



# Good News for the Pews

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## From Pastor Don

So this is going to start going in one direction, and then take a turn and go somewhere completely different. Think of it like an adventure in reading. I'm sitting at my gate in the Denver airport this afternoon after a two day conference for the PC(USA) Board of Pensions. Don't worry I'm not thinking about my retirement. I was here as a representative from the San Francisco Presbytery Committee on Ministry (COM). In addition to our actual pension plan the Board of Pensions (BOP) is the agency that manages all of the benefits for Ministers of the Word and Sacrament and other church workers, including our medical plan, various assistance programs, and host of continuing education and wellness programs. This year the benefits plan is going to change *dramatically* for many pastors.

Every year at the English Worshipping Committee Annual Meeting you see my total benefits package. About two thirds of my compensation goes to me as salary and housing allowance. Another third are the various dues for my pension, medical benefits, and death and disability coverage. The program was instituted in the late 90s, and (spoiler alert), the old model no longer functions for our current reality. When the plan was designed the amount paid into the pension plan was largest percentage of dues. Today the medical benefits portion is almost three times higher than the pension portion. All installed pastors, working 20 hours or more, (specifically all Ministers of the Word and Sacrament installed in PC(USA) churches) are required to be in the same benefits plan, and their churches pay the same percentage of their salary for benefits, 39%. Whether the pastor makes \$50,000 or \$110,000 their church pays an additional 39% for dues. For many churches the combined package is unaffordable.

Because some churches lack the financial resources to pay that amount they have to have part time pastors, or Commissioned Ruling Elders (who don't *have to be* paid the same—though they can be). 30% of churches with 150 members or less can't afford and do not have installed pastors. *Only 20% of Black congregations have installed pastors.* Of the 4049 ministers ordained in the last 15 years, 1167 have never received any benefits from the BOP; 63% of them are women.

The cost of the current plan, paid for by the local churches but subsidized by the BOP is simply unsustainable. The cost of health care continues to skyrocket. Newly ordained ministers, people of color, and women are more likely to be excluded. The BOP is thoroughly



## Deacons' Report By Diane Go

The Deacons are off and running in 2024!  
Your current Board of Deacons is as follows:

Eunice Bejar-Lee  
Pat Chan  
Terry Chan  
Carole Chinn-Morales  
Sharlene Hall  
Dayton Leong, co-chair  
Kathy Tong, co-chair  
And me, Diane Go

The PCUSA Book of Order states—

“The ministry of Deacon as set forth in scripture is one of compassion, witness and service, sharing in the redeeming love of Jesus Christ for the poor, the hungry, the sick, the lost, the friendless, the oppressed, those burdened by unjust policies or structures, or anyone in distress.”

It has been 10 years since I last was a Deacon. The look and feel of the role of Deacon has changed in significant ways, and it is all good! The big change that I notice from 10 years ago is the shift from a focus on service to our worshipping community to a ministry of outreach and sharing of compassion and love. I wish to acknowledge and thank the Resource Committee for its support and service in making this shift possible.

So what have we been up to? We meet monthly with Pastor Don Hammond. We continue to reach our community through birthday greetings to all members. Led by Eunice Bejar-Lee, we have reached out to our college agers and “away” young adults with care boxes loaded with goodies. *(continued on page 4)*

