



# COVENANT BENEFITS

A MINISTRY OF THE EVANGELICAL COVENANT CHURCH



## The Simple Choice. The Covenant Choice.

### 2024 BENEFITS PACKAGE

**Pastor and Ministry Staff Open Enrollment:**  
OCTOBER 16-NOVEMBER 16, 2023





## Dear Partners in Ministry,

**Greetings from the Covenant Benefits team!** Covenant Benefits is a ministry of the Covenant Church to provide an avenue for Covenant churches and ministries to share the cost and administrative burden of managing employee benefits contracts. Premiums paid to Covenant Benefits directly pay for Covenant pastors' and ministry staff's medical expenses. *It's a tangible way the Covenant is "in it together" in ministry and caring for each other.*

We have been hard at work this year training new staff, educating members on how to use their benefits most effectively, and preparing for the next year. New staff includes a manager of benefit education and church relations—please reach out to Aaron for personalized assistance in determining how Covenant Benefits fits into your ministry.

Most significantly, we have successfully transitioned our billing and enrollment platform to a new partner. *The open enrollment process is improved with a platform specifically designed to help pastors and ministry staff understand their benefits and assist them in making decisions.* The process is described in detail on page 10.

Covenant Benefits is a resource provided by the Covenant for you and we are grateful to be able to serve you.

*On behalf of the Covenant Board of Pension and Benefits,*

**Christina Kempe**, DIRECTOR OF COVENANT BENEFITS



## 2024 Updates

**Three health insurance plan options for non-Medicare policies:** Your employees have the option to choose which health insurance plan is best for them, with access to tax-free Health Savings Account savings if they choose the Covenant Value Plan and meet other IRS criteria. These plan options have not changed from 2023 to 2024.

**Premium changes:** Due to high medical inflation and the need to price plan benefits more in line with industry standards, premium rates for each of the non-Medicare medical insurance plans will increase by 9%. Premium rates for the dental and vision package will increase by 5%. Medicare supplement rates will be announced by October 5.

**New and improved open enrollment process:** If your pastors and ministry staff do not want to make any changes to their benefits elections, they do not need to take any action. Otherwise, pastors and ministry staff have access to an online portal, at [covbenefits.mybenefitchoice.com](https://covbenefits.mybenefitchoice.com), where they can learn more about their benefits options and make choices based on their needs. A tutorial is available on our website and when logged onto [covbenefits.mybenefitchoice.com](https://covbenefits.mybenefitchoice.com).

If your ministry does not yet partner with Covenant Benefits to provide insurance coverage to your pastors and ministry staff, the process for enrollment is simple. Reach out to Covenant Benefits by phone or email for assistance, or complete the form to register your church or ministry at [bit.ly/CovBenefits-Eligibility](https://bit.ly/CovBenefits-Eligibility).

**Minimum participation:** If you choose to enroll staff in Covenant Benefits, at least 75% of benefits-eligible staff must be enrolled. This requirement will limit adverse selection and aid in keeping premium rates manageable. More details regarding this policy are on page 8.

## Looking into the Future

**Region and age rating:** Almost all health insurance plans vary premium rates based on location and age, and in order to reflect the value of Covenant Benefits to all ministries, we continue a significant review of the impacts of adjusted rates. The Board of Pension and Benefits requested additional data and a pause on making these types of changes until 2025 to ensure any changes are made only after careful consideration.

**Medicare coverage:** We have decided to continue providing a similar Medicare supplement plan in 2024 with ongoing considerations for more substantial changes in future years. We do not believe offering a Medicare plan that is substantially different than our non-Medicare plans would be beneficial to our Medicare-eligible members. Our Medicare supplement plan is considered “richer” than a majority of other options in the market, especially the prescription coverage, and we will continue to provide it in 2024.

We are grateful to be able to partner with you in your ministry.



