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connex

IMPORTANT UPDATES FROM PC-MEPS

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No Increases to Benefits Premiums

The Permanent Committee on Ministry and Employment Policies and Services (PC-MEPS) approved the recommendation of Ministry and Employment unit staff that there be no increases to premiums for any elements of the group benefits package which does not include pension for members of the benefits plans of the United Church for 2013.

The increased pension contribution amounts that come into effect in January were top of mind for the committee in this decision. Members hoped that holding benefit premiums at current levels for the first year of the pension contribution increases would help mitigate the effect of these increased costs for both plan members and employers (pastoral charges and other ministry sites).

Another important consideration for the committee was pensioner members who have health and dental coverage through the United Church but have not seen an increase in their pension benefit since 2009. These plan members are particularly vulnerable to the continued increases in medical and dental insurance premiums because, although their pension benefit is not affected by the pension plan changes, any increases to premiums effectively reduce benefit amounts.

Although all service providers working with the church have assessed increases to various elements of the benefits plans, the determination was made to tap into the reserves—held to use in these circumstances—to cover these expenses rather than passing them along to members and employers.

Life Insurance Premiums Depend on Age, Smoking Status

Premiums for optional life insurance coverage are pegged to age, as well as smoking status and level of coverage for life insurance. The birthdays ending in 0 or 5 are “landmark” birthdays, meaning that insurance premiums for life coverage will increase the January following that birthday. If you are a smoker, these increases are larger.

Premium rates for optional insurance coverage are subject to change annually. Contact the Benefits Centre at 1-866-859-5025 for the most up-to-date rates.

Ministry and lay employees of the United Church who have benefits coverage and who wish to quit smoking may take advantage of the information and support available through Shepell.fgi, the church’s employee assistance program (EAP) provider. The provision of EAP services is confidential and can be accessed 24/7 online at www.shepellfgi.com or by phone at 1-800-387-4765.

2013 Premiums for Optional Life Insurance Coverage

Age	Nonsmoker (Male)	Smoker (Male)	Nonsmoker (Female)	Smoker (Female)
<30	0.56	0.86	0.40	0.60
30-34	0.60	0.96	0.46	0.70
35-39	0.70	1.20	0.50	0.90
40-44	1.10	2.00	0.76	1.36
45-49	1.90	3.50	1.20	2.26
50-54	3.20	5.76	2.00	3.50
55-59	5.40	9.50	3.20	5.36
60-64	8.30	13.76	4.80	7.40

Cost per month for each \$10,000 in coverage.

New Ministry Compensation Plan:

The Permanent Committee on Ministry and Employment Policies and Services adopted an implementation plan for the new ministry compensation plan and recommended it to the General Secretary. Nora Sanders advised the Executive of the General Council that she is satisfied with the readiness of the plan to proceed to the next steps. There will be continuous review of the plan at each step.

Why is a comprehensive salary being implemented?

See the report on compensation from the Permanent Committee at <http://gc40.united-church.ca>. Select GCE, select 2012 Meetings, select Full Workbook, then "search" and select Ministry Compensation Report (p.131–140).



New Salary Schedule for Ministry Personnel Not Yet Ordered or Recognized

Implementation of the new salary schedule will involve the following:

1. Condensing the salary schedules for designated lay ministers and intern/candidate/student supply to one salary schedule for students preparing for ministry leadership who are not recognized as designated lay ministers, ordained, or commissioned to diaconal ministry (hereafter, "students").
2. Condensing the movement through six minimum salary increment categories A to F (based on service) to two minimum salary steps: Step 1 for years 1 and 2, and Step 2 for years 3 and following.

The following table is an example of how the published salary schedule could appear.

MINIMUM SALARY SCHEDULE ACCORDING TO YEARS OF ELIGIBLE SERVICE (INCREMENT CATEGORY)						
2013	1–2 (A)	3–4 (B)	5–7 (C)	8–10 (D)	11–13 (E)	14+ (F)
Order of Ministry	\$33,793	\$35,314	\$36,835	\$38,357	\$39,877	\$41,397
RDLM	\$32,705	\$34,176	\$35,650	\$37,120	\$38,592	\$40,062
	1–2 (Step 1)	3+ (Step 2)				
Students	\$31,983	\$32,300				

Implementation January 1, 2014

- The new two-step salary schedule for ministry personnel not yet ordered or recognized
- Changes to the calculation of credited service in relation to movement through the increment categories once ministry personnel become ordered or recognized

Implementation January 1, 2015

- Comprehensive salary that incorporates local cost of living
- Process for ministry personnel living in high cost/remote areas to obtain funds for emergency situations



Nora Sanders



E-mail Notification

To receive e-mail notification about *Connex* (four messages per year), please ensure your e-mail address is correctly noted in your Benefits Centre profile.

Pensioner Members: Call the Benefits Centre at 1-866-859-5025.

Active Members: Call the Benefits Centre at 1-866-859-5025, or go online at <http://ybrcanada.hewitt.com/ucc> and update the field.

PRELIMINARY SCHEDULE

Changes to Calculation of Service Credits

New Candidates or Applicants Appointed on/after January 1, 2014

Effective January 1, 2014, any students commencing service in a pastoral charge who have not previously served as a student supply/intern/candidate supply/designated lay minister applicant will be paid based on the minimum salary at Step 1; following two years of service, students will be eligible for the Step 2 minimum salary. No years of service while in student assignments will be credited for the purpose of progression through increment categories A to F once becoming ordered or recognized.



