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**A Little Extra Help to Keep the Home Fires Burning**

Seems like in one way or another, Jack and Kate Eisel have always been busy putting out fires — unless they were building them.

The couple met fireside in 2009 at Zephyr Point Presbyterian Conference Center, where Kate was the conference manager, and Jack, a recently retired pastor, was volunteering in the maintenance department.

"Since our courtship developed through long talks in front of the fire during snowy winter nights,” recalled Kate, "sitting by a fire is very special to us."

As for Jack, following a long, second career spent almost entirely in interim ministry, he was no stranger to fighting the frequent fires inherent in transitional situations. Throughout his career, Jack served 15 interim pastorates over 25 years, in 12 different presbyteries throughout the western U.S. There God used his gifts to help congregations navigate through challenging and often difficult times.

These days both Jack and Kate candidly admit that moving forward in their own post-retirement lives has required some careful planning — and maybe a little firefighting. Kate lost her job unexpectedly when she was not yet of retirement age, and the couple found themselves relying heavily on Jack’s modest assets.

“When we first retired, life was extremely restrictive,” Kate said. “I often had to ask myself, ‘Can I really go get that carton of milk right now?’ Jack’s Social Security and pension were very modest, so we still wondered how we were going to pay the bills *and* put food on the table.”

As a minister himself, as well as the son of a Presbyterian minister, Jack had always known that help was available through the [Assistance Program](https://www.pensions.org/your-path-to-wholeness/assistance-program) of the [Board of Pensions](https://www.pensions.org/), a resource he occasionally commended to his colleagues. He just didn’t know that one day he might need that help.

Through the Assistance Program, supported by your gifts to the Christmas Joy Offering, the Eisels were able to receive an Income Supplement to help alleviate their financial burden.

“The PC(USA) long ago recognized the need to support those who served faithfully, ordained or otherwise, beyond their active service and into retirement,” said Lucas McCool, Assistance Program operations manager. “Stability in retirement can be a weight lifted and one that allows for retirees like Jack and Kate to live with emotional and financial flexibility.”

"Knowing the impact of the programs that the Christmas Joy Offering supports, it has always been important for me to promote the offering in the many churches I’ve served,” said Jack. “I’ve gotten to highlight the wonderful things the offering provides and to encourage people to participate in this extraordinary generosity. And now, years later, I have firsthand knowledge of what a life-changing difference it can make.”

For Jack and Kate, it helps to keep those cherished home fires burning.

***Let us pray:***

*Draw us near to the light of the manger, generous God, to see your perfect gift to us. By your grace, stoke the fires of our compassion that all might know the gift of your love.* ***Amen****.*