



ABUNDANT IMPACT

SPRING 2020

The following stories represent the abundant impact generous donations make for the people United Church Homes serves, including support for pastoral care, the Ruth Frost Parker Center for Abundant Aging, affordable housing and Ohio's Hospice at United Church Homes. Thank you!



UCH Warriors on the Frontlines

In a world filled with stories of anxiety, a common refrain is, "What can we do?"

This question is familiar to anyone in nonprofit service, especially these days. With the whole world focused on fighting the COVID-19 pandemic, our first instinct is to act. Our volunteers and friends have started asking how they can support our residents and staff.

This is a beautiful question.

I am reminded that United Church Homes emerged just before the worldwide Spanish Flu pandemic in 1918. United Church Homes continues its mission, despite what may become our biggest challenge in our 104-year history.

We began preparations in late January as the COVID-19 crisis gained its foothold in Washington state. Of course, we knew the virus was dangerous for older adults, especially those with other chronic conditions. So, marshalling all the information we could gather, we enhanced our policies and procedures and set up isolation areas. We then conducted additional training on the virus and how to safeguard everyone in UCH communities. And we worked with our vendors to ensure an adequate stock of food, equipment and supplies. We have hired extra help to assist with all the daily tasks our residents depend on. In the last week of March, we launched our virtual visit guide program, enabling family members and friends to connect through an iPad or tablet with our residents.

Our staff is rising to this immense challenge. You can be proud of each one of them; I know we are! If there was ever a situation that called forth the United Church Homes "Spirit," this is it.

So, what can you do? Our faithful friends, you have stood by this organization and supported us through good times and bad. Our generous neighbors and friends have been donating games, puzzles, large-print books, craft supplies and other items keep residents involved in community life safely. Some have sent donations to help us with the added costs of providing for the residents during this pandemic.

Recalling the days of World War II, when volunteers rolled bandages, flattened cans for recycling and otherwise supported the war effort, some of you may want to sew cloth protective masks for United Church Homes residents. While we must use commercially made, medical masks for our staff, our residents can benefit from a washable, cotton cloth mask. If this interests you, you can find patterns on our website, unitedchurchhomes.org/covid-19. Make as many as you want. Share this with sewing circles or other craft groups. If you live near one of our communities, you can bring them to us during regular business hours or you can also contact us for mailing instructions.

We are doing a lot for our residents and, with your help, we can do even more. Thanks for being such a dedicated family to United Church Homes. We couldn't get through this without your prayers, gifts and financial contributions.

Please enjoy these stories that illustrate how generous donors like you are making an impact to the people we serve at United Church Homes.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kenneth V. Daniel".

Rev. Dr. Kenneth V. Daniel
President and CEO

End of Life:

“Don’t Forget to Remember”



A resident lay quietly in a private room, nearing death, surrounded by family and loved ones. Led by chaplain Rev. Dr. Robert Smitley, they share stories and sing. Rev.

Bob encourages them to remember the life and their relationship with their loved one and one another. **Love.**

Upon death, Rev. Bob waits with the grieving family until the funeral director arrives. Devotedly, he escorts their loved one out the front door as they follow closely behind. **Courage.**

Inside the community, a single white rose is placed on a modest end table in a simple vase. No announcements, no words — this rose is the message, a subtle signal that another beautiful soul has exited the community. **Grief.**

A small white card nestled next to the rose invites others to share encouragement for the family. **Memories.**

Every November, at the annual community memorial service, five large candles surround a candle for each person remembered. Rev. Bob, in his deep, gentle voice announces, “Roll call.” Each family lights a candle, acknowledging the presence of their loved one. **Hope.**



Pastor Bob continues to tell the story of each of the five large candles — all profoundly significant in the ceremony:

1. **Grief** = “The pain of losing you is intense. It reminds us of the depth of our love for you.”
2. **Courage** = “The courage to confront sorrow, to confront each other, to change lives.”
3. **Memory** = “For the times we laughed, the times we cried, the times we were angry with each other, the silly things you did, the caring and the joy you gave us.”
4. **Love** = “We remember that your light will always shine; we cherish the special place in our hearts that will always be reserved for you. We thank you for the gift your living brought to each of us.”
5. **Hope** = “It reminds us of our love and the memories of you that are ours forever. May the glow of the flame be our source of hopefulness now and forever. We love you; we remember you.”

Rev. Dr. Robert Smitley is a chaplain at Trinity Community at Fairborn, an ordained minister in the UCC and a public servant for over 50 years.



