

An illustration of the Three Kings of the East. One king is in the foreground, wearing a red robe with white crosses and a gold crown. Behind him are two other kings, one with a white beard and a gold crown, and another with a gold crown and a blue robe. They are holding gifts, including a golden vessel. The background shows a landscape with rolling hills and a bright star in the sky.

2010 Offering Guide

★
THE CHRISTMAS FUND
for the VETERANS OF THE CROSS
and the EMERGENCY FUND

The Birth of Jesus

Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: "Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means, "God is with us." When Joseph awoke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took her as his wife, but had no marital relations with her until she had borne a son; and he named him Jesus.

(Matthew 1:18-25, New Revised Standard Version)

*All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet:
“Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel,”
which means, “God is with us.” (Matthew 1:22-23)*

Grace to you and peace in this season of hope and promise!

Matthew’s Gospel begins with an affirmation of God’s covenant faithfulness. A troubled Joseph – caught between the harsh demands of the law and the tender leanings of his heart – receives assurance from a heavenly messenger. The inexplicable events that are unfolding reveal God’s greater plan for humankind, as prophesied by Isaiah more than seven centuries earlier. With the gift of God’s own Self – Emmanuel – humanity is redeemed and renewed.

In this holy season, our hearts turn toward Emmanuel, the Presence of God-with-us. As the Body of Christ, we are called to reflect that Presence in our relationships, with one another and with the world God so loves.

For 108 years, the Christmas Fund Offering for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund has been a means by which we, as members of the United Church of Christ and its predecessor bodies, live out the mandate to be Christ’s Body in the world. The Christmas Fund, one of four Special Mission Offerings received annually in the United Church of Christ, is a ministry of compassion and care to those who serve

our church. Your generous giving to the 2009 Offering enabled the Pension Boards’ Ministerial Assistance program, on behalf of the whole church, to provide \$1,504,420 to individuals and families in need.

Lower-income retirees continue to feel most keenly the financial stress brought about by the current economic climate. Because of that, we ask you to prayerfully consider your response to the 2010 Christmas Fund Offering and give to the best of your ability. Reflect upon the ways in which your life has been touched by a retired pastor, a former youth leader, a Christian Education director, a church secretary, a custodian, or a minister of music, and honor their ministries in a way that will help them and others like them in these challenging 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 heartfelt thanks to you for your generosity. May you continue to experience the blessings of Emmanuel – the One Who is with us, now and always.

Faithfully,



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

INTRODUCTION

A pastor who, in recent weeks, received a grant from the Christmas Fund, wrote:

Words cannot express how much this means to us. The financial help is so crucial to our being able to meet our obligations and we are grateful for it!

We are also so grateful for and touched by the UCC congregations and individuals who have provided this funding in recognition and appreciation of the faithful ministry of so many ministerial families like us.

We thank you for your wonderful compassionate work.

And from one who received a gift last Christmas:

To all the generous individuals and churches that contributed to the Annual Christmas Fund Offering:

The 107-year old "Tradition" of sending a monetary gift to those who have served the Lord and His church, has brought fantastic response...I pray for all that have received from this Fund, at this blessed Christmas time of our Christian year.

Indeed, this comes to our home as a means of making the time of Christmas so much more joyful. It is with your kindness that we can now celebrate and share the warmth of Christmas in our home as well as with our family!! I thank you for making this all possible...and thinking of us who have served the Lord and His church these many years.

Like the Magi of old, we can honor the Christ Child by bringing gifts that will be used to support and honor those who have served and are serving this beloved church, which truly represents the incarnational spirit of the church at its best.

Gifts to the Christmas Fund will help Veterans of the Cross who have given their lives to the service of the church in days gone by. Gifts to the Christmas Fund provide resources for the Emergency Fund, which provides assistance to those who are serving the church today.

Gifts to the Christmas Fund help provide Pension and Health Premium Supplementation to low-income retirees, Emergency Grants to the families of clergy and lay employees and Christmas "Thank You" Gift Checks to hundreds of annuitants.

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 that 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 low-income retirees in 2011. In 2009, you provided gifts totaling \$1,504,420. Most of these gifts were provided during December 2008, which was at one of the deepest points of the recession. Thank you for your support.

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 appeal and with legacy gifts.

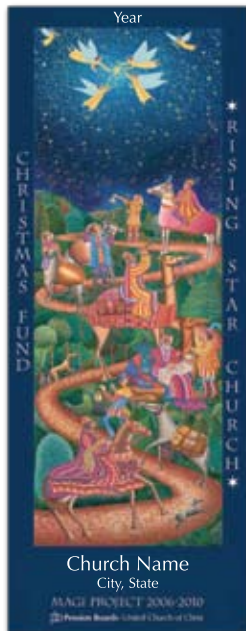
Setting goals, telling personal stories, asking for personal annual gifts and thanking donors are all proven methods for raising awareness of, and support for, the Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund.



