

Shared Grant Program helps family cope with daughter's cancer

Rev. Howell Martin's daughter, Laura, was just 19 when she was diagnosed with breast cancer. Because her treatments began in the fall of 2002 and continued into 2003, the family had to meet its medical deductible for both years. Frequent medical visits to Dallas and Houston meant additional (but not covered) expenses.

"I've served small churches for most of my ministry and we've been largely a month-to-month kind of a household where we make it from paycheck to paycheck,"

Rev. Martin explains. **"We really didn't have much in our savings to deal with this."**

When Rev. Martin's Palo Duro Presbytery learned of the situation, it volunteered \$500 of assistance.

His congregation in Sweetwater, Texas, raised another \$1,000. **"Then the Executive Presbyter told me of the Assistance Program that the Board of Pensions had,"**

Rev. Martin recalls. Through the Board's Shared Grant Program, he received a much-needed additional \$1,500. **"We were really struggling,"** Rev. Martin says. **"When the financial aspect was helped in so many ways, it gave us the freedom to deal with the issues of cancer."**

Having undergone a mastectomy and reconstructive surgery, Laura has now been cancer-free for over a year. She is active in the American Cancer Society and engaged to be married at the end of 2004. **"We feel that people all over the United States are a part of our family and our support,"** Rev. Martin says, **"This is a testimony to Presbyterianism at its best."**

Interview conducted in January 2004.

About the Assistance Program

When the needs of church workers or their families exceed the bounds of the Benefits Plan, personal resources, or other means, our Financial Assistance and Retirement Housing Programs provide an important safety net. These Assistance Programs include:

- Shared Grants
- Emergency Assistance Grants
- Income Supplements
- Retirement Housing
- Housing Supplements
- Seminary Debt Assistance

The Board of Pensions of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) oversees benefits programs for church workers and their families, while being guided by the Biblical principles of community and stewardship.

For information on applying for assistance, call 800-773-7752 or 800-PRESPLAN. Or visit the Board's Web site at www.pensions.org.