



Ted Dawson, Artist

Offering Guide 2018

★
THE CHRISTMAS FUND
for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund



www.christmasfund.org



The Pension Boards
United Church of Christ, Inc.
WHERE FAITH AND FINANCE INTERSECT

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	1
2017: How the Funds Were Used.....	2
Top Giving Churches to the 2017 Christmas Fund Offering.....	3
Timeline for Promoting the 2018 Christmas Fund Offering.....	4
Worship Resources.....	5
Advent I – Hope.....	5
Advent II – Peace.....	6
Advent III – Joy.....	7
Advent IV – Love.....	8
Christmas Eve/Christmas Day.....	8
Liturgy for Any Time of Year #1.....	10
Liturgy for Any Time of Year #2.....	11
Bulletin Inserts.....	12
Authors of Worship Resources.....	16
Artist for “The Light Is Surely Coming”.....	16
5 Ways to Support the United Church of Christ.....	Inside Back Cover
Where to Donate.....	Back Cover
Resources & Extra Supplies.....	Back Cover
Further Assistance.....	Back Cover

The light of God surrounds us,
The love of God enfolds us,
The power of God protects us,
The presence of God watches over us.

– James Dillet Freeman

For over a century, the **Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund** has been a tangible expression of God's love and light in the world. Year after year, United Church of Christ (UCC) members and congregations have reached out in kindness, compassion, and gratitude to those who have faithfully shepherded our Church in the past and who now find themselves facing unexpected financial needs.

In 2017, UCC congregations and members generously contributed over \$1,500,000 to the Christmas Fund. This enabled the United Church Board for Ministerial Assistance (UCBMA), the charitable arm of the Pension Boards, to provide, on behalf of the whole Church, Supplementation of Small Annuities, Retiree Health Premium Supplementation, Emergency Grants, and Christmas "Thank You" Gift Checks to individuals in need.

The theme of this year's Christmas Fund Offering is *The Light Is Surely Coming*. Our goal is to raise \$1.7 million to help support these ministries of light and love. The recipients of your gifts are persons who have faithfully served the church for many years. And now, in their time of need, you can be the church to them. We invite and encourage you to join thousands of UCC members and congregations who will support this year's appeal and trust the light is surely coming.

The suggested date for receiving the Offering is **December 23, 2018**. We are pleased to provide the resources in this **Offering Guide** to assist and inspire you in promoting the Christmas Fund in your congregation. These and other resources are also available online at www.christmasfund.org.

On behalf of the hundreds of clergy, lay employees, and their families whose lives were touched by your support of the Christmas Fund Offering, we offer our sincere thanks for your generosity!

*The Pension Boards–United Church of Christ, Inc.
and United Church Board for Ministerial Assistance*



2017: How the Funds Were Used

One of the unique aspects of the Christmas Fund is that the funds provide direct financial assistance to individual UCC clergy, lay church employees, and their surviving spouses/partners—the funds do not support programs or institutions, but people. With your continued generosity, more individuals will receive the support of the Church in their time of need.

- **MONTHLY PENSION SUPPLEMENTATION**

424 lower-income retired UCC clergy, lay employees, and surviving spouses/partners, totaling \$1,513,602

Retired servants of the church rely on this additional income for basic needs such as food, utilities, and medical expenses. Funds to meet this need come from three sources: the Christmas Fund Offering, Our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM), and the Ministerial Assistance Fund.

- **QUARTERLY HEALTH PREMIUM SUPPLEMENTATION**

210 lower-income retired UCC clergy, lay employees, and surviving spouses/partners, totaling \$492,863

These funds subsidize premiums for the UCC Medicare Supplement Plan so that individuals can afford and receive quality health care.

- **CHRISTMAS "THANK YOU" GIFT CHECKS**

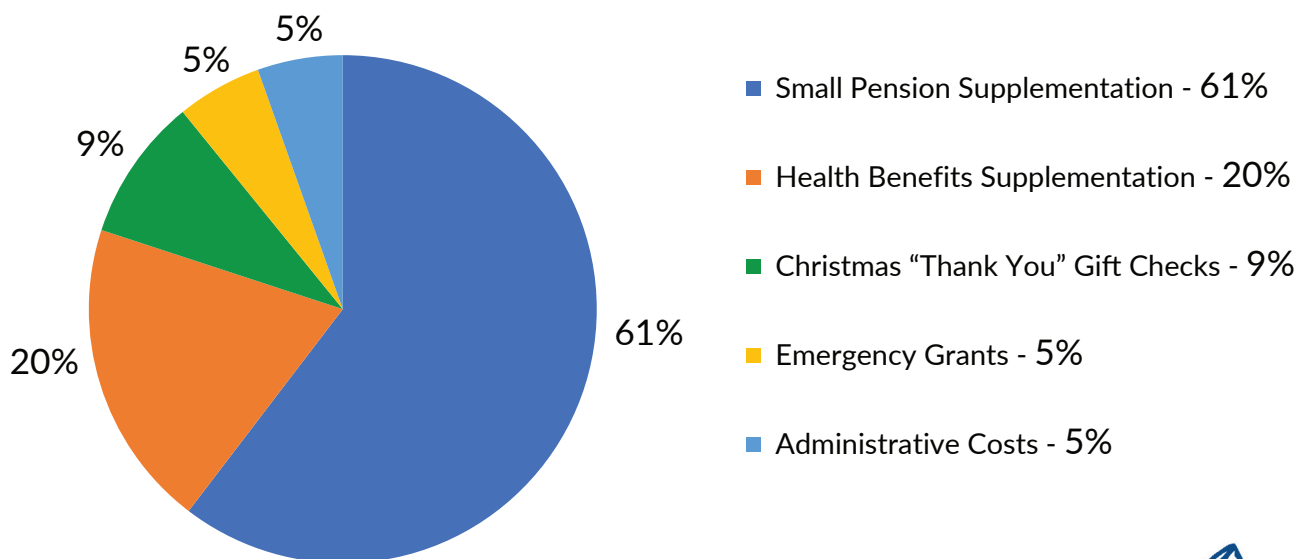
477 retired UCC clergy, lay employees, and surviving spouses/partners, totaling \$228,300

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.