RISING STAR CHURCHES

2010 is the final year during which your congregation can reach the status of a Rising Star Church.

A congregation that triples its yearly giving will be designated a Rising Star Church and receive a 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.) Banners for congregations that achieve Rising Star status during 2010 will be distributed in the fall of 2011.



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

The following churches, identified to date as Rising Star Churches, include 72 congregations that became Rising Star Churches through their 2009 Offering:

2009

First Congregational Church of Palo Alto
Palo Alto, California

St. John's United Church of Christ
San Francisco, California

Woodland Hills Community Church
Woodland Hills, California

New Ark United Church of Christ
Newark, Delaware

Pilgrim Church United Church of Christ
Silver Spring, Maryland

Ashland First Congregational United Church of Christ
Ashland, Oregon

Bridgeport United Church of Christ
Portland, Oregon

First Church of Christ
Woodbridge, Connecticut

Riviera United Church of Christ
Palm Bay, Florida

St. Andrew United Church of Christ
Sarasota, Florida

Spring Hill United Church of Christ
Spring Hill, Florida

Community Church of Honolulu
Honolulu, Hawai'i

Kaumakapili Church
Honolulu, Hawai'i

Congregational United Church of Christ
of Arlington Heights
Arlington Heights, Illinois

Zion United Church of Christ
Gilman, Illinois

Second Congregational United Church of Christ
Rockford, Illinois



St. Paul United Church of Christ
Waterloo, Illinois

St. Peter's United Church of Christ
Carmel, Indiana

Immanuel United Church of Christ
Lafayette, Indiana

First Congregational Church of Chatham
Chatham, Massachusetts

The Plymouth Church in Framingham
Framingham, Massachusetts

Pilgrim Congregational Church
Harwich Port, Massachusetts

First Church of Christ in Pittsfield, Congregational
Pittsfield, Massachusetts

First Congregational Church of Rockport
Rockport, Massachusetts

First Trinitarian Congregational Church
Scituate, Massachusetts

Edgewood United Church
East Lansing, Michigan

St. John's United Church of Christ
Port Huron, Michigan

Congregational United Church of Christ
Detroit Lakes, Minnesota

First Congregational United Church of Christ
Moorhead, Minnesota

Olivet Congregational Church
St. Paul, Minnesota

St. Paul's United Church of Christ
Marthasville, Missouri

Friedens United Church of Christ
St. Charles, Missouri

First Congregational Church of Webster Groves
Webster Groves, Missouri

Immanuel United Church of Christ
Ferguson, Missouri

Saint John's United Church of Christ
Saint Louis, Missouri

Red Lodge Community Church
Red Lodge, Montana

Maranatha Indonesian Church
Madbury, New Hampshire

The First Church Congregational
Nashua, New Hampshire

United Church of Christ
Bismarck, North Dakota

St. Peter's United Church of Christ
Amherst, Ohio

Immanuel United Church of Christ
Cincinnati, Ohio

Mount Zion Congregational Church
Cleveland, Ohio

St. John United Church of Christ
Defiance, Ohio

St. John United Church of Christ
Elmore, Ohio



The First Church in Oberlin
Oberlin, Ohio

First Congregational Church of Tallmadge
Tallmadge, Ohio

Mt. Zwingli United Church of Christ
Wadsworth, Ohio

Church of the Redeemer United Church of Christ
Westlake, Ohio

St. Paul's Church of the United Church of Christ
Alexandria, Kentucky

Shiloh United Church of Christ
Danville, Pennsylvania

Faith United Church of Christ
State College, Pennsylvania

St. John's United Church of Christ, Fullerton
Whitehall, Pennsylvania

St. Mark's United Church of Christ
Cressona, Pennsylvania

Community United Church of Christ
Boulder, Colorado

Congregational United Church of Christ
Buena Vista, Colorado

First Congregational Church
Colorado Springs, Colorado

Sixth Avenue United Church of Christ
Denver, Colorado

Christ Congregational Church
Fort Morgan, Colorado

United Church of Huntsville
Huntsville, Alabama

Holy Covenant UCC
Charlotte, North Carolina

Peace United Church of Christ
Greensboro, North Carolina

St. John's United Church of Christ
Kannapolis, North Carolina

First United Church of Christ
Salisbury, North Carolina

Congregational Church United Church of Christ
Tryon, North Carolina

Lynnhaven Colony Congregational
United Church of Christ
Virginia Beach, Virginia

Tombstone Community Congregational Church
Tombstone, Arizona

Rincon Congregational Church
Tucson, Arizona

First Congregational UCC of Everett
Everett, Washington

Wayside United Church of Christ
Federal Way, Washington

United Church in University Place
University Place, Washington

Emanuel United Church of Christ
Hales Corners, Wisconsin

St. Stephens United Church of Christ
Merrill, Wisconsin

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

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

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' website at www.pbucc.org. You may also go directly to the Christmas Fund section of the site at www.christmasfund.org. 

