



COVENANT BENEFITS

A MINISTRY OF THE EVANGELICAL COVENANT CHURCH



The Simple Choice.
The Covenant Choice.

2025 BENEFITS PACKAGE A comprehensive benefits package administered by the Evangelical Covenant Church for Covenant churches and affiliated ministries to provide employee benefits to their pastors and staff.

PASTOR AND MINISTRY STAFF OPEN ENROLLMENT: OCTOBER 15-NOVEMBER 15, 2024



Dear Partners in Ministry,

Greetings from the Covenant Benefits team! Covenant Benefits is a ministry of the Covenant 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 recently undergone a listening project to gain feedback regarding our plan offerings, service, and anticipated premium changes. We are grateful to have received useful feedback from over 25 Covenant churches and affiliated ministries, much of which impacted the decision-making process for 2025 plans and will affect our ongoing support to your employees.

Covenant Benefits is a resource provided by the Covenant for you and we are grateful to be able to serve you. If your ministry does not currently offer insurance coverage to your employees through Covenant Benefits, please contact us to have a conversation about how we can support you.

On behalf of the Covenant Board of Pension and Benefits,

Christina Kempe, DIRECTOR OF COVENANT BENEFITS

We believe our benefits package can provide your pastors and staff with the support they need to continue their vital work in your community.

2025 Updates



Five 2025 Health Insurance Plans

All five health insurance plan options include the Blue Cross Blue Shield PPO network, with 100% coverage on preventive services and multiple enhancements to improve health and make health-care navigation easier (*as described on page 5*).

The three plans from 2024 carry over into 2025 with inflation increases for deductibles and physician copays. **The Covenant Plus Plan** and **Covenant Standard Plan** are traditional health plans with copay costs for physician visits and prescription drugs, while the **Covenant Value Plan** is a high deductible health plan that is eligible to be partnered with a Health Savings Account.

TWO NEW HEALTH PLAN OPTIONS

- **Covenant Standard HSA Plan:** Health savings account-eligible health plans can be a beneficial cost-saver for members who contribute to their HSA. HSAs are the only triple-tax-savings accounts available - contributions can be made pre-tax, interest or investment returns are earned tax-free, and eligible withdrawals can be made tax-free. More information is included on page 5. This health plan option is the same “medal level” as the Covenant Standard Plan with a lower deductible than the Covenant Value Plan, but can be partnered with an HSA.
- **Covenant Premier Plan:** The Covenant Plus Plan includes adjustments for inflation in the deductible and physician copays (*maximum out-of-pocket and drug copays remain the same*), though we understand change is hard. The Covenant Premier Plan offers the same out-of-pocket amounts as the 2024 Covenant Plus Plan except a slight change to the specialist physician copay. Some churches and ministries generously cover the full cost of the Covenant Plus Plan to their pastors and staff and communicated they prefer to pay a higher premium to continue this plan as-is. The Covenant Premier Plan provides churches and ministries with this option.

Family Tiers

When Covenant Benefits added the “plus spouse” and “plus children” premium options in 2021, we limited the increase to the family tier and therefore limited the decrease to the new tiers. In 2025, the “plus children” rate increase is substantially lower than the other tiers to adjust the ratio between tiers closer to actuarial equivalent.

This is a good time to consider your policies regarding insurance benefits. You may choose to request employees whose spouses have their own employer health coverage pay a higher payroll deduction than those whose spouse does not have access to employer health coverage. See page 9-10 for more details regarding payroll deductions for health insurance.

Inflation Adjustments

Since Covenant Benefits has not annually increased deductibles, copays, and maximum out-of-pocket limits like most health plans, our health plans are “richer” each year as inflation increases costs. Deductibles, copays, and maximum out-of-pocket limits are adjusted to accommodate inflation and absorb a portion of the necessary premium increase to break even in 2025.

Premium Update

Due to the consistent release of new medications and other medical advances, the cost of medical care is always on the rise. Because Covenant Benefits prioritizes easy access to quality care, we are not willing to trim our plans in hidden ways other health insurance plans do to save money, like narrowing networks, limiting prescription drug access, and instilling unreasonable authorization requirements. However, we are committed to breaking even in 2025 so future premium rate increases can remain stable. Health insurance premiums are outlined on page 5.

