



# 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

## A Web of Support

By Lorna King

This is my second term as a member of the Permanent Committee on Ministry and Employment Policies and Services (PC-MEPS). I still remember my first meeting, facing over 100 pages of reports and possible motions and feeling horribly overwhelmed. But soon I learned the intricate web of the programs and services, and I have been proud to play my small part in this committee work, always aware of its impact on the lives of ministry personnel.

During the past year I have been grateful for the role that PC-MEPS, the General Council staff, and the Conference Personnel Ministers play in our church. At the end of May 2017 I began working with my doctor on some health concerns, and while waiting for appointments



I contacted a counsellor at Morneau Shepell—the United Church’s Employment and Family Assistance Program provider—and had several supportive conversations. In July I began a medical leave and received wonderful advice and support from the Conference Personnel Minister and General Council staff, who helped me negotiate the paperwork involved in being on the Restorative Care Plan. The Ministry and Personnel Committee also received good advice in their work

## IN THIS ISSUE

- Annual police record check: New requirement
- New from Green Shield Canada: Mindfulness Program
- STRAIGHT TALK about our pension plan
- New compensation model: What treasurers need to do

of supporting me. Meanwhile, at home on my computer, I was able to access some excellent online resources from Morneau Shepell at [WorkHealthLife.com](http://WorkHealthLife.com): useful articles to read, good assessment tools for tracking my overall health, and some online activities to do, like a guided meditation to help with relaxation and stress release.

With good advice and support, I decided late in the year that returning to work was not possible and retirement was the best choice for me. With a dedicated team effort, I received my first pension deposit on February 1. Through the many challenges of the last year I can affirm that our church’s programs and services work well, and I am glad to continue on the committee that supports them.

—Lorna King is a retired Designated Lay Minister who lives in Saskatchewan.



## Torrance E. Bissell Bursary Fund

This fund provides grants for undergraduate education to dependants of members of the Order of Ministry and recognized designated lay ministers in the United Church who are paid at the minimum salary for their category. The due date for 2018 applications is **June 15**.

To submit an application, contact your Conference Personnel Minister. For more information about the funds of the Financial Assistance Committee, contact the Rev. Adam Hanley, Program Coordinator: Ministry Personnel Vitality, at 1-800-268-3781 ext. 3147 or [ahanley@united-church.ca](mailto:ahanley@united-church.ca).



## Annual police record check: New requirement

An online form must now be filed by June 30 every year by every ministry personnel who is carrying out active functions of ministry. This is a change from the previous requirement to show a police record check to your Ministry and Personnel Committee at the time of your call or appointment or in certain other situations.

The form is available in the Pastoral Relations section of [www.united-church.ca/forms](http://www.united-church.ca/forms), or search for “Annual Declaration in Respect to Criminal Charges.”

Before your first online filing, the date of your last police record check must be verified by your Conference office and included in the online form that you complete by June 30, 2018. If your police record check is not current, you have time to obtain one before June 30, 2018. After that, if you complete the online form every year before June 30, you will not be required to obtain any further police record checks. If you have questions about this change, please contact your Conference or call the General Council Office toll-free at 1-800-268-3781, ext. 7788.



## BENEFITS INFORMATION

### New from Green Shield Canada: Mindfulness Program

GSC has launched a new preventative, digital mental health support program that is available to every plan member at no cost. Members can access the Mindfulness Program on the Change4Life® health portal.

Mindfulness is also a spiritual practice connecting us to the Divine, one another, and the environment. It is a proven practice that helps people approach stress, low mood, and anxiety differently so they can get more out of their day-to-day experiences and improve their well-being. It's



a mental state achieved by focusing your awareness on the present moment while calmly acknowledging and accepting your feelings, thoughts, and body sensations—often through meditation.

The series consists of six sessions that combine audio and video components, on-screen education materials, and a reflection workbook. For more information visit [www.greenshield.ca/en-ca/news/mindfulness](http://www.greenshield.ca/en-ca/news/mindfulness).

Take this opportunity to engage this spiritual practice through our benefits provider. As with anything on Change4Life, you'll earn points for your mindfulness activity that you can use to bid on great rewards!



## STRAIGHT TALK about our pension plan

This edition of STRAIGHT TALK answers some questions we recently received from members and presbyteries.

**We are concerned about what is happening to employees of Sears. What would happen to our United Church Pension Fund should The United Church of Canada cease to operate?**

The Sears plan is a single-employer pension plan. Because Sears went into receivership the plan has to be wound up. Unfortunately, the Sears plan is not fully funded on a solvency basis. This means it does not have enough assets to pay for all the benefits owed to current and retired members.

Fortunately, the United Church plan is fully funded on a solvency basis, so if it had to wind up today there would be enough money to pay all the benefits owed to its working members, deferred members, retirees, and survivors. This is based on the last valuation performed by the plan actuaries effective December 31, 2016. Also, ours is a multi-employer plan with over 1,800 participating employers. For the plan to cease operations or wind up, all or most of those employers—churches and other charitable organizations—would have to cease operations.

**Some members tell us they feel uncertain about the new church governance structure. They want to know whether the pension fund and the benefits from that fund will continue to both accrue and be paid out as is currently happening.**

The pension fund is separate from the assets of the church. Changes in the church's structure do not affect the operations of the pension plan.

