Update on the future of a pastor’s medical plan

A critical first step in investigating the addition of a medical plan for pastors was BBT’s recent survey, used to gather current medical plan information from Church of the Brethren churches, districts and camps. At press time, the BBT team was analyzing data, waiting for pricing information, and having comprehensive discussions about the feasibility of offering medical insurance for pastors again in the future. Here are some details being examined as this very important decision is weighed —

- The medical insurance industry is currently in a state of flux as various entities navigate the ACA and its rules and ramifications.
- Many people are finding what they need (in terms of medical insurance coverage) through other means, such as the exchanges, spousal coverage, and high deductible plans.
- Pricing will likely be the determining factor in whether or not BBT can play a role in offering this new coverage.

Also important to note is the fact that —
- BBT plans to give an update on the status of this process at Annual Conference.
- If it is determined that this plan is not feasible, BBT will offer a full explanation as to the reason why it could not move forward.

In the meantime, if you have any questions or concerns you want to make known, please don’t hesitate to contact Nevin Dulabaum, president of BBT, at ndulabaum@cobbt.org or 847-622-3388.

Visit the BBT Booth, July 11-15, in Tampa Bay, Fla.

Please plan to visit our booth to learn more about all that we have to offer, including our new Target Date Funds. You can even try to “hit the target” when you stop by — take your turn at our Target Date Fund dartboard.

We will have cake and noisemakers to mark the anniversary celebration for the Brethren Foundation, which is turning 25 this year.

Our popular 5K Fitness Challenge will be held on Sunday, July 12, at 7 a.m. on the beautiful Tampa Riverwalk. To register for this run/walk, you can visit our booth before 10 p.m., Saturday, July 11, or register at the race location on July 12 from 6 – 6:30 a.m.

BBT will offer several educational insight sessions at Annual Conference, including Meandering through Medicare; Thriving in Retirement, Not Just Surviving, and many more. See the full list and schedule at cobbt.org/insight-sessions.

You will also have a chance to win a SERRV gift card when you stop by our booth and answer a question. We hope to see you there!
A five-minute prep for retirement readiness

The vast number of Americans these days are not adequately preparing for retirement, but that does not mean that you have to be one of “them.”

Just give me five minutes of your time, and you’ll be asking the right questions and making steps to a fruitful retirement. If you still have questions, I will be glad to answer them, too.

Who are the unprepared?

Are people really that unprepared for retirement? Take a look for yourself. Go to www.usatoday.com. In the search box at the top right, type in the word “retirement.” And then as you scroll down, look at the articles that you pass by. “Millennials concerned about their retirement.” “People leaving work too soon to be able to afford their retirement.” “Social security may not be enough without other financial support in retirement.” The list goes on and on. USA Today has articles on retirement readiness every week, and the paper is free of charge on the Internet and available to read from your smartphone.

The retirement readiness two-step

The first step toward retirement readiness is deciding to take steps to work toward that goal, and looking at these USA Today articles once a week is such a first step, as retirement readiness is an investment not only in money, but also in time. Reading about how to be ready for retirement is an important first step.

Whether you’re a member of Brethren Pension Plan or another employment pension plan, the second step of retirement readiness is to be in an employer-based Plan in which contributions are consistently being made for your retirement. With Brethren Pension Plan, the contributions you make into the account are tax-deferred. There are two prime factors of being in an employer-based plan that you must consider — how long you contribute into the plan, and how that money is invested before you retire.

Want to see the incredible impact that time and compounding interest and contributions make on retirement? Try out the calculator at www.dinkytown.net/java/RetirementPlan.html. This calculator is easy to use, and it illustrates in a manner that everyone can understand, how a secure retirement begins with starting early and contributing regularly.

To address the second factor of being in a group plan, think about how your money is invested.

Which investment choices are for you?

Many people don’t know how their retirement monies should be invested, and yet this decision can positively or adversely impact your retirement. Choose funds that are too aggressive, and you may take on more risk than you are willing to endure. Choose funds that are too passive, and you may find that you have not selected enough risk, and your portfolio doesn’t grow much during all of the years that you are working and contributing to the plan.

Target Date Funds might be for you

In July, Brethren Pension Plan will be launching five target date funds, which will be offered by some of the employer groups that utilize Brethren Pension Plan. These funds, which we can’t certify at this time to meet all of the BBT socially responsible investing screens, are meant for people who want to grow their portfolios during the years they are working, but transition to a goal of investment preservation as they near their intended retirement date. As one draws nearer to retirement, the mix of investments changes from the more risky and yet potentially more rewarding stocks and other alternatives, to bonds and other “safer” alternatives, so that your account is better protected, should the markets take a sudden drop right before you want to retire and annuitize your account.

