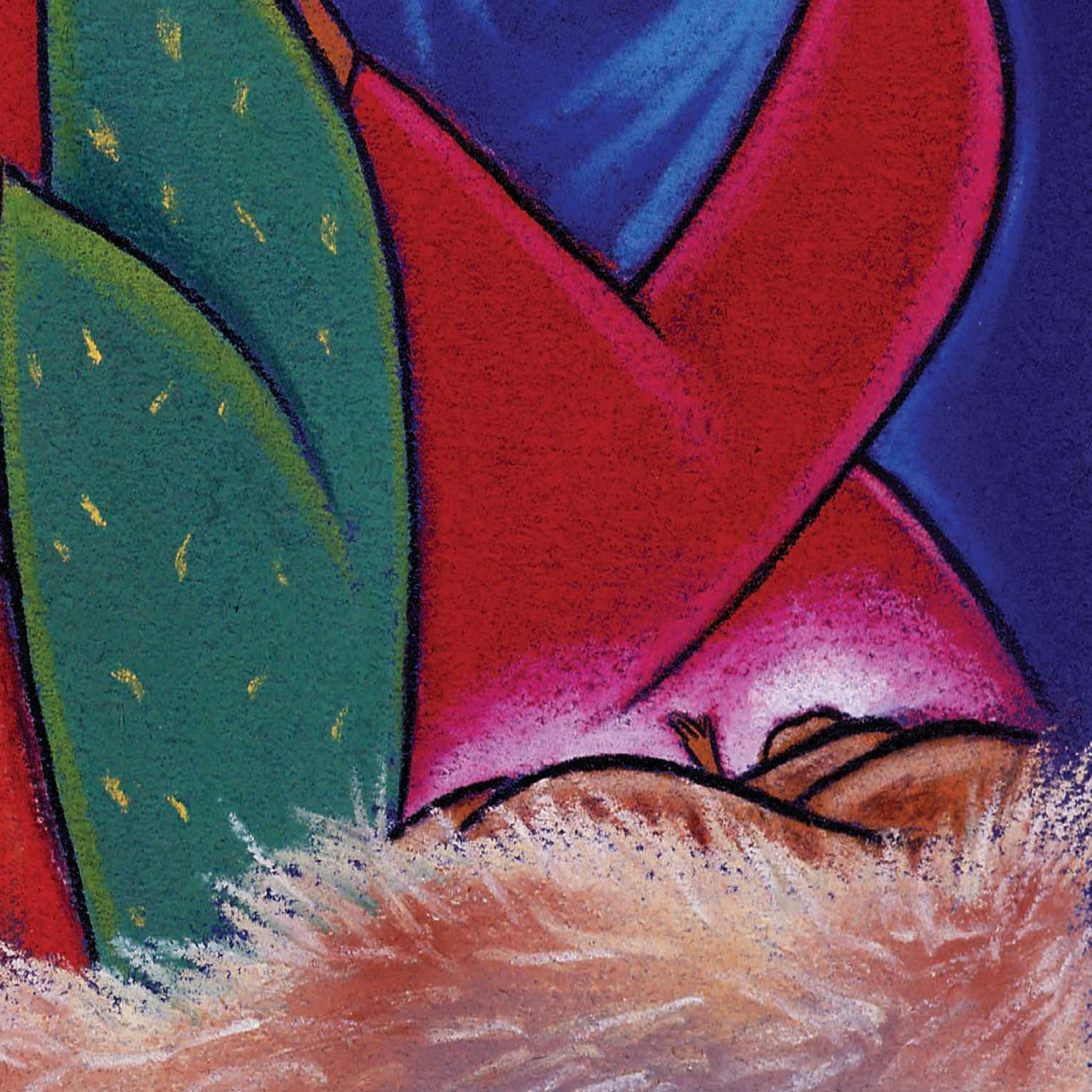




2009 Offering Guide

★
THE CHRISTMAS FUND

for the VETERANS OF THE CROSS
and the EMERGENCY FUND



*“See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me,
and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple.
The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight –
indeed he is coming, says the LORD of hosts.” (Malachi 3:1-2)*

Grace to you and peace in this holy and joyous season, as we prepare the way for the celebration of Jesus’ birth!

