

Being the son of an army air corpsman prepared the Rev. Robert (Bob) R. Ruse to a life of moving from place to place. By the time Bob reached his senior year of high school, he and his family had settled in Belleville, Illinois. It was then that he discerned a call to ministry.

Bob started his education at Elmhurst College, but it was at Tarkio College, a Presbyterian school in northwestern Missouri, where he found fresh inspiration.

While at Tarkio, Bob met Jacqueline, a nursing student. Jackie left school to marry Bob shortly before his first call. She has always been very supportive of his career and active in his churches. They have three sons: Robert Jr., Michael, and Timothy.

Bob's first call was to a yoked parish near Fall City, Nebraska. Nineteen months later, he was called back east to serve on the pastoral staff of Maple Street Congregational Church in Salem, Massachusetts. In 1983, he accepted a call to St. Paul's United Church of Christ in Elgin, Illinois, where he served for seven years before moving to Philadelphia's First United Church of Christ. In June 1997, he went to the Ridge Road United Church of Christ at Parma, near Cleveland.

In 2004, Bob had surgery to correct an aortic aneurysm, but found that he was unable to sustain the energy he had had before the diagnosis. Reluctantly, he retired from full-time ministry in 2005. Initially, he and Jackie enjoyed retirement. They traveled, visited their children's families, and Bob occasionally preached and took odd jobs. But the weakness persisted, and in 2008, he was diagnosed with kidney failure. His only hope was a kidney transplant.

Bob was spared being placed on the lengthy waiting list for a kidney because one of his sons turned out to be a perfect match. However, in spite of having enough insurance and other resources to pay for the surgery, they did not have the necessary funds to cover the expensive after-care regimen that would keep the new kidney healthy. Meanwhile, Bob's condition was worsening.

As a pastor, Bob had helped raise money for the Christmas Fund Offering every year, but had not considered himself a possible recipient. He received a \$2,500 Emergency Grant, which was enough to get him approved for surgery in May 2011.

The surgery, says Bob, was "truly a total rebirth. The Christmas Fund was life-changing for me, and I now know it has been for others, whether they are facing disasters of health or financial difficulty. If you are looking for a place to make a difference, the Christmas Fund is the place to do it."

The Third Sunday of Advent
December 16, 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.