Dental, vision, and hearing premiums will increase 2%. Life and long-term disability premiums will remain flat.

Priorities in the Next Year

- **Onboarding new employees** can be an elaborate process and Covenant Benefits' goal is to take the burden of benefits education off your ministry's plate. We plan to improve communication and education to new enrollees in the coming months.



- Due to shifting **dental network access**, we will perform a careful and thorough study of dental networks of multiple insurance vendors, focusing on areas where Covenant ministries are prevalent and where Delta Dental has lost in-network dentists. Results will shape dental benefit offerings in 2026.

- **Healthcare navigation** can be challenging, especially with a new diagnosis or a bill that is higher than expected. Though Covenant Benefits already offers a substantial resource network to our members, we are in the process of reviewing our options to increasingly ease the burden of healthcare navigation.



Churches who provide Covenant Benefits to their staff really show how much they care for their people.

BRANDI SANDERS

Manager of Global Personnel Serve Globally



Medical and Prescription

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

ALL FIVE HEALTH INSURANCE OPTIONS INCLUDE:

- **Blue Cross Blue Shield PPO: Broad, nationwide 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
- **Telemedicine:** Virtual access to mental health professionals, dermatologists, and 24/7 primary care physicians
- **Diabetes & hypertension support:** No-cost programs providing free equipment and health coaching
- **Virtual physical therapy:** No-cost virtual physical therapy
- **Opioid abuse prevention**
- **Wellness discounts** through Blue365
- **Health coaching and care navigation**

Five Covenant Health Insurance Plan Options — Blue Cross Blue Shield PPO Network

	COVENANT PREMIER	COVENANT PLUS	COVENANT STANDARD	COVENANT STANDARD HSA	COVENANT VALUE HSA
Medal Level	<i>Platinum</i>	<i>Platinum</i>	<i>Gold</i>	<i>Gold</i>	<i>Silver</i>
Out-of-Pocket costs*					
Deductible	\$400	\$800	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$6,750
Family deductible	\$800	\$1,600	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$13,500
Coinsurance after deductible	20%	20%	20%	20%	0%
Maximum out of pocket	\$2,700	\$2,700	\$5,500	\$6,250	\$6,750
Family max out of pocket	\$5,400	\$5,400	\$11,000	\$12,500	\$13,500
Primary care physician	\$20	\$25	\$35	DEDUCTIBLE	DEDUCTIBLE
Specialist physician	\$25	\$45	\$70	DEDUCTIBLE	DEDUCTIBLE
Prescription costs**					
Generic drug	\$8	\$8	\$8	DEDUCTIBLE	DEDUCTIBLE
Preferred brand 30-day/90-day	\$40	\$40	\$40	DEDUCTIBLE	DEDUCTIBLE
Non-preferred brand 30-day/90-day	\$65	\$65	\$75	DEDUCTIBLE	DEDUCTIBLE
Specialty 30-day/90-day	\$100	\$100	\$125	DEDUCTIBLE	DEDUCTIBLE
Monthly Premium rates***					
Employee only	\$965	\$940	\$855	\$832	\$748
Employee + children	\$2,165	\$2,105	\$1,913	\$1,859	\$1,674
Employee + spouse	\$2,405	\$2,342	\$2,129	\$2,072	\$1,863
Family	\$2,576	\$2,509	\$2,280	\$2,219	\$1,996

*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 Package

MONTHLY PREMIUM RATES

Employee Only = \$64 | Employee + Child(ren) = \$149 | Employee + Spouse = \$128 | Family = \$200

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	\$2,000 <i>(per person annually)</i>
Lifetime Orthodontic Maximum	\$1,500 <i>(per person)</i>
Preventive Services	100%
Basic Services	80%
Restorative Services	50%
Orthodontic Services	50% <i>(lifetime maximum benefit: \$1500)</i>

Vision Coverage

EYEMED ACCESS NETWORK

Exam copay	\$20
Frames	\$100 allowance, then 20% off
Glasses Lenses	\$20 copay <i>(\$65 progressives)</i>
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.



I'm grateful that there's a real awareness of mental health as part of the overall health benefits for pastors.

