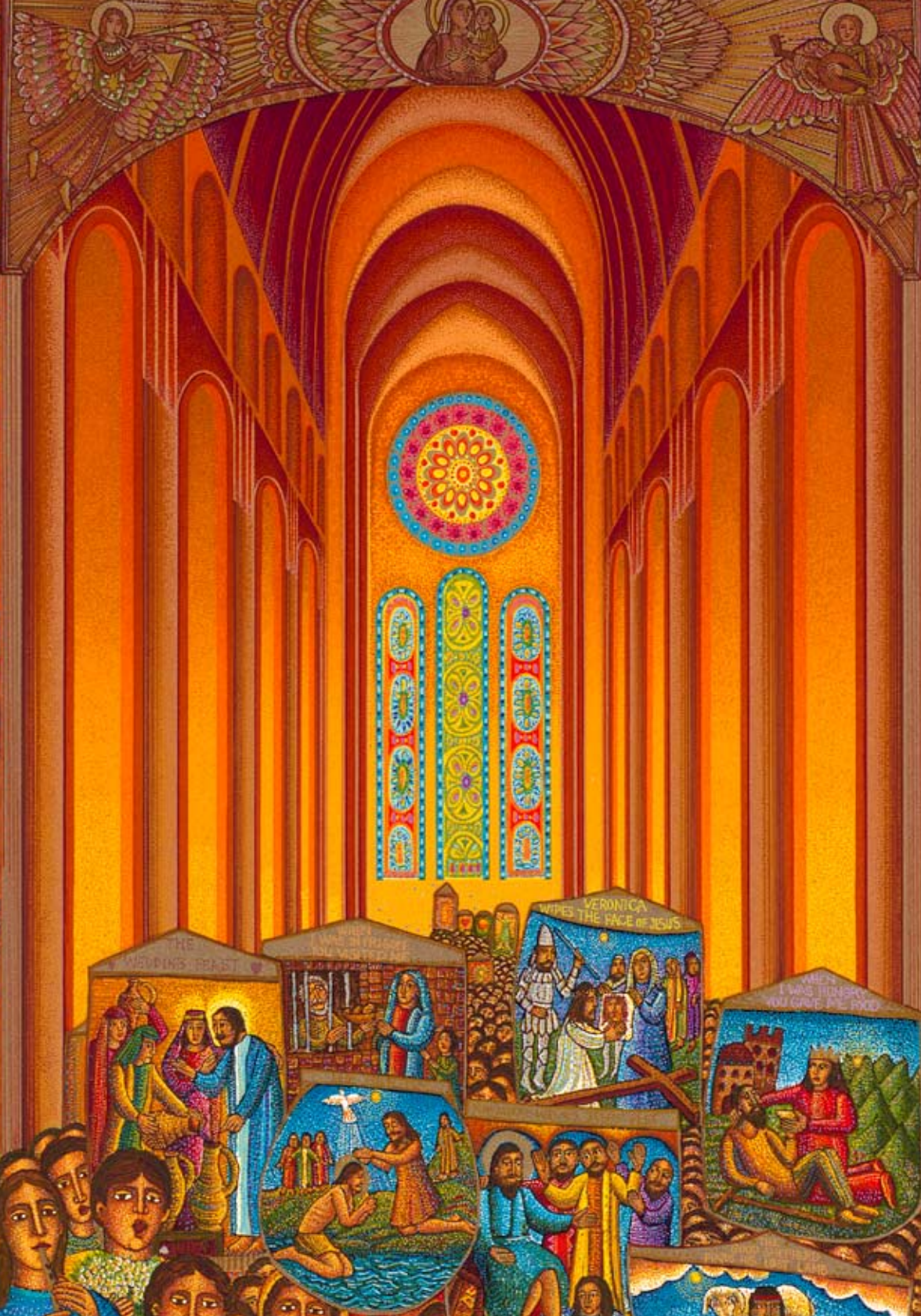


Offering Guide

★ 2008 CHRISTMAS FUND



“Don't Be Afraid - SHOUT!”



Good tidings to you, in this season when we celebrate the Word made flesh – Jesus, the Christ.

In our churches and homes, with our families and friends, we focus on the wondrous gift of God's love, shown to us in the Child who was born not in grandeur and riches but in humility and simplicity, and who taught us the importance of compassion and care for all God's people.