Gifts and Joy for All

All 108 residents at Pilgrim Manor experienced the pervasive philanthropic spirit of the Grand Rapids, Michigan, community with an abundance of love during the holidays. They each received a personal gift from Pilgrim Manor staff and a local business partner. Spectrum Health’s Butterworth Hospital gift shop generously provided gifts for residents while care team members raised funds from bake sales to ensure the gift giving included a festive atmosphere.



All 83 residents at two Ohio affordable housing communities received Christmas presents, thanks to United Church Homes Central Office staff in Marion. Inspired by a visit with a resident who doesn’t have family and was experiencing loneliness, Jennifer Ramey, corporate accounting manager, wanted to help low-income older adults experience abundant joy during the holidays. Jennifer shared her idea about how staff could collectively brighten each resident’s Christmas by committing to a donation of just one gift from each staff member. Her idea quickly turned into action. Staff members delivered over 80 gifts, one to each resident of Brownstone Terrace in Marion and Hardincrest in Kenton.

“I took my idea back to my colleagues, and God took care of the rest.”

— Jennifer Ramey,
Corporate Accounting Manager, United Church Homes

All 59 residents at Sterling Place, an affordable housing community in Lakeland, Florida, were surprised to receive 100 percent of the items on their individual Christmas lists. This extreme generosity by an anonymous donor filled their hearts with appreciation.

"We are up against a headwind, supporting older adults, including the aging myths that suggest individuals 60 years and older don't have value anymore and that their lives are on a downward slope," said Rev. John Cramton, a founding funder for **United Church Homes' Ruth Frost Parker Center for Abundant Aging**.

John invested his philanthropic dollars into the center because he cares about the UCH mission to transform aging. He knows the center supports this through education, engagement, outreach and advocacy. Initially, John's motivation was to make sure the center had a strong launch. Now, five years later, he says:

"It is gratifying to know this work is not only making an impact in central Ohio and the wider community but also having national influence."

The Parker Center counters ageist myths with facts, the latest research and technology. Its annual symposium is one way to see United Church Homes' culture change in action. The conference offers a forum to learn and engage with others — perfect means for collaborating new ideas and solutions to an array of challenges. It brings together individuals and organizations who wouldn't necessarily coalesce otherwise.

As a UCH Board member and chair of the Parker Center Advisory Council, John knows this work matters. "The center demonstrates how United Church Homes is a thought leader and not just a place to work or live. It inspires people to think in different ways. It is creating systemic change and transforming the views and assumptions about older adults in our society. It's very exciting to be a part of this movement."

Personally, John is proudest of the work the center is doing in Dayton, Ohio, in collaboration with Rainbow Elder Care of Greater Dayton. "This partnership helps organizations work together to advocate for LGBT seniors who find themselves in difficult circumstances as they age. More organizations are joining us in exploring the unique challenges LGBT older adults face. We want to affirm those who are fearful of moving to a senior living community because they think they won't be accepted. Our work with transgender individuals is especially moving, and I'm pleased that a faith-filled organization like UCH offers them hope."



Rev. John Cramton (center), a member of the United Church Homes Board of Directors and chair of the Ruth Frost Parker Center for Abundant Aging Advisory Council, shares insights about end-of-life care during a panel discussion at the 2018 Parker Center Symposium.

A professional who serves older adults, John is also a caregiver for both his mother and aunt, who have attended the Parker Center's symposiums.

"These thought-provoking experiences have given both of them valuable information and new resources and have inspired our conversations, so they now feel empowered to make important decisions as they age," he said.

John believes engaging with other organizations and thought leaders across the country is in the Parker Center's bright future. These exciting collaborations will expand the impact of their collective work. This year, the Parker Center is working closely with filmmakers Stu Maddux and Joe Applebaum, who produced the award-winning documentary *Gen Silent*, about the challenges LGBT older adults may face when trying to access healthcare or housing. Their next film, *All the Lonely People*, will premier at this year's symposium on Oct. 9 at Nationwide Hotel & Conference Center in Lewis Center, Ohio.

"Recognizing that renowned experts, such as Parker Palmer and Drs. Ira Byock, Laura Carstensen and Joseph Coughlin, know the Parker Center and are influenced by our work speaks to the caliber of the service the center is providing," John said. "When we share good ideas, we are inspired to dream about what might be possible."



Rev. John Cramton serves as a Board member for United Church Homes. He is also an ordained UCC Minister and a hospice chaplain.



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WHAT CAN **WE DO?**



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