



A Theology of Benefits

The Church's provision of benefits for its employees is holy work, giving expression to the creative activity of the Trinitarian God to whom Holy Scripture bears witness: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him."ⁱ Scripture reveals One who cares about the health of body and soul.

God's desire is that all people experience *shalom* — the flourishing of life. This desire is reflected in the repeated refrain of the creation narrative: "God saw that it was good."ⁱⁱ The ensuing portrayal of life in the Garden of Eden illustrates an ideal in which humanity dwells in mutual care and well-being.

Jesus extends the promise, "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly."ⁱⁱⁱ The desire for health and wholeness are at the heart of the gospel call, which implores followers of Christ to care for the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick, and the prisoner.^{iv} In the celebrated parable of the Good Samaritan, itself a story of healing and wellness, Jesus extends the charge: "Go and do likewise."^v

The Holy Spirit gathers the Church and shapes its life through the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper, which are the sign and seal of new birth, new life, and a new way of living. Shaped by these sacraments and empowered by the Spirit, we, the Church, live in caring community with one another in all that we are, all that we have, and all that we do. The Church, as the Body of Christ, is rightly committed to a ministry of wholeness and compassionate care.

The very character of God as revealed in the Scriptures compels those who worship and serve God to "maintain justice, and do what is right."^{vi} Hence, from its inception the Church has affirmed just compensation for its servants.^{vii} The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) has repeatedly confirmed this commitment to support its servants with compensation that includes salary, benefits, vacation, and opportunities for spiritual growth and renewal.^{viii}

These concrete expressions of care extend God's desire for *shalom* and well-being, helping church servants flourish in the holy and human endeavor of ministry. As the body of Christ, we demonstrate abundant life to the world as a community of faith, hope, love, and witness.^{ix} 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.

ⁱ John 1:1-3

ⁱⁱ Genesis 1:12,18,21,25,31

ⁱⁱⁱ John 10:10

^{iv} Matthew 25:35-36

^v Luke 10:30-37

^{vi} Isaiah 56:1

^{vii} Luke 10:7-9; I Corinthians 9:9-12; I Timothy 5:18; “The Second Helvetic Confession,” *Book of Confessions*, 5.168.

^{viii} *Book of Order* W-4.0404i(5)(c); “Elements of Compensation,” *Report of the Compensation Committee* [approved by the 188th General Assembly (1976) of The United Presbyterian Church in the United States of America]; *A Theology of Compensation: A Study Paper* [approved by the 195th General Assembly (1983), from the General Assembly Mission Council]; “Theological Concepts” and “Basic Principles,” *Report of the Task Force on the United Presbyterian Compensation Plan* [approved by the 195th General Assembly (1983), from the Vocation Agency]; “The Presbyterian Church as Employer,” *Life Abundant: Values, Choices and Health Care — The Responsibility and Role of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)* [approved by the 200th General Assembly (1988)].

^{ix} I Corinthians 12:27-28; *Book of Order* F-1.0301