## *Medical and Prescription*

To provide employees flexibility and choice, we offer three health insurance options tailored to meet a variety of preferences and needs. All three health insurance options include:

- Broad, nationwide Blue Cross Blue Shield PPO network
- Preventative services and drugs covered 100%
- Concierge service
- Wellness rewards: \$250 to members and their enrolled spouses after completing simple steps toward improved health
- Teledoc: 24/7 access to primary care physicians, as well as dermatology and mental health professionals
- Medical policy and prescriptions: Same services are covered by all plans and the total cost is the same



“*The team at Covenant Benefits understands not only the intricacies of insurance, but the intricacies of ministry as well.*”

LINNEA EK, SOLO PASTOR



*Benefits with a Choice*

	Covenant Plus Plan	Covenant Standard Plan	Covenant Value Plan (HSA eligible)
MEDAL LEVEL	PLATINUM	GOLD	SILVER
<b>Out-of-Pocket costs*</b>			
Deductible	\$400	\$2,000	\$6,250
Family Deductible	\$800	\$4,000	\$12,500
Coverage percentage after deductible	80%	80%	100%
Maximum Out-of-Pocket	\$2,700	\$5,500	\$6,250
Family Maximum Out-of-Pocket	\$5,400	\$11,000	\$12,500
Primary Care Physician	\$20	\$35	deductible
Specialist Physician	\$20	\$45	deductible
<b>Prescription costs**</b>			
Generic 30-day/90-day	\$8/\$16	\$8/\$16	deductible
Preferred brand 30-day/90-day	\$40/\$85	\$40/\$85	deductible
Non-preferred brand 30-day/90-day	\$65/\$140	\$75/\$160	deductible
Specialty 30-day/90-day	\$100/\$225	\$125/\$280	deductible
<b>Premium rates***</b>			
Employee Only	\$839	\$763	\$668
Employee + Child(ren)	\$1,986	\$1,805	\$1,579
Employee + Spouse	\$2,091	\$1,901	\$1,663
Family	\$2,240	\$2,036	\$1,782

\*Maximum out-of-pocket includes all in-network applicable deductible, copay and coinsurance amounts.

\*\*90-day prescription fills available through Express Scripts mail order and Walgreens pharmacies.

\*\*\*Charged monthly to employer. Agreed-upon employee contributions toward monthly premiums must be recovered by payroll deduction.



## Dental, Vision, & Hearing Benefits

### Monthly Premium Rates

Employee Only = \$63 | Employee + Child(ren) = \$146 | Employee + Spouse = \$126 | Family = \$196

### Dental Coverage

Delta Dental PPO & Premier networks

- Enhanced benefits for certain conditions including diabetes, pregnancy, periodontal disease, certain high-risk cardiac conditions, certain conditions which suppress the immune system, and cancer-related radiation & chemotherapy
- Maximum benefit balance can carry over to the next year if enrolled the entire previous year and filed at least one claim

Deductible . . . . .	\$25
Family Deductible Maximum . . . . .	\$75
Maximum Benefit (per person annually) . . . . .	\$2,000
Lifetime Orthodontic Maximum (per person) . . . . .	\$1,500
Preventive Services . . . . .	100%
Basic Services . . . . .	80%
Restorative Services . . . . .	50%
Orthodontic Services . . . . .	50%

### Vision Coverage

EyeMed Access network

Exam copay . . . . .	\$20
Frames . . . . .	\$100 allowance, then 20% off
Glasses Lenses . . . . .	\$20 copay (\$65 progressives)
Contact Lenses . . . . .	\$80 allowance

### Hearing Discount Program

Amplifon (no additional cost)

Discounted or no-cost hearing screening, discounted hearing aids with free batteries and three-year warranty.



“*With all the changes going on with my children’s births, we didn’t have any problems, any issues. Covenant Benefits had everything laid out for us.*”

NATHAN NICHOLSON,  
COVENANT OFFICES EMPLOYEE



## Life, Disability, and Other Benefits

Benefits listed below are available through Covenant Benefits for all full-time staff (working at least an average of 30 hours per week). **All benefits-eligible full-time employees must enroll in these benefits unless specific arrangements have been made.**

### Life Coverage

#### Monthly premium rate

To age 65	\$100,000	\$23.00
Age 65-69	\$65,000	\$14.95
Age 70-74	\$50,000	\$11.50
Age 75+	\$36,000	\$8.28

Double indemnity for accidental death and dismemberment.