For 106 years, the Christmas Fund Offering has been a way in which we, as members of the United Church of Christ and its predecessor bodies, have shown Christ's compassion and care to those who serve the church. Your generous giving to the 2007 Christmas Fund Offering enabled the Pension Boards' Ministerial Assistance Program, on behalf of the United Church of Christ, to provide \$1,571,050 to individuals and families in need.

The economic climate of the past year has exacerbated the financial stresses on those with the most limited resources. The number of requests received by the Ministerial Assistance Program this year has increased dramatically over the same period last year. Because of that, we ask you to prayerfully consider your response to the 2008 Offering and give to the best of your ability, in thanksgiving for the blessings you have received over the past year. Think of the ways in which your life was touched by a retired pastor, a former Sunday School teacher, a church secretary, a custodian, a minister of music – and honor their ministries in a way that will help them and others like them in times of need.

On behalf of the nearly 1,500 clergy and lay individuals and families who received some form of Ministerial Assistance since the last Christmas Fund Offering, I express sincere thanks to you for your generosity. May you and yours truly be blessed by the One who brings Good News – now and forevermore.

Faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michael A. Downs". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Michael A. Downs
President/Chief Executive Officer
Pension Boards–United Church of Christ



INTRODUCTION

Our joy at Christmas is a response to God's promise of new life through the birth of the promised Savior, Jesus Christ. We are called to share that joy widely both to loved ones and to distant neighbors.

The Christmas Fund Offering (formerly the Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross), one of four Special Mission Offerings of the United Church of Christ (UCC), is an important way of sharing our joy at God's renewing, life-giving grace. The Offering, which is administered by the United Church Board for Ministerial Assistance (UCBMA) of the Pension Boards on behalf of the UCC, is an expression of joy and gratitude to, and for, those who serve the church.

Gifts to the Christmas Fund help provide pension and health premium supplementation to low-income retirees, emergency assistance to the families of clergy and lay employees and Christmas "Thank You" Gift Checks to hundreds of annuitants each year.

When the United Church of Christ celebrated 50 years of ministry in 2007, the Christmas Fund celebrated 105 years of continuous ministry.

A 1953 publication stated: "In 1902, a little money was collected and special Christmas gifts were sent to ten older ministers." The same article also reported that \$121,054 was received for the Christmas Fund in 1952.

Fifty-five years later, the 2007 Christmas Fund received \$1,571,050, providing assistance to nearly 1,500 families. Our goal is to be able to provide at least \$1,650,000 in assistance from the 2008 appeal.

The theme for the 2008 Offering is: "Don't Be Afraid – Shout!" We are commissioned to boldly proclaim Good News: that the incarnation of God in the Christ Child has happened – Good News that a new day, God's day, has dawned. The church today is the incarnate presence of the Christ – the Body of Christ. We are called to be the presence of the Christ in the lives of those who have served the church so faithfully, as well as to usher in a new day for God's whole creation.

Your gifts are needed more than ever to help the growing number of retirees whose low-income annuities make it difficult to meet increasing living costs. This is your opportunity to "SHOUT" in God's name, to participate in God's promise of renewal by supporting this vital ministry of compassion and care.

INCREASING THE OFFERING

The mission of the Christmas Fund is to provide assistance dollars in situations of critical need, while preserving the dignity of those who receive the aid.

Our goal is to raise \$2,000,000 a year by 2010 for the vital ministries of Pension Supplementation, Health Premium Supplementation, Emergency Grants, and Christmas “Thank You” Gift Checks to low-income retirees. In 2007, you provided gifts totaling \$1,571,050, which set a record for the total amount received in one year. Thank You!

It **is** possible to increase the size of the Christmas Fund Offering in your congregation!

First, someone must emerge as leader for the effort. Then, that leader will:

1. SET A GOAL with the congregation.
2. SHARE information about the ministry the Offering supports.
3. ASK the congregation to be generous.
4. LEAD with his/her personal contribution.
5. CELEBRATE the results with the congregation.

You Can Help

We welcome your personal gifts.

We welcome your willingness to tell the story, share the good news, and ask your friends, colleagues, acquaintances and congregants to join you in providing support to both the annual Christmas Fund appeal and with legacy gifts.

