



December 11, 2016

Why give to The Christmas Fund next Sunday?

Our joy at Christmas is a response to God's promise of new life through the birth of Jesus. It is a joy we are called to share widely, through our witness and gifts, both to loved ones and to distant neighbors.

"It wasn't easy picking up the telephone to share with you my present situation. In fact it was one of the most humiliating experiences of my life although it reminded me that grace still happens. Sometimes we as clergy persons lose sight of God's grace when the negative stuff comes into our lives."

"...thanks so much for sharing your time and ministry with me. Your most gracious gift is appreciated more than words can say as I continue to live in the 'meantime.'"

These eloquent words are from a pastor who is the recipient of the caring and concern of those who contribute to the Christmas Fund Offering.

You have the opportunity to be a part of this ministry that cares for the active and retired clergy and lay employees of the United Church of Christ through your participation in this year's Christmas Fund Offering.

Your gift to the Christmas Fund will not only assist pastors like the one above, but also provide for the Supplementation of Small Annuities, Supplementation of Health Premiums, Emergency Grants, and provide Christmas "Thank You" Gift Checks next December to low-income retirees.

Your gifts are needed more than ever to help the growing number of retirees whose low-income annuities make it difficult to meet increasing living costs. This is your opportunity to participate in God's promise of renewal by enabling this ministry of compassion and care.

However you choose to provide your gift, please know that it is truly appreciated and that it will brighten the life of one of God's servants who is facing a moment of personal need.

- from *The Pension Boards*

Getting to Know:

Grace (Alsace) UCC

2151 Kutztown Rd., Reading, PA 19605



Grace (Alsace) has been serving God and our community since 1732. If you've ever been to the Kutztown Folk Festival, you've heard of our long history of reaching out to those in need – our pastor cared for the infamous Susanna Cox before her hanging in 1809.

Our current membership is very small, but we continue to share the love of God through ministering to others. The

group that makes breakfast at Opportunity House was once pointed out by one resident to another as "the people who brought us Easter" – perhaps the greatest compliment a church could want. The highlight of our year is preparing breakfast on Easter morning, worshipping with them while the meal is cooking. And of course, there are Easter baskets for all the kids. We make breakfast there once a month, on a Sunday morning.

Our CROP Walk team of two raises nearly \$2000 every year, often as the highest contributing team. Our Relay for Life team is equally dedicated. Our candy makers bring in money that is used to benefit a number of service organizations in the area. Our building is home to Path to Holiness (a Spanish language congregation), who reaches out with literacy classes and Bible classes, as well as hosting a meal for Muhlenberg fire and ambulance crews on September 11. We also host an exercise group for local senior citizens and a coin club. Many of our members participate in their own service projects.

We even helped to chase away some local drug dealers after the local police officers used one of our education rooms for a stake out!

Worship at Grace (Alsace) is in a traditional style, and we offer Sunday School to our kids. Like many small churches, we've learned how to face anything with humor and grace. We struggle and we strive, and although we worry about our future, we take each day as one more day to walk with God and one another.



Prayers are requested for Grace (Alsace) UCC in Reading and Rev. Bonnie Dalious.