

Rev. Marjorie Peters

Rev. Marjorie Peters* was 55 years old when she entered seminary. Her original goal had been to go to medical school. "In those days there weren't grants and loans like today. I spent 29 years working in four hospitals doing medical research," she says. "When I lost my job, I was under a great deal of stress. My husband was terminally ill. I didn't know what I was going to do." Her pastor suggested that she attend a job-training workshop. "At one point, we were asked what we wanted to do. I don't know where it came from but when it was my turn I said, 'I want to go to seminary for Christian ministry,'" she says. "The more I said, 'No,' the more God said, 'Yes.'" It wasn't until Rev. Peters began collecting her Social Security that she was able to pay off her educational debt.

She was ordained in 1990 at the age of 58. While she was interested in serving only small churches in New England, over the years she also served the Maine Conference on the Commission for Witness Life, and promoted Our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM), helping explain its importance and encouraging increased giving. She also served as an elected leader on Association and Conference levels, and on the Church and Ministry Committee. She has been a Sunday School Superintendent, and in retirement, serves as Clerk and Church Secretary in her local congregation.

Rev. Peters was a Congregationalist at the time of the 1957 merger that birthed the United Church of Christ. "I like to tell people that while the UCC was in gestation, I was in gestation as well, since I was pregnant with my second child," she says. "When the merger...was being discussed, my husband was not in favor of it. I ultimately convinced him otherwise."

The pension supplementation Rev. Peters receives "has been an absolute God-send! It made a big difference," she says. "I emphasize to my congregation the importance of the Christmas Fund, that it not only helps retirees but active persons as well. I like giving Mission Moment talks to encourage giving generously to the Offering." The grandmother of four and great-grandmother of six retired in 2003, and continues to provide supply preaching.

A recent lunch with her Annuitant Visitor turned out to be a twofold blessing. "I mentioned an expensive dental problem I was having. Just like that I was referred to [Ministerial Assistance Director] Krista Betz and received a grant to help with my dental work. The Pension Boards is a God-send!"

* Pseudonym

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 some form of assistance to impact the lives of hundreds of persons during the past year.

- **MONTHLY PENSION SUPPLEMENTATION** for 408 lower-income retired UCC clergy/lay employees.

Our retired clergy/lay employees relied on this income supplementation for basic needs such as food, utilities, and living and medical expenses. Since needs exceed the amount received through the Christmas Fund Offering, assistance was also supported by Our Church's Wider Mission and legacy gifts to Ministerial Assistance. The amount of pension supplementation totaled \$1,342,000 in 2013.

- **QUARTERLY HEALTH PREMIUM SUPPLEMENTATION** for 239 lower-income retired UCC clergy/lay employees.

These funds subsidized premiums for the UCC Medicare Supplement Plan with Rx so that individuals could afford and receive quality health care. Assistance totaled \$508,000 in 2013.

- **CHRISTMAS "THANK YOU" GIFT CHECKS** given to 543 retired UCC clergy/lay church employees.

This special gift at Christmas time reminds these Veterans of the Cross that they have not been forgotten and that the Church is grateful for their service. Gifts totaled \$235,800 in 2013.

- **EMERGENCY GRANTS** for 65 active or retired UCC clergy/lay employees.

Sometimes those who serve the Church need our help, and emergency funds are available to assist in covering costs that arise unexpectedly – for example, large medical expenses, or home damage resulting from natural disasters. Emergency assistance totaled \$57,000 in 2013.

ADVENT II – PEACE