Much like John the Baptist would generations later, the prophet Malachi reminds us that God’s covenant with humankind is unwavering, that God reaches out to us in holy love and reconciliation and invites us to prepare the way for the coming of new life.

Advent is a time of preparation, in our churches, our homes, and our lives. The word itself derives from the Latin *ad*, meaning “to” or “toward,” and *venire*, meaning “come.” It is the season when our hearts turn toward the coming of the Promised One, God’s Son. In the cycle of the church year, we set apart the four Sundays prior to Christmas to focus more intently on preparing the way for the arrival of the Christ Child – the LORD whom we seek, who has come among us as the Word made flesh. And we are reminded that we are an incarnational community, embodying his love and care in our relationships with one another and with all whom Jesus called neighbor, particularly those in need – the “least of these” – who hold a special place in his heart and in ours.

For 107 years, the Christmas Fund Offering for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund has been a way in which we, as members of the

United Church of Christ and its predecessor bodies, have embodied Christ’s compassion and care to those who serve our church. Your generous giving to the 2008 Offering enabled the Pension Boards’ Ministerial Assistance program, on behalf of the United Church of Christ, to provide \$1,597,490 to individuals and families in need.

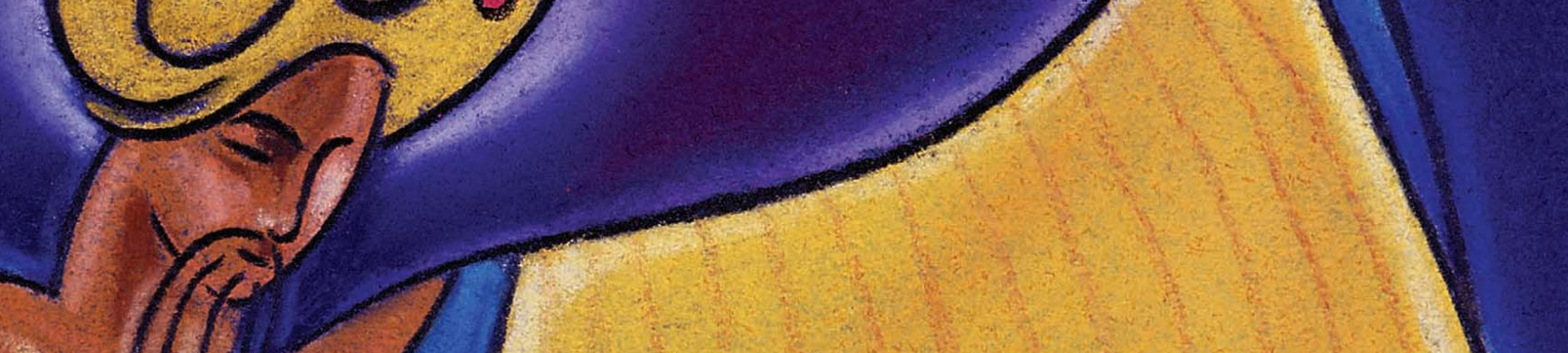
The severe economic downturn experienced since the start of the current recession at the end of 2007 has created even greater financial stress on those with the most limited resources and resulted in an unprecedented number of requests for Ministerial Assistance compared with prior years. Because of that, we ask you to prayerfully consider your response to the 2009 Offering and give to the best of your ability. 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 these critical times.

On behalf of the nearly 1,600 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 the One for whom you prepare the way continue to abide with you and yours, now and always.

Faithfully,



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



INTRODUCTION

Prepare the Way (Malachi 3:1)

Prepare the way...through your participation in the annual Christmas Fund Offering for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund.

God's people have lived through terrible and terrifying times throughout history. There is one constant that remains true even in these times: God has never forsaken the promise to care for the covenant people.

