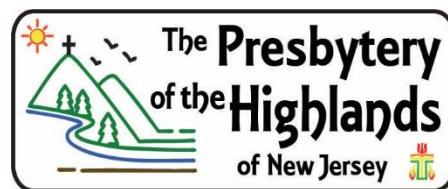


RETIRED MINISTERS Policy
Presbytery of the Highlands of New Jersey

“I said, ‘Let days speak, and many years teach wisdom.’” (Job 32:7)



Upon request of a member of presbytery, the presbytery may designate the member retired. (Book of Order, G-2.0503c)

The Book of Order offers presbyteries freedom in how they manage the retirement category of membership **(299)**.

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance and policy for the Committee on Ministry in relating to the presbytery’s retired members, as well as to retired members of other presbyteries who may be engaged in post-retirement service in one of the presbytery’s congregations.

Retirement status is **granted by vote of the presbytery**, not by action of the Board of Pensions. Although retirement status typically coincides with the commencement of retirement benefits, the two are not directly related. When a minister determines that he/she is ready to set a retirement date he/she shall connect with the Committee on Ministry to start the process of dissolving the relationship with the congregation. Ministers not serving in a congregation shall also communicate with the COM with the date that he/she will complete their ministry so they can be enrolled as retired.

Those enrolled by the presbytery as retired (299) will continue to be listed as such in the national directory of PCUSA ministers, even if they subsequently engage in paid post-retirement service, in accordance with Board of Pensions Administrative Rule 801 “Post Retirement Service”.

Retired ministers, normally, belong to the presbytery within whose bounds they reside, although they may request membership within another presbytery or stay with the presbytery in which they retired from and live outside its bounds. Retired members of other presbyteries who ask to become members of the Presbytery of the Highlands of New Jersey will be examined in the same manner as other ministers coming into the Presbytery.

The Continuing Call

God’s call to ministry is life-long. Retirement is a new phase of God’s continuing call. Retired ministers continue to be members of presbytery (G-2.0503), exercising voice and vote in presbytery meetings, although their attendance at meetings is not mandatory and

they do not need to request to be excused from presbytery meetings. They may serve on presbytery committees, commissions, and other work groups. In consultation with the Committee on Ministry, they may serve congregations as temporary pulpit supply or as session moderators. They may be elected to presbytery office (moderator, vice-moderator, stated clerk, treasurer) or as commissioners to Synod or General Assembly.

Within the post-retirement service guidelines of the PC(USA) Board of Pensions, retired ministers may choose to accept post-retirement employment with congregations or with other agencies. This should be arranged in consultation with the Committee on Ministry. It should be noted that the Board of Pensions *places stringent restrictions* on post-retirement service in the congregation most recently served before retirement (please see Board of Pensions Administrative Rule 801, "Post-Retirement Service.")

Pastoral Care

Because retired ministers continue to be members of the presbytery and not of a local congregation, the presbytery has responsibility to provide pastoral care and support to them through life's transitions and crises (G-3.0301b; G-3.0307). *The Committee on Ministry will develop such structures and programs as are necessary to extend this supportive care.*

"Honorably Retired"

Honorably Retired is a designation routinely granted to presbytery members in good standing and does not signify exceptional achievement. Honorably Retired status is granted by presbytery vote in consultation with the Committee on Ministry.

The Committee on Ministry shall offer to all ministers in good standing the opportunity to mark their retirement in a community recognition and celebration.

Pastor Emeritus

Sometimes congregations wish to honor a retiring pastor with the designation "Pastor Emeritus." Such a title is honorific and carries no responsibilities or privileges. Congregations should not grant such a title without first consulting with the Presbytery's Committee on Ministry.

Retired or Member At Large?

The Book of Order has no recommended retirement age, the Board of Pensions does consider age 55 to be the earliest time when retirement benefits may commence and considers age 65 to be full retirement age for pension purposes. ***The is entirely distinct from the provisions of the United States Social Security Administration.***

The Board requires members to terminate their employment with the church or agency

where they have been working. (see Board of Pensions Administrative Rule 801, “Post-Retirement Service.”)

