



"From Where I Sit ..."

Healthcare and the CME Church!

2014 is finally here! And with its arrival is President Obama's Healthcare program and the group insurance plan for the CME Church. Now the question is, "Which do you choose?" The plan from a governmental or local exchange or participation in the CME Church's group plan. With all of the public scrutiny and the various allegations from political groups, one can easily be fearful about the appropriate steps to take.

Let me again try to paint a background picture. From my review and research into the legislation, it appears that the primary intent of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) was to provide affordable quality insurance to people who did not have insurance and encountered great difficulty obtaining insurance. Simply put, its intent was to bridge the gap between those who had insurance and those who did not. And although simply put, the meaning of this intent would naturally have a different impact on different people.

I have always said that in my opinion the chief benefit of the ACA was to provide insurance for people unable to get group insurance which normally was offered to persons who were employed. It is commonly understood in the insurance industry that group insurance is less expensive than an individual policy with the same benefits. In fact, without a group insurance plan structure, the average person could seldom afford individual insurance if he or she had a pre-existing condition or other constraints that were not precluded in a group insurance plan. Hence a group insurance plan was generally an ideal solution for the typical employee especially when the employer bore a portion of the cost.

However, there were also some less than "ideal" situations such as, 1) those persons who were employed but worked a specific number of hours less than a full week and were therefore denied eligibility in a company group insurance plan, or 2) those persons who were employed but their employer chose not to sponsor a group plan because of mandated costs, or 3) those persons who were discontinued (let go) from their employment and therefore no longer eligible to participate in a company sponsored group insurance plan, and finally 4) those persons who were self-employed and either did not qualify for a group plan or could ill afford a group plan. There are likely other unique groups beyond these I have cited above.

I mention all of this to showcase the fact that at long last the CME Church has available to it a group insurance program that addresses the needs of the pastors and lay employees of the Church. A plan that provides coverage for persons under 65 backed by one of the largest insurance providers in the country and a plan for those employees 65 and older with coverage even into retirement. A plan that gives each person employed by the church the opportunity for coverage for themselves and their families at a group rate that is competitive and affordable. A plan that has been specifically designed for our unique structure as a connectional church.

Unfortunately our plan does not cover the laity in general, only the laity who are employed by the church. But even this is a significant step and comes after nearly 10 years of continued effort. And for those eligible persons who are under the age of 65, the condition for participation is similar to our retirement plan in that one need only meet the criteria of a 20-hour work week.

Of course the question most people want to know is, “How does it compare in cost?” According to our brokers for the plan designed for persons under 65, our rate quotes have been 10-12% lower than the quotes offered on the various exchanges. And for those 65 and older, 2014 premiums have been established at group flat rates in age banded categories based on the location of the CME Headquarters in Memphis, Tennessee, which has one of the lowest base costs in the country.

The other question most often asked is, “What do the plans offer?” Well I’m glad you asked and before answering, let me also say that although I have only spoken of two plans which are health insurance plans; our program also offers a third option of medical benefits and other insurance benefits. Before describing some of the benefits, let me give titles for each specific plan:

- 1) **Major Medical Insurance** for Pastors and other church employees under age 65.
- 2) **Senior Care Insurance** for Pastors and other church employees 65 and older including Pastors and other church employees who have retired.
- 3) **PSP (Professional Services Program) Plan** of benefits and other insurance for all Pastors and other church employees regardless of age.

The **Major Medical Insurance Plan** offers the following from among its benefits:

- ❖ It is a “group” healthcare exchange for pastors and other church employees
- ❖ Offers coverage for the insured, spouse and eligible children
- ❖ There is no contribution requirement or minimum participation requirement
- ❖ Offers traditional coverage and benefits packages
- ❖ No annual or lifetime limits
- ❖ Guaranteed Issue
- ❖ Persons enrolled can be billed directly or through their respective churches
- ❖ Multiple Pastors/employees combinations can be list-billed to their church location
- ❖ 10-12% average savings compared to other ACA approved plans
- ❖ Free, no obligation quote available online at www.CMEHealth.com
- ❖ Underwritten by the Kennion Group

The **Senior Care Insurance Plan** offers the following from among its benefits:

- ❖ Health insurance and Drug coverage that supplements original Medicare (Plans A & B)
- ❖ Available in this form in 48 states (FL and NY have additional offerings also available)
- ❖ Coverage is Portable (will follow you wherever you go in the US)
- ❖ Accepted by any provider who accepts Medicare
- ❖ No Health Questions
- ❖ Available year-round (no need to wait for an open season)
- ❖ Covers pre-existing conditions
- ❖ “0” deductible and higher deductible with lower premium plans available
- ❖ “Cadillac” options available
- ❖ Quotes are available by phone at **(877) 936-2991**
- ❖ Underwritten by **Guarantee Trust Life (GTL)**

The **PSP (Professional Services Program) Plan** offers the following from among its benefits:

- ❖ Benefit payments directly to insured
- ❖ Monthly and (with certain options) weekly premiums available
- ❖ Hospital Indemnity Insurance (underwritten by US Health)
- ❖ Accident Plan (underwritten by Humana)

- ❖ Critical Illness (underwritten by Humana)
- ❖ Disability Income (for limits above CME Retirement Plan Limits)
- ❖ Term Life [for additional amounts in addition to the CME Retirement Plan] (underwritten by KMG/Humana)
- ❖ Dental (underwritten by Nationwide)
- ❖ Vision (underwritten by CS Benefits)
- ❖ Quotes and enrollment information is available via toll free **(877) 517-8900**
- ❖ Plan broker Worksite Benefits

The beauty of this program is found in its comprehensive offerings and the available flexibility to design a specific program to fit the needs of each Pastor or other church employee. It has been crafted for the CME Church and is therefore structured for implementation in conjunction with a church entity (either local, regional or national). As an example, for the purpose of securing an online quote for the Major Medical Insurance Plan, the applicant will need to provide the Name and Tax ID (or EIN) of their respective church before submitting individual data even if the applicant plans to be direct billed for the premium. Inquiries for the Senior Choice and PSP Plans will also prompt questions about the applicant's church association which is intended to insure that there is a church connection as either a Pastor or other employee. Unfortunately, it is a necessary inconvenience to protect the credibility of the Plans for the future.

By the time you read this article, the Board of Personnel Services will have a new website designed to further assist with questions and steps for ease of enrollment. Sample applications will be posted to clarify some of the unique questions required to be answered and a FAQ section will be included. Most importantly, in regard to this program we should all remember that this is a process designed by our Church, for our Church, to benefit our Church and her mission in the vineyard of service. Over the long term, when we add these new insurance and medical benefits to our existing offerings of Retirement, Life Insurance, Short-Term Disability Income, and Accidental Death and Dismemberment Insurance; we provide a tremendous enhancement in the quality of the employment packages that we can offer to new Pastors and other employees. This is a good thing for the present and for the future but it can only be of beneficial value if we take the time to explore these offerings and make the effort to take advantage of them. Or at least that's the way it looks to me ...

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*(Copies of earlier articles may be found on the
Personnel Services Webpage of the CME Website at www.thecmechurch.org)*