Among the resources you will find on the website 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
- Testimonies from those who have benefited from the ministries supported by the Offering
- Secure online giving

“ How fortunate I am to be a recipient of a gift from the Christmas Fund. This check will allow me to visit my 96-year old sister. She is looking forward to me being with her for the holidays. ”


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:

- Christmas "Thank You" Gift Checks were sent to approximately 900 persons in 2009. Of those who received 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 436 persons. These gifts total \$100,250 per month. A significant part of the annual total of \$1,203,000 comes from the Christmas Fund. (2010 data)
- Quarterly Health Premium Supplementation is being provided to 298 families, totaling \$179,986 per quarter. All of the funding for Health Premium Supplementation is derived from the Christmas Fund. (2010 data)
- Emergency Grants were provided to 23 individuals and families from January 1 through June 30, 2010, totaling \$39,684.

These statistics reflect annualized projections as of June 30, 2010. The numbers of persons receiving assistance and the totals of assistance payments fluctuate on a monthly basis.

Some form of Ministerial Assistance is being provided to approximately 1,600 persons during 2010.

Updated information is available on the Christmas Fund section of the Pension Boards' website, www.pbucc.org. You also may access the Christmas Fund web page directly at www.christmasfund.org. 

TOP-GIVING CHURCHES TO THE 2009 CHRISTMAS FUND OFFERING

Total Dollars

1. Rock Spring Congregational
United Church of Christ
Arlington, Virginia
2. Naples United Church of Christ
Naples, Florida
3. The First Church in Oberlin
Oberlin, Ohio
4. Church of the Beatitudes United Church of Christ
Phoenix, Arizona
5. First Congregational Church
Moline, Illinois
6. The Congregational United Church of Christ
Rochester, Minnesota
7. Immanuel United Church of Christ
Lafayette, Indiana
8. First Congregational Church of Webster Groves
Webster Groves, Missouri
9. First Congregational Church of Canton Center
Canton Center, Connecticut
10. Congregational United Church of Christ
of Arlington Heights
Arlington Heights, Illinois

Per Capita

1. Lahuiokalani Kaanapali Congregational
Lahaina, Hawai'i
2. Zion Oakfield United Church of Christ
Pacific, Missouri
3. Maranatha Indonesian Church
Madbury, New Hampshire
4. Rock Spring Congregational
United Church of Christ
Arlington, Virginia
5. St. John's United Church of Christ
San Francisco, California
6. Hauula Congregational Church
Hauula, Hawai'i
7. Rolling Hills Congregational Church
Salina, Kansas
8. Metaline Falls Congregational Church
Metaline Falls, Washington
9. The First Church in Oberlin
Oberlin, Ohio
10. Union Congregational Church of Madbury
Madbury, New Hampshire

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 Matthew 1:18-25)

Leader: Matthew's gospel quotes the prophet Isaiah saying, Look the virgin shall conceive and bear a son and they shall name him Emmanuel, which means "God with us." (Matthew 1:22)

People: Emmanuel – God is with us in all times and all places.

Leader: We are reminded when a pastor preaches Bethlehem, pushes a committee, counsels a couple, celebrates communion.

People: Emmanuel – God is with us in all times and all places.

Leader: We are reminded when a chaplain prays by a hospital bed, shares memories in an army café, explores questions on a campus, answers worries in a correctional institution.

People: Emmanuel – God is with us in all times and all places.

Leader: We are reminded by music – the organ's prelude, the praise band's percussion, the choir's cantata, the liturgical dancers, the choir director's kindness to a wobbling alto.

People: Emmanuel – God is with us in all times and all places.

Leader: We are reminded when a Christian educator plays holy, teaches faith practices or ties on a pair of lost angel wings.

People: Emmanuel – God is with us in all times and all places.

Leader: We are reminded when the sexton makes the wedding perfect, the funeral peaceful and the Christmas wax drips disappear.

