



connex

IMPORTANT UPDATES FROM PC-MEPS

Please circulate to

- ✓ Treasurer
- ✓ M&P Committee
- ✓ Ministry Personnel
- ✓ Lay Employees
- ✓ Presbytery Personnel/E&S Rep.
- ✓ Pension Convenor
- ✓ Church Board/Office

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Planting Seeds for Ministry

By Mary Smiley



As I write this, I am sitting in my garden, my place of refuge. This is where I seek wisdom and direction and contemplate what is happening in my world. I am alone, and yet I know I am not alone. No matter the season or time of day, I marvel at the activity around me—the hummingbirds, the plants, and the chipmunks. Today, I am thinking of the people seeking to become ministers in The United Church of Canada, and I know we are not alone.

For the past six years I have been involved with the Candidacy Pathways pilot in our Conference, and I am encouraged by the number and variety of people who are spending the time discerning their call and the stream of ministry they are called to

in the church. We have journeyed with people at many stages of their lives—those who are in high school to those who are retired—all wanting to fulfill their call. We are privileged to have the opportunity to move forward together with them on their journey.

There are highs and lows as we interview each applicant and candidate. The road is not always smooth and straight. There are frustrations and celebrations on all sides throughout the process. However, we do move forward together with prayer, questions, suggestions, and requirements. Five times a year we meet for two full days to interview, and we do so with care, compassion, and a sense that the church is alive and well.

I find these times remind me of and bring me back to my garden. We encourage, nurture, plant seeds, and sometimes need to weed, knowing that the weeds still have much to offer to the garden. I am thankful that I have been part of this pilot. The experience has been rewarding. This is certainly confirmed to us when our candidates are ordained, commissioned, admitted, and recognized.

The flowers are blooming and the vegetables are growing in my garden, as in the church. We are not alone!

—Mary Smiley is a lay representative on PC-MEPS from Bay of Quinte Conference. She is a retired rural economic development consultant and attends Almonte United Church.



Responsible investment initiatives

The pension plan engages with companies on important issues through participating in actions of the Shareholder Association for Research and Education ([SHARE](#)). Recently the pension plan participated in SHARE's engagement efforts with ARC Resources and Canadian Pacific Railway, encouraging both companies to adopt a formal policy or program on Indigenous employment and contracting. The discussion with both companies so far has focused on building awareness and getting disclosure.

The plan also recently participated in SHARE's engagement efforts on decent work with Dollarama Inc. to reduce their usage of on-call scheduling of their workforce. The company indicated that it posts its schedules for workers one week in advance. A recommendation was made to Dollarama to consider posting schedules at least two weeks in advance given the store hours are fairly predictable. A meeting is planned with management to discuss the issue further.

Your pension beneficiary

Members of the pension plan should have recently received their annual pension statement as at December 31, 2016. Some members with spouses were concerned that no beneficiary was shown on their statements.

Please note that pension legislation requires any pre-retirement death benefit to be paid to your spouse, if you have one. The same is true for pensioners who die before the end of the guarantee period. There is no need to name your spouse as your pension beneficiary. If you have a qualifying spouse, the death benefit would only be paid to your beneficiary if the spouse is no longer living or no longer qualifies as your spouse, due to divorce or end of a common-law relationship. So, if you have a qualifying spouse, ensure their name is shown in the "Spouse" field and name a separate beneficiary in case your spouse pre-deceases you.



COMPENSATION AND PAYROLL

New compensation model

The deadline for moving ministry salaries to the new compensation model is July 1, 2018.

With this new model, where a manse is not provided, ministers now receive a single comprehensive salary that incorporates what were formerly referred to as base salary and housing allowance. **Ministers provided with a manse** continue to receive a base salary plus use of the manse.

ADP must make many changes on their system to correctly administer the salary move from the old to the new compensation model. To ensure success, **it is highly recommended** that you contact Ministry and Employment staff at the General Council Office for their support:

Your GCO contact will

- answer your questions and assist with the paperwork
- send payroll forms to an ADP specialized input representative on your behalf
- monitor the payroll to ensure accuracy
- confirm with you once the payroll is successfully processed

Diane Collier

dcollier@united-church.ca; 1-800-268-3781, ext. 3148

Carmen Flores

cflores@united-church.ca; 1-800-268-3781, ext. 3166



Mandatory training for candidates

All active ministry personnel in The United Church of Canada are required to participate in two kinds of mandatory training: Boundary Issues for Church Leaders (Introduction to The Sexual Misconduct Prevention & Response Policy) and Racial Justice Workshop.

At its May 2017 meeting, the Executive of the General Council approved a proposal to include the same requirement for those entering ministry through the candidacy process. Inquirers must complete both types of training before being made candidates for ordered ministry.

Presbytery Education and Students Committees are being notified of this change, and current candidates who have not yet completed the training are being instructed to do so.

Here is the rationale articulated in the proposal:

- Candidates are eligible to serve in appointments as Student Supply or Candidate Supply.
- They are also placed in positions of trust while fulfilling field/contextual education and Supervised Ministry Education (SME) requirements, either through an internship placement or an appointment.
- Those who are responsible for ensuring that ministry personnel have completed the two types of mandatory training often find themselves in a position of enforcing the requirement after a candidate starts an appointment.
- Candidates who are fulfilling the SME requirement in a pastoral charge placement are not currently required to complete this training. Including the mandatory training as part of the candidacy process would clarify the expectations.