- **EMERGENCY GRANTS**

384 active/retired UCC clergy and lay employees, totaling \$136,012

Sometimes those who serve the Church need help to respond to unexpected and unfunded emergencies—for example, large medical expenses, or home damage resulting from natural disasters. In 2017, special gifts were provided to over 300 authorized ministers in Florida and Houston area after hurricanes devastated their regions.



Top Giving Churches to the 2017 Christmas Fund Offering

United Church of Christ congregations from every state and Conference opened their hearts in 2017 to abundantly bless the ministries supported by the Christmas Fund.

Top Total Dollar Congregations gave more than \$5,000.

Name	City	State	Total Members	Total Donations	CF Per Member
Naples United Church of Christ	Naples	FL	1202	\$29,624	\$24.65
Pleasant Hill Community Church UCC	Pleasant Hill	TN	223	\$10,215	\$45.81
First Congregational UCC	Barstow	CA	19	\$10,000	\$526.32
Rock Spring Congregational UCC	Arlington	VA	550	\$9,989	\$18.16
University Congregational UCC	Seattle	WA	798	\$6,859	\$8.60
Central Union Church UCC	Honolulu	HI	1257	\$6,621	\$5.27
Plymouth Congregational UCC	Fort Collins	CO	709	\$6,293	\$6.96
The Bath Church UCC	Akron	OH	904	\$6,101	\$6.75
Fort Myers Congregational UCC	Fort Myers	FL	257	\$5,540	\$21.56

Since 2005, Naples UCC in Florida has led the way as the top giving congregation to the Christmas Fund. Thank you!

Top Per Capita Giving Congregations gave more than \$35 per member.

Name	City	State	Total Members	Total Donations	CF Per Member
First Congregational UCC	Barstow	CA	19	\$10,000	\$526.32
Lahuioakalani Kaanapali Congregational UCC	Honokowai	HI	1	\$300	\$300.00
Peace United Church of Christ	Genoa	IL	13	\$1,500	\$115.38
Chinese Community UCC	Southfield	MI	28	\$2,000	\$71.43
Waioli Hui`ia UCC	Hanalei	HI	35	\$2,052	\$58.63
Kingsbury Community UCC	Vernal	UT	28	\$1,323	\$47.25
Pleasant Hill Community Church UCC	Pleasant Hill	TN	223	\$10,215	\$45.81
Friedens United Church of Christ	Mt. Carmel	IL	33	\$1,457	\$44.15
Rolling Hills Congregational UCC	Salina	KS	8	\$310	\$38.75
Congregational UCC	San Marino	CA	62	\$2,300	\$37.10

These congregations gave over \$35 per member to the Christmas Fund. How much would your congregation have to give to make the list next year?

Pleasant Hill Community Church UCC's and First Congregational UCC, Barstow's generosity has placed them on both the Top Total Giving and Top Per Capita Giving lists. Thank you!

Data provided by the Center for Analytics, Research and Data of the United Church of Christ.



Timeline for Promoting the 2018 Christmas Fund Offering

- Resource materials are available online at www.christmasfund.org.

Beginning November 1, 2018

- Order additional envelopes or posters from UCC Resources, **1.800.537.3394** or www.uccresources.com, if needed.
- Work with your Missions Committee or Church Council to establish a 2018 giving goal. Look at last year's total and see if the congregation can increase it.
- Ask your Pastor or Worship Committee to use the Christmas Fund liturgies available in this **Guide** or online.

Week of November 25 – Begin Your 2018 Christmas Fund Promotion

- Display Christmas Fund posters prominently throughout the church building.
- Promote the theme and images of *The Light Is Surely Coming* in your church's communications: newsletters, bulletins, social media, and worship announcements.
- Send a letter and Offering envelope to every household, announcing the Offering date and goal amount.
- Download, print, and copy—or purchase from UCC Resources—the companion *The Light Is Surely Coming, a Christmas Coloring Book* for distribution during Advent.
- Recruit persons to give Mission Moments in worship regarding the Offering.

Advent Sundays (December 2, 9, 16, 23)

- Place additional Offering envelopes at each seat/pew.
- Distribute copies of the bulletin inserts with your weekly worship bulletins—make sure crayons are available!
- Share the *The Light Is Surely Coming, a Christmas Coloring Book* during children's time, Church School, and wherever there are persons who like to create and color.
- Give weekly announcements or Mission Moments in worship to promote the Offering.
- Invite your Missions chairperson, church moderator, or a retired minister, missionary, or lay employee (or their surviving spouses/partners) to reflect during worship on what it means to be remembered and cared for as a "Veteran of the Cross."
- Use the liturgical resources provided in this **Guide** or online.

Sunday, December 23

- Today is designated as the day to receive the Christmas Fund Offering. Some congregations may elect to receive the Offering during the Christmas Eve or Christmas Day worship services.
- Make your personal gift to the Christmas Fund and, if possible, give your personal testimony in worship as to why you are supporting this Special Mission Offering.
- When the Offering is received, use the liturgy available in this **Guide** or online.

January 2019

- Have the Treasurer of the congregation forward the contributions received to one of the addresses listed on the back cover of this **Guide**.
- Celebrate your congregation's generosity! 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.



