

## 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.

Twice a week, Mary Ann Bonebrake walks from her apartment at the UCC-related Brewster Place Retirement Community to the facility's Health Center, where she reads aloud to an Alzheimer's patient who has recently suffered a stroke. No one knows for certain whether the patient can hear or understand, but Mary Ann knows how important her presence is not just to the patient, but to the family as well. Her husband, Boyd, a retired UCC pastor, was diagnosed with Alzheimer's in 1999 and died of the disease in 2007.

Mary Ann, a Kansas native who has lived in the Midwest her entire life, met Boyd when they were both students at Grace Bible Institute (now Grace University) in Omaha, Nebraska in the 1940s. The couple married in 1948. While still in school, Boyd was called to a small Methodist church in Climax, Iowa. Over the years, he served several congregations in Iowa and Kansas, and Mary Ann became involved in the churches' children's ministries.

"I loved being a minister's wife," Mary Ann says. She and Boyd enjoyed playing the piano and singing together, and brought their love of music to the churches they served. "We would do musical services and lessons and carols," she says.

"Outside of family and church, Boyd's great love was learning," Mary Ann says. "He would have spent his life in school if it had been possible." Wherever they lived, Boyd took courses at nearby colleges. Boyd continued to serve churches after his retirement in 1994. When he began showing symptoms of the illness, Mary Ann recalls, he "asked the congregation to bear with him. The people were extremely kind." With Boyd's health continuing to decline, the couple moved to Brewster Place, where he could receive care. Mary Ann acknowledges that it was very difficult to watch her husband, who pursued knowledge and learning throughout his life, lose everything and succumb to the illness.

With no pension and very little Social Security income, Mary Ann is grateful to Brewster Place for enabling her to stay on after Boyd's death. The monthly Ministerial Assistance grant she receives helps with daily expenses and medical costs. "The Lord has been good," she says.

Mary Ann has long supported the Christmas Fund but after Boyd's death, she began sharing her story with the people of Central Congregational Church in Topeka, Kansas, where she is a member. The Christmas Fund, she tells them, is "a wonderful program and God's hand is in it, moving people to give and respond to a need." To those considering a gift to the Offering, Mary Ann says, "It helps so many people, and I am so grateful."

Christmas Eve  
December 24, 2010