People: Emmanuel – God is with us in all times and all places.

Leader: We are reminded when a youth minister plays paintball, manages a mission trip, listens to the lonely. We are reminded when pastoral counselors make the way clear or mission personnel take paths far from our experience. We are reminded when a Conference Minister helps a search committee or a seminary professor shapes a new call.

People: Emmanuel, God who is coming and yet is always with us, we give you thanks for those in our midst and in communities of faith throughout this country and around the globe who remind us of your presence. They offer their gifts of emmanu-ministry at Christmas time and throughout the year in small and great ways. We present them with our gifts of appreciation and ask your blessing on our offering and on their lives that they may receive again the grace they share. Amen.

The invitation to give to the annual Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross and Emergency Fund should include explanation of the four uses (Pension and Health Supplementation, Emergency Grants and Christmas "Thank You" Gift Checks). Please see p. 8 for information on how the funds are used or visit www.christmasfund.org.



RESPONSIVE READING#2

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

People: Emmanuel – God is with us – let’s celebrate the church with the apps.

Leader: Celebrate the texting of the pastor!

People: Emmanuel – God is with us!

Leader: Celebrate the iGod of the musicians!

People: Emmanuel – God is with us!

Leader: Celebrate the sexton’s download of spring bulbs, summer picnic tables, autumn leaves, sheep for the live Nativity, and all that snow!

People: Emmanuel – God is with us!

Leader: Celebrate the friending of the youth minister.

People: Emmanuel – God is with us!

Leader: Celebrate the smartphone of the administrator...not to speak of all those upgrades.

People: Emmanuel – God is with us!

Leader: Celebrate the gee!mail of the church educator, the wheel!mail of the church educator, the come-and-see!mail of the church educator.

People: Emmanuel – God is with us!

Leader: Celebrate the global positioning of the mission staff.

People: Emmanuel – God is with us!

Leader: Celebrate the voicemail of chaplains in military bases and colleges, in hospice and hospital and correctional facilities.

Leader: We celebrate all of these people of the church who share Christ’s presence, each with a different “application.” This morning we give from our abundance to those who have shared themselves in this and other faith communities. These gifts provide a network of support in need, links to emergency assistance and a world wide web of blessing.

People: Gracious God, we give thanks for those who put a face on the holy book, and teach us to share the spirit not the spam of our faith. Their care for the church is never offline. Bless these gifts that they may express our thanks to retired and active clergy and lay employees of our churches. Amen.

The invitation to give to the annual Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross and Emergency Fund should include explanation of the four uses (Pension and Health Supplementation, Emergency Grants and Christmas “Thank You” Gift Checks). Please see p. 8 for information on how the funds are used or visit www.christmasfund.org.



PRAYERS OF DEDICATION FOR CHRISTMAS FUND GIFTS:

(For the Fourth Sunday in Advent)

Emmanuel, God with us, we have received blessings of hope and peace, of joy and love from pastors and teachers, church musicians, youth ministers, chaplains, sextons, administrators and mission staff who share your presence in this congregation, in congregations around the country and throughout the world. In this holy season we dedicate these gifts that they may return as a blessing of support and emergency assistance to those who are retired and those in active service. Amen.

(For Christmas Eve)

Emmanuel, on this silent night, holy night, we know that much is calm and many things are bright 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. Amen.

(Sunday after Christmas)

Emmanuel, God-with-us, you are present with us when the tinsel has faded, the needles have been swept, and the star has gone west. In this holy season we have awakened to your presence because a pastor preached, a teacher spoke through a camel puppet, a sexton opened a box of chrismos, an administrator copied carols, a youth minister listened and slept on the floor, a musician helped us find our voices. We dedicate these Christmas Fund offerings to bring a little Emmanuel to those who have given so much to us. Amen

“

We are deeply grateful to the United Church of Christ for these generous ministerial emergency gifts. They will truly help us as we are seeking to help our son receive the necessary and vital health treatment that he needs. And, in turn, hopefully bring new health and recovery to our family!

”

MISSION MOMENT

Hear these words...

Thank you for the Christmas check I recently received in the mail. It is great that the UCC members think of us “old” people.

Yes, this check from the UCC Annual Christmas Fund Offering did indeed brighten my day. Thank you!

And yes, this gift does remind me of God’s presence and the care he has given me my whole life. I thank God for all the blessings he bestowed upon me.

May God bless you all.

You have the opportunity to be a part of this ministry that cares for the active and retired clergy and lay employees of the United Church of Christ through your participation in the annual Christmas Fund Offering.