Worship Resources

The theme for the 2018 Christmas Fund Offering is *The Light Is Surely Coming*. These worship resources have been developed around that theme using the Revised Common Lectionary readings for this year's Advent/Christmas season. Ready-to-use PowerPoint presentations, bulletin inserts, information on how the funds are used, and an archive of previous years' worship resources, are available at www.christmasfund.org.

We thank you for your willingness to use these worship resources and promote the important ministry that happens through the Christmas Fund!

ADVENT I – HOPE

Jeremiah 33:14-16; Luke 21: 25-36

Lighting the First Advent Candle

One The light is surely coming!

Many **Its rays reaching out to illuminate injustice and oppression.**

One With hope we watch for new growth to be coaxed from the earth.

Many **With anticipation we wait for the branch of mercy to shed its lifelessness and sprout new fruit.**

One We open our hands to be bearers of Christ's light in the world.

Many **We open our hearts to be transformed with the promise of possibility that is to come.**

One As we light this candle, the candle of Hope, we pray that it will brighten our path, that our steps inside this church might align with our steps outside in the world.

All **We await the son of God!**

(The candle of Hope is lit, and the congregation sings a hymn of your choice.)

Invitation to the Offering

Murmuring in their woodsy tongue, "Make way!
Make way!"—the beetles, ants, and even ticks
hop from their leaves to safer soil, except the brave
few, who, climbing atop dirt-mounds, strain their little necks,
to watch as swollen feet press water from the ground.
It is Mary who walks, pauses, wipes the sweat
from her forehead and calls to Joe: "I've found
a cherry tree. Gather some, would you, for us to eat."
The man refuses to go,
but in his anger quips, "Can't your baby's father do it?!"
The tree approaches Mary, bends down, and she eats from his bough.
The insects, still spying, leap with joy, recognizing God's fruit.
Follow her footsteps! Water the earth, critters and trees!
Cherish the elements who first taught us to see!



Prayer of Dedication

“There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on the earth distress among nations confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves.” May we recognize the signs springing up amid the roaring confusion, and usher in a new light of generosity to those who bring light and love in service to the United Church of Christ. May our gifts shine a light upon the path of comfort, blessing, hope, and compassion to all in need. Amen.

ADVENT II – PEACE

Malachi 3:1-4, Luke 1:68-79

The Hope candle should be lit before the service begins.

Lighting the Second Advent Candle

One In this holy place, O God, we seek to prepare a path through the wilderness of our lives.

Many **Quiet our souls that we may hear your voice.**

One Keep us mindful of the work yet to be done in your Kingdom.

Many **Remind us to see that work through the lens of possibility.**

One Help us remember the covenant of hope you forged with our ancestors, even as we yearn for your presence in our world today.

Many **Illuminate our path, that our feet may be guided toward the way of peace.**

One Today we light the second candle on our Advent wreath, the candle of Peace.

Many **May the Peace of the coming Christ child live within us all.**

(The candle of Peace is lit, and the congregation sings a hymn of your choice.)

Invitation to the Offering

Who was it who first extended an arm
in your direction, waiting for your own fingers
to link with theirs, the one whose warmth
intruded on the cold, who, even immersed in shadow,
illuminated? To whose voice does your every fiber
stretch when you hear them call to comfort
or, in healthy provocation, to inspire?
There are hands at your back, countless, a network
whose sole instruction is to support your climb
to the precipice of possibility,
clergy and lay who've approached the future, and glimpsed
the promise of your very being. To those who built
the horizon of our emergence,
it's time we turn, in our own right, and extend!

Prayer of Dedication

“The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight—indeed he is coming, says the Lord of Hosts.” Through our generosity, we, too, act as messengers preparing the way of light and hope. Since ancient times, our covenant has been not only with the Lord but with one another in blessed community. May this offering be a message of peace for all those who serve our church. Amen.



ADVENT III – JOY

Zephaniah 3:14-20; Luke 3:7-18

The Hope and Peace candles should be lit before the service begins.

Lighting the Third Advent Candle

One With joy we await the coming of Christ, even as we struggle to make sense of living in a topsy-turvy world.

Many **We seek God's wisdom for our purpose outside these walls.**

One Let our prayers be filled with light and love for those in need.

Many **Let our words be a healing balm for those who seek comfort.**

One Let our actions demonstrate we are a safe harbor for those living in fear.

Many **In this season of Advent, let us be fully present to what it means to be the church.**

One As we light the third candle of Advent, the candle of Joy, we are reminded of God's promise of salvation through the humble birth of a child.

All **Surely the light is coming!**

(The candle of Joy is lit, and the congregation sings a hymn of your choice.)

Invitation to the Offering

"You are like a family of vipers,"
she screams at her hair. Flinging the brush
to the tiled floor, she dunks her head in the water
and turns the faucet off, then she rushes,
the Daughter of Zion, to her bathroom window,
having heard a shout coming from the street.
"Hello down there!" She yells to the crowds,
"What's going on?" "The world's topsy-turvy,"
a voice calls back. "We're marching to set it right!"
She looks in her mirror, curls still dripping, her eyes
opening, her mouth beginning to smile,
then her cells disperse into a light that permeates the chorus.
Rendering want into abundance,
we cultivate our own transcendence.

Prayer of Dedication

In the third chapter of Luke, the people asked John the Baptist what they should do. In reply, he said to them, "Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise." So, may it be with our offering today that we, too, see life from the perspective of possibility in a topsy-turvy world. The generosity of our covenant and shared offering for those in need who serve the United Church of Christ is the message of light, hope, peace, and joy needed throughout our world. May it be blessed. Amen.



ADVENT IV – LOVE

Micah 5: 2-5a; Luke 1:39-45 (46-55)

The Hope, Peace, and Joy candles should be lit before the service begins.

Lighting the Fourth Advent Candle

One Today let our hearts join together as we light the candle of Love.

