

CHAPLAIN TO RETIRED CLERGY

Report to Diocesan Convention 2023

Pittsburgh Silver Eagles: Chaplaincy to Retired Clergy and Families

The Pastoral Care Office of the Church Pension Fund asks the bishop of each diocese to appoint a volunteer *Chaplain to the Retired* to be an ongoing liaison for communication between the Fund and Clergy Pension Fund Beneficiaries who were canonically resident in the Diocese of Pittsburgh at the time of their retirement or who were canonically resident in another diocese at the time of their retirement but who are now physically resident within the geographical borders of our diocese. The Chaplain serves as well to supplement parish and diocesan pastoral care for retired clergy; for their wives, husbands, and families; and for the surviving widows and widowers and other family of clergy who have died.

My and our good friend Arthur Dilg was appointed to this role in 2002--following the exemplary ministries of Chaplain predecessors like John Leggett and Aus Hurd—and served a remarkable 19 years. With Bishop McConnell’s consent Art passed along the baton to me in February of 2021--and Bishop Solak generously renewed my appointment when she became our diocesan bishop later that year.

Our Pittsburgh “Silver Eagle” flock has a census that changes really month-by-month with the ebb and flow of life. New retirees are added, addresses change, and dear friends and colleagues are called Home. **A snapshot: as of September, 2023, I count on our roster 108 retired clergy, 85 clergy spouses, and 28 widows and widowers.**

As “Pittsburgh’s Chaplain” I participate in a monthly Zoom conference with other Chaplains in Provinces I, II, and III and in occasional webinars provided by the Fund to educate us on the state of the Fund in general and then particularly on issues related to retiree benefits. There is also an annual in-person regional gathering and a once-every-three-years national gathering for education and support. It’s my hope that all this will continue to equip me to be helpful to our retiree and surviving spouse community when questions and concerns related to Pension Fund benefits arise. Often I know the answers to the questions folks ask—but if I don’t, I will always do my best to find someone “at Pension” who does!

I’m also available to clergy who are beginning to plan for retirement. Over a cup of coffee or at lunch I share what I can about Pension Fund retiree benefits and lend a hand to help “aspiring retirees” negotiate the sometimes complicated administrative, vocational, and personal process of transition from Active to Retired status.

In addition to fielding questions and concerns about pension and medical benefits, I send somewhere between 20 and 40 birthday/anniversary/congratulations/get well/sympathy/and other cards and notes each month. I post pastoral news and prayer requests to a “Silver Eagles” e-mail distribution list. I stay in touch with Bishops Solak and Cameron and Canons Kim

Karashin and Bill Henry to assist them in their pastoral ministry with this segment of our clergy family—sometimes with an e-mail, Zoom chat, phone call, or home/hospital visit, sometimes over a cup of coffee or a lunch, etc. This year I also have been delighted to collaborate with Silver Eagle Carol Henley in her initiative to develop an online (and eventually to meet “in real life”) fellowship group, *Pittsburgh Senior Clergy Connect*. This group is open to “senior” and retired clergy who are canonically resident in the Episcopal Diocese and who live near enough to be able to participate in occasional in-person gatherings.

When possible, I also attend funerals for retired Pittsburgh clergy colleagues, and it is a special privilege to speak with the surviving spouses, children, and other family members and friends to express my and our prayerful thanksgiving and a word of Christian sympathy on behalf of the wider church. Since our last Convention in November of 2022 I count 15 of our Pittsburgh Silver Eagles who have entered Greater Life, and we would remember them and give thanks for the gifts they shared with all of us over many decades: *Ellin Leggett, John Rodgers, Rodge Wood, George Werner, Don Keyes, Terry Johnson, Roger Butler, Rod Whitacre, Becky Spanos, Earle Fox, Bill Eaton, Mary Weatherwax, Marjorie McCarty, Chips Koehler, Peter Ostrander, and Joyce Morgan*. May Light Perpetual shine upon them.

Again, I’m very thankful for the opportunity to serve in this ministry.

Respectfully submitted,
The Rev. Dr. Bruce Robison
Chaplain to Retired Clergy