Setting goals, telling personal stories, asking for personal annual gifts and thanking donors are all proven methods for raising awareness and support for the Christmas Fund.



“

Thank you for the gift from the Christmas Fund. All the years that my husband and I contributed to the Veterans of the Cross Fund and later the Christmas Fund I never expected to be a recipient. I do appreciate the gift and also that you are acknowledging his years of service to the church.

”

Rising Star Churches

A congregation that triples its yearly giving using 2005 as a base year will be designated a Rising Star Church and will receive a banner celebrating this achievement. (A minimum level of \$1,000 is required; if giving is already \$10,000 or more, a 30% increase is required.)

Congregations that achieve this level of giving should inform the Pension Boards to ensure recognition. The reporting process in the UCC takes months and we wish neither to delay nor to miss providing appropriate acknowledgement.

Churches identified as Rising Star Churches to date:

Urbandale United Church of Christ
Urbandale, Iowa

Naples United Church of Christ
Naples, Florida

Gethsemane United Church of Christ
Houston, Texas

Have we missed your congregation? We are very sorry! Please let us know, as it is very difficult to track this information from the data available to us. We will make every effort to provide your recognition banner in time for the Christmas Fund promotional season this December.



“

Though I always give to the Christmas Fund through my church in December, I want to give to the Christmas in July appeal also.


I have benefited greatly from the supplementation that the Christmas Fund makes possible, and I'd like to contribute in appreciation.

”

“ Thank you for the Christmas gift of \$275 from the Pension Boards-UCC, and the warm Advent greetings you convey to us. It is very assuring that somebody is concerned with our little needs, not only of money but also of inspiring thoughts that make us aware that we are connected with the whole body of the United Church of Christ. ”



Campaign Resources

High-quality materials are provided to help you tell the story of the Christmas Fund and encourage giving. In addition to the resources in this Offering Guide, an extensive array of electronic and downloadable resources are available on the web at www.pbucc.org or on the Christmas Fund home page at www.christmasfund.org. 

Among the materials you will find on the web site are:

- Up-to-date statistics on the use of the Offering's proceeds
- Ready-to-use PowerPoint presentations for Advent worship services and the Christmas Fund Offering
- Stories and articles that can be cut and pasted into newsletters and/or bulletins
- Bulletin inserts
- Testimonies from those who have benefited from the ministries supported by the Offering
- Online giving opportunities

HOW THE FUNDS ARE USED...

The generous gifts of UCC congregations and individuals to the Christmas Fund enabled the Pension Boards' Ministerial Assistance Program to provide:

- Some form of Ministerial Assistance to over 1,500 persons during calendar year 2008.
- Monthly pension supplementation to 458 persons. These gifts total \$96,265 per month or \$1,155,180 per year. A significant part of the \$1,155,180 distributed annually comes from the Christmas Fund.
- Quarterly health premium supplementation to 280 persons, totaling \$151,601 per quarter.
- Emergency Grants to 32 individuals and families, totaling \$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 "Thank You" Gift Checks to approximately 900 persons in December 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 total \$247,500.

These statistics reflect activity through July 31, 2008, and change monthly. Updated information is available in the Christmas Fund section of the Pension Boards' web site, www.pbucc.org, or by going directly to the Christmas Fund home page at www.christmasfund.org. 

“

Thank you for your thoughtfulness – you have made this season of joy very meaningful to me. It seems strange to be in this group of receivers – age comes so fast!

”



TOP GIVING CHURCHES TO
THE 2007 CHRISTMAS FUND
OFFERING (TOTAL DOLLARS)

Naples United Church of Christ
Naples, Florida

St. John United Church of Christ
Freeport, Illinois

First Congregational Church of Bellingham
Bellingham, Washington

Fort Myers Congregational United Church of Christ
Fort Myers, Florida

Church of the Apostles
Lancaster, Pennsylvania

The Bath Church
Akron, Ohio

Old South Union Church
South Weymouth, Massachusetts

First Parish Church UCC
Brunswick, Maine

Central Congregational United Church of Christ
Atlanta, Georgia

Venice United Church of Christ
Venice, Florida

TOP GIVING CHURCHES TO
THE 2007 CHRISTMAS FUND
OFFERING (PER CAPITA)