Many **We seek God's love to help us heal a broken world.**

One Love is the strength of a young woman destined to bear the Light of the world.

Many **Love is the humility of a young man called to play the unexpected role of an earthly father.**

One Love is protecting the innocent.

Many **Love is embodying the hope of righting the wrongs in the world.**

One Today, as we light the fourth candle of Advent, the candle of Love, we remember the path we traveled this Advent season. May our love be fueled with the Hope, Peace, and Joy promised through the birth of the Christ child.

Many **We are ready for the light!**

(The candle of Love is lit, and the congregation sings a hymn of your choice.)

Invitation to the Offering

Never renowned for the breadth
of her talents—though she has many,
Elizabeth weaves with utility
“only what's useful,” just like the blanket
swaddling her infant son, teething
its corner into shreds. “This one's for Mary's son.
You have your own!” She laughs, pushing his grasping
fingers off. “Some heaven to warm his skin.”
Years pass. John grows up, lives in the wild, wearing scraps
from his blanket—every now and then, comes home
to check on aging Liz and help her at the loom.

Prayer of Dedication

We rise together within a covenant of love, energized in our faith, embodying the hope that the coming light will right this world. The gifts of our offering today are a beacon of hope, peace, joy, and love—given freely with compassion. As it says in Micah 5:4, “And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord his God. And they shall live secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth.” Amen.

CHRISTMAS EVE/CHRISTMAS DAY

Isaiah 9:2-7; Luke 2:1-14 (15-20)

Lighting the Christ Candle

One Rejoice, for God is with us. We are not alone.

Many **We gather as the beloved community of God to hear the timeless story of Christ's birth.**

One There is reason for our hope and joy.

Many **God's holy light shines forth from the shadows of our world.**



The Congregation sings the first verse of Child in the Manger (to the tune of Morning Has Broken):

**Child in the manger, infant of Mary,
Outcast and stranger, Lord of all.
Child who inherits all our transgressions,
All our demerits on him fall.**

One God's son has come for all people.

Many Emmanuel, God with us.

One His message of peace flows among those God favors.

Many We pray for courage to embrace the good news he brings.

The Congregation sings the second verse of Child in the Manger:

**Once the most holy, Child of salvation,
Gently and lowly, lived below.
Now as our glorious, Mighty Redeemer
See him victorious, o'er each foe.**

One The authority of ages is his.

Many Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting One, Prince of Peace.

One Glory to God in the highest.

Many Surely the light has come.

The Congregation sings the third verse of Child in the Manger:

**Prophets foretold him, infant of wonder
Angels behold him, on his throne.
Worthy our Savior, of all our praises
Happy forever are his own.**

(The Christ candle is lit.)

Invitation to the Offering

Vines, clinging to their host trees, unhitch,
dance with each other in the wind as leaves
and pine needles ring around their stems, sticks
a-rattle on the earth. The wilderness breathes
out, astonished by the sky, whose clouds
marble the gray, surrounding a disk
of starlight cracking through shadow:
a signal to the sand and sea, dew and dust.
"Rise from this earth, your bed, and celebrate!"
the light hollers, "There is a child born tonight,
a fire burns amidst the frost. Wake up!"
Following earth, the church announces Christ;
each atom, calling to its neighbor, comes to life,
cells giving of themselves: the body thrives.



Prayer of Dedication

"The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness on them light has shined." We awake from the shadows on this Christmas Eve/Day to the promised light, and we rejoice for it has truly arrived! On this Eve/Day of hope, peace, joy, and love may our offering emerge into the light of compassion for all who serve our faith. Amen.

LITURGY FOR ANY TIME OF YEAR #1

Proverbs 25:6-7, Hebrews 13:1-8, 15-16

Call to Worship

One Come; let us gather together to worship.

Many **We gather with our minds open to hear the word of God.**

One We challenge ourselves to live our lives as Christ lived for us.

Many **We are ready to be in relationship with God, knowing we may need to step out of our comfortable lives to do so.**

One May our time together today energize us for the work we have yet to do.

Many **And remind us that it is work we do in unity with each other and with God.**

One Let us be intentional with how we live in community this week.

Many **Let our service to others be inspired by our worship.**

All: **Praise be to God!**

Invitation to the Offering

A whistle penetrates the silence,
and you, a child, submerged in the water
of formation, swim to the surface.
You poke your head through the ripples "Mother?
Father? Who calls out in this place?" You stand,
drops falling from your skin, down into the pool,
percuss along with the shrill address. Your hands
are heavy, you've yet to use them, but the call
entices, so you reach in its direction,
purse your mouth, and whistle to the one who claims
you and you in turn are its subsistence,
the fruit of your lips confessing their name.
Your flesh is God's refrain, your mind, your soul,
and you, the answer, complete the eternal.

Prayer of Dedication

May we come forward in love and hope as we share this gift of our generosity with those in need. God, help us to remember that existing in relationship with one another means we are bound to one another in community. Let us honor those who sacrifice for our faith. For as we are told in Hebrews 13:2, "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it." Amen.



LITURGY FOR ANY TIME OF YEAR #2

Exodus 32:7-14, Luke 15: 1-10

Call to Worship

(The congregation is invited to stand and turn as they are able. The Call to Worship will include the completion of a circle by making 90 degree turns, one at a time, before speaking each line. The Worship Leader may stay in position or turn "opposite" or LEFT of the congregation, so all are facing the same direction.)

One Please rise as you are able for our Call to Worship.
As we come to worship in this holy place, we seek guidance from the one who surrounds us
with light and love wherever we go.

(Congregation turns 90 degrees to the RIGHT before speaking.)

