



Guidelines for Retired Rostered Ministers

Revised 2019
National Church Council

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Introduction

Throughout this document the terms “rostered ministers” and “ministers” refer to ministers on the ELCIC Roster of Ordained Ministers, including bishops, and the Roster of Diaconal Ministers. Reference to “congregations” may include synodically recognized ministries, specialized ministries, or in the case of bishops, the synods or national church, where applicable.

Retired rostered ministers are honoured in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (“this church”) 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. Retired bishops, upon appointment by acting bishops, have served in representational functions and have presided at ordinations. 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 this 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 IV Section 12

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 V, Section 10

Upon application, the status of “retired” shall be granted by Synod Council to a diaconal minister who has attained the age of 55 years or who has 30 years of service.

The minister's roster status will be "retired" upon the minister's request and approval from the synod council. A minister with "retired status" will be ineligible for 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 from regular call on the attainment of age sixty-five is no longer mandatory. Retired rostered ministers may continue to serve by appointment of the bishop.

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 retirement, 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 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 and/or Bylaws 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.

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

In the case of retired bishops, service in either a pastoral or episcopal function requires the consent of the current bishop.

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.

ELCIC Pension, Benefits, and Continuing Education Plans

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. Note that contributions after a Member attains age 65 may continue at the Member's option to age 71. The Pension Plan defines normal retirement date as the last day of the month in which the Member attains age 65, but a Member may settle their pension account earlier if their roster status is "retired" and in all cases the pension account must be settled by age 71.

The Group Extended Health and Dental Plan requires a retired rostered minister who continues employment and meets the eligibility criteria to enroll or continue to be enrolled on the plan with premiums paid by the congregation unless the minister has waived coverage as per the policy criteria. A national voluntary group retiree health plan is available at the member's option and cost when employment ceases.

Rostered ministers, who continue employment are encouraged to participate in programs of continuing education appropriate to their activity making use of their Continuing Education Plan ("CEP") account. The CEP policy states that unused personal contributions to CEP shall be returned to the retired rostered minister. The unused funds contributed by the employer shall be transferred to the long-term fund portion of the CEP

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.

A party or parties who wish permission for a rostered minister not under call to perform ministerial acts (weddings, baptisms, funerals, etc.) may make a request through the called pastor.

Where 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. Retired bishops are expected to respect and be supportive of the office of the current synodical or national bishop. 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.

Retired Bishops

Bishops who are no longer serving in episcopal office, due to retirement or a move to other ministry, are encouraged to retain the title Bishop, as appropriate. All bishops are entitled to participate in the ordination of new bishops, including the laying on of hands.

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 credited retired ministers will be a witness to the love which the gospel engenders.