Union Congregational Church UCC
Bryant, South Dakota

Grace United Church of Christ
Grosse Pointe Park, Michigan

New Vision United Church of Christ
Canton, Ohio

Congregational Church of Harrison and North Bridgton
Harrison, Maine

Rolling Hills Congregational Church
Salina, Kansas

First Congregational United Church of Christ
Tucson, Arizona

San Marino Congregational United Church of Christ
San Marino, California

United Church of Spring Valley
Spring Valley, New York

Pilgrim Congregational Church UCC
Charlotte, North Carolina

Wellspring United Church of Christ
Centerville, Virginia

Data Provided By: *Yearbook Office, UCC Office of General Ministries*

RESPONSIVE READING # 1 (FOR GENERAL USE)

(This responsive reading may be used in churches that do not light an Advent wreath. Please visit www.christmasfund.org for Advent Candle Lighting Liturgical Resources for Advent Sundays and Christmas Eve.)



Leader: You who bring good tidings to Zion, go up on a high mountain. You who bring good tidings to Jerusalem, lift up your voice with a shout, lift it up, do not be afraid; say to the towns of Judah, "Here is your God." (Isaiah 40:9, NIV)

People: We lift up our voices with a shout.
We lift them up and are not afraid.

Leader: Pastors and Preachers tell the Bethlehem story. They counsel the weary; they seek the lost; they comfort the sad; they encourage couples in love; they break the bread that feeds us all.

People: We lift up our voices with a prayer.

Leader: Church School Educators share practices of faith, as well as pageants, parties, pottery and poetry. Youth Leaders lead mission and ministry, movies and mystery nights, and are just there when youth is a mystery.

People: We lift up our voices with a question.

Leader: Church Musicians direct choirs, ring bells, perform cantatas, inspire dancers, play the organ, and pass out buckets for the rest of us to carry our tunes in!

People: We lift up our voices with a song.

Leader: Sextons hang greens and care for the sheep in the live nativity. They find a wheelchair-corner or a riser for the choir, and shovel snow, snow, snow!

People: We lift up our voices in the sanctuary.

Leader: Administrators prepare bulletins, keep calendars, coordinate committees, and, when the phone rings – they listen, listen, listen.

People: We lift up our voices in print.

Leader: We celebrate those who help our solo faith become the chorus of church. Honoring the ministries of these voice-lifters and text-messengers we bring our gifts for support in need, emergency assistance, and the simple blessing of being remembered. Let us pray:

People: Gracious God, we give thanks for those whose voices, minds, spirits and hands share the good tidings of Bethlehem. Their care for the church is faithful in all seasons. Bless these Christmas Fund gifts that they may express our thanks to retired and active clergy and lay employees of our churches and our willingness to lift up the love we have received and give it voice in all the world. Amen.

RESPONSIVE READING #2 (CAN BE USED AT OTHER SEASONS)

- Leader: You who bring good tidings to Zion, go up on a high mountain. You who bring good tidings to Jerusalem, lift up your voice with a shout, lift it up, do not be afraid; say to the towns of Judah, "Here is your God."
(Isaiah 40:9, NIV)
- People: Shout! We are people who shout!
- Leader: Pastors and Preachers tell the Bethlehem story and then they go on to tell the Galilee story and the Jerusalem story and the resurrection story.
- People: We shout Peace on Earth and Hosanna and Alleluia!
- Leader: Chaplains in college, prison, hospital and Pastoral Counselors visit the sick, accompany the troubled, comfort the grieving, inspire justice, compassion and peace-making.
- People: We pray Peace on Earth and Hosanna and Alleluia!
- Leader: Christian Educators and Youth Ministers pageant up, lock-in, re-treat, play holy and rotate. They answer questions and question answers.
- People: We learn Peace on Earth and Hosanna and Alleluia.
- Leader: Sextons make the sanctuary sacred – shovel the snow, iron the wax from carpets, wait for the last person at a funeral. Administrators word process and listen, calendar check and listen, coordinate committees and listen.
- People: We experience Peace on Earth and Hosanna and Alleluia through greens, palms and lilies, old text and new text messages.
- Leader: We celebrate those who bring us good tidings so that we can lift up our own voices and vocalize – not a solo faith but the chorus that is the church, joining the great procession of all people in all times and places. This morning we give from our abundance to those who have shared themselves with this and other faith communities. These gifts provide support in need, emergency assistance and special blessings.
- People: Gracious God, we give thanks for those whose voices, minds, spirits and hands share the good tidings of Bethlehem, Galilee, Jerusalem, Pentecost and beyond. Their care for the church is faithful in all seasons. Bless these gifts that they may express our thanks to retired and active clergy and lay employees of our churches and our willingness to lift up the love we have received and shout it out in all the world. Amen.