**Many God calls us to action against the injustices in the world, but we often find
ourselves wandering from God's path.**

One How quickly we turn from our obligations as part of God's community.

(Congregation makes another 90 degree turn RIGHT before speaking.)

**Many We turn from our neighbors. We turn from the strangers in our lives. Sometimes we even
turn from God.**

One God knows our hearts and our deepest desires. God comforts us through our times of loss,
and our times of being lost.

(Congregation makes another 90 degree turn RIGHT before speaking.)

Many God's love is like a compass. It inspires our every step before we even take it.

One Let us encourage one another and embrace our strength in unity. Together we share the joy
of turning back to the path that leads us to God.

(Congregation makes another 90 degree turn RIGHT before speaking, and all are facing forward again.)

Many We rejoice when we are reunited with the light and love that calls us home.

Invitation to the Offering

Pebbles disturbed from rest by the north wind
blowing through the desert, speak of your return
and for the life of me, their murmuring
and gossip boil my love into a fury.
I would become a vulture if you collapsed
on your path. I'd peck at your exhausted limbs,
eagerly, carry you up in rapture!
But the closer you come to me, my sins
reveal themselves in your fear: what am I
that makes my own baby quiver? The distance
you built between us saved both parent and child,
and gained perspective on my intemperance.
If anger from below feeds on anger from above,
what could happen if love would feed on love?

Prayer of Dedication

"Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it?" Nor do we leave behind one that is lost or hidden from our view, but we rejoice in their being found again. Through the strength of our shared covenant with God and one another, we bring this generous offering to those in great need. May it be blessed with graciousness and love. Amen.



Making Ends Meet in Small Church Ministry

The Rev. Herbert and Hilda Zimmerman



Born in 1923, Herb Zimmerman was the first in his family to attend college. Following graduation from Yankton College in South Dakota, Herb attended seminary, married Hilda, and embarked on what became 52 years of local church ministry. Over those years, Herb served congregations in Oklahoma, Nebraska, North Dakota, Montana, Idaho, Washington, South Dakota, and Minnesota.

Ministry in those primarily small churches involved the whole family: Herb saw to pastoral duties, Hilda led ladies' groups and organized service projects, their children provided backup on organ and piano and led youth group activities. Family was not only the foundation for ministry with those churches, it was essential for economic survival. Salaries were small, and because each church had a parsonage, "Dad never accumulated assets, had neither retirement nor savings," says Sharon, the eldest child. "But my parents were industrious, talented, and smart. They survived by always having a garden, by growing and putting away their own food."

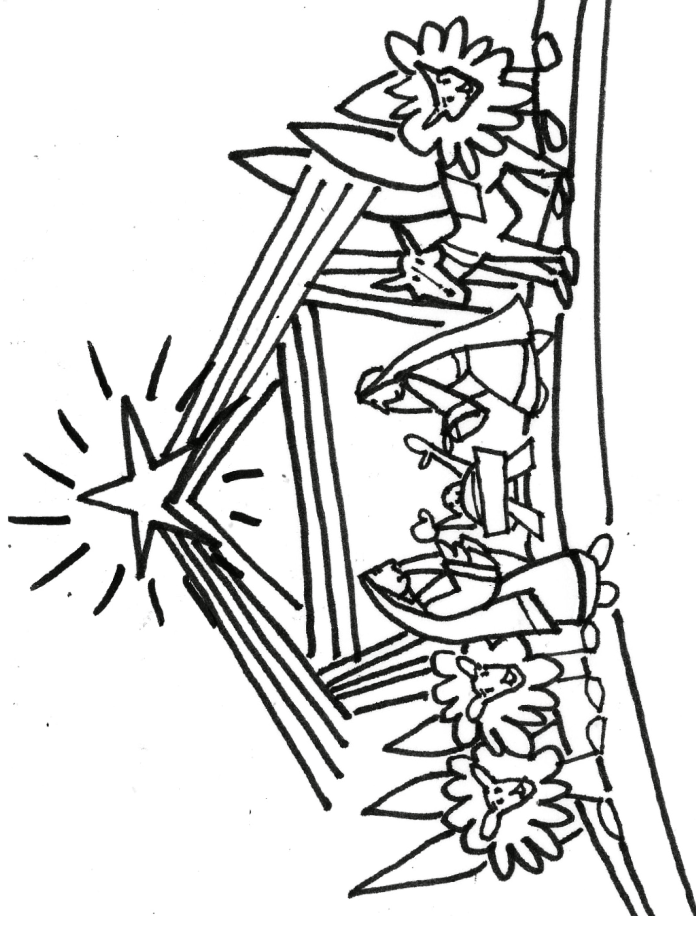
Though Hilda held full-time jobs during the Zimmerman's years of ministry, "at the age they should be retiring, they had no money and no place to go." Herb was a skilled carpenter, so when opportunity arose to clear a lumber yard, he and family members used the wood to construct a home in Alexandria, Minnesota. The arrival of city water, sewer, and higher taxes were expenses they couldn't afford, and the couple lived in smaller homes in the years that followed, always near family who continued to help them make ends meet.

Herb and Hilda began receiving assistance from UCBMA before his retirement in 1998, and that has continued for Hilda since Herb's death in 2009. That and a small Social Security benefit provide enough today for her to survive financially.

"My father was a progressive voice in often conservative country and was so very excited about the UCC as it began," recalls Sharon. "He was in at the beginning, and got the churches he served to join. He was active in conference ministries and youth camps and attended General Synods." That calling to small church ministry and wider church involvement, though, came with financial burden—eased by help provided through the Christmas Fund. "I'm so grateful, it's beyond words. I don't know how they would have made it without this assistance."

★ 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

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.

