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connex

IMPORTANT UPDATES FROM PC-MEPS

ISSUE 49 | DECEMBER 2016

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Something UNexpected

by Jean Macdonald

When I first joined the Permanent Committee for Ministry and Employment Policies and Services (PC-MEPS) last year, I expected to be immersed in human resource policy, benefit plans, or ministry personnel compensation. I did not anticipate becoming involved in the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

In response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, one of our commitments as a church has been to formally adopt this declaration as the framework for reconciliation. To this end, a task group has been formed to ensure that the church complies with the declaration's principles, norms, and standards. I feel very fortunate to serve on this task group on behalf of PC-MEPS, with representatives of other branches of the United Church.

One of the joys of this assignment has been getting to know some of the Indigenous members of our United Church. As an accompanier at an Aboriginal Ministries Council consultation in March of this year,

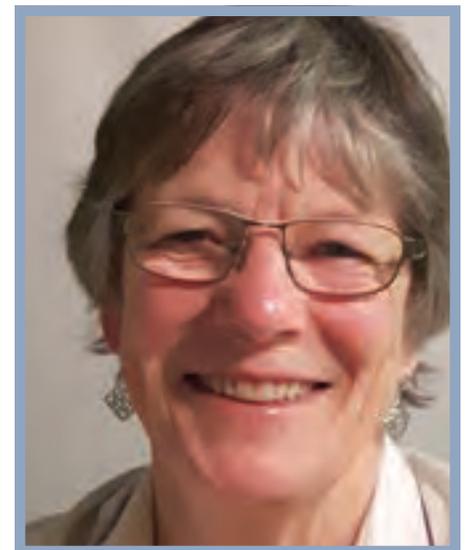
I felt—at various times—ashamed and proud, joyful and sad, humbled and privileged, moved to tears and touched by faith. I experienced a sense of cultural richness, of welcome, acceptance, and perhaps even reconciliation that I would crave for everyone.

There is much for the task group, for PC-MEPS, and indeed for the United Church to do. We need to ensure that all the courts of our church understand and appreciate that, at all levels, we need to examine our policies, programs, and practices to ensure that they are in compliance.

While more information and resources will be forthcoming, it is not too soon for some local action! Perhaps it is something as simple as reading from the pulpit the Moderator's September 2016 letter to the church on "Living Out the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples" (search united-church.ca), or acknowledging in worship the traditional Indigenous territory on which your church is located (search united-church.ca for "acknowledging the territory"), or

conducting a KAIROS Blanket Exercise (kairosblanketexercise.org).

Let us, as the United Church's March 2016 statement on adopting UNDRIP put it, turn "towards justice, and deepen our commitment to a new identity, a new relationship, and a new way of being, both in the church and in the world."



—Jean Macdonald, Executive of the General Council representative on PC-MEPS, is a lay volunteer from BC

New Website: Where did all the info go?

The beautiful new United Church website was designed primarily for “seekers.” It has been restructured to put the focus on the ministry of The United Church of Canada through the world and across Canada. Some administrators and employers have found it a challenge to find the resources and policy documents they often look for.

Policy and other “administrative” documents are now housed on the United Church Commons (<https://commons.united-church.ca>), a separate website that is linked to from the main site at www.united-church.ca. One good example is *Connex*: when you search for it on the United Church website, you’re directed to click a link to the Commons, where the full list of archived issues is easily viewed.

Of course, if there is any existing resource that you can’t find, please contact Ministry and Employment, and we can send it to you!

Look
for this
button



Treasurers: Year-end info



The year-end processing timetables and information from ADP should have reached your pastoral charge by now. If you have not yet received it, please contact Ministry and Employment and we’ll happily e-mail you a copy! Please open and read it when you get it: there are deadlines that must be met to avoid service charges from ADP, the payroll service provider.

Employee and Family Assistance Program: Not just for stress!



When thinking about our Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP), it’s easy to assume it’s limited to psychiatric services for assisting members experiencing stress. The program offers good information and services for stress management, but the EFAP is much more than that! If you have benefits with the United Church, you and your immediate family have access to a very wide range of services, provided 24 hours a day, 7 days per week. All of them—including elder care, nutrition and healthy eating, wellness and health, and financial guidance, including financial adviser referrals—are completely confidential.

Go online to www.shepell.com, or call 1-800-387-4765 (English); 1-800-361-5676 (français).

Benefits Premiums: Will they increase?