Waiver of premium for certain disabilities.

Options to convert to individual life insurance policy at termination of employment or retirement.

### Long-term Disability Coverage

Elimination period	90 days
Benefit payment based on salary	60%, up to 70% with other earnings
Continued health insurance	Up to 24 months
Continued retirement contributions	100% if licensed Covenant minister

#### Monthly LTD Premium Rates

Licensed Covenant minister	\$1.06 per \$1000 annual salary
Non-licensed employee	\$0.91 per \$1000 annual salary

### Travel Assistance

*(No additional cost for full-time employees)*

Includes no-cost emergency medical evacuation, passport retrieval assistance, hospital admission assistance, and more through Assist America.

### Employee Assistance Program

*(No additional cost for full-time employees)*

A 24/7 counseling and referral service and online resource bank for most work/life balance issues and concerns. Also included are up to three free in-person counseling services and medical billing advocacy assistance for non-covered and out-of-network medical services.



# *Providing Covenant Benefits to Your Ministry Staff*

## **Employer Policies & Recommendations**

### **Who can enroll?**

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All Covenant churches, conferences, camps, global personnel, and any ministry affiliated with the Covenant may enroll their employees in Covenant Benefits. If an employer chooses to enroll their employees in Covenant Benefits, minimum participation requirements must be followed, as outlined below.

Covenant ministers serving in non-Covenant ministry are also eligible if they hold an active credential and have been approved by Ordered Ministry to serve in a non-Covenant ministry or if they hold an inactive credential and whose employer has been approved as a voluntary participant of the Covenant Pension Trust. (Contact us for more details and any needed clarification.)

### **Minimum participation requirements**

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Employers who wish to enroll staff in Covenant Benefits must meet minimum participation requirements to be eligible. This policy helps the Covenant to provide high-quality benefits at a reasonable premium rate to all Covenant churches and ministries. At least 75% of benefits-eligible employees must be enrolled (does not apply to ministers serving outside the Covenant). The 75% count only includes employees who are hired in a position that has been assigned as a “benefits-eligible” position. Employees who are enrolled in life and long-term disability benefits but waive medical coverage because they are enrolled in their spouse or parent’s employer health coverage are included in the

75% count. 100% participation is preferred — where all employees who are eligible for benefits are enrolled and waive health coverage only if they have it through their spouse or parent’s employer health coverage.

### **Who is “benefits-eligible”?**

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Each employer chooses which positions are “benefits-eligible” and counted toward the minimum participation requirement. For example, you may choose to offer benefits to all staff working at least 30 hours per week, or your budget may allow you to only offer benefits to pastoral or non-hourly staff. The Covenant encourages all churches and affiliated ministries to be as generous as possible when choosing how and to whom to offer benefits so your employees are cared for and protected when they and their families experience physical or mental hardship.

### **Which benefits are required?**

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Employees working 30 hours or more per week who are considered “benefits-eligible” must enroll in life and long-term disability benefits but may opt out of dental and vision benefits (unless alternate employer-level arrangements have been made with Covenant Benefits). Employees working less than 30 hours are not eligible for life and long-term disability benefits.

Employees may opt out of medical and prescription benefits only if they are enrolled in health insurance through another employer (i.e., spouse or parent’s employee coverage or another job of their own) or if they are eligible for government-subsidized health insurance (i.e., veteran’s benefits, income-based Medicaid).





### How to administer more than one health insurance plan option

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For many Covenant employers, offering staff options for different levels of health insurance policies is brand-new! Covenant Benefits is ready to help you navigate this adjustment, and we are confident your employees will be grateful for the opportunity to choose which health plan works best for them.