Candidates or applicants appointed before January 1, 2014

If a student has served as a student/intern/candidate supply or designated lay minister applicant before January 1, 2014, the increment category minimum salary achieved up to January 1, 2014 will be frozen. For future assignments after that date the frozen increment category minimum will apply in accordance with the provisions below and no additional credited service will accumulate. Once ordered or recognized, the salary will be based on the frozen increment category minimum salary.

- If within Increment Category A (1-2 years of service), and the Increment Category A minimum salary is greater than the Step 1 minimum salary, the Increment Category A minimum salary will be frozen until the Step 1 minimum matches the Increment Category A minimum salary (through annual cost of living increases).
- If within Increment Category B to F (3+ years of service), the applicable (B to F) increment category minimum salary will be frozen until the Step 2 minimum salary matches the applicable (B to F) increment category minimum salary (through annual cost of living increases). Once this occurs, the student's salary will be paid in accordance with the Step 2 minimum salary (with annual cost of living increases) until the student becomes ordered or recognized.
- **For example**, a student with seven years of service on January 1, 2014, becomes ordered July 1, 2014. Effective January 1, 2014, the student's minimum salary will be frozen at the Increment Category C minimum salary. From January 1 to June 30, 2014, student assignments will be based on the frozen Category C minimum salary and no further credited service will accumulate. On July 1, 2014, once ordered, the student's salary will be based on the order of ministry Increment Category C minimum salary.

Note: All student/supply/intern/candidate supply/designated lay minister applicants who could be affected by these changes will receive a direct communication early in 2013.

Incorporating Local Cost of Living into Comprehensive Salary

Once the new ministry compensation plan is fully implemented, every pastoral charge will be assigned to a local cost-of-living area. The minimum salary for each local cost-of-living area will be adjusted to include the average local cost of living. The number of local cost-of-living areas is still being determined.

A two-stage process will be used to transition ministry personnel salaries to the new comprehensive salary structure smoothly. First, base salary will be added to the housing allowance amount/fair rental value of the manse. Second, based on the local cost-of-living area, the minimum salary may be adjusted.

Establishing Local Cost-of-Living Areas

Various data (primarily from Statistics Canada and the Canadian Real Estate Association) are being analyzed to determine which source(s) will be reliable and comprehensive enough to group pastoral charges into similar cost-of-living areas.

Many details need to be worked out, including

- the effect for pastoral charges with a manse
- the change to pensionable earnings
- situations where the new comprehensive salary minimum is greater than the ministry personnel's salary plus housing allowance

General Council staff are considering all implications carefully and will keep pastoral charges and ministry personnel apprised through *Connex*.

Quebec Pastoral Charges, Did You Know?

All Quebec-based organizations with at least one employee, whether full-time or part-time, must register with the Commission de la Santé et de la Sécurité du Travail (CSST) either online (www.csstt.qc.ca) or by telephone (1-866-302-2778). Failure to do so could result in costly penalties. Based on information given by you, CSST will calculate and provide an annual premium and CSST code. Pass this information on to ADP (1-877-377-4784), which will remit the premium to CSST on your behalf.

RCP and EI: Reimbursement Process

The basis for reimbursing pastoral charges under the Restorative Care Plan (RCP) for disability leaves starting on or after January 1, 2013, will be revised to reflect the actual costs of the leave to the pastoral charge. Payments will be based on actual salary plus housing (rather than pensionable earnings, which include an estimate of the housing component).

Tax Deduction Information for 2012

"Where do I find the amount to report health insurance premiums on my tax form?"—this is the most common query to Ministry and Employment. The Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) has communicated that the only acceptable amounts are noted on members' T4 (Active) or T4A (Retired) forms as follows:

- T4 in Box #85—Employee-paid premiums for private health services plans
- T4A Code#135—Recipient-paid premiums for private health services plans

Please also note that unpaid balances of benefits claims and other medical expenses can be added to this amount on your income tax return: include the explanation of benefit statements from Green Shield to confirm unpaid claim amounts (or keep for your records if filing online).

Benefit Increase: Long-Term Disability Recipients

The Permanent Committee on Ministry and Employment Policies and Services has approved a cost of living adjustment (COLA) of 2.9 percent to the benefit received by long-term disability recipients. This comes into effect for January 1, 2013.

Not at work but continuing pension and benefits coverage?

If you are continuing benefits and pension contributions during a leave, you will be invoiced directly by the Benefits Centre. Please note that the monthly invoicing process has been delayed. However, you should be setting aside the premium amounts you will owe for this period, in order to facilitate payment when the monthly invoicing process resumes in early 2013. To check how much you owe per month to continue your coverage/participation, contact the Benefits Centre at 1-866-859-5025, <http://ybrcanada.hewitt.com/ucc>.

Invoicing Update for Employers

For pastoral charges or participating employers requiring an invoice, please be advised that General Council staff continue to work with the Benefits Centre to resolve lingering system issues. Therefore, the interim statement process established last year will continue. You will receive an interim statement before the end of the year, confirming how much you owe on a monthly basis for pension and benefits. Instructions on how to remit payment will be included with the interim statement. Please remit your payments as soon as possible, as some remittances must be submitted within a 30-day period to be held in trust (as a matter of legal compliance). If payment is not received before year-end, this will affect your member's pension accrual and pension adjustment total (appearing on the T4). If you have any questions regarding the interim statements, please call 1-800-268-3781 ext. 3010.



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Connex is the newsletter of the General Council Permanent Committee on Ministry and Employment Policies and Services (PC-MEPS) and of the Ministry and Employment unit.

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