



MINUTE FOR MISSION

Time does not erase family's gratitude for Board of Pensions assistance program

Jim Irwin was looking forward to college graduation and medical school when he received news of his father's death on a cold February day in 1962. Jim's father, Rev. James Walter Irwin, had a fatal heart attack at the age of 58.

Jim's parents had raised five sons on the modest salary Rev. Irwin earned serving small rural parishes in Illinois, Pennsylvania, California, Missouri, and Kansas. When their father died, three of Jim's brothers were pursuing either undergraduate or advanced degrees, while another had just begun his pastoral career. Their mother, Nell, was left with limited financial resources and would soon need a place to live. Mrs. Irwin suffered from Parkinson's disease, which made the situation even more challenging.

The congregation Rev. Irwin had served paid her his salary for a year and allowed her to live in the manse for several months. She and her youngest son, then a college junior, moved into a rental house where she lived until he graduated, when Mrs. Irwin again found herself in need of housing. Her anxiety about being able to afford a decent dwelling was relieved thanks to assistance from the PC(USA)'s Board of Pensions. The Board provided a monthly housing grant that enabled her to live at Sterling Presbyterian Manor in Sterling, Kansas, until her death in 1979.

Had it not been for the assistance, Jim says he and his brothers "would have figured something out." Yet at the time of their father's death, none was in a position to offer much help.

The Board of Pensions, using gifts from the Christmas Joy Offering, continues to assist current and retired church servants and their families who find themselves in challenging financial circumstances. The Board receives

half of the Offering to provide this assistance, while the other half goes to Presbyterian-related racial ethnic schools.

Jim finished medical school and chose surgery as his specialty. His brothers completed their educations and entered successful careers as well. Their gratitude for the assistance the Board of Pensions provided their mother continues.

Jim and his wife, Francie, faithfully support the Christmas Joy Offering through their congregation, First Presbyterian Church in Othello, Washington. When Jim gives, he remembers the help his mother received.

"The help my mom received was invaluable," Jim says. "We've always supported the Christmas Joy Offering because it contributes to the well-being of those who have made a life decision to serve the church. It helps them not to have to choose between housing and food."

Because of gifts to the Christmas Joy Offering, fewer people have to make such difficult choices. Gifts to the Offering help current and retired church workers and their families navigate difficult financial circumstances. Your gift will make a difference.

LET US PRAY:

Gracious God, we give thanks for people who faithfully serve your church. Sustain them in times of celebration and in times of struggle. Help us support those whom you have called into your service. Amen.