As we approach and experience Advent 2009, we bless and are blessed as we prepare the way for others to remember God's faithfulness through our own faithfulness to the covenant.

God has always cared and provided for the people of the covenant. We can do nothing more to prepare the way for better days than follow God's example in caring and providing for those in our midst who are experiencing the greatest need.

Like the magi of old, we can honor the Christ Child by bringing gifts that can be used to support and honor those who have served and are serving our beloved church.

Gifts to the Christmas Fund will help Veterans of the Cross, who dedicated their lives to the ministry of the church in their years of active service.

Gifts to the Christmas Fund provide resources for the Emergency Fund, which offers assistance to those who serve the church today.

Gifts to the Christmas Fund help provide Pension and Health Premium Supplementation to lower-income retirees and Christmas "Thank You" Gift Checks to hundreds of annuitants.

In 2008, the Christmas Fund raised a record \$1,597,490, providing assistance to nearly 1,600 families during 2009. Our goal for the 2009 Offering is to raise \$1,650,000 to continue this important ministry in the year ahead.

During these tough economic times we have become accustomed to hearing stories of declining donations; however, the amount raised by the Christmas Fund has increased each year for the past five years! This is a wonderful witness to the faithfulness, generosity and caring hearts of the members of the United Church of Christ. Your gifts are needed more than ever to help the growing number of retirees whose lower-income annuities make it difficult to meet increasing living costs. This is your opportunity to participate in God's promise of renewal by enabling this ministry of compassion and care.

The United Church Board for Ministerial Assistance and the staff of the Pension Boards are confident that, with your continuing faithfulness, we will be able to provide the same level of care and compassion as has become our tradition.



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 \$1,650,000 for the vital ministries of Pension Supplementation, Health Premium Supplementation, Emergency Grants, and Christmas "Thank You" Gift Checks to lower-income retirees during 2010. In 2008, you provided gifts totaling \$1,597,490, which set a record for the total amount received in one year. Thank you!

It is possible to increase the size of the 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 for both the annual Christmas Fund Offering and through legacy gifts.

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

“ Thank you very much for the check you recently sent me. It’s a very generous gesture and I do appreciate it. Every dollar is important in these economic times, so this check was truly a surprise and a blessing. ”



RISING STAR CHURCHES

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

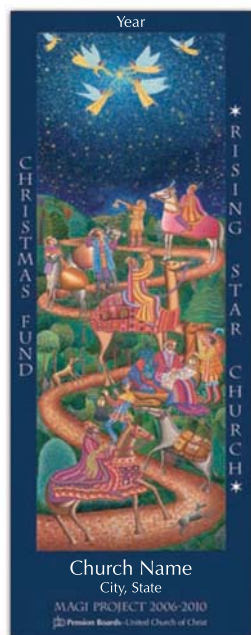
Congregations that achieve this level should inform the Pension Boards to ensure recognition. The reporting process in the UCC takes months and we wish neither to delay nor to miss providing appropriate recognition.

Twenty-one churches have been identified as Rising Star Churches to date, including 18 congregations that became Rising Star Churches through their 2008 giving to the Christmas Fund Offering:

2008

First Congregational United Church of Christ
Platteville, Wisconsin

Scottsdale Congregational United Church of Christ
Scottsdale, Arizona



First Congregational United Church of Christ
Asheville, North Carolina

Community United Church of Christ
San Antonio, Texas

Emmanuel Reformed United Church of Christ
Export, Pennsylvania

Forks United Church of Christ
Stockertown, Pennsylvania

Trinity United Church of Christ
Canton, Ohio

First Parish Church Congregational
Manchester-by-the-Sea, Massachusetts

Groveland Congregational Church
Groveland, Massachusetts

St. Paul United Church of Christ
Eudora, Kansas

Trinity United Church of Christ-Gary
Gary, Indiana

O'Fallon United Church of Christ
O'Fallon, Illinois

Iao Congregational Church
Wailuku, Hawai'i

Southport Congregational Church
Southport, Connecticut

Higganum Congregational Church
Higganum, Connecticut



2008 *continued*

Samoan Congregational Christian Church
of South Los Angeles
Carson, California

Murphys First Congregational Church
Murphys, California

Congregational Church of Belmont
Belmont, California

2007

Gethsemane United Church of Christ
Houston, Texas

2006


Naples United Church of Christ
Naples, Florida

2005

Urbandale United Church of Christ
Urbandale, Iowa

If we have we missed your congregation, we are very sorry! Please let us know; 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.

