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connex

IMPORTANT UPDATES FROM PC-MEPS

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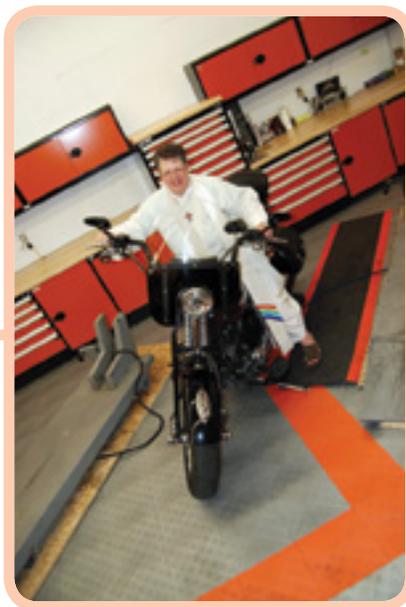
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Help When You Need It

When I began serving on the Permanent Committee on Ministry and Employment Policies and Services two years ago, I was amazed by the sheer volume of reports that we consider. But we are working to ensure that policies and services are in place for ministers and lay employees and their families. One of these important services is the Employee Assistance Program, offered through Shepell.fgi.

I've used the plan a number of times. In one instance, I had ended a pastoral relationship after a painful meeting. I knew I needed help to work through my feelings in order to be strong and healthy enough to begin writing a resume and doing interviews. I was close to a major centre, so through Shepell.fgi I was able to find a counsellor I could



Lorna King pictured at her godson's wedding in the Harley shop where he works. Lorna shows her fierce motorcycle momma face—though the bike was never running while she sat on it.

drive to see for several face-to-face meetings. These got me back on track, and I was able to move into a new and healthy pastoral relationship.

In another instance, after I ran into difficulties dealing with a pastoral care relationship with an individual, I recognized that I needed to talk through some issues I had with a counsellor. At that time, I was in a small town where there were a couple of counsellors, but I didn't

feel confident about confidentiality and driving to the city wasn't an option. A few sessions over the phone with a counsellor enabled me to resolve those issues. I was pleased to discover that Shepell can now provide video counselling. In retrospect, if I had had a web cam and Skype back in the day, they would have improved my long-distance experience with the counsellor.

My own positive experiences with the Employee Assistance Program through Shepell.fgi give me the confidence to encourage colleagues to access this resource for themselves and their families. Take a look at what they can offer you! An easy way to see what is available is to go online. You can access a wealth of articles and tools on a wide array of topics, from health and nutrition to financial advice, children, and elder care issues. Visit www.shepellfgi.com and select Employee and Family Assistance Programs.

—**Lorna King** is a designated lay minister from Nipawin, Saskatchewan, serving on the Permanent Committee on Ministry and Employment Policies and Services.

Restorative Care Plan

The Restorative Care Plan is extending to all eligible plan members on January 1, 2015.

The March 2014 issue of *Connex* explained the changes coming to the short-term disability benefit for members. As of January 1, the Restorative Care Plan will be extended to all eligible plan members regardless of their role within The United Church of Canada.

The following chart summarizes the changes in coverage:

	Former Short-Term Disability (for lay employees of congregations)	Former Restorative Care Plan (for ministry personnel)	New Restorative Care Plan (for all plan members)**
Waiting Period (for coverage to start)	2 weeks, salary continuance may be in effect (local pastoral charge/ ministry site decision)	1 month, salary continuance in effect	2 weeks, salary continuance in effect
Benefit Paid to Member	85% of pensionable earnings	100%* of pensionable earnings	100%* of pensionable earnings
Adjudicator Involved	Great West Life	Shepell.fgi	Shepell.fgi

*Pastoral charge or ministry site to be compensated at 85%.

**Includes Conference and General Council Office staff.

- Benefits will continue for a maximum period of six months. If the member is unable to return to work after six months, the member would apply for long-term disability benefits.
- Shepell.fgi will be the claims adjudicator and the General Council Office, Ministry and Employment unit, will continue to manage the claims reimbursement process and act as a supporting resource for all involved in Restorative Care Plan cases.

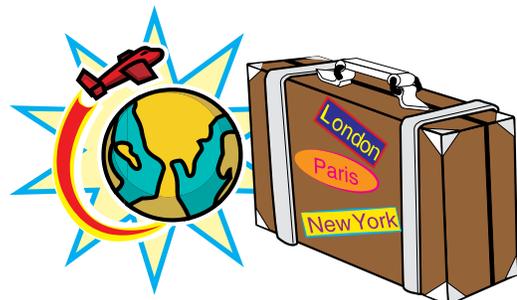
Updates are being made to the Active Benefits booklet, and a letter to all plan members, pastoral charges, and ministry sites will be sent out this fall. More information, including details about premiums, will be in the December issue of *Connex*.



Out-of-Country Travel Coverage Notice

Green Shield, the United Church’s health benefits provider, has sent a clarification of emergency coverage offered to members travelling outside Canada (for active coverage only):

“‘Emergency’ means a sudden, unexpected injury, illness, or acute episode of disease that requires immediate medical attention and could not have been reasonably anticipated based upon the patient’s prior medical condition. This includes treatment (non-elective) for immediate relief of severe pain, suffering, or disease that cannot be delayed until you or your dependent is medically able to return to your province of residence.”



Ministry and Employment unit continues to advise all members to confirm that their coverage with Green Shield is adequate before departing on any trips outside of Canada. Should you require additional coverage, Green Shield can assist you with that arrangement. Contact them directly at 1-888-711-1119.