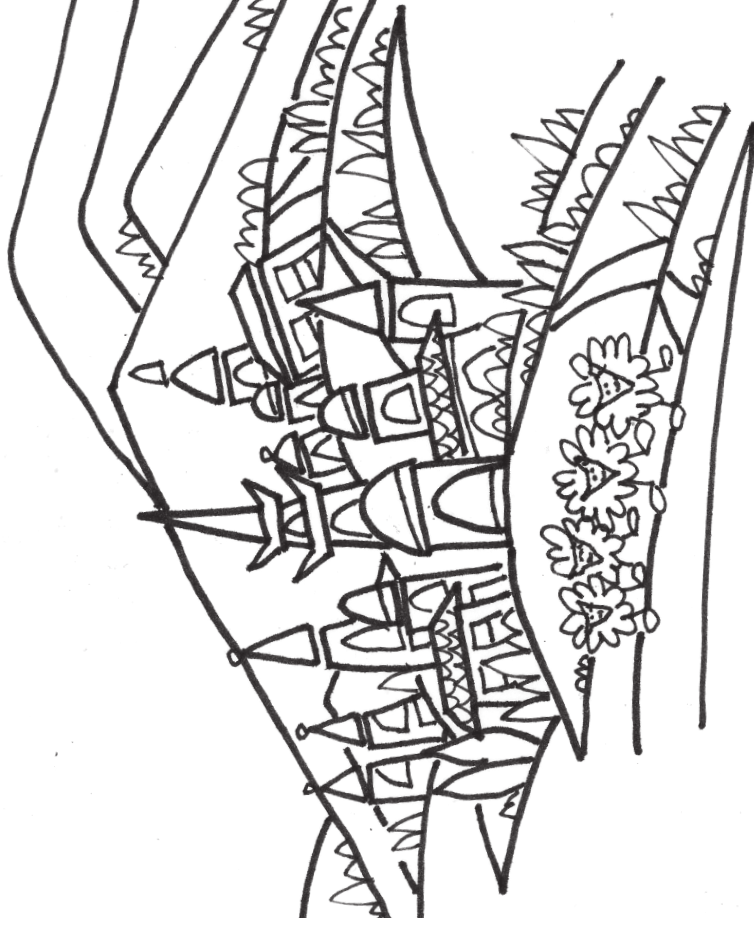
Historically, Christian educators have been among the lower-paid staff members of local churches, a pattern that continues to this day. Shouldering the responsibility for nurturing the faith in young and old, "Christian educators are often not rewarded for that deep commitment." Now, knowing that retired 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

The Church Has Been the Heart of My Life

The Rev. Victoria Snow



Victoria Snow knows how to multi-task. A necessary skill for any local church pastor, successfully managing work and home responsibilities is indispensable if you're also a single parent of three children.

"It hasn't always been easy," says Victoria, "but it's always been the support of the UCC that got me through it." Clergy groups she belonged to were her "rock." "They helped me raise my kids."

Having grown up in New Hampshire, Victoria served churches in New England until 2015, when she became Pastor of Community Congregational Church, UCC, in New Port Richey, Florida.

For as long as Victoria can remember, the church has been there for her. She said, "I am dyslexic, and I struggled in school and had very low self-esteem. But the church was my lifesaver! When I was a young teenager, my pastor, Rev. William Cunitz, encouraged me to participate in church activities. When I went to Andover Newton Theological School, each spring and fall the Men's Group at my home church would dedicate the proceeds from their famous Roast Beef Suppers to pay for my books in seminary."

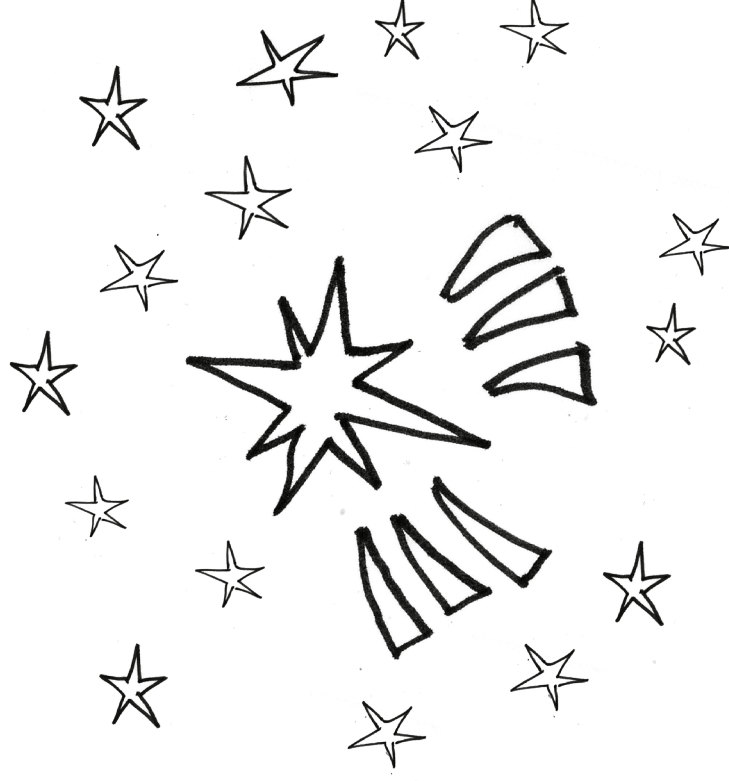
Last fall, Victoria's oldest child was hospitalized. Nearly a year later, Victoria is still making payments on that hospital stay. At around the same time, Victoria was in an automobile accident and her car was totaled. This was followed by a costly dental procedure necessary to prevent the loss of her teeth. The United Church Board for Ministerial Assistance provided Victoria with an emergency grant to help her through this difficult period.

"With so much coming at me at once, financially, I wasn't sure how I would manage. I was able to receive a gift from the Christmas Fund to get my teeth and gums treated. I am very grateful for this help," said Victoria.