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 Pension Boards' web site at www.pbucc.org, or you may go directly to the Christmas Fund home page at www.christmasfund.org. 

Among the resources 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 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 the following gifts:

- Some form of Ministerial Assistance to approximately 1,600 persons during 2009.
- Christmas Gift checks 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.
- Monthly Pension Supplementation to 453 persons. These gifts total \$103,559 per month. A significant part of annual total of \$1,243,188 comes from the Christmas Fund.

- Quarterly Health Premium Supplementation to 295 families, totaling \$164,548 per quarter. All of the funding for Health Premium Supplementation is derived from the Christmas Fund.
- Emergency Grants to 39 individuals and families during the first seven months of 2009, which totaled \$56,116.

These statistics reflect annualized projections as of July 31, 2009. The numbers of persons receiving assistance and the total assistance payments fluctuate on a monthly basis.

Updated information is available on the Pension Boards' web site at www.pbucc.org, or you may go directly to the Christmas Fund home page at

www.christmasfund.org. 

“

Thanks so very much for
the love gift. It truly was a gift from God that
came through the Pension Boards.
I shall always be grateful.

”



TOP GIVING CHURCHES TO THE 2008 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
Bath, Ohio

Old South Union Church
Weymouth, Massachusetts

First Parish Church
Brunswick, Maine

Central Congregational United Church of Christ
Atlanta, Georgia

Venice United Church of Christ
Venice, Florida

Per Capita

Union Congregational Church
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

The United Church of Spring Valley
Spring Valley, New York

Pilgrim United Church of Christ
Charlotte, North Carolina

Wellspring United Church of Christ
Centreville, Virginia

Data Provided by: Yearbook Office, UCC Office of General Ministries

RESPONSIVE READING FOR GENERAL USE

(For churches that do not light an Advent wreath or wish to do the Offering in one focus, using Malachi 3:1)

Please visit www.christmasfund.org for Advent Candle Lighting Liturgical Resources for Advent Sundays and Christmas Eve.



- Reader: “See I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me,” said the prophet Malachi, and John the Baptist took a turn as messenger, too. We give thanks for messengers of God’s good tidings whom we know, because they help us all to prepare God’s way in our time.
- People: Prepare we the way of our God.
- Leader: Pastors and preachers proclaim the nativity of Christ. They meet us in the mangers of our lives through counseling and visiting, sharing communion and committees. They are messengers of word and sacrament.
- People: Prepare we the way of our God.
- Leader: Chaplains support us in college and hospital, military service and correctional facilities. Pastoral counselors accompany us as we prepare new paths through our lives. These are messengers of comfort and compassion, justice and truth.
- People: Prepare we the way of our God.
- Leader: Christian educators and youth ministers organize the pageant, the mission trip, the bowling night and the holy play. They are messengers of all our faith practices.
- People: Prepare we the way of our God.
- Leader: Sextons are messengers with tables and snow shovels, the crèche on the lawn and the casket coming into the church with dignity. Administrators are the messengers of web site and phone call, calendar and coordination. They are the messengers of messages and they remember our names.
- People: Prepare we the way of our God.
- Leader: Musicians cantata and carol. They rehearse with aging tenors, squirming fourth graders and anxious wedding couples. As messengers, they take a feather from the angels’ book.
- People: Prepare we the way of our God.
- Leader: We celebrate all of these messengers who share Christ’s coming, each with a different gift. Honoring their ministries we bring our own gifts that together we may prepare the way for the One who comes.
- People: Emmanuel, God who is coming and yet is always with us, we give you thanks for those who share your message in our midst and in congregations throughout the country, and who prepare us in so many ways to experience the Christmas good tidings, as well as the good tidings of February, June, August and October. Bless these gifts that they may, indeed, sustain and support your faithful messengers. Amen.

