



## **Pension Newsletter**

### **Issue 24, November 2013**

#### **No Change to Benefits, but Plan Funding Improving**

Analyses of the health of the United Church pension plan show that recent significant changes made in contributions for both members and employers (pastoral charges and other ministry units) are proving effective. These changes are helping to solidify the position of the plan, an encouraging improvement from only a couple of years ago.

As the economic health of the global investment markets improves, so does the ability of the Pension Board to consider increases in the benefit promise, but investment markets are still volatile. The board will watch for consistent trends upward, where losses do not cancel out gains. A persistent movement in this direction will be required before increases can be considered.

The Pension Board's duties and priorities for managing the pension plan are outlined in the Statement of Beliefs and Guiding Principles. These principles are designed to balance the legal duty of the board to act on behalf of pension plan members—carefully managing the pension plan fund to ensure the pension promise of the church's plan is on solid ground—and the need to maintain a meaningful benefit level for members. The board continues to keep the need to provide upgrades to benefits for members as a priority, but this can only happen when the plan can afford to meet the increased benefit promise for the long term.

The Pension Board is aware that holding benefits at current levels is difficult news to hear, especially when costs to pensioners are increasing. A letter to all members explaining in detail why this is the case has been sent from Pension Board Chair Marcus Robertson.

#### **So, Does Anyone Even Read This?**

The Ministry and Employment unit will be conducting a survey in the new year (details in the February issue), asking members of the pension plan how our communications are working for you. The Pension Board wants members to share what they value about pension communications—and what can go! Our last survey was in 2008, and a lot has changed since that time!

#### **Pension Statements**

Pension statements for members are normally produced mid-year; however the

Benefits Centre experienced some challenges with meeting this deadline and ensuring the accuracy of statements. Because the Pension Board has prioritized correct information, the delay in mailing out pension statements for the year 2012 was to provide sufficient time and resources to thoroughly check figures to ensure data for members is accurate.

The board continues to monitor the service provider's effectiveness and is working to ensure that you receive quality and reliable service.

### **Pre-retirement Seminars and Tips**

Many ministry personnel retire on the first of July, largely related to the traditional end of the pastoral year. There are ways to streamline the process to calculate your pension and avoid delays to receiving your benefit:

1. Today/any day: Check your profile at the Benefits Centre to ensure your spouse (if applicable), beneficiaries (if applicable), and address are correct. Visit the AON Hewitt website (using your PIN) or call 1-866-859-5025.
2. Promptly report life events, for example, divorce. Do not wait until retirement to report a marriage breakdown. The calculations and documentation are complex and will delay the process of calculation of your benefit.
3. Three months before your planned retirement date, call the Benefits Centre: 1-866-859-5025.

### **Updated Webpage**

The United Church website has updated the Pension webpage to make the information provided to members easier to find. All important information about the pension plan is posted here. Check out the page and see what's available.

### **Address Updates?**

**Active Members:** Contact your treasurer or payroll administrator, who will do one of the following:

- Complete the New/Change Employee sheet and fax it to the pastoral charge payroll service provider (ADP).
- Contact the Benefits Centre directly to update the address (if not using the payroll service).

**Pensioner Members:** Contact the Benefits Centre directly at 1-866-859-5025.

### **E-mail Notification**

To receive e-mail notification about *Foresight* (three annual e-mails, plus one for

the annual report), please ensure your current e-mail address is correctly noted in your Benefits Centre profile.

**Pensioner Members:** Call the Benefits Centre at 1-866-859-5025.

**Active Members:** Call the Benefits Centre at 1-866-859-5025 or go online and update the field directly.