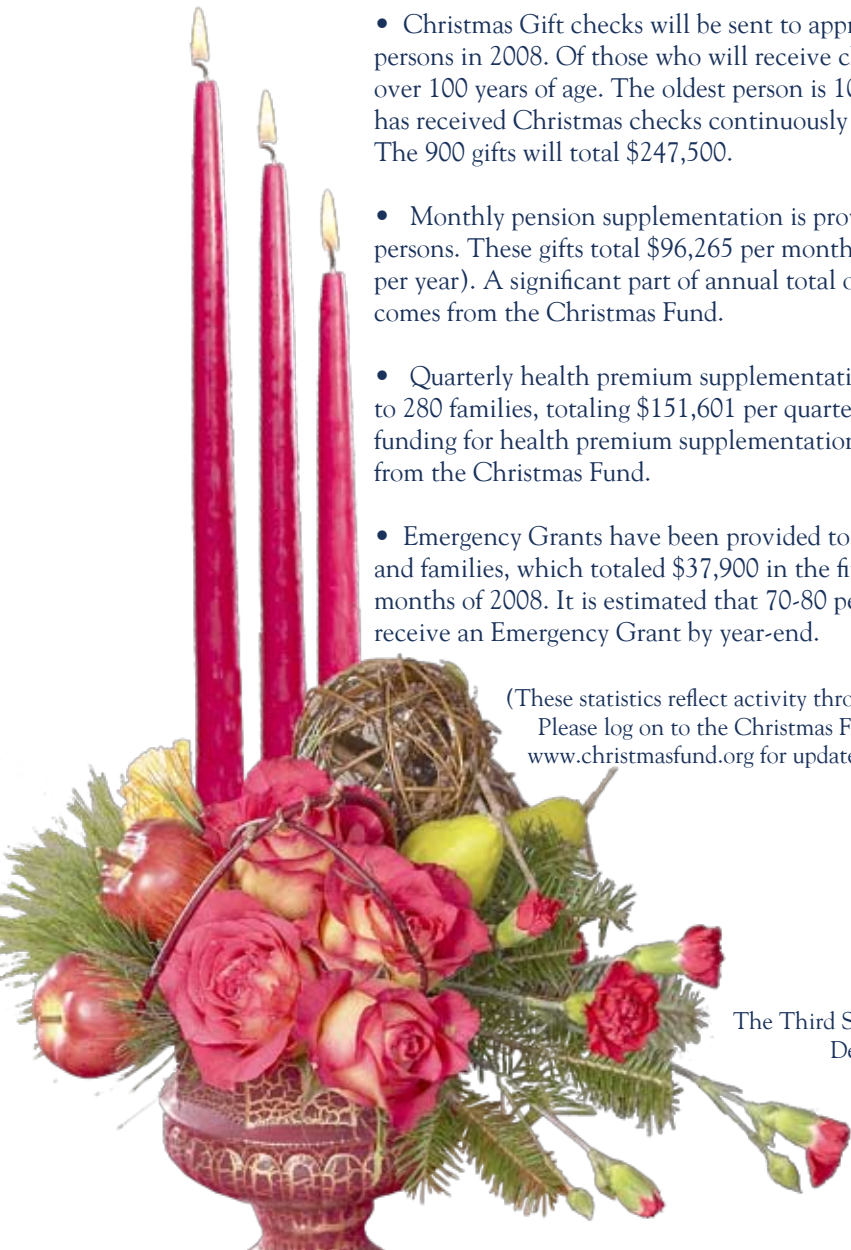


Christmas Fund Gifts Provided...

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:

- 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.
- 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.

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



The Third Sunday of Advent
December 14, 2008



"The spirit of the Lord God is upon me,
because the Lord has anointed me; he has
sent me to bring good news..."

(Isaiah 61:1a, NRSV)

Even as a small girl, Ruthann Magler felt called to ministry. One of her earliest experiences was attending church with a friend; as she became more involved, her family began attending church also.

Ruthann enjoyed church but, "As I grew up and gained understanding of who God is, I found that congregation too conservative. I wanted a church that was more about what you should do, than about what you shouldn't do, and have fun with it."

She joined an African American congregation, which was an empowering experience. Eventually, Ruthann went on to attend Virginia Union University School of Theology on a full scholarship.

After graduation, it was difficult to find placement in a local church. A colleague suggested that she consider the United Church of Christ. Ruthann joined the UCC and was ordained in 1980. She has found great joy in her ministry, although she admits that there have been challenges along the way. "I was a woman in a small county seat church. You had to get to the part where [the people] accepted you and that's not easy. Where you were loved you were deeply loved," she says.

Even with health issues, Ruthann is enjoying retirement. Recently she went back to the church where she was ordained to officiate at the marriage of her oldest granddaughter. She also writes poetry and performs as a soloist in her clear mezzo soprano voice.

Throughout her ministry, says Ruthann, "I always thought the Christmas Fund was a good idea. Many ministers don't make [the kind of] money that allows you to set some aside. Seeing to your own is a good idea and the extra money I receive [at Christmas time] is helpful."

She adds, "I see God at work in everything around me. It is more blessed to give than receive."