Some people enjoy working with investments, and they might feel comfortable moving their invested monies around on their own, using the online portal. Others might have financial planners who help determine their “asset allocation mix.” But for the rest, who aren’t sure how to best grow their investments, and don’t have a financial planner, Target Date Funds will do the job for them.

If this still sounds confusing to you, then drop me a line or give me a call. Nothing is more important than for you to be prepared for retirement, and I’m glad to help answer questions or hear your concerns at ndulabaum@cobbt.org or 847-622-3388. — N.D.
Exploring the state of happiness

What makes you happy? What makes other people happy? The answers might surprise you.

For as long as humans have been doing research and thinking about the psyche, the focus has been on mental illness and depression, once called “melancholia.” But since the 1980s, psychologists have been asking, in research projects, magazine articles, and books, what makes people happy. A new field called “positive psychology” has sprung up. At Harvard University, a class by that name is the most popular on campus.

Research shows that 50 percent of our happiness is determined by our genes. A surprisingly small portion, 10 percent, is determined by circumstances — income, education, social status, age, occupation, and where you live. This is notable because we are often told that these are the greatest determinants. But what is most revealing, according to Sonja Lyubomirsky, Professor of Psychology, University of California, Riverside, is that 40 percent of our happiness is determined by our own intentional activity. The things we choose or don’t choose to do have a great deal to say about how happy we are.

Benjamin Franklin once said, “The constitution only guarantees the American people the right to pursue happiness. You have to catch it yourself.” This Franklin quote appears at the beginning of a recent Academy Award nominated documentary titled simply, “Happy.”

The film introduces the many scientists doing this new research, but it’s the people being profiled who are at the heart of the film — including a man steering his boat through beautiful Louisiana bayous; his extended, gregarious, outgoing family, who speak both English and French and gather at least once a week to feast on crabs and other game they take from the land and waters where they live. They are an unassuming bunch who get a great deal out of living simple lives.

Another subject is a former beauty queen whose face was crushed in a pick-up truck accident on her ranch in Texas. She was disfigured for more than nine years and underwent 30 reconstructive surgeries. Her traumatized husband divorced her. In the midst of her pain, she began to have flashbacks of serious sexual abuse from her childhood, which she had completely repressed. The film follows her through recovery, remarriage, and a reconstructed face. Though not as beautiful as before and with a different life, she says, “Accepting all of my life is part of healing. The truth is, I am a happier person. I am more grounded, more centered, more connected and integrated with who I am, and grateful for who I am. I think you can make a choice when things happen in life.”

In the chemistry of the brain, dopamine is necessary for happiness, and physical activity is one the best ways to release this chemical. In Brazil, we meet a man who has spent his life surfing and living by the sea. He says worry about money keeps people awake and, “Sports take you out of this.” For him, surfing is spiritual. He’s been doing it for over 40 years with his children and is in harmony with nature. “It’s not the life of a Ph.D., but I live well.”

There is also a poignant story of a young man in Japan who worked himself to death. This happens often enough that the Japanese even have a word for it — karoshi. The Japanese recovery after World War II was one of the extraordinary success stories of the 20th century, but the focus on economic realities has taken a heavy toll, and Japan is considered one of the least happy places.

We see a rickshaw driver in Calcutta who lives with his wife and children in what we would call a slum, a ramshackle house that is open to the elements. But he goes to work each day with joy and he speaks with pleasure about his life and family. One of the studies suggests that this man is as happy as the average American. He especially values those around him. “My neighbors are good,” he said. “We stay together and that makes us happy. We are all friends.”

We meet a German, also in Calcutta, who gave up his prosperous career as a banker to volunteer at the Home for the Dying founded by Mother Teresa. A thoughtful man, he reflected that, “There is a

Continued on Page 5
Five ideas to consider when planning for retirement

If you are anxious about facing retirement for any reason, please know that, as Nevin Dulabaum referenced in his President’s Message, you are not alone. To help you follow the first step of his advice, here are some easy-read tips — things to ponder as you begin preparing for your retirement.

**Think about a phased retirement**
This means formal retirement from your full-time career job (the one you’ve held for many years, while hopefully paying into a pension plan) but continuing to work at a part-time flexible job that allows you to keep earning income, yet have more time to enjoy life. Some retirees are able to do consulting work or make money from a favorite hobby, such as quilting or woodworking. Others might seek out a part-time position at the local library, as a crossing guard, in retail, or at fast-food restaurants.

A 2011 AARP survey found that more than half of the employers (65 percent) say that they will try to keep older workers on as part-time employees or consultants. Other steps include use of a knowledge-transfer program to allow workers who are approaching retirement age to mentor or transfer knowledge to younger workers; and using a succession plan for critical positions, which helps avoid loss of knowledge that might occur if phased retirement is not offered to their older workers.