RESPONSIVE READING # 2

(General use litany, adapted to receiving the Offering at another time of year)



- Leader: “See I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me,” said the prophet Malachi, and John the Baptist took a turn as messenger, too. We give thanks for messengers of God’s Good News whom we know, because they help us all to prepare God’s way in our time.
- People: Prepare we the way of our God.
- Leader: Pastors and preachers tell the Bethlehem birth, the Galilee stories, the Jerusalem sorrow, the resurrection joy, and the wild red Pentecost church. They counsel and visit; they share communion and committees. They are messengers of word and sacrament.
- People: Prepare we the way of our God.
- Leader: Chaplains support us in college and hospital, military service and correctional facilities. Pastoral counselors accompany us as we prepare new paths through our lives. These are messengers of comfort and compassion, justice and truth.
- People: Prepare we the way of our God.
- Leader: Christian educators and youth ministers organize pageants and mission trips, bowling nights and holy play. They are messengers of all our faith practices.
- People: Prepare we the way of our God.
- Leader: Sextons are messengers with tables, rakes and shovels, the crèche on the lawn and the casket coming into the church with dignity. Administrators are the messengers of web site and phone call, calendar and coordination. They are the messengers of messages and they remember our names.
- People: Prepare we the way of our God.
- Leader: Musicians play preludes over chatter and offer anthems that touch hearts. They rehearse with aging tenors, squirming fourth graders and anxious wedding couples. As messengers, they take a feather from the angels’ book.
- People: Prepare we the way of our God.
- Leader: We celebrate all of these messengers who share Christ’s coming, each with a different gift. 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 blessing.
- People: Gracious God, we give thanks for those whose voices, minds, spirits and hands share the message of your love and prepare us to share it in our lives. 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. Amen.







PRAYERS OF DEDICATION FOR CHRISTMAS FUND GIFTS

(For the Fourth Sunday in Advent)

Emmanuel, God who is coming and yet is always with us, we give you thanks for those who share your message in our midst and in congregations throughout the country, and who prepare us in so many ways to experience the Christmas good tidings, as well as the good tidings of February, June, August and October. We make this offering for pastors, musicians, Christian educators, administrators and sextons in recognition of their service. Bless these gifts that they may, indeed, bring hope, peace, joy and all our love to your faithful messengers. Amen.

(For Christmas Eve)

Gracious God, we give you thanks for messengers of good tidings and preparers of joy – retired and active clergy and lay employees of our congregation and other churches who are faithful in words, tuneful in carols and as persistent in their tasks as the wandering magi. On this holy night of Bethlehem, we ask that these small gifts become a manger – unexpected but needed, a grace that holds our love and the light of God’s pure star. Amen.

(For the Sunday after Christmas)

Gracious God, our Advent preparations are past, the Christmas presents are no longer present, even the greens are crisp and fragile, but the wonder in our hearts is full and new and fresh, in part because of the faithfulness of those who serve our congregation. Bless these Christmas Fund gifts that they may express our gratitude and offer help, healing and hope in times of need for retired and active clergy and lay employees of our churches who are messengers of the Messiah not only on holy-days but on the messy ordinary ones of the year to come. Amen.

“

I am so grateful for the gift awarded to me, having recently gone through my husband’s surgery. He’s on disability and his co-pay is the same amount as the check!

”



MISSION MOMENT

It is no longer news to anyone that the world has been in the grips of the worst recession since the Great Depression since late 2007. Lower-income annuitants have been hit especially hard.

Thankfully, the people of the United Church of Christ were particularly generous in their support of the 2008 appeal for The Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund.

The proceeds from the Christmas Fund Offering 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 United Church Board for Ministerial Assistance to help ensure a sustainable quality of life for those who ultimately receive the gifts.

