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IMPORTANT UPDATES FROM PC-MEPS

ISSUE 25 | DECEMBER 2010

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Letter from the Editor

Greetings to you, my brothers and sisters, in this season of anticipation and preparation. As I write this, Advent is still weeks away, yet I am keenly aware of my own yearning for the messages of hope, peace, joy, and love that Advent brings.

But where is hope when the new family that started attending church in September simply stops coming, with no word of explanation? What does peace feel like when December financial statements are grim? Where is joy in the midst of grieving a loss—loss of a job or relationship, or loss through death? Who can celebrate love when the news is full of accounts of teen suicide in the face of bullying? The temptation to despair, to grow apathetic, to turn inward is very real.

The season of Advent comes to remind us that we are an “in-between” people, living the moments between the promise and the fruition. And yet we are also the people who witness how God is already breaking into our lives. As resurrection people, we seek the face of Jesus in our neighbour, in a stranger, in the last-and-least. We look for hope, for peace, for joy, and for love, and we proclaim it where we find it, teaching others the discipline of hopeful expectation.

The Spirit is afoot, bringing wisdom and faithfulness to our committees and projects, and revealing herself in surprising ways. Jesus, as always, walks with us, sharing in our hurts and challenges, and pointing to the lily, the child, the bread, and the cup. And there is God—seeking the lost, even the lost parts of ourselves, to claim, redeem, and love.

Have a hopeful Advent, and I will be rejoicing with you at the in-breaking of God, the birth of Christ. *Shalom!*

—Erin Sterling

Treasurers 2010 Year-End Payroll Information

Year-end payroll information was sent to all treasurers by the end of October.

If you haven't received this package (which includes instructions from the United Church's Human Resources Unit as well as from ADP, the payroll service provider) from ADP, **please contact Human Resources immediately.** E-mail HumanResources@united-church.ca (write “Year-End” in the subject line) or call 1-800-268-3781 ext. 3161.

Year-end forms and other information can be found on the Church Leadership Network: <http://churchleadership.united-church.ca>

For pastoral charges not on ADP, the United Church Pension and Benefits Centre (Morneau Sobeco) mailed out year-end packages at the beginning of November. If you have not received this package, please contact the centre at: 1-888-657-4607.



To receive e-mail notification when a new issue is online (instead of a print copy), contact us at 1-800-268-3781 ext. 3161 or PC-MEPS@united-church.ca.

2011 Collaborative Research Project

“Effective Leadership and Healthy Relationships”: Not Just Another Survey

One large collaborative research project, rather than a number of small specific projects is the latest information-gathering initiative of the Permanent Committee on Ministry and Employment Policies and Services (PC-MEPS). The project is part of its mandate to meet the research needs of its steering and task groups effectively. This approach to research will

- concentrate projects around a central vision of effective leadership and healthy relationships
- allow for a higher level of communication and transparency between the work of the Permanent Committee and ministry personnel
- minimize the number of survey requests coming across your desk
- allow for the steering and task groups of the Permanent Committee to seek feedback throughout the church, while focusing on good stewardship of time and finances
- serve as a model of simplification and collaboration for work in each triennium

Much of the work of the task, steering, and working groups of the Permanent Committee addresses the policies and processes of the United Church that seek to support ministry personnel and alleviate isolation. Responses from all those involved in pastoral relationships will guide this work.

The project will be coordinated by an advisory panel of members from the steering and task groups of the Permanent Committee, chaired by Tracy Murton, chair of PC-MEPS. The Human Resources Unit staff members assisting both the advisory group and the project as a whole are Joe Ramsay, Manager, Ministry Personnel Policies and Programs, and Wendy Cranston, Program Coordinator, Ministry Personnel Administration.

Winnipeg firm Meyers Norris Penny has been selected to complete the research project, which will be survey-based with a focus on constituency feedback. The survey will be conducted electronically, on paper, by telephone, and through focus groups, with a stewardship-driven emphasis on electronic submission of the survey.

A Word from Erin Sterling

Your participation in this project is very important, and will be sought and prayed for. It is essential for our work to hear the needs, perspectives, experiences, and opinions of the wide diversity that make up the body of Christ in our United Church. Your responses will help shape the work of PC-MEPS, and of the United Church, for years to come. Thank you!

Ministry personnel and lay leaders should receive their surveys in January 2011.

Contact the HR Unit at 1-800-268-3781 ext. 3161 or HumanResources@united-church.ca for information. Mention “Comprehensive Survey” in your voice mail or in your e-mail subject line.

Circle of Support

Is there someone who has supported you, believed in you, and always been there?

The Human Resources Pastoral Relations group has developed Circle of Support, a program to recognize the individuals who have been “that person,” supporting you in your ministry in The United Church of Canada.

As an ordained minister, diaconal minister, designated lay minister, or overseas personnel, you are invited to designate one such person for the Circle of Support. A certificate made out to the person will be sent to you to present to him or her. A copy of the certificate will be placed in the Circle of Support book at the General Council Office.

For more details, or to make a nomination, please call the Human Resources Unit at 1-800-268-3781 ext. 3037 or e-mail HumanResources@united-church.ca. Please mention “Circle of Support” in your voice mail or in the subject line of your e-mail.

Sabbatical Extended to Interim Ministers

Sabbatical has been available for ministry personnel in pastoral relationships for some time, but because the details of funding a sabbatical leave for interim ministers have been complex, interim ministry personnel have not had the same access to this opportunity for study, reflection, and rejuvenation.