"The church has been the heart of my life. It is because of the church that I am the person I am today. Without all those faithful people who believed in me, I would not be serving Jesus Christ or God's people today."

★ 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

Reflecting the Love of Jesus Christ

The Rev. Nancy Miller



Nancy Miller grew up a “P.K.” – a preacher’s kid – the daughter of Edwin A. Randle, a minister in the United Church of Christ. Growing up, she witnessed first-hand the stress of pastoral ministry. She informed her father that she wasn’t enough of a masochist to be a minister and chose a career as a botanist instead. When she at last accepted her call to ministry, her father reminded her of that long-ago conversation. “You mean after all these years you’ve become a masochist?”

Nancy received her Master of Divinity degree in 1983 from the Starr King School for Ministry in Berkeley, California. She was called to serve Trinity Congregational UCC in Weaverville, California, where she remained until her retirement in 2000.

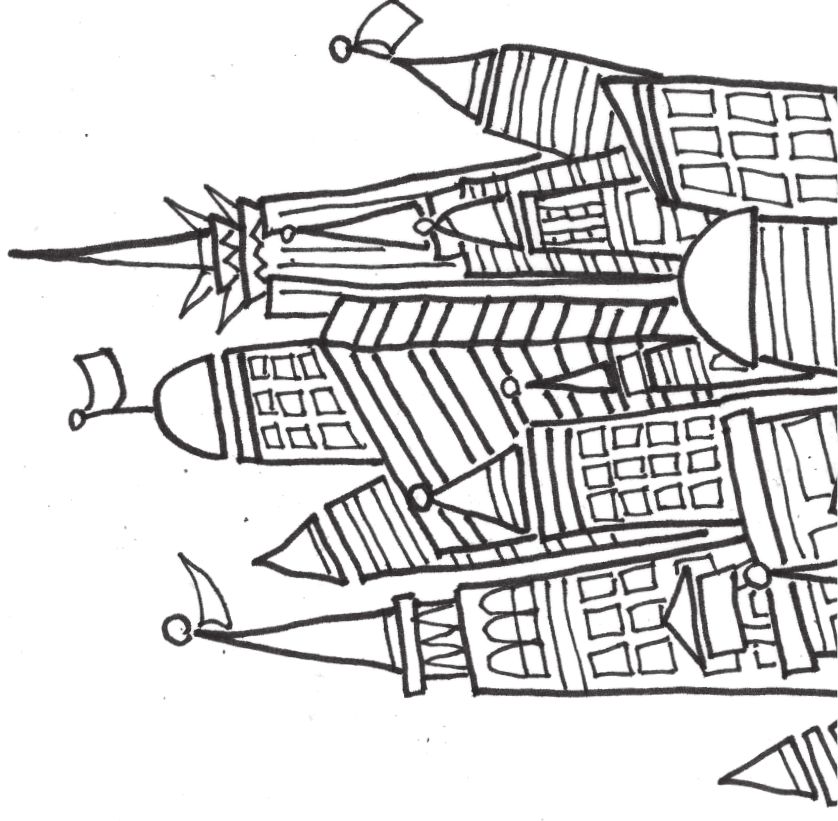
In the beginning of her time at Trinity, Nancy encountered some resistance to her ministry because she was a woman—this was the early 80’s, when female pastors were a rarity. But over time, acceptance grew, as Nancy’s presence impacted the church and community in positive ways. Along with colleagues, she formed a youth group with Weaverville’s Lutheran and Roman Catholic churches, helped to start a food pantry, and was instrumental in establishing the first hospital chaplaincy program and the first ministerial association in the area.

Nancy has long been familiar with the Christmas Fund. She remembers her widowed mother receiving Christmas “Thank You” gift checks. “She would call up excited to tell me about it,” she says. Nancy’s own Christmas check “arrives just when it starts to get cold and the fuel bills go up. It’s a real Godsend.”

Now living in Redding, California, Nancy remembers the people who touched her life along the way, especially people like Wendell Miller, a retired minister who preached in her place for a month each year so that she could take time off. People like Wendell, she says, were “lights” in her life, reflecting the love of Jesus Christ. She continues to experience that love through the Christmas Fund. “It is kind of like a light that goes on through time,” she says, reflecting on the steadfast generosity of those who faithfully support the Christmas Fund each year with their gifts.

★ 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

Authors of Worship Resources

Our special thanks to the following students and professor at United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities (United) in New Brighton, Minnesota. Affiliated with the United Church of Christ, United was the first seminary in mainline Protestantism with an ecumenical charter. The founders intended that the seminary should pioneer new ways to educate people for ministry in a changing world. United is a vibrant, creative, caring, and challenging place in which to pursue theological education. To learn more, visit www.unitedseminary.edu.



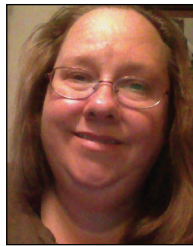
Max Yeshaye Brumberg-Kraus is a playwright, poet, and performing artist living in St. Paul, Minnesota. He is the co-founder of the House of Larva Drag Co-Operative and has done work with Pangea World Theatre, In the Heart of the Beast Puppet & Mask Theatre,

the Rochester Arts Center, and Patrick's Cabaret. Max's art explores how trauma and memory live in the body, the relationship between the holy and the embodied, the formation of LGBTQ identities and communities in history, and theatre as a form of healing. When not performing or writing, Max blogs and curates social media for the Marketing and Communications department at United, where he is also a student pursuing a Master's degree with a concentration in Theology and the Arts.