Since the spring of 2008, the Pension Boards has seen a dramatic increase in the number of requests for assistance. During the first quarter of 2009, we averaged one new request for assistance every day. We are responding to those requests with dollars given to the Christmas Fund, which go directly to those who serve or have served the church, in their moments of critical need. Currently, nearly 1,600 families have received either a one-time grant or are receiving continuing assistance as a result of your gifts to the Christmas Fund Offering.

In 2008, the Christmas Fund raised a record \$1,597,490, which is providing assistance during 2009. Our goal for 2009 is to raise \$1,650,000 for this important ministry.

During these tough economic times, we have become accustomed to hearing stories of declining donations; however, the amount raised by the Christmas Fund has increased each year for the past five years! This is a wonderful witness to the faithfulness, generosity and caring hearts of the members of the United Church of Christ. Your gifts are needed more than ever to help the growing number of retirees whose lower-income annuities make it difficult to meet increasing living costs. This is your opportunity to participate in God's promise of renewal by enabling this ministry of compassion and care.

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



FIVE FOR FIVE

Is your church 5 for 5?

According to the Stewardship Team of Local Church Ministries in Cleveland, Ohio, MORE THAN 1,200 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 for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund

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

December 20, 2009/December 19, 2010

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 14, 2010



Strengthen the Church

Grows the UCC's future funding, The Still Speaking Ministry, new and renewing churches, youth and young adult ministries, and lay and pastoral leadership formation – especially among women and people of color; administered by your church's Conference, Local Church Ministries, and The Still Speaking Ministry.

May 23, 2010

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 3, 2010

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, www.christmasfund.org. 

“

I cannot thank all of you enough. God knows my heart overflows when those angels like you all share with us the way you do. I don't know what I would do otherwise. Thank you; I shall continue to pray for all of you.




”




PROMOTING THE 2009 CHRISTMAS FUND OFFERING FOR VETERANS OF THE CROSS AND THE EMERGENCY FUND

Beginning October 26, 2009

Watch for the arrival of Christmas Fund materials.

- Order extra materials, as needed, by calling United Church of Christ Resources toll-free at **800.537.3394**.
- Enlist the help of your church's Missions Committee or other group(s) to assist in promoting the Christmas Fund Offering.
- Check the Pension Boards' web site, **www.pbucc.org**, or the Christmas Fund home page, **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 Pension Boards' web site, **www.pbucc.org**, or the Christmas Fund home page, **www.christmasfund.org**, for ready-to-use PowerPoint worship resources. 
- Participate in the Middle Grades Magi Mission Project (*see page 19*).
- Participate in a webinar about the Christmas Fund on Wednesday, October 28 at Noon (Eastern). Check the Pension Boards' web site, **www.pbucc.org**, or the Christmas Fund home page, **www.christmasfund.org**, for more details. 


Week of November 16

- Begin your 2009 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 Pension Boards' web site, **www.pbucc.org**, or the Christmas Fund home page, **www.christmasfund.org**, for a sample letter and newsletter articles. 




- Participate in a webinar about the Christmas Fund on Wednesday, November 18 at 3:00 PM (Eastern). Check the Pension Boards' web site, www.pbucc.org, or the Christmas Fund home page, www.christmasfund.org, for more details. 

Advent Sundays (November 29, December 6, 13, 20)


- Share information about the Offering in worship, during announcements or Mission Moments.
- Place additional Offering envelopes at each seat or pew.
- Distribute the new Christmas Fund coin boxes (*pictured on page 20*) in Sunday School classes and youth groups to encourage children and youth to participate in the Offering. (The Offering boxes may also be distributed to Bible Study groups, women's and men's groups, etc., to encourage greater involvement.)
- 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 with your worship bulletins.
- Use the Christmas Fund table placemats (*pictured on page 20*) at church meal functions. The table placemats, new for 2009, feature children's crossword and word search puzzles on the back that are designed to help familiarize children with the biblical story of the magi and the spirit of giving.
- Use the Advent Candle Lighting Liturgical Resources provided on the Pension Boards' web site, www.pbucc.org, or the Christmas Fund home page, www.christmasfund.org. If your church uses projection systems as a part of the worship experience, check out the ready-to-use resources provided on the Pension Boards' web site, www.pbucc.org, or the Christmas Fund home page, www.christmasfund.org. 
- Share art projects created by participants in the Middle Grades Magi Mission Project (*see page 19*) during worship.

