



# MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT/CEO



**Michael A. Downs**

The direst financial predictions finally came through in 2008. After years when the housing bubble inflated, American credit card debt soared and the global stock markets set record highs, everything was brought back to earth. The Dow Jones Industrial Average recorded its worst return in 77 years. European stocks performed even worse, and once highflying emerging markets lost nearly half their value in one four-month period during the year. That left panicky investors with few secure options, other than retreating to the safety of U.S. government debt, where one-month notes sold in December 2008 yielded essentially nothing. The velocity of market declines was unprecedented.

Following the failure of several large financial institutions last September, the Pension Boards initiated a series of monthly conference calls on the economy, open to all members and led by senior Pension Boards staff. More than 1,100 discrete callers have participated in the first six calls. A recording of each call is posted on our web site, [www.pbucc.org](http://www.pbucc.org), within four days of the call. We want to reassure you that we have never invested in subprime mortgages, that we had no exposure to Lehman Brothers at the time of their bankruptcy and – most importantly – since 1914, through two World Wars, a Great Depression and multiple recessions, the Annuity Plan has never missed a payment to its members. According to our external actuary, The Hay Group, “The reported assets are sufficient to satisfy the actuarial liability. The Annuity Plan is actuarially sound.”

For members still in their years of active ministry, the two main concerns expressed are: “I am one to three years from retirement and my accumulation account is down substantially. What should I do?” and “Should I sell, or reallocate, my balances now?”

We have said that if your current account balances will not support the annuity payment that you need to meet your expenses in retirement, you may need to work longer; and we caution against selling or reallocating investments in the Equity Fund after significant market declines, as you will realize or lock in these market losses. Remember that although the dollar value of your account balance has declined, you still have the same number of units that should increase in value as market performance improves.

As we move through this dismal economic environment, some pundits have said that the only thing they see at the end of the tunnel is a train wreck. This is not our view. In spite of the economic challenges ahead, and perhaps even several more

quarters of market underperformance, we believe that there is hope for the future. Please see the article on page 1 for more thoughts.

Our improved disease management program, **optimalhealth**, launched January 1, 2008, now touches 1,410 UCC (Non-Medicare) Health Plan participants or their dependents. The first report from the vendor indicates a 4.1 to 1 savings in Plan health care costs from dollars invested in the program! In addition, more than 2,000 Non-Medicare participants have accessed the **myhealthIQ** wellness program, with more than 400 completing both the Health Risk Assessment (HRA) and Wellness Exam. First-year participants who completed both the HRA and exam received a \$50 financial incentive in 2008. In 2009, first-year participants will again receive \$50, while second-year participants are eligible to receive as much as \$100 and their respective employers, \$200. Please see the articles on p.4-5 for more information on upcoming Wellness Exams and the many resources available through the Pension Boards’ **Healthy Stewards** wellness initiative.

The Pension Boards received a thorough, complete and clean audit from our external auditors. Enhanced risk management and compliance strategies are underway so that we continue to conform to best practices in operational compliance, particularly in this challenging economic environment. Our 2008 Annual Report will be available on the PBUCC web site in mid-May, and in print format for those members who requested to receive a copy by mail.

Our continued thanks for your confidence and trust in us.

Sincerely,  
  
Michael A. Downs  
President/CEO

## Diabetes: Did You Know?

Diabetes is a condition defined as the combination of obesity, diabetes, and heart disease.

An obese person is 60 to 80 times more likely to contract diabetes and three to four times more likely to suffer from heart disease than a lean person. Obesity, diabetes and heart disease are linked together so tightly that a number of experts don't consider them as separate issues, but as a single condition called "diabetes."

Where one carries excess weight is significant. Central or abdominal obesity is a core symptom of cardiovascular disease and diabetes. In women, central obesity is defined as a waist circumference greater than 35 inches, while in men, a waist measurement greater than 40 inches is considered dangerous.

The heavier we are, the more likely we are to develop diabetes and heart disease. Focusing on our weight can greatly improve our health.

