

In 1973, during the first general assembly, the Ministerial Relief Fund was established because the elders of our denomination saw the future financial needs our retired pastors and their families would incur. Today this need has grown in ways they couldn't have seen coming.

Much of today's assistance is to the widows of our Teaching Elders and missionaries who have outlived their husbands and their retirement savings. Many of these ladies are in their 80's and 90's with current incomes near or below the poverty level. Some as low as \$500 a month. Many have serious health issues they can only afford to manage with Ministerial Relief assistance.

Based on a 2011 RBI survey of our pastors and missionaries, the number of retired PCA Teaching Elders will triple over the next 20 years. A significant number of these families will not have sufficient savings to meet their full retirement needs.

In the next 25 years, the projected number of widows needing assistance will quadruple. Currently it takes \$500,000 a year to meet the needs of our church servants. By 2035, it will take \$5.5 million a year.

Scripture is very clear, our Lord expects us, His people to care for the widowed and orphaned among us. We learn in James 1:27, *"Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widow in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world."*

The PCA Ministerial Relief Fund Offering is an opportunity for each of us to demonstrate our Christian compassion by caring for the widows of our church servants who have served so sacrificially and well.