The full proposal can be found in the GCE workbook at commons.united-church.ca. Click the Governance folder, then General Council Executive, and then GC42 Executive (2015-2018). In the Meeting Documents folder select “2017-05-06 GCE Meeting” to get to the workbook. The proposal is MEPS 13 Mandatory Training for Candidates on page 116.

Leaders Equip, Accredit, Discipline

Learn about their work:

united-church.ca/LEADERSHIP

(formerly the Pastoral Relations cluster)

Revised M&P Committee resources

Two revised M&P Committee resources are online at united-church.ca/handbooks:

- *Ministry and Personnel Committees: Policy, Procedures, Practices* (July 2017) contains policy and procedures that must be followed. It also contains best practices that provide information, guidance, and advice on the recommended ways to live out mandatory policies and procedures, which M&P Committees are encouraged, but not required, to follow.
- A companion volume, *Resources for Ministry and Personnel Committees* (July 2017), contains checklists on the structural needs of the Ministry and Personnel Committee; more on its roles and responsibilities, including best practices on giving and receiving feedback, and developing and maintaining healthy ministry teams; resources for recruitment and selection of lay employees and for annual performance reviews for staff; and lists of helpful websites.

These resources replace the *Ministry and Personnel (M&P) Committee Guidelines* (January 2010) and *Employment Guidelines for Lay Employees* (March 2010).



Assessed Rates for benefits

Our goal is always to provide the best affordable benefit program for members and employers. In an effort to manage payroll costs, we were able to temporarily reduce the “Assessed Rates” paid by employers and members in 2015 by using plan reserves to subsidize the cost of benefits. However, after three years, we now need to protect the plan’s reserves by bringing Assessed Rates closer to covering actual benefit costs.

Consequently, the following rates will increase by 6.5 percent in 2018:

- employer-paid core rates, including the Restorative Care Plan and Employer Indemnity
- member-paid Long Term Disability and Optional Health & Dental premiums
- pensioner-paid Health & Dental premiums

We have posted updated budgeting tools to allow employers to budget for 2018 at united-church.ca; search for “budgeting tools for treasurers.”

Mental health awareness

When we feel physically unwell we know to seek out effective treatment so we don’t get worse or even compromise our long-term health. But is the same true for mental health? Possibly not, either due to the stigma around mental illness or lack of awareness of what constitutes mental illness.

Mental illness is characterized by changes in behaviour, thinking, mood, or a combination of the three and is associated with substantial distress and general dysfunction over an extended period of time. It is also the leading cause of disability claims under the church’s Restorative Care Plan and Long Term Disability Plan.

Our Employee and Family Assistance Plan offers resources to help members recognize and access help with mental health issues.

WHERE TO LEARN MORE

- The Employee and Family Assistance Plan (EFAP) covers a range of mental health issues and highlights how we can help ourselves and others. See workhealthlife.com and select “Newsletters and microsites” after going to The United Church of Canada page.
- Don’t forget that EFAP also provides a variety of services, from counselling through health coaching, that can all help on the road to good mental health. Those services can be accessed online through the website, via the “My EAP” app, or by phone. For more information go to united-church.ca and search “EFAP.”

CONTACT US

Connex is the newsletter of the Permanent Committee on Ministry and Employment Policies and Services (PC-MEPS), the Ministry and Employment unit at General Council Office, and The Pension Plan of The United Church of Canada.

United Church Benefits Centre: 1-855-647-8222
(update personal information; start pension)

Green Shield Canada: 1-888-711-1119 greenshield.ca
(questions on coverage for health and dental; online tools; reminders)

Pastoral Charge Payroll Service: 1-800-268-3781,
ext. 3132 or 2757 payroll@united-church.ca

Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP): Confidential, 24/7
1-800-387-4765 (English), 1-800-361-5676 (français) shepell.com

Ministry and Employment unit at GCO: 1-800-268-3781
MinistryandEmployment@united-church.ca

Pastoral Clinical Consultations

Let us help

24/7 access to confidential advice and guidance to help ministry personnel deal with sensitive situations.

Dealing with sensitive people situations can challenge you in your role. Let your Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP) help with confidential and professional guidance for any situation you may be faced with.

How it works

Pastoral Clinical Consultations are confidential and available 24/7. You will interact with an EFAP counsellor via the telephone who will listen and help you manage through a situation you may not know how quite to handle. Together, you will explore options, brainstorm solutions, and work on action plans.

How to request Clinical Consultations 24/7

- Call the EFAP Care Access Centre
- Use online chat in the Manager Area on workhealthlife.com
- Use online chat on My EAP app

ASK TO SPEAK WITH A CLIENT CARE COUNSELLOR (CCC) FOR A PASTORAL CLINICAL CONSULTATION

Clinical Consultations will help you respond to;

- Mental Health concerns
- Emotionally sensitive situations
- Cross-cultural communication
- Harassment or violence
- Expression of suicidal thoughts
- Illness or medical conditions
- Difficult personalities



Connect with us for confidential support or to learn more

Use the EFAP resources and support designed just for you.
For immediate assistance, contact us at **1.844.880.9142** or visit workhealthlife.com.



Download My EAP app now at
your device app store or scan
the QR code.



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