



At the age of 15, Jeri Abbott decided to be a missionary to China. When her late husband, Donald, was in seminary and felt his own calling to that ministry, their enduring missionary partnership was forged. The couple first served in the former Rhodesia beginning in 1950, with Don teaching and Jeri providing office support for a school and hospital. "I had an aptitude for it, and enjoyed relating so closely to the students." The Abbotts' four children were all born during their 16 years there, a term that ended when the couple was deported for their support of the struggle for liberation. After serving a church in Ndola, Zambia, for two years, the Abbotts returned to the U.S., but soon felt the pull back to foreign missions, and spent four years in Turkey.

The Abbotts' commitment to the missionary life continued as they returned and settled at Koinonia Partners in Georgia, an intentional, diverse Christian community. In 1986, Jeri and Don returned to an independent Zimbabwe and stayed for one school term before Don's health necessitated travel back to the U.S. He died two days after their return.

Jeri "felt very strongly that the Chikore Mission in Zimbabwe was my spiritual home," and so returned to teach and serve as chaplain there for four more years, until 1993. Once back in America, Jeri visited the UCC congregations that had supported the Abbotts' work, reveling in the opportunity "to meet people and tell them about the wonderful people in Zimbabwe."

Today Jeri lives among many other retired UCC pastors and missionaries at Uplands Village in Tennessee. The pension supplements she receives through the Christmas Fund Offering "have helped specifically when rent has continued to go up, and so made life easier and less worrisome. I am truly grateful." The check she receives at Christmas allows her to provide gifts for her grandchildren. This missionary couple blessed many during their long partnership; today Jeri receives continued blessings from the church they served so faithfully.

★ THE CHRISTMAS FUND

for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund



In 2015, gifts to the Christmas Fund enabled:

- Small pension supplementation for 464 retired clergy and lay employees - \$1,500,203
- Health benefits supplementation for 235 retired clergy and lay employees - \$452,561
- Emergency grants for 58 individuals and families - \$91,694
- Christmas "Thank You" gift checks to 528 retired clergy and lay employees - \$211,200

Your gift in 2016 will be combined with the gifts of others to continue this vital mission. Thank You!