

## *Christmas Fund Gifts Provided...*

The generous gifts of UCC congregations and individuals to the Christmas Fund enabled the Pension Boards' Ministerial Assistance program to provide some form of Ministerial Assistance to approximately 1,600 persons over the past year:

- Christmas "Thank You" Gift Checks were sent to approximately 900 persons in **2010**. Of those who received checks, 20 are over 100 years of age. The oldest person is 107. One person has received Christmas checks continuously since 1976. The 900 gifts total \$270,000.
- Monthly pension supplementation is being provided to 434 persons. These gifts total \$103,401 per month. A significant part of the annual total of \$1,234,344 comes from the Christmas Fund. (**2011 Data**)
- Quarterly health premium supplementation is being provided to 267 families, totaling \$160,608 per quarter. All of the funding for health premium supplementation is derived from the Christmas Fund. (**2011 Data**)
- Emergency Grants totaling \$38,163.35 were provided to 24 individuals and families from January 1 through July 31, 2011.

These statistics reflect annualized projections as of July 31, 2011. The numbers of persons receiving assistance and the totals of assistance payments fluctuate on a monthly basis.

Lynne Busch was caught off guard the first time someone suggested she pursue a seminary education. True, she had been a lifelong United Church of Christ member and a long-time church and youth volunteer. Both her parents were long-time, active UCC members as well. But at the time, Lynne already had established a career as a paraoptometric, and she had a young daughter to care for.

Lynne had been involved in several youth events, and by the late 1980s, had become the Indiana-Kentucky Conference Director of Youth. When she confided to her mentor, Greg Bain, that she was interested in additional religious instruction to help guide her youth groups, he said "No, you should get a Master of Divinity at Eden Theological Seminary." She said she nearly fell out of her chair.

She decided that she would pursue the degree when she felt it was God's will rather than her own ambition talking to her. God's unmistakable call came to her at a youth event where she felt as if the entire program was speaking directly to her. With her family's help and support, she went back to school, first finishing a Bachelor's degree in Sociology and then receiving an M. Div. from Eden in 1995. Her first year of internship was at a city jail "which some hate, but I loved," then her second year was at Mt. Tabor, "a good proving ground," and finally, Open Arms. In 2008, she left Michigan for Clarksville, Iowa, right before a tornado and resultant flood. Clarksville struggled to recover, but as Lynne says, the people staunchly look out for one another. She remembers the Christmas Fund Offering as one of the ways in which the United Church of Christ has always looked out for those who have faithfully served. "I remember the Christmas Fund from way back. Each year my parents would give the envelope to one of the kids and let them drop the money in."

The generosity of UCC churches and individuals has helped provide Lynne with Ministerial Assistance in the form of emergency grants and an energy assistance grant, as well as financial support to assist with health insurance coverage while she was in seminary. "The Christmas Fund is incredible and I was very blessed many times."

Today, youth work continues to be a priority. She helped develop an activity-based confirmation program that has given rise to a vibrant youth ministry. "We are always the energy church," says Lynne. "Growing up in the Conference like I did, to me nothing is impossible!"

The Third Sunday of Advent  
December 11, 2011

