

MINUTE FOR MISSION

“IT MADE A HUGE DIFFERENCE”

After her car went flying off the road and rolled over in a stubbled cornfield, first responders believed the accident had taken the life of the Rev. Shelley Wiley.

She had fallen unconscious while driving because of an epileptic seizure, a condition that had been diagnosed years earlier and, until her accident, had been under control. The good news is that she recovered and her new medication works well, but Ohio law requires people who suffer seizures to cease driving for six months.

Rev. Wiley worried that her inability to drive would compromise her efforts to serve the congregation she pastored at that time, Honey Creek Presbyterian Church in New Carlisle, Ohio. How would she be able to connect with the people she loved? Six months seemed like such a long time.

While she struggled with how she might adapt, the Presbytery of the Miami Valley suggested a plan to pay drivers to take her to work-related duties — church, presbytery meetings and pastoral visits — at the same rate as Uber drivers in the area. It involved a shared grant between the Assistance Program of the Board of Pensions, the presbytery, and her congregation. Gifts to the Christmas Joy Offering support the Assistance Program, which helps current and past church leaders and their families who are in critical financial need.

What a relief, and a blessing.

“People who spent a lot of time driving me talked about how good it had been for them to get uninterrupted time to sit in the car with the pastor, chat and get to know each other better personally, and have occasional conversations about theology, polity and the future of this small church,” Wiley said.

One driver discovered a passion for ministry with homebound church members. She became an elder and coordinates the congregation’s ministry with these members.

“She found a whole new ministry for herself visiting with shut-ins,” Wiley said. “She discovered she loved it.”

Rev. Wiley said she had long known about the Assistance Program and the critical help it provides, but her experience helped her see another dimension of the program’s usefulness.

“Central in my mind as to why give to the Christmas Joy Offering is that it is going to allow ministry to happen, and you just never know what that ministry is going to be,” she explained. “The church I was serving is a small church, and it didn’t have a lot of reserve funds. It really made a huge difference.”

And isn’t that what we always say: “When we all do a little, it adds up to a lot.”

Let Us Pray ~

*In Jesus the world received
your perfect gift,
your presence with humanity.*

*May the gifts we share
be with those who need
creative support to
continue their ministry
and live out their call.*

Amen.