

National Capital Presbytery

2025 Theological and Practical Guidance for Benefits Decision-Making

Constitutional Framework

The Book of Order requires that terms of call include participation in the benefits plan of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) (G-2.0804), leaving it to the Board of Pensions to specify the precise terms of eligibility and enrollment. **The Book of Order also entrusts to presbyteries the responsibility of establishing minimum compensation standards for pastoral calls and those serving in temporary pastoral relationships** (G-3.0303c). In NCP, the Commission on Ministry develops these standards and publishes them in the annual compensation policy document. The new Board of Pension offerings for pastors can be found on the BOP website [here](#). This COM policy presented below covers aspects of coverage requirements and guidelines that lie beyond the scope of the Board of Pensions' mandate.

Background: Board of Pensions "Season of Rebuilding"

This year the Board of Pensions approved [a new medical dues structure](#) to take effect in 2025. Previously, the Pastors Participation program provided full family medical benefits at a cost to the employer of 29% of total effective salary. The Board has established a new dues structure, with a number of options. Employers will now be **required** to contribute 16% of the minister's effective salary for installed pastors (subject to a minimum of \$6,000 and a maximum of \$17,000), and benefits for spouses and children **may** be purchased for an additional cost, which may be borne by the employer, by the minister, or shared between the two.

The benefits for ministers' families under the new plan are priced as follows:

Coverage Level	Dues	Minimum Dues	Maximum Dues
Member-only	16%	\$6,000	\$17,000
Member + Child(ren)	16% + \$8,950	\$14,950	\$25,950
Member + Spouse	16% + \$11,000	\$17,000	\$28,000
Member + Family	16% + \$20,600	\$26,600	\$37,600

For those currently enrolled in Pastors Participation, a transitional program is available for 2025-2027, in which the church pays an increasing percentage of effective salary for full family benefits. In some cases, the transitional program will result in lower dues than the new structure above.

Transitional Pastors Participation	2025	2026*	2027*
Medical Dues %	33%	37%	41%
Minimum	\$15,000	\$18,000	\$21,600
Maximum	\$43,000	\$50,000	\$57,000

* The percentage amounts listed for 2026 and 2027 may be increased and should be taken as a *minimum* forecast.

The board has also expanded benefits eligibility and options for non-installed church employees. The rationale for these changes and an overview of available benefits may be found on the board's [website](https://pensions.org/file/our-role-and-purpose/the-connectional-church/living-by-the-gospel/Documents/pln-619.pdf?utm_source=web&utm_medium=homepage_news&utm_campaign=lbtg) and here: pensions.org/file/our-role-and-purpose/the-connectional-church/living-by-the-gospel/Documents/pln-619.pdf?utm_source=web&utm_medium=homepage_news&utm_campaign=lbtg

Theological Guidance

Because it has been the nature of the church from the beginning to share in common the necessities of life (Acts 2 & 4), additional financial burdens created by the change in dues structure should be shared in an equitable way. The Apostle Paul reiterated this in his letter to the Galatians, "Bear one another's burdens, and in this way, you will fulfill the law of Christ" (6:2). "The very character of God as revealed in Scriptures compels those who worship and serve God to 'maintain justice and do what is right.' Hence from its inception the Church has affirmed just compensation for its servants." (See [A Theology of Benefits, Board of Pensions](#), Isaiah 56:1, I Corinthians 9:9-12, Second Helvetic Confession 5.168)

When a pastoral relationship begins, the congregation answers the following question regarding their pastor (W-4.0404 c): Do we promise to pay [her/him] fairly and provide for [her/his] welfare as [she/he] works among us; to stand by [her/him] in trouble and share [her/his] joys?

The congregation promises to provide for the welfare of the pastor, and the welfare of a pastor cannot be separated from the welfare of a pastor's family. Being a pastor is a unique vocation that requires significant commitment, not just from the pastor but from their entire family. Every minister, and every minister's spouse and dependent child, deserves medical coverage that does not unduly burden the family.

In their [Theology of Benefits](#), the Board of Pensions states that "as the body of Christ, we demonstrate abundant life to the world as a community of faith, hope, love, and witness. We call people to varied forms of service and covenant to support them so they may devote their best gifts and energies to the work of God's kingdom." As the church, we have an opportunity to demonstrate our trust in the abundance of God.

Considerations

The Commission on Ministry recognizes that some churches will realize savings under the new plan. However, it also recognizes that different benefit needs, and associated costs may present challenges for some churches and present a heavy burden for some pastoral candidates, particularly ministers who have lower salaries and require the family benefits that come at a fixed cost. For most ministers, bearing the full \$20,600 cost of benefits for a whole family is prohibitive, given that NCP's minimum salary guidelines have been established with the expectation of full family coverage provided by the church.

Given these concerns, the 2025 compensation guidelines aim to ease the transition to the new benefits standards, while creating new opportunities for cost-sharing for churches burdened by the high cost of benefits.

Presbytery Guidelines

1. In 2025, church employers shall offer family medical coverage through the Board of Pensions to installed pastors working at least twenty hours a week, either through the Transitional Pastors Participation plan (for those already enrolled in Pastors Participation), or through the Congregational Pastors Package.

When the Congregational Pastors Package is chosen, the church shall pay a minimum of 90% of the cost of coverage and the pastor no more than 10% for the desired family coverage (spouse-only, children-only, or spouse+children). The pastor may decline the optional family coverage and instead may negotiate a compensation increase that offsets the cost of family benefits available outside of the Board of Pensions. For instance:

- If the pastor's spouse is eligible for medical coverage through another plan, and has contributory requirements for such coverage, for themselves and/or dependent children, the church would provide additional salary to the pastor to offset the contributory cost. Pastors should recognize that such a contribution is a taxable event. (COM recommends that pastors consult with their tax preparer regarding how best to structure the terms of call.)
 - Pastors may elect family coverage for spouses and children through the Affordable Care Act marketplace or other plans outside the Board of Pensions offerings and negotiate an increase in salary that offsets the cost.
 - Because family benefits carry a fixed cost under the new dues structure, churches employing ministers in part-time positions are encouraged to explore opportunities for using the Board of Pensions' Shared Ministry Program, which provides subsidies for dues when two or more churches work together to provide full-time employment to a minister.
2. Some congregations have pastors who do not need family benefits and may realize savings under the new dues structure. However, if a church does not continue to budget for the cost of providing family benefits, the church could create a challenge for itself in its next pastoral search.

Congregations that realize savings on medical coverage through ministers waiving unneeded family benefits should consider:

- a. earmarking the savings made from a pastor who waives unneeded family benefits for future pastoral compensation,
- b. redirecting savings into increased salary for the pastor or covering the cost of benefits for other staff members, and/or

- c. contributing savings toward the National Capital Presbytery cost-sharing fund to help cover the cost of family benefits for ministers serving other churches.

3. Congregations may petition the COM:

- a. for an exemption to this policy, in light of extraordinary circumstances. A request for exemption should be directed to comadmin@thepresbytery.org.

- b. for support negotiating family coverage arrangements, Stated Clerk Rev. David Baer is available to advise, as is our Board of Pensions representative Carrie Mitchell.

- c. for cost-sharing support through the NCP fund. Requests may be made to Heather Deacon, NCP Director of Business Affairs.

- d. to discuss possibilities for constructing a full-time pastoral leader position that is shared between churches, to ease the cost of benefits. Contact General Presbyter Rev. John Molina-Moore to begin this conversation.

This policy shall be revised on an annual basis as we move through the transitional period ending December 31, 2027.