Melissa Miller believes passionately that, as spiritual beings, art gives us a way to connect to something bigger than ourselves. Serving as a Children's Ministry Director for over 10 years, she has used art as outreach in faith formation to build a sense of

community, to provide ministry for working parents, and as outreach to homebound friends. She has a Certificate in Arts and Spirituality for Spiritual and Religious Leaders from United and is currently a student in the Master of Arts program with an arts concentration.



Lisa Myers is a Master of Divinity student at United with a dual concentration in Theology and the Arts and Interfaith Chaplaincy. She serves as Worship Arts Ministry facilitator at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Minnetonka, Minnesota, where it is her goal

to integrate the arts, pastoral care, and worship into deeply meaningful and resonating worship experiences for her congregation.



The Rev. Dr. Cindi Beth Johnson (Advisor) is the director of The Intersection: Wilson Yates Center for Theology & the Arts and Professor in the Practice of Theology and the Arts at United. She is an ordained minister in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in

America and the board chair for the Society for the Arts in Religious and Theological Studies (SARTS). Her work has been published in *Visual Theology: Forming and Transforming the Community through the Arts*; *Arts, Theology and the Church: New Intersections*; and *Teaching for a Multifaith World*. She enjoys building collaborations with artists and local arts organizations, in particular as a Creative Community Leadership Fellow with Intermedia Arts.

Artist of "The Light Is Surely Coming"



Ted Dawson is a graphic designer and illustrator whose clients include the New York Philharmonic, United Church of Christ, ASPCA, Bailey House, Rutgers University, CancerCare, and American Musical and Dramatic Academy. Ted recently illustrated two children's books: **Hermie the Laughing Hyena** and **Sophie's Story**. See more of his work at www.tdawsonstudio.com. Ted is a member of Judson Memorial Church of New York City, affiliated with the United Church of Christ and the American Baptist Churches USA.



5 Ways to Support The United Church of Christ

UCC Basic Support

Provides funding for Conferences and the national ministries of the United Church of Christ – Wider Church Ministries, Local Church Ministries, Justice and Witness Ministries, General Ministries, and the Pension Boards.

UCC Special Mission Offerings

United Church of Christ Special Mission Offerings (SMOs) exist to allow congregations and individuals to meet people at points of critical need in their lives. Though many options exist for direct, individual support of these needs, the SMOs allow a common witness and make a collective positive impact. We believe these SMOs collectively serve to lift people closer to the abundance and wholeness to which Jesus Christ has called us to work together to bring about.

Our church has identified four areas where these critical human needs exist:

- in places lacking health and educational resources and where disaster has struck;
- within systems of injustice that oppress daily life and opportunity;
- in the lives of church leaders without sufficient resources to live with dignity;
- in the nurture of youth and congregations just beginning their lives of faith.

Order promotional materials for any of the specific offerings by calling United Church of Christ Resources at **1.800.537.3394** or at **www.uccresources.com**.

The Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund: Remembering Those Who Serve Our Church

Helps provide pension and health premium supplementation to lower-income retired church workers, emergency assistance to clergy or lay church employees in need, and Christmas “Thank You” Gift Checks to hundreds of annuitants; administered by the Pension Boards. **December 23, 2018/December 22, 2019**

One Great Hour of Sharing: Giving Help, Hope and Life

Channels resources for international programs in health, education, agricultural development, emergency relief, refugee ministries, and both international and domestic disaster response; administered by Wider Church Ministries, Global Sharing of Resources. **March 31, 2019**

Strengthen the Church: Faithfully Building the Body of Christ

Strengthen the Church funds efforts to reimagine and build the future of the United Church of Christ. Shared at the Conference and national levels, Strengthen the Church largely supports youth ministries and full-time leaders for new churches in parts of the country where the UCC voice has not been heard.

June 9, 2019

Neighbors in Need (NIN): Justice and Compassion Like a Mighty Stream

Supports ministries of justice and compassion throughout the United States. One-third of NIN funds support the Council for American Indian Ministry (CAIM). Two-thirds of the offering is used by the UCC’s Justice and Witness Ministries (JWM) to support a variety of justice initiatives, advocacy efforts, and direct service projects through grants.

October 6, 2019



WHERE TO DONATE

Thank you for your gifts to the Christmas Fund! You may remit your offerings:

By making a secure online donation at www.christmasfund.org

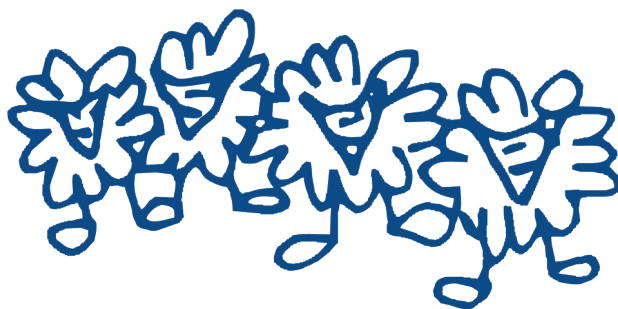
-or-

To Your Conference Office

-or-

Directly to:

The Pension Boards-United Church of Christ
Christmas Fund
75 Remittance Drive, Suite 1637
Chicago, IL 60675



RESOURCES & EXTRA SUPPLIES

Promotional resources available at www.christmasfund.org

Extra supplies of envelopes, posters, and coloring books are available at UCC Resources by calling **1.800.537.3394** or visiting www.uccresources.com.

FURTHER ASSISTANCE

If you have any questions regarding how the Christmas Fund is used, or how to make a major or planned gift, please contact:

Rev. Krista L. Betz, Director, Ministerial Assistance, kbetz@pbucc.org

Rev. Dr. Jonathan B. Lee, Philanthropy Officer, jlee@pbucc.org



@pensionboardsucc



<http://bit.ly/PBMEDIA>



www.christmasfund.org



@pensionboards