**Consider working longer**
The Center for Retirement Research estimates that those who start saving at 45 and hope to retire at 65 will need to save just over 25 percent of their income each year. That number drops to 10 percent, though, if you can put off retirement until age 70, because Social Security benefits increase each year you delay, up to age 70, and it is best to wait until age 70 to claim Social Security if you expect to live to 90. Think about how you can cut spending now, and plan to work longer if you can.

**Yearly Check-ups**
Farrell Dolan, a retired former principal with Farrell Dolan Associates, says you’d be wise to not only create a plan but to update it each year, or as circumstances change. “The right approach is to get started, because the plan is never done, just updated and changed as life changes,” he said. “What you do in your 60s to finance your lifestyle may be very different when you’re in your 70s or 80s.”

**Life is often more affordable in retirement**
Think about all the ways expenses go down once you retire. There are many things that will be easy to cut back on once you’re not working: for example — more time to plan meals means you can eat out less often; and you’ll have more time for do-it-yourself home-improvement projects. You also may be able to cut back on things like auto-related expenses, office or work clothes, dry-cleaning, and other discretionary items that are no longer necessary.

**Last bit of advice —**
Working longer and postponing retirement does not replace the need for careful planning and saving. Too often, life’s unforeseen circumstances can derail the future you’ve envisioned.
What’s New at BBT

The BBT Board of directors held its spring meeting in April at the Church of the Brethren general offices in Elgin, Ill. In addition to hearing department updates as well as discernment on the possibility of a medical plan for pastors, the following took place at the meeting —

- **Approval of Department of Defense lists** — Each year the BBT Board approves two lists of companies in which it won’t invest – the top 25 publicly traded U.S. Department of Defense contractors, and companies that generate 10 percent or more of their annual gross revenues from DoD contracts. If you would like to follow these principles as well, you can view the complete 2015 Department of Defense lists online at [www.cobbt.org/screening](http://www.cobbt.org/screening).

- **Clean audit report** — Chicago-based Legacy Professionals gave BBT an unqualified opinion, which means the audit team found no material deficiencies in the manner in which BBT conducts its financial operations and recordkeeping.

- **The Board voted to renew the services of IR+M** as one of its bond managers.

- **The date of the next BBT Board meeting** was approved for July 16-18, at Tampa, Fla., following Annual Conference.

- **Board member resignation** — Just after the conclusion of the April Board meeting, Board president Harry Rhodes accepted the resignation of Board member Tim McElwee. The BBT Board will approve a successor to this position.

**Staff Updates from April 2015 —**

Lynnae Rodeffer, who joined BBT in January as Interim Director of Employee Benefits, was officially named permanent director. Lynnae works from her office near Seattle.

Donna March, who is in her 26th year with BBT, was promoted and given the new title of Director of Human Resources and Administrative Services. Donna is now a member of the BBT management team.

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**The happiest people …” continued from Page 3**

The happiest people …

Ed Diener, Professor of Psychology at the University of Illinois and one of the pioneers of positive psychology, observes, “We studied some of the happiest people, and we found without exception, that all of them had close, supportive family and friends.”

The film’s narrator concludes by saying, “Playing, having new experiences, having friends and family, doing things that are meaningful, appreciating what we have — these are the things that make us happy. And they are free! And, with happiness, the more you have, the more everyone has.”

The filmmakers observe that one of the prominent reasons for happiness there may be that more people live in co-housing in Denmark than anywhere else in the world. In one such community, 20 families have their own living units but share many tasks. A woman with three children said, “It helps me a lot to live in this community, because we eat together nearly every evening. We each cook one or two times a month. The elder ones are grandfather and grandmother for my children. I feel it’s a gift from me to my children to live here.”

If you are interested in learning more about this film, visit their website at [www.thehappymovie.com](http://www.thehappymovie.com). Produced by Wadi Rum Films and Shady Acres, directed by Roko Belic, 2011.

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A five-minute prep course for retirement readiness — read more inside.

Going to NOAC?

Don’t miss these BBT-sponsored events
September 7-11, 2015, at Lake Junaluska Conference and Retreat Center in the beautiful mountains of western North Carolina.

Insight sessions
Count Well the Cost: The Benefits of Long-Term Care Insurance – by Randy Yoder
Why have it? How can it help you? What will it cost?

Meandering through Medicare – by Lana Rose
Are you confused and uncertain about health care in general and Medicare in particular?

On The Road To...? – 2015’s Economic Infrastructure – by Malcolm Nimick
Which parts of our economy are built on rock, which on sand? What are the storms ahead?

Special workshop
A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words – by Nevin Dulabaum, BBT President
Are your photographs telling your story, or are fingers, unfocused lenses, and a general lack of expertise getting in the way? Bring your camera.

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The latest information on the feasibility of a new medical plan for pastors

• Your Money
Helpful ideas to consider as you approach retirement

• Heart, Soul, and Mind
A look at what makes people happy

• President’s Message
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• What’s new with BBT?
BBT staff and board meeting updates

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