The United Church has been able to keep the fees for our benefits the same for the past three years but, as you can imagine, this cannot continue much longer. The reserves that the church held to offset large increases to benefits have been significantly depleted over the past three years.

Rates paid by both employers and employees (plan members) will have to start increasing, in the range of 5 per cent up to a possible 8 per cent, as of January 1,

2018, and annually after that. Connex will keep you posted on the rates and any other changes through 2017.

The core benefits, which include health and dental, are paid by the employer, based on employees' pensionable earnings.

Optional coverage, to increase the coverage provided by the core plan, is paid for by the employee. Current rates are noted below.



Important information for treasurers and members

The benefits premiums for 2017 will remain the same as in 2016, as will the (percentage of pensionable earnings) costs for pastoral charges. Although these costs have increased for the United Church, the reserve fund built up by the plan for this circumstance is absorbing the increase to keep rates level from 2016 to 2017.

Important: Because the cost of the benefit has increased, even though employees and employers pay the same rate between 2016 and 2017, it's critical that treasurers and Ministry and Personnel Committees use the **2017 Budgeting Tool: Calculating Taxable Benefit** when calculating the TB LIF F amount on the Benefits Addendum (ADP payroll).

Treasurer Tip: Any time a salary changes, the Benefits Addendum calculation for TB LIF F must be completed. Cost of living adjustments for ministry personnel are to be applied as of January 1 of each year (or retroactively to January 1, should required approvals happen later in the year).

Benefit Category with payroll code	United Church Rate for 2017 Premium a % of Pensionable Earnings unless specified as \$
Restorative Care Plan (employer paid): EN22	0.89%
Employer Indemnity (employer paid): EN23	0.096%
Pension Contributions (employer paid): EN26	9%
BASIC Benefits, incl. health and dental, life insurance (employer paid): EN27	4.30%
Pension Contributions (employee paid): DN02	6%
Long-Term Disability (employee paid): DN19	2.50%
Optional Life (employee paid): DN22	As per the Rate Table
Optional Spousal Life (employee paid): DN23	As per the Rate Table
Optional AD&D (employee paid): DN24	
Single: for each 10,000 of volume	\$0.33
Family: for each 10,000 of volume	\$0.56
Optional Health and Dental* (employee paid): DN25	
Single	\$36.02
Family	\$102.59
Pensioner Health and Dental* (pensioner paid via pension benefit)	
Single	\$47.74
Family	\$96.29

* Plus applicable tax in ON (8%) & QC (9%).

Salary Schedule 2017

A reminder for Ministry and Personnel Committees and pastoral charge treasurers preparing budgets for 2017: the schedule of **Minimum Salaries for Ministry Personnel 2017** can be found at

www.united-church.ca/sites/default/files/resources/2017-salary-schedule-ministry-personnel.pdf (or search www.united-church.ca for "2017 salary").

Km/h rate: Now \$0.39/km (previously at \$0.41/km), a full explanation on the calculation of this amount is provided in the Minimum Salaries for Ministry Personnel 2017 document. The rate is based on the Government of Canada compensation for travel; because the salary schedule is set early in the year previous to the year concerned, there can be a gap between current reality and the compensation rates.

God's World Needs Leaders



Like us on Facebook

The God's World Needs Leaders Facebook page (www.facebook.com/GodsWorldNeedsLeaders) is for those who are in leadership, or are considering leadership, in The United Church of Canada and in the world! It's a helpful page to explore, network, support, and challenge ideas and practices of leadership and ministry vitality.

Articles, blog posts, and events are shared to encourage dialogue and reflection about leadership in the church and the world. What does leadership look like? What might it look like? How do we continue to lead faithfully? How can we lead with vitality?

Be sure to check us out during Advent, when every day we will be highlighting various leaders from the past and present, from a whole variety of ministries and contexts!

connex Streamlining information from Ministry and Employment

Connex will be the sole newsletter on benefits and pension for the United Church as of June 2017. To reduce costs and centralize the information on the work of the Ministry and Employment Unit, the *Foresight* newsletter will be folded into *Connex*.

Foresight has communicated only pension-related information. During its early years, development of the governance structure of the pension plan, including term limits for volunteers and development of important policies like the Funding Policy (now available on the United Church Commons), meant there was meaningful content to communicate regularly. Regular reassurance of the pension plan's security through 2009–2011 was also important for members.

As the Pension Board, Pension Plan Advisory Committee, and Investment Committee continue to work toward better stewardship of resources, communication efforts will be redirected to media that can increase the understanding of the plan and be accessed at any time by members and employers.



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



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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