

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:

- Emergency Grants have been provided to 44 individuals and families, totaling \$61,716 in the first eight months of 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.
- Christmas "Thank You" 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.)

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see – I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord." (Luke 2:8-11, NRSV)

The recipients of the angel's message certainly needed to hear good news. Marginalized, anxious, fearful – they were the first to receive the startling and joyous news that God's tender and compassionate love is intended for all humankind. There is no need to live in fear, because God-is-with-us.

The economic uncertainties of the past year have taken a toll on many who served or are presently serving our church. Some are anxious – even fearful – about how they will be able to meet basic living costs. Others wonder how they will recover from an unforeseen financial crisis.

The Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund is a tangible expression of Good News, a way in which we reach out in Christ's love to say, "do not be afraid." It is a way of being present with one another as members of the body of Christ.

As you celebrate the Good News of great joy this day, may you be an instrument of Good News through your generous giving to the Christmas Fund.

Christmas Eve/Christmas Day
December 24/25, 2009

