

SUMMER 2020

Board Connections

Updates for churches and church employers from the Board of Pensions

Dues relief and deferments available to struggling churches and employers

The Board of Pensions has extended dues relief and other assistance to churches and employers that participate in the Benefits Plan of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and have experienced hardship due to the COVID-19 crisis. This is especially true for churches.

“Churches are in a particularly difficult situation, with limits being placed on gathering sizes and the need for social distancing,” said the Reverend Frank Clark Spencer, Board of Pensions President. “It’s been Board practice during crises like this to offer financial support to churches and employers.” In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, for example, the Board granted dues relief to churches with unavailable sanctuaries or displaced congregants.

“Providing that kind of relief for an extended period to the entire denomination is not feasible because of the Board’s obligation to maintain sustainable benefits plans,” President Spencer said. “But we are hopeful that, with congregations and employers supporting their ministers and employees as best they can, together we can help our community of faith weather COVID-19.”

The details on support the Board is offering follow. As so much remains unclear, these steps are being reviewed every 30 days.

The smallest churches

For those churches with congregations no larger than 300 people with a single pastor enrolled in Pastor’s Participation that self-identify as having extreme need, dues relief will be granted on a case-by-case basis, in consultation with the presbytery/synod. Up to three months of Pastor’s Participation dues will be waived, with no change to benefits.

If these churches are also covering other employees through the plan, the Board may defer payments owed by the church for up to two months. Benefits would not be affected and no interest would be charged. At

the end of the deferment period, the outstanding balance would be paid off in monthly installments for the remainder of 2020, along with the normal payment.

Other churches

Churches that participate in the Benefits Plan but don’t meet the criteria above may be able to receive deferments of up to two months on payments for minister and employee coverage. Deferment decisions will be case-by-case. There will be no change in benefits and no interest charge with a deferment. At the end of the deferment period, the outstanding balance will be paid off in monthly installments, along with the normal payment.

Other PC(USA) employers and affiliated employers

Other church employers, including presbyteries, synods, and agencies, may also have difficulty during this crisis. PC(USA)-affiliated organizations, a diverse group of employers with varying needs and financial resources, may struggle as well.

Employers in this group that self-identify as having extreme need may be able to defer payments for employee plan coverage for up to two months. Deferments will be decided on a case-by-case basis. Benefits will not be affected and interest will not be charged. At the end of the deferment period, the outstanding balance will be paid off in monthly installments, along with the normal payment.

“Our churches and employers are all over the country, and the time frame for COVID-19 to run its course varies by region,” President Spencer said. “We’re monitoring the situation daily to be sure that we’re doing all we can.”

Any church or employer experiencing economic hardship is encouraged to contact us. If you have questions or think you may qualify for a waiver or deferment, please call us at **800-773-7752 (800-PRESPLAN)** Monday-Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. ET.



THE BOARD OF PENSIONS
OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (U.S.A.)

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GREETINGS SIBLINGS IN CHRIST,

We began planning a newsletter for congregations and presbyteries before COVID-19 made such a difference in all our lives. From the beginning, our goal was to ensure that important updates about benefits reached all our church employers, but the current crisis has made it urgent.

So, we are providing a special printed edition of Board Connections. Our hope is that you will find it informative, especially as we move through the COVID-19 crisis, and that you will share it with others.

This first issue, by necessity, provides information on support for congregations during the crisis. This includes coverage of the dues relief and deferments the Board of Pensions is making available to church employers who are struggling financially in this difficult time.

But also important is the information on the 2021 Benefits Plan, which has undergone the most substantial changes since 2017. Our hope is that what you read here will prove useful as you prepare to complete your Employer Agreement.

The Board of Pensions believes that too many ministers are being excluded from the Benefits Plan and are also missing out on programs that foster wholeness. The 2021 plan addresses that by extending support for more ministers with the establishment of a new benefits package, Minister's Choice. It also expands the benefits offerings available for both ministers and employees.

Thank you in advance for taking the time to read this Board Connections. And, as always, if you have questions, please call us at **800-773-7752 (800-PRESPLAN)**. Our service representatives are here to serve you.

—The Rev. Dr. John G. McFayden
Executive Vice President &
Chief of Church Engagement

Benefits Grants for Organizing Pastors and Evangelists

To support the evangelism efforts of presbyteries planting churches and cultivating new ministries, the Board offers benefits grants to fund the enrollment of ministers in Pastor's Participation. This comprehensive benefits package includes family medical coverage, pension, death and disability, and (in 2021) temporary disability.

