

INFORMATION
For
SURVIVING SPOUSES
Of
PENSION PLAN MEMBERS

Pension Fund of the Christian Church
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When does a surviving spouse pension become effective?

The surviving spouse pension is effective on the first of the month following the death of the Pension Plan member or pensioner.

Is there a payment upon the death of a Pension Plan member?

For Pension Plan members actively serving the church and under age 60, there is a Salary Continuation Benefit of three times the annual salary on which pension dues are paid up to \$50,000.00. At age 60, the Salary Continuation Benefit is two times the annual salary on which pension dues are paid, up to \$30,000.00.

The Pension Fund's normal procedure for the Salary Continuation Benefit is to send \$5,000.00 to the surviving spouse immediately to assist with the final expenses, placing the remaining amount in a Benefit Accumulation Account for future use.

For those Pension Plan members receiving a retirement pension, there is a pensioner "death benefit," which is three times the annual pension or \$10,000.00, whichever is less.

There is no Salary Continuation Benefit for Inactive members and no death benefit for those who retired from an Inactive status. Also, there is no death benefit on the life of the surviving spouse.

What can I expect to receive as a surviving spouse pension?

Normally, the surviving spouse pension is 50% of the member's pension credits (if not retired) or 50% of the member's retirement pension. Members who retire at age 65 or older may elect a 75% or 100% surviving spouse pension at the time of retirement. If your spouse retired at age 65 or later and made one of these elections, your pension will be either 75% or 100% of the retirement pension he/she was receiving.

Will my surviving spouse pension increase or decrease?

Surviving spouse pensions will not decrease. The Pension Fund Board may periodically grant Special Apportionments which increase all retirement and surviving spouse pensions.

When will the surviving spouse pension end?

The surviving spouse pension is payable for the rest of your life.

What happens to the surviving spouse pension if I re-marry?

The Surviving Spouse pension will continue. However, you should notify the Pension Fund of your new marital status.

Will the surviving spouse pension terminate if I become employed? What if I am employed by a congregation or organization related to the Christian Church?

Your surviving spouse pension will not terminate if you become employed. If you become employed by a congregation or organization related to the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Christian Churches (NACC) or Church of Christ, you would then be eligible for Pension Plan membership in your own right and we would encourage your employer to remit Pension Plan dues on your behalf. When you eventually retire, you would receive both a retirement pension and a surviving spouse pension.

Is there a benefit for minor children?

Yes. Each minor child is eligible for a surviving child pension of \$500.00 per month until age 21. In addition, there is an Education Benefit of \$5,000.00 per year for up to 48 months to assist with education expenses beyond high school. Minor children are eligible for these benefits whether the Pension Plan member was actively serving or retired at the time of death.

My spouse was receiving a Pension Plan retirement pension and a portion was designated as housing allowance. May I continue to designate a housing allowance?

Unfortunately, no. Current tax law states that retired, ordained ministers may designate a portion of their church retirement pension as housing allowance but this does not extend to the surviving spouse. However, if you, the surviving spouse are also an ordained minister, you may designate a portion of your *own* church pension as housing allowance but you cannot designate the surviving spouse pension as housing allowance.

In addition to the Pension Plan, my spouse had a Tax Deferred Retirement Account at the Pension Fund. What do I need to know about that account?

Most Pension Plan members name the spouse as beneficiary of the Tax Deferred Retirement Account. If you are the beneficiary, you may keep the funds on deposit at the Pension Fund. You may withdraw funds from the account when needed but you cannot deposit funds into the account.

Since taxes have not yet been paid on the funds in this account, current tax law requires that 20% be withheld from each withdrawal for income taxes, unless you set up a payout of the funds over 10 or more years.

If your spouse was over age 70 ½ at the time of death and receiving Required Minimum Distributions (RMDs), even if you are under age 70 ½, by law, the RMDs must continue. However, in the year following your spouse's death, the RMD calculation will be made using your age rather than your spouse's age. This generally spreads distribution of the funds over a longer period of time.

My spouse had a Benefit Accumulation Account at the Pension Fund. Can I still make deposits and withdrawals?

The Benefit Accumulation Account is an after tax account. If the account was a joint account, or if it was a single account and you were the named beneficiary, you may continue to make deposits and withdrawals. If someone else was the named beneficiary, funds in the account must be paid to that beneficiary immediately.

What about Churchwide Health Care coverage?

As a surviving spouse, you may keep your Churchwide Health Care coverage or, if you are not already covered, you may enroll. You will need coverage either for yourself only (individual) or for yourself and your children (one adult plus minor children).

Am I eligible to enroll in and/or renew the Accident Insurance?

Surviving spouses remain eligible for Accident Insurance coverage until the year they reach age 80. All surviving spouses under the age of 80 may renew coverage or enroll at the \$20,000 or \$50,000 level.

Questions I need to ask the Pension Fund:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Notes:
