

A Donor's Story

The Rev. Mary Hawkes



Mary Hawkes knows the United Church of Christ: her service to the church has included settled and interim pastorates in Vermont, Connecticut, and New York; Christian education positions in Connecticut, Vermont, Michigan, New Jersey, and Germany; and a national position as Secretary of Educational Programs in the former United Church Board for Homeland Ministries. Like her father, grandfather, brother-in-law, and two uncles, Mary graduated from Hartford Seminary in Connecticut.

From firsthand experience, Mary recognizes the importance of sufficient income in retirement. "When my father died, my mother received checks from the Pension Boards, and without them, I would not have been able to go to college and seminary." Her own retirement plan was originally held by the Retirement Fund for Lay Workers before it became part of the Pension Boards, and today "it is one thing I can rely on in my own retirement."

Mary gives to the Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross year after year because she is acutely aware of two populations of UCC servants who often don't have that reliable source of retirement income: Christian educators and those ordained after age 40, both of which describe Mary herself.

Historically, Christian educators have been among the lower-paid staff members of local churches, a pattern that continues to this day. Shouldering the responsibility for nurturing the faith in young and old, "Christian educators are often not rewarded for that deep commitment." Now, knowing that retired lay church educators are often the recipients of financial assistance made possible through the Christmas Fund, Mary gives from a place of abiding concern for those called to that teaching ministry.

And as one ordained after turning 40, Mary also appreciates the dilemma faced by that population, a growing segment of authorized ministers currently serving the church. That awareness is shared by her family: a fund in memory of her parents has been set up in the Connecticut Conference, specifically to aid those who were ordained at 40 or older and are facing financial difficulties. Knowing those needs are denomination-wide is another reason Mary chooses to support the Christmas Fund. "We give where we know from experience there are needs," says Mary, as made evident by her own ministry and generosity.

THE CHRISTMAS FUND

for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund



In 2017, gifts to the Christmas Fund enabled

- Small pension supplementation for 424 retired clergy, lay employees, and surviving spouses/partners, totaling \$1,513,602
- Health benefits supplementation for 210 retired clergy, lay employees, and surviving spouses/partners, totaling \$492,863
- Emergency grants for 384 servants of the church, totaling \$136,012
- Christmas "Thank You" gift checks to 477 retired clergy, lay employees, and their surviving spouses, totaling \$228,300