Covenant Benefits' strong suggestion is to set a budgeted dollar amount for each family tier and allow employees to choose the plan they want. If they choose a plan with a greater premium than the budgeted dollar amount, they will reimburse the employer for the difference through payroll deduction. If they choose a plan with a lower premium than the budgeted dollar amount, the employer will provide the difference to the employee in a tax-advantaged savings option, such as a Flexible Spending Account (with the Covenant Plus or Covenant Standard Plan— \$500 annual employer non-matching contribution limit) or a Health Savings Account (with the Covenant Value Plan). (Covenant Benefits does not offer tax-advantaged savings options, but is able to provide recommendations for vetted vendors.) If your church or ministry budgets the full cost of the Covenant Plus Plan, you could offer pastors and church staff an additional cash stipend if they select the Covenant Standard Plan or Covenant Value Plan, or you could require them to enroll in the Covenant Plus plan, based on your preference.

### Transferring or continuing benefits when employment ends

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If an employee relocates from one church or participating ministry to another, benefits can transfer without interruption. If an employee or dependent becomes ineligible for coverage through the church or ministry, coverage will be canceled, and Continuation of Coverage will be offered, which allows the employee or dependent to continue their health



*“I’m very grateful for the care my family has received from Covenant Benefits. It has been a blessing. I highly recommend our churches do the same for their pastors.”*

DANNY MARTINEZ, SUPERINTENDENT

insurance elections for between 18 and 36 months at their own expense. If an enrolled employee or Covenant-ordained minister retires, they may enroll in Covenant Benefits' retiree health insurance package, which includes Medicare supplement, Medicare D, dental and vision coverage.

### Medicare

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If an employer has fewer than 20 total employees (including all part-time and full-time W-2 employees), an employee's medical coverage can be changed to Medicare supplement when they become Medicare-eligible due to age (65). The employee's coverage is changed to the Medicare supplement plan (most similar to the Covenant Plus Plan), and the premium rate is adjusted to reflect the change (Medicare supplement rate if single, combination of Medicare supplement rate and family rate if dependents are insured). This opportunity provides cost savings to both the employer and Covenant Benefits. Please contact Covenant Benefits for instructions.



Oct. 16  
to  
Nov. 15  
2023

## *Open Enrollment Procedure*

**If your ministry does not yet partner with Covenant Benefits** and is excited to get started in 2024, please complete the simple form to send your information securely at [bit.ly/CovBenefits-Eligibility](https://bit.ly/CovBenefits-Eligibility) by **October 16, 2023**. We will send your employees the instructions to review benefits available to them, enter their personal information, and select their benefits.

**If your ministry's staff is already enrolled in Covenant Benefits**, you do not need to do anything. Enrolled employees will receive mailings and emails with reminders and instructions on how to log into their account to view benefits details and select benefit choices. **If your employees do nothing, the same benefits will continue into 2024.** They will only have an option to change plan selections after open enrollment if they have a qualifying event.

If you need to add or remove employees who are newly eligible or leaving employment, please complete the simple form to send the request securely at [bit.ly/CovBenefits-Eligibility](https://bit.ly/CovBenefits-Eligibility).



## **Covenant Benefits**

**MAIL:** 8303 W. Higgins Road; Chicago, IL 60631

**TOLL FREE:** 800-313-8955

**EMAIL:** [benefits@covchurch.org](mailto:benefits@covchurch.org)

**WEB:** [covchurch.org/benefits](http://covchurch.org/benefits)

## **Covenant Benefits Enrollment & Billing**

*Online portal, open enrollment assistance, policy updates*

**EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE:** 833-531-3006

**EMPLOYER ASSISTANCE:** [covenantbenefits.support@milliman.com](mailto:covenantbenefits.support@milliman.com)

## **Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield**

*Medical provider network search, estimated costs of medical services, claims information, download insurance card, health coaches, and care navigation*

**TOLL FREE:** 844-363-0067

**WEB:** [myhighmark.com](http://myhighmark.com)

**MOBILE APP:** My Highmark

## **Express Scripts**

*Prescription drug cost search, order prescriptions for delivery*

**TOLL FREE:** 800-892-5130

**WEB:** [express-scripts.com](http://express-scripts.com)

**MOBILE APP:** Express Scripts



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