For a presbytery to be eligible for the grant, the minister must

- be employed by the presbytery in church job code 301 for no less than 20 hours per week;
- have an effective salary less than the congregational ministers' median (\$60,800 for 2020);
- not currently be enrolled in Pastor's Participation and not have been enrolled in Pastor's Participation in this employment relationship, or with this employer, for at least two years before enrollment in this grant program; and
- not have initiated a retirement benefit with the Board of Pensions.

The next application period is June 1 to August 31, 2020 for benefits effective October 1, 2020. For the application and more information, see pensions.org/benefits-grants-evangelists.

Paying your monthly invoice is easy and secure with BoardLink

Are you still mailing checks to the Board of Pensions each month? There's a faster, easier way to pay your monthly invoice.

BoardLink is the Board's secure, online payment system. After setting up your account, you will receive monthly email reminders when your invoice is ready to view online. You can pay your invoice on the day you choose, set up recurring monthly payments, and view the status/history of your account.

Each transaction is conducted securely, and all sensitive data, including financial account information, is encrypted. Visit pensions.org/boardlink to learn more and sign up today.

Dismantling structural racism together

As an agency of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the Board of Pensions is committed to the goal of dismantling structural racism. For those who wish to join us in pursuit of justice, here are a number of resources to help guide the journey: pcusa.org/racial-justice-resources.

Help with navigating benefits decisions

Sessions, session committees, and other church leaders making benefits decisions may call on their Board of Pensions Church Consultant for guidance about options. These consultants offer personalized assistance to churches, as well as mid councils, across the country. To find the consultant for your region, see pensions.org/church-consultants.

Changes to benefit offerings for 2021

The Board of Pensions has announced changes to the Benefits Plan that extend support to more ministers and add benefits that promote financial protection for all church workers effective January 1, 2021. Employers can choose benefits for 2021 beginning July 20.

Minister's Choice benefits package added

To address the Board of Pensions' concern that too many ministers are not enrolled in the Benefits Plan, the 2021 plan offers two benefits packages for PC(USA) ministers: the existing Pastor's Participation and the new Minister's Choice.

Enrollment in Pastor's Participation, a comprehensive benefits package with medical coverage and pension participation, is required for installed pastors and may be offered to any minister with a minimum 20-hour workweek. Dues, paid in full by the employer, will remain at 37 percent of effective salary for 2021, with no reduction to existing benefits and the addition of the new Temporary Disability Plan.

Benefits Packages		
	Pastor's Participation	Minister's Choice
Medical Plan	● PPO (includes EAP)	EAP only
Death and Disability Plan	●	●
Temporary Disability Plan	●	●
Defined Benefit Pension Plan	●	●

● Included in package

Minister's Choice, available for non-installed ministers working at least 20 hours a week, includes pension, death and disability, temporary disability, and the Employee Assistance Plan. The cost is 10 percent of effective salary, also fully employer paid.

Minister's Choice also opens the door for eligibility to assistance and education programs that have been available only through Pastor's Participation, such as CREDO and Minister Educational Debt Assistance.

New Financial Protection Programs

For 2021, the Board of Pensions has added financial protection options, including the Temporary Disability Plan, Long-Term Disability Plan, and an expanded term life benefit.

The Temporary Disability Plan provides a partial weekly income for up to 90 days of disability, with a 14-day waiting period before benefits payments begin. Employers pay the full cost for ministers enrolled in Pastor's Participation and Minister's Choice. Employers may offer it outside of those benefits packages, with the employer or the member paying the full cost.

The Long-Term Disability Plan offers financial protection for employees with a disability that surpasses 90 days, providing a partial monthly income throughout their disability. Employers may offer the plan to employees who are not enrolled in the Death and Disability Plan (which includes a long-term disability benefit) and are working at least 20 hours per week. Employers pay the full cost of coverage.

The Term Life Plan offers the same low-cost coverage available in the 2020 Benefits Plan. But in addition to a fixed amount of coverage (from \$5,000 to \$50,000), it includes a new feature — an income-based benefit amount, equal to one times a member's effective salary, capped at \$50,000. Under either option, employers pay the full cost of coverage.

The Board of Pensions' goal is for every minister and church worker to have access to quality benefits in support of well-being. The 2021 Benefits Plan advances on that goal while also enabling more ministers to access assistance and education programs designed to help them devote their best gifts to ministry.



Retirement Programs

- Defined Benefit Pension Plan
- Retirement Savings Plan



Financial Protection Programs

- Death and Disability Plan
- Term Life Plan
- Temporary Disability Plan
- Long-Term Disability Plan



Health Programs

- Medical Plan, with PPO, EPO, and HDHP options
- Employee Assistance Plan
- Vision Eyewear Plan
- Dental Plan



Tax-Advantaged Accounts

- Dependent care flexible spending account
- Healthcare flexible spending account
- Health savings account

Enhanced benefits, additional resources, and support during COVID-19 crisis

The Board and its partners have responded to the COVID-19 crisis in a variety of ways that enhance benefits for members and provide additional support to employers.