**With some United Churches closing, how secure is the health and dental plan, basic and optional, currently managed by Green Shield?**

As mentioned above, the plan is multi-employer, so if a few participating employers ceased to exist the plan could continue to operate unaffected. In addition, a reserve is

maintained to provide benefit stability. In the case of Sears, the company's management was not contributing enough to maintain a reserve in the retiree benefit fund.

## Responsible investment efforts through SHARE

The United Church has contracted with the Shareholder Association for Research and Education (SHARE) to participate with other clients in a program of engagement on a broad range of social, environmental, and corporate governance issues. This engagement happens through correspondence and dialogue with companies, or in some cases by filing a shareholder proposal independently or in collaboration with investor groups.

Through these efforts using SHARE's services,

- the United Church along with The Presbyterian Church in Canada and SHARE met with Goldcorp to discuss outstanding human rights concerns related to the closure of the Marlin mine in Guatemala that were not fully addressed in the company's most recent disclosures, including consultation on closure planning, the future of the foundation Goldcorp established, and how community grievances will be addressed.
- Canadian Pacific committed to an Indigenous employment target and appointed a staff person responsible for internal education and Indigenous relations.
- Enbridge indicated that in its upcoming Indigenous Relations report it will outline how the company will address free, prior and informed consent; how Indigenous rights due diligence is being integrated into potential investment decisions; and how the company will approach Indigenous relations for its own projects in Canada and the US.
- engagement with all six of Canada's banks on how they are managing and disclosing on climate-related concerns is continuing. TD Bank has now set a financing target of \$100 billion for low carbon lending, financing, asset management, and other initiatives by 2030.



## Albright Gardens survey

Please consider responding to an online survey to help the United Church determine whether a need that was addressed over 60 years ago is still relevant. Replies will be accepted until May 31, 2018: [www.surveymonkey.com/r/albrightgardens](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/albrightgardens). Thank you in advance for your help.

The United Church of Canada (General Council) owns a property donated in 1954 by the Rev. Ray Albright for the purpose of providing lower-cost independent living accommodation to retired members of the United Church Pension Plan.

The property is located on the slopes of the Niagara Escarpment in the town of Beamsville, Ontario, overlooking Lake Ontario. It has 41 single-storey dwellings, including cottages and detached and attached houses. The dwellings were built in the 1950s and 1960s to respond to the reality that many ministers living in manses had no housing equity upon retirement. This is the Albright Gardens Retirement Community (AGRC). (An eight-minute video, *Albright Gardens Beamsville, Ontario*, can be viewed at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=G224lthXOmU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G224lthXOmU)). A long-term care home and independent-living apartment complex are also on the property but are separately owned by a non-profit corporation with historical roots in the United Church.

To find out more about AGRC or be added to the waiting list, please watch the video mentioned above and contact the property manager: Joseph Tonnos & Associates, 343 Merritt St., St. Catharines, ON,



L2T 1K5; phone 905-688-6600; e-mail [tonnos@niagaralandlord.com](mailto:tonnos@niagaralandlord.com).

Consideration is being given to renewing, upgrading, and possibly redeveloping the property to better accommodate residents' needs. Please complete the survey to help clarify what should be done.

*Connex* is available online on the [United Church Commons](#). Please provide your e-mail address so we can notify you when new issues become available. If you are an active plan member, just call the United Church Benefits Centre at 1-855-647-8222. If you are not an active plan member, please send an e-mail to [MinistryandEmployment@united-church.ca](mailto:MinistryandEmployment@united-church.ca).

## 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](http://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](mailto: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](http://shepell.com)

Ministry and Employment unit at GCO: 1-800-268-3781  
[MinistryandEmployment@united-church.ca](mailto:MinistryandEmployment@united-church.ca)



## New Compensation Model: What Treasurers Need to Do

### Changing ministry salaries to a new compensation model

The deadline for changing 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 called base salary and housing allowance. Ministers provided with a manse continue to receive a base salary plus use of the manse.

Most pastoral charges have moved their minister's salary to the new compensation model. If you have not yet done so, please contact

Diane Collier (dcollier@united-church.ca, 1-800-268-3781, ext. 3148) or  
Carmen Flores (cflores@united-church.ca, 1-800-268-3781, ext. 3166)

### Calculation for a year of credited service

Minimum salaries for ministry personnel are based on credited years of service. For Order of Ministry and Recognized Designated Lay Ministry, there are increment categories: A (1 to 2 years), B (3 to 4 years), C (5 to 7 years), D (8 to 10 years), E (11 to 13 years), and F (14+ years). For students, there are steps: 1 (1 to 2 years), and 2 (3+ years).

Currently, in order to progress through the increment categories and steps, a minimum of 750 hours of paid, accountable ministry service are required in a calendar year. A year of service that does not meet this minimum does not count toward a ministry personnel's years of eligible service and cannot be "banked" with other, similar years of less than 750 hours to create a full year of eligible service for salary increment purposes.

Through the Effective Leadership and Healthy Pastoral Relationships project, it was determined that the current policy is not fair or equitable for ministry personnel who work part-time hours. To recognize the work of part-time ministry personnel more equitably, the following proposal was approved:

- Effective January 1, 2019, the calculation for a year of credited service for paid accountable ministry work will change from 750 hours of paid work in one calendar year to 728 hours of paid work in one calendar year (14 hours per week).
- For years in which paid accountable ministry work is less than 728 hours, the hours worked can be banked if the yearly paid work is more than 416 hours (8 hours per week); once 728 hours of paid work are reached, a year of credited service will be calculated.