

*Pittsburgh Silver Eagles: Chaplaincy to Retired Clergy and Families*

Report to 2026 Diocesan Convention

*Background:*

The Pastoral Care Office of the Church Pension Fund invites the bishop of each diocese of the Episcopal Church 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 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 the diocese. This is part of how the Pension fund assists and demonstrates gratitude to those who have ministered in the Church, including some who are no longer Episcopalians. It is the Chaplain's duty & privilege to serve them all: at last count, 102 retired clergy and 25 surviving spouses.

The Chaplain may also serve to supplement parish and diocesan pastoral care for retired clergy; for spouses and families; and for the surviving spouses and other family of clergy who have died. Following the work of Bruce Robison for 5 years, and Arthur Dilg for the preceding 19 years, Bishop Solak asked me toward the end of last year to take on this responsibility, and I gladly accepted.

*Report for 2026:*

Much of the first few months entailed figuring out the job responsibilities and communications network among my fellow volunteer chaplains within the Church Pension Group. I attended a CPG national conference for Chaplains to Retirees, which provided a clearer presentation of the expectations and resources available for the work, as well as meeting with chaplains from other dioceses about their work. Notes (US Mail or electronic) to retirees on birthdays & "round number" anniversaries (ordination and marriage) let them know their years of service have not been forgotten, as well as correspondence with family members when there's been a death in the retiree community. Along with local parish clergy and diocesan staff, I have offered pastoral visits to retirees during hospital stays. Carol Henley had been leading a monthly "Senior Clergy Connect" Zoom chat for diocesan retirees, but that has been on hiatus recently as we assess if this is the most helpful resource for offering a regular connection with colleagues. As Chaplain I endeavor to remind pension participants occasions to update information with the Pension Fund and sign up for a Medicare Advantage Plan during the annual enrollment period, as well as making them aware of other supportive resources that are available to Plan members. Working with Bishop Solak's office,

we hope to re-instate an annual or semi-annual lunch for retired clergy, spouses, and retired spouses, which hasn't happened since before the pandemic. In all this work I am grateful for the support of Bishop Solak, and Canons Kim Karashin and Wes Smedley.

In recent months I have been quite distracted from the work by a family emergency that has required much of my time, energy, and physical presence away from the diocese. I apologize to my fellow retirees that I have not been as available as I had hoped to be. The personal situation is much improved, and I hope to address the Chaplain's duties more attentively henceforth.

It is always a solemn honor to remember those in the Pension Fund who have died, and when possible I attend their funeral to make personal contact with family members. Since our last convention, these include:

Mary Jane "Shane" Appel (widow of Charlie Appel+), The Rev. Austin Hurd, Jr., The Rev. William "Bill" Ilgenfritz, The Rev. John Leggett, The Rev. Deacon Christine McIlvaine, Carol Mitchell (widow of Richard Mitchell+), The Rev Richard "Dick" Stinson, The Rev. Philip Wainwright, Rosalind "Rosie" Wood (widow of Rodge Wood+). May their souls, by the mercy of God, rest in peace.

Bill Geiger