PRAYERS OF DEDICATION FOR CHRISTMAS FUND GIFTS

(For the Fourth Sunday in Advent)

Emmanuel, whose holy season fills our hearts with wonder, we give thanks for those who lift up their voices in our midst and share good tidings in stories, carols, prayers and service – clergy and musicians, chaplains and counselors, educators and youth leaders, sextons and administrators, those both retired and currently employed. Bless these gifts that they may, indeed, bring hope, peace, joy and all our love – to your faithful shepherds, stewards and saints. Amen.

(For Christmas Eve)

Gracious God, on this holy night in which your good tidings fill our hearts, we give you thanks for those who have lifted up their voices in stories, prayers, carols and service in this and other faith communities. As we reflect on the great gift of Emmanuel, God present with us, so we dedicate at the manger our small gifts of help, hope and healing for them, and pledge ourselves to join the procession of love. Amen.

(Sunday after Christmas)

Gracious God, the tinsel is a tiny bit tarnished and the greens a little dry on this Sunday of pause after the hurry of Advent and the holy hush of Christmas. Now we return to the work of the faithful and remember before you those who lift up their voices as a shout of welcome, a promise of hope, a prayer for peace, a song of joy and a chorus of love in all seasons. Bless these Christmas Fund gifts that they may express our thanks to active and retired clergy and lay employees of our churches and seal our willingness to become clear new voices of hope, peace, joy, and love all the precious ordinary days of the year to come. Amen.

“ I am very grateful to you and all those who contribute to the Christmas fund for the generous gift you sent me.

Each year seems to bring greater demands on our income and many items cut from our usual lists. So a special gift is indeed a great blessing. My blessings are countless even with the frailties of older age.

”



MISSION MOMENT

You've seen the news reports.

The average price of gasoline in the U.S. has exceeded \$4 a gallon in 2008. These record-breaking prices have had a dramatic impact on the cost of every commodity used by the nation's families.

Low-income annuitants have been hit especially hard. The ripple effect of soaring energy costs affects what consumers pay for food, utilities and other necessities as well.

The proceeds from the Christmas Fund are used to provide gifts to clergy and lay employees in all stages of their lives and ministries to and through the UCC. The availability of these funds is critical to the ability of the Board for Ministerial Assistance to help ensure a sustainable quality of life for those who ultimately receive the gifts.

In spring of 2008, the Pension Boards witnessed a 300% increase in the number of requests for assistance. We responded to those requests with dollars given to the Christmas Fund Offering, which go directly to those who serve or have served the church, in their moments of critical need. Currently, nearly 1,500 families have received either a one-time grant or are receiving ongoing assistance through your gifts to the Christmas Fund Offering.

A 1953 publication stated: "In 1902, a little money was collected and special Christmas gifts were sent to ten older ministers." The same article also reported that \$121,054 was received for the Christmas Fund in 1952.

Fifty-five years later, the 2007 Christmas Fund Offering received \$1,571,050 – a record amount – and almost 1,500 families were assisted. Our goal is to be able to provide at least \$2,000,000 in assistance from the appeal by 2010.

Your generous contributions can and do make a difference in the lives of many.



“

I would like to express my deep gratitude regarding the funding afforded me by the Ministerial Assistance grant for 2007.

This monetary gift relieves a great deal of physical, mental and emotional stress during a most difficult time in my life.

”

FIVE FOR FIVE

Is your church “5 for 5”?

According to the Stewardship and Church Finances Ministry Team of the UCC Local Church Ministries Office in Cleveland, Ohio, MORE THAN 1,265 UCC CHURCHES ARE!

These congregations fully support Our Church’s Wider Mission. They give to Basic Support and all four Special Mission Offerings. Thank you to all churches that are “5 for 5”!

If your congregation is not yet “5 for 5,” check to see which ministries have not yet been blessed with your support. Ask your congregation to become a “5 for 5” Church.



