

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 2010.

- Christmas Gift checks will be sent to approximately 900 persons in **2010**. Of those who 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 is being provided to 431 persons. These gifts total \$98,988 per month. A significant part of annual total of \$1,187,856 comes from the Christmas Fund. **(2010 data)**
- Quarterly health premium supplementation is being provided to 292 families, totaling \$177,361 per quarter. All of the funding for health premium supplementation is derived from the Christmas Fund. **(2010 Data)**
- Emergency Grants were provided to 39 individuals and families from January 1 through October 31, 2010, which totaled \$61,717.48.

These statistics reflect annualized projections as of October 31, 2010. The numbers of persons receiving assistance and the totals of assistance payments fluctuate on a monthly basis.

Irene Smith was raised Roman Catholic, but she was drawn to the United Church of Christ during the Vietnam War Era. "The [UCC] called conscientious objectors who crossed the border 'protesters' rather than criminals," she says. In the UCC, she found a theological home that welcomed all persons in the open and generous spirit of Jesus Christ.

Together with her husband Bruce, Irene attended the Methodist Theological School in Delaware, Ohio. She was one of only 19 ordained women in Ohio when she received her first pastoral call to serve as Co-Pastor - with Bruce - of Covington United Church of Christ. The couple had only been serving the church for four years when Bruce died suddenly of a brain aneurysm. The church asked Irene to remain as Pastor; she stayed on for another four years.

During her eight years at Covington UCC, Irene felt increasingly called to pastoral counseling. She became certified as an addiction counselor, and opened the church and the parish house to meetings of Alcoholics Anonymous. She left parish ministry at the conclusion of her service at Covington, and worked with the Miami County alcoholism program in Troy, Ohio. She moved to Indiana to be nearer to her daughter and in 1983, at age 60, accepted a position as Director of the Northeastern Center, a mental health facility in Angola, Indiana. She then followed her daughter to Wynn, Indiana and served as a drug and alcohol counselor for Catholic Charities until her retirement.

Now 87, Irene lives in Eugene, Oregon, with one of her children. In recent years, illness has kept her mostly homebound. The self-described "solitary, stay at home kind of person" continues to indulge her passion for reading. She also enjoys regular visits and phone calls from her Annuitant Visitor.

She receives ministerial assistance in the form of pension supplementation and a Christmas "Thank You" Gift Check. The financial assistance, as well as the Annuitant Visitor Program, are made possible by the contributions of UCC congregations and members to the Christmas Fund Offering.

"The December gift check makes it possible for me to give gifts to my children, which means the world to me," she says. "I want you to know how important that is."

The Fourth Sunday of Advent
December 19, 2010

