

The Rev. Jane R. Ireland was studying zoology at Carlton College in Northfield, Minnesota when she met the University of Michigan law student who would become her husband. After their marriage, the couple set up housekeeping in Ann Arbor, Michigan. After her husband's graduation, Jane left her job at the University of Michigan biology lab and the couple moved to Rapid City, South Dakota. They had four children, and soon Jane found herself actively involved in their church's Christian Education and Sunday School ministries.

Jane also developed an interest in spirituality. She opened a spirituality center in Rapid City that offered classes and group meditation sessions.

In 1984, Jane entered Sioux Falls Seminary. At the same time that her spiritual life was burgeoning, her marriage was coming to an end. She and her husband separated and divorced soon after her graduation in 1986.

After her ordination at First Congregational United Church of Christ in Rapid City, Jane served a number of churches – First Congregational Church in Stockton, Kansas, First Presbyterian Church of Sturgis, South Dakota, and several interim calls. She also served as a chaplain at the Hennepin County Medical Center in Minneapolis, a therapist at the Evangelical Children's Home in Kansas City, and a chaplain at a rehabilitation facility for head trauma patients. As Jane reflects on her ministerial career, she sees a unifying theme. "A lot of my ministry was about healing from grief," she says. Certain events held a special place for her. A confirmation class she led in one of her interim pastorates started out contentiously, but the dynamic of the group changed and, by the end, the confirmands wrote a poem together and left as good friends.

Jane retired in 2009 at age 75. She attends a church where there are nine other retired ministers. She serves on the worship committee and preaches sometimes. She is in good health and remains active, but due to her late start in ministry, her pension income is low. After having supported the Christmas Fund for years, Jane is now among the hundreds of lower-income annuitants who receive Christmas "Thank You" Gift Checks. This past year, the check was particularly appreciated:

"I want to thank you for the generous Christmas Fund check...It was an answer to a prayer I didn't know I needed. I received the check on a Friday and that very same night while I was attending a meeting I had two tires slashed, an expense I never dreamed of. The check replaced the tires, and I still had some left to pass on. It was a real blessing."

The Second Sunday of Advent
December 9, 2012

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 assistance to approximately 1,600 persons during the past year.

- Christmas "Thank You" Gift Checks were sent to approximately 900 persons in 2011. 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 373 persons. These gifts total \$102,899.50 per month. A significant part of the annual total of \$1,255,885.20 comes from the Christmas Fund (2012 data).
- Quarterly Health Premium Supplementation is being provided to 250 families, totaling \$146,840.30 per quarter. All of the funding for Health Premium Supplementation is derived from the Christmas Fund (2012 data).
- Emergency Grants totaling \$27,177.62 were provided to 22 individuals and families from January 1 through June 30, 2012.

These statistics reflect annualized projections as of June 30, 2012. The numbers of persons receiving assistance and the totals of assistance payments fluctuate on a monthly basis.

