



*“From Where I Sit ...”*

## **“The Gift Fund ... Why We Still Have It!”**

Over the past four years I have written several articles about the CME Gift Fund and how it came into being as a successor to the old S. P. W. & O. (Superannuated Preachers, Widows and Orphans) Plan and I will not attempt to repeat what was printed in those earlier articles. However, in this article I will focus on the question of “Why we still have the CME Gift Fund Program?” in light of ¶1035.3 (p. 227) of the 2010 Book of Discipline of the CME Church which states that *“The Superannuated Preachers, Widows, & Orphans (S. P. W. & O.) Plan, having been abolished by the General Conference of 1982, has been replaced by a periodic Gift Plan.”* This statement implied that the Gift Fund Plan had been closed since 1982 to new additions. In light of the above, some might question if there are any remaining current recipients of the Gift Fund Plan and the answer is YES! Yes for several reasons:

- 1) Ministers who were already in the S. P. W. & O. Plan prior to 1982 were automatically included in the Gift Plan although they may have retired at age 65 or later. It is possible for a person who was 65 in 1982 to still be a recipient today at age 97.
- 2) The widow of a minister who died well before retirement age would have been a S. P. W. & O. Plan recipient also at an early age and been transferred into the Gift Plan and continued to be a recipient today at ages as young as 75 or 80.
- 3) Per ¶322.2 (p. 30-31) as stipulated in the First Supplement to the 1974 Discipline (Revised in 1980) following the 1978 General Conference, early participants in the CME (12%) Retirement Plan, prior to 1980, who were required to retire due to mandatory age provisions without having had the opportunity to accumulate a certain amount in their retirement account were also allowed to transfer into the Gift Plan to help compensate for their inability to fully participate in the CME Retirement Plan.
- 4) Those ministers in 3 above who were permitted to transfer into the Gift Plan were also eligible to participate in the full benefits of the Plan meaning that upon their deaths, their widows would continue to receive Gift Plan payments but at 50% of the amounts of their husbands. Again, if they and/or their widows were young enough, they could readily be recipients today at ages as young as their 80's.

Finally I would offer one additional reason as evidence as to why the Gift Fund continues. It is because I have discovered that I know some of the recipients personally. I know Annie Pugh, the widow of the late Reverend W. H. Pugh, who with their congregation came by bus to support my ministry at Phillips Chapel CME Church in Steubenville, OH during my tenure of 1970-1972. Mrs. Pugh is now in Nashville, TN. I also know Lulu James, the widow of the late Reverend Arthur James, with who I fellowshiped during my tenure at Phillips Memorial CME Church in Lexington, KY. Mrs. James is now in Cincinnati, OH.

When I speak with these two widows of the more than 100 recipients who are still claimants on the CME Gift Fund, I am reminded of the opening words of Wesley's hymn that we often sang at the opening of each annual conference, *“And are we yet alive, and see each other's face? Glory and thanks to Jesus give for his almighty grace!”* Although distance precludes our seeing each other's face, through the miracle of cell phones we can at least “hear each other's voice.” And even that is truly a blessing and further evidence as to “Why we still have a Gift Fund Plan!” Or at least that's the way it looks to me ...

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*(Copies of earlier articles may be found on the*

*Personnel Services Webpage of the CME Website at [www.thecmechurch.org](http://www.thecmechurch.org))*