



"From Where I Sit ..."

Retirement Planning ... What to do at 62!

When the General Board of Personnel Services (*formerly General Board of Pensions*) was founded in 1918, its purpose then was to oversee and administer the pensions of the Retired (Superannuated) Preachers, Widows and Orphans (of retired preachers) of the CME Church. Included in that purpose was an expectation to help these preachers prepare for retirement. Over the last nearly 100 years, the purpose of the department has remained somewhat the same. The department oversees the (12%) Retirement Plan and administers the distribution of the Plan Benefits to retired, disabled and withdrawn preachers or their named beneficiaries. The department also works to assist preachers to prepare for retirement which is the focus of this article.

Bearing in mind that many of our preachers do not plan to retire from the itineracy of the CME Church (and pastoring regular appointments) until the "conference" nearest their 74th birthday, effective planning for retirement, if done well, must begin years earlier when our preachers are in their 30's and 40's. The problem many of them experience is that of having a plan that is static, a plan that does not accommodate changes and revisions. An effective plan for retirement must be revised at regular intervals based on circumstances. However the secret for the most effective retirement plan is something so basic it is often overlooked and that is because the plan for the average person during the period "before" retirement is often static with one goal and one primary strategy.



It is a fact that many of our preachers are bi-vocational and retirement from a secondary (or in some cases primary) job may precede their plans to retire from the itineracy of the CME Church. And for those eligible to receive Social Security, a third retirement factor is drawn into the mix. With this in mind, the fact is there are no simple cases and every case (and I mean every case) is different.

If you have the opportunity and the access, seeking the advice of a certified retirement planner (CRP) is a beginning and for those who can take advantage of such a resource, it is a great first step but remember the key term in the above statement is "advice" of a retirement planner. The final decision is yours to make and yours alone. Therefore you should never fully rely on the advice of another without first making every effort to know the reasons or basis for their recommendations or advice.

So what's the secret? I know you thought I had forgotten but the secret is "asking questions." You should never fear asking questions about your future or the future of your family. Too many times we take the advice of others at face value without understanding the full implications. Too often we feel that our questions will make us look foolish or cause us embarrassment. The truth is, the only foolish question is the unasked question!

And what about, "What to do before 62"? Well apart from the CME Church Retirement Plan the most common retirement denominator for CME preachers is the opportunity to receive benefits from Social Security. Because you can receive Medicare Insurance benefits at age 65 and Social Security benefits as early as age 62, it is extremely important for you to visit your local Social Security office shortly after you turn 60 and, with your proposed plan for retirement, ask questions about your potential eligibility for benefits and when would be the best time to apply. If you are married and your plan includes your spouse, take him or her with you to insure that all of the best options are considered for you as an individual or as a couple. Do not be intimidated because it is a federal office. Remember that the persons with whom you will be meeting are public employees and you, through your taxes, have paid their salaries. Ask them the questions ... any questions regarding your potential benefits. Their answers may surprise you. You may discover that they really do want to help you with your plans. For the sake of your future and the future of your family, it's important for you to know ... before 62. Or at least that's the way it looks to me ...

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Personnel Services Webpage of the CME Website at www.thecmechurch.org)*