

Assistance Program helps a pastor weather two storms

When Hurricane Francis roared over the town of Loxahatchee, FL, it left a large tree hanging precariously above the house of Dr. Gary Cecil, pastor of Palms West Presbyterian Church. **“When Hurricane Jeanne followed three weeks later,”** Dr. Cecil recalls, **“I was waiting for a crash during the night. Instead, another tree broke and took down my fencing.”**

Repairing the damage and removing the trees would cost an estimated \$2,500, none of it covered by Dr. Cecil’s insurance.



Dr. Gary Cecil

Fortunately, the pastor qualified for an emergency assistance grant of \$1,000 from the Board of Pensions Assistance Program.

“I finally managed to get a tree person in some weeks later,” Dr. Cecil says.

“The grant enabled me to pay for that and rectify that situation.”

With his own situation under control, Dr. Cecil was better able to coordinate repairs to his church and assistance to members of

his community. **“The ability to take care of business at home and get my house in order, in a real sense freed me up to begin focusing on some of the other needs in my congregation,”** he says.

“I knew we were a connectional church, but this has shown me that we’re not just talking about a congregation. We’re talking about a presbytery or even General Assembly itself that is interested in pastoral care.”

Interview conducted in January 2005.

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. Available forms of assistance include:

- Shared Grants
- Emergency Assistance Grants
- Income Supplements
- Retirement Housing Supplements
- 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 (800-PRESPLAN) or visit the Board’s Web site at www.pensions.org.