Weight management is a simple matter of balancing calories consumed against calories burned off. People gain weight when they take in more than they use. We burn calories in two ways. Our bodies burn calories just to live; this is called our metabolism. We also burn

calories during physical activity. Weight loss is best accomplished with a combination of eating fewer calories and increasing physical activity.

The good news is that we do have control over a number of important risk factors that relate to our behavior and lifestyle. These include physical activity, diet, weight, and smoking.

### Take Action!

- Get a medical exam
- Focus on eating the right fats
- If you smoke, quit
- Cut out 500 calories a day to help lose one pound a week
- Focus on physical activity

*For more information, go to the Healthy Stewards section of the Pension Boards' site at [www.pbucc.org](http://www.pbucc.org).*

To Serve Well, Be Well!



## Vision Plan Enrollment Still Available

The Pension Boards is pleased to offer optional vision coverage on a stand-alone basis, regardless of participation in the UCC Medical Benefits Plan.

Enrollment materials were mailed those not already in the Plan and eligible to participate. For those who took advantage of the annual open enrollment period available through April 30, coverage is effective at 12:01 a.m. on April 1, 2009, following receipt of a completed enrollment application along with a check for the annual premium.

### Enrollment After April 30, 2009:

The Vision Benefits Plan is offered on a Service Year basis from April 1 to March 31 of the following year. Eligible participants still may enroll in the Plan after the annual open enrollment period; however, if you enroll after April 30, coverage for you and your dependent(s), if any, will begin on the date that your completed enrollment application and check for the annual premium are received. Your benefits will not be retroactive to April 1.

### Existing Vision Plan Participants:

Invoices have been sent out for the April 1, 2009-March 31, 2010 Plan Year. Please note that if you do not re-enroll for coverage at this time, then decide to rejoin the Plan at a future date, you will be billed retroactively for the lapsed coverage period in order to ensure that you (and your dependents, if any) will receive uninterrupted benefits according to the terms of the Vision Plan. If you have questions regarding the UCC Vision Benefits Plan, *please contact a Health Services Representative toll-free at 1.800.642.6543, ext. 2824.*

## Nursing Home Pharmacy Benefits

Nursing homes may require residents to use a designated retail pharmacy affiliated with the facility when obtaining medication. Also, the nursing home may mandate medications be dispensed to residents in blister packs.

If you or a family member are:

- a UCC Medical Benefits Plan participant, and
- a nursing home resident,

you are eligible for assistance with your pharmaceutical needs. *Please call a PBUCC Health Services Representative at 1.800.642.6543, ext. 2898 for more information.*



“...that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health,  
just as it is well with your soul.” (3 John 1:2)

## Are you a Healthy Steward?

The Pension Boards knows that healthy leaders are essential to healthy churches. We are called to be faithful stewards of all our resources – including our health. Your UCC Health Benefits Plan offers many resources to help you live a healthier lifestyle:

### myhealthIQ

Take an online Health Risk Assessment and an onsite Wellness Exam and receive a detailed, personalized report with recommendations for you to share with your physician to help you implement healthier lifestyle habits AND receive a cash incentive. To get started:

1. Go to the **myhealthIQ** web site ([www.myhealthiq.com](http://www.myhealthiq.com)).
2. Log in with the user name and password you receive directly from **myhealthIQ**.
3. Complete the online Health Risk Assessment (HRA).
4. Schedule a Wellness Exam (height, weight, waist measurement, blood pressure and blood sample to determine cholesterol and glucose levels). See p.5 for a list of UCC Conference Annual Meetings and other events where Wellness Exams will be offered.
5. Receive a detailed, personal and confidential health report.
6. Take action and share your report with your physician to set up a healthy regimen.



Savings on health-related products and services, including fitness centers, yoga, nutrition counseling, mind/body therapies, vitamins and health publications are available through Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield, our Plan's medical preferred provider organization (PPO). To locate a practitioner in the discount program:

1. Go to the Highmark web site ([www.highmarkbcbs.com](http://www.highmarkbcbs.com)).
2. Log in with your Highmark user name and password (if you already have a user account) or click on **Register Now** to create an account.
3. Once you log in, click on the **Choose Providers** tab at the top of the page.


