

C. Disability

7.41.08. Disability. Ministers of Word and Sacrament may be designated as disabled and continue to be listed on the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament of this church, upon endorsement by the synodical bishop, by action of the Synod Council in the synod in which the minister of Word and Sacrament is listed on the roster.

- a. The policies and procedures for designation of disability on the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament shall be developed by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council.
- b. If a minister of Word and Sacrament who has been granted disabled status resides at too great a distance from any congregation of this church to be able to sustain an active relationship with that congregation, or if there are no ELCA congregations in the vicinity, other than a congregation previously served, the bishop of the synod in which the minister of Word and Sacrament is listed on the roster may grant permission for the minister of Word and Sacrament to hold membership in a congregation of a church body with which a relationship of full communion has been declared and established by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

7.42. Each person on the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament of this church shall be related to that synod:

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- h. **on whose roster the minister of Word and Sacrament, if designated as disabled, was listed when last called or the synod of current address, upon application by the minister of Word and Sacrament for transfer and the mutual agreement of the synodical bishops involved after consultation with and approval by the secretary of this church. ...**

1. Introduction

Disability roster status is an ecclesial determination granted by the Synod Council upon endorsement by the synod bishop in keeping with their constitutional authority. Such determinations are independent of the denial or granting of disability status by any health plan or benefits provider.

2. Disability roster status

- a. Disability roster status is discretionary, and there is no right or entitlement to such roster status even when disability benefits have been granted by a health plan or benefits provider.
- b. A minister of Word and Sacrament who seeks disability roster status shall submit a written request to the synod bishop for such status. The request from the minister should include the medical diagnosis, benefits decision, if any, of Portico Benefit Services or other benefits provider, and other pertinent information regarding the minister's disability. The synod bishop has sole discretion to determine whether to recommend to the Synod Council that such status be granted. If the synod bishop does not endorse the request, the bishop shall report the decision to the council, in executive session if deemed necessary. If the synod bishop does endorse the request, the Synod Council shall determine, in its sole discretion, whether to grant disability roster status.
- c. Disability roster status may be granted even though the minister has not submitted a request to the bishop or disability benefits have been denied by a health plan or benefits provider (*e.g.*, 7.46.c., †S14.18.c., *C9.05.c.).
- d. The synod bishop shall act to provide for appropriate pastoral care of the congregation or for those previously served by the minister.
- e. The continuation of disability roster status granted to a minister of Word and Sacrament is subject to review at any time and shall be reviewed in the event that disability benefits are terminated. Disability roster status granted to a minister of Word and Sacrament may be terminated by the Synod Council upon recommendation by the synod bishop or in the event the minister accepts a call.
- f. The transfer of the roster status of a minister with disability roster status may be authorized upon mutual agreement of the synod bishops involved after consultation with and approval by the secretary of this church.
- g. If the disability roster status ceases, a minister who is not under call or has not received and accepted a call, should request on-leave-from-call status or retired status, if eligible, in accordance with the established processes.

D. Retirement

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

- a. The policies and procedures for granting retired status on the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament shall be developed by the appropriate churchwide unit, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council.
- b. If a minister of Word and Sacrament 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, or if there are no ELCA congregations in the vicinity, other than a congregation previously served, the bishop of the synod in which the minister of Word and Sacrament is listed on the roster may grant permission for the minister of Word and Sacrament to hold membership in a congregation of a church body with which a relationship of full communion has been declared and established by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

7.42. Each person on the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament of this church shall be related to that synod:

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

1. Policy and procedures related to retired status

- a. A minister of Word and Sacrament who has attained the age of 60 or who has been on the roster of this church or one of its predecessor bodies for 30 or more years may be granted retired status by this church. Retired status is an ecclesial determination which may be granted by the Synod Council upon endorsement by the synod bishop in keeping with their constitutional authority. Such determinations are independent of the denial or granting of benefits under any health or retirement plan in which the minister of Word and Sacrament may be a member.
- b. A minister of Word and Sacrament who seeks retired roster status shall make a written request to the synod bishop no later than 45 days following the termination of the most recent call or of on-leave-from-call or disability status.
- c. The synod bishop shall determine whether the minister of Word and Sacrament is eligible for retired status and whether, in the bishop's sole discretion, to recommend to the Synod Council that such roster status be granted. If the synod bishop does not endorse the request, the bishop shall report the decision to the Synod Council, in executive session if deemed necessary. If the synod bishop does endorse the request, the Synod Council shall determine, in its discretion, whether to grant retired status.
- d. The synod bishop shall act to provide for appropriate pastoral care of the congregation or for those previously served by the retiring minister.
- e. A minister of Word and Sacrament who has been granted retired status shall retain that roster status until (1) the minister is no longer on the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament, (2) the minister accepts a call, or (3) the Synod Council revokes retired status upon recommendation of the synod bishop. Such revocation of a minister's retired status may occur only upon a two-thirds vote of the Synod Council, present and voting at a legally called and conducted meeting.
- f. The Synod Council shall engage in a regular, periodic examination of all ministers of Word and Sacrament on the retired roster such that each and every retired minister's status is reviewed at least once during a three-year cycle.

2. Guidelines for retired ministers of Word and Sacrament

a. Roster of ministers of Word and Sacrament

A retired minister is on the roster of the synod in which last under call or in which the minister resides. The retired minister remains accountable to the synod bishop where rostered, and the minister should regularly report to the synod bishop on any activities as a minister of Word and Sacrament.

Unless bylaw 7.41.07.b. applies, a retired minister must be a member of an ELCA congregation in order to remain on the roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament and remains subject to the standards for ministers of Word and Sacrament of this church.

b. 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.

c. Pastoral service

At the time of retirement, a minister of Word and Sacrament is no longer pastor of a congregation and therefore must discontinue the functions of the pastoral office in any congregation previously served unless specifically authorized to do so. Ministers of Word and Sacrament must respect the integrity of the ministry of congregations which they do not serve as well as the authority of the current pastors of such congregations.

The service of retired pastors is governed by the *Constitution for Synods* [†S14.19.], which describes the role of pastors in congregations in which they do not serve: "Ministers of Word and Sacrament 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" (†S14.19. in the *Constitution for Synods*).

The title of Pastor Emeritus has no official standing and carries with it no compensation or authorization for service or for other responsibilities.

d. Interim ministry

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

A retired pastor may serve under contract as an interim pastor during a time of pastoral vacancy only upon appointment by and authorization of the synod bishop. Retired pastors who serve under call in an interim ministry return to the active roster of Ministers of Word and Sacrament.

e. Compensation

Retirement benefits provided through Portico Benefit Services, combined with Social Security benefits, are intended to provide adequate compensation to ministers in retirement. Neither retired pastors nor their spouses are entitled to any compensation from any congregation or ministry previously served solely by reason of being retired or having previously served in that congregation or ministry.

f. Consultation with synod bishop

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

g. Transfer from one synod to another

The transfer of the roster status of a rostered minister who is retired may be authorized upon mutual agreement of the synod bishops involved after consultation with and approval by the secretary of this church.