

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:

- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

(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 Fourth Sunday of Advent
December 21, 2008



"I will sing of your steadfast love, O LORD, forever; with my mouth I will proclaim your faithfulness to all generations."

(Psalm 89:1 NRSV)

Anne Roberts grew up in a churchgoing family, but didn't discover the United Church of Christ until she was living away from home, in college. She started attending the local UCC congregation and soon found herself singing in the choir and playing guitar in the service. "I took to it right away. I loved the church I grew up in, but I'll never forget how inspirational those services in college were for me," she says. "I've been a member of the UCC ever since."

Anne finished her degree and went on to teach school for 10 years, but her long dedication to the church led her to seminary at age 35. After completing her degree, she served in associate pastorates for several years before accepting a call as pastor of a small church so that she and her son could live closer to her family.

But tensions between congregation and pastor soon surfaced. "We just didn't adapt well to each other. I have a very different style than they were used to and it wasn't a good fit. In the end differences could not be worked out and they let me know my contract would not be renewed."

As a diabetic, Anne immediately became concerned about having health insurance. The small church did not have the financial resources to offer her interim benefits.

Anne contacted her Conference Office and was put in touch with the Office of Ministerial Assistance. After evaluating her situation, Anne was approved to receive a grant from the Christmas Fund to cover her health and dental insurance premiums for three months while she looked for another job.

Now able to concentrate on future placement, Anne is working with the Conference on some placement possibilities. "I was pretty down about the whole affair for a while. Receiving practical assistance at the right time was a Godsend."

Anne is optimistic about her future, and credits her outlook in great part to the support she received in a time of need. "It's a great idea to donate to the Christmas Fund. Sometimes the effort we make is tangible, other times its not as easy to measure, but people who donate to the Christmas Fund can know that their gift will have far reaching effects," she says. "It helped open a door for me to move on."