Sunday December 20

- 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 Pension Boards' web site, www.pbucc.org, or the Christmas Fund home page, www.christmasfund.org. 

January 2010

- 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 Pension Boards' web site, www.pbucc.org, or the Christmas Fund home page, www.christmasfund.org. 
- Remind participants in the Middle Grades Magi Mission Project to submit their artwork to the Pension Boards before the January 31 deadline (*see page 19*).

“

Yesterday my wife and I were surprised and very pleased to receive the generous check issued by your Board.

We can't begin to express how helpful that gift is to us at this particular time.

This past year has been especially difficult, both health-wise and financially. It's also a nice gesture coming as it did on the 50th anniversary of my ordination.

”

MIDDLE GRADES MAGI MISSION PROJECT

This year, students in Grades 5 through 8 are invited to participate in the Middle Grades Magi Mission Project, a special arts project sponsored by the Pension Boards and the United Church Board for Ministerial Assistance.

Young people will have an opportunity to research the Christmas Fund and study the biblical story of the magi. They will then use what they have learned to create original art illustrating the concepts of magi and giving. They may use the medium of their choice, from crayons to computers, from paint to poetry to PowerPoint, and more.


Student-artists are encouraged to share their creations in their local churches throughout Advent before sending their work to the Pension Boards. All artwork must be received by January 31, 2010, along with a Submission Form signed by the student, a parent or guardian, and the pastor or other member of the ministerial staff.

Some of the artwork submitted to the Middle Grades Magi Mission Project may be chosen for use in the 2010 Christmas Fund materials.


Materials developed for the Middle Grades Magi Mission Project include:

- Leader's Guide
- Participant's Guide
- Poster
- Artwork Submission Form
- Certificate of Appreciation



Additional information about the Christmas Fund may be found on the Pension Boards' web site, www.pbucc.org, or the Christmas Fund home page, www.christmasfund.org. 

WORSHIP RESOURCES

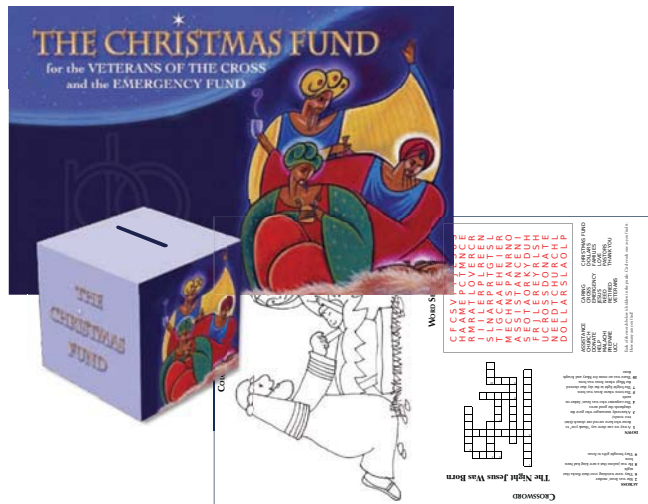
This Offering Guide contains two Responsive Readings and several Prayers of Dedication for the 2009 Offering. Electronic versions of these, and additional worship resources, are available on the Pension Boards' web site, www.pbucc.org, or the Christmas Fund home page, www.christmasfund.org. 

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

New for 2009:

Christmas Fund coin boxes, and table placemats for use at church meal functions.



Coin boxes and table placemats may be ordered from United Church of Christ Resources; call **800.537.3394** to place your order in time for Advent.



Maren C. Tirabassi

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The Rev. Maren C. Tirabassi is the author of the liturgical resources for the 2009 Christmas Fund Offering for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund. A Pilgrim Press author, her recent titles 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.





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2009 Offering Guide