

ELCIC GUIDELINES FOR RETIRED ROSTERED MINISTERS

Introduction

Throughout this document the terms “rostered ministers” and “ministers” refer to ministers on the ELCIC Roster of Ordained Ministers and the Roster of Diaconal Ministers.

Retired rostered ministers are honored in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada in appreciation of the years they have served in ordained or diaconal ministry under the call of God and church.

Retired rostered ministers are a valued resource to this church. Bishops and congregations rely on the assistance of many of them in a variety of situations from leading worship in congregations to providing full-time pastoral leadership on an interim or term basis by call or appointment. Synod officials and church related agencies and institutions have turned to them for specialized assistance or other services from time to time. In various ways, many retired ministers continue to serve under the mandate of their ordination or consecration.

The retirement of a rostered minister from service in a congregation raises some questions touching on relationships established in the course of active service before retirement. These guidelines are set forth in order to facilitate the continuation of good relationships and to avoid misunderstandings. Both the official documents of the church and accepted ministerial ethics apply. It is important for both congregations and rostered ministers to understand the need for good relationships in retirement and do everything to assure their continuation.

Cordiality and mutual affirmation are expected of the relationship between retired ministers, their successors and the pastors and congregations where they are members. Retired ministers contribute in many ways to the life of the congregation which, in turn, contributes a support of love and concern. The ministers involved are expected to do everything possible to assure this mutual affirmation.

Official Provisions

ELCIC Bylaws, Part III Section 11. Upon application, the status of retired shall be granted by synod council to an ordained minister who has attained the age of 55 years or who has 30 years of service.

ELCIC Bylaws, Part IV, Section 10. Upon application, the status of retired shall be granted by synod council or other calling authority to a lay diaconal minister who has attained the age of 55 years or who has 30 years of service.

ELCIC Pension Plan Text:

2.24 Normal Retirement Date means the last day of the month in which the member attains age 65.

2.30 Retired Member means an individual who is receiving a retirement benefit from the Retired Benefit Account.

Retirement from regular call on the attainment of age sixty-five is no longer mandatory. The Pension Plan requires that members shall commence pension benefits no later than age 71. Rostered ministers and congregations are encouraged to consult ELCIC Group Services Inc. for more information.

When a rostered minister requests and receives retirement status from the synod council and/or the minister begins to draw pension benefits according to the ELCIC Pension Plan, the minister's roster status will become "retired" and the minister will be ineligible for regular call. However, upon the request of a congregation or specialized ministry, and with the concurrence of the synod bishop, the retired minister may serve by appointment of the bishop for a renewable term agreed by the bishop and the congregation or specialized ministry setting.

Retirement does not change the ministerial status of the rostered minister. Responsibilities and obligations of a confessional, functional and personal nature continue as appropriate to the type of activity performed by the rostered minister. Accountability to the synod continues as well.

For example, allegiance to the Confession of Faith and a fitting lifestyle are continuing obligations. Retired ministers continue to be subject to discipline. After attainment of retired status, rostered ministers shall remain on the roster of the synod, or, if they move to the territory of another synod, may request a transfer to the roster of that synod. They are delegates and may vote in synod conventions. They are expected to complete an annual Confidential Report to the Bishop. Retired ministers must be a member of a congregation of the ELCIC except as this requirement is waived according to the bylaws of this Church. Retired ministers are also required to observe the following provision in the Constitution for Synods:

No (ordained or consecrated) minister shall preach or perform any ministerial act within the parish of another pastor/minister except at the latter's request or consent, or visit or perform ministerial acts in a time of a ministerial vacancy, except by invitation of the interim minister or congregational council.

Service by Retired Rostered Ministers

The general experience across this church is that retired ministers who are able to serve are happy to be called upon to do so. Among the assignments which can be made are:

- a) Worship leaders in congregations without resident pastors, or during the incapacity of the pastor, or while the pastor is on vacation, on leave, or on sabbatical.
- b) Service as an interim minister during periods of transition in a congregation.
- c) Service in a congregation in visitation or other specialized work.
- d) Special assignments of shorter or longer duration upon appointment by the bishop

in various agencies or institutions.

Those who remain active are urged to participate in programs of continuing education appropriate to their activity, making use of their Continuing Education Plan (CEP) account.