4. Click **Member Discounts** (on the upper left corner of the page).
5. Click on the **Wellness Discount Program** link (center of the page).
6. Click **I Accept** beneath the **Terms of Service**.
7. A new screen will open up: **Whole Health**: Integrative health care for the body, mind and spirit; scroll down for an online directory of practitioners/facilities, information on discounts (including fitness centers and weight loss programs), and more.

## A Greater Hand in Your Health

Highmark also provides resources designed to help you “have a greater hand in your health”:

1. Log in to Highmark ([www.highmarkbcbs.com](http://www.highmarkbcbs.com)).
2. Click on the **Your Health** tab at the top of the page to:
  - create an online personal health record
  - find a health coach
  - learn more about preventive care (including information on living wills and advance care planning), and more.

## Mental Health Resources

 **VALUEOPTIONS**, the Health Plan's Mental Health/Substance Abuse PPO, provides a number of online resources. Visit [www.achievesolutions.net/ucc](http://www.achievesolutions.net/ucc) to access helpful information on:

1. Work/life balance
2. Managing life events (marriage, birth, death, illness, divorce, career changes)
3. Mental health, family care, substance abuse and relationship issues
4. Self-assessment tools
5. How to locate a network provider, and more.

*\* ValueOptions recently received the highest accreditation from the National Committee for Quality Assurance.*

# Upcoming myhealthIQ Wellness Exams

## May 1

Florida Conference Annual Meeting (Daytona, FL)

## May 2

Central Pacific Conference Annual Meeting (Eugene, OR)

## May 29

Vermont Conference Annual Meeting (Lyndonville, VT)

## June 5

Indiana-Kentucky Conference Annual Meeting (Indianapolis, IN)

## June 6

Illinois Conference Annual Meeting (Springfield, IL)  
Minnesota Conference Annual Meeting (St. Joseph, MN)  
Southern California Nevada Conference Annual Meeting (Claremont, CA)  
New York Conference Annual Meeting (Silver Bay, NY)

## June 12

Wisconsin Conference Annual Meeting (Green Lake, WI)  
Penn Central Conference Annual Meeting (Selinsgrove, PA)  
Rocky Mountain Conference Annual Meeting (Boulder, CO)

## June 13

Wisconsin Conference Annual Meeting (Green Lake, WI)  
Iowa Conference Annual Meeting (Cedar Rapids, IA)  
Penn Southeast Conference Annual Meeting (Lancaster, PA)  
Penn West Conference Annual Meeting (Johnstown, PA)  
South Dakota Conference Annual Meeting (Huron, SD)  
Central Atlantic Conference Annual Meeting (Newark, DE)

## June 26-30

General Synod (Grand Rapids, MI) – Please check the Pension Boards' web site ([www.pbucc.org](http://www.pbucc.org)) for dates and times when wellness exams will be offered

## July 25

Ohio Conference Annual Meeting (Delaware, OH)

## September 18

Penn Northeast Conference Office (Palmerton, PA)

## September 26

Maine Conference Annual Meeting (Bethel, ME)

## October 3

California Nevada Northern Conference-Church Day Gathering (Modesto, CA)

## October 15

UCC Church House (Cleveland, OH)

## October 17

Massachusetts Conference Annual Meeting (Worcester, MA)

## October 24

Connecticut Conference Annual Meeting (Hartford, CT)

## October 30

Missouri Mid-South Conference Annual Meeting (Independence, MO)

We look forward to your participation in our efforts to help you become a healthier you!

The UCC Health Benefits Plan will provide a \$50 **CASH INCENTIVE\*** to you for completing the HRA and Wellness Exam. If you have any questions regarding **myhealthIQ**, please feel free to contact the Health Plan Team toll-free at **1.800.642.6543, ext. 2872**.

