

## 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.
- 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.
- Monthly pension supplementation provided to 458 persons. These gifts total \$96,265 per month (\$1,155,180 per year). A significant part of the 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](http://www.christmasfund.org) for updated information.)

Christmas Eve  
December 24, 2008



"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation..."

(Luke 2:10b-11, NRSV)

After nearly 40 years of pastoral ministry, the Rev. Don Gibson retired – for the first time – in 1992. But it wasn't long before a congregation in Salina, Kansas sought his leadership as it went through the painful decision to close its doors and sell the church building. After another pastorate in Abilene, Kansas, he retired a second time, but remained frequent supply preacher until he and his wife relocated to Lincoln, Nebraska in 2005 to be nearer to their son and grandchildren. Even now, he can be found several times a year in the pulpit of Faith UCC, a small congregation sponsored by First-Plymouth Congregational Church UCC in Lincoln.

Dedicated to the church, Don knows firsthand the kinds of sacrifices pastors make. "It can be a lonely profession when you are working and afterwards. I never made much more than a lower middle class income," he says. That does not always lead to a comfortable income in retirement.

Don has supported the Christmas Fund Offering throughout his career and passionately advocates for those who find themselves without sufficient resources in retirement. "Without the work the Pension Boards does, many would retire without the benefits that keep them alive," he says. Don is also concerned for young pastors coming out of seminary who must spend decades paying down the student loans that made theological education possible.

The Christmas "Thank You" Gift Check the Gibsons receive arrives right when they need it. "The check is very helpful right then. It is a wonderful gift for those who can't afford Christmas," he says. "If I had a lot of money, I would give a lot so the [Christmas Fund] could do even more."

