

**For the Information of Parish Officers  
Re: Benefits for Parish Lay Employees  
(Current January 1, 2008)**

Over the past several years there has been a marked increase in the number of parishes hiring lay employees for youth or music ministry, administrative support, building maintenance etc. Many of those parishes, and employees themselves, have raised the issue of the availability of pension and benefits participation. The following information may help in that regard.

**Available Plans:** The Pension Office of General Synod administers and provides access to a full range of plans for parish lay employees, including pension, long term disability plan, and a comprehensive benefits package. The benefits plan is national plans and premiums are set annually on a province by province basis.

**General information:** While there is no specific policy requiring that benefits be offered to qualifying lay employees, doing so is a strong example of fair employment practices.

Before offering pension/benefits participation, it is critical for the employing parish to first develop policies in the area of eligibility, waiting periods, premium cost sharing etc. This will help avoid inconsistencies and misunderstandings. That policy can include a "probationary" period for newly hired employees, during which there is no eligibility for participation in pension and benefits plans.

Generally employers cannot force employees to participate group plans. If an employee is offered participation in any of the plans and chooses to decline, the parish must have that in writing, and should offer participation again, at least annually.

**Available Plans:** The Pension Office of General Synod administers and provides access to a full range of plans for parish lay employees, including pension, a comprehensive benefits plan, and coverage under a long term disability plan. Application forms are available from the Synod Office.

**The Lay Pension Plan:**

- Description:** This is a registered pension plan requiring contributions from both employee and employer. It allows employees to accumulate capital which can be used to purchase annuity income at retirement. Employee decides how the contributions will be invested.
- Management:** The Plan is administered by the Pension Office of General Synod, with London Life providing the investment services to participants through their various registered pension products.
- Eligibility:** Any employee may participate in the Lay Pension Plan.
- Contributions:** Employee and employer contribute at a rate of 5% of employee salary.
- Waiting period:** None
- Long Term Disability (LTD):** Provides 60% of earnings in the event of permanent disability resulting from illness or accident. Subject to a 16 week waiting period and to approval through an application process. Benefits are taxable, and Canada Pension Plan Disability benefits are an offset to this Plan.
- Eligibility:** Enrollment in pension plan results in automatic enrollment on the LTD Plan. However, persons employed on a contract basis for a specific term are ineligible for coverage.

Premiums: Employer pays a premium of 2.2% of salary and employee's premium is 0.4%

The Benefits Plan:

Description: Group Life Insurance: \$20,000 coverage along with \$2,000 on spouse and \$1,000 per child. Also includes Accidental Death & Dismemberment (AD&D) coverage.

Medical: A standard extended health benefit plan for prescriptions (\$1 co-pay per prescription), vision care (bi-annual exam and \$100 every two years for glasses); semi-private hospital, medical devices and supplies, and special practitioners with various annual limits for claims.

Dental: Standard plan with the usual 80% reimbursement rates based on a dental fee guide. Claims however, are limited to a maximum of \$1,000 per person per calendar year. (There is no such maximum on the medical plan)

Management: Administered by the Pension Office of General Synod, and underwritten by Manulife Financial.

Eligibility: Employees must work an average of at least 20 hours per week to participate in the plan. All participants must also be enrolled in the Lay Pension Plan.

Waiting period: 30 days from hire or from end of probationary period

Premiums: The following table shows the 2008 monthly premium rates. Premiums may be cost shared by employee and employer.

**Benefits plan monthly premiums (effective January 1, 2008)**

Item	Single	Married	Family (IE with children)
Group Life (plus AD&D)	\$8.40	\$8.40	\$8.40
Dependant Life	n/a	\$0.58	\$0.58
Medical (Including Vision Care)	\$96.60	\$264.13	\$264.13
Dental	\$41.46	\$58.33	\$107.93

Authored by F Scott, Diocesan Treasurer (January 2008)