

Mission Moment

The Christmas Fund

Have you ever experienced the feeling that you were faced with an insurmountable problem, agonized over it, prayed about it, and almost despaired of finding a solution?

Then—unexpectedly—someone, some organization, even a vague memory of a possible way out of the problem came to you. What a relief! What a blessing! Was this, indeed, an answer to prayer?

These circumstances come to us all, active and retired ministers included. “How are we going to pay those hospital bills?” “I know I need hearing aids, but with my meager income, how will I ever afford them?” “The rent is due again, the savings are practically exhausted, and still that search committee hasn't acted.”

In such circumstances, you have provided the needed relief. The Board for Ministerial Assistance was enabled by your contributions to the Christmas Fund to bring relief from painful stress. Even the monetary gift at Christmastime comes to many a retired clergy household as a gift from heaven, arriving just at the time of need.

Emergencies can come at any time. Retirees on small pensions or without a pension altogether are in need of ongoing assistance. The disabled with no expectations of growth in earning power are, nevertheless, able to cope, with your help.

Please share some of your blessings with the “Veterans of the Cross” and “Those who serve the Church” by contributing generously to the Christmas Fund.

December 2008

God is still speaking,



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Let the Children Come

The practice of Christmas gift-giving can be life-affirming and spiritually fulfilling or it can be a habit that depletes our souls. Consider this story told by Bishop Kenneth L. Carder of The United Methodist Church about John Wesley, the eighteenth-century Methodist leader.

A poor girl who visited Wesley one winter day looked cold and hungry. “You seem half starved,” he said. “Have you nothing to cover you but that thin linen gown?” When she said that was all she had, Wesley put his hand in his pocket and found he had scarcely any money left, having just purchased some framed pictures for his rooms. He later wrote of this incident with sarcasm:

“It immediately struck me, will not thy Master say, ‘Well done, good and faithful steward? Thou hast adorned thy walls with the money which might have screened this poor creature from the cold!’ O justice! O mercy! Are not these pictures of the blood of this poor maid?”

This Christmas let us reach out to the children all around us, and especially those living in poverty. “Let the little children come to me... for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs.” (Luke 18:16)

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Don't Forget . . .

Every year, the national offices of the United Church of Christ send a complimentary copy of the UCC's Desk Calendar and Plan Book to every retired UCC clergy person.

And every year, we get thank-you notes and letters—often written in shaky handwriting—expressing appreciation for being “remembered” in this way by the church. “This is the only way I can still feel connected to the United Church of Christ,” writes one who is no longer able to attend church.

It is important that we not forget about those who served so faithfully. But in addition to remembering them, we must help where it is needed. Many ministers and church staff struggle to live on pensions after years of faithful service to the church.

The Christmas Fund is designed to help. This offering is one way to express appreciation for the devotion of church workers. It supplements pension, helps with healthcare costs, and assists with emergency grants for those in financial crisis. Generous contributions from UCC members ease the plight of those who helped establish our proud legacy of service and witness. The need remains great. Your generosity is especially critical to meet it.

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