

Policy and Procedures Related to Retired Status

I. INTRODUCTION

Retired status or disabled status is an ecclesial determination granted by the Synod Council in keeping with its constitutional authority. Such determinations are not necessarily dependent upon an ordained minister receiving retirement benefits.

Churchwide bylaw 7.41.17. in the *Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America* provides:

Retirement. Ordained ministers may retire upon attainment of age 60, or after 30 years on the roster of ordained ministers of this church or one of its predecessor bodies, or upon disability, and continue to be listed on the roster of ordained ministers of this church, upon endorsement by the synodical bishop, by action of the Synod Council in the synod in which the ordained minister is listed on the roster.

- a. The policies and procedures for granting retired status or for designation of disability on the roster of ordained ministers shall be developed by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council.

Churchwide constitutional provision 7.42. stipulates:

Each pastor on the roster of ordained ministers of this church shall be related to that synod:

- i. on whose roster the ordained minister, if granted retired status, was listed when last called or the synod of current address, upon application by the ordained minister for transfer and the mutual agreement of the synodical bishops involved after consultation with and approval by the secretary of this church.

II. RETIRED STATUS

- A. An ordained minister who has attained the age of 60 or who has served for 30 or more years on the roster of this church or one of its predecessor bodies may be granted retired status by this church.
- B. An ordained minister who seeks retired status on the clergy roster upon attainment of age 60 or after 30 years on the roster of ordained ministers of this church or one of its predecessor bodies applies to the synodical bishop for such status.
- C. In the case of an application for retired status, the synodical bishop shall make a determination that the ordained minister is eligible and then recommend to the Synod Council that such status be granted. At the same time the synodical bishop acts to provide for appropriate pastoral care of the congregation previously served by the retiring minister.
- D. An ordained minister who has been granted retired status shall retain that status as long as continued on the clergy roster or until acceptance of a call.

- E. If an ordained minister who has been granted retired status resides at too great a distance from any congregation of this church to be able to sustain an active relationship with that congregation, the bishop of the synod in which the ordained minister is rostered may grant permission for the ordained minister to hold membership in a congregation or parish of a church body with which a relationship of full communion has been declared and established by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Adopted by the Church Council April 1998 [CC98.04.40k] and amended November 2010.

Guidelines for Retired Ordained Ministers

Ordained ministers may retire upon attainment of age 60, or after 30 years on the roster of ordained ministers of this church or one of its predecessor bodies, or upon disability, and continue to be listed on the roster of ordained ministers of this church, upon endorsement by the synodical bishop, by action of a Synod Council in the synod in which the ordained minister is listed on the roster . . . (bylaw 7.41.17. in the Constitutions, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America).

Persons who have served within the ordained ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and who have determined that they will enter retirement are not only to be honored for their past service but are seen as important resources for ministry within the life of this church. To enter this new phase of one's life is always a significant milestone. It is a transition into another important stage of life for every retired person. It is true also for the retired pastor (and spouse if the pastor is so blessed).

The following statement is a guideline for retired pastors, the congregations they served, and synodical bishops in understanding the new status of a retired pastor. It is intended to affirm the past ministry of retired pastors, to give directions which seek to avoid some pitfalls that can present themselves to the retired pastor, and to point to new arenas of service and support.

I. ROSTER OF ORDAINED MINISTERS

A retired pastor is on the roster of the synod in which last under call or in which the pastor resides. The retired pastor remains accountable to the synodical bishop where rostered. Unless bylaw 7.41.17.b. applies, a retired pastor must be a member of an ELCA congregation in order to remain on the roster of ordained ministers and remains subject to the standards for ordained ministers of this church.

II. CONGREGATIONAL MEMBERSHIP

A retired pastor should not remain a member of the congregation served at the time of retirement. Transferring one's membership to another congregation allows the successor pastor to assume pastoral leadership more readily. It also provides an opportunity for the retired pastor to enter fully into the life of a different congregation with clarity about the pastor's retired role.

III. PASTORAL SERVICE

At the time of retirement a pastor is no longer pastor of a congregation and therefore must discontinue the functions of the pastoral office in the congregation unless specifically authorized to do so.

The service of retired pastors is governed by the *Constitution for Synods* [†S14.14.], which describes the role of ordained ministers in congregations in which they do not serve: "Ordained ministers shall respect the integrity of the ministry of congregations which they do not serve and shall not exercise ministerial functions therein unless invited to do so by the pastor, or if there is no duly called pastor, then by the interim pastor in consultation with the Congregation Council" (†S14.14. in the *Constitution for Synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*).

IV. INTERIM MINISTRY

One area of potential service for the retired pastor is interim ministry. Many retired pastors provide valuable and needed ministry to congregations in time of transition following the resignation of a pastor. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America invites retired pastors to consider this important arena of ministry.

A retired pastor may serve as an interim pastor during a time of pastoral vacancy only by the authorization of the synodical bishop. Retired pastors who wish to serve under call in an interim ministry must return to the active roster of ordained ministers.

V. COMPENSATION

Retirement benefits provided by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America through the Board of Pensions, combined with Social Security benefits, are intended to provide adequate compensation to pastors in retirement. Therefore, there shall be no financial commitment by a congregation or agency to retired pastors or their spouses.

- A. A retired pastor who is authorized to serve (not under call) in a congregation for a stated period of time and for pastoral services may be compensated according to compensation practices within the synod.
- B. The title of Pastor Emeritus has no official standing and carries with it no compensation or authorization for service or for other responsibilities.

VI. CONSULTATION WITH SYNODICAL BISHOP

As part of the bishop's pastoral care of retired pastors, a synodical bishop or a member of the bishop's staff is encouraged to meet with a pastor at the time of retirement to discuss these guidelines, the pastor's new retired status, and its implications.

*Adopted by the Church Council
as policy of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America,
November 1998 [CC98.11.45]*