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connex

IMPORTANT UPDATES FROM PC-MEPS

ISSUE 43 | MAY 2015

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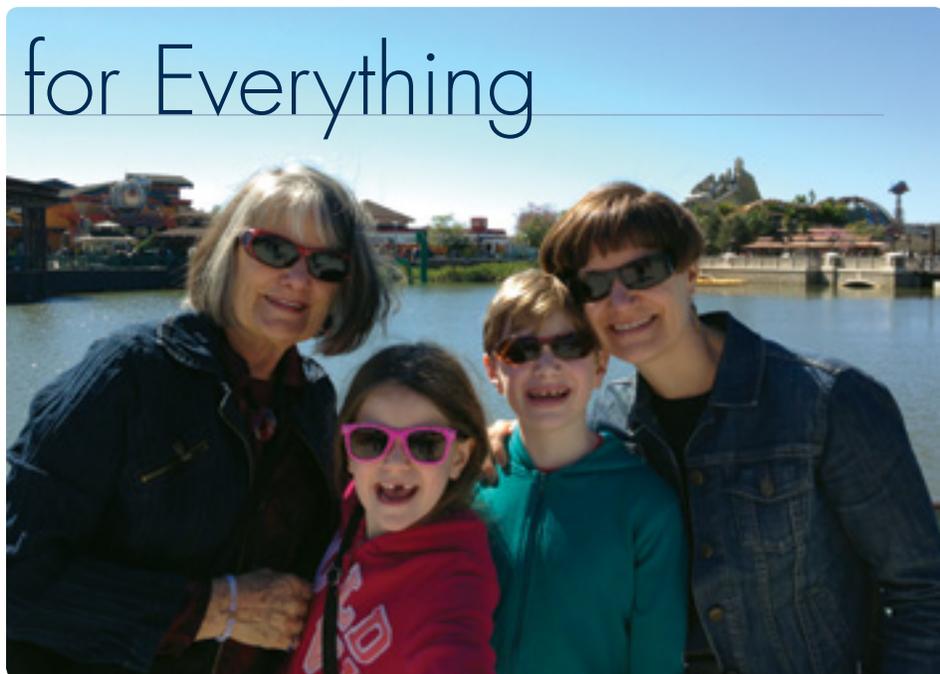
- The Blessing of Part-Time Ministry
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A Right Time for Everything

As the weather moves from spring to summer, our thoughts turn to all the changes life offers us. According to Ecclesiastes 3:1 in *The Message*, “There’s an opportune time to do things, a right time for everything on the earth.”

For the last six years, it has been the right time for me to chair the Permanent Committee on Ministry and Employment Policies and Services (PC-MEPS), to focus on developing new ways to support ministry personnel and lay leadership. As chair, I have been privileged to see the Effective Leadership and Healthy Pastoral Relationships project happen, the Candidacy Pathways pilots put into place, and the exploration of diaconal ministry vocations come to pass. What we have learned is that experimenting and looking for inspiration help us to focus on our covenant to sustain ministry personnel in the years to come.

Our time has also been spent in policy updates, reviewing and



Tracy Murton, right, with her mom and kids.

monitoring a number of ongoing projects, including support to military chaplaincy, implementing the compensation policy, and looking at the demographics of our ministry personnel. We have realized that clear and consistent policy offers guidance for our leaders and opportunities for living into our intercultural commitment.

As the report of the Comprehensive Review Task Group continues to be explored across the church, the implementation of relevant work will be integrated into PC-MEPS to ensure consistency, fairness, and accountability.

I have learned much from so many people, and I am grateful for the opportunity to work with such competent staff and dedicated volunteers. I know you will join me in welcoming Adam Hanley as chair of PC-MEPS in the fall. Thanks to all of you who have engaged our work by asking questions, challenging assumptions, and experimenting with policy. We would not have accomplished so much without your collaboration.

—Tracy Murton is chair of PC-MEPS until General Council in August. She lives in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.

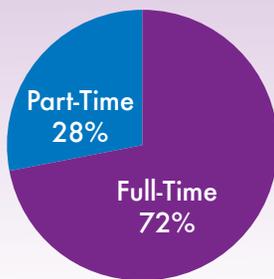
The Blessing of Part-Time Ministry

Part-time ministry is a reality in the United Church, sometimes from necessity and sometimes by choice. For some pastoral charges, part-time ministry is all they can afford, and they must rely more on lay leadership. Some ministry personnel need to be part-time for various reasons:

- to fulfill educational requirements (training for the designated lay minister program, for the distance M.Div. program offered through Atlantic School of Theology, and for the supervised ministry education portion of St. Andrew's M.Div. program)
- as a source of income while a student in a residential theological studies program
- to supplement the work of a full-time ministry, such as a minister of pastoral care, visitation, or Christian development, particularly in team ministries, where the need for a specific type of ministry is not full-time
- as a preferred choice of some older ordinands and commissionands who are entering ministry. Some choose to continue to work in their first career on a part-time basis while beginning to serve in a part-time ministry; some prefer to serve in a part-time ministry only while in retirement from a previous career.
- for retired ministry personnel who may no longer wish to serve on a full-time basis (27 percent of part-time ministry personnel serve in retired supply appointments)
- to combine with other appointments or calls to create the equivalent of a full-time paid accountable ministry

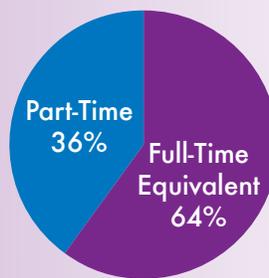
Some Interesting Facts

UNITED CHURCH MINISTRY PERSONNEL



Statistics from our payroll service provider show that 72 percent of serving ministry personnel work full-time, and 28 percent work part-time.

