

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 Ministerial Assistance to approximately 1,600 persons during 2009:

- Monthly pension supplementation is provided to 450 persons. These gifts total \$101,400 per month (\$1,216,800 per year). A significant part of the annual total of \$1,216,800 comes from the Christmas Fund.
- Quarterly health premium supplementation is provided to 294 families, totaling \$165,200 per quarter. All of the funding for health premium supplementation is derived from the Christmas Fund.
- Emergency Grants have been provided to 44 individuals and families, which totaled \$61,716 in the first eight months of 2009.
- Christmas Gift checks will be sent to approximately 900 persons in 2009. Of those who will receive checks, 20 are over 100 years of age. The oldest person is 107. One person has received Christmas checks continuously since 1976. The 900 gifts total \$270,000.

(These statistics reflect activity as of August 31, 2009.
Please log on to the Christmas Fund web site at
www.christmasfund.org for updated information)



Rev. Harvey M. Joyner, Jr.

The Rev. Harvey M. Joyner, Jr.'s ministry has taken many twists and turns. Ordained in 1978 in the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), he began his service to the church during a stressful period in the denomination's life that he describes as a "holy war", when the SBC began moving increasingly toward fundamentalism.

After leaving the SBC, Harvey served as a hospital chaplain and, later, as chaplain with a church-related family services organization that provided care for teens in a behavioral treatment program.

It was during this time that Harvey was diagnosed with Crohn's Disease, a debilitating autoimmune digestive tract illness for which there is no cure. He underwent five surgeries during the 1980s. Harvey's symptoms gradually improved to the point where he began to consider possible next steps in his life and ministry.

Since the SBC was no longer an alternative, Harvey began looking for a new church home. His journey of 32 years in ministry has included pastorates in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the Unitarian Universalist Association, and, more recently, the United Church of Christ.

After an interim ministry in Hancock, Maine (1998-99), Harvey pastored the First Congregational Church in Haverhill, Massachusetts (1999-2004). From 2004-2008, he served as pastor of First Congregational Church, Rock Springs, Wyoming.

Ten years ago, Harvey was offered an alternative treatment strategy for dealing with Crohn's Disease - Remicade infusions every eight weeks, at a cost of about \$7,000 for each treatment, not all of which is covered by insurance. An Emergency Grant from the Pension Boards' Ministerial Assistance Program - funded primarily by gifts to the Christmas Fund - significantly reduces his out-of-pocket expenses.

Harvey recently returned to his geographical roots in the South, where he serves as a hospice chaplain and as part-time pastor of the First Congregational Christian United Church of Christ in Chesterfield, Virginia. There, he is part of an open and affirming church community that "thinks outside the box and seeks to practice a ministry of wellness and justice".

Harvey is enthusiastic about the United Church of Christ and about the Christmas Fund and sees it as a way for people to help those who are hurting or experiencing hopelessness. "For me it was my health, for others it could be something else", he says. "At this time of year, it's a way to experience the gift of Christ's love through the benevolence of others".

The First Sunday of Advent
November 29, 2009