HOLLIS KIM

Director of Ministerial Health & Connections — Northwest Conference



Life, Disability, and Other Benefits

Benefits listed below are available as a package for all full-time staff. 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

MONTHLY PREMIUM RATE

Licensed Covenant Minister	\$1.06
per \$1000 annual salary	
Non-licensed Employee	\$0.91
per \$1000 annual salary	

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 receiving 12.5% retirement contributions from their employer before disability

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.

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.

Providing Covenant Benefits to Your Ministry Staff

EMPLOYER POLICIES & RECOMMENDATIONS

Who Can Enroll?

All Covenant churches, conferences, camps, and any other 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. Premium payment must be made by the employer. *(Contact us for more details and any needed clarification.)*



“

It's not just transactional, it feels like we're actually on mission together. This is the way Covenant Benefits helps me to be the best that I can be for the mission that God has me on.

MICHAEL THOMAS

Senior Pastor—Radiant Church, Seattle, WA



Minimum Participation Requirements

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 plan or they are enrolled in a government-subsidized health plan (*i.e. veterans’ benefits, Medicaid, etc.*) 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 or are enrolled in a government-subsidized health plan (*i.e. veterans’ benefits, Medicaid, etc.*). 100% participation of your ministry’s benefits-eligible staff ensures all employees are receiving the coverage included in their compensation package and can receive the benefits of them in cases of emergency or need.

Who is “Benefits-Eligible”?

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?

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., veterans’ benefits, Medicaid, etc.*).

How to Administer More Than One Health Insurance Plan Option

For many Covenant employers, offering your pastors and 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. (*Payroll deductions for health and dental premiums can be withheld pre-tax if you have a “premium only plan” (POP) document on file.*) If they choose a plan with a lower premium than the budgeted dollar amount, the employer can provide the difference to the employee in a tax-advantaged savings

option, such as a Flexible Spending Account (*with the Covenant Premier, Covenant Plus, or Covenant Standard Copay Plan— \$500 annual employer non-matching contribution limit*) or a Health Savings Account (*Covenant Standard HSA or Covenant Value HSA Plan*). Covenant Benefits does not offer tax-advantaged savings options, but is able to provide recommendations for vetted vendors. For example, National Covenant Properties provides an HSA and would be grateful to work with you.

Covenant Benefits cannot provide tax or financial advice, but these are suggestions that have been used successfully at Covenant ministries.

Transferring or Continuing Benefits When Employment Ends

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 at the end of the month in which the event occurred, and Continuation of Coverage will be offered, which allows the employee or dependent to continue their health 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

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 (*subject to Medicare approval*). 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.

Premium Billing

Premiums for all employees' benefits are consolidated monthly and auto-withdrawn by ACH near the 10th of the month from the church or ministry's bank account by our billing partner, Milliman. Several days before withdrawal, a summary total and detailed premium outline are sent via email to employer email contact(s) of choice. Premium details are provided in Excel format for flexible sorting/copying capabilities. If the withdrawal is returned, a second attempt will be made. If the total premium is a credit amount, an ACH payment will be made to the bank account on file.



Pastors & ministry staff can log onto covbenefits.mybenefitchoice.com to select their benefits for 2025 and request changes throughout the year.

Open Enrollment Procedure

Oct. 15
to
Nov. 15

If your ministry does not yet partner with Covenant Benefits and is excited to get started in 2025, please complete the simple form to send your information securely at bit.ly/CovBenefits-Eligibility by October 1, 2024, or contact us for assistance. We will send your employees the instructions to review benefits available to them, add personal information such as dependents and life beneficiaries and select their health and dental plans.

If your ministry's staff is already enrolled in Covenant Benefits, you do not need to do anything.

You can share the resource flyer designed for employees (*located on our website*) and we will send them emails with instructions and reminders to select their 2025 plan choices. **If your employees do nothing, the same benefits will continue into 2025.** 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.



COVENANT BENEFITS

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

TOLL FREE: 800-313-8955

EMAIL: benefits@covchurch.org

WEB: covchurch.org/benefits

Covenant Benefits Enrollment & Billing

Online portal, open enrollment assistance, policy updates

covbenefits.mybenefitchoice.com

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE: 833-531-3006

EMPLOYER ASSISTANCE: covenantbenefits.support@milliman.com

Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield

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

TOLL FREE: 844-363-0067

WEB: 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

MOBILE APP: Express Scripts