20-hour rule suspended for coverage

As a result of the crisis, PC(USA) congregations have had to make difficult decisions about staffing, including layoffs, reduction in hours, and furloughs. The Board of Pensions has suspended the required 20-hour rule so employees with reduced hours may maintain benefits coverage. If you have an employee working more than 20 hours, and you reduce those hours to less than 20, the employee can maintain benefits, provided the dues remain paid. However, the employer may not be eligible for federal Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loan forgiveness, which requires that employers continue to pay at least 75 percent of salary.

With a furlough, you can reduce hours to zero and still maintain the active status of an employee for benefits purposes without the need to continue pay, provided the dues are paid on the position. Once a layoff or termination decision is made, the employee no longer remains eligible for benefits through the Board.

Medical Plan updates

For those enrolled in the Medical Plan, all three medical options (PPO, EPO, and HDHP) will pay 100 percent of the cost — the member pays no deductible, copay, or copayment — for coronavirus testing. Under the PPO and EPO options, deductibles and copayments will be waived for inpatient treatment of COVID-19 at a network hospital. The Board will re-evaluate this decision every 30 days.

In addition, for members enrolled in the PPO, EPO, or HDHP option, all copays, deductibles, and copayments when using the telemedicine option Teladoc through June 30, 2020, will be waived. Teladoc doctors are available 24/7 by phone or video.

Tax-advantaged accounts

As a result of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act, signed March 27), the requirement that over-the-counter drugs must be prescribed by a physician to be eligible for reimbursement from a healthcare flexible spending account or health savings account has been removed. Members may use these accounts to pay for over-the-counter drugs purchased on or after January 1, 2020.

Additionally, a dependent care flexible spending account election can be changed if, as a result of the pandemic, a member is not working, or working fewer hours, or if care provider/costs change. These qualify as permissible reasons under the IRS.

More information and assistance

➔ For more coronavirus-related information and resources from the Board of Pensions and our partners, visit pensions.org/coronavirus.

➔ Visit pensions.org/COVID19legislation for information and resources for churches and ministries about federal legislation enacted by the U.S. government in response to the COVID-19 crisis, including a three-part presentation series from attorneys who serve agencies of the PC(USA).

Emotional support for members, consultations for employers available

The Employee Assistance Program (EAP), offered through the Board of Pensions and administered by Cigna Behavioral Health, can help members and employers receive the emotional support they need during this difficult time with consultation services, private counseling sessions, and other resources. The EAP is confidential, free, and a phone call away, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.



Emotional support for members

The EAP offers employees with medical coverage through the Board of Pensions, their family members, and anyone in their household 24/7 access to EAP advocates and licensed clinicians who will listen to their concerns and guide them to resources to help them. The EAP is completely confidential, and there is no cost.

Those with access to the EAP can receive up to six free private counseling sessions per issue with a provider in the Cigna Behavioral Health network. And through September 30, 2020, they can get four additional sessions — for a total of 10 free sessions — to help with isolation, stress, depression, or other emotional support they may need.

To access these free counseling sessions, members can call Cigna Behavioral Health at 866-640-2772 or visit mycigna.com. One time registration is required; use **pcusa** for Employee's Employer ID.

Consultation services for employers

No-cost management consultation services through the EAP can help you handle the impact of COVID-19 on the workplace. To access these services, call 866-640-2772 and you'll be put in touch with an employee assistance consultant who will help you assess the situation and guide you. Employee assistance consultants are licensed, master's degree-level clinicians with backgrounds in theology.

Benefits Plan exemplifies 'care' for Lees-McRae College

Lees-McRae College, in Banner Elk, North Carolina, is a private institution affiliated with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). It was founded at the turn of the 20th century when the pastor of the Presbyterian church in Banner Elk gathered together a small group of students.

This Presbyterian connection brought together Lees-McRae and the Board of Pensions. When leaders from the two organizations met at the Association for Presbyterian Colleges and Universities annual conference, Lees-McRae had been struggling with the risk and uncertainty of a self-funded medical plan.

"It was a budgeting nightmare," said Jon Kokos, Vice President for Finance and Business Affairs/CFO and Treasurer at Lees-McRae. "Some years, we would win, and some years, we would lose and lose big."

Additionally, "there are a lot of administrative responsibilities with a self-funded plan," explained



Lees-McRae College in Banner Elk, North Carolina

Mary Furst, Lees-McRae's Human Resources Director. "It added additional work and a layer of complexity."