PART-TIME UNITED CHURCH MINISTRY PERSONNEL



As of December 2014, there were 47 ministry personnel working in more than one part-time paid accountable ministry. Statistics reflect these people as serving in part-time ministries; however, more than 60 percent of them work the equivalent of a full-time ministry or more.

- 51 percent work multiple appointments or calls equivalent to full-time (40 hrs/week)
- 23 percent work a combined equivalent of between 75 and 99 percent of full-time hours
- 13 percent work a combined equivalent of between 50 and 74 percent of full-time hours
- 13 percent work a combined total of hours in excess of 40 hours per week

We are grateful for the ministry personnel who serve in these part-time ministries and the ongoing life and mission of the congregations they serve.

Part-Time vs. Full-Time While both roles are needed, there are ministry personnel who are working part-time not by choice, but for a variety of reasons. Depending on the pastoral charge or ministry site's needs, presbyteries and settlement committees should consider all the options available to match individuals to full-time positions when that is the ministry personnel's preference and, when conducting needs assessments, explore other options available when a reduction in ministry personnel is seen as the way to balance the budget.

Short-Term Absences

Absence from Work Due to Illness

Whenever an eligible member is absent from work due to illness or another health situation, Ministry and Personnel Committee chairs are requested to contact Ministry and Employment's disability specialist as soon as possible. They will provide contact information, forms, and any follow-up required in the event the absence stretches to a long-term disability claim.



Qualifying Period for Short-term Absences

Effective January 1, 2015, all eligible employees at a pastoral charge are covered by the Restorative Care Plan. Salary (and housing, if applicable) continues at 100 percent for up to six months while ill or disabled, and the charge is reimbursed 85 percent of the salary (and housing, if applicable) starting at week 3.

New Benefits Rates

Rates for all benefits changed, effective January 1, 2015. **Treasurers & Members:** In your regular review of payroll statements, please confirm deduction rates have been updated.

Employees Receiving Workers' Compensation Benefits

Even if an employee is covered under their provincial Worker's Compensation plan, it is important to notify Ministry and Employment's disability specialist of that employee's absence from work. If their absence has continued beyond six months, they could be eligible for long-term disability benefits. If so, they would also be eligible for a waiver of premium for benefits under the United Church's benefits plan. Additionally, the member's pension should also be accruing during their absence.

New Support for Transgender Members of the Benefits Plans

The Executive of the General Council approved the recommendation from the Permanent Committee on Ministry and Employment Policies and Services to extend some financial support for members who are transgender and are transitioning. Working in combination with provincial health care, the financial support will be administered via Green Shield. Members who are seeking more information about accessing this support are encouraged to e-mail MinistryandEmployment@united-church.ca.

Contact Us

Myron Baryckyj is the disability specialist in Ministry and Employment unit. Contact him directly to report an employee absence due to illness: 1-800-268-3781, ext. 4127; MBaryckyj@united-church.ca; or MinistryandEmployment@united-church.ca.

Not Using ADP? What's the Problem?

The very few pastoral charges that do payroll without ADP cost members and churches, through their premiums, an enormous amount of money in extra staffing and processing and especially the annual cost for the software to manage the invoicing and accounting (\$175,000). "Non-ADP" churches do pay a cost-recovery fee, but this is approximately 20 percent of the actual cost of the infrastructure supporting their choice to do their own payroll.

Church boards that have had negative experiences in the past may be surprised at the supports available for treasurers both from ADP and the General Council Office Ministry and Employment unit.

To enrol with ADP, Contact the Enrolment Centre: 1-866-435-1507; email cathy.locke@adp.com

See the Xtra insert in this issue of Connex for online resources for treasurers and important information about summer closure.



Benefits: Keeping Dental Costs Down

As members of United Church benefits plans, it's important to be as informed as possible about practical ways to keep costs for health and dental services reasonable. The following tips can help you maximize your dental services coverage from Green Shield.

Frequency of Recall Exams

While the old rule of thumb still suggests you visit your dentist once every six months, the Canadian Dental Association recommends that you decide with your dentist the schedule that's best for you, not your dental plan's frequency limitations.

Healthy Habits to Keep You Smiling

Your dentist suggests how often you need to visit based on the state of your oral health, which is influenced by what you do between dental appointments. Ask yourself the following questions:

- ▶ Do I floss every day?
- ▶ Do I brush twice a day with a fluoride toothpaste and follow my dentist's instructions on how to brush properly?
- ▶ Do I eat a well-balanced diet, including food from all food groups, and limit sweets and sticky foods?
- ▶ Do I smoke?
- ▶ Do I have a history of cavities or gum disease?
- ▶ Is my overall health good?

The answers to these questions affect your oral health. They will help you and your dentist decide how often you need to visit for check-ups.

Shop Around for Better Dental Costs

Fees charged by dentists and dental practices can vary widely. Here are some helpful hints to keep in mind when receiving dental care that will help protect you and your benefit plan from unnecessary costs:

1. If you pay a portion of your dental costs out-of-pocket, try to shop around to get the best quality of dental service for the best price.
2. Dental fees/costs of dental services should be provided upfront.
3. Watch out for dental providers requesting a list of the covered benefits and the plan maximums.
4. Your dentist should be explaining what treatment options or alternatives exist.
5. **If the cost of a recommended dental treatment is expected to be \$300 or more, it is recommended that you send Green Shield Canada a treatment plan from your dentist before treatment begins. Green Shield will determine the amount that will be covered based on standards of dental practice. This is important!**
6. Always ask how much is being billed to your benefit plan by requesting a detailed breakdown of the bill, especially if your dentist is submitting the claim for you.
7. Avoid overcharging—ensure the quantity and quality of treatments being billed are actually what you are receiving.

To Get 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



— or —

Contact

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

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Need **connex** help?

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:

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