

# CHRISTMAS JOY OFFERING

## MINUTE FOR MISSION: IN CHRISTIAN CARE AND CONCERN FOR ONE ANOTHER



**140**

Shared Grants distributed by  
the Board of Pensions in 2012.



When Pam Brackbill hears music, her husband, Pastor Tom Brackbill, says her eyes sparkle and light up.

“She continues to be very social and engages, but loses her words very quickly,” Tom says about his wife of 37 years. “But she always has a smile on her face, even when she doesn’t know why.”

Tom and Pam met while attending Maryville College, a Presbyterian school, and married after she graduated. Tom attended Princeton Seminary before serving in both rural and large congregations over the last 33 years.

Through it all, Pam supported him, raised their three children, and, as a lifelong Presbyterian, understood his call to serve God.

“We were always working as a team and making decisions in life together,” Tom says. “It is sad to see when she cannot make those decisions or participate in that.”

Pam was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease two years ago following a year of testing. It’s something the Brackbills never expected. They had plans and ideas for retirement, but those plans had to shift—to caring for Pam.

It was then that Tom turned to the church and his faith for support—including using the Assistance Program of the Board of Pensions to help provide respite care for Pam. That program is partly funded by money you give to the Christmas Joy Offering.

“We’re taught to be independent and are always trying to do everything the best we can without asking for help, but there is a point when we need to ask,” Tom said.

The respite care, paid partly by the Assistance Program, makes it possible for him to continue serving as pastor of First Presbyterian Church in Alma, Michigan, a church of about 250 members. He says the congregation has long supported senior issues in the community, including hosting an Alzheimer’s support group called “Good Company” for the last 12 years.

The program offers music, puzzles, and socialization—all things that seem to ease the effects of the disease on Pam. Tom says he gets “glimpses” of his wife’s soul in those moments. He also says he believes it’s by God’s grace that he was called to serve a congregation that offers the program, coming to the congregation even before his wife was diagnosed.

“I can’t imagine going through this without a strong faith and church. I believe God oversees us and loves us, and the grace he’s offered us in so many ways helps us deal with the day-to-day frustrations and the more difficult issues in life.”

For Tom that includes the Assistance Program, supported by congregations throughout the PC(USA) through this offering. As Tom puts it, “This gives the community a chance to respond in Christian care and concern for one another.”

***Please give generously.***