Ultimately, the college wanted to provide better medical coverage for its employees, reduce administrative burdens and financial risks, and restore stability to its annual budget. "We looked at several options, including a large conglomerate in our area. Unlike the Board, it was an all-or-nothing plan, and the pricing wasn't close to that of the Board. Plus, the Board's plan was in line with our mission as a PC(USA) college," said Kokos. Lees-McRae also appreciated the philosophy of the Benefits Plan of the PC(USA), based on A Theology of Benefits. All three medical coverage options offered by the Board of Pensions – the PPO, EPO, and HDHP – include a variety of features, at no additional cost to the employer or employees, that demonstrate the Board's commitment to wholeness and well-

being, such as an online well-being program, Call to Health, and the Employee Assistance Program.

"If I could summarize the Benefits Plan in one word, it would be 'care'," said Furst. "We valued how the Board of Pensions manages the plan and their focus on the individual. It's easy to become cynical about employee benefits, but the Benefits Plan was very refreshing."

Lees-McRae initially offered the PPO medical option in 2019, and for 2020 added the EPO option and vision eyewear coverage. The addition of the EPO option was all about giving employees the ability to choose which plan would work best for them and their situation, said Kokos. Lees-McRae would recommend the Board of Pensions to other organizations. "This is a great way to shore up your budget and add value for your employees. We're really glad we made the switch," Kokos said.

Pathways to Renewal 'A real impact on real people'

First Presbyterian Church of Franklin's congregation has long had a "keen interest in mission and outreach," said the Reverend Dr. Chris Joiner, FPC Franklin's senior pastor.

Yet for many years, the church, just outside of Nashville, Tennessee, went without a leader dedicated to this growing area of ministry. It fell to Rev. Joiner to accompany church members on their increasingly ambitious mission trips, which included journeys to Lesbos, Greece, to work with Syrian refugees marooned in the camps there.

After returning and sharing their experiences

and insights with the congregation, mission participants and other congregants began dreaming of ways to expand FPC Franklin's support of this vital ministry.

At about this time, Rev. Joiner heard about the Board of Pensions' Pathways to Renewal program, which brings young ministers into the Benefits Plan through the benefits package Pastor's Participation at substantially reduced dues. The program is designed to provide hope of renewed leadership to small congregations and support to innovative ministries of congregations of all sizes.

Any size Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) congregation that increases ministerial headcount is eligible for Pathways to Renewal if the minister being called is under age 40 and has never previously been enrolled in Pastor's Participation, which includes PPO medical coverage, Pension Plan, and the Death and Disability Plan.

The financial boost provided by Pathways to Renewal helped decide the question of whether FPC Franklin was ready to expand its pastoral staff. FPC Franklin hired Mary Sellers Shaw as Director of Mission and Outreach out of seminary, and, upon her ordination in March 2019, called her to be Associate Pastor — a new position responsible for leading the church's

mission and outreach ministries. She also supports Rev. Joiner in leading worship and providing pastoral care.

"I am so excited for this opportunity," Rev. Shaw said. "And I'm grateful for the Board's help. It's a gift to the church."

Rev. Shaw hit the ground running, leading a mission trip of eight congregants to the U.S.-Mexican border. The group worked with the Presbyterian border ministry Frontera de Cristo, helping to escort immigrants to border security gates, participating in a binational prayer vigil at the border wall, and building their understanding of border realities for immigrants and the churches that seek to serve them.

Barely a month later, Rev. Shaw and another group of congregants helped provide disaster relief in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, where many people still are without homes since tornadoes devastated the area in 2017. She and the others spent a week helping build a home.

Thanks to Pathways, Rev. Shaw is able to join with FPC Franklin staff, congregants, and other community leaders, sharing Christ's compassion both inside and outside the church.

"I like what Pathways is doing for the PC(USA) as well as for FPC Franklin," Rev. Joiner said. "It has a real impact on real people."



The Reverend Dr. Chris Joiner (left) and the Reverend Mary Sellers Shaw of FPC Franklin



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Your Summer 2020 Board Connections

It's almost time to select benefits for 2021.

Your Employer Agreement will be available on Benefits Connect
July 20.

HOW WE SERVE MORE

Our commitment to service excellence is a defining characteristic of what we do. As an agency of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), we are honored to provide benefits — a call that we take seriously.

HOW WE SERVE BETTER



PLAN DESIGN THAT
REFLECTS OUR VALUES



STABILITY OF COSTS
YEAR OVER YEAR



A CULTURE AND
TRADITION OF SERVICE



COMMITMENT
TO WHOLENESS AND
WELL-BEING

2021 BENEFITS

See what's new for 2021 at pensions.org/2021benefits

Retirement Programs

- ◆ Defined Benefit Pension Plan
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