Congregations and agencies engaging retired ministers for temporary service should provide fair remuneration for that service.

Honorary Assistant Pastor

The ELCIC has established an Honorary Assistant Pastors Policy which is commended to congregations where retired pastors and other pastors not under call are members.

Retirement Income

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada established the Pension Plan administered by ELCIC Group Services Inc (GSI) which is available to all its rostered ministers and is designed to provide retirement income. That income, together with the Canada Pension Plan and Old Age Security should provide for retirement. Therefore, there is no financial commitment of a continuing nature made by a congregation, agency or institution of this church to retired ministers, their spouses or families.

For a Pension Plan member who is employed in a member congregation or institution after retirement, contributions shall be made to the Pension Plan of the ELCIC in the name of that member. No contributions can be made after 71 years of age. Pension Plan benefits begin upon retirement, which may be as early as 55 years of age and no later than 71.

Congregations that employ a retired rostered minister shall continue to pay pension benefits in an amount based on the GSI Salary Calculation Form into the ELCIC pension plan.

According to ELCIC Group Services Health and Dental Plan, a retired rostered minister who has been a member of the Health and Dental plan and who continues under employment must continue on the plan with premiums paid by the congregation until age 70 unless the minister can demonstrate coverage under another plan.

According to the Continuing Education Plan (CEP) of this church, unused personal contributions to the Continuing Education Plan shall be returned to the retired rostered minister. Application for these funds should be made no later than 12 months after full retirement. The unused funds contributed by the employer shall be transferred to the long-term fund portion of the CEP.

A person considering retirement should consult Government agencies to learn about eligibility under the Canada Pension Plan and Old Age Security.

Ethical Guidelines for Rostered Ministers Not Under Call

Upon retirement the rostered minister must cease all service in the congregation served immediately prior to retirement. This enables the congregation to continue its life and ministry with new pastoral leadership. In most instances this provision is observed, resulting in good relationships. Violations of this provision may necessitate calling such violations to the attention of the retired rostered minister, the congregational council and/or the synodical bishop. In those exceptional cases when a retired rostered minister is asked to serve by term appointment in the congregation served under regular call immediately prior to retirement, all employment arrangements must be worked out in consultation with the synodical bishop. Rostered ministers choosing to retire in the community where they have served are urged to exercise the greatest care to respect in every way the role and place of their successor.

No rostered minister shall preach or perform any ministerial act (including parish visitation) within the congregation/parish of another rostered minister except at the latter's request or consent. Consent implies clear communication with the duly called rostered minister prior to any arrangements or commitments.

In a time of pastoral vacancy in a congregation, no rostered minister shall visit within the parish or perform ministerial acts without a clearly expressed invitation from the congregational council.

Retired rostered ministers are not to encourage requests for pastoral services by members of the congregation served immediately prior to retirement. It is preferable to decline any such requests, even unsolicited, in deference to the successor.

It is preferred that a request of the called pastor to give permission to a rostered minister not under call to perform ministerial acts (weddings, baptisms, funerals, etc.) will come from the party or parties to be served, although the request may come from the rostered minister who is being asked to perform the service.

Wherever possible, rostered ministers should transfer their membership to another congregation upon retirement. Where this is not possible, arrangements between the retired minister and the congregation immediately served prior to retirement shall be worked out in consultation with the synodical bishop.

Retired rostered ministers are expected to respect and be supportive of the office of the rostered minister currently under call in a congregation. In the event of situations requiring intervention, retired ministers, or any ministers who are members of the congregation, are expected to follow appropriate constitutional procedures in consultation with the bishop's office.

Pastor Emeritus

The title of honor, "Pastor Emeritus", is discouraged since all retired pastors are honored for their service within the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada. Such title carries no privileges, obligation, or remuneration.

Conclusion

Congregations and rostered ministers alike will benefit from clear understandings leading to good relationships in retirement. The image of rostered ministers and congregations will be enhanced in the community and beyond the community. The harmony and the honour accredited retired ministers will be a witness to the love which the gospel engenders.

Synod bishops shall ensure these guidelines are available for the information of congregations and rostered ministers. Bishops shall provide a copy to ministers upon retirement.

Amended by National Church Council on March 13, 2010.