\* You, as the participant in the UCC Medical Benefits Plan, qualify for a cash incentive upon completion of both the HRA and Wellness Exam. Other enrollees (your dependents - defined as your spouse, same-gender domestic partner or other family member covered under your Plan) are not eligible to receive cash incentives under **myhealthIQ**.

# Retirement Seminars



## May 5

Penn Central Conference  
Colonial Park UCC  
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

## May 19

Central Pacific Conference  
Portland, Oregon

## June 11

Southern Conference  
Burlington, North Carolina

## August 26

Nebraska Conference  
Lincoln, Nebraska

## September 15

Iowa Conference  
Plymouth Congregational  
Des Moines, Iowa

## September 30

New York Conference  
The Interchurch Center  
New York, New York

## October 14

Southern California  
Nevada Conference  
San Marino Congregational  
San Marino, California

## October 28

South Central Conference  
First Congregational UCC  
Houston, Texas

## November 5

Wisconsin Conference  
Wisconsin Conference Center  
DeForest, Wisconsin

# Corporate Social Responsibility

## Predatory Credit Card Lending Puts Downward Pressure on Families

Amid mounting reports of waning household income, socially responsible investors are filing shareholder resolutions with credit card companies to ensure that companies' lending practices don't unnecessarily penalize the most underserved individuals. Because of a looming threat of massive national credit card default, investors are encouraging companies to halt practices considered predatory for fear that these credit lines are more likely to become delinquent and go into default as well.

Americans carry nowhere near the same level of credit card debt as they do mortgage debt. However, the Center for Responsible Lending estimated that low- and middle-income households in debt had an average of \$8,650 in credit card debt. Military personnel, students, and other young people are also at high risk at finding themselves in insurmountable credit card debt.

Investors are encouraging companies to discontinue several practices that are deemed predatory. Late fees and over-the-limit fees press credit customers into further debt while driving up revenues for the companies. Some have reported that up to one-third of



companies' total revenues can be attributed to the collection of fees.

Credit card companies have the ability to raise and lower credit limits without notifying customers. These actions could have negative effects on the credit scores of individuals and make it harder for people to obtain mortgages.

Similarly, companies have the ability to increase credit card interest rates, regardless of payment history. This compounds debt for families that may already be in financial straits.

Certain credit card companies position sub-prime customers for failure by applying high interest rates and fees and then selling off the resulting "non-collectible" debts to collections agencies.

The Pension Boards was invited to help in the investors' campaign to halt these practices in the face of mounting national debt. In light of the longstanding United Church of Christ commitment to economic justice, we have joined this campaign and will continue to dialogue with relevant credit lending companies.

## Ministerial Assistance

### Are You Prepared for Retirement in Tough Economic Times – or Even in Good Times?

The recent volume of new requests for Ministerial Assistance – one a day, on average, over the past three months – has revealed a few recurring questions and concerns. So, based on those threads, it is an opportune time to remind members of two key cost factors that you need to consider as you contemplate retirement:

- Health benefit premiums: as a retiree, you will be paying your own; for some of you, this may be the first time you have ever done so. While the premiums for the Medicare Supplement Plan are much lower than for active employees, the impact on income can be substantial.
- Housing: many ministers live in parsonages, and in most cases, the cost of utilities was provided. Retirees, on the other hand, are responsible for covering the cost of both housing and utilities.

As important as it is to be psychologically prepared for retirement, it is equally important to be financially ready. The Pension Boards provides tools with which you can prepare for the transition to retirement:

- The Annuity Plan for the UCC, a professionally-managed 403(b) Plan with eight investment Fund options

- Tax-Sheltered Annuity (TSA)
- Retirement Savings Account
- Pension counselors and Pre-Retirement Seminars to help you prepare for retirement
- Ministerial Assistance for small emergency grants, both before and after retirement
- Annuitant Visitor Program, providing regular visits to you in retirement, keeping you connected to the church.

The Pension Boards and the United Church of Christ are committed to serving those who have devoted their working lives to others. Please note, however, that it is not our intention to take the place of financial advisors, nor can we offer legal or tax advice. We urge you to consult these experts to enable you make the best financial decisions for your unique financial profile.