Benefits 101 Webinars Are Coming!

Based on the popular pre-retirement seminar format, Ministry and Employment unit is developing an online seminar under the working title "Everything you wanted to know about your benefits and pension with the United Church but were afraid to ask." (We're working on a better title too.)

Communications and Survey Feedback

- Thanks so much to all who took the time and effort to complete our short survey about our communications to you. Over 700 responses have been received! Interestingly, the split between online and mailed-in paper survey responses was almost even, with a slight advantage to paper. In the weeks to come, we'll analyze the information we've gathered and share more of our findings. In the meantime, we'll try to include information that you indicated you were looking for. These include benefits information, health tips, treasurer tips, and information about new processes, such as the new compensation model.
- Another update to our communications process is the use of an e-mailing program that will assist our office to manage the e-mail address information that you have entrusted with the Ministry and Employment unit and keep it current, and also to ensure that volunteers who have served in various capacities (M&P chair, treasurer, church board chair) in the past can permanently unsubscribe from notices from our unit. Some additional features include mobile-friendly display and our ability to add some nice graphics! We still rely on you to keep contact information current. Please update e-mails by sending an e-mail to MinistryandEmployment@united-church.ca. Include your plan member ID or, for treasurers or administrators, include the pastoral charge number or ADP company code to correctly associate the e-mail update.
- There are a number of aspects to our communications that still require a lot of manual intervention, such as responding to requests for an attached file or extra hard copies for committees at your pastoral charge. These requests must be made in response to each mailing, and can take time to fill. We really appreciate your patience with these processes.

Support for Ministry Personnel and Staff

Issues of mental health, isolation, bullying, and stresses related to, among other things, family or finances (or both!) are often in the news. The United Church recognizes that these can affect, sometimes significantly, work performance and the relationships that are vital to effective ministry and a healthy workplace.

One example of how Shepell.fgi's services have been used by the church was last June, when Moncton, New Brunswick, was subjected to a terrible event involving an active shooter walking through a residential neighbourhood. Ministry and Employment asked Shepell.fgi to offer special support services to the Maritime Conference office to manage trauma caused by this horrible situation.

Shepell.fgi provides employee assistance services to members of the United Church's benefits plans. These services range from information on child care to senior services and assisted living, debt counselling, and even advice on buying a car! To get an idea of what's available and how you can access the service if you, or a member of your immediate family, need to, visit the Shepell.fgi website, www.shepellfgi.com.

Financial Advice...from our Employee Assistance Program?

Yes! In our recent pre-retirement seminar, one comment appeared again and again in the feedback: "The advice to get a financial advisor was really good!" Shepell.fgi can refer members to financial advisors, as well as counselling. **Call 1-800-387-4765.**

Compensation Update

In July, pastoral charges and ministry sites received a communication about the proposed New Compensation Model. The proposed structure was then posted on the United Church's website at www.united-church.ca/minstaff/compensation/model. A special issue of *Connex* dedicated to the compensation proposal was sent out in early September. Feedback provided by ministry personnel and volunteer leadership in the pastoral charges has been incorporated into reports to the Executive of the General Council.

Presbytery-Accountable Ministry: If you are a presbytery or presbytery-accountable ministry (i.e., an outreach ministry or mission), the new compensation model applies for ministry personnel.

Changing a Pastoral Relationship? Here are some things to keep in mind:

1. Ministry personnel who end a pastoral relationship but do not start another one immediately are moved to the status "in search of a call." A minister can opt to continue to contribute to the pension and/or pay for group benefits coverage while "in search" by contacting the Benefits Centre directly: 1-866-859-5025. The minister must make this arrangement themselves.
2. Benefits are maintained when a minister changes pastoral relationships without an "in search" period, but because the member is "terminated" from one workplace and "added" to another, the paperwork can take four to 10 weeks to catch up with this change. Medical services are covered, so receipts must be retained and submitted to Green Shield once coverage is confirmed. If you aren't sure what's going on, please contact Ministry and Employment; we can find out for you.
3. Address information is updated by the treasurer at your new workplace, pastoral charge, or ministry site through the ADP New/Change Employee form. Check your pay stub (you must receive it every pay period) to ensure it is correct, or you could be missing important information that is sent to your home, such as your updated Green Shield card.
4. Adding your e-mail address to our contact list keeps you updated on all resources produced by the Ministry and Employment unit. Contact us to add it to your Benefits Profile and our Unit Resources database. We don't share e-mail addresses with anyone.

Treasurer Tip: Saving Fees on Payroll

Do you want to run payroll twice* per month, but don't want the extra fee? Here is how to do it for your ministry personnel and lay employees:



Calculate the "take-home" pay for each person per month.

Write a cheque for half that amount and advance it to each person.



Call ADP to set up the advance amount for each person.

When ADP runs payroll later that month, it will deposit the other half of take-home pay and do all the deductions and deposits.



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DIRECT DEPOSIT



(Federal, Provincial, Pension and Benefits)

You can set this up at any time, with no additional service fees!

Call ADP for more information: 1-877-377-4784.

*Already running ADP twice per month? Changing to once per month can be done for January; one-time \$200 service fee applies.

Follow us on Twitter!
@UCCan_MandE



E-mail Notification

Receive e-mail notification about *Connex* (four messages per year): please ensure your e-mail address is in your Benefits Centre profile

Contact

Ministry and Employment:
MinistryandEmployment@united-church.ca
or
1-800-268-3781 ext. 3161



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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.

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

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