

ADDENDUM-2014 CONFERENCE REPORTS

BOARD OF PENSIONS

With the new CRSP pension program in place, little work has to be done in terms of the pension benefits presently offered through the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits (GBOPHB). However, there is much work to be accomplished with regard to matters of health insurance.

The CBOP identified four areas of work for 2013-14:

Retiree Health Insurance

Retiree Health Insurance has been of prime concern for your CBOP. Our concern resulted from the GBOPHB announcement that it will no longer offer the Blue Cross Blue Shield (BCBS) group supplemental plan for retiree health insurance as of January 2015, but instead will offer an individual plan known as "Extend Health."

The CPOB therefore reviewed two options: In Option 1, Extend Health would be provided by GBOPHB. This plan would enable each retiree and/or spouse to choose their own supplemental plan based on individual needs. Each retiree would be provided with a qualified counselor who would review their health needs, and recommend one or more health and drug plans that could meet those needs. Several annual conferences have already selected Extend Health, and their reports suggest it is working very well.

Option 2 would be for the CBOP to find a group plan similar to our present supplement and enroll all our retirees/spouses in that plan much as we now do with our BCBS supplement. The CBOP hired the Willis Consulting Co. as a consultant to explore the possibility of purchasing a group plan vs. using the GBOPHB Extend Health plan. The CBOP may also ask Fred C. Church Insurance to explore the possibility of a supplemental group plan for retirees.

The CBOP will announce its findings at the Annual Conference in June. An educational/informational gathering will be established following the conference.

Active Participant Health Insurance

Health insurance for active participants is less pressing, as the GBOPHB will provide essentially the same health coverage in 2015 and 2016. Active participants are enrolled in a program called "B-500" (named for its \$500 co-pay). This plan will terminate in 2015. In 2015 the CBOP will move to a B-750 plan, and possibly to a B-1000 plan in 2016. The CBOP is exploring alternative plans, including a Consumer Driven Health Plan sponsored by the GBOPHB, the purchase of another group plan, or moving all active participants to either the public exchanges or, possibly, to a private exchange which the GBOPHB may offer.

Sustainability Committee

The CBOP affirms that the sustainability of our pension plans currently looks good. But the question arises as to whether the Conference will be able to continue to provide health benefits to retired participants who are living longer. This becomes more critical as we realize that the Conference has been in decline both in terms of the number of churches and the number of church members. Currently, the CBOP has met with actuarial representatives from the GBOPHB to explore methods by which the Conference may begin to annuitize unfunded health insurance liability.

Policy Committee

Over the years the CBOP has adopted a variety of policies related to issues such as eligibility for benefits, establishment of rates, and individual grants. Many of these will impact present and future sustainability. The CBOP intends to collect, catalog, and review all of these in order to keep them current as we move forward.

Looking Ahead

Current trends suggest that, increasingly, industry is moving away from employer-sponsored pension and health benefits. The current trend is to encourage individuals to be responsible for their own retirement through IRA's and 401K programs. Likewise, the Affordable Care Act will move many people now in group plans to the exchanges.

CBOP encourages all participants to prepare themselves for retirement by contributing as much as possible to their United Methodist Personal Investment Program (UMPIP).

In closing, we are reminded that the work of the CBOP could not happen without the efforts of Bill Burnside, Janis Salesi, and Thelma Phelan who keep us well informed and on task. The CBOP is most thankful to their dedicated efforts in assisting clergy, church and conference staff every day with pension or health insurance questions.

Respectfully,
David A. Hoyt, Chairperson CBOP

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY MINISTRIES

As Marriage and Family Ministries Coordinator for the NE Conference, I encourage and support local church ministries for strengthening marriages and families of all configurations. I post lists of upcoming events and resources available in New England at www.neumc.org/marriageandfamily and share this information through the Catalyst and by email to persons who have expressed interest. This year we have added a Speaker's Bureau to the website and are developing a list of recommended counselors.

I continue to gather names of interested persons, respond to inquiries (requests for relationship advice or for information about resources and programs), review resources, and donate curriculum resources to the conference resource library and to Boston University School of Theology library (which has accepted the books previously donated to the Bangor Theological Seminary Library in Portland, Maine). Books may be borrowed from the BUST Library by Inter-Library Loan through your local library. You may be told that there will be a \$20. fee for borrowing these books, but BUST has waived their usual charge for the books in the "Ives Collection." Your local librarian should see this when placing the order, but if not, please contact Amy Limpitlaw, Head Librarian (ael23@bu.edu or 617-353-1321).

More comprehensive lists of marriage and family ministry resources are posted at www.marriagelovepower.net, www.gbod.org/marriage, and www.gbod.org/families. As a Marriage and Family Ministries Consultant for the UM General Board of Discipleship, I write articles describing "best practices" for various aspects of marriage and family ministry (marriage preparation, relationship education for youth, parenting, domestic violence, infidelity prevention and recovery, pornography, and other topics). These may be downloaded from the websites and copied to use as handouts (please include the copyright permission printed on them). Because the GBOD websites have been undergoing extensive reconstruction, you may find the latest updates more easily at www.marriagelovepower.net.

In addition to presenting Learning Centers on "Effective Communication" and "Equipping Youth to Build Healthy Relationships" during Annual Conference in June 2013, I presented two workshops at the NE School of Congregational Development in November: "Building Better Marriages" and "Marriage and Ministry" (for clergy families).

We have scheduled a Better Marriages Leadership Training Workshop to be held in the retreat buildings at Mechuwana August 26-30, 2014 (SCHEDULE CHANGE TO 3 DAYS EARLIER THAN PREVIOUSLY ANNOUNCED). This is an extremely important and vital opportunity for lay couples and pastor/spouse couples. Participants will build skills and acquire resources to use in workshops, classes, weekend events, and personal relationships to teach communication and conflict management skills that help couples build healthy, life-long relationships. Registration deadline is June 30th. Contact Better Marriages at 800-634-8325 or nrussell@bettermarriages.org for details and to register. Space is limited!

The need is great, as evidenced by the many social problems exacerbated by the breakdown of family life in our culture. Let's work together to strengthen marriages and families to help make disciples for the transformation of the world.

Please tell me how you strengthen marriages and families. Also let me know if you would like to receive my occasional email updates and announcements and if you would like to participate with the conference team.

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY MINISTRIES

Name: Expertise/Interest [Location]

Margaret Barrow: Great Start (PREPARE/ENRICH) and Couple Communication; Myers-Briggs [Mt. Vernon, ME]

Deborah Curtis: LICSW, Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT) [Woburn, MA]

Robert Ebersole: Elder New England Conference, Doctor of Ministry in Marriage and Family Counseling, MFT (Soon to be licensed), Pastoral ministry for 25 years, now full time therapist. Special interest in Trauma issues, anxiety issues, and the use of forgiveness to treat anger. Individual, couple, family and group therapy. [Massachusetts]

Susan Heafield: singles ministries [Orleans, MA]

David Hodgkins: counseling [Scarborough, ME]

Jane P. Ives: Better Marriages, Couple Communication, Active Parenting, [Portland, Maine]

Barbara Lemmel: Family Systems workshops, visioning, individual and couple coaching,
www.Tending-the-Fire.com [Essex Junction, VT]

Kim Tisdale Yeasir: Social Work Background, trained as mediator, passionate about conflict
and communication [Boston]

Respectfully submitted,

Jane P. Ives

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