Your gift to the Christmas Fund will not only assist pastors, like the one above, with a “Thank You” Gift Check at Christmas, but also provide for the Supplementation of Small Annuities, Supplementation of Health Premiums and provide Emergency Grants to active and retired clergy and lay employees.

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 low-income retirees during 2011. In 2009, you provided gifts totaling \$1,504,420. Most of these gifts were provided during December 2008, which was at one of the deepest points of the recession.

Please remember that your generous contributions can and do make a difference in the lives of many.

**“ Comforting. Unexpected. Helpful. Grateful.
Blessing. Needed. Words, too often, seem
inadequate to express our heart-felt appreciation
for the gift we recently received.”**

”

FIVE FOR FIVE

IS YOUR CHURCH 5 FOR 5?

Being **5 for 5** is one sign of congregational vitality in UCC churches.

5 for 5 Churches are those that contribute to Our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM) – both Basic Support and Special Support, including the four Special Mission Offerings (One Great Hour of Sharing, Strengthen the Church, Neighbors in Need, and The Christmas Fund). We have been delighted by the response of congregations across the entire church that have celebrated being **5 for 5**, and just as delighted by the many churches that have asked how they, too, can meet this challenge.



This recognition program says “Thank You” to churches that are often small but nevertheless faithful and generous, and it strengthens their relationship with the wider church. It also helps those churches teach about mission and the ways their gifts are being used beyond the local congregation. Finally, the program serves as an incentive and a challenge to other churches to add one or two offerings – or, in some cases, even to add OCWM Basic Support – to their stewardship and mission efforts.

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, 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 low-income retired church workers, Emergency Grants to clergy families in need and Christmas “Thank You” Gift Checks to hundreds of annuitants; administered by the Pension Boards.

December 19, 2010/December 18, 2011

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.

April 3, 2011

Strengthen the Church

Grows the UCC's future by funding The Stillspeaking 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 Stillspeaking Ministry.

June 12, 2011

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 2, 2011

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' website, www.pbucc.org. You also may access the Christmas Fund web page directly at

www.christmasfund.org. 

“



It is a blessing to know I worked
[for] an organization that cares.

”


PROMOTING THE 2010 CHRISTMAS FUND OFFERING FOR THE VETERANS OF THE CROSS AND THE EMERGENCY FUND

Beginning October 18, 2010



Watch for the arrival of Christmas Fund materials.

- Order extra materials, as needed, by calling toll-free **800.325.7061**.
- Enlist the help of your church's Missions Committee or other group(s) to assist in promoting the Christmas Fund Offering.
- Check the Web (**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 Web (**www.christmasfund.org**) for ready-to-use PowerPoint worship resources. 


Week of November 14

- Begin your 2010 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 Web (**www.christmasfund.org**) for a sample letter and newsletter articles. 


Advent Sundays (November 28, December 5, 12, 19)

- Share information about the Offering in worship, during announcements or Mission Moments.
- Place additional Offering envelopes at each seat or pew.
- 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 Advent Candle Lighting Liturgical Resources provided on the Web: **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 Web: **www.christmasfund.org**. 

Sunday December 19

- 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 Web: www.christmasfund.org. 

January 2011

- 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 website thanking church members and friends of the congregation for their generous response. Sample articles are provided on the Web: www.christmasfund.org. 

“

. . . My family is one that has been affected by the downtrend in [the] economy; my husband was laid-off. Hence, your kindness in letting me know that you care meant so much more to me.

Thank you very much for your kind words, your empathy and a most generous and unexpected gift.”

”



Maren C. Tirabassi

THE AUTHOR

The Rev. Maren C. Tirabassi is the author of the liturgical resources for the 2010 Annual Christmas Fund Offering for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund. A Pilgrim Press author, her recently-published books include *All Whom God Has Joined: Resources for Clergy and Couples for Same-Gender Loving Marriage*, *Caring for Ourselves while Caring for our Elders*, and *Before the Amen: Resources for Worship*. She is the pastor of Union Congregational Church, UCC in Madbury, New Hampshire.

WORSHIP RESOURCES

This Offering Guide contains two Responsive Readings and several Prayers of Dedication for the 2010 Offering. Electronic versions of these, and additional worship resources, are available on the Web at:

www.christmasfund.org 

Among the resources on the website are:

- Advent Candle Liturgies
- Christmas in July Liturgical Resources
- PowerPoint Worship Resources for congregations using projection before and/or during worship

“ The financial help I received has given me a lift, not only physically but more so emotionally. I realized that the church I have served for all of these years has not abandoned me. Thank you. God is good all of the time. ”



THE CHRISTMAS FUND

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