UCC BASIC SUPPORT

Provides funding from congregations for Conferences and the national ministries of Wider Church Ministries, Local Church Ministries, Justice and Witness Ministries, General Ministries and the Pension Boards.

UCC SPECIAL MISSION OFFERINGS

Part of Our Church’s Wider Mission (OCWM), these four offerings sponsor vital ministries that bring hope to people around the world.

The Christmas Fund

Helps provide pension and health premium supplementation to low-income retired church workers, emergency assistance to clergy families in need and Christmas checks to hundreds of annuitants; administered by the Pension Boards.

December 21, 2008 / December 20, 2009

One Great Hour of Sharing

Channels resources for international programs in health, education and agricultural development, emergency relief, refugee ministries, and both international and domestic disaster response; administered by Wider Church Ministries, Global Sharing of Resources.

March 22, 2009

Strengthen the Church

Grows the UCC’s future by supporting new and revitalizing congregations, programs for youth and young adults, leadership development and God is Still Speaking activities; administered by UCC Conferences, Local Church Ministries and The Stillspeaking Ministry.


May 31, 2009

Neighbors in Need

Supports ministries of justice and compassion throughout the United States and Puerto Rico, including the Council for American Indian Ministries (CAIM), justice and advocacy, and direct service projects supported by Justice and Witness Ministries.

October 4, 2009

ALREADY HAVE ANOTHER CHRISTMAS OFFERING FOR LOCAL MISSIONS?



Why not become a “5 for 5” church by taking a “Christmas in July” offering? Resources are available on the Pension Boards’ web site, www.pbucc.org, or on the Christmas Fund home page at www.christmasfund.org. 




PROMOTING THE 2008 CHRISTMAS FUND OFFERING

Beginning October 27, 2008




Watch for the arrival of Christmas Fund materials.

- Order extra materials, as needed, by calling toll-free **800.325.7061**.
- Enlist the help of your church's Missions Committee or other group(s) to assist in promoting the Christmas Fund Offering.
- Check the web (**www.christmasfund.org**) for electronic resources to use in promoting the Offering. 
- Recruit your church's Worship Team/Committee to help in promoting the Christmas Fund Offering.
- Check the web (**www.christmasfund.org**) for ready-to-use PowerPoint worship resources. 


Week of November 17

- Begin your 2008 Christmas Fund promotion.
- Send a letter and Offering envelope to every household on your church mailing list, announcing the Offering date and goal amount. (If you include materials in your regular church newsletter mailing, please make sure to emphasize that the Christmas Fund Offering is an expression of your church's mission. This ensures compliance with U.S. postal regulations governing the use of non-profit mailing permits.)
- Display Christmas Fund posters prominently throughout the church building.
- Check the web (**www.christmasfund.org**) for a sample letter and newsletter articles. 


Advent Sundays (November 30, December 7, 14, 21)

- Share information about the Offering in worship, during announcements or Mission Moments.
- Place additional Offering envelopes at each seat or pew.
- Invite your Missions chairperson, church moderator or a retired minister, missionary or lay employee (or their widowed spouses) to make a special announcement about the Christmas Fund during the service.
- Distribute copies of the bulletin inserts (available on the web at **www.christmasfund.org**) with your worship bulletins. 
- Use the Advent Candle Lighting Liturgical Resources provided on the web: **www.christmasfund.org**. 
- If your church uses projection systems as a part of the worship experience, check out the ready-to-use PowerPoint resources provided on the web: **www.christmasfund.org**. 

Sunday December 21

- This is the week designated to receive the Christmas Fund Offering. Some congregations may elect to receive the Offering on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day.
- Use the Responsive Reading and a Prayer of Dedication when the Offering is received. These resources are provided in this Offering Guide, and also available in electronic format, including PowerPoint, on the web at www.christmasfund.org. 

January 2009

- Announce the total gifts received, and publicly thank all who helped make the appeal successful.
- Invite those who have not yet provided their gifts to the Christmas Fund to do so.
- Prepare an article for your church newsletter or web site thanking church members and friends of the congregation for their generous response. Sample articles are provided on the web at www.christmasfund.org. 



“

Have a blessed Christmas – and please accept my sincerest thanks for the welcome check from the 2007 Christmas Fund Offering! The gift itself was a blessing, and so also was being remembered by the Church we love so much!

