

## New Policy Proposal Regarding Clergy Serving Congregations Past 72

1. Canon III.9.8 of the Canons of the Episcopal Church requires that all clergy persons resign their positions upon turning seventy-two years of age. They may be able to return to that same position, or they may seek a new position, with the permission of the Bishop of the Diocese where the service is to be performed and, if such be the case, in consultation with the ecclesiastical authority in which said priest is canonically resident. These appointments may not be for a term of more than twelve months, although terms may be renewed by the Bishop. This is true of non-paid as well as paid positions.

2. The Diocese of South Dakota understands the Church's requirement to make retirement at seventy-two normative for three primary reasons: a) to allow congregations an expected end of service for which they can plan; b) to allow clergy people to plan for and take retirement by lessening potential pressure from congregations for clergy persons to continue working past their retirement age, thus ensuring they can freely pursue their right to retirement; and c) understanding that retirement traditionally presents a defined transition point at which to reflect on vision and direction, to offer congregations an anticipated point at which they can pursue new directions in purpose, vision, and leadership, all of which are necessary for the continued growth and vitality of congregations.

3. Given that the interpretation of the canonical expectation is that retirement from active ministry at seventy-two is the norm for clergy, and that this expectation is in part to ensure congregational health by promoting continued energy related to the congregation's purpose, vision, and leadership, **the Diocese of South Dakota expects that a clergy person's remaining in active ministry after seventy-two years of age will be an exception granted out of the fact that in such cases the clergy person's remaining in active ministry serves the purpose of furthering the active purpose and vision of a congregation.** Thus, the conditions for the Bishop considering the possibility of a clergy person's initial appointment of twelve or less months to an active ministry position after seventy-two are as follows:

- i. The clergy person in question will first speak to the Bishop about the possibility of being appointed to a new position or being reappointed to their current position for the first time after seventy-two. In cases where reappointment is sought, said clergy persons are not to approach their Vestry, Bishop's Committee, or Mission Council about this possibility until after speaking with the Bishop and then only with the conditions set forth or authorized by the Bishop.
- ii. The clergy person must demonstrate two elements in his or her visit with the Bishop: a) a clear personal ministry purpose for the proposed time allotted and b) a vision statement for their anticipated ministry in that place for the proposed time allotted (the purpose and the vision).
- iii. If the Bishop approves moving forward, and if the matter pertains to reappointment, the Bishop will write the members of the Vestry, Bishop's Committee, or Mission Council. In that letter, the Bishop will convey the clergy person's request to be re-appointed and will ask for the input of the Vestry, Bishop's Committee, or Mission Council regarding the matter of whether they wish to accept the clergy person in this role. The members of the Vestry, Bishop's Committee, or Mission Council will be expected to consider this matter in a meeting without the presence of the clergy person. A written copy of decision and/or opinions of the members will then be conveyed to the Bishop no later than one week after this meeting takes place.
- iv. If the members of the Vestry, Bishop's Committee, or Mission Council concur, the clergyperson and these members are to submit to the Bishop two to three concrete S.M.A.R.T (specific, measurable, assigned, realistic, and time-bound) goals that will be accomplished during the requested placement. Once these goals have been submitted and approved, the Bishop will grant official permission for the placement.

v. Timing: Initial requests approved for appointment or for reappointment will be valid until December 31<sup>st</sup> of that year. Subsequent requests for reappointment must be initiated by the clergy person and submitted to the Bishop's Office no later than All Saints Day, November 1, of that year.

4. The conditions in paragraph 3 pertain to both an initial appointment and subsequent reappointments. Consideration of reappointments for subsequent terms of not more than twelve months will require one of the following: a) if the clergy person and congregation have not completed the S.M.A.R.T. goals, they will need to demonstrate what progress has been made toward them and what plan is in place to continue working toward these goals, modifying the existing goals, or implementing new goals; or b) if the clergy person and congregation have completed the S.M.A.R.T. goals, a plan to implement two-to-three new S.M.A.R.T. goals consonant with the purpose and vision of the congregation or other ministry placement.

5. A clergy person's failure or refusal to meet any of the conditions in paragraphs 3 and 4 will result in their being ineligible for consideration for appointment or reappointment to a ministry location after seventy-two years of age. However, compliance with the conditions in paragraphs 3 and 4 is necessary but not sufficient for such appointment or reappointment, meaning that Bishops still retain their full canonical rights to refuse appointment or reappointment of clergy persons of more than seventy-two years of age at their discretion even if such priests have fulfilled the conditions of paragraphs 3 and 4.

6. This policy only applies to clergy persons who have direct responsibility or oversight for a parish or mission. This policy does not apply to clergy who are hired by the clergy person in charge to perform supply work.