

PRE-AUTHORIZED REMITTANCE

Congregations of the Synod of Alberta and the Territories of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada can now participate in PAR, a pre-authorized remittance program administered in co-operation with the Department of Stewardship Services of the United Church of Canada (the Department). PAR is a service that allows members of a congregation to make their regular offerings by electronic transfer from their bank account to the congregation. Many financial institutions and businesses use similar programs. PAR has been found to be very reliable, and is convenient for the donor in contributing to their church.

The cost of the program to the congregation is 50¢ per participant, per month. Individual donors are charged their normal chequing fee by their bank. Cheques are drawn on contributor's accounts on the 20th of each month (or the following business day if the 20th falls on the weekend), and congregational accounts are credited on the same day for the total amount, less the 50 cent per donor service charge. This amount shows up on the congregation's bank statement as a credit memo. The monthly printout and the congregation's bank statement should be checked to ensure that the amount credited equals the amount on the printout.

A monthly printout is mailed to your church from the Department showing the breakdown of individual contributors for record-keeping/income tax receipt purposes and should be shared with the congregation's Financial Secretary. The printout is also where you will see a record of the monthly charges to the congregation. An amount equal to 50¢ per person using PAR in your congregation will be deducted from the amount credited to the congregational bank account. A similar process will be used in the event of NSF Cheques.

It is the responsibility of the congregation to reimburse the Department in the event that any contributor's cheque is not honoured by their bank (i.e. NSF, stop payment, etc.). In the month following an unpaid item, a notation will be made indicating that an amount equal to that item has been deducted from the amount credited to the congregational bank account. As soon as the information regarding returned Cheques is received by Treasury, letters are sent to the appropriate congregations letting them know what has happened and including the returned cheque. This usually gives the congregational contact person a chance to rectify the situation before the next month's deductions are made.

There is no minimum number of givers required for a congregation to initiate the program. However, since one of the basic precepts of the program is to ensure regular monthly givings to help pay church expenses, most congregations find that the more people on the program, the more valuable and viable it is.

Each donor **must** include with the Authorization Card a void cheque indicating the account from which the money will be withdrawn. A void **church** cheque must also be sent when a church begins the program so that the system can forward the collected monies on to the

church's bank account. **Up to three different congregational bank accounts (i.e., Current Account, Benevolence Account, Building Fund, etc.) can be credited.** The totals of the corresponding amounts would then be directly deposited to the various accounts each month. The name of one contact person (with a phone number for use during business hours) in case of problems needing immediate response, is necessary. This person will also receive the monthly printouts. This person may be the church secretary, treasurer, financial secretary, etc.

The contact person at the congregation should let those people who have decided to use PAR know which month the system will be implemented in order to avoid mix-ups and gaps in regular contributions. The contact person will receive confirmation as to when PAR will begin for the congregation from the Department of Stewardship Services. Unless otherwise noted, changes, additions and deletions are made within the month that these are received by the Department. For a change to be made in a particular month it must be received by the 10th of the month (the earlier in the month the better). With change requests please use the reference numbers from the printout. We have developed sheets that may be photocopied on which you may record your congregation's additions, changes and deletions and other information for system. Please call or e-mail for a sample. There are actually four different sheets for recording changes. An initial set will be sent to you when requested and these can be copied, as you require them.

Also, available from The Department are sample offering plate cards that you can adapt for use in your congregation. They can be made available in the narthex and PAR contributors can use them to leave in the offering plate when it comes to them.

If you need any further information, please contact:

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FAQs (Frequently asked Questions)

What is PAR?

If you are used to making mortgage, loan, cable, insurance, utility or similar bill payments directly from your bank account, then you already understand the principle of PAR. PARs allow us to meet our regular financial commitments in a convenient manner.

How does it work?

A cheque is drawn on your bank account for the amount of the monthly contribution on or about the 20th of each month. On the same day, that money is transferred to the church's bank account.

What are the advantages of PAR to the contributor?

1. This allows you to make your stewardship commitment a part of your overall financial planning. It meets the principle of returning to the Lord from among the "first fruits".
2. PAR provides regular and predictable support to the church. This meets another important principle of the Christian steward.
3. PAR assures support for the church even when you are away, and avoids annoying "catch-up" periods.
4. PAR can reduce the number of transactions that go through your bank account.

What are the advantages to the congregation?

1. PAR provides a regular, dependable flow of funds.
2. PAR increases the member's appreciation of the importance of stewardship and its place in the life of the Christian.
3. PAR reduces the likelihood of overdrafts or deficit financing.
4. PAR may also be used for individual congregations to make regular benevolence payments to the Synod office.

What does it cost?

Their bank, credit union or trust company charges the member the same amount they would normally pay for a cheque service fee. The congregation pays an administration fee - currently 50 cents - for each transfer.

When does it take effect?

The first contribution from your account occurs on the 20th of the month following. You will want to continue making envelope offerings until the beginning of the month when the transfers begin.

What do I do when the offering plate comes around?

You may pass the plate along, or you may place a card which will be available in the plate when it comes around that indicates you give regularly by PAR.

May I still make envelope offerings?

Sure. There will be special occasions, important mission needs, and other occasions when you will still want to use your envelope.

Can I change the particulars of my PAR contribution?

Certainly. You are encouraged to review your commitment regularly. Circumstances change and everyone understands that.

Who administers the PAR program?

This is a modified version of the program in place with the Department of Stewardship Services, United Church of Canada. They have developed considerable expertise after many years of use. This arrangement avoids the considerable start up fees and administration costs we would incur on “going it alone.” The Eastern Synod of the ELCIC is already participating in this project.