”



John August Swanson

THE ARTIST

The theme art for the United Church of Christ's 2008 Christmas Fund Offering is entitled "The Procession."

Los Angeles artist John August Swanson is noted for his finely detailed, brilliantly colored paintings and original prints. His works are found in the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History, London's Tate Gallery, the Vatican Museum's Collection of Modern Religious Art, and the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.

Full-color posters and cards of Mr. Swanson's work are available from the National Association for Hispanic Elderly. Proceeds benefit its programs of employment and housing for low-income seniors. For information, contact:

National Association of Hispanic Elderly
234 East Colorado Boulevard
Suite 300
Pasadena, CA 91101
626.564.1988
www.anppm.com

John August Swanson
2903 Waverly Drive
Los Angeles, CA 90039
323.665.3677
www.johnaugustswanson.com



Maren C. Tirabassi

THE AUTHOR

The Rev. Maren C. Tirabassi is the author of the liturgical resources for the 2008 Christmas Fund Offering. A Pilgrim Press author, new titles out in the last year are **Caring for Ourselves While Caring for Our Elders**; **Before the Amen: Resources for Worship**; and **God in My Life – Faith Stories and How and Why We Share Them**. She is the pastor of Union Congregational Church, UCC in Madbury, New Hampshire.

WORSHIP RESOURCES

This Offering Guide contains two Responsive Readings and several Prayers of Dedication for the 2008 Offering. Electronic versions of these, and additional worship resources, are available on the web at www.christmasfund.org.



Among the resources on the web site are:

- Advent Candle Liturgies
- Christmas in July Liturgical Resources
- PowerPoint Worship Resources for congregations using projection before and/or during worship
- Bulletin Inserts for the four Sundays of Advent and Christmas Eve



“

Dear Friends,
and we do mean “friends.”
Thank so much for your
Christmas gift. It allays
the bittersweet arrival of
the holidays, the joy of the
coming of Jesus along with
the nervousness brought on by
extra expenses.

”

ARTIST'S REFLECTIONS by John August Swanson

There are sacred places throughout the world for all beliefs, places that have special meaning in the lives of people who journey to get there. They experience a centering, a healing and a safe place to remember and to hope. The places that inspired this image are the beautiful cathedrals I have seen in Europe and Mexico: Chartres, France; Canterbury, England; Notre Dame, Paris; the Sagrada Familia, Barcelona; the Basilica of Guadalupe, Mexico City; and Our Lady of the Angels, Los Angeles. These are sacred places used for procession.

The journey or procession takes us out of our ordinary lives to experience a transcendental or universal connection. The outward walk reflects an inner journey. We have taken the steps to move to another space in the journey of our lives...

Processions also move us toward a transformation of more than just our individual hearts. Martin Luther King organized processions and marches for civil rights in the South, accompanied by spiritual leaders of different faiths. He gathered people together to work for change and for the understanding of nonviolence. César Chávez, the leader of the United Farm Workers, organized farm laborers to work for their rights and to improve their lives. To gather support for their movement, they walked many miles in procession, carrying banners and flags as a way of spiritual empowerment.

We, in our communities of faith, are a procession of stories, stories both unique and shared, stories connected to those who have gone before us and those who will come after us. We gather in celebration of and respect for each person's story and in expectation and awe of the story we are becoming together. This is the reality I seek to touch upon in this work.

Noted historian, Howard Zinn, offers this reflection: "To be hopeful in bad times is not just foolishly romantic. It is based on a human history not only of cruelty but also of compassion, sacrifice, courage and kindness. What we choose to emphasize in this [our] complex history will determine our lives. If we see only the worst, it destroys our capacity to do something. If we remember those times and places...where people have behaved magnificently, this gives us the energy to act...And if we do act, in however small a way, we don't have to wait for some grand utopian future. The future is an infinite succession of presents, and to live now as we think human beings should live, in defiance of all that is bad around us, is itself a marvelous victory."

It is not my desire that the complexity and intricacy of this work confuse or confound, but that it illuminate and inspire. We are invited to join together in the procession to help each other see in ways we have never seen before, to help each other see again what we have forgotten, to see something familiar in a new way, in a new light, from a different perspective.