It is inappropriate for ministers under age 55, who are not permanently disabled, to be given retirement status. Those younger than 55 who wish to leave ministry employment for a time shall consult with the Committee on Ministry about being moved to Member At Large (797) status and report to the Committee on Ministry annually, in order to keep their Member at Large status in effect.

The COM will recommend to the Presbytery that ministers younger than 65 only be granted retired (299) status if they are starting to receive pension benefits at the same time.

For those who qualify for permanent disability income, either through the Board of Pensions or through Social Security, or both, it is possible for the Presbytery to grant retired (299) status at an earlier age.

Retirement Ethics and the Former Congregation

In 1948, the PC(USA) General Assembly described the continuing status of a minister’s ordination following retirement. “The retirement of a minister does not affect in any way [the minister’s] status as a minister or deprive [the minister] of any of the functions of [the] office. [The minister] has still the right to preach, to administer the sacraments, to represent the presbytery as a Commissioner in the higher judicatories of the Church, and to exercise other functions of the ministry, to the same extent as in [the minister’s] active ministry.” (“Status of Retired Ministers,” General Assembly Minutes, 1948, 119-120.)

As members of the presbytery, retired ministers perform ministerial roles under the guidance of the Presbytery.

Following retirement from congregational ministry, it is essential and required that former pastors establish healthy boundaries, disengaging from ALL congregational life and function of the congregations they have served. It is strongly recommended for pastors’ spouses to do so as well. This is to provide sufficient space for the new pastoral relationship to become firmly established and to bond with the congregation.

The Book of Order’s ethical standard, “Officiate by Invitation Only” (G-2.0905), applies to retired ministers, just as it does to ministers in active service: “...former pastors and associate pastors shall not provide pastoral services to members of their former congregations without the invitation of the moderator of the session.”

Out of consideration for the next pastors and the life of the congregation, it is critical that former pastors politely and unconditionally decline all such invitations that come directly from church members.

It is not appropriate at any time for former pastors to respond to church members by saying they would “be willing, pending an official invitation”. Rather, they shall decline and then let the new pastor or session moderator take the initiative if that person is so inclined.

The General Assembly’s Standards of Ethical Conduct require ministers to live by the following affirmations:

“I will...

...deal honorably with the record of my predecessor and upon leaving a ministry or office speak and act in ways that support the ministry of my successor.

...participate in the life of a ministry setting I left or from which I have retired only as directed by presbytery.

...provide pastoral services for a congregation I previously served only as directed by the presbytery and provide pastoral services to members of other congregations only with the consent of their pastors; and

...consult with the Committee on Ministry in the presbytery of my residence regarding my involvement in any ministry setting during my retirement.”

(Standards of Ethical Conduct II, 14-17)

Minister members who retire or leave a congregation of the Presbytery of the Highlands are required to sign a dissolution/separation covenant. The covenant reinforces the Ethical Standards and the Book of Order requirements.

Retired or former pastor also may not moderate session/congregational meetings or serve as interim, installed or temporary supply pastor without permission of the Committee on Ministry.

Retirement Ethics and the New Congregation

Retired ministers are encouraged to become actively involved in a congregation other than their former congregations. In doing so, they shall exercise the same sort of discretion and explicit public support to the pastor or associate pastor of that congregation as they would offer to a pastor or associate pastor of a congregation they have formerly served. They shall refrain from offering pastoral care to members of that or any other congregation, except as the pastor may invite them to do so.

Among the greatest services retired ministers can perform for the congregation where they are worshipping is support the pastoral leadership.

Retired Ministers of Other Presbyteries

Retired members of other presbyteries may express interest in serving a congregation of this presbytery as post-retirement employment, as defined by the Board of Pensions. In that case, the Committee on Ministry shall ordinarily require the minister to apply to be transferred to this presbytery as a retired member, although there may be special circumstances that dictate that temporary membership in this presbytery is preferable.