This is due to differences in the pastoral relationships of interim and regular ministry. Sabbatical leave for qualifying ministry personnel is funded by the pastoral charge served by that minister. Once a minister's request for sabbatical leave is approved by presbytery, the pastoral charge is required to plan for the minister's absence and associated costs.

Interim ministers typically serve in short-term appointments and rarely become eligible for sabbatical while serving a single pastoral charge. As of December 1, 2010, a new funding strategy to fill this gap has been put in place: funding will come from contributions received from all pastoral charges being served by interim ministers. Form PR433AP now includes a request for the equivalent of two weeks' salary and employer costs per 12 months of interim ministry appointment (or a pro-rated amount).

Contributions are pooled in the Interim Ministry Sabbatical Leave Fund, administered by the Financial Assistance Committee of the General Council Office. This fund allows three qualifying interim ministers per year to take sabbaticals. As must all sabbatical-leave applicants, interim ministers must develop a sabbatical plan and apply to have a leave approved. They apply to Conference rather than to presbytery. Interim ministers may qualify for sabbatical leave by serving at least 60 months in Interim Ministry. Complete details and the application form are at www.united-church.ca (search: "sabbatical"). Or, contact the Human Resources Unit directly: HumanResources@united-church.ca. Write "sabbatical" in the subject line.



Compensation Task Group Develops Guiding Principles

When the Ministry Compensation Task Group began its work in 2009, it was aware that amending compensation practices to be more sustainable, just, and fair would have an enormous, far-reaching impact on ministry personnel, pastoral charges, and ministry units.

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Disability Policy and Procedures Review Under Way

PC-MEPS has recently created a task group on disability policy and procedures. The members are Mr. John Keddy, the Rev. Don Linkletter (chairperson), and the Rev. Jack Spencer. The task group's mandate, from the Permanent Committee, includes

- review the current disability-leave policy of the United Church, as stated in s. 037 of *The Manual*
- clarify the roles and obligations of ministry personnel and pastoral charges when a minister is receiving benefits through the Restorative Care Plan, Long Term Disability, or Total and Permanent Disability
- where appropriate, recommend the removal of procedural matters concerning disability from *The Manual* and recommend their inclusion in a new policy statement document on disability leave and benefit entitlements

The task group is scheduled to present its report to the Permanent Committee in June 2011. Ministry personnel and their family members, Ministry and Personnel Committees, and other pastoral charge representatives may be interested in contributing to the work of this task group. Specific suggestions and/or recommendations may be forwarded to the task group by e-mailing HumanResources@united-church.ca, with "Disability Policy" in the subject line.

PC-MEPS: NEWS AND RESOURCES

Compensation Task Group Develops Guiding Principles

(continued from p. 3)

To ensure that reforms met these criteria, the task group developed this set of guiding principles.

This salary structure should be consistent with the current priorities of The United Church of Canada.

The salary structure should promote just, fair, equitable, sustainable, and consistent compensation practices for both ministry personnel and pastoral charges.

A salary structure should be easy to understand and administer, and allow for appropriate oversight.

The salary structure should be comprehensive and eliminate the notion of all allowances.

The primary responsibility for the financial support of ministry personnel is with the pastoral charge or other ministry unit, subject to certain minimum standards.

Ministry personnel should be compensated at a level commensurate with the cost of living in the region in which they work.

The salary structure should provide a means to recognize additional skills, experience, education, responsibility, etc.

These will be tested through the Collaborative Research Project (see p. 2).

“General Council News,” reporting from GC39, carried the first news about the Compensation Remit and the work following from that. The Human Resources Unit, as well as other program areas at General Council Office, have been developing and delivering on various elements of the original remit since 2006. See www.united-church.ca/files/organization/gc39/gcnews_08.pdf

Compensation Payroll Service Update

At its May 2010 meeting, the Executive of the General Council confirmed that all pastoral charges are required to participate in the pastoral charge payroll service. We are pleased to report that as of October 2010, 85 percent of all pastoral charges process their payroll through the payroll service.

The Human Resources Unit is also working closely with presbytery on matters related to pastoral relations and the payroll service. Because only pastoral charges that are enrolled with the payroll service should declare a vacancy, presbyteries have been proactive in identifying possible barriers to establishing a pastoral relationship if a charge is not yet enrolled.

Enrolling incurs no cost to the pastoral charge until a minister is in place, and means this is not a barrier to an appointment or call being made. Direct communication between pastoral charges not yet enrolled and presbyteries, Conferences, and the General Council office will continue.

To support the remaining 15 percent, and those pastoral charges that have chosen to pay their lay employees outside the payroll service, the HR Unit has had to put in place resources costing close to \$100,000 per year.

We hope improvements to the payroll service, including the ADP dedicated United Church service line (1-877-377-4784), will encourage all treasurers to pay staff through the pastoral charge payroll system. This will reduce the workload at the pastoral charge and reduce costs to the whole church.



Need
connex
help?

Connex is the newsletter of the General Council Permanent Committee on Ministry and Employment Policies and Services and of the Human Resources Unit.

For additional copies to circulate to your M&P committee, church board, congregation members, or presbytery representatives, or to comment on **Connex** or suggest content